

Public Value Lab

Origin Story

The Public Value Lab (The Lab) began with a simple question over coffee in early 2025: *What's next for those who've built careers in public service but now find themselves outside government?* As a group of former public servants, we saw a need for a space where people could reconnect with purpose, test new ideas, and reimagine public service, and incidentally, their futures, beyond traditional institutions. So we hosted a facilitated workshop. It filled quickly and revealed something bigger: *a widespread hunger for community, creativity, and a new kind of public leadership.* From that spark, the Public Value Lab was born. ***The Lab is a home for those with public service DNA to explore, build, and grow together in service of the common good.***

Mission

The Public Value Lab cultivates purpose-driven ventures that generate public value beyond government. We empower founders by providing a safe space to explore and refine ideas in a community that is finding new ways to impact shared civic, economic, and environmental systems.

Progress to the Present

On April 22, 2025, before the Public Value Lab had a name or a roadmap, we hosted our first idea-crafting workshop. What began as an experiment drew over 25 participants - former public servants, community leaders, and purpose-driven thinkers - eager to explore what comes after government. Ideas flowed, connections formed, and something became clear: there was a deep, shared desire for a new kind of public service driven forward by peer support. That workshop planted the seeds of the PVL incubator and showed us we were onto something real.

Two months after our first gathering, the April cohort reconvened on June 24, 2025. This time the cohort met with sharper tools and deeper intention. Equipped with materials on market analysis, customer discovery, and venture design, participants returned ready to test, refine, and evolve their ideas. Some teams validated key elements of their concepts, while others made bold pivots in new directions. What emerged was not just progress on individual ideas, but a shared sense of momentum. It is a cohort beginning to shape what public value innovation could look like in practice.

Going forward

The energy and insight from our April and June workshops laid the foundation for something more ambitious. Drawing on what we learned, we've developed a structured 8–12 week program that begins with idea crafting and builds toward rigorous validation, critique, and venture design. Grounded in the unique experiences of former federal employees, this next chapter of the Public Value Lab is designed to help purpose-driven leaders turn early-stage concepts into public value ventures. We're excited to launch new cohorts into this journey.

Success

Success takes many forms for the Public Value Lab. For some, it includes launching a business. Some include taking their idea to a company and getting hired. Others include reflection and pivoting to a new industry. All are important and all merit space and time dedicated to the journey.

"The Public Value Lab workshop(s) provided a wonderful forum for me to share and receive excellent feedback on my business idea. I appreciated the friendly, supportive environment in which we all lifted up each other and helped refine our ideas through thoughtful discussion. Over the course of the two workshops, I modified and refined my idea to land on a business concept that is promising and practical. As a first-time entrepreneur, I left feeling empowered and encouraged to pursue this new path".

- Nirmal Bhagabati, PVL Alumni, 2025, former USAID employee



PVL Alumni Ventures

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