

# LAUNCH

A public private partnership between NASA, USAID, US State Department, and NIKE

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**Organisation:** LAUNCH

**Country:** United States

**Level of government:** Central government

**Sector:** Economic affairs, General public services

**Type:** Digital, Financial Resources, Partnerships

**Launched in:** 2010

**Overall development time:**

4,5 years

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# Description

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LAUNCH is a global innovation platform designed to seek innovative technologies and ideas to improve life for people throughout the world. It is a creative, new path for NASA, USAID, Department of State and NIKE to pool resources and capabilities to find and accelerate early stage sustainability-related innovations.

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## Why the innovation was developed

LAUNCH was designed to address large challenges that no single organisation can solve alone. The LAUNCH team searches for transformative innovations and connects them to thought leaders and experts to move their technologies quickly toward implementation without using government funding.

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## Objectives

Improve effectiveness, Improve social equity, Increase citizen engagement, Other, Support economic growth

- Identify a challenge that is important to all partners.
  - Find ten new innovators that can improve people's lives within that challenge area.
  - Host a forum where the innovators present their ideas and technologies.
  - Work with the innovators in a well-designed accelerator programme afterward to do everything possible to propel their innovations to success.
  - Share our ideas, processes, and success with all who wish to be a part of LAUNCH.
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## Main beneficiaries

Businesses, General population, Government bodies, Government staff

- NASA searches for technologies that can be used to support their space missions.
- USAID searches for technologies that can improve lives in developing countries.
- NIKE searches for technologies that can improve sustainable manufacturing and practices.

# Results

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## Efficiency

With relatively small investments from each of the partners, the programme has shown significant returns by finding over USD 40 million investment by private funders to implement several important technologies.

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## Service quality

### Accessibility:

Solutions identified by the LAUNCH platform have resulted in some of the following service quality improvements:

- Clean water to 4 million Kenyans.
- A cell phone technology that can test eyesight.
- Turbines that can be used to produce electricity using shallow canal waterways.
- Affordable, reliable electricity to rural India where none existed.
- A painless vaccine needle to millions.

### Responsiveness:

Solutions identified by the LAUNCH platform have resulted in some of the following service quality improvements:

- A device that tracks a patient's self-treatment for asthma.

### Other:

Solutions identified by the LAUNCH platform have resulted in some of the following service quality improvements:

- Using salt water to grow plants for food and to prevent erosion.
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## Evaluation

We have monitored the success and progress of all of our past innovators. This provides the basis for how we are reaching the sustainability world and changing lives. However, we also want to know how we are measuring up to other innovative processes and programmes. We are currently developing a detailed evaluation framework concerning our process and our reach. We are looking at how we are affecting the processes of innovation in the government and are measuring the value of innovation and collaboration, as well as a traditional measurement model to measure participation experience and innovator success. The evaluation framework will consist of surveys, data collection, and evaluation of patterns and progress.

# Development

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## Design

NASA began the programme in 2010 on the belief that combining US Government agency networks and technical skills with a powerful “innovation accelerator and incubator” programme model could successfully accelerate innovations that are important to sustainability issues to the US and throughout the world. LAUNCH focuses on sourcing innovators poised for large-scale or “disruptive” impact and assisting those innovators in achieving larger-scale and faster impact.

Design time: 6 months

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## Testing

The partners met in January 2010 and agreed to try a pilot LAUNCH forum and chose the topic of WATER. They immediately began planning the event and by the Fall, the event was held at Kennedy Space Center. It was a huge success, and all that attended declared that this programme was unique. There was a generosity of spirit provided by the Partners and the Council attending. The Partners knew that they wanted to continue, so they put more formal structure into place and committed more funds to improve the quality and support at the next forum. Since that time, LAUNCH has continued to improve, tweak the process, and identify ways to reach larger audiences. LAUNCH is now preparing to replicate its process in other countries.

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## Implementation

### Tools used:

LAUNCH consists of three parts: finding fresh innovators, a three day forum, and a six month technology accelerator programme.

The LAUNCH process is:

- Publish a call for innovations focused on a specific challenge (water, health, energy, etc). Vet the proposals for authenticity.
- Choose ten innovators with the best technologies to present at a three day forum.
- Gather forty experts in the challenge topic plus successful leaders in finance, marketing, manufacturing and more to serve as council.
- Prior to the forum, assist the innovators with their presentations.
- During the forum, innovators present their innovation and experts provide intense coaching regarding improvements, financing and business models.
- Post forum, work closely with the innovators to follow up on the council's ideas, make connections and support their successful implementation toward high impact.

### Resources used:

There is one full time civil servant from NASA, and two additional part time civil servants from USAID and NASA. NIKE supports the team with communications and organising personnel when necessary. The State Department has provided a portion of one of their Fellows, and the organisation is supported by approximately 10 contractors that provide expertise in facilitation, acceleration, sustainability, and media. Each partner funds different segments of the programme.

Implementation time: 12 months

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## Diffusion

This model could be easily transferrable to most other government agencies and address many of the world's challenges. By using the power of world recognisable brands like NASA and NIKE, LAUNCH has been able to grab the attention of top leaders in the field of sustainability as well as other large corporations and government agencies that want to make a difference –now. LAUNCH is open-sourcing the process for others to adopt. Recently, a variety of US government agencies and European agencies have requested presentations from the LAUNCH team because they see the potential for using this model to create new ideas and partners to solve the issues that their agencies face. In October, we begin preparing for a LAUNCH event to be held in Spring 2014 by the Nordics.

Diffusion time: 3 years

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## Challenges and solutions

The basic challenges that occurred through the development of the programme were defining the responsibilities of each partner and how to hold accountability.

Throughout the four years, partners have switched roles and responsibilities when appropriate and overall support has increased. The demand for more activities and events has also increased. This has put pressure on the partners regarding funding and resource commitments. However, each partner believes strongly in the purpose of LAUNCH and sees it as a unique opportunity to change lives and make a real difference in our focus areas. Because of this, each partner is willing to be collaborative and seek solutions instead of creating roadblocks or stalling progress.

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## Partnerships

### NIKE, NASA and USAID

#### Other

LAUNCH is a partnership between federal agencies and private companies who would not normally work together because of their diverse missions. NASA explores space and the USAID focuses on improving the lives of people in developing countries. In both cases, people live and work in extreme and often isolated environments which present unusually difficult challenges that require extraordinary solutions. NIKE is committed to driving new sustainable technologies, programmes and business models. Each partner brings unique capabilities and resources to LAUNCH; together they provide unprecedented cross-Agency capacity.

Together, these partners are committed to finding new technologies and ideas that will improve people's lives throughout the world.

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## Lessons Learned

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### Lessons Learned

The process used to create and execute LAUNCH can be used in any country and by any organisation. The challenge is to find partners that are willing to work together for one shared purpose. However, this purpose could be to solve a large problem, to identify better ways to provide services, to create new businesses, etc. We have found that it is very important to have a mix of government and private partners. Each brings unique abilities and perspectives to the partnership. Private partners can help with funding when a quick turn-around is necessary, and government partners have incredible leverage and resources necessary for research and logistics support. It is also necessary to divide the responsibilities between partners in an equitable manner. This is necessary in order to insure that each partner continues to stay engaged and involved in the work and prevents resentment from other partners that may begin to feel like they are putting more resources and commitments into the project than others. A partnership agreement specifying each partner's gives and gets is necessary as well as documented governance structure that defines how the partners will work together, how decisions are made, how work will be accomplished, how resources will be used, and has specific dates and milestones.

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### Conditions for success

Each partner must be interested and willing to commit resources. The resources don't necessarily have to be equal, but they must be something important and unique for each partner. The goals must be shared, intentional, and real. Innovation is not performed in a straight line. Partners must be flexible and be willing to put others needs out in front at times.

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### Other information

The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government named LAUNCH one of the "Top 25 Innovations in Government" in July 2013.