

Accelerator FAQs

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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. Launching in September 2019, ReFED's Nonprofit Food Recovery Accelerator will apply years of learning into a three-month program that will equip participants with the knowledge, network and capital they need to implement earned revenue models and technology solutions using a human-centered approach — keys to unlocking this capacity. Learn about a few examples of these efforts already underway [here](#).

Program Details

2. How will the Accelerator work?

By immersing a cohort of 10 nonprofit recovery organizations in a combination of virtual curriculum and in-person ReFED Learning Labs that focus on leveraging earned revenue models, technology solutions, and human-centered design, ReFED aims to catalyze ideas and inspire actions that will lead to a doubling of healthy food available to the 40 million Americans facing food insecurity.

Participants 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 and convenient experience for end beneficiaries, adopt the use of innovative technologies to increase capacity, and network with Fortune 500 food businesses, hunger and climate funders, and industry-leading technology companies.

3. How long is the program?

ReFED's Nonprofit Food Recovery Accelerator will run for 3-months from September 10 - December 6, with in-person ReFED Learning Labs the weeks of September 10, October 28, and December 2, all likely located in the San Francisco Bay Area.

4. What kind of financial and non-financial support is provided?

Each participant will receive \$25,000 and a stipend to help cover travel expenses, plus an additional \$100,000 awarded to the selected winner(s) at the end of the Accelerator. 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

5. 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 recovered 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

6. What are the selection criteria for ReFED's Nonprofit Food Recovery Accelerator?

- Is the concept truly innovative?
- Is the concept scalable or replicable?
- Does the team have the correct skill set?
- Is the impact measurable?
- Does the concept have a long-term sustainable funding model or an initial view on how to develop a sustainable funding model?

7. 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.

8. 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.

Nonprofit Accelerator Curriculum

9. How does it work and how will I be spending my time?

Over the course of the 3-months (September 10-December 6), you and your team will learn the basics of 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 the Learning Lab each week and can have up to 10 people from your organization access all the curriculum materials even after the program ends. You should expect to spend at least 6 hours per week working on your project, with a larger time commitment required for the Learning Labs. Most of this work can be done online, on your own schedule. The weekly time commitment breaks down as follows:

- **Practice Tutorials (1 hour per week):** Complete 1 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 3 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):** Live interactive session with your cohort. You'll share a status update on your project and receive feedback from +Acumen and your peers.

10. What's included in the curriculum?

The Nonprofit Food Recovery Accelerator curriculum includes:

- Lifetime access to 22 video tutorials, practical case studies sharing the detailed experiences of other organizations, and 6 workbooks with step-by-step instructions for each stage of the process hosted by a dedicated resource portal (curriculum will remain accessible after the 3-month program ends)
- Sample assignments showcasing other nonprofit business models
- Certificate in Nonprofit Innovation from +Acumen
- Final Feedback Report from +Acumen and ReFED, and a LinkedIn endorsement if you successfully complete the Accelerator
- Final Showcase where you will receive feedback from outside experts

11. 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 Customer Discovery
- Value Proposition Design
- Case Study
- Featured Experts
- Assignment: Customer Interviews

Session Three: Customer Discovery

- Value Proposition Consultations
- 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
- 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 Price
- Financial Model Template
- How to Complete the Products/Service and Costs Tab of 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 Council and Expert Network for feedback and Accelerator winner(s) selection

12. 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 income for your nonprofit organization, but there is no guarantee that the idea you generate through this 3-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.

13. 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 tend for any reason, you should designate a substitute from your organization.

14. How much time should I expect to spend each week?

The more time you put in, the better the outcomes! We've streamlined the steps in this process so that 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. You can also divide some of the work on your assignments amidst other people on your nonprofit team.

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 Learning Labs?

The in-person ReFED Learning Labs will be held the weeks of September 10, October 28, and December 2, all likely located in the San Francisco Bay Area. 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, hunger and climate funders, and industry-leading technology companies in attendance.

18. Will expenses be covered?

Each participant will receive \$25,000 and a stipend to help cover travel expenses, plus an additional \$100,000 awarded to the selected winner(s).

Additional Questions

19. What additional support is available for participants beyond the 3-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 beyond the 3-month accelerator. In addition, participants receive lifetime access to 22 video tutorials, practical case studies sharing the detailed experiences of other organizations, and 6 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.

**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. Unfortunately, we will not be able to notify every organization's selection status, so if you do not hear by August 25, 2019, then you were not selected to participate.

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 and someone will be in touch to assist you. Response times may vary.

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