

2023-24 CSPA Digital Accelerator - Cohort Experience Overview

CSPA Digital Accelerator Cohort: Participant Guide

Welcome to the CSPA Digital Accelerator Cohort program! This guide will provide you with an overview of the program and the composition of an Accelerator team. The CSPA Digital Accelerator program has been guiding public servants to learn and practice digital skills since 2019, and the cohort experience offers a unique opportunity for you and your team to explore new ways of working and solve current business problems in the Government of Canada.

What is a Digital Accelerator?

The CSPA Digital Accelerator program is an ecosystem of team based, hands-on learning designed to support public servants in becoming digitally fluent and adopting modern work practices. This includes using design, agile, lean and product management methodologies. The Digital Accelerator cohort experience provides your team with relevant and engaging learning experiences, including foundational courses, facilitation, coaching, mentoring, workshops, applied learning experiences, and community events. This six-month program guides teams through the [process of designing human-centered solutions to current organizational problems](#), by way of hands-on learning opportunities with coaching, mentoring and peer support.

By joining this cohort, your team will:

1. Learn about human-centered design and the design thinking double diamond model.
2. Practice applying the four phases of the design process to improve the products or services your team is currently working on to Discover and Define the problem, then Develop and Deliver a prototyped solution.
3. Gain valuable insights and knowledge through applied learning opportunities.

Here's what you can expect to learn and gain:

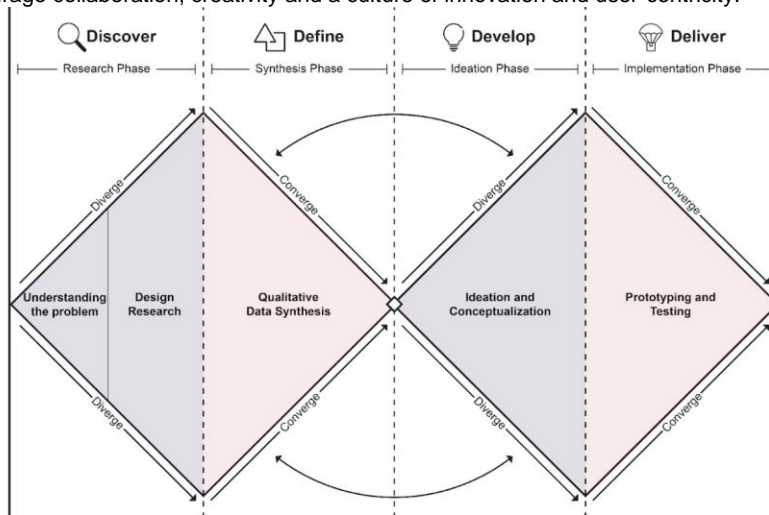
- **Applying Design Thinking:** You will learn how to apply the Design Thinking methodology and utilize various tools to enhance your problem-solving approach. This includes understanding user needs, pain points, and expectations, generating and evaluating innovative ideas, and prototyping and testing solutions.
- **User-Centric Research:** Gain insights into conducting user research and empathizing with the people your solution is trying to help. Understand how to uncover their needs, challenges, and aspirations, allowing you to develop solutions that address their specific requirements.
- **Idea Generation and Evaluation:** Learn effective techniques for generating and evaluating ideas. Explore different ideation methods and understand how to assess and prioritize potential solutions based on their feasibility, desirability, and viability.

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- **Prototyping and Testing:** Gain practical skills in prototyping and testing your solutions with real users. Learn how to create low-fidelity prototypes, gather feedback, iterate on your designs, and refine your solutions based on user insights.
- **Implementation Planning and Communication:** Develop strategies for planning and communicating the implementation of your solutions within your organization. Learn how to effectively communicate the value and impact of your proposed solutions and create a plan for successful adoption.
- **Innovative Work Environments:** Immerse yourself in innovative working environments that foster experimentation and continuous learning. Discover new ways of working that encourage collaboration, creativity and a culture of innovation and user-centricity.

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What does a Digital Accelerator team look like?

The ideal team for this cohort experience is multi-disciplinary and composed of curious and engaged employees who want to learn together about new ways of working and how to apply them to current business problems.

Recommended team composition:

1. **Product team members (3 to 10, ideally 6):** This team is responsible for bringing your product or service to life and iterating on the solution. They work collaboratively with various stakeholders to design a solution that meets the needs of the people involved. It is advantageous to have team members with diverse disciplines and expertise or from related work units, to bring different perspectives to the problem space.
2. **Product team lead (one):** A member from the product team will decide to take on the role of product team lead. Over the duration of the cohort experience, they will learn and apply how to define and prioritize the product backlog, ensure clear communication of project goals and requirements, and facilitate effective collaboration within the team and with stakeholders. The product team lead will also play a crucial role in managing

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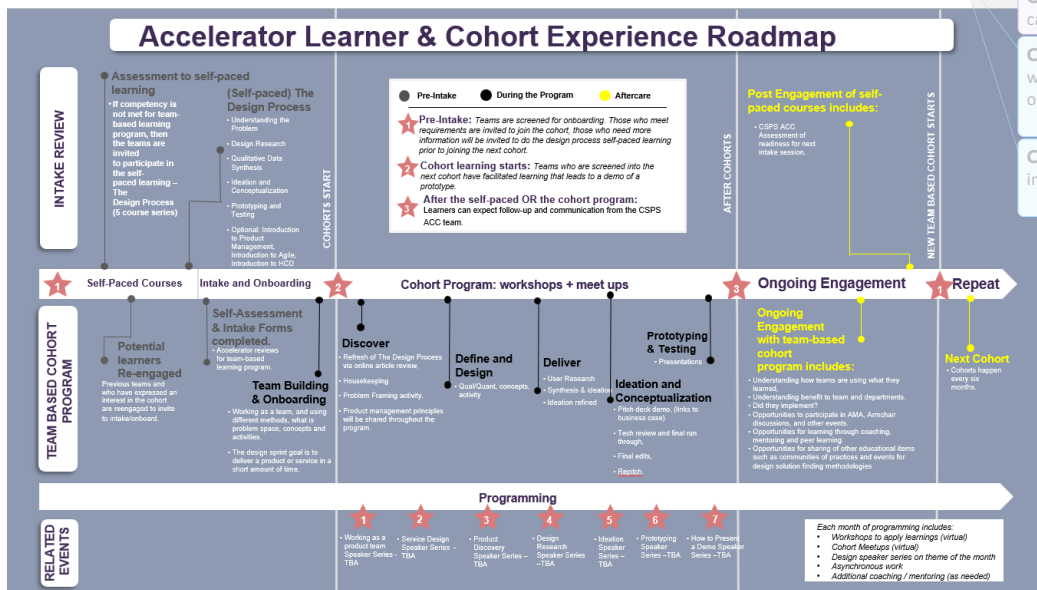
expectations, adapting to changing circumstances, and maintaining the product vision and roadmap based on feedback and insights from the design process.

3. **Executive champion (one):** The executive champion serves as an advocate for the team throughout the cohort experience. This executive is responsible for providing guidance, support, and ensuring that the team stays on track. Ideally, the executive champion should have business ownership for the problem being solved. You will need to establish Executive support, bring a multi-disciplinary team composition, and maintain an openness to learning throughout the cohort experience.

If available, you should consider the following additional team members:

1. **Organization partners or mentors:** Experts in specific domains within your organization who can provide guidance and support to the product team in solving the business problem (e.g., organizational, policy, technology, security, etc.).
2. **Departmental resources:** Resource entities within the department that offer consultancy or other support capacities to assist the product team in solving their business problem (e.g., accelerators, hubs, labs, etc.).

Program elements and scheduling



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- Commented [N(5R4)]: visually it's tiny.... put it in so you can see and decide
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- Commented [I(7R4)]: but this is not terrible - I can zoom in and it's all clear

The CSPS Digital Accelerator cohort experience includes the following elements:

1. **Foundational:** Engage in courses and programming that provide a solid understanding of digital skills and modern work practices.
2. **Facilitation, Coaching, and Mentoring:** Receive support and guidance from experienced facilitators, coaches, and mentors to enhance your learning journey.

3. **Workshops and Applied Learning Experiences:** Participate in workshops and practical exercises to apply new knowledge and develop practical skills.
4. **Community Building:** Connect with peers, share insights, and learn from the experiences of others in the Digital Accelerator and GC Design community.

Time Commitments:

The Digital Accelerator offers a flexible and robust cohort experience that spans six months. Here's what you can expect in terms of time commitments:

1. **Monthly Workshops (5 to 10 hours):** You and your team will spend dedicated time together with the facilitator/practitioner practicing and applying design methods in the context of your problem. These workshops will provide you with valuable insights and tools to tackle your challenges effectively.
2. **Cohort Meetup (approximately 1.5 hours):** Each month, the cohort will gather to share progress, successes, and challenges encountered in their problem space. This is an opportunity to learn from other teams, provide feedback, and foster a collaborative environment. Executive champions are expected to participate in these meetups to support their teams.
3. **Asynchronous Work (ongoing):** Between the workshops, it is expected that teams will continue working asynchronously to advance their projects. You will return to your work environment and engage in homework or tasks related to the month's theme. Accelerator coaches will be available to provide support and facilitate your progress during this time.
4. **Design Speaker Series (monthly):** Each month, there will be a Design Speaker Series event aligned with the Accelerator's theme. This event offers further learning opportunities to deepen your understanding of the focus area your team has been working on.
5. **Executive Champion touch points:** Throughout the cohort there will be opportunities where our Champions can connect with each other to provide support and advice on the challenges and successes for how to adopt these new ways of working more broadly across GC organizations.

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What You Can Expect from Us:

The Digital Accelerator is built on three foundational pillars to ensure a valuable learning experience:

1. **Skill Building:** You will have the opportunity to develop digital skills and adopt new mindsets and behaviors that support a design thinking approach to problem-solving. The program emphasizes multidisciplinary teamwork, fostering a safe environment for idea generation, creativity, human-centred design and idea testing. Practical skills like storytelling, reporting, documentation, and briefing will also be developed.
2. **Supported Learning:** The program encourages learning from teams, peers, mentors, and coaches to reinforce collaboration, culture, and cohesion. Networking opportunities will be provided to establish connections beyond the program's duration.
3. **Learning in the Flow of Work:** The Digital Accelerator enables you to work on a current business problem while learning modern methods. You will be applying design thinking in your day-to-day operations while striving to integrate this learning on the job.

What You Can Expect to Do:

- Attend workshops and complete assigned work to gain a comprehensive understanding of the solution to your problem and the people this solution will be helping.
- Engage in relevant, hands-on workshops, leverage job aids, and participate in events to build your skills.
- Collaborate with your team and colleagues within your organization, seeking input, sharing progress, and asking for help.
- Embrace curiosity, openness to new ways of working, and an iterative approach to problem-solving.
- Understand your stakeholders and users, foster connections and community among teams, and share your work in an open environment.
- Create and test prototypes of potential solutions with users, supported by coaches and mentors.
- Participate in Demo Day to showcase your learning journey and results to other public servants while celebrating your successes.
- Provide and receive feedback on Demo Day presentations and proposed solutions.
- Participate in the monthly Design series events
- **Remain part of the Digital Accelerator community to continue engaging, learning and sharing your insights and challenges with future cohorts.**

What Will You Learn and Gain from Participating?

By participating in the Digital Accelerator cohort program, you and your team will gain valuable knowledge and experiences that can be applied to your work and within your organization. The curated cohort experience follows the Double Diamond design methodology and offers a range of learning outcomes.

How to Apply for the Digital Accelerator Cohort Experience?

Who Can Apply: Existing teams from all Government of Canada departments and agencies are eligible to apply. Teams can be within a single work unit or cross-functional and cross-departmental, as long as they are working together to solve a common problem.

Eligibility Requirements: To participate, teams must meet the following requirements:

1. Submit an application describing the problem you aim to solve.
2. Identify the cross-functional team members you intend to engage throughout the program.
3. Obtain management approval to participate for the duration of the program and commit to delivering a proposed solution.

Application Process: To apply for the Digital Accelerator Cohort Experience, follow these steps:

1. Complete the ["Cohort Experience Intake Form"](#) and provide the requested documents.
2. The Digital Accelerator team will review all applications and will contact interested teams for a meeting to further explore program readiness and provide those teams with a commitment agreement.

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Application Evaluation: The goal of the evaluation process is to set your team up for success. The Digital Accelerator team will work closely with all applicants to prepare them for participation in the program. Various resources, such as additional courses and events, will be made recommended to help teams prepare for participation and engage with the broader GC Design community.

To sign up or schedule an introductory meeting, please contact us at accelerator-accelateur@cspc-efpc.gc.ca!

We look forward to welcoming you to the Digital Accelerator Cohort program and supporting your team's learning journey.

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Cohort Experience Commitment Agreement

Canada School of Public Service: Digital Accelerator

CSPS Digital Accelerator Cohort Commitment Agreement

This Commitment Agreement ("Agreement") is entered into between [Department name, branch, team] and The Canada School of Public Service, Digital Academy's Accelerator Team to establish a partnership for [Department name, branch, team] participation in the Digital Accelerator Cohort program. This Agreement outlines the commitments and expectations of both parties for the duration of the entire program, which is anticipated to be six months, from [date] to [date].

[Department name, branch, team] Commitment:

[Department name, branch, team] commits to actively participating in the Digital Accelerator Cohort program and agrees to allocate the necessary time and resources to successfully complete the program.

[Department name, branch, team] will engage to learn the following skills and competencies, which will receive support throughout the program:

- Active Listening
- Effective Communication
- Collaboration
- Critical Thinking
- Open-mindedness
- Adaptability
- Organizational Acumen
- Analytical Skills
- Problem Framing
- User Research
- Data Analysis & Synthesis
- Ideation
- Prototyping & Testing
- UX/UI Design
- Service Design
- Product Management
- Agile Methodologies

Monthly Program Expectations:

[Department name, branch, team] commits to attending the following monthly programming throughout the Digital Accelerator Cohort program:

- *Workshops on design topics:* These workshops, lasting 5-8 hours each, will provide your team with valuable insights and knowledge in various design areas.
- *Supported asynchronous work prep and research time for teams:* Your team will be provided with dedicated asynchronous work time at their place of work to prepare and conduct research related to the program.
- *Design topic speaker series:* Your team must attend a 1-hour design topic speaker series session each month to gain industry insights and learn from experienced professionals.

- *Cohort meetups for teams and executives:* Your team and Executives are expected to participate in 1.5 to 2-hour cohort meetups, fostering collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and networking opportunities.
- *Executive Champion touch points:* Throughout the cohort there will be opportunities where the Champions can connect with each other to provide support and advice on the challenges and successes for how to adopt these new ways of working more broadly across GC organizations.

Expectations from [Department name, branch, team]:

In addition to the monthly program requirements, we expect [Department name, branch, team] to fulfill the following requirements and provide the necessary support:

- Senior management approval, commitment, and support to meet the learning objectives and outcomes of the cohort program.
- A current business problem of your choice as a learning case study to solve for, allowing for practical application of the program's concepts and methodologies.
- A pre-existing working team, ideally with a multi-disciplinary composition, that will actively participate in the Digital Accelerator Cohort program and engage with relevant cross-functional resources to arrive at a human-centred solution to your current business problem

Our Commitment to [Department name, branch, team]:

The CSPS Digital Accelerator commits to providing your team with comprehensive mentoring, coaching on an as-needed basis, and support throughout the duration of the program. We will also offer all the programming mentioned above, including workshops, asynchronous work prep time, design topic speaker series, and cohort meetups.

Duration:

This Agreement will be effective from the start date mentioned above and will remain in force for the duration of the entire Digital Accelerator Cohort program, expected to be six months.

Confidentiality:

Both parties agree to maintain the confidentiality of any proprietary or sensitive information shared during the Digital Accelerator Cohort program.

By signing below, I acknowledge and agree to the terms and expectations outlined in this Commitment Agreement for [Department name, branch, team]'s participation in the CSPS Digital Accelerator Cohort program.

Signatures: _____

Date: [Date of signing]

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<i>For the [Department name, branch, team]</i> Name and Title of Authorized Signatory Contact info	<i>For the Participating Team</i> Name and Title of Team Lead Contact info
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For the Digital Academy: Kent Aitken, Director of Digital Learning Products Kent.aitken@cspc-efpc.gc.ca	For the CSPS Digital Accelerator: Irene-Ann LaCroix, Program Lead irene-ann.lacroix@cspc-efpc.gc.ca
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