BLOOMBERG | City
HARVARD | Leadership
Initiative

"You Have One Hundred Days"

Accelerating Government Performance in the UAE

Educator Guide

JORRIT DE JONG AND FERNANDO MONGE

Overview

This Educator Guide is designed to assist instructors in teaching this case to students and practitioners. It is based on case pedagogy, which invites participants to put themselves in the shoes of the protagonist(s) of the case and imagine how they would respond to the circumstances. Participants should read the teaching case in advance and identify key issues as a preliminary step toward meeting the learning objectives. Instructors may then use the time in the classroom to guide participants in exploring the issues and examining the challenges in the case; to introduce key concepts, tools, and frameworks; and to assist participants in applying their learning to their own environments and challenges.

This guide includes learning objectives, a synopsis, key questions, a roadmap for discussion, and appendices with some additional pedagogical information and theoretical applications. The roadmap and appendices are offered to initiate meaningful conversations but are by no means the only way to teach the case. Each educator or facilitator should feel free to design their own teaching plans; both the structure and the time allotted for each component are suggestions.

Learning Objectives

This case will help students and city leaders:

- o Examine, compare, and contrast methods to promote and sustain innovation and continuous improvement in government.
- o Identify the conditions required to launch and make a Government Accelerators program thrive.
- o Discuss the pros and cons of using one hundred-day challenges for public sector innovation.
- o Identify the drivers of success for teams participating in one hundred-day challenges and the lessons learned by the Government Accelerators team from these experiences.

Case Synopsis

In the fall of 2016, the government of the UAE launched the Government Accelerators, an innovative tool to accelerate change and enhance performance across government agencies. The government was willing to make progress in several areas such as health or traffic safety, but many programs in these areas were lagging behind. The Government Accelerators sought to address those bottlenecks through the implementation of a novel methodology.

This new program ran one hundred-day challenges: intense periods of action where "acceleration" teams of frontline staff worked together across boundaries in a context of urgency to tackle some of government's most difficult problems. The teams presenting challenges to the Government Accelerators were selected by four criteria: they had to set clear and ambitious goals, touch people's lives, involve multiple organizations or departments, and be achievable in the one hundred-day time frame.

By looking at the establishment of the Government Accelerators and three teams that participated in it, this teaching case aims to (1) raise discussion about different types of public sector innovation, (2) explain the approach and methodology of the Government Accelerators and identify its main ingredients, and (3) analyze the conditions under which the Government Accelerators may or may not work.

Key Questions

1. What was the key problem that the Government Accelerators was trying to solve? What alternatives did the UAE government have at hand? What were the pros and cons of each?
2. Based on the three projects described in the case, what were the key ingredients necessary for an acceleration team's success?
3. Did you think the breast cancer team needed the Government Accelerators? Why? And how could the Government Accelerators have supported the team to achieve success?

Roadmap for Discussion (See Appendix 1.)

Introduction (3-10 minutes): Briefly state the goal of the session in reference to the case, cite specific major conflicts facing the protagonist, and foreshadow broader learning objectives.

Exploration (15-45 minutes): Use class discussion, "buzz groups," and board work to examine the issues and options confronting the protagonist.

Diagnosis (15-30 minutes): Introduce key concepts, frameworks, and tools to help participants pinpoint possible solutions to major conflicts in the case.

Application (15 minutes, optional): Ask participants to relate the concepts and frameworks to their own organizations' challenges.

Wrap-Up and Takeaways (15 minutes): Review the learning objectives and discuss insights most relevant to the participants' organizations' challenges.

Introduction (3-10 minutes)
In your introductory remarks, briefly describe the case, the major conflicts facing the Government Accelerators, and foreshadow the learning objectives. *What methods worked in supporting innovation and continuous improvement in the one hundred-day challenges, and why? What conditions were necessary? What were the keys to success? What did the teams learn?*

Exploration (15-45 minutes):
- *What are common barriers to innovation in Government? What makes the UAE different from other places? What makes it similar?*

Barriers to innovation are shared among bureaucracies from different geographies, cultures, and political systems. Some of these barriers include silo-mentality, barriers to collaboration, and lack of incentives to innovate.

- *What was the key problem that the Government Accelerators was trying to solve? What alternatives did the UAE Government have at hand? What were the pros and cons of each?*

List different alternatives (innovation labs, agile and scrum techniques, performance contracting, etc.) and their pros and cons. (See Board Plan 1, Appendix 2.)

Optional buzz group:

- *What were the key elements that made the Government Accelerators (not the one hundred-day methodology) work in the UAE?*

Key elements mentioned in the case:
- o There was a lot of previous strategic planning and indicator-design work, as well as experience with the iLabs.
- o There was a sense of urgency and demand from government agencies.
- o The Government Accelerators was housed in the PMO office, so there was top-level political backing, but a cross-governmental focus not owned by any particular agency.
- o The visibility and open nature of the meetings on the first floor of a landmark building increased accountability and motivated the Government Accelerators team and the participating teams.
- o The role of the coaches and the Government Accelerators team providing fundamental capacity was essential for the whole project to succeed.
- o Publicity and early wins spread the word across the government and the country.
- o Political cover helped ensure that the country's leadership supported the Government Accelerators initiative.

Diagnosis (15-30 minutes)
Consider the three challenges presented in the case.

- *What were the ingredients that "did the work" in the one hundred-day challenge methodology?*
  - Establishing a sense of urgency, a crisis mode
  - Empowering the frontline people
  - "Letting go" by the leadership
  - Visibility
  - Breaking silo dynamics with new lines of authority and responsibility within teams
  - The idea of the cohort; competition and support among teams

- *What worked and did not in the three examples?* (See Board Plan 2, Appendix 2.)

Present the dilemma:

- *Did the breast cancer team need the Government Accelerators? Why? And how could the Government Accelerators have supported the breast cancer team to ensure they achieved success?* (See Board Plan 3, Appendix 2.)

Unveil what happened.

Application (optional, 15 minutes)
Have students work together in groups or in plenary to apply the concepts to their own challenges.

- *Are the preconditions (top leadership buy-in, government neutrality, sense of urgency, etc.) for a Government Accelerators project present in your context?*
- *What are potential barriers to the establishment of a Government Accelerators project?* (Not enough thought devoted to the resources needed to launch a Government Accelerators, lack of political support and required visibility, etc.)
- *What are the areas where the one hundred-day methodology could work best? Any area or challenge where it would not work?*

Wrap-Up and Takeaways (15 minutes)
Summarize the process, review the learning objectives, and discuss insights most relevant to your organizations' challenges.

Appendices

Appendix 1   One Approach to Designing a Case Session

A case session aims to increase participants' ability to use theory and frameworks to guide their thought and action in practical circumstances. To train the mental muscle and integrate theory and practice, a case session moves up and down in level of abstraction frequently, testing and refining abstract theory through practical application.

Jorrit de Jong, 2020
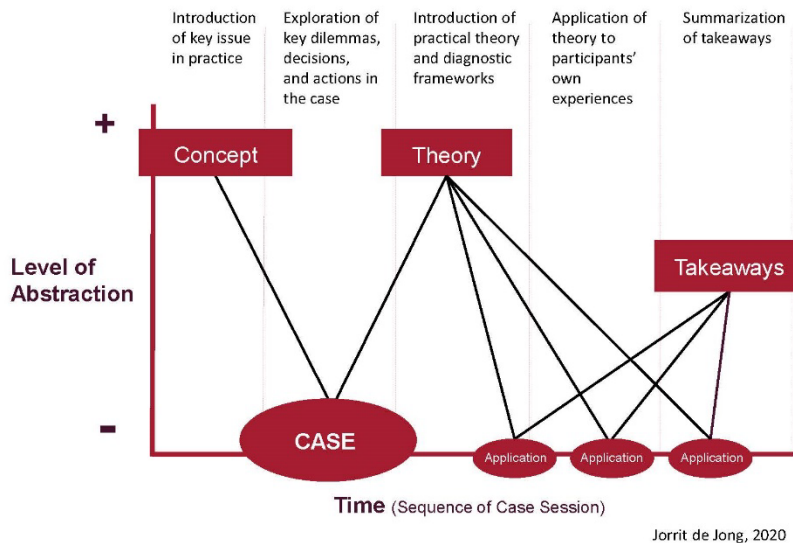
Appendix 2   Board Plan

Board 1: Approaches to enhance government innovation

Government Accelerators	Innovation Labs	Agile
Pros: Cons:	Pros: Cons:	Pros: Cons:

Board 2: Evaluating the Acceleration Teams

Dimensions	Newborns Package	Small Claims Court	Electronic Payment
Sense of Urgency			
Empowerment			
Key stakeholders involved			
Visibility			
Composition of the team			
Clear target			
Leadership style			
Role of sponsors and coaches			

Board 3: Evaluating the Breast Cancer Challenge

Why yes?	Why no?
o Touches people's lives o Achievable in one hundred days o Needs cross-sectoral collaboration o Is a national priority so leaders will be committed o High impact potential o Clear goal	o Is it sustainable? o What is the collaborative need? o Is it ambitious enough?