

LEARNING SECTORS: STARTER CHALLENGE 2026 - CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

1. THE CHALLENGE

Learning Sectors: Starter Challenge is an educational challenge that brings together Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) with the excitement of Formula 1®. Delivered by the British Council with the support of Formula 1®, the programme encourages students from state schools to solve real challenges within their school communities through creativity, teamwork and innovation.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are core principles of Learning Sectors. The challenge aims to broaden access to science, technology, engineering and mathematics for groups that have historically been underrepresented in these fields, while also encouraging proposals that contribute to the sustainability of school communities. These principles underpin the Call for Applications, the design of the workshops and the assessment criteria described in Section 5.1.1.

1.1. About the British Council

This challenge is delivered by the British Council, the United Kingdom's international culture and education organisation.

The British Council supports peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries around the world through its work in Arts and Culture, Education and the English language. It operates in more than 150 countries and territories and has a presence in over 85 of them, reaching 700 million people each year. In Brazil, the organisation operates under the name Associação Conselho Britânico.



2. CATEGORIES

The challenge is divided into two categories, each with its own application process and allocation of places:

CATEGORY	PUBLIC
National	Students and educators from state schools across Brazil, specifically those in Years 8 and 9 of lower secondary education (<i>Ensino Fundamental</i>).
Centro Paula Souza	Students who will be under the age of 18 by the end of 2026 and are officially enrolled in the first or second year of upper secondary education (<i>Ensino Médio</i>) at a Centro Paula Souza institution, regardless of the integrated course (Etim and Mtec), as well as the educators from those institutions. Centro Paula Souza (CPS) institutions compete exclusively within the CPS category and are not eligible to enter the National category. The Centro Paula Souza category results from a specific partnership between the British Council and Centro Paula Souza and is therefore reserved exclusively for students and educators from its institutions.

3. CHALLENGE FORMAT

The challenge is organized into four consecutive stages: application selection, workshop, finalist selection, and judging panel, followed by the awards ceremony for the winning teams.

STAGE	WHAT HAPPENS	TEAMS
1. Application Selection	Review team evaluate the ideation narratives submitted by the teams and select those that will progress to the workshop.	80 teams selected from all eligible applications (40 per category).
2. Workshop	Training for the lead teacher and co-lead teacher on problem definition, action plan development, pitching and oral skills. Attendance is recommended, and a recording will be made available.	Lead and co-lead teachers.
3. Finalist Selection	Review team evaluate the teams' action plans.	10 finalist teams are selected in each category (20 in total).
4. Judging Panel	Finalist teams present their action plans in a pitch format to an expert judging panel. The Centro Paula Souza and National category	Finalist teams and judging panel members



	panels will take place online on the same day, at different times.	
5. Awards	Behind-the-scenes experience at the Formula 1 São Paulo Grand Prix.	One winning team from each category.

3.1. Support Throughout the Challenge

Throughout all stages of the challenge, participants may submit questions by emailing the project's official address: acelerando@britishcouncil.org.

4. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Participation is open to all areas of knowledge.

Applications may be submitted by teams made up of students and educators from state schools, in accordance with the categories described in Section 2. In the Centro Paula Souza category, only students who will be under the age of 18 by the end of 2026 and are officially enrolled in the first or second year of upper secondary education (High School), regardless of the integrated course, may be members of a team.

No previous experience in computational thinking, programming or STEM education is required.

Teams may include participants from different schools, provided they belong to the same category. Each student may be a member of only one team.

Participation in the challenge is **free of charge**.

Note: Independent schools, including not-for-profit institutions, are not eligible to participate in the challenge, as this programme is exclusively intended for state schools.

4.2. Application Process

Application period	18 August to 6 September 2026
Cost	Any costs incurred in carrying out the activities described in this Call for Applications shall be the responsibility of the participating teams, except for the costs associated with the winning teams' participation in the awards event, which will be fully covered by the British Council.

4.3. How to Apply

The Lead Teacher must submit the team's application using the official application form made available through the programme's communication channels.

Click [here](#) to access the official application form.

Once the application deadline has passed, no new team applications or changes to team membership will be accepted.

Any issues relating to the application process should be reported to the project's official email address: acelerando@britishcouncil.org.

4.4. Application Content

Application must include:

- School details;
- Team member details;
- Ideation narrative;
- Any other information requested in the application form;

The ideation narrative must address the following guiding question:

What challenge within your school community does your team want to solve, how do you intend to solve it, and what impact has your solution already had, or what impact could it have, in the classroom?

The narrative must not exceed 1,500 characters and should include:

- The challenge within the school community that the team intends to address;
- Why this challenge is important;
- The proposed solution;
- The observed or anticipated impact in the classroom, as described by the Lead Teacher;



4.5. Team Composition

ROLE	NUMBER	ELIGIBILITY	RESPONSABILITIES AND RULES
Lead Teacher	1	Teachers from eligible state schools, from any subject area, with employment status evidenced in accordance with Section 10.	Submits the team application in accordance with Section 4.3; Acts as the team's official representative throughout all stages of the challenge; Participates in the workshop on behalf of the team, as described in Section 5.2; May lead only one team and act as Co-lead Teacher for a maximum of three teams;
Co-lead Teacher	1	An educator from the same school or a different school, provided both belong to the same category.	Participates in the workshop alongside the Lead Teacher, as described in Section 5.2; Assumes responsibility for the team if the Lead Teacher is unable to continue; May act as Co-lead Teacher for a maximum of three teams.
Students	2 - 4	Students officially enrolled at an eligible school within the team's category: for the National category or CPS category, as per Section 2.	Each student may belong to only one team at any given time; Students do not participate in the workshop described in Section 5.2, but contribute to the development of the action plan within their school, which is submitted by the Lead Teacher; Participate in the final pitch presented to the judging panel;



5. HOW THE CHALLENGE WORKS

5.1. Stage 1: Application Selection

Once the application period has closed, the review team will evaluate the ideation narrative submitted by each team, applying the criteria and weightings set out below, and will select 40 teams per category to participate in the workshop.

A total of 40 teams will be selected in each category, resulting in 80 teams participating in the workshops.

The results will be communicated by email to the Lead Teacher, using the email address provided in the application form.

5.1.1. Assessment Criteria

CRITERION	WEIGHTING	WHAT IS ASSESSED	EXAMPLES
EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion)	30%	How effectively the proposal promotes inclusion and equity within the school community. Strength: solutions that broaden access and meet the needs of different user groups.	- Takes into account the needs of different groups within the school community; - Encourages equitable participation within the team; - Improves accessibility and avoids reinforcing stereotypes or discriminatory practices; - Values equity and diversity among the groups served by the proposed solution;
Originality and Creativity	20%	The ability to propose innovative solutions and apply STEM* concepts creatively. Strength: the use of techniques or technologies that are not commonly explored in the school context.	- Demonstrates a new or creative approach to the identified challenge; - Shows innovation in the application of STEM concepts; - Presents ideas that differ from existing practices within the school community;



			Has the potential to inspire new approaches in other educational contexts;
Feasibility	15%	The realism and consistency of the proposed approach to implementing the solution. Strength: a clear implementation plan that reflects the reality of the school community.	- Can be implemented using the available financial, material and human resources; - Is sustainable over the long term; - Includes a well-structured Action Plan; - Takes practical constraints into account, such as infrastructure and available time;
Quality of the Proposal	20%	The clarity, coherence and quality of the proposed solution, together with the Lead Teacher's ability to demonstrate its educational impact. Strength: a well-structured proposal with a clearly articulated challenge, solution and educational impact.	- The ideation narrative clearly explains the challenge, its relevance, the proposed solution and its impact in the classroom; - The Lead Teacher describes observed or anticipated improvements in learning, engagement, participation or classroom dynamics; - The proposed solution is clear, practical and appropriate for the intended audience; - Achieves an effective balance between simplicity and efficiency in the design of the solution;



Social Impact	15%	The proposal's contribution to education, social transformation and the sustainability of the school community. Strength: clear and lasting benefits for the school community.	• Addresses a significant challenge and benefits the school community; • Responds to a genuine and relevant need; • Has the potential to significantly improve the educational environment; • Can be replicated or adapted in other contexts;
Total	100%		

*STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

5.1.2. Tie-breaking Criteria

In the event of a tie in the final score, the team with the highest score in the highest-priority criterion will prevail. If the tie remains, the score in the next criterion will be considered, and so on until the tie is resolved. The order of priority is as follows: EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion), Originality and Creativity, Quality of the Proposal, Feasibility, and Social Impact.

5.2. Stage 2: Workshop

The workshop is intended for the Lead Teacher and the Co-lead Teacher of each selected team. Students do not participate in this stage, as they remain engaged in their regular school timetable. Instead, the workshop equips educators with the knowledge and tools needed to guide the development of the Action Plan with their teams at school.

Two online workshops will be delivered: one for the National category and one for the Centro Paula Souza category. The workshops are held separately because they are designed for participants from different educational levels: lower secondary education (*Ensino Fundamental*) in the National category and upper secondary education (*Ensino Médio*) in the Centro Paula Souza category.

The workshop will cover problem definition, the development of solutions using the Business Model Canvas, and an introduction to preparing the final pitch. It will also include guidance on presentation skills, including structuring a presentation, communicating clearly, managing

presentation time effectively, presenting with confidence, and responding to questions from the Judging Panel.

Participation in the workshop is strongly encouraged. The workshop will be recorded, and the recording will be made available to all selected teams. Therefore, a team's absence from the live session will not result in disqualification from the challenge.

Participants are responsible for arranging their own internet access in order to participate in both the workshop and the final Judging Panel.

5.2.1. Action Plan

During the workshop, the organisers will provide guidance on how to develop the Action Plan and offer initial instructions for preparing the final pitch. Following the workshop, each team will develop its Action Plan within the school environment using the Business Model Canvas format, under the coordination of the Lead Teacher and with the participation of the students.

The Action Plan must follow the template provided by the organisers.

5.2.2. Submission of the Action Plan

The Lead Teacher is responsible for submitting the team's Action Plan through the online submission form.

The Action Plan must be submitted by 18 September 2026 at 23:59 (Brasília Time), in accordance with Section 7.

Submissions received after the deadline will not be accepted. Failure to submit the Action Plan by the specified deadline will result in the automatic disqualification of the team.

5.3. Stage 3: Finalist Selection

Once the submission deadline has passed, the review team will evaluate each team's Action Plan, applying the same assessment criteria and weightings set out in Section 5.1, this time based on the Business Model Canvas submitted by the teams.



Ten finalist teams will be selected in each category, resulting in a total of 20 finalist teams.

5.4. Stage 4: Judging Panel

The 20 finalist teams, comprising both educators and students, will present their Action Plans in the form of a pitch to a Judging Panel made up of representatives invited by the British Council.

Each finalist team shall deliver its pitch presentation live in an online format before the judging panel. The presentation should be led primarily by the students who are members of the team, taking a central role in presenting the action plan they have developed. The lead teacher may attend the presentation and provide occasional support where necessary.

Each team will have up to 3 minutes to present its pitch, followed by up to 5 minutes of questions and answers with the judging panel. During this stage, students are also expected to participate actively in responding to questions, with the lead teacher providing occasional support where necessary.

The judging panels for the Centro Paula Souza (CPS) and National categories will be conducted live online on the same date, but at different times. Access links, schedules and any further participation guidelines will be communicated to the finalist teams in advance.

Once all presentations and question-and-answer sessions have been completed, the Judging Panel will deliberate during the same event. Following deliberation, the winning team in each category will be announced before the end of the event.

The Judging Panel will assess the pitches using the criteria and weightings set out below. In the event of a tie, the Judging Panel's decision shall be final.

5.4.1. Panel evaluation criteria

Feasibility Weighting 25%	Consistency and feasibility of the proposed implementation pathway;
Innovation Weighting 25%	Originality of the solution and of the approach presented in the pitch;
Oral skills Weighting 25%	Clarity and coherence of the team's responses during questioning by the judging panel;



Impact
Weighting 25%

Potential of the solution to create positive change within the school community.

5.5. Certificates

Lead teachers and co-lead educators will receive participation certificates for each stage, according to the activities completed throughout the programme:

- **Stage 1 – Workshop and Action Plan Submission:** a certificate equivalent to 14 hours, awarded to the lead teachers and co-lead educators of teams that take part in this stage and complete the submission of their action plan.
- **Stage 2 – Pitch:** a certificate equivalent to 6 hours, awarded to the lead teachers and co-lead educators of finalist teams that participate in the presentation stage before the judging panel.

Educators who complete both stages may therefore accumulate a total of 20 hours of participation in the programme.

Students who are members of the teams will receive a general certificate of participation in the programme, recognising the activities undertaken throughout the challenge.

Certification is aligned with the general and specific competencies of the National Common Curricular Base (BNCC) developed throughout the programme activities.

5.6. Selected teams by stage

The table below shows the number of teams progressing to each stage of the challenge, by category

STAGE	No OF TEAMS
Selected during the Application Selection stage to take part in the workshops	80 (40 per category)
Finalists selected during the Finalist Selection stage	20 (10 per category)
Winning Teams	1 per category



6. AWARDS AND WINNER SELECTION

The winning team in each category, comprising the lead teacher, the co-lead educator, and the 2 to 4 students who formed part of the team, will be awarded an immersive backstage experience at the 2026 Formula 1® São Paulo Grand Prix.

All expenses necessary for the winning team's participation in the event, whether or not the team is based in São Paulo, including travel and accommodation where applicable, will be fully funded by the British Council.

In order to participate in the event, students must provide the relevant authorisations from their legal guardians and must be properly accompanied by the lead teacher.

Failure to provide the required authorisation will prevent the unauthorised individual from taking part in the event.

6.1. Accreditation

The winning teams will be required to complete Formula 1®'s own accreditation process in order to obtain access credentials for the Grand Prix backstage experience.

This process consists of two stages:

Documentation submission	The team must gather and submit the documents and personal information required by Formula 1® within the deadline specified in Clause 8;
Accreditation approval	Formula 1® will review the submitted documentation and, subject to its own procedures and timelines, issue the access accreditation badge. The timing of this process is determined solely by Formula 1® and is not controlled by the British Council.

The British Council is responsible only for the initial phase of collecting and submitting the teams' documentation. Approval of accreditation and the issuance of badges are subject exclusively to Formula 1®'s criteria, procedures and timelines, and the British Council cannot guarantee or provide advance confirmation of the outcome.

Should a winning team fail to obtain the required approval, the prize may be transferred to the next highest-ranked team from the pitch stage, in accordance with the scoring order established by the judging panel, provided that there is sufficient time to complete the process before the



Grand Prix. Any team that assumes the prize in these circumstances shall be deemed the winner of the category for all purposes.

7. Timeline

The dates below set out the stages of the challenge.

Meeting the deadline for each stage and, where applicable, submitting the required materials are conditions for a team to progress to the next stage.

For the selection stages (Application Selection, Finalist Selection and Judging Panel), progression is also subject to the team being selected:

STAGE	DATA	DESCRIPTION
Launch of the Call for Applications and opening of registrations	18/08/2026	Call for Applications launch
Closing date for applications	06/09/2026	Four-week application window
Announcement of selected teams	10/09/2026	80 teams selected to take part in the workshops from among all applicants; announcement made a few days before the workshops begin
Action Plan Development Workshop	15/09/2026	Online workshop for both categories
Deadline for submission of the Action Plan	18/09/2026 at 23h59 (Brasília time)	Teams finalise and submit the Action Plan developed during the workshop
Selection of finalists	19/09 to 22/09/2026	Review team evaluate the Action Plans and select the finalists
Announcement of finalist teams	23/09/2026	Notification of the finalist teams in each category
Pitch Presentations and Announcement of Winning Team (online)	26/09/2026 (morning) • Panel 1: 09:00–10:30	Finalist teams present their pitches to a judging panel composed of British Council representatives. The judging panels for both categories will take place online on the same date at different times. Deliberation and the



	• Panel 2: 11:00–12:30	announcement of the winning team in each category will take place during the same pitch event, in accordance with Section 5.4.
Issue of Stage 1 Certificates	Within two weeks of the end of the workshops	Participation certificates issued to the lead teachers and co-lead educators of teams that took part in the workshops and submitted the Action Plan, in accordance with Section 5.5
Submission of Accreditation Documentation	Deadline for teams to submit documentation: 02/10/2026	Winning team gathers and submits the documents, personal information and forms required by Formula 1®
Formula 1® Approval	No fixed date. Formula 1® internal process taking place between submission of documentation and the Grand Prix	Review of documentation and issuance of access badges; response timelines are not controlled by the British Council
Prize Award	November 2026, date to be confirmed	Backstage experience at the Formula 1® São Paulo Grand Prix at Interlagos
Issue of Stage 2 Certificates	Within two weeks of the Prize Award	Participation certificates issued to finalist teams, in accordance with Section 5.5

The event dates are as set out in this schedule. The time of the workshops and judging panels will be confirmed by email to the teachers responsible for the participating classes as the selection process progresses.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

8. PERSONAL DATA

The British Council will collect and store the names and email addresses of all participants, together with additional information relating to finalists and winners. The data collected is essential for participant application.

In addition, the data will be used to manage the relationship between participants and the British Council, communicate with participants regarding the challenge, issue certificates, organise the delivery of prizes, and promote initiatives related to the challenge.

The data will be processed in accordance with the British Council's Data Protection and Privacy Policy, which can be accessed via the following links: Information Security and Data Protection: [Information security and privacy global policy statement](#) and [Data Protection](#).

Participants who wish to withdraw their consent for the processing of their personal data must submit a formal request to the project's official email address: acelerando@britishcouncil.org. Requests to withdraw consent will be processed within 30 (thirty) working days.

It is important to emphasise that the withdrawal of consent before the prize is awarded or before the conclusion of the challenge, where such withdrawal makes participation unfeasible due to the need to process personal data in order to carry out the activities concerned, will result in the participant's disqualification and automatic exclusion from any stage, event, or communication directly or indirectly related to the challenge, pursuant to Article 7, Item I, of the Brazilian General Data Protection Law (LGPD).

The withdrawal of consent referred to in this clause is distinct from the withdrawal of authorisation for the use of image rights set out in Clause 11, which may be exercised at any time without resulting in disqualification, except where the use of the image is essential to the activity itself.

Any withdrawal of consent for data processing shall not affect any processing activities lawfully carried out on the basis of the consent originally provided prior to such withdrawal.

9. PUBLICITY AND RIGHTS

The British Council and Formula1® reserve the right to publish winners' names, photographs, and testimonials in promotional materials, including social media platforms and official websites.

By applying, the lead teacher responsible for the team agrees to grant the use of their image rights for communication and marketing purposes for a period of up to five years following the conclusion of the challenge, in accordance with the data usage policy set out in the registration form.

Application does not automatically grant image rights for students or other team members, particularly those under the age of 18. Should the images of finalists be used, formal consent from their legal guardians will be requested at a later stage. Until such consent is obtained, no images or personal information will be used publicly, with the exception of those relating to the lead teachers responsible for the teams.

Intellectual property rights relating to the solutions developed during the challenge shall remain the exclusive property of the participants. However, by taking part, participants grant the British Council and Formula 1® a non-exclusive, royalty-free and perpetual licence to use the solutions for communication, promotional or educational implementation purposes.

The participation of the winning team in the behind-the-scenes experience at the Formula 1® São Paulo Grand Prix, as well as in any related activities, shall be conditional upon the signing of an image rights licence agreement in accordance with requirements to be specified by Formula 1® at the appropriate time. Failure to sign the required agreement will result in the participant being unable to take part in the event.

10. GENERAL

Participants who do not provide proof of their affiliation with a state school institution, either as educators or students, will be automatically disqualified.

Proof of affiliation must be provided through official documentation. For educators, accepted documents include an appointment or nomination notice published in the Official Gazette, a signed employment record book, a declaration issued by the school, or a certificate confirming the affiliation. For students, a declaration or certificate of enrolment issued by the educational institution must be provided, with an issue date no more than 30 (thirty) days prior to application. Only documents issued by state educational institutions will be accepted.

Participants under 18 years of age must submit an authorisation signed by at least one of their legal guardians in order to participate in the challenge. The authorisation must be accompanied by a copy of the identity document of both the minor and the legal guardian.

For participants under 18 years of age who are required to travel between states to take part in the immersive behind-the-scenes experience at the 2026 São Paulo Grand Prix, a travel authorisation signed by both parents or legal guardians, with signatures officially notarised, will be required, in accordance with the Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA) and CNJ Resolution No. 295/2019. The lead teacher must accompany the minor during the necessary travel and must carry the corresponding authorisation, also with officially notarised signatures.

Legal guardians of participants under 18 years old must sign a specific authorisation form to use the minor's image during the event. This authorisation must:

- Be signed by the parents or legal guardians, along with the participant, and notarised;
- Specify the duration of the licence limited to up to three years following the event;
- Indicate the authorised channels of dissemination (social media, institutional websites, promotional materials);
- Guarantee the right of legal guardians to revoke the authorisation at any time via a formal request to the British Council by email (acelerando@britishcouncil.org);
- Provide advance notice of image capture and filming at the event.

The British Council may provide a standardised template for both image licensing and participation/travel authorisation, which must be completed and submitted within the stipulated deadline set by the event organisers. Failure to meet this requirement may result in the disqualification of the participant and their team.

The British Council reserves the right to disqualify or deny the application of any participant who fails to meet the eligibility criteria or comply with this Call for Applications, including application deadlines, adherence to the British Council's policies on Safeguarding and EDI, and maintaining respectful and collaborative conduct throughout the competition.

Participants who engage in any of the situations outlined below or in other actions that violate these regulations or the British Council's operational policies—particularly those concerning Safeguarding and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion—will be automatically disqualified from the Challenge in its entirety, without any entitlement to compensation:

- Engaging in cyberbullying or bullying;

- Committing acts of racism, homophobia, or any other form of discriminatory behaviour;
- Failing to provide proof of affiliation with a state school institution, either as an educator or a student, when requested by the organisers;
- Violating other rules or provisions established in this Call for Applications.

The British Council reserves the right to modify, amend, or update any item in this regulation at any time at its sole discretion. Any changes will be duly communicated to participants through the programme's official channels. Changes will not affect acquired rights or stages of the Challenge already completed.

If any provision of this regulation is deemed invalid, illegal, or unenforceable, in whole or in part, by any court or competent authority, such provision shall be interpreted to preserve, to the greatest extent possible, its original intent without affecting the validity and enforceability of the remaining provisions. If it is impossible to adjust the invalid provision, the remaining clauses shall remain in full force and effect.

11. DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Any disputes related to using personal data or image rights must initially be submitted for amicable resolution by contacting the British Council at acelerando@britishcouncil.org.

If the issue cannot be resolved amicably within 90 days of submitting the email, the competent jurisdiction for resolving any disputes will be the court of São Paulo, SP. Participants expressly waive the right to any other jurisdiction, regardless of its potential advantages.

12. ACCEPTANCE OF COMPETITION RULES

By participating in this Challenge, participants confirm that they have read and agree to these rules.

13. CONTACT

For additional information or questions, participants may contact the official project email:

acelerando@britishcouncil.org