The Humanitarian Leadership Academy is a global learning initiative set up to facilitate partnerships and collaborative opportunities to enable people to prepare for and respond to crises in their own countries.

We are working with local, national, regional and global organisations, communities and individuals to develop and facilitate access to learning resources and tools.

We work with partners across the humanitarian sector and beyond; from technology companies to universities; local communities to multinational corporations, drawing on the knowledge, expertise and resources of a range of organisations to ensure the best solutions are found for those most in need.

We aim to be a leader and catalyst for innovation in learning and learning about innovation.

We have the flexibility to experiment in how we deliver our programmes, who we support, and how we work.

Thanks to this flexibility and a genuine desire to collaborate, we are well positioned to innovate in the field of learning and develop a culture of innovation throughout the humanitarian sector.

Why innovation?

With the ongoing increase in scale and complexity of humanitarian emergencies, accelerated by factors such as climate change, urbanisation, and the challenges faced by actors operating in longstanding protracted emergencies, it is recognised that alternative and improved approaches are needed to meet the growing needs of populations affected by humanitarian crises.

Achieving improved humanitarian outcomes requires a collaborative effort between different and new actors to bring about enhanced thinking and effective solutions to these complex challenges.

“We are always looking to further support humanitarian organisations and learning providers in innovative ways.”
Our innovation approach in more detail

Creating space and opportunity for innovation
Our aim is to create space for individual innovators and groups within the humanitarian sector to innovate – with a keen focus on learning and knowledge sharing.

This could involve:
- creative activities such as co-creation sessions, hackathons, workshops
- practical support and mentoring.

Investing in innovative solutions that work on the ground
By working with partners on the ground, we will seek out existing, local, innovative solutions and find ways to invest in their development, and document and share the learnings that arise during their development, and share.

We will work through our Centres so that local partners take the lead on developing innovation programmes – identifying what works in local contexts and sharing with other Academy Centres and partners.

This could involve:
- Learning activities in innovation methodology and behaviours - online and blended/MOOCs
- Hosting a Community of Practice for innovation within the humanitarian sector
- Case study and report writing on innovation activities within humanitarian learning.

Why is the Academy well-placed for this and what is our added value?

Inverting the system:
We aim to invert the current ‘top-down’ system, by focussing on local solutions that work on the ground and are culturally, linguistically, and situationally relevant. This process differentiates our approach across everything we do, and has the potential to create a unique perspective on innovation in the sector.

Collaboration and partnerships
We aim to build on the networks and partnerships that are central to our mission and we are keen to forge a range of different collaborative relationships, from traditional partnerships with established actors, to ‘radical collaborations’ that seek to engage new partners and in new ways – bringing additional resources on the humanitarian sector on a local and global level.

This will include:
- Local and national governments
- Private sector partners
- Civil Society Organisations
- Academia.

A keen focus on contextualised learning
In our Learning Approach, we have focussed on trying to scale-up access to learning through the use of technology, however this can be challenging in a number of emergency contexts.

We will focus our innovation in learning efforts on uncovering effective ways of delivering learning to users in different cultures and contexts and discover ways to deliver educationally sound learning to users.

Sharing what we learn
As innovation increasingly becomes a priority across the sector, we are well placed to build and share innovation knowledge and skills across our network.

Through our innovation activity we will generate and develop learning around best practices for humanitarian innovation: evaluating the processes, practices and behaviours used, that were both successful and unsuccessful.

Developing and disseminating this learning will form a critical part of our innovation value add, and will be supported by efforts to create a culture conducive to risk-taking, creativity and the openness to learn from failure, across our local Academy Centres and at a global level.

Finding, connecting, and promoting
Significant resources are expended in the humanitarian sector to create new solutions to humanitarian problems.

The Academy will focus on discovering solutions to humanitarian problems.

We will use our convening power to help connect innovations, specifically in the area of learning and knowledge sharing with the right people to grow and develop them.

Finally, we will help to share and disseminate these innovations in other countries via our network of local Academy Centres.
To this end, as well as the work listed previously, we will:

- Always keep our end users in mind by working through our local Academy Centres
- Use simple language to make our work more accessible to all
- Build tangible KPIs and tools to measure performance and effectiveness in all innovation activities
- Encourage a culture that sees failure as an opportunity to learn and improve
- Capture learnings and feedback from engagements and using them to inform future initiatives
- Never be afraid to (re)ask fundamental questions
- Avoid any temptation to try to be all things and will focus on what we are good at.

To find out more talk to our Innovation Team.

Flexibility
We’re in a unique position: being a new organisation enables us to be flexible. We will experiment and learn what our organisational strengths are and how we can add value. We will take the learnings from all innovation activities and be willing and able to iterate and improve our future projects.

We know that our strengths will change over time, so we will not take a prescriptive approach to what we develop, instead focussing on what works: finding simple solutions that address complex problems within humanitarian learning.

Leading by example
We will work to embed innovation skills and culture in the humanitarian sector both internally and externally – in our own centres as well as through humanitarian projects that we are supporting and working on.