

# Big Change Begins with the Way We Think.

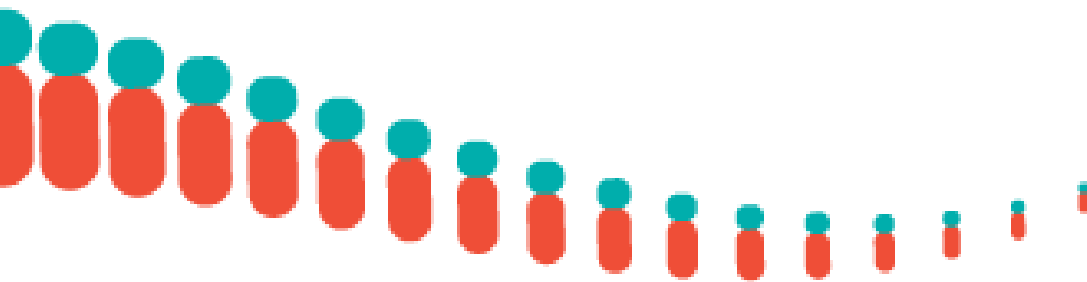
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CENTRE FOR  
 **EXPONENTIAL**  
CHANGE



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## WHY DO WE NEED TO THINK ABOUT EXPONENTIAL CHANGE?

Across human history, long periods of small changes have been disrupted by a small shift that compounded into bigger shifts – transforming the landscape of life entirely. We are in the middle of such a transformation, where both our social challenges and our ability to respond are multiplying and mutating at an unprecedented pace. Would linear solutions that may have worked in the past be adequate for the future? This moment compels us to pause and reflect on how we can respond to exponential challenges with exponential change.

**But, what does exponential change mean? To us at the Centre for Exponential Change (C4EC), it means change that inspires more and rapid changes. Each change induced is a domino that has the capability to trigger bigger dominoes of changes that can eventually solve the problem.**

To illustrate, far and wide across India, waves of change are visible – from street vendors to farmers, plumbers to temple idols – the economy is supercharged with digital payments. Unified Payments Interface (UPI), an unknown term in 2016, is the trigger for this transition at scale. This digital payments shift in India's financial landscape is a tale of reimagination – of solving problems exponentially, where one minimal disruptive change (UPI) rippled into many changes, leading to digital inclusion at scale. In 2011, it was forecasted that it would be five decades before 80% of adults in India own a bank account. With UPI, this milestone was achieved in less than one.

The Africa Frontline First Catalytic Fund (AFF-CF) is another example of exponential solving. Investing in community health workers may have a ten-fold return on investment and despite evidence, they are often underpaid, undertrained, unequipped, unprotected and disconnected from the formal healthcare system. Financing remains the largest systemic barrier to scaling and sustaining quality community health services, so AFF-CF catalyses innovative financial solutions to expand the health workforce. Forging partnerships between governments, donors, implementers, and technical allies, AFF-CF has secured \$100 million in funding to professionalise 200,000 community health workers across ten African countries.

## WHY CENTRE FOR EXPONENTIAL CHANGE?

These examples raise an important question –

### What does it take to solve such exponential challenges, for all, in our lifetime?

Most successful social innovations scale because of the collective work of many problem solvers across communities, civil society, government, and the private sector (Samaaj, Sarkaar, Bazaar).

However, enabling collective work for scale requires System Orchestration: connecting the dots, expanding the ecosystem, and driving network effects. These endeavours are complex, extend over long periods, and are riddled with chasms on the way.

To drive exponential change, what is needed most are System Orchestrators – change leaders who shape a new paradigm – a different plane of thinking and doing that enables impact at scale. When system orchestrators are networked and resourced, they can “conduct” [social](#)

[change symphonies](#) and trigger domino effects of positive change. But, how do we unlock the imaginations of a System Orchestrator, reinforce their capabilities and reduce the friction they face?

To address these questions, the [Centre For Exponential Change \(C4EC\)](#) was established with the objective to serve as a global network of support for System Orchestrators.

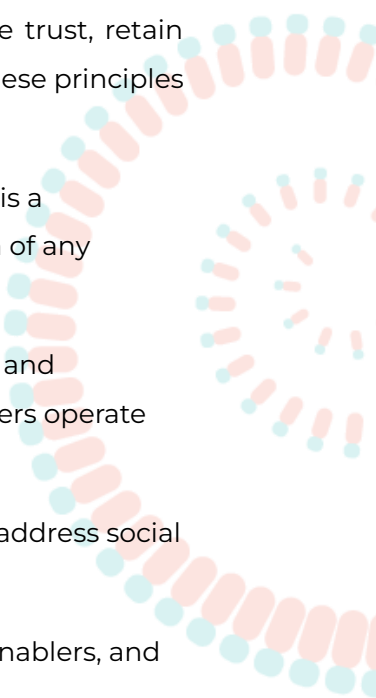
C4EC co-founders ([Instituto Beja](#), [New Profit](#), [Nilekani Philanthropies](#), [Skoll Foundation](#) and [Waverley Foundation](#)) came together to create it as an emerging space for co-creation and collaboration, bringing together diverse enablers, and influencers to enable exponential change journeys for many System Orchestrators.

[Watch](#) our co-founders and System Orchestrators talk about exponential solving. [Read](#) about the vision of C4EC from two of our co-founders – Rohini Nilekani (Co-founder of Nilekani Philanthropies) and Don Gips (CEO of Skoll Foundation).

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## FOUNDING PRINCIPLES OF C4EC

The C4EC network is woven with a set of principles that clarify intent, nurture trust, retain focus, guide decisions, and enable value exchange amongst its participants. These principles are:

1. **C4EC is co-created** by a global network of values-aligned participants. It is a welcoming space that nurtures diversity. It is not a proprietary institution of any one-member organisation.
  2. **C4EC is an open network** that embraces all relevant fields of knowledge and experiences. All its assets are shared as open public goods and all members operate with generosity, gratitude, and abundance.
  3. **C4EC is a co-traveller**, instep with System Orchestrators, on a journey to address social challenges, together. It does not charge any fee for its support.
  4. **C4EC is an orchestrator** of interactions between System Orchestrators, enablers, and influencers. It does not pool and provide resources.
  5. **C4EC is a contributor**, motivated by sustained progress and success of System Orchestrators. It does not claim attribution for their impact.
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## C4EC'S OFFERINGS

C4EC is organised as orchestrating hubs focused on five areas of sustained support that can enable System Orchestrators to bridge the chasms in their journey. These areas are:

- **Open practical knowledge** : C4EC will curate and facilitate open access (CC BY SA 4.0) to ideas, experiences, methods, practices, and tools that answer the why, what, and how of exponential change. This includes open knowledge developed by C4EC and the knowledge curated with the participants of the C4EC network.
- **Deep design and prototyping** : As there is no one perfect pathway, different approaches to induce positive exponential change will be offered by the exChange partners of the C4EC network. C4EC will organise learning opportunities and discovery sessions for System Orchestrators to explore such pathways to design and prototype new ideas and approaches. The current exChange partners (and more being onboarded) of C4EC are:
  - a. **Societal Thinking** : This systemic approach has emerged after many “Do-Think-Do” cycles with change leaders across the globe. This pathway of inducing positive exponential change continues to evolve with “Do” cycles that include co-exploring, designing and building missions that create impact at societal scale and “Think” cycles that help distil the learning into a set of core values, design principles, and frameworks that are open for everyone to use and build upon. Some exemplars of Societal Thinking are [here](#).
  - b. **Apurva.ai** : System Orchestrators need to respond to complex and evolving problems by instantly understanding the voice of their communities and integrating knowledge and insights from the ecosystem to design effective contextual solutions. As a sense-making digital infrastructure that is powered by exponential technology, Apurva.ai enables System Orchestrators to instantly listen to their communities and surrounding ecosystems, gain a pragmatic,

deep, and wide understanding of real challenges and opportunities, and mobilise actions that are contextual and timely. Some exemplars of Apurva are [here](#).

- c. **Shikshalokam** : ShikshaLokam is driving systemic, scalable impact by enabling leadership development across India's public education system. Through its open digital infrastructure, ShikshaLokam empowers education leaders to continuously sense, learn, and improve. By building a network of government, civil society, & philanthropists, ShikshaLokam is catalyzing collective action for sustainable, exponential transformation.
- **Paradigm shifting grants** : C4EC will orchestrate unrestricted grants (upto \$500K), redefine the paradigm, and prototype new ideas and approaches (hence Paradigm Grants). C4EC co-founders have set aside \$40 million for these Paradigm Grants across diverse geographies and diverse problem statements. We will soon share a process for applying for these grants. Follow our social media handles ([Linkedin](#), [X](#)) or [subscribe](#) to our newsletter for updates.
  - **Amplify leaders' self-efficacy** : C4EC will curate safe spaces and hold regular convenings for System Orchestrators to nurture their self-efficacy. In the first phase, it will be an invite-only space. We will share more insights and learnings from the lab through the year [here](#).
  - **Hands-on mentors' network** : The right mentor, who extends pragmatic insights at the right time, may have a profound impact on the complex journeys of System Orchestrators. C4EC will onboard a network of global practitioners and experts who will work with our grantees on their exponential change journey.

## C4EC'S NETWORK

**Co-founders** : The co-founders of C4EC are visionary funders ([Instituto Beja](#), [New Profit](#), [Nilekani Philanthropies](#), [Skoll Foundation](#) and [Waverley Foundation](#)) invested in enabling System Orchestrators towards catalysing exponential change to build a better society. Apart from guiding the formation of C4EC as the advisory board, each C4EC co-founder will extend catalytic Paradigm Grants of \$500K up to 12 months to validated System Orchestrators, adding to a total of \$10 million (cumulatively for each co-founder) over five years (2024-2028).

**Momentum Partners** : While Paradigm Grants bridge the early chasms faced by System Orchestrators, further financial resources need to be orchestrated to sustain transformation at a societal scale over extended periods. Momentum Partners such as philanthropists, philanthropic foundations, funder collaboratives, impact investors, venture philanthropy networks, and multilateral organisations who join this network may consider the System Orchestrators for funding support based on their respective due diligence process.

**exChange partners** : exChange partners ([Societal Thinking](#), [Apurva.ai](#) and [Shikshalokam](#)) provide frameworks that enable System Orchestrators to embark on exponential change journeys. They do this through:

- Sharing open knowledge assets: around ideas, experiences, methods, practices, and tools that answer the why, what, and how of exponential change.
- Co-traveling: These partners embark on exponential change journeys with curated System Orchestrators or advise them on how to bridge chasms.
- Building strategic narrative: The partners work with System Orchestrators to create a narrative around their exponential change journey and support them to take the ideas further.

**C4EC Collaborators** : C4EC will curate a network of collaborators - institutions that support the exponential change journeys of System Orchestrators over the long term. This network will include academia, dev sector institutions (research, development, and multilateral),



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collaboratives and networks, incubators and accelerators, and consultants. They may offer one or more of the five core offerings of C4EC. [Here](#) are our current collaborators.

**C4EC Mentors :** C4EC will engage with eminent practitioners, experts, and thought leaders to weave a network of Mentors who may extend their invaluable advice to enable exponential change journeys of System Orchestrators in their context. This Mentor's network will include experienced hands-on individuals from across various types of institutions such as civil society organisations, businesses and governments.

Like we strive to conserve natural systems (such as coral reefs and rainforests) that sustain the health of our planet, together C4EC's network strives to enable System Orchestrators, who ensure the health of our society so we can make rapid progress towards a sustainable and equitable future.

## FAQ'S

### What does it take to induce exponential change?

An exponential change journey is a journey to restore agency, nurture dignity, and strengthen the ability to make informed and meaningful choices for all participants (individuals and institutions) of society. It requires reimagining what works at scale, who needs to be the solver, who needs to be the enabler, what infrastructure is needed for solving at scale and most importantly what mindset shifts one needs to undergo to take on an immense endeavour. This journey is not about building a program or a way to grow an organisation, it is a way to solve any exponentially growing problem.

### What does an exponential change journey look like?

For every System Orchestrator, the exponential change journey depends on their context - the size of the problem, the complexity of the problem, what infrastructure exists to solve the problem and what needs to be built, what networks can add to the idea/ take it forward, what conditions exist that can make change exponential and more.

### How can C4EC help me in my exponential change journey?

C4EC provides sustained support in five areas that can enable System Orchestrators to bridge the chasms in their journey. These areas are:

- Open practical knowledge
- Deep design and prototyping
- Paradigm shifting grants
- Amplify leaders' self-efficacy
- Hands-on mentors' network

### How do I apply for the Paradigm Grant and what are the selection criteria?

We are working on the process to apply for the grant and the criteria for the same. Follow our social media handles ([Linkedin](#), [X](#)) or [subscribe](#) to our newsletter for updates.

### How do I access the open knowledge?

Currently, you can access open knowledge on the websites of our exChange partners ([Societal Thinking](#), [Apurva.ai](#) and [Shikshalokam](#)).

### How can I become a Mentor/Collaborator of C4EC?

If you think you bring expertise to System Orchestrators that can enable them to induce exponential change, please send us an email at [info@c4ec.org](mailto:info@c4ec.org) answering the following questions:

- I believe in the idea of exponential change because...
- As a Mentor/Collaborator what support/value can I provide to System Orchestrators (of the C4EC's five offerings?)
- As a Mentor/Collaborator, how can I add to the development of this network of support that C4EC is trying to build?
- As a Mentor/Collaborator, what value can C4EC bring to your work?

### How can I become a Momentum Partner of C4EC?

If you would like to join us as a Momentum Partner to fund exponential change, please reach us at [fundinghub@C4EC.org](mailto:fundinghub@C4EC.org)

