



# SDG INNOVATION



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### SDG Innovation Accelerator for Young Professionals



#### A. GENERAL

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##### **Q: What is the SDG Innovation Accelerator for Young Professionals?**

A: The SDG Innovation Accelerator for Young Professionals is a facilitated programme designed to engage young professionals working in companies that participate in the UN Global Compact. The programme aims to equip them with skills to advance sustainability efforts, drive innovation, and deliver tangible sustainability solutions for your company.

##### **Q: How is this accelerator programme different from the Young SDG Innovators Program YSIP?**

A: This accelerator was formerly known as the Young SDG Innovators Programme YSIP, launched in 2019. With an ambitious agenda for behaviour change, the UN Global Compact decided to launch a new SDG Innovation portfolio, scale the Young SDG Innovators Program accelerator and rebrand it under the name of: SDG Innovation Accelerator for Young Professionals. Sustainability and innovation are increasingly overlapping within corporate structures in discussions on how business can meet their long-term objectives and goals. Amid this changing landscape characterised by globalisation and digitalisation, new business models and ways of working require skills that focus on creativity, problem-solving and applying business acumen to addressing global challenges. For business to do this, they must tap into their two greatest resources available: the capacity and innovation of youth and the enormous market potential of the SDGs.

##### **Q: Will the UN Global Compact stay in touch with previous YSIP participants?**

A: Of course! The UN Global Compact aims to engage previous participants and foster a new community of young leaders disrupting traditional ways of doing business and spearheading change for true SDG impact. By the end of 2024, the UN Global Compact plans to mobilise 2000+ young professionals in Global Compact participating companies, primarily in the Global South, to leverage the SDGs to inform the design and development of new business models, strategies and products within their companies.

##### **Q: What does the SDG Innovation Accelerator for Young Professionals involve?**

A: In the programme, young professional participants (“Innovators”) explore new innovations and learn from leading experts and sustainability leaders about how to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the development of breakthrough ideas, products and business models. Using the tools and training from the programme, the Innovators work in teams to identify an SDG-related challenge that is relevant to their company and, over the course of the programme, develop a solution to address that challenge.

##### **Q: How is the learning journey structured?**

A: Each team of Innovators will, over the course of 9 months, work on a challenge specific to their company with the goal of designing more sustainable business models, initiatives and products that will advance the company’s sustainability efforts while driving innovation and delivering tangible solutions with potential market value. The programme takes participants through a design thinking approach to innovation by focusing on the SDGs. Participants run through each phase of the programme, provided with resources, tools and methodologies that will guide them through the process of identifying a challenge, designing and testing solutions, and validating these solutions for business value as well as SDG impact. The programme contributes to corporate behaviour change by exposing participants to various business models and digital transformation tools that can be adopted by their companies.

### **Q: What are the benefits of participation for young professionals?**

A: The programme offers young professionals the opportunity to connect with other business units and collaborate on innovative projects relative to their company and industry. Young professionals will have access to a unique learning experience through a comprehensive curriculum with a blend of learning opportunities, including on-demand and in-person workshops, case studies, convening opportunities and forum discussions. Young professionals will also have the chance to build working relationships and learn from some of the brightest minds working on sustainability and innovation from around the world.

### **Q: What are the benefits of participation for companies?**

A: The programme offers companies the opportunity to engage their top talent at the junior and middle manager level and develop a new generation of employees that think between the intersection of corporate sustainability and innovation. Companies also benefit from the development of real business solutions that have the potential to provide value for both the company and society.

### **Q: How can my company ensure the protection of our intellectual property if we take part in the programme?**

A: While the programme is designed to facilitate cross-pollination of knowledge, new skills, and ideas across project teams, we recognise the importance for companies to safeguard proprietary information and ideas. As part of the application process, we require the Innovators and Mentors to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) to cover any intellectual property being used or discussed as part of the programme.

### **Q: How will the company information from the application forms be used?**

A: Protecting your privacy is a top priority. The company data entered into the application forms is strictly confidential and the results will never be linked back to an individual company nor will company information be divulged to the public. Data will be solely used in its aggregate form to better understand programme trends and to communicate programme outcomes and impact.

### **Q: Where does the programme take place?**

A: The programme is currently being run by Global Compact Local Networks in over 15 countries. For a full list of Local Networks, please visit the [programme web page](#).

### **Q: My company is not based in a participating Network country. How can we take part in the programme?**

A: Unfortunately as this is a country-level programme, only companies based in countries whose Global Compact Local Network is taking part can participate. However, non-eligible companies may be able to take part in the programme as Mentors or Experts. Please refer to the [programme brochure](#) for more information or contact [sdginnovation@unglobalcompact.org](mailto:sdginnovation@unglobalcompact.org)

### **Q: Can young professionals from subsidiaries of UN Global Compact participating companies take part in the programme?**

A: As long as the parent company is a UN Global Compact participating company and the subsidiary is based in a country whose Global Compact Local Network is taking part, their young professionals are eligible to participate.

### **Q: What is the commitment my company has to make to take part in the programme?**

A: As a participating company, you commit to:

- Selecting 2 – 3 Innovators to take part in the programme for the full duration of 9-months;
- Allowing Innovators the time needed for full participation in the programme
- Identifying a Champion and Mentor who will support the Innovator team internally within the company.

### **Q: What is the time commitment for Innovators?**

A: Innovators are expected to attend five in-person 1-day workshops, in addition to spending approximately 2 – 3 hours per week on on-demand online learning, activities, and group project development.

### **Q: What is the difference between Innovators, Champions, and Mentors?**

A: Innovators are the young professionals that form teams to take part in the programme to develop viable SDG business solutions for their companies. Champions are senior-level executives within the same company that ensure the teams have high-level support in their company and the SDG business solutions are aligned with the company's strategic goals and objectives. Mentors are individuals also within the Innovators' company with knowledge of technical and relevant subjects in the programme, such as sustainability, innovation, product design and breakthrough technologies. Mentors are tasked with shepherding the team throughout the programme and provide technical guidance in their training and project development. Mentors work closely with the teams, often attending their meetings, while Champions provide an overseeing advocate role. Only companies in participating Networks can select Innovators for the programme. Each Innovator team must have a designated Champion *and* Mentor throughout the programme.

### **Q: Is there an extra cost for my company to participate?**

A: In the UK, the programme costs £2,450 per team of Innovators.

## **B. ELIGIBILITY**

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### **Q: Why is the programme only for young professionals?**

A: The programme is designed to target employees that do not yet have senior management responsibilities and therefore have more time to dedicate to a 9-month development programme. There is also a critical opportunity to mobilise young people working in established companies to innovate from within and accelerate the transition towards business models that align with the SDGs.

### **Q: Why do you categorise young professionals as 35 and under?**

A: There is no set definition for the age of a young professional. Young professionals can be categorised as working individuals anywhere between the ages of 21 to 40. The age of 35 was selected as the upper age limit for the programme given that many demographic and population statistical organisations recognise young adulthood at being between the ages of 18 and 34.

### **Q: Is any company participating in the UN Global Compact eligible to take part in the programme?**

A: All companies participating in the UN Global Compact are eligible to take part in the programme as long as they are based in a country whose Global Compact Local Network is participating.

### **Q: How many young professionals can represent my company in the programme?**

A: Companies can be represented by one team. Teams can be formed by up to three (3) young professionals.

### **Q: What are the eligibility criteria for the SDG Innovation Accelerator for young professionals?**

A: While there are no set requirements, the programme is designed to target employees aged 35 and under who have a passion for sustainability, creativity, and demonstrate strong teamwork skills. Employees from business innovation, Research and Development, marketing, logistics, procurement, customer experience/service and sustainability units are encouraged to participate.

**Q: Does the Global Compact have to approve the Innovator candidates from my company before they are selected?**

A: No, we encourage individuals who best fit the Innovator profile to nominate themselves. When forming the teams, we ask you to ensure diversity among the candidate pool in terms of business unit and background. Guidance is provided as to desired qualifications for Innovators.

**Q: What kind of companies are encouraged to apply?**

A: Because this is an innovation-focused program, we will favour companies that are involving departments such as Innovation, Research & Development, and Engineering. To encourage knowledge sharing, it is not necessary that Innovators are involved in sustainability-related aspects of the company. In fact, the programme is an opportunity to teach departments traditionally separate from sustainability about the SDGs.

**C. APPLICATION**

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**Q: How do I apply?**

A: Companies or young professionals interested in joining the programme can [apply on the programme web page](#) or connect directly to their participating Global Compact Local Network. Due to demand and limited spots in the programme, Local Networks will need to confirm company participation before approved companies are able to put forward programme participants.

**Q: When does the programme start?**

A: February 2024 is when the on-boarding period for Innovators starts, where they are given time to better understand concepts on SDGs and breakthrough innovation before they start the learning journey. The in-person programming for the programme will begin in March 2024 and run until September 2024.

**Q: What is the duration of the programme?**

A: The programme will run in annual cycles over the course of 9 months.

**Q: My company is not able to take part in the programme this year but would like to participate next year. Can we sign up now for the next round?**

A: Programme applications are managed by Global Compact Local Networks which have the right to determine how and when to waitlist companies for future rounds of the programme.