

## ReFED's Nonprofit Food Recovery Accelerator FAQs

Version 1.1

### *Background*

#### **1. Why is ReFED launching the Nonprofit Food Recovery Accelerator?**

With nearly 40 million Americans facing food insecurity, there is an enormous need and opportunity for recovery organizations to deliver more food at scale and become operationally sustainable. ReFED's Nonprofit Food Recovery Accelerator will apply years of learning into a three-month virtual curriculum, plus a series of in-person ReFED Learning Labs, that will equip participants with the knowledge, network and capital they need to scale their impact by implementing earned revenue models and human-centered technology solutions. Learn about a few examples of these efforts already underway [here](#).

### *Program Details*

#### **2. How will the Accelerator work?**

The 10 participating organizations in ReFED's Nonprofit Food Recovery Accelerator will be able to rapidly prototype new products and services that drive mission-aligned revenue, learn how to incorporate principles of human-centered design that create a more dignified experience for end beneficiaries, and adopt the use of innovative technologies to increase capacity. Organizations should designate one Lead Participant (a senior-level staff member) to guide a team of up to 10 people from their nonprofit to develop and test an idea through this Accelerator.

The Accelerator will take place from September 10 - December 6, 2019. During this three-month period, organizations will have one Lead Participant join four virtual Learning Labs and three in-person Learning Labs on behalf of the organization. In between each Learning Lab, the Lead Participant and their team members will have access to an online curriculum to help them develop their idea. This curriculum will contain video tutorials, case studies and assignments. Throughout the Accelerator, participants will actively give and receive feedback from their peers and have access to mentors to help them develop their ideas.

#### **3. How long is the program?**

ReFED's Nonprofit Food Recovery Accelerator will run for three months from September 10 - December 6, with in-person ReFED Learning Labs the weeks of September 10, October 28, and December 2. The first two Learning Labs will be held in the San Francisco Bay Area, with the second coinciding with The US Food Waste Summit. The location of the early December Learning Lab will be determined soon. As much as possible, the same Lead Participant from each organization is expected to attend all virtual and

in-person ReFED Learning Labs. The virtual sessions will typically be 2-hour sessions and the in-person Learning Labs 2 days.

#### **4. Does it cost anything for nonprofit organizations to participate in the Accelerator?**

No, participation is free. In fact, participants will receive both financial and non-financial support, which is detailed below.

#### **5. What kind of financial and non-financial support is provided?**

Ten nonprofit food recovery organizations will be selected to participate in the Accelerator. Each organization will receive \$25,000 for participating and a travel stipend, plus an additional \$100,000 will be awarded to selected winner(s). In addition, participants will have access to a range of tangible and intangible benefits, including publicity and brand exposure, access to ReFED staff and world-class mentors, as well as an invitation to the 2019 Food Waste Summit, hosted by ReFED.

### *Application Process*

#### **6. What type of applicants are most likely to be successful?**

ReFED is looking for truly transformative solutions from innovators whose missions are intrinsically tied to fighting both food waste and food insecurity. Solutions may span the innovation maturity curve from early-stage concepts to more mature innovations. However, any organization must already be implementing, or willing to implement, earned revenue models and technology solutions using a human-centered approach.

#### **7. Who is eligible to apply?**

ReFED is looking for organizations that:

- Are currently or expected to become US-based nonprofits in the food recovery space
- Believe earned revenue models and technology solutions can help them scale significantly
- Are interested in designing solutions using a human-centered approach; ensuring more healthy food is delivered in a dignified and convenient way
- Are willing to share best practices and partner with others across the nation to drive more impact
- Have a full-time senior leadership member willing to commit the time to actively participate in the Accelerator's virtual curriculum and in-person ReFED Learning Labs

## **8. What are the selection criteria for ReFED's Nonprofit Food Recovery Accelerator?**

Applicants will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Does the team have a clear, mission-aligned idea to generate revenue?
- Is the concept truly innovative?
- Is the concept scalable or replicable?
- Is the potential impact of the idea measurable?
- Does the concept have a long-term sustainable funding model or an initial view on how to develop a sustainable funding model? Is there a clear potential customer segment defined and a source of potential revenue identified?
- Does the team have the correct skill set and attitudes? Does the Lead Participant demonstrate a willingness to learn, share, and revise their organization's ideas based on feedback?

## **9. What is the application process? When and how can I apply?**

Interested participants are invited to [apply here](#). Applications will be accepted from June 11, 2019 to 11:59 p.m. PT on July 10, 2019. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis and evaluated based on the selection criteria described below. If you are selected as a finalist, you will be invited to take part in a 30 minute interview via a video conference.

## *Curriculum*

### **10. How does it work, what is the time commitment and how will I be spending my time?**

Over the course of the three months (September 10-December 6), you and your team will learn about developing an earned revenue stream and implementing technology solutions at your food recovery organization, complete your own assignments, and then share them via interactive Learning Labs (both virtual and in-person).

You will need a Lead Participant to show up to each of the Learning Lab sessions and can have up to 10 people from your organization access all the curriculum materials even after the program ends. You should be able to complete all activities within 6 hours per week, but there will certainly be opportunities for you to go deeper and spend much more time on each stage to significantly develop your ideas, especially during the in-person ReFED Learning Labs. You can also divide some of the work on your assignments among other people on your nonprofit team. Most of this work can be done online, on your own schedule.

The weekly time commitment breaks down as follows:

- **Self-Paced Curriculum (1 hour per week):** Complete one hour of self-paced tutorials each week in a dedicated portal. Tutorials will feature practical case studies, frameworks, and strategies that you can apply directly to your organization's work.
- **Weekly Project (3 hours per week):** Spend at least three hours per week working on a structured exercise to advance your idea. You'll interview customers, analyze competitors, build prototypes, and learn quickly.
- **Interactive Learning Lab (2 hours per week for virtual sessions; longer for in-person labs):** Live interactive session with your cohort. You'll share a status update on your project and receive feedback from coaches and peers.

## 11. What's included in the curriculum?

ReFED's Nonprofit Food Recovery Accelerator's online curriculum includes:

- Lifetime access to video tutorials, practical case studies sharing the detailed experiences of other organizations, and workbooks with step-by-step instructions for each stage of the process hosted by a dedicated resource portal (curriculum will remain accessible after the three-month program ends)
- Sample assignments showcasing other nonprofit business models
- Certificate in Nonprofit Innovation from +Acumen and ReFED
- Final Feedback Report from +Acumen and ReFED, and a LinkedIn endorsement if you successfully complete the Accelerator

## 12. What is the curriculum schedule?

Below is a sample curriculum schedule that will be finalized ahead of the Accelerator:

Session One: Orientation and in-person ReFED Learning Lab #1

- Get Oriented
- Meet Your Peers
- Earned Revenue 101
- The Desirability, Feasibility and Viability Framework
- 7 Characteristics of Successful Earned Revenue Ventures
- Case Study
- Featured Experts
- Assignment: Hypothesis Dashboard

## Session Two: The Social Enterprise Mindset

- Introduction to Human-Centered Design and Building Something Desirable to Customers
- Value Proposition Design
- Case Study
- Featured Experts
- Assignment: Customer Interviews

## Session Three: Customer Discovery

- Value Proposition Consultations
- Case Study
- Featured Experts
- Assignment: Customer Interviews

## Session Four: Map Your Organizational Core and Business Model

- Connecting Customer Insights to a Business Model
- Types of Nonprofit Business Models
- How to Create a Core Map
- How a Business Model Fits Together
- Nonprofit Revenue Engines
- Leveraging Technology Solutions and Innovations
- Introduction to the Business Model Canvas
- Case Study
- Featured Experts
- Assignment: Business Model Canvas and Core Map

## Session Five: Size Your Market and Develop Your Financial Model

- How to Size Your Market
- How to Set Prices
- Financial Model Template
- How to Complete your Financial Model
- How to Connect Your Financial Numbers to Your Social Impact
- Case Study
- Featured Experts
- Assignment: Financial Model

## Session Six: Develop and Test a Minimum Viable Product and in-person ReFED Learning Lab #2

- What is a Minimum Viable Product?
- Business Experiment Design
- Examples of MVPs
- Case Study
- Featured Experts
- Assignment: MVP Development

## Session Seven: Individual Consultations and Presentation Development

- Assignment: MVP Testing
- Consultation on Business Experiments

## Session Eight: Final Showcase and in-person ReFED Learning Lab #3

- Present your final projects to ReFED's Advisory Committee and Expert Network for feedback and Accelerator winner(s) selection

### **13. Am I guaranteed to emerge with a profitable idea?**

No. There are no guarantees of profitability in the field of social entrepreneurship. This Accelerator will offer you a structured process for testing out potential ideas to generate earned revenue for your nonprofit organization, but there is no guarantee that the idea you generate through this three-month program will be the exact one that starts to earn revenue from your organization. All good ideas require iteration and development as they interact with the market. However, you will gain a replicable process for quickly testing ideas so that you can learn faster and identify a promising business model more efficiently in the long run.

### **14. Do I need to attend all of the Learning Labs?**

The Learning Labs (both virtual and in-person) are the core of this experience. We strongly recommend that each organization designate one Lead Participant who can attend all Labs. If you cannot attend for any reason, you should designate a substitute from your organization.

### **15. How many people per organization can participate in the Learning Labs?**

One person per organization should participate in the weekly Learning Lab. This should be the same person each week. Up to 10 additional people from your organization can access all of the curriculum materials and participate in completing the weekly assignments.

## **16. When and where are the in-person ReFED Learning Labs?**

The first two Learning Labs will be held in the San Francisco Bay Area, with the second coinciding with The US Food Waste Summit. The location of the early December Learning Lab will be determined soon. Travel stipends will be provided.

## **17. What is the agenda for the in-person Learning Labs?**

The in-person ReFED Learning Labs will be a way to bring the virtual curriculum to life, allowing for peer-to-peer learning and best practice sharing, presentations from subject matter experts and networking with Fortune 500 food businesses, capital providers, and industry-leading technology companies in attendance.

## **18. Will expenses be covered?**

Each organization will receive \$25,000 for participating and a travel stipend, plus an additional \$100,000 will be awarded to selected winner(s).

## *Additional Questions*

## **19. What additional support is available for participants beyond the three-month Accelerator?**

It is expected that participants will form relationships with key stakeholders, including food businesses, funders, subject matter experts, and peer recovery organizations, that will last well beyond the three-month Accelerator. In addition, participants receive lifetime access to video tutorials, practical case studies sharing the detailed experiences of other organizations, and workbooks with step-by-step instructions for each stage of the process hosted by a dedicated resource portal.

## **20. Can I speak to someone directly about the program and/or application process?**

Yes. To coordinate a time to speak with Accelerator staff, please email [accelerator@plusacumen.org](mailto:accelerator@plusacumen.org).

## **21. Will all organizations be notified if they are selected to participate?**

All organizations that have been selected to participate will be notified during the first two weeks of August 2019. We will let every organization know their selection status by August 23, 2019.

## **22. I have read all of the above but still have a question — what do I do?**

Please send an email to [accelerator@plusacumen.org](mailto:accelerator@plusacumen.org) and someone will be in touch to assist you. We will get back to you as soon as possible.