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accelerator for good

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ACCELERATOR FOR GOOD

SECOND COHORT
APPLICATIONS OPEN NOVEMBER 2026





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OUR HISTORY

May, 2016: Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

We're a year into the development of the world's first practitioner programme on applying behavioural science (BI) to public policy at Harvard Kennedy School of Government, cross-developing it with other projects on cities, innovation, new social and organisational models, and digital transformation in government. And we're stuck.

The way "it's done" in creating this kind of work seems to be the exact opposite of what the nascent evidence in BI says works, in how we as humans make decisions, form judgments, interact with each other, create structures, and, essentially, think, collaborate, behave, and learn.

So we pitch a new idea. Let's adapt these intervention frameworks to the creation of the programme, the cohort, the convening and the work itself. A new field of work begins.

In redesigning how this work happens, we uncover a universal gap – the farther away we are from a problem, the less we know about its detail, so the harder it is to create workable, practicable solutions to that problem. This revolutionises how we work.

Over the next 10 years, we build innovation, learning and solutions creation programmes with Harvard, University College London, and in governments and large organisations around the world, embedded for multiple years, co-creating transformation and innovation in some of the most intractable structures out there.



In total, our portfolio now numbers over 120 projects in over 40 countries - with governments, companies, organisations and multilateral institutions like the InterAmerican Development Bank and the UN Food & Agriculture Organisation.

From this experience, we've built diverse and international cohorts over multiple years, co-generating how to convene and co-create successful solutions for the 21st century, with participants from 29 countries so far, in every sector, and every size and shape of challenge.

Now based at Cambridge University in the UK, we're launching our second cohort of the Accelerator for Good. Drawing on further Place-based, innovation, applied systems and human science learnings from successive Curiosity Collaborative cohorts and collaborators, together we've created the world's only full-spectrum solutions creation approach.

"The Curiosity Incubator was an awe-inspiring and transformative experience that surpassed all expectations."

Margarita Gomez, Executive Director, Southern Voice

ACCELERATOR OVERVIEW

Many interventions around the world have tried to 'crack' the multiple challenges inherent in our most pressing 21st century problems, but we often find ourselves without the progress we need. Individual interventions or one-size-fits-all solutions only get us so far, since approaching from the national level, or institutional perspective, alone, can miss key ingredients to why people and structures don't change, even when they know they should: their environment, and the complexity of reality where we all live and work.

Whether this is our physical, work, or social environments, experience teaches us that the barriers to solving complex societal challenges, and delivering solutions that work across populations and countries, are dependent on the concrete details of how and where we live, work, and convene, together - so it's critical to diagnose and build solutions that can work with, not against, that complexity.

The Curiosity Incubator | Accelerator for Good approach co-creates solutions that apply knowledge of how we as humans, behavioural environments and Places - from workplaces to neighbourhoods to transit systems - impact, leverage or impede the success of the exact changes we need at scale: and what we can do instead.

In our work with the UK Cabinet Office, the White House and Census Bureau, the Governments of Nigeria, Barbados, and Brazil, and in partnership with the Place-led insights in cities like New York, Recife, London, and many others, we have honed this craft of working with national level evidence and data to understand this nuance and power of 'People to Places to Populations', better.



Bridget Gildea, Founder, Curiosity Incubator | Accelerator for Good

Together with funders and NGOs like the MacArthur, European Climate and Open Society Foundations, and the Wellcome Sanger Institute, we've worked on Place, Population and what works for People - crafting diagnoses, interventions, and solutions, that work at the individual, municipal, and population level. In this, we've leveraged a unique approach to methodological and data analytics tools, to both hone current offerings, and co-create new solutions.

Drawing on human and behavioural sciences thinking and public innovation evidence we've created at Harvard, UCL, and Cambridge Universities, we work on what is needed for 21st century solutions, from the individual to the Place to the national level with organisations like the German Parliament and Bosch Stiftung, for Good teams in large companies like AstraZeneca's sustainability team, and Places large (New York City, London, LA, Berlin) and small (Cambridge UK, Barbados).

Now we're bringing this approach to the work of People to Place to Population solutions creation capacity and capabilities strengthening, sharing and co-creating to up to 4 projects in the 2nd cohort of the Accelerator - connecting theory to practice, understanding and building from specific social technology in Place, and jump starting new impact and success.

PREVIOUS PROJECTS











Our work leading the way in finding out and applying what works for 'People, to Place, to Population-level solutions creation' has seen us work with:

- White House Innovation Fellows, US Census Bureau and New York City on resilience and public health
- UK Cabinet Office and Cambridge University on 21st century policymaking learning
- German Parliament and Bosch Stiftung on 21st century legislator learning and innovation
- AstraZeneca UK and Cambridge Institute of Sustainability Leadership - place-led design for climate and decision making
- Open Society Foundations ($23billion endowment) and Wellcome Sanger Institute project - designing Place-led workplace solutions for increased impact and collaboration
- MacArthur Foundation and Nigerian Government - place-led behavioural solutions for corruption control
- InterAmerican Development Bank on BI applied learning for all Latin American offices
- UN Food & Agriculture Organisation - food systems for healthier populations
- Government of Brazil on cross- and through-government work to create all-of-Society solutions

40 Countries

120 Projects

Our unique human and behavioural sciences-led innovation approach to problem definition into solutions creation includes convening participants from across different sectors, countries, and levels of government and solutions, to find out what we need to know to craft solutions that work.

Participants of the Curiosity Incubator and members of the Curiosity Collective alumni and collaborators group who have co-created this approach have been drawn from the NHS, Kaiser Permanente, US Department of Energy, World Health Organisation, United Nations, World Bank, Eden Project, Ellen MacArthur Foundation, Raspberry Pi Foundation, Cambridge Institute of Sustainability Leadership, and a host of local government participants including Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire and East Cambridgeshire County Councils.

CASE STUDY: NEW YORK CITY & US CENSUS BUREAU - DATA FOR HEALTH



The problem: data sets for populations in the tens of millions are a huge asset for public policy problem definition - but how can we parse what is present and what is missing, in our quest to create more effective, behaviourally-informed solutions to our most pressing problems?

In our work with cohorts of behavioural science practitioners at Harvard, this question stood out again and again, leading us to innovate, test, and progress different ways of 'reading' data, for domains like public health. As part of this work, collaborating with the New York Commissioner for Buildings, identifying proxy data to help detect and predict where outbreaks of Legionnaire's disease might be, and using buildings data and the correlation between buildings being out of 'code' and likelihood of Legionnaire's disease developing in their pipes, for a city of 8.5 million people.

Bringing together the NYC Harvard BI programme alumni team with one from the US Census Bureau, we co-created a methodology of looking at municipal problem sets and diagnoses, into new behaviourally-informed solutions creation, parsing national-level Census data and its trends, finding what was missing from a human sciences point of view, and generating new ways of looking at potential solutions and interventions.

National-level data collection and sets are an amazing resource, as we discovered in our time working with the White House innovation fellows as well as the US Census Bureau, which is responsible for the data gathering and management for the US's c.340 million citizens. In working with the NYC and Census teams together, going from the municipal to the national and back again, and combining the learning from those projects, we discovered what is missing in these data sets, and what that can mean for better, quicker, solutions.

Often this was where the data interacts (or doesn't) with the built and social environments in which people live; these were critical elements that could create more effective, both long-term and acute, solutions. Some key findings:

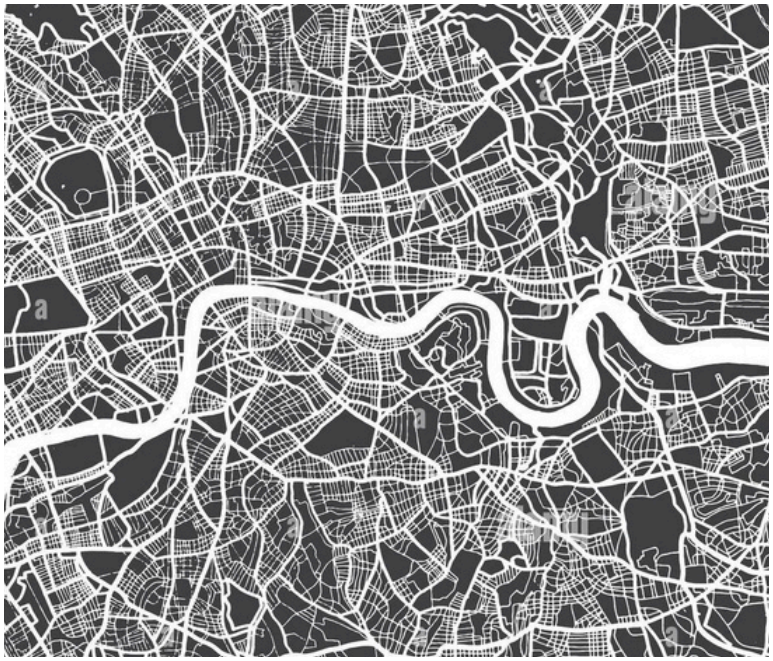
- If a building was 'out of code', it also was likely to pose a public health risk, through disease, overcrowding, or multiple other risks
- Understanding how people experienced the built environment in every day life was central in prevention
- Mapping social infrastructure data over the buildings and transport data was key.

CASE STUDY: UK CABINET OFFICE AND CAMBRIDGE ECOSYSTEM

The problem: state capacity in the UK has been hit by successive waves of challenges, from under-investment to turnover to outsourcing, over the last 15-20 years. In 2025, the lack of ability to deliver the basic responsibilities of the state was so stark that there was a shared consensus that the state could not deliver, and significant action needed to be taken, including the creation of a new National School of Government.

We at the Curiosity Incubator | Accelerator for Good were asked to convene an accelerated learning journey and Curiosity Community of Practice online and at Jesus College, University of Cambridge, for a group from the Cabinet Office and other Ministries, with experience of and responsibility for state transformation and learning. This looked at what is needed for state capacity building in the 21st century - from cross-governmental missions, to Place-led learning, to innovation in government, for its 67 million population and policy priorities.

One key theme that emerged was the lack of learning from and contact with other parts of government, and with other countries' experience on similar threats, challenges, and challenges. We brought colleagues from Brazil and Barbados into an online session as part of this process, so the group could hear directly from their experiences and learning, and how to jump start the process of capacity and capabilities building. At the same time, the seeds of further Place-led devolution were being sown.



How to build a National School of Government and state transformation approach that works in the 21st century had as a key theme what information, evidence, and data we use in decision making - and how we know what works. Connecting further with citizens and Places was a central part of the work: but how?

In parallel, our Cambridge local government Accelerator for Good Cohort 1 project included 3 local government bodies, for a conurbation population of around 400,000, including England's most unequal city. This project convened around the 'how' of taking a systems transformation approach to serving our most vulnerable populations - and how we can work collectively to do this better. Key findings:

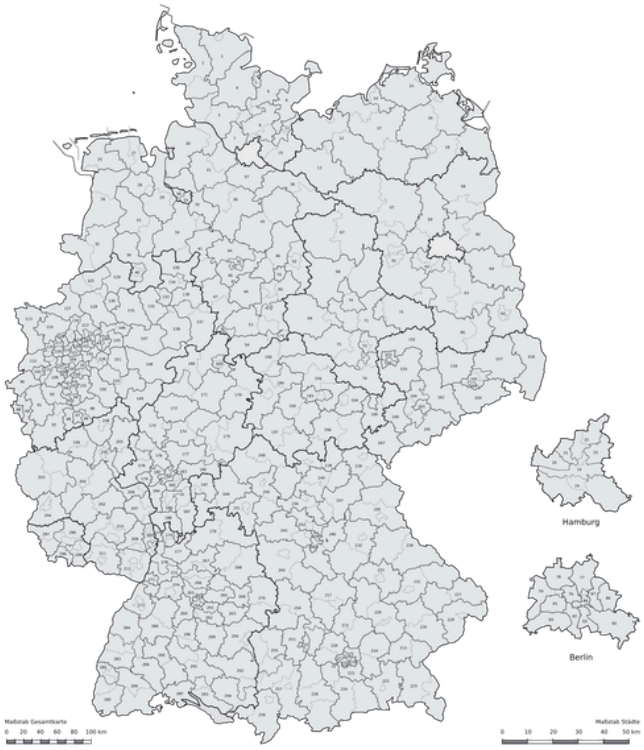
- Much of the advice on Place-led systems transformation for better outcomes is too vague and theory- rather than practice-based to build solutions with: so we co-created new pathways of learning together
- Understanding how people experienced both their environments and interacting with different parts of govt and public service was vital
- Mapping what we thought we were providing, over gaps in not just provision but social and logistical infrastructure helped illuminate key issues.

CASE STUDY: 21ST CENTURY POLICY LEARNING, GERMAN PARLIAMENT

The problem: in the German Parliament (Bundestag), like in many parliamentary systems, newly-elected Members as legislators often come into political responsibility very quickly, and without an 'air lock' of learning and capacity strengthening in policymaking and governing, between campaigning and being plunged straight into their new role. In the fast-changing environment of 21st century challenges, a learning and collective capacity sharing programme of work was sorely needed to help strengthen and accelerate state capacity and legislative and political solutions creation.

Together with the Bosch Stiftung in Berlin, we adapted what was learnt in the building of the Bipartisan Program for Newly Elected Members of Congress at the Institute of Politics (IoP) in Harvard Kennedy School, and cycles of learning, since its inception in 1972. Working with our colleagues and IoP alumni, we gained insights from this programme for newly-elected legislators, in their customary week at Harvard before taking up their roles in US Congress.

One central insight was that what the legislators (and some collaborators) thought would be the most high-value sessions (heavily knowledge-focused talks by senior faculty) were often less impactful experientially in the long run than sessions that looked less valuable to them on paper ahead of time - those focused on reflective and collective thinking and learning spaces.



In our co-design process with collaborators, alumni and legislators, what emerged as one of the biggest challenges in being a Member of Parliament is the lack of time and productive space to reflect, consider, and collectively work through complex challenges. Designing for this, we created a reflective design and collective practice as part of the Harvard programme: applying what we know about what works in convening and collectives design in a participatory way to legislators' learning for better success and impact.

Over the 10 years since we created this programme, which still runs yearly, the feedback that occurs the most is about how the design of the learning and collective building forged not just individual learning, but cross-political party relationships, trust, and collective capability. Key insights:

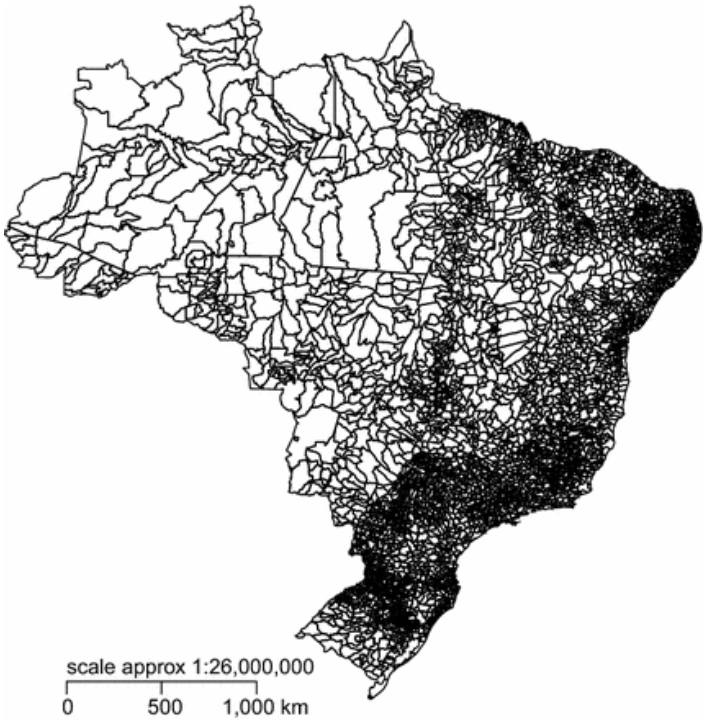
- Perception of value (what is famous or high status) vs what works in long-term transformative and collective learning impact are often divergent
- Understanding how people experience their roles and work, and building convenings and learnings for that, is key.

CASE STUDY: PLACE-UP POLICY FRAMEWORKS, BRAZILIAN GOVT

The problem: policies and solutions created at the central government level, especially in a socially and ecologically diverse country with a large population (213 million) and space, like Brazil, can struggle when we try to apply them at the municipal level across the board. How can we co-generate better and stronger solutions, together with Places and people?

This Accelerator for Good Cohort 1 project supported the Ministry of Management and Innovation in Public Services' work with municipalities around the country, including in Piauí, Pernambuco, and the Amazons. Taking the Accelerator 'what works for People, to Places, to Populations' approach, it collaborated with central government colleagues like the Rural Environmental Registry team, on finding out: what are the barriers to working together better, not just from a municipal perspective, but from a central one as well?

Applying the ongoing work on social technology, municipal strengths and capabilities already present in Places, and looking at co-creation with local actors in and out of public institutions, it tested out new ways of thinking and working on capacity inter-relatedness and strengthening. The Accelerator team worked in sprints, bringing new layers of approaches, methodology and tools to the pilot projects, tailoring to the specific features of each municipality, and parsing what works in overarching approaches versus how the specifics of Places work.



The Accelerator for Good takes a co-creative approach to problem definition into solutions approach overall - but in this project, we also explored a new paradigm for 'co-creation': 'co-generation', further reflecting the complexity on the ground in municipalities, and the breadth and diversity of Places in Brazil. Key insights:

• Bringing in other Accelerator projects and previous work, as well as examples of co-generation of solutions in Places like Copenhagen, Bogota, and others, the project team worked through scenario planning, foresight and the interaction between physical and social infrastructure and policy interventions, plotting how to co-generate solutions, rather than imposing centralised policies

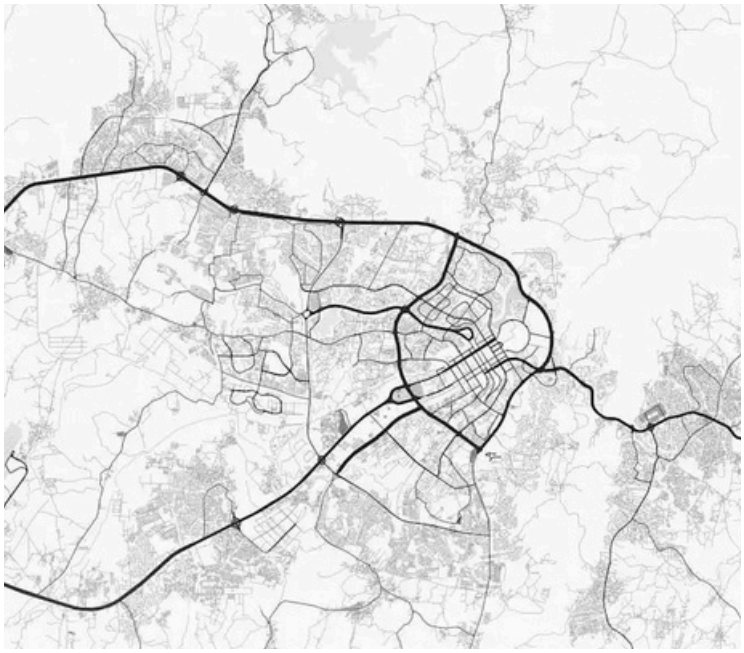
• The project also prompted thinking about what counts as evidence for solutions creation, drawing on data in Place insights from different levels of infrastructure, from John Snow's Victorian cholera map to modern day data-driven insights and predictive methodologies, as well as prompts on how to co-generate these in Places across the country.

CASE STUDY: CORRUPTION CONTROL IN NIGERIA AND IDB

The problem: corruption control, like many complex social challenges, tends to be analysed using traditional policy methods without incorporating what we were rapidly learning in the human sciences about how people work, live, and interact. The MacArthur Foundation and Nigerian Government approached us during the inception of our Harvard programme to explore taking a capacity sharing approach to new corruption control initiatives - one where we learned together how human and behavioural sciences could be applied to corruption control efforts in Nigeria for its 243 million citizens.

As our cohorts of alumni practitioners emerged, the question of how to rapidly iterate new interventions in areas like corruption control, using these powerful and nascent tools, stood out again and again. As we worked with our successive cohorts like at the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB), we and the Nigerian and MacArthur teams co-created a new way of blending applied learning with innovating, testing, and maximising different ways of 'reading' data and evidence, and designing new interventions, especially for 'complex' challenges.

Going to Abuja, Nigeria to see and learn from not just the people and social infrastructure but also the physical and behavioural aspects of how processes, teams, and government departments worked, helped target areas of 'slippage' where inefficiencies in systems and processes created gaps that citizens and civil servants then tried to fill - sometimes with aspects of retail corruption.



Taking a blended and co-creative approach to problem definition into potential solutions to test, our collective group took a shared-expertise approach to knowledge, tools, and social norms, so that we could cluster diverse teams of experience around thematic kinds of challenges, to form new potential solutions.

Testing solutions over 6 months in Abuja, we convened rapid-fire groups of co-creators all over the world to troubleshoot and red team potential pitfalls in the solutions design - from IDB alumni teams on corruption control to key colleagues in Nigeria and worldwide, working on similar challenges. So the learning happened in real time, to be incorporated back into solutions design, and tested in the behavioural environment where it happened. Key insights:

- Approaching the project with a collective learning mindset rather than one of individualised 'expertise' was critical - different people involved in the ecosystem are expert in different things, any of which might be the key for the solution
- Understanding how people experienced the built environment in every day life was central to the solution that evolved
- Finding out what not just could work but would work was the deciding factor.

CURIOSITY INCUBATOR CO-DISCOVERY PROCESS

The Accelerator process begins with a co-discovery one: an adapted, bespoke, accelerated version of the Curiosity Incubator. The only applied learning and problem definition into solutions co-creation programme in the world, we bring together a road-tested, full spectrum set of tools and approaches to solutions creation, built at Harvard, UCL and Cambridge over our 10 years of history, iterating and learning what works over 120 projects, in 40 countries, including:

- How People work, where they are: applied psychology, human & behavioural sciences
- How we can accelerate progress in systems and structures: applied systems approaches for accelerating positive change
- Using Place-based insights towards building Population-level solutions (and back again)
- Building stronger, quicker, better solutions where people are, through iteration and collective intelligence: public and for Good innovation methodologies
- Using data, evidence and foresight, co-designed for Good
- Organisational, network, and individual change and learning: how to make these solutions work in our workplaces, neighbourhoods, populations, and lives
- Insights from hard-won government, third sector and social entrepreneurial leadership experience, including the 'how to' of cross-society solutions

Using the Incubator co-discovery process as Phase 1 of the Accelerator, we take teams through an intensive and accelerated process of insights co-generation, using applied learning and knowledge of what works for people, to Place, to population, solutions in collective intelligence-led problem definition sprints.

Drawing on the bleeding edge of what works, this co-discovery process unlocks what's hidden in the problem challenges the Accelerator team and organisation are facing, both externally-focused (like policy or complex challenges at a population or Place scale) and internal, organisational challenges - involving transformation, change, or organisational impact. Once the co-discovery Incubator unlocks and accelerates these insights, the next phase of the Accelerator starts.







ACCELERATOR PHASES

The Accelerator builds on Curiosity Incubator co-discovery foundations and progress, with the co-creation and collective intelligence project work done with the core team and a bespoke group of senior alumni and collaborators drawn from its network around the world. Each Accelerator team's 6-month project plan and solutions creation architecture will be tailored in applied consultancy, supporting team, and co-learning journey, terms, to its specific needs, problem scope, and operating environment. Accelerator projects will launch out of the Accelerator with a fully-formed solution and plan of action.

1

Curiosity Incubator co-discovery process: unlocking insights

Co-discovering the underlying insights and challenges hidden in the problem sets brought into the Accelerator, using the Curiosity Incubator approach, content and tools. Exploring and finding the dimensions of what's not yet visible in the challenges to feed into solution sets co-creation.

2

Accelerator co-generation sprints: testing and iterating potential solutions sets

Looking at shaping, defining, and road-testing potential solutions to the problem(s) identified, building on collective, network and team intelligence. We draw on the cutting edge of what works in testing and iterating potential solutions 'sets' ahead of solutions prototyping in the next Phase.

3

Prototyping Accelerator solutions for impact and scale

Building on the honing, learning and insights from the co-discovery Incubator Phase and Accelerator co-generation Phase, the Accelerator team prototypes, road tests and scenario maps multiple options for potential solutions, drawing on what has been learned so far, finding a final (few) solution(s) to launch.

LAUNCH

Accelerator project team launches their solution plan for organisations and networks

Collective insights into collective buy-in for solutions' success is critical for any new solution to work - be that in the public or in an organisation. Launch of the solution means launching with a plan for how to co-create solution success with target groups, to maximise its impact and shared value.

METHODOLOGY AND COSTS

The 3 Phases into Launch of the Accelerator projects build into a complete solution diagnosis and testing process, and holistic solutions approach, for each team. First, we will do a deep dive into the data, evidence and context that each team has about its problem question, through the co-discovery Curiosity Incubator approach. This will be tailored to each team in a bespoke way, bringing our decades of experience in diagnosing what is missing, from a People, to Place, to Population perspective, for human and behavioural-science informed new solutions creation.

In Phase 2, we will choose, with the Accelerator team, 1-3 'outlier' findings, organisational elements or Places in the data and what we've discovered: where are we seeing specific conditions and patterns that don't match the usual hypotheses and could point to key nuances on what is missing. In some cases, with the Accelerator project team, we will visit those Places, workplaces, or countries, where the outlier data or findings seem not to fit the pattern, to find out together what is missing. This could be in the data and information we're using in problem identification into solutions creation, or in our approach. And we'll convene there to learn, iterate, and reformulate on that basis, to solidify our understanding of the problem(s) and potential solutions.

Then in Phase 3 into Launch Phase, we co-create a comprehensive set of tools and approaches for the Accelerator team and its key collaborators, drawing on the cutting edge of this thinking worldwide. This bespoke methodology and tool sets for each team will be used to refine, iterate and prototype potential solutions, in whatever form is most relevant to the Accelerator team's problem type.



Crucially, our approach provides ongoing capabilities and tools to further iterate and grow these solutions into the future. This opens whole new, impactful, lines of solutions for each project in an ongoing way - providing a thriving ability to create new solutions, where traditional consultancy projects end with a report and a powerpoint deck - and very little changing.

Unlike traditional consultancies and learning approaches, we take a capabilities and learning co-creative from the ground up approach rather than a one size fits all, copy & paste from the 'solutions vault' one, learning and building together with our project teams what really works.

These are Harvard- and international-level approaches, knowledge, insights, methodologies and skills, honed at the cutting edge of this work around the world over a decade plus, so are priced at that level of impact and value.

An Accelerator project including a bespoke Curiosity Incubator co-discovery learning phase starts at £150k / $200k, scaling up with more bespoke elements for more complex organisations, countries, or international work, teaming, or travel.

If the Accelerator project team or lead is part of the Curiosity Collective alumni group already, ie has attended a Curiosity Incubator or previous of our programmes, there is a £15k / $20k discount to these costs, as Phase 1 can be accelerated, reflecting the learning that has already happened. Project scale, and therefore costs starting at the price above, for a project, are determined with the team in the application process.





APPLICATION & NEXT STEPS

Applications for the next Accelerator for Good cohort of the open in November 2026. Each Accelerator accepts up to 4 projects, running for 6 months. Project teams are selected by application, on the basis of the breadth of scope of the problem set, and institutional ability to take forward the work. Projects can come from any area, country, sector or discipline - what matters most is the ambition and capability to tackle our most pressing and complex problems.

The Curiosity Incubator | Accelerator for Good takes a co-creative (and co-generative) approach for all of its design, work and projects, so the Curiosity Collective of Incubator alumni and Accelerator project collaborators are part of the ongoing co-creative group.

We will also be convening a "Solutions Symposium" spring-onwards in 2027, at which we will be showcasing the best of our collective work and Incubator projects.

CONTACT

To join this cohort of the Accelerator, send us an email to request an application: curious@curiosityincubator.com

Further information:

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