

Impact Lab Development Fellowship & Public Service Leaves

April 27 & May 12, 2026



**HARVARD
IMPACT LABS**

Harvard Impact Labs Leadership



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Agenda

- Overview of Harvard Impact Labs
- Impact Lab Development Fellowship
- Public Service Leaves
- Q&A

Harvard Impact Labs' Mission

- Accelerate the development of scalable solutions to big social challenges
- Build increased capacity for solutions-focused research at Harvard
- Enhance Harvard's culture of public service among faculty, students, and staff
- Advance social science and collaboration across disciplines

Our Theory of Change



If we strengthen the capacity
of **university researchers** to collaborate with **practitioners and communities**,
we will **significantly increase the problem-solving capacity** of our society.

What is an Impact Lab?

1. Aimed at solving a social problem
2. Co-creation of solutions with external organization(s)
3. Designs, tests, and scales solutions

What is a Social Problem?

1. Has collective and not just individual implications;
2. Affects a large number of people;
3. Reflects a failure of markets, governments, and other institutions; and
4. Cannot be understood or solved without understanding the human behaviors and institutions involved

Overcoming the Barriers to Doing this Work

Barriers

Faculty not trained to do engaged research

Hard to raise funds to hire initial lab employees

Challenging to build relationships with initial partners

Bureaucratic obstacles such as data use agreements

Components of our initiatives

Year-long faculty fellowship/workshop

On-going coaching capacity

Funding for leaves in government and nonprofits

Start-up funding

Shared capacity for outreach and for administration

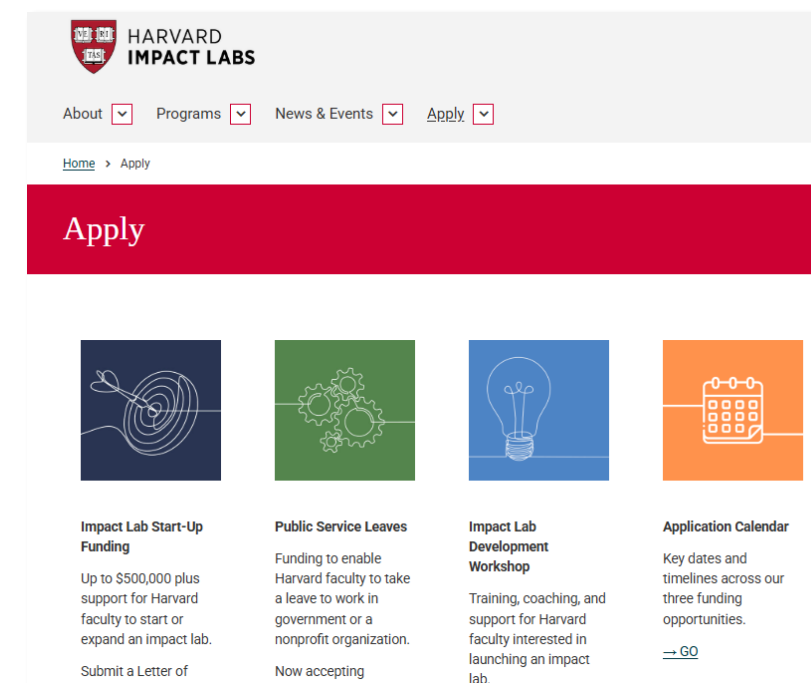
Research opportunities for students

Community of scholars

Our Three Initiatives

1. Impact Lab Development Fellowship *Currently accepting applications*
2. Public Service Leaves *Currently accepting applications*
3. Impact Lab Start-Up Funding *Applications were due in March*

Visit the [Apply page](#) on our website to view the **application calendar**



Impact Lab Development Fellowship

- 9-month fellowship (September to May)
- Cohort of 8-10 faculty from across the University
- Monthly 3-hour activity- and discussion-based workshop
- 1-on-1 coaching from experienced staff and faculty
- \$25k in flexible seed funding
- Applications due June 2, 2026

Who is a Good Fit for the Fellowship?

- Want to increase the impact of their research
- Are curious about how best to engage with practitioners to co-create strategies to solve a particular social problem
- Have a track record of scholarship relevant to the problem area
- Are excited to be part of a community of Harvard faculty doing solutions-focused research
- An existing relationship with an external organization is not required

2025-26 Impact Lab Development Fellows

“The Fellowship is a great way to learn how to move your work from focusing purely on academic production to including how to impact issues beyond the academy.”

– [David Pedulla](#), Professor of Sociology and Public Policy



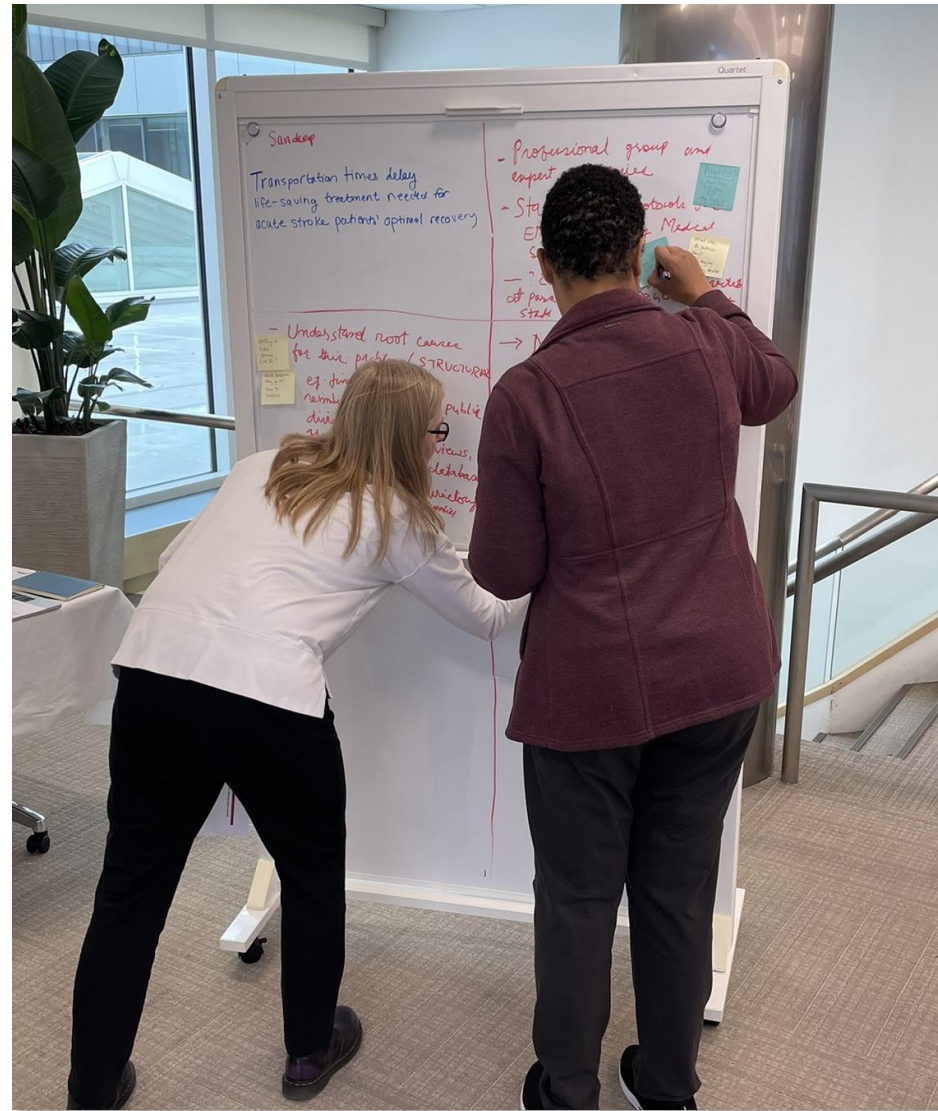
L to R: Christine Desan (HLS), Sarah Dryden-Peterson (HGSE), Rita Hamad (HSPH), David Pedulla (FAS), Patrick Slade (SEAS), Sandeep Kumar (HMS), Andrew Crespo (HLS), Wafaie Fawzi (HSPH)

The Fellowship Experience

"The Fellowship provides a structured space to reflect on what I am doing, why, what next steps might be, and how all the pieces fit together.

My coach encourages me to think in new ways: who to connect with, how to frame the problem, and how to act on what I am learning."

– [Sarah Dryden-Peterson](#), Prof. of Education



What Fellows Gain from the Fellowship

- New and/or deepened relationships with potential partners and key stakeholders
- A theory of change that converts your research agenda into an impact agenda
- A compelling pitch to communicate your vision to potential partners and funders
- A model of the team needed and a plan for securing funding
- A new community of solutions-focused scholars

Public Service Leave

Public Service Leave components

- Support to take a leave for one semester to work in government or a nonprofit organization (up to \$175,000)
- Designed to help faculty understand issues and stakeholders central to their scholarship, build key relationships, and learn to communicate more effectively with different audiences

Before you apply...

- You should already be talking to your host organization by the time you apply
- We can help you find a host organization or refine the focus of your leave before you apply

Timeline

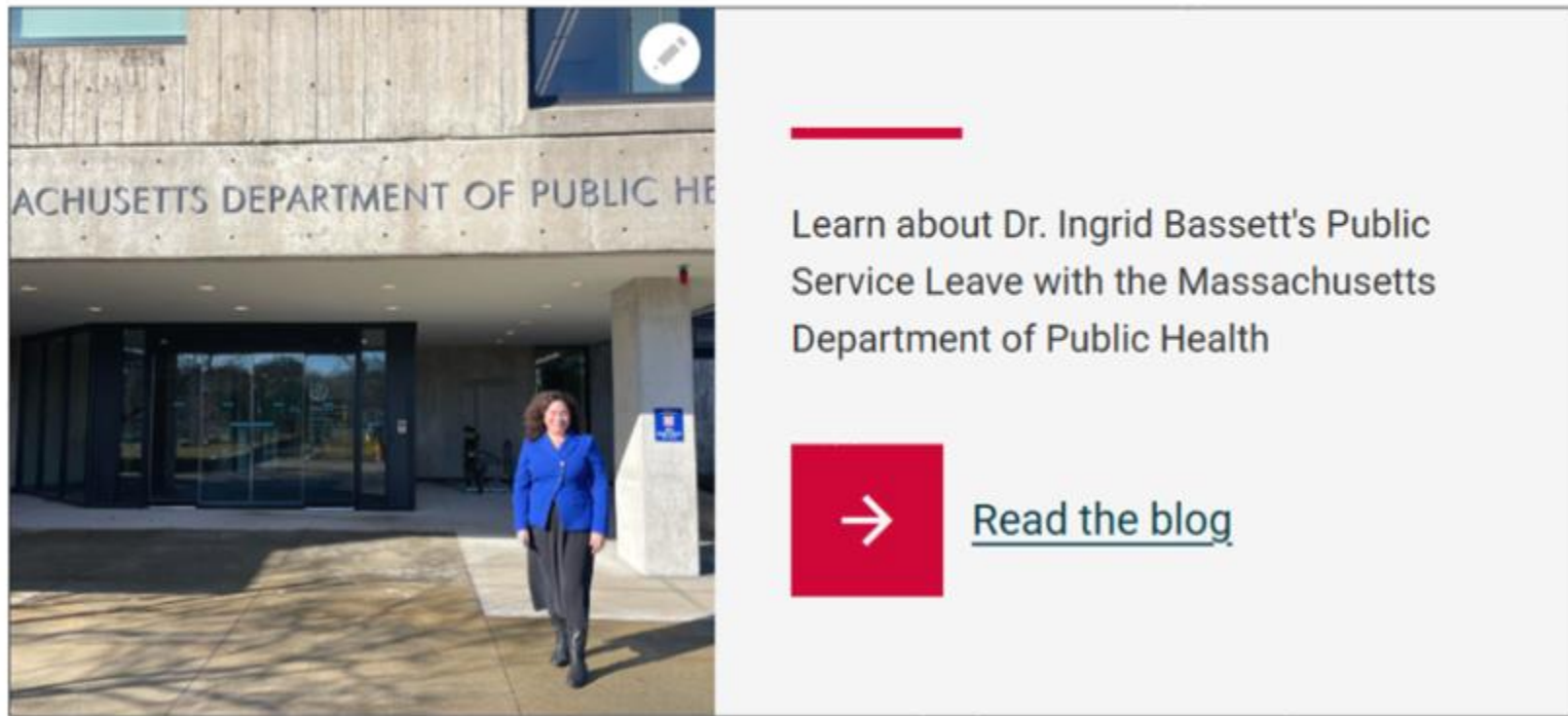
- Currently accepting applications
- **Applications due September 18, 2026**

Current Public Service Leave Participants

“The way we think about problems as academics – there’s a big appetite for that in government.”

- Dr. Ingrid Bassett on her public service leave so far

The Public Service Leave Experience



Ingrid Bassett (HMS) is on leave at the Mass. Department of Public Health



Alisha Holland (FAS) is going to Argentina to work with the President’s Council of Advisors

Competitive Leave applicants will explain:

- How the experience will enhance their understanding of a compelling social problem and lead to important insights that will inform their research, teaching, and advising
- Who the host organization is and that they are already in conversation with them
- How the placement will benefit the host organization and the public

Who is Eligible for the Fellowship and Leaves?

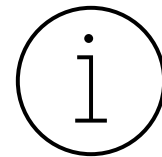
Harvard faculty who are:

- Tenured or tenure-track
- Full-time Professors of the Practice or Professors in Residence
- HMS and HSDM professors may be Quad or non-Quad

Questions?



[View the 2026 application calendar](#)



[Sign up for updates](#)



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