



Impact Accelerator 2026

Identifying how to improve a policy programme through
experimentation



What is the Impact Accelerator

The Impact Accelerator has been designed to empower teams with the knowledge and tools to use experimentation to enhance programme impact.

Participants bring their own policy challenge, an existing scheme or new idea, are shown how to apply the key elements of experimental policymaking through targeted workshops and personalised support. Participants explore how to identify and fill key knowledge gaps early, design clear paths to impact, and generate meaningful insights that inform the development of the programme along the way. Sessions include analysing policy design, developing a theory of change, establishing a robust data collection and analysis strategy, developing a meaningful pilot and designing a randomised experiment.

The objective is to enhance both the theoretical and practical understanding to achieve tangible impact for a specific policy programme.

Why join

Under the pressure to deliver, policymakers are often forced to bet on a single solution. We implement what we think will work, rather than testing alternatives. Could a different design have delivered better results? How do we know if we are measuring what really matters? Did we really improve outcomes?

Experimentation offers a way to resolve this uncertainty, providing a rigorous way to develop and test alternative approaches to identify strategies that truly work. The **Impact Accelerator** empowers teams to apply a scientific mindset and use the development of an experiment to see how they can:

- **De-risk implementation:** Test and refine interventions on a small scale before committing to full rollout.
- **Gain clarity on effectiveness:** Utilise a theory of change to spot logic gaps and identify the most effective policy levers - thinking in alternatives and how to compare distinct options.
- **Measure accurate impact:** Use rigorous counterfactuals to prove causality and rule out external factors, giving confidence that the intervention actually drove the result.

Participants will be equipped to drive transformative change in a **policy challenge of their own choosing**.

Transforming organisations for impact

IGL

Output focused counting activities

Conservative "why change?" mindset, no space for new ideas

Static rigid, set-and-forget, change is the exception, inertia

Fear of failure doing things differently is risky

Overconfident single solution, assume answer

Risk-averse risk is to be avoided...(even if this actually more risky)

Learning by accident unplanned, ad hoc, unused

Information poor no data infrastructure or skills

Weak evaluation what participants did or said

Closed protective, insular, limited external engagement

Impact focused measuring outcomes

Curious "what if" mindset and culture

Dynamic change is the norm

Accept failure no innovation without risk

Experimental explore multiple paths, test answer

Risks managed take small risks to avoid large risks

Learning by design intentional, continuous, used

Data rich real time, internal activities and external ecosystem

Robust evaluation what impacts were caused

Collaborative good ideas, evidence and partners outside

Who is it for

We are looking for ambitious teams involved in the design and delivery of innovation, business, and entrepreneurship support.

Organisations:

- **IGL Member:** Participation is free as a core benefit of membership.
- **Non-members:** We are now accepting applications from external agencies (e.g. Ministries, Innovation Agencies, Regional Development Bodies). If you are considering joining the IGL network, this is the perfect introduction to our methodology.

We recommend applying as a team of 2–3 people responsible for a specific policy intervention. This typically includes those who are facing decisions about how to design new initiatives, responsible for taking decisions about how to implement support or tasked with developing evaluations.

No previous experience of running policy experiments or special knowledge of econometrics or statistics is required - the course will be structured as an introduction to the principles and practices of experimentation in government agencies.

Training Structure and Journey

Your policy challenge: Participants join with a specific policy or deliver challenge, and a willingness to question how it works.

The format: Six Interactive Workshops. The IGL team will guide you through the Experimental Framework, blending peer learning with targeted training that includes: Ideation and policy design, defining policy objectives, developing a theory of change, selecting outcome measures, the importance of piloting and how to design an experiment.

Office Hours: Between workshops, you will have access to 1:1 "Office Hours" with IGL experts. We act as your personalised coaches to help you troubleshoot operational hurdles and apply the learning to your specific context.

You will leave with a concrete roadmap. This document refines your intervention's logic and data strategy so you are ready to learn, whether you proceed to a full trial or a smaller feasibility pilot.

Key features

Training period	25 March - 10 June
Total number of sessions	6 joint sessions (1:30h per session) 5 optional 1:1 office hour sessions (25 min per session)
Session frequency	Bi-weekly with office hours in between
Days of sessions	Wednesday (except in bank holidays)
Time	Joining Sessions - 3:00 PM CET (Office Hours - To be arranged on request)
Availability	Available for all teams within the IGL Member organisations and select non-Members
Cost	Free to IGL Members £3500 (+VAT) per participant team for non IGL-Members
Format of training	Online (via Zoom)
Contact	innovationgrowthlab@nesta.org.uk
Deadline for requesting a place	13 March 2026

Timelines

Announcements		Workshops		Office Hours	
11 February	Impact Accelerator Info Session	25 March	1. Kick off	w/c 20 April	First 1:1 sessions
13 March	Deadline for registration and provision of information	15 April	2. Programme ideation, policy objectives & policy impact	w/c 4 May	Second 1:1 sessions
		29 April	3. Logic model & theory of change	w/c 18 May	Third 1:1 sessions
		13 May	4. Measuring outcomes & Data	w/c 1 June	Forth 1:1 sessions
		27 May	5. Experimental design, implementation and piloting	w/c 15 June	Fifth 1:1 sessions
		10 June	6. Interim presentations, analysis & reporting		

The experience from previous years

This will be our third edition of the Accelerator for IGL members, with 10 teams from having previously participated.

“It has definitely helped shape our openness to experimentation levels and ability to create more effective interventions using the theories we learned about.”

“Our overall engagement with IGL has been brilliant – the team have been incredibly helpful and are always willing to support/give up their time to help us. The workshops were great – was good to use the learning on our practical example.”

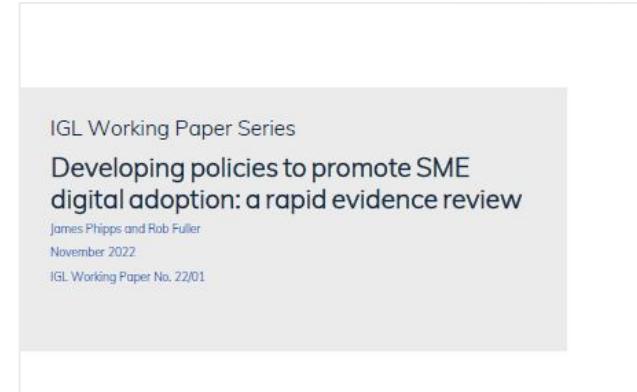
“This was really useful in terms of developing the learning objectives and thinking about risks/pivots that might be needed”

“It has brought a much more considered approach via the frameworks you demonstrated that will enable our work to be taken more seriously within this public sector environment”

Past projects have included:

1. Improving the user’s experience of applying for innovation funding by introducing of suitability checker to help applicants navigate the process
2. Optimising the allocation of innovation funding - exploring the introduction of random assignment within the allocation of small grants
3. Can we use experimentation to encourage vocational education institutions to increase engagement in regional innovation?
4. A new programme to encourage companies to increase export sales through investment
5. How best to support SME tech adoption - developing an experiment to compare alternative approaches for delivering support

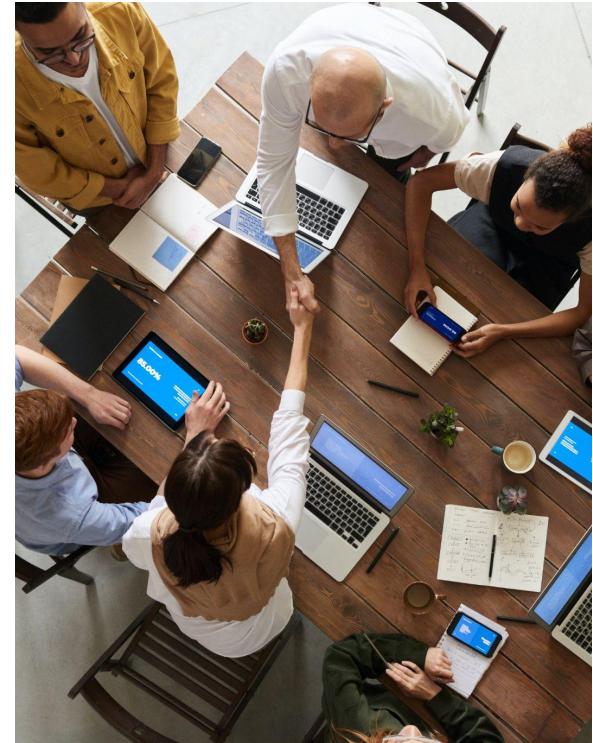
Sources for some further ideas and examples



7. Your commitment

To make the most of this opportunity, we invite you to:

- **Attend the Info Session** if you have any questions on the Accelerator or the specific programme to work on.
- **Submit an application** to the support scheme, focusing on a particular programme you are currently designing, piloting or planning to implement that could benefit from the training and technical support.
- If selected, consider an **ideal number of two participants per team** to actively engage in both the training sessions and the personalised technical support. However, bigger teams and solo applications are also accepted.



Info Session

On **Wednesday, February 11th**, we will host an Info Session for those interested in joining the Impact Accelerator.

This session will provide an overview of the Accelerator's framework, including its objectives, methodology, and key lessons from previous editions. It is open to everyone in your organisation.

You will have the opportunity to ask questions, present your project idea, and discuss how it aligns with the Accelerator's conditions.

If you prefer a one-on-one session with the IGL team, we'd be happy to arrange that—just reach out to us.

**Link to register
to the Info
Session here**

Wednesday, 11 February

3:00 - 4:00 PM CET

How to apply

We are looking for **teams of 2–3 participants** from IGL Members and partner agencies to join the 2026 cohort.

To ensure you get the most out of the Accelerator, your application must include a specific policy challenge or intervention you intend to refine during the course.

Deadline to apply is 13 March 2026.

We will review applications and confirm your place shortly after the deadline.

The Accelerator is designed for a small, focused group of 3–6 teams to maximise peer learning and personalised feedback. If we cannot accommodate your team in this intake despite a strong application, you will be placed on our waiting list for future priority access.

If you would like to participate but cannot at this time (e.g. problems with time zone differences), please register your interest and indicate that in the comments section.

Link to apply
to the
Accelerator
here

If you have any issues accessing the link or have any queries about how to book, please contact
innovationgrowthlab@nesta.org.uk

About IGL: A global collaboration

IGL is a global collaboration launched in 2014 in partnership with a group of governments and foundations. We are a **non-profit** organisation run by a core team based at **Nesta** and the **Barcelona School of Economics**.

We span the boundaries of policy and research.

Our **IGL Members** include leading institutions that support our mission, and the **IGL Research Network** has over **300 researchers** working on experimental research in this field, including the **IGL Scientific Committee** members:

Nick Bloom Stanford Business School | Dietmar Harhoff Max Planck Institute for Innovation & Competition | Karim Lakhani Harvard Business School | Josh Lerner Harvard Business School | Fiona Murray MIT Sloan | Mark Schankerman LSE | Scott Stern MIT Sloan | John Van Reenen LSE | Reinhilde Veugelers KULeuven | Heidi Williams Dartmouth



Netherlands Enterprise Agency



Department for
Science, Innovation
& Technology



Barcelona School of Economics

The IGL team

Our [core team](#) are experts in innovation, entrepreneurship, productivity and business growth policy, with backgrounds in government and academia. We are experienced in working with government agencies and organisations aiming to become more experimental and data-driven, and have strong networks with policy and research communities.

Our wide range of skills include:

- Experimental research methods
- Data science and innovation mapping
- Policy analysis and development
- Design and facilitation



Our approach to impactful policies

Policymakers often face challenges without clear solutions. Many options are considered but typically only one is taken forward. Under pressure to act, this is usually an existing approach.

Could other options have proved more effective? Could new solutions be explored? If so, how can we tell which ones work?

IGL helps organisations to **develop and test new ideas systematically**, putting in place structures to enable learning and drive impact.

Traditional approach

Launch a large programme without prior small-scale testing, with one design and the hope that it will work



Experimental test and learn approach

Start small, trial different designs systematically, learn what works to increase impact and scale it up

Experimentation can be used in different ways **IGL**

USE

Diagnosis: to identify the underlying causes and mechanisms that justify and inform policy interventions

Optimisation: Testing small tweaks in implementation process (rapid fire A/B testing)

Evaluation: Impact evaluation of new programme or changes in the design of an existing one

EXAMPLE

Research collaborations: Do “search costs” limit collaborations? An experiment showed how facilitating face-to-face interactions amongst researchers in the same research department would increase collaborations.

More effective messages: the UK Business & Innovation Ministry has run a range of ‘nudging’ trials, for example experimenting with the wording of emails encouraging people to apply for support programmes.

Innovation vouchers: UK and Dutch trials enabled by use of lotteries to allocate oversubscribed vouchers. Both experiments show vouchers supported innovation, with the Netherlands trial also showing long term performance benefits.

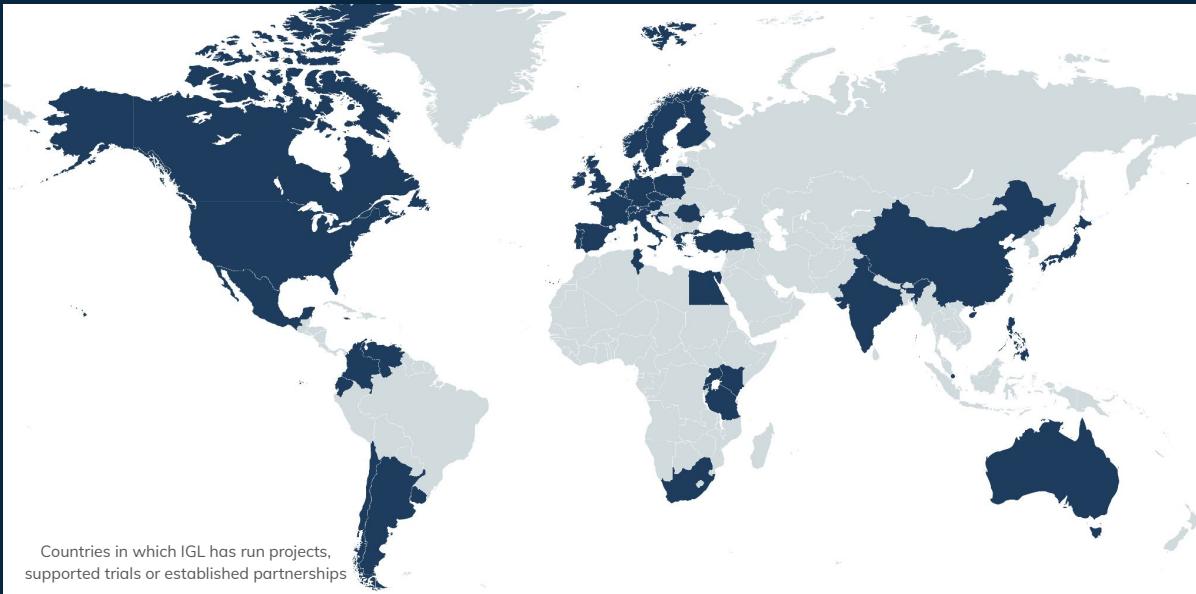
Researchers were 75% more likely to collaborate

Additional 9000 applicants from one messaging trial

25% more innovation collaborations in first year (UK)

IGL's Impact

IGL has become the global leader in the application of experimentation and data to innovation and business policy. Achieving substantial policy impact across the OECD and advancing the experimentation agenda in this policy space.



Collaborated with **over 50 government agencies** worldwide to help them become more experimental and data-driven

Supported **over 70 policy experiments in 28 countries** through advice, grant funding and matchmaking

Enabled **experimentation funds** in the EU and the UK, supporting many organisations to start experimenting

Reached **thousands of policymakers from over 45 countries** with our capacity building workshops, events and resources

Built a **growing global community** of policymakers and researchers engaged in experimentation in this field



Innovation Growth Lab

Sign up to our
newsletter



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