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Immediate Release

The Governance Lab Launches Online Course in Innovation for Social Good

Featuring practical advice from global changemakers, the 12-part course, “Solving Public Problems,” gives everyone the tools to take a mission-driven project from idea to implementation.

BROOKLYN, New York, Monday, February 1, 2021 – Today [the Governance Lab](#) (The GovLab) at the [NYU Tandon School of Engineering](#) launched a free, online course on [Solving Public Problems](#). The 12-part program, presented by [Beth Simone Noveck](#), director of The GovLab, and over two-dozen global changemakers, trains participants in the skills needed to move from demanding change to making it.

Taking a practical approach to addressing entrenched problems, from systemic racism to climate change, the course combines the teaching of quantitative and qualitative methods with participatory and equitable techniques for tapping the collective wisdom of communities to design and deliver powerful solutions to contemporary problems.

“We cannot expect to tackle tomorrow’s problems with yesterday’s toolkit,” said Professor Noveck, a former advisor on open government to President Barack Obama. “In the 21st century, we must equip ourselves with the skills to solve public problems. But those skills are not innate, and this program is designed to help people learn how to implement workable solutions to our hardest but most important challenges.”

Based on Noveck’s new book, [Solving Public Problems: A Practical Guide to Fix Government and Change the World](#) (Yale University Press 2021), this online program is intended to democratize access to public

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problem-solving education, providing citizens with innovative tools to tap the collective wisdom of communities to take effective, organized action for change.

Developed over a decade of coaching thousands of “public entrepreneurs,” including public servants and activists, to work on problems as diverse as urban farming, disaster response, and the digital economy, the program includes video tutorials, readings, self-assessments, interactive exercises, and worksheets, as well as a discussion forum to enable participants to ask and answer questions of one another. The curriculum shows how to break intractable issues into manageable problems, and how to use data and collaboration to understand those problems and partner with others to implement legitimate and effective solutions. It also includes practical advice on how to write compelling letters, memos, and presentations to persuade the many people who need convincing along the way to implementation.

Solving Public Problems is available to changemakers seeking to tackle inequality and advance social justice anywhere in the world, including the United States where [research](#) by Achieve and the Case Foundation shows that Americans, especially younger Americans, are eager to contribute ideas for social change. Half of respondents [surveyed](#) by Pew Research said they had participated in a civic activity in the past year, but more want to do so and about three-quarters of those [surveyed](#) by Public Agenda said they wanted to contribute their skills and experiences to participate more in civic life. This course in problem solving also responds to the [demand](#) for better complex problem-solving skills, which the World Economic Forum identifies as the most important skill a contemporary worker can possess, and for [more meaningful jobs](#) helping others.

“Too often, the gap between idea and implementation is a chasm. With all the tools and skills we now have at our disposal, it no longer needs to be,” says Professor Noveck. “With the widest possible deployment of these skills, we can, in the words of youth poet laureate Amanda Gorman, ‘raise this wounded world into a wondrous one.’”

In a series of video interviews created for the course, 30 global changemakers tell how they took their own idea from inspiration to implementation and impact.

They include Audrey Tang, Taiwan’s first digital minister, who has played a leading role in helping Taiwan overcome the coronavirus crisis; Richard Buery, who runs a network of 37 charter schools predominantly for African-American and Hispanic children in three American states; and Ali Clare, who designed a program to help stateless refugees from Middle Eastern conflicts build careers in digital technology; as well as inspiring public servants, including the Lt. Governor of New Jersey, Sheila Oliver, who is only the fourth African-American woman to become a lieutenant governor, and Achim Steiner, passionate environmentalist and leader of the [United Nations Development Programme](#) (UNDP).

Noveck, who is also New Jersey’s Chief Innovation Officer and a member of German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s Digital Council, describes the course as both a practical guide for change and “an antidote against 21st century despair.”

About the New York University Tandon School of Engineering

The NYU Tandon School of Engineering dates to 1854, the founding date for both the New York University School of Civil Engineering and Architecture and the Brooklyn Collegiate and Polytechnic Institute. A January 2014 merger created a comprehensive school of education and research in engineering and applied sciences as part of a global university, with close connections to engineering programs at NYU Abu Dhabi and NYU Shanghai. NYU Tandon is rooted in a vibrant tradition of entrepreneurship, intellectual curiosity, and innovative solutions to humanity's most pressing global challenges. Research at Tandon focuses on vital intersections between communications/IT, cybersecurity, and data science/AI/robotics systems and tools and critical areas of society that they influence, including emerging media, health, sustainability, and urban living. We believe diversity is integral to excellence, and are creating a vibrant, inclusive, and equitable environment for all of our students, faculty and staff. For more information, visit engineering.nyu.edu.

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