
THE GCA
CHANGEMAKER
PROGRAMME
Global Change Award

STEP INSIDE THE GCA CHANGEMAKER PROGRAMME

This guide offers an in-depth look at the GCA Changemaker Programme – a yearlong journey designed to strengthen changemakers, advance their ideas and contribute to systemic transformation within the textile industry.

INDEX

01 THIS IS GLOBAL CHANGE AWARD 3
02 ABOUT THE GCA CHANGEMAKER PROGRAMME 6
03 THE PROGRAMME JOURNEY 9
04 PROGRAMME TRACKS 17
05 COMMUNITY & NETWORK 28

THIS IS GLOBAL CHANGE AWARD

01

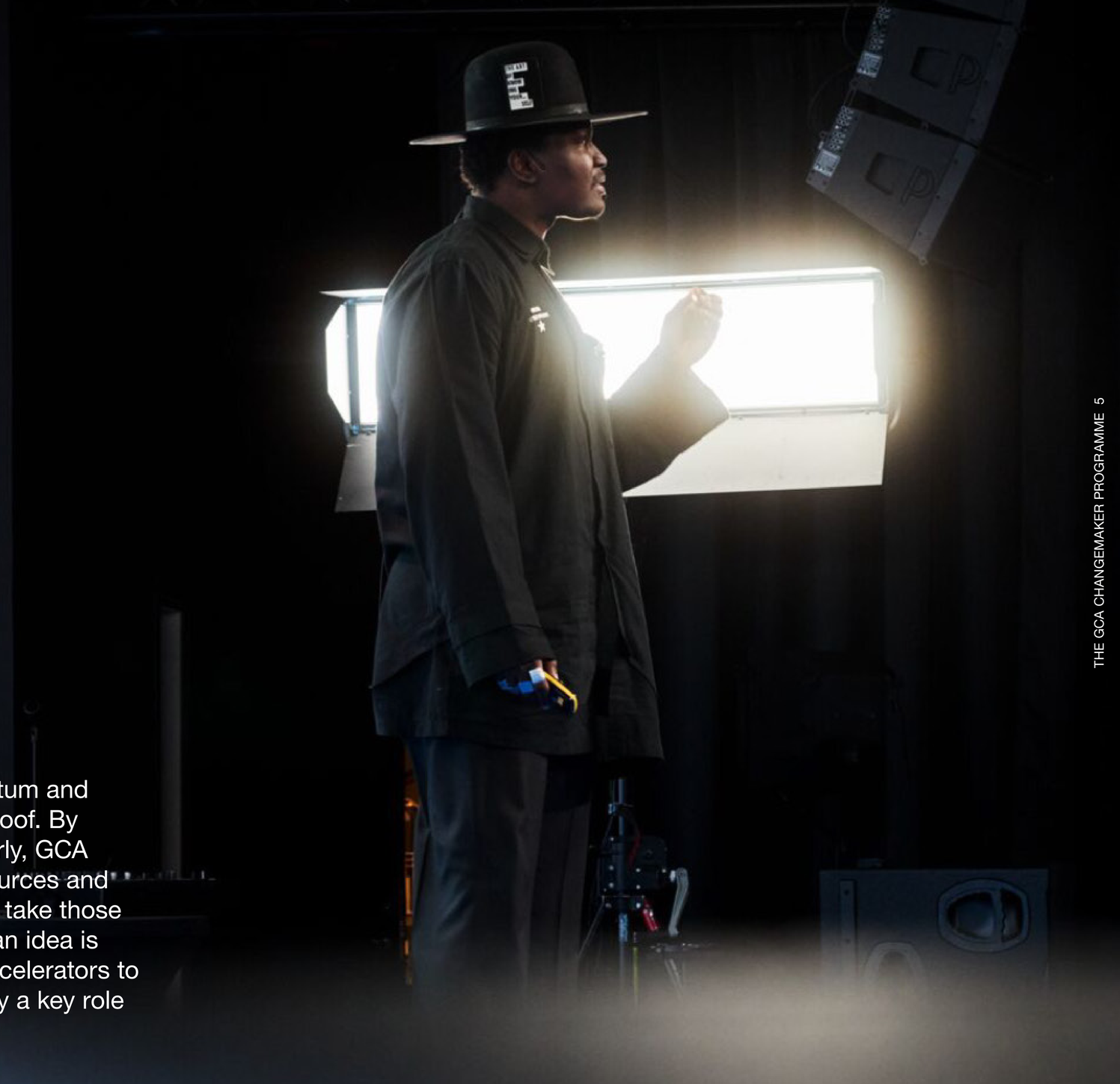
The Global Change Award (GCA) is an innovation challenge initiated by H&M Foundation. Its mission is to accelerate early-stage innovation to support the textile industry in halving its greenhouse gas emissions every decade, reaching net-zero by 2050.

The H&M Foundation launched the Global Change Award, often referred to as the Nobel Prize of Fashion, as the first innovation challenge of its kind in 2015.

Every year, ten changemakers each receive a €200,000 grant and take part in a one-year Changemaker Programme designed to help turn bold ideas into tangible solutions. Participants gain textile industry knowledge, practical tools, strategic connections and a holistic mindset – enabling their innovations to benefit both people and planet.



BIG IDEAS START SMALL – WE'RE HERE TO BACK THEM



Behind every breakthrough is a beginning, and those first steps are often the most fragile. For a founder, that early phase can mean limited funding, networks still taking shape, and a path forward that isn't always clear.

At this critical stage, the Global Change Award acts as a first spark, helping ideas gain momentum and move from possibility to proof. By backing changemakers early, GCA provides the support, resources and encouragement needed to take those first decisive steps. Once an idea is validated, others – from accelerators to brands and investors – play a key role in helping it scale.

ABOUT THE CHANGEMAKER PROGRAMME

02

THE HEART OF WINNING GCA

The Changemaker Programme is at the heart of the Global Change Award. It's a yearlong journey that helps each winner develop their idea, grow as a leader, and understand how their innovation can contribute to reshaping the textile industry at a systems level.

Being selected as a winner is just the beginning. The programme is a tailored journey designed to strengthen each changemaker's solution, build momentum, and unlock long-term impact. Throughout the year, participants connect with peers from around the world, engage with leading experts, and strengthen their ability to position their innovation within the wider system. The focus is on learning, reflection and understanding how individual solutions can contribute to long-term industry change.

Beyond the programme itself, winning the Global Change Award brings recognition and visibility. Changemakers are featured across GCA platforms and industry moments, helping introduce their work to a broader audience and increase awareness of their ideas beyond the early-stage context.



NOT YOUR ORDINARY ACCELERATOR

The Global Change Award is made possible through long-standing partners: Accenture, KTH Royal Institute of Technology and The Mills Fabrica.

Together, we co-create and deliver the Changemaker Programme, combining expertise across innovation, technology, leadership, business and textiles to support bold ideas on their journey towards real-world application.

What sets the programme apart is not only the partners involved, but the model behind it. As an independent, non-profit philanthropy, the H&M Foundation can deploy capital with a singular focus: maximising positive impact rather than financial return. This allows us to de-risk early-stage ideas, create space for experimentation, and support changemakers working to shift systems, not just scale businesses.

Without equity, ownership or commercial expectations, the support is shaped around each winner's needs. While the core structure of the programme remains consistent, each year is defined by the cohort: their strengths, challenges and ambitions. The result is a programme that stays relevant and responsive, grounded in the belief that meaningful industry change requires both collective progress and individual growth.

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THE PROGRAMME JOURNEY

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WEEK 1: LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS



COHORT BUILDING, PERSONAL GROWTH AND SYSTEMS THINKING

This first week focuses on forming the cohort and establishing a shared direction. Changemakers meet their fellow winners and partners, explore the foundations of the programme and begin to understand the wider textile system. The week combines innovation readiness, leadership development and systems thinking, helping each participant shape their personal road-map for the year ahead.

Alongside cohort-building, the first week introduces key tools and frameworks that help changemakers begin shaping their journey. For example, sessions such as the KTH Innovation Readiness Level™ module provide a structured way to assess where an idea stands today and what is needed to move it forward.

In parallel, personal growth sessions delivered with Accenture focus on leadership, self-awareness and how to navigate uncertainty as a founder.

Alongside the other sessions and interactions during the week, these elements help changemakers define priorities, reflect on their goals and take the first steps in shaping their roadmap for the year ahead.



WEEK 2: INDUSTRY IMMERSION



STRENGTHENING IDEAS AND EXPANDING NETWORKS

This week focuses on industry knowledge, connections and collaboration. Changemakers take part in the GCA Summit and are recognised at the Award Ceremony. These moments connect them to the wider textile industry, creating opportunities to engage with stakeholders across the value chain. They also deepen connections within the GCA Alumni network, strengthening long-term relationships within the community.

GCA SUMMIT

The summit is a full-day gathering featuring keynotes, fireside conversations and interactive breakout sessions. It brings together industry leaders, funders, brands, suppliers, funders and other key voices from across the textile value chain.

The GCA Summit is also a defining moment for our changemakers. On this stage, they step into the spotlight to present their innovations, share their vision, and engage directly with a global audience working in the textile industry and beyond.









AWARD CEREMONY

The Award Ceremony is a memorable evening at the iconic Stockholm City Hall, the venue where the Nobel Prize is held every year.

Bringing together global industry actors, partners and alumni, the ceremony celebrates bold ideas and the changemakers behind them. It marks the official crowning of the new cohort – an evening of recognition, inspiration and collective celebration within the GCA community.

Step into the atmosphere of the GCA Summit and Award ceremony.









WEEK 3: REAL-WORLD CONTEXT



PRODUCTION ENVIRONMENTS AND SETTING THE PATH AHEAD

Hosted in a global textile hub, the final week connects innovation with real-world practice. Through visits to production sites and factories, changemakers gain practical insight into the industry landscape. The focus shifts to individual priorities and next steps. As the winners graduate from the programme, support is provided to help define a clear and confident path forward.

FACTORY VISITS

Week three of the Changemaker Programme takes the cohort to a textile production country, giving changemakers the opportunity to experience the global textile system up close. The aim is to move beyond theory and see how the industry operates in practice, from the factory floor to the wider production ecosystem.

Through visits to different factories, participants gain first-hand insights into how the various parts of the textile system are connected, as well as the realities, challenges, and opportunities within the industry.

By engaging directly with suppliers and manufacturers, changemakers also learn how innovation is implemented in production environments, helping them understand where their own ideas could fit and create meaningful impact.



PR↑↱GRAMME TRACKS

04

3 TRACKS SHAPING THE JOURNEY







The programme consists of three equally weighted tracks that run throughout the year. Each track has a distinct focus, together supporting the development of the innovation, strengthening leadership skills, and enhancing each changemaker's ability to drive systemic change.

IDEA DEVELOPMENT

The Idea development track supports changemakers in turning promising ideas into clear and credible proof of concept.

The focus is on strengthening both the innovation and the thinking behind it. Participants are introduced to tools and frameworks that help clarify their concept, test assumptions and articulate value. Innovation is approached from a systems perspective: moving beyond traditional entrepreneurship towards long-term industry impact.

Alongside strategic guidance, changemakers receive practical support for refining their concept. Structured feedback and targeted exercises help them assess where they are today and define the next stage of development with greater confidence.

The Idea development track is built on a simple principle: strong ideas need the right conditions to grow.

EXAMPLES OF MODULES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR INCLUDE:

- KTH Innovation Readiness Level™
- How to build a winning team



PERSONAL GROWTH

The Personal growth track focuses on strengthening the person behind the innovation.

Driving systemic change requires more than a strong idea, it requires confidence, resilience, and the ability to inspire and mobilise others. This track supports changemakers in developing the confidence and self-awareness needed to navigate complexity and sustain over time.

Through reflective exercises, structured dialogue and practical skill-building, participants strengthen their leadership capabilities and communication skills.

The focus is on building changemakers confidence, develop resilience, sharpen leadership capabilities, and turn vision into action.

The Personal growth track exists because sustainable change depends on sustainable leaders. By investing in the individual, the programme supports long-term progress, for both the changemaker and their innovation.

EXAMPLES OF MODULES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR INCLUDE:

- Leadership development sessions
- Future-proofing leadership



SYSTEMS UNDER-STANDING

The Systems understanding track helps changemakers step back and see the wider context around their innovation.

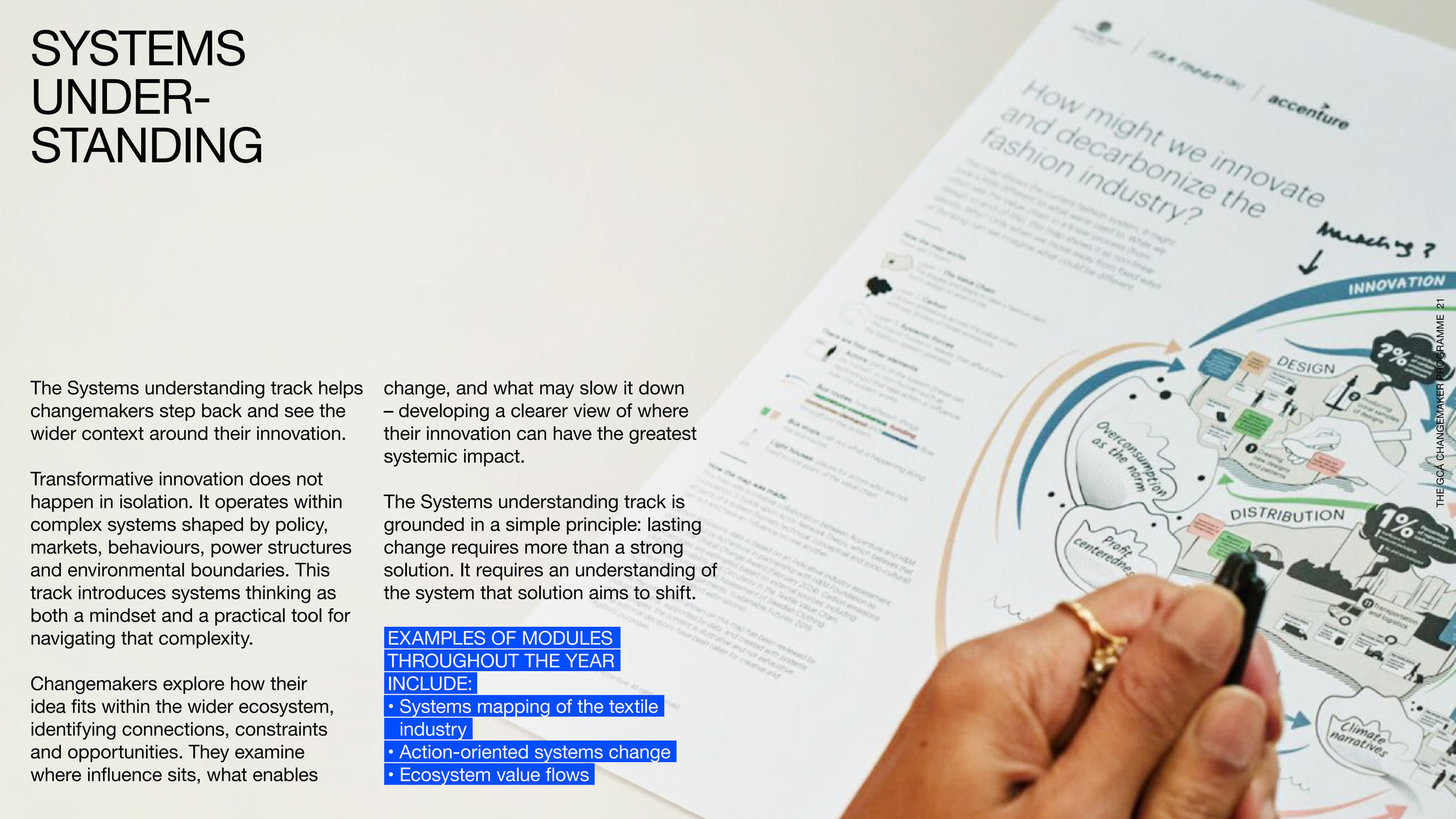
Transformative innovation does not happen in isolation. It operates within complex systems shaped by policy, markets, behaviours, power structures and environmental boundaries. This track introduces systems thinking as both a mindset and a practical tool for navigating that complexity.

Changemakers explore how their idea fits within the wider ecosystem, identifying connections, constraints and opportunities. They examine where influence sits, what enables change, and what may slow it down – developing a clearer view of where their innovation can have the greatest systemic impact.

The Systems understanding track is grounded in a simple principle: lasting change requires more than a strong solution. It requires an understanding of the system that solution aims to shift.

EXAMPLES OF MODULES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR INCLUDE:

- Systems mapping of the textile industry
- Action-oriented systems change
- Ecosystem value flows



ADDITIONAL PROGRAMME ELEMENTS



TAILORED APPROACH & DIGITAL SESSIONS

A core strength of the Changemaker Programme is its tailored approach. While the overall structure remains consistent, the content evolves around the specific needs of each cohort.

During Week 1, time is dedicated to understanding the changemakers needs, both collectively and individually. This helps identify ambitions, challenges and capability gaps early in the year. Based on these insights, the programme is adjusted to ensure it remains relevant and aligned with where the cohort stands.

Rather than having a predetermined content, the programme allows space for adaptation. As needs shift, sessions, formats and areas of focus can shift with them. In this way, the experience is shaped in dialogue with the changemakers themselves.

To support individual priorities, additional tailored modules are offered, primarily in digital format to allow flexibility. These sessions draw on the wider GCA network and provide targeted input where it is most needed.

This responsive structure distinguishes the GCA Changemaker Programme from more traditional accelerator models, ensuring that support remains structured while adapting to the realities of early-stage innovation.

Based on the needs of the cohort, the Changemaker Programme also includes focused digital sessions between the three in-person weeks. These sessions help carry the work forward across the year by offering expert input, practical guidance and space for shared discussion.

They allow changemakers to test ideas and apply new perspectives directly in their day-to-day work, while also enabling contributions from different parts of the world and keeping the cohort connected between gatherings.

By combining in-person weeks with digital touchpoints, the programme remains active throughout the year, reinforcing learning, encouraging application and supporting steady progress.

THE TAILORED APPROACH IS SUPPORTED THROUGH:

- Needs analysis interviews
- Daily reflection sessions during in-person weeks

EXAMPLES OF SESSIONS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR INCLUDE:

- GCA Alumni Buddy connection
- Textile industry Deep dive
- Funding 101

QUOTES

“What makes the GCA programme so special is its diverse sponsors, all of which are thought leaders in their own right. The H&M Foundation team has made valuable introductions for us in the apparel space, giving us a direct path to the industry that we founded SXD to serve.”

SHELLY XU
Founder of SXD
2023 winner



“The Changemaker Programme is more than just an accolade, it’s a gateway to extraordinary opportunity. The connections it fosters are unmatched, the learning experiences it offers are truly distinctive, and the growth it enables, both personally and professionally, is exceptional.”

ARJUN BAJWA
Co-founder & CTO of
Kbcols Sciences
2023 winner



“If there’s one programme that can truly change the game for your company, it’s GCA. The more you put in, the more it gives back. Everyone is not just helpful, they believe in you. GCA was one of the first to believe in us, and that belief lit a fire that pushed us forward. It made all the difference.”

LUCIANO BUENO
Founder & CEO of Galy
2020 winner



QUOTES

“Winning the Global Change Award was a turning point for me and Phycolabs. To winners to come; be bold, stay curious, and take every opportunity to connect. The Changemaker Programme is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to turn challenges into pathways, grow your vision, and lead with purpose.”

THAMIRES PONTES
Founder & CEO of Phycolabs
2023 winner



“The unique aspect of the Changemaker Programme is the deep and relevant network innovators get immediate access to as part of the Global Change Award. It also provides credibility and enables them to quickly test, iterate and pivot based on valuable industry feedback.”

WALDEN LAM
Co-founder of Unspun
2017 winner



CHANGE-MAKER TALK

The Changemaker talk session connects the cohort with experienced innovators who share honest, real-world stories of building purpose-driven ventures. Through personal experiences on challenges, setbacks, milestones, and resilience, the session offers perspective and a space for reflection as changemakers navigate uncertainty and lead their work forward.

Changemakers consistently say they value stories that feel honest and relatable. This session responds to that need by bringing forward real journeys from people who have taken ideas from early stages into the world – especially within a sector as complex as fashion and textiles.

THE SESSION AIMS TO:

- Offer perspective and encouragement for the change-maker journey
- Reinforce that progress is rarely linear
- Share practical insights that can inform next steps
- Create space to reflect on mission, motivation and resilience



MILES KUBHEKA
CEO and founder of Wakanda Food Accelerator



MAI LAM
Founder of Mai Lam Wearable Art



ANDREAS ANDRÉN
Head of Buisness Development Colorifix

BRAND VISIT

The Brand visits connects changemakers directly with fashion brands working at the forefront of implementation. By hearing how brands assess, test and integrate new ideas, participants gain practical insight into what it takes to move innovation into real-world application.

The visits focus on how collaboration works in practice – from early pilots to product integration – and offer clearer insight into how sustainability is integrated into brand strategy and decision-making.

THE BRAND VISITS AIM TO:

- Clarify what brands look for when considering new innovations
- Provide insight into how brand partnerships are structured and managed
- Explore the challenges brands face when scaling sustainable solutions



& OTHER STORIES



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COMMUNITY & NETWORK

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IT’S ALL ABOUT COMMUNITY

The GCA Community is a global ecosystem of innovators, industry leaders, investors and experts committed to accelerating transformation within the textile and fashion industry. As part of the Changemaker Programme, winners gain access to this network, including the Expert Panel, Nominator Network, Investor Network, Alumni Community and a growing circle of industry collaborators.

Throughout the year, these actors are actively integrated into the journey. Changemakers engage through curated moments such as investor breakfasts, digital pitch sessions, Expert Panel dialogues, leadership Q&As and a dedicated Alumni Buddy system.

The result is not just exposure, but meaningful exchange – connecting bold ideas with the people, capital and insight needed to move them forward.



THE JOURNEY CONTINUES



Once changemakers complete the programme, they are invited to join the GCA Alumni Network.

The aim is to sustain momentum beyond the programme year and support continued progress within a growing community of innovators.

THROUGH THE NETWORK, ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES ARE PROVIDED TO:

- Connect with brands, investors and industry stakeholders
- Participate in alumni gatherings and mentoring initiatives
- Collaborate with fellow changemakers across cohorts
- Contribute to GCA storytelling and industry events

Global Change Award

An innovation challenge
by H&M Foundation