

TENTATIVE

INNOVATE FOR GMC PROGRAM OVERVIEW

COHORT 1 – Oct-Dec 2025

About the Program

The Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC), envisioned by His Majesty The King, is a symbol of Bhutan's future: values-led, innovative, and globally relevant model for development. More than an economic hub, GMC is positioned as a living experiment on mindful living in the 21st century, a space where economic development, environmental stewardship and spiritual well-being converge.

This vision presents an opportunity for young Bhutanese to shape the future of the country by contributing ideas and reimagining how societies can thrive when grounded in values. To align Bhutan's youth with this opportunity, Innovate for GMC will be launched as a flagship innovation program of GMC. The challenge seeks to empower young Bhutanese to co-create solutions to pressing national and global challenges through four pathways: (i) policy, (ii) entrepreneurship, (iii) non-profit projects, and (iv) blended fourth sector initiatives.

The program aims to become a national pipeline of changemakers, a proving ground for civic innovation, and a gateway into Bhutan's evolving innovation ecosystem. Selected participants will form dynamic innovation units supported by experienced mentors and industry experts, fundings, and strategic resources. The teams will develop actionable and mindful solutions that can be integrated into the GMC context and scaled across Bhutan.

The Innovate for GMC challenge will sandbox the growing details of GMC's principles. Youth will innovate for-benefit enterprise models that blend social purpose, financial sustainability, and inclusive ownership. By cultivating talent, fostering collaboration and anchoring innovation within the Bhutanese context, Innovate for GMC seeks to inspire a generation of leaders who will shape not just the future of GMC but also Bhutan's role in the global space.

Program Objectives

- **Cultivate a culture of civic innovation.** The Innovate for GMC aims to nurture a generation of Bhutanese who see innovation and problem-solving as a civic duty—youth who will take ownership of Bhutan's future.

- **Develop home-grown, context-sensitive solutions.** The program will prioritize solutions designed for Bhutan's realities while carrying lessons that are globally relevant.
- **Empower youth with practical skills.** Participants will gain hands-on experience in design thinking, systems analysis, and public policy—tools they can apply in their own lives, workplaces, and communities.
- **Integrate learnings to inform the development of a GMC Innovation Lab** that connects to national and global platforms.

Guiding Principles

Innovate for GMC is anchored in principles that reflect Bhutan's values and the spirit of Gelephu Mindfulness City. Every activity, decision, and solution under the program will be guided by these commitments:

- **Values-led engagement.** Uphold mindfulness, harmony, and sustainability as the foundation of innovation.
- **Experimentation with purpose.** Encourage creativity, resilience, and learning from failure—innovation as a disciplined practice.
- **Collaboration and inclusivity.** Embrace diversity of gender, region, skills, and perspectives, ensuring solutions are co-created with communities.
- **Action-oriented mindset.** Deliver practical, scalable, and impactful solutions that can be tested, refined, and adopted.
- **Integrity and responsibility.** Maintain transparency, accountability, and service to the nation in all actions.

Eligibility Criteria & Compliance Requirements

Innovate for GMC is open to a wide spectrum of young Bhutanese, reflecting the diversity of talent that will shape Gelephu Mindfulness City and the nation's future.

Eligibility Criteria

- **Age:** 20–35 years old.
- **Citizenship:** Open only to Bhutanese nationals.
- **Background:** Applicants may come from any sector: students, graduates, early-career professionals, entrepreneurs, civil servants, or private sector actors.
- **Education:** A minimum of a diploma in any field.
- **Commitment:** Applicants must show a genuine interest in civic innovation, public policy, and social impact, and be able to commit to the full duration of the program.

Special Conditions

- **Civil Servants:** To ensure agencies remain functional while enabling youth participation, a maximum of five participants per government department will be allowed in each Youth Innovation Program cohort. Additional interested applicants will be encouraged to apply in future rounds.
- **Private Sector & CSOs:** Participants from companies or organizations are required to obtain a no-objection letter from their employer confirming their availability during key phases of the program (bootcamp, prototyping, demo week).

Compliance Requirements

- Submit a **RBP security clearance certificate**.
- Provide a **medical certificate** confirming fitness to participate.
 - The medical certificate will be issued by the Ministry of Health only after the candidate goes through a medical screening process.
- Undergo a **drug test**, coordinated with the Ministry of Health
- Sign the **Code of Conduct** and consent forms for participation, data use, and media documentation.

Program Overview

The program is designed to equip all participants with essential skills in innovation and complex problem-solving. It begins with mandatory foundational modules that establish a strong base for developing innovative thinking and analytical approaches. Building on this foundation, participants will engage in practical, activity-based sessions that encourage them to identify and analyze real-world issues, formulate clear and professional problem statements, and prototype and test creative solutions. The journey culminates in a **Demo Day**, where participants will pitch their solutions, showcasing their ability to translate ideas into actionable innovations.

Month 1: Orientation & Exploration

The first month of the Innovate for GMC sets the foundation for the entire program. Participants will be introduced to the values, principles, and tools that will guide their journey as innovators. This stage combines orientation, training, field visits to help participants build a strong grounding in mindful innovation.

Deliverables

By the end of the month, each team is expected to:

- Complete team introductions and establish a shared working approach
- Hold initial discussions with their mentor on problem framing
- Submit a formal worksheet summarizing their progress, challenges, and next steps
- Each participant will also submit a short personal reflection to document their learning journey

Field Visits

To ground learning in real-world contexts, participants will take part in immersive visits, including:

- Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary
- Manas National Park
- Cross-border exposure visits to Assam and Shillong

Month 2: Skills Building & Exploration

The second month deepens the challenge journey by focusing on specialized learning and applied skills. Participants will select from a wide range of elective workshops based on their interests while also attending mandatory sessions that strengthen their capacity to design, plan, and manage impactful solutions. The month will also feature site visits to leading organizations and innovation hubs across Bhutan.

Elective Workshops

Participants may choose from diverse fields to broaden their knowledge and skills. These workshops provide exposure to cutting-edge technologies, creative practices, and traditional Bhutanese knowledge systems.

Mandatory Workshops

Alongside electives, the second month also includes core sessions designed to provide essential competencies for project development and delivery:

- Stakeholder mapping and analysis
- Universal design and accessibility
- Business planning and alternative financing models
- Project and product management (Agile approaches)
- Accounting, taxation, and financial responsibility
- Operationalising research and development (R&D)

Deliverables

By the end of Month 2, each team is expected to:

- Develop a **problem statement and project brief**
- Sketch potential solutions for their chosen problem
- Submit a formal worksheet documenting their approach, supported by mentor feedback
- Each participant will also provide a short reflection on their learnings and progress

Field Visits

To connect classroom learning with real-world contexts, participants will engage in exposure visits, including:

- Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck Super Fab Lab
- Bhur Organics
- Khenrig Namsum Cooperative
- Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative (SJI)
- Motanga Industrial Park
- Menjong Sorig (traditional medicine)
- Thimphu Tech Park
- De-suung Skilling Centres
- Bio-Fab Lab at the College of Natural Resources (CNR)
- Trong (Tourism Knowledge Centre)
- Startup Centre
- Mountain Hazelnuts

Month 3: Prototyping & Presentation

The third month focuses on translating ideas into actionable solutions. Participants will refine their problem statements, develop prototypes or proposals, and prepare to present their work to peers, mentors, and senior officials during Demo Day. The emphasis will be on communication, scaling, and bridging the gap between vision and implementation.

Workshops

Participants will attend targeted workshops designed to sharpen their ability to present, refine, and scale their projects.

Deliverables

By the end of Month 3, each team is expected to:

- Submit a final **report or proposal**
- Present a **prototype, concept demo, or policy memo**
- Deliver a polished **presentation** during Demo Day to senior officials, partners, and peers
- Complete the formal worksheet summarizing their project outcomes and learning journey
- Each participant will also submit a reflection and a **program feedback** form to guide improvements for future editions

Mentorship

Mentorship is a cornerstone of the Innovate for GMC learning experience. To help you refine your ideas, gain sectoral insights, and expand your networks, you will be paired with mentors who are **industry experts, policymakers, entrepreneurs, academics, and innovators** from Bhutan and abroad.

Boundaries

- All mentorship interactions must remain professional. Personal advances, favoritism, or requests unrelated to the program are prohibited.
- If you feel uncomfortable during any interaction, report it immediately to the Safeguarding Officer.

Support for Participants

The challenge is a sandboxing of the Gelephu Mindfulness City, the city built on mindful principles of enabling innovation through safe environment and conducive policy. As participants, you will have access to structured support systems for your learning, wellbeing, and safety.

Learning & Program Support

- **Mentorship.** One-to-one and group guidance from national and international mentors.
- **Training.** Access to all foundational and elective workshops, including guest lectures and clinics.
- **Resources.** Use of co-working spaces, labs, and digital platforms to support your innovation journey.
- **Stipend.** Innovate for GMC expects its participants to learn financial literacy and management. Therefore, each participant is paid a fixed monthly stipend. This stipend is expected to be used for accommodations, fooding, etc.
- **Travel & Logistics.** Transport, accommodation, and field visits organized by the program.
- **Recognition.** Certificates, recommendation letters, and opportunities to showcase your work at Demo Day.

Wellbeing & Safety

- **Medical Emergencies.** In the event of an illness, participants can access medical services at the Central Regional Referral Hospital in Gelephu. In cases of emergencies or accidents, participants must call the project management team at the listed emergency contacts.
- **Counseling & Psychosocial Support.** Access to confidential counseling services if participants experience stress, trauma, or personal challenges during the program. A project support team consisting of trained counselors and clinical counselors are available if needed.

Safeguarding & Harassment

Innovate for GMC enforces a zero-tolerance policy for harassment, abuse, and discrimination. To protect participants:

- A **Safeguarding Officer** will be appointed and introduced at orientation. This officer is your first point of contact for any concerns.
- A **Welfare Committee**, composed of independent experts, will handle complaints with impartiality and confidentiality.
- **Clear boundaries for officials and mentors:** all communications must remain professional, and personal advances or favoritism are prohibited. Officials from the project team and mentors commit to a shared code of conduct.

Reporting & Redressal Mechanism

If you experience or witness misconduct, bullying, harassment, or unsafe behavior:

- **Report immediately** to the Safeguarding Officer (verbally or in writing).
- The officer will **acknowledge your report within 48 hours** and ensure immediate safety if required.
- The officer will conduct a **preliminary investigation** and submit findings to the Welfare Committee within 7 days.
- The Welfare Committee will review the case and decide on **appropriate actions within 2 weeks**.
- You will be informed of the outcome, and confidentiality will be maintained throughout.
- Where necessary, cases will be referred directly to law enforcement authorities.

Possible actions include: verbal reminders, written warnings, loss of privileges, suspension, or removal from the program. Any act that constitutes a crime will be handed to the authorities.

Participant Pledge & Expectations

As a Innovate for GMC participant, you are part of a unique national initiative. Considerable effort and resources have been invested to bring you here. In return, we ask you to uphold this pledge:

My Pledge as a Innovate for GMC Participant

I commit to:

- **Respect the opportunity.** Make full and responsible use of the resources provided including stipends, mentorship, training, and facilities.
- **Engage wholeheartedly.** Participate in all sessions, field visits, and activities with energy and focus, knowing this program is designed for adults who are trusted to take initiative.
- **Be accountable.** Deliver work of high quality, respect deadlines, and actively contribute to my team.
- **Uphold values.** Live by the principles of respect, integrity, inclusivity, and mindfulness at all times.
- **Protect the program.** Safeguard the reputation of Innovate for GMC, GMC, and Bhutan through my conduct.

During the program, I will submit:

- **Worksheets** documenting progress, challenges, and next steps.
- **Personal reflections** to capture my growth and learning journey.
- Team deliverables, including project briefs, prototypes, and presentations.
- A final project report and presentation at Demo Day.

Attendance & Withdrawal

- Full attendance in all mandatory sessions is required.
- Withdrawal for reasons beyond the candidate's control (illness, family emergency, natural disasters) will be accepted as valid grounds for withdrawal.
- Voluntary withdrawals based on reasons within the candidate's control will be subjected to refund of expenses incurred.

A **Call to Action** - Innovate for GMC is a pipeline for Bhutan's future leaders and innovators. By joining this cohort, you are not only investing in your own growth, but also carrying the hopes of a nation. Approach each day with courage, discipline, and creativity. **Your journey here has the power to shape the future of GMC, and Bhutan itself.**