

Nesta's work in  
Government  
innovation



**Nesta is a global innovation foundation.  
We back new ideas to tackle the big challenges of  
our time.**

We use our knowledge, networks, funding and skills - working in partnership with others, including governments, businesses and charities. We're a UK charity but work all over the world, supported by a financial endowment.

**We see** Making sense of opportunities and challenges.

**We spark** Generating new ideas.

**We shape** Helping to test, grow and adapt promising solutions.

**We shift** Changing whole systems.

The kinds of big challenges we tackle include ageing; stretched public services; a fast changing jobs market and people feeling disempowered. We focus on areas where the combination of digital technology, empowered individuals, and better use of data and evidence can have the biggest impact.



# How Nesta is tackling the big challenges of our time: Our work in government innovation

**The challenge:** How can governments respond to rising expectations, shrinking budgets and fragile trust in political systems?

**Nesta's response:** We support governments and public sector bodies to make smarter use of people, data and technology to reform public services, improve citizen engagement and deliver social impact at scale.

## **What we want to see:**

- **Smarter use of data and technology** to help public sector and civil society organisations deliver more and better with less. Our Offices of Data Analytics programme seeks to radically reform a variety of services through more intelligent use of data and predictive analytics.
- **Better use of the skills and time of citizens**, to enhance and shape public services and give local people greater control over their lives. Working with our partners in UK Government, we're

directing £22 million towards growing new models of public services delivered in partnership with citizens, such as volunteer tutors alongside teachers, and emergency responders alongside ambulances. And through D-Cent, we've tested digital tools to improve democratic engagement across Europe, enabling citizens to propose and draft solutions collaboratively, and vote on local budgets.

- **Public servants given the skills and resources to innovate.**  
We've created a curriculum for public sector leaders to help them learn the methods and skills of innovation.

## **Nesta has championed government innovation since our inception in 1998**

**We never work alone. To date, we've worked with over 30 national governments, and dozens of local and city governments, to help them get better at innovating.**

Our partners have included the European Commission, the United Nations, the Welsh Government, The Cabinet Office, The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, The Office for Civil Society at The Department for Culture Media and Sport, Cardiff University, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Heritage Lottery Fund, Big Lottery Fund, the GLA, The Waag Society, The Innovation Unit, ESADE Business School and The Social Innovation Partnership (TSIP).

# Nesta approaches challenges from multiple angles

We combine thinking and doing to bring ideas to life, test them on the ground, demonstrate what works and help the best to grow.

## We see new opportunities and challenges

**Futures and explorations:** We explore emerging trends and technologies. Our research on the Restoration and Renewal of Parliament will help inform the debate on what a UK parliament fit for the 21st century should look like. Our *Connected Councils* report sets out a vision for local government in 2025, showing how digital technologies can help save money, deliver local economic growth and support better outcomes for residents. In 2017 we launched DECODE (Decentralised Citizen Owned Data Ecosystem) to develop and test cutting edge blockchain-based tools that can give individuals control of their personal data on the internet.

**Research:** We use research to generate new insight, highlight best practice, and find opportunities for innovation. Our *Wise Council* report demonstrates how local authorities can use data - from data-informed social workers to sensors that alert gritting vans to the presence of ice. As curators of collaborativeconomy.com, Nesta supports a global hub for academic research on the collaborative economy, with a focus on turning that knowledge into actionable insights for policymakers.

**'What works' evidence:** Nesta champions the use of high quality evidence and rigorous experimental methods in decision-making for the public and charity sector. Our Alliance for Useful Evidence is a hub for sharing social research, good practice and resources, such as the Nesta Standards of Evidence - a framework to assess how confident we can be that a new intervention is having a positive impact. For example, through randomised control trials we've demonstrated the effectiveness of tutoring on exam grades.

## We spark creative solutions from many sources

**Early-stage innovation:** we run early-stage innovation programmes that discover and incubate new practice. For example:

- Our Offices of Data Analytics programme is supporting local authorities to join up, analyse and act upon data at a city scale to improve public services. Current experiments include tackling London's rogue landlords, and addressing issues related to alcohol abuse in the North East.
- Innovate to Save with the Welsh Government is a £5 million pilot fund providing a mix of R&D support, grant and loan finance to help public service providers redesign their services and release cashable savings. If successful, it will provide a template for wider public service reform in Wales and for other governments focused on finding savings.
- Together with Big Lottery Fund and Heritage Lottery Fund we supported 11 pioneering parks in the Rethinking Parks programme to test new business models that enable parks to remain free and open, despite cuts to local budgets.

- Our ShareLab Fund is incubating digital, collaborative (or 'sharing economy') platforms that can support public services. The portfolio includes a platform to connect carers with those in need of care, an 'AirBnB' for hiring community spaces, and new ways to deliver community transport in rural areas.
- Together with the Office for Civil Society, we're prototyping new full-time volunteering roles with charities marketed as a gap year after work (rather than after school) through the Give More Get More Fund; and experimenting with nudges and behavioural insights to convert one-off volunteers into regular givers through the Join In Stay In Fund.

## We shape the most promising ideas so they can work at scale

**Scaling grant funds:** We provide grant finance and support for innovations with a proven evidence base to grow rapidly. Over the last five years we've directed over £22 million towards new models of delivering public services in partnership with 'people power' - using the time and energy of local people. Together with the Cabinet Office, the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund ensured innovations like Code Club and Shared Lives Plus are now available in every town. And the Second Half Fund is currently mobilising citizens in the second half of their lives as first aiders, carers and tutors to create new models of people powered public services.

**Impact investments:** Nesta has used investment to support innovation for nearly 20 years, seeking both positive financial and social returns. Investments include FutureGov, who design digital products to improve local government services in areas such as child protection and social care. Nesta is also an investor in the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT), a social purpose company redesigning public services by applying behavioural science.

## We shift systems in a new direction

**Innovation skills:** We're supporting the next generation of public sector leaders to learn the methods and skills of innovation, through the development of the world's first dedicated public innovation curriculum.

## International work

Nesta is a UK charity but we work globally with international bodies, national and local governments, charities and public services. For example, we're working with the United Nations Development Programme on new ways to improve public services by using collective intelligence methods. We also work on a number of projects funded by the European Commission, including a series of Digital Social Innovation programmes. Through the digitalsocial.eu platform, we've identified, mapped and helped to connect almost 2,000 civil society organisations who are using technology to improve areas such as health, democracy and education.

**Not everything we've done or supported has worked.  
For example ...**

We published detailed recommendations for changes to the structure of government in the run up to the 2015 election, and although some were taken up by the European Commission, none were implemented by the UK Government.



## CASE STUDY

# Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund



**The challenge:** Our public services are facing increasing demands while under significant funding pressure. We need radical new models of public service delivery.

**Our intervention:** The Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund supported 52 promising innovations that mobilised citizen time and skills alongside public services, from Code Club volunteers helping children learn computing, to GoodSAM, an app that alerts trained first aiders to emergencies nearby. The £14 million partnership between Nesta and the Cabinet Office helped innovations like this to grow both their reach and their evidence of impact.

### **The result:**

- More than 70,000 generous people across England gave their time and expertise to help nearly 175,000 people.
- The innovations leveraged a further £18 million of investment as they grew. Some have reached significant scale, able to deliver their services to any public service in England that commissions them. For example, any local authority can request a Shared Lives Plus caring scheme (matching disabled adults or older people with carers to share their family and community life).
- We've published 30 evaluations to date, including two randomised control trials that empirically show the impact of volunteer-led tutoring on students' GCSE and A Level scores.

## By 2021 Nesta will have...

**Made social action easy to commission at a local level.** We'll have grown the supply of social action innovations that the public sector can use (integrating at least five into everyday public services nationwide), as well growing commissioner engagement in social action, through convening and publishing evidence and 'what works' guides. We'll also have voiced the stories and impact of these radical models of caring and sharing on real lives in the community.

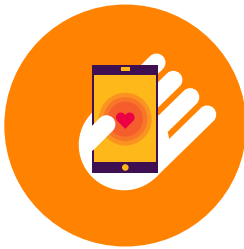
**Supported the development of at least eight tangible examples of how smarter use of people, technology and data can reform public services, improve citizen engagement and deliver social impact at scale.** Through Nesta-led practical work (e.g. Offices for Data Analytics and Collective Intelligence pilots) regions will have the ability and confidence to use data to address local needs. Through financial support and mentoring (e.g. the ShareLab Fund), we'll have supported the growth and market readiness of external projects that offer alternative service delivery models. And through our research, we'll have inspired and facilitated new practices and collaborations.

**Made the case for the use of dedicated innovation funds, programmes and new financial instruments by governments.** We'll have proven the case for the Innovate to Save scheme and replicated the model with other governments.

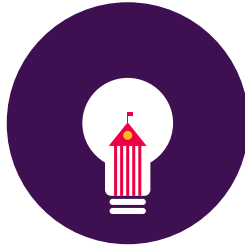
**Established the pre-eminent global learning community for public sector innovation,** with thousands of public innovation leaders delivering greater impact through their participation in an active curriculum across every continent.

If you'd like to find out more about Nesta's work in government innovation, please contact:  
**[government.innovation@nesta.org.uk](mailto:government.innovation@nesta.org.uk)** Or visit:  
**[www.nesta.org.uk/areas-work/government-innovation](http://www.nesta.org.uk/areas-work/government-innovation)**

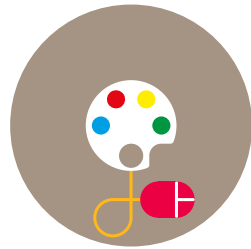
# Our five priority fields



Health



Government  
innovation



The creative economy,  
arts and culture

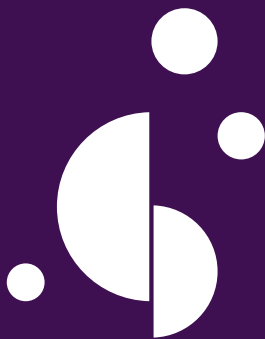


Innovation  
policy



Education

**Nesta are experts in methods for innovation.** We apply these methods in priority fields where there are big challenges and our capacities are suited to the action that's needed: **health; education; government innovation; the creative economy, arts and culture; and innovation policy.** In each field we bring together research, funding for practical work, convening and advocacy.



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