



# UN GLOBAL PULSE ACCELERATOR

The United Nations' programme for turning promising innovative solutions into real-world impact at scale

COHORT 4 - 2026





*With effective scaling, promising innovative solutions can move beyond perpetual pilots and maximize their impact for people and planet.*

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## **WHAT IS THE UN GLOBAL PULSE ACCELERATOR?**

The UN Global Pulse Accelerator is the United Nations' programme to support the scaling of promising innovative solutions, ensuring that exceptional UN-led pilots maximize their impact for the people we serve. The programme supports UN-led teams in developing sustainable, realistic and impactful scaling strategies for their innovative solutions. Those with the most compelling strategies will be awarded a grant and tailored mentoring to help implement them.

The Accelerator is developed based on key findings from a [2022 UN system-wide study](#) by UN Global Pulse.

## **HOW DOES THE UN GLOBAL PULSE ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME APPROACH SCALING?**

Scaling is a concept with multiple interpretations, and its definition varies within the UN family. As a result, it can be understood in different ways in different contexts. At the UN Global Pulse Accelerator Programme, **the aim of scaling is not to maximise growth, but to achieve optimal scale and impact for people and planet**. Key elements of successful scaling are the innovation's sustainability and replicability, supported by strong leadership and a strong ecosystem of partners. However, scaling is a long and complex process that requires a different approach than the ideation and piloting phase of the solution. Thus, it is not simply the replication of the pilot.

Our approach recognises that **there is no one-size-fits-all model** for scaling and that innovation can follow multiple pathways to scale. Through the Accelerator Programme, we support teams in defining a clear, realistic vision of scale that fits their specific project and the problem their solution addresses. Building on this vision, we work with teams to identify and assess the most appropriate pathways and strategies to achieve it.

## **WHO IS THE UN GLOBAL PULSE ACCELERATOR FOR?**

The Accelerator is open to all **UN-led teams** with **innovative, piloted solutions** that show evidence of positive outcomes and are ready to scale. The project can also be a collaborative effort between multiple UN agencies and/or an external partner.

We prioritize applications that have already established partnerships with the private sector, government bodies and/or other relevant stakeholders. If applicable, we encourage you to include a team member from a partner you are working with to join the workshop in Finland.

**Note!** Projects run solely by non-UN entities, or those only endorsed, branded, or funded by the UN, will not be considered.

So far, 22 UN-led teams from 11 different UN entities have gone through the Accelerator, working on a diverse mix of innovative solutions. **Read more about the teams here:**

- [Cohort Three](#)
- [Cohort Two](#)
- [Cohort One](#)

## **WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME?**

We're looking for solutions that:

- Demonstrate their readiness to transition to scale.
- Demonstrate their ability to achieve tangible results in development and/ or humanitarian action, with data, digital technologies and/or AI serving as enabling components. Approaches may be low-tech, high-tech or hybrid, provided they are appropriate to the context and problem being addressed.
- Will enhance the UN's delivery of outcomes for people and planet, support [UN80 priorities](#) on effectiveness and efficiency and the central promise of Agenda 2030 to leave no one behind.

**Your application will be considered if your innovation project:**

- Is led by a UN entity or co-led with a partner.
- Addresses one or more of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Has been piloted at least once in the local context of the challenge it seeks to solve, with evidence of positive outcomes.

- Demonstrates how it applies data, digital technologies, and/or AI as an enabling component in the solution.
- Demonstrates how these cross-cutting themes: human rights, gender equality, diversity and inclusion are taken into account.
- Demonstrates a human-centred, co-creation approach in the innovation design process.

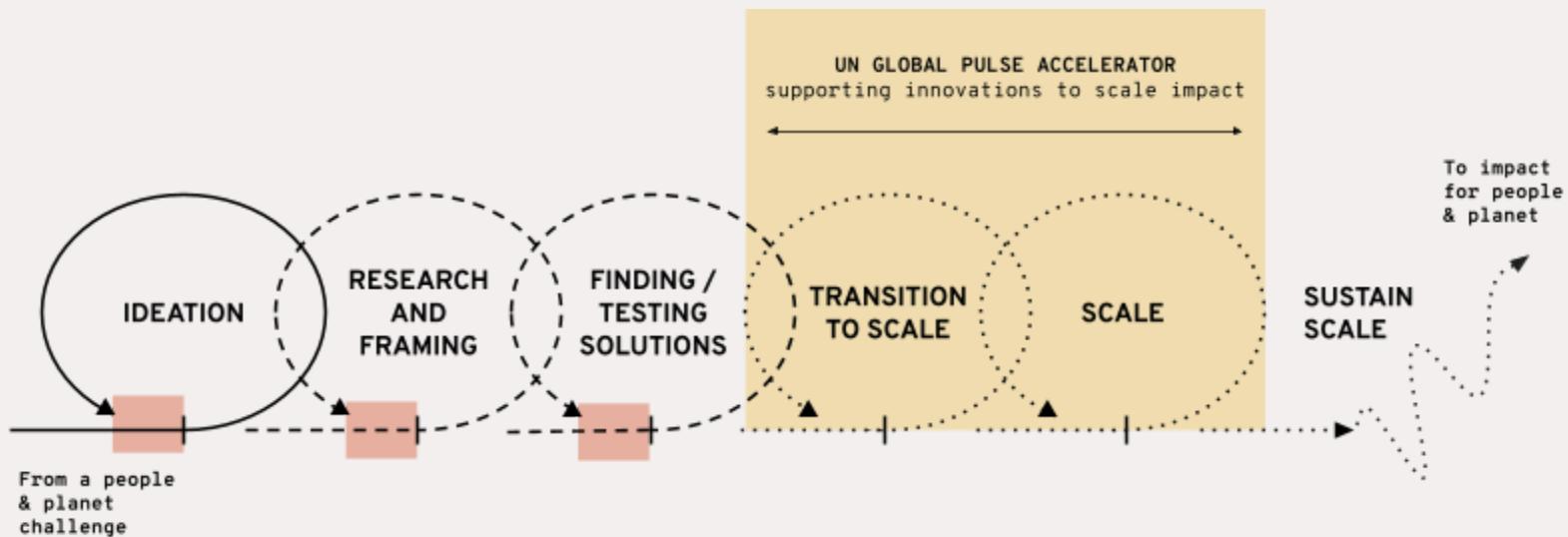
**We encourage applications that:**

- Address challenges across the least developed countries.
- Show organizational readiness and leadership support for the solution.

### **WHAT QUALIFIES AS AN INNOVATIVE AND PILOTED SOLUTION?**

We **define innovation** as delivering impact for people and planet by creating or adapting a product, service, process, or system that adds new value, whether by solving and addressing an existing problem, seizing an opportunity, or responding to an emerging need. The innovation can be entirely new or new in its specific context.

**To qualify, the project must be piloted at least once in the local context of the problem it seeks to solve and it must provide concrete evidence of positive outcomes.** A piloted project means the solution has gone beyond a concept or prototype and has been tested in practice, with its effectiveness and feasibility assessed.



The UN Global Pulse Accelerator focuses on piloted solutions that are ready to transition to scale.

## WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIVE PROJECTS THAT USE DATA, DIGITAL AND/OR AI AS ENABLING COMPONENTS?

For this cohort, we are looking specifically for projects that use data, digital and/or AI as enabling components. **We welcome a wide range of approaches.** The solutions may be low-tech, high-tech or hybrid, provided they are appropriate to the user and the context, as well as to the problem addressed. The emphasis is not on using advanced technology for its own sake, but on applying the right and suitable digital tools to address the problem in its context. We align with the [Principles for Digital Development](#).

Examples of projects that use data/digital/AI from our previous cohort include:

**OHCHR - Civic Space Pulse** is an AI-driven data collection and classification system developed by UN Human Rights that enables tracking of events such as public demonstrations, internet shutdowns, and attacks on human rights defenders or civil society organisations. The system facilitates human rights monitoring, prevention of escalation, protection of victims and support to accountability.

**WFP - School Connect** is a digital solution designed to streamline and standardize school meal programme reporting. The application digitises the entire data collection and analysis

*process in schools, from data entry to visualization on a near real-time dashboard. Real-time access to data enables programme officers at the country level to improve programme quality, optimize supply chain planning and reduce pipeline breaks to ensure that school children receive a meal every day.*

## **WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM THE ACCELERATOR?**

### **A STRATEGIC JOURNEY TOWARD SCALING**

Selected teams will join a hands-on, in-person workshop **in Finland from 8-12 June 2026**. The Accelerator supports the selected UN-led teams to craft sustainable, realistic and impactful strategies for scaling their innovative solutions.

Throughout the programme, participants will be:

- Guided by a **pool of multidisciplinary experts**
- Supported in analysing readiness to scale, identifying strategic gaps, and mapping potential routes to scale

During the workshop week, you will have the opportunity to participate in a partnership and networking event designed to connect you with potential partners across the Finnish innovation ecosystem.

### **A TAILORED SCALE STRATEGY DEVELOPED**

The workshop will help you to develop a scaling strategy that includes elements such as:

- Creating a **long-term scaling vision** and actionable milestones to achieve it;
- **Strengthening your value proposition** to support scaling efforts;
- **Identifying team and organizational requirements for scale;**
- **Identifying the ecosystem** required for the journey to achieve scale;
- **Refining/developing a delivery model** focused on financial and operational sustainability.

In addition, the workshop will help you to create a compelling pitch deck to effectively communicate your project to different audiences.

## **ACCESS TO THE SCALE CATALYST GRANT**

After the workshop, teams will submit a scale strategy proposal, which will be evaluated by a panel of experts. The two teams with the most compelling scale strategies will receive:

- A Scale Catalyst Grant of USD 60,000.
- Tailored technical support and strategic mentoring from UN Global Pulse to implement their scaling strategy.

## **WHAT EXPENSES WILL UN GLOBAL PULSE COVER FOR THE WORKSHOP WEEK IN FINLAND?**

In line with United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) rules and regulations, UN Global Pulse will cover **travel tickets to attend the workshop in Finland from 8 to 12 June 2026.**

### **Travel Arrangements**

Travel arrangements for the workshop week will be made to allow participants to arrive in Finland on the evening before the start of the programme and to depart on the day after the conclusion of the workshops. Flights will be booked in economy class, in line with UNOPS standard travel policies.

**Please note that DSA, terminal expenses or any additional expenses will not be covered.**

## **WILL VISA OR TRAVEL ASSISTANCE BE PROVIDED?**

We can support visa arrangements by providing an official invitation letter. However, we are unable to provide financial assistance for visa-related costs.

## **WHAT WILL YOUR TEAM NEED TO COMMIT TO?**

Each participating team must:

- Be composed of **3 people working directly on the project who can commit time to participate in the workshop series from 8 to 12 June 2026 in Finland.**
- Ensure that their innovation is aligned with organizational priorities and has the support and endorsement of leadership to continue their scale journey.
- If selected as a grant recipient, **be able to enter into a UN-to-UN agreement** and commit to the mentoring phase of 6-8 months.

### **ARE REMOTE PARTICIPATION OPTIONS AVAILABLE?**

Unfortunately, **we are not able to accommodate remote participation**. All three members must be able to travel to Finland for the workshop week.

### **HOW MUCH TIME IS EXPECTED FROM PARTICIPANTS OUTSIDE THE WORKSHOP WEEK?**

After the workshop, teams will have two weeks to submit a scale strategy proposal for evaluation by an expert panel. A template will be provided by UN Global Pulse.

### **HOW DOES MY TEAM APPLY?**

To apply for the programme, please submit [this form](#) by **February 11, midnight EST.**

### **CAN MY TEAM APPLY WITH MORE THAN ONE PROJECT?**

Yes. Make sure to submit a separate application for each project.

### **WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE REQUIRED?**

No additional documents are required beyond the application form. However, you may upload **up to three supporting materials** to strengthen your application. We particularly welcome documents that **describe pilot projects, highlight results, or include evaluations or reports**. Please note that lengthy submissions may not be reviewed in full, so we encourage concise, relevant materials.

## **HOW WILL WE KNOW IF WE HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED?**

We will contact shortlisted applicants in mid-March to invite them to an interview. Please note that an interview invitation does not guarantee selection for the Accelerator Programme.

We aim to select all participants by the end of March and will notify those not selected once we receive final confirmation from the selected teams.

## **WE WERE CONTACTED FOR AN INTERVIEW. HOW SHOULD WE PREPARE?**

### **WHEN**

Interviews will take place around mid-March and will last approximately 30 minutes.

### **WHAT TO EXPECT**

You will not be required to present or pitch your project. Instead, the **selection committee will ask clarifying questions based on your application** to better understand your project, its potential and the team behind it. Please be prepared to discuss the details of your project, including its goals, impact and any key insights during the pilot phase.

### **WHO SHOULD JOIN THE INTERVIEW**

The interview should be attended by team members who are familiar with the project. Not all workshop participants need to be present in the interview in case of scheduling conflicts.

To help us understand support from your leadership and alignment with your UN entity's strategic priorities, we encourage you to invite a member of your leadership team to join the interview as well.

## **I HAVE A QUESTION THAT WAS NOT ANSWERED IN THIS DOCUMENT. WHO CAN I CONTACT?**

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact:  
[events@unglobalpulse.org](mailto:events@unglobalpulse.org)

We also encourage all interested applicants to attend a Q&A session, where Accelerator Programme staff will be available to answer any questions. Register below for one of the four upcoming sessions:

- January 28, 2026 at - / 8 AM CET / 2 PM ICT - register [here](#)
- January 28, 2026 at 9 AM EST / 3 PM CET / 9 PM ICT - register [here](#)
- February 4, 2026 at - / 8 AM CET / 2 PM ICT- register [here](#)
- February 4, 2026 at 9 AM EST / 3 PM CET / 9 PM ICT - register [here](#)

