

Frequently Asked Questions

Understanding the Program

What is the Public Value Lab (PVL)?

The Public Value Lab nurtures and accelerates ideas that advance the public good. Our work centers on supporting individuals and teams driven by a deep sense of public service. We help them turn early-stage, innovative concepts into impactful ventures that thrive outside of traditional government structures. We do this through cohort-based accelerators and ongoing engagement with our alumni community.

What makes PVL different from other accelerators?

Its focus is on creating *public value* outside of traditional government contexts. This is not about bureaucratic reform or generic social impact. It's about reimagining how people connect with each other, their communities, and the environment in ways that renew civic engagement and democratic vitality.

How long is a PVL accelerator?

Our accelerators typically run between 8–12 weeks, though each cohort may vary based on its design and the needs of participants. We balance structured learning with time for deep thinking, collaboration, and iteration.

How is PVL's facilitation different from others?

Our facilitation invites creative experimentation and develops skills necessary to bring ideas to life. Through original frameworks and people-centered approaches, participants learn to craft their ideas into bolder possibilities and design them into meaningful endeavors for the public good.

Do I need to have a fully baked idea to join?

No. In fact, PVL focuses on the early stages of idea development. If you already have a “fully baked” idea, the program may not be the best fit. However, if you’re eager to re-examine or evolve your idea through structured experimentation, one of our accelerators may be right for you.

Will I launch something by the end of the program?

Not necessarily. PVL is less about launching ventures and more about re-grounding purposes, testing new hypotheses, and building scaffolding for longer-term work. If something launches, that’s great—but it’s not the only goal.

Is PVL a non-profit?

Yes. The Public Value Lab is a nonprofit corporation registered in the District of Columbia and is in the process of obtaining 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status.

Eligibility and Participation

Is the PVL exclusive to government workers?

No. While the Lab was originally created with displaced government workers in mind, its mission has evolved. PVL encourages entrepreneurial innovation to restore the public good, build resilient communities, and reclaim the commons as a space for shared purpose, dignity, and democratic vitality. Anyone drawn to this purpose-driven exploration is welcome to join.

What is the ideal candidate?

The ideal candidate can look many different ways but will generally stand out in these respects:

- 1) Motivation to Create Public Value,
- 2) Openness to Structured Experimentation,
- 3) Learning & Collaboration Orientation, and



4) Potential to Catalyze Others.

Can I participate in the PVL virtually?

Each PVL cohort is uniquely designed. While we have not yet hosted a virtual accelerator, we recognize that future needs may call for a virtual or hybrid model—and we are open to that possibility.

What kinds of ideas are a good fit?

We welcome a broad range of ideas—from reimagining civic infrastructure or rethinking public finance to exploring new forms of community accountability, data governance, or storytelling. The common thread is a commitment to public value beyond profit or narrow institutional reform.

What kinds of people are in the PVL community?

Our community welcomes former civil servants, grassroots organizers, technologists, policy innovators, artists, scholars, and more. What connects them is not a shared résumé but a shared sense of public purpose and an openness to doing things differently.