Advisor, Climate Ventures

Harvard Innovation Labs

10-15 hours per week

Job Summary

The Advisor, Climate Ventures at the Harvard Innovation Labs (i-lab) is responsible for supporting and mentoring Harvard students, alumni, and affiliated founders building climate and sustainability ventures. This role advises i-lab members and founders from the earliest idea stage through scaling, and builds and stewards a network of climate experts, mentors, and investors who can be matched with our more mature teams. The ideal candidate has led or been part of the leadership team of a climate venture or climate investment firm, has a strong network across climate founders and investors, and has experience as an advisor to startups and students.

The Harvard Innovation Labs is an education space designed to foster entrepreneurship and innovation across Harvard University. The mission of the Harvard Innovation Labs is to champion the people behind the ideas, equipping Harvard entrepreneurs with the community, skills, and opportunities to turn insights into impact. Support extends from pre-idea students, to an incubator for early-stage entrepreneurs, to accelerators and beyond. Visit innovationlabs.harvard.edu for more information.

Job Overview

Advising i-lab climate founders and teams; building the climate network:

Serves as advisor for climate-focused teams and innovators in the i-lab ecosystem. Meets with prospective and current founders, and provides direction, insight and practical support to help them build and grow their ventures, with particular attention to founders at the very beginning of their journey. Develops and maintains a network

of climate experts and investors and makes well-matched introductions. Managed by the Senior Advisor, Social Impact + Climate, this role works with the full Climate team to ensure wrap-around support for climate founders.

Position Description

Early-Stage Venture Advising:

- Serves as a primary advisor to climate ventures through 1:1 meetings, with an extra focus on early-stage teams, including pre-idea and "idea stage" or "test stage" founders who are still finding the problem, the customer, and the team.
- Helps early founders pressure-test climate problem domains, identify first customers and pilot partners, and plan the technical and market validation that comes before fundraising.
- Brings a working knowledge of the climate startup landscape and of the non-dilutive funding (grants, prizes, accelerators, government programs, piloting programs) that early climate ventures often rely on. Advises directly as well as routing founders to experts on technology, regulation, and commercialization.
- Supports climate programming for founders.

Cohort Curation and Opportunity Matching:

- Helps guide climate founders who join the i-lab for annual membership as well as those in the Climate Circle Accelerator. This means knowing who is in the climate cohort, understanding quickly what stage each team is at and what each team needs next, and which teams belong in which sub-groupings.
- Identifies, vets, and shares opportunities with student sub-cohorts--these often include incubator, accelerator, fellowship, funding and convening opportunities. Ensures that the opportunity is shared with the right subset.
- Supports recruiting, application review, and interviews for the Climate Circle Accelerator.
- Supplements existing resources and communications to help founders in their journeys. This may include guides, toolkits, templates, and content for the climate newsletter.

Expert, Mentor, and Judge Network:

- Helps identify the climate network of experts, mentors, and judges. This looks like sourcing new experts, helping run intake calls, and referring the right founders to them, in collaboration with the Climate team and the i-lab's Network Engagement Specialist.
- Matches experts, mentors, etc. to ventures.
- Helps to source climate judges for the annual President's Innovation Challenge (PIC), helping build a bench that is deep, diverse, insightful, and returns year over year.

Climate Investor Network and Matching:

- Builds and stewards a network of climate investors, including venture capital, corporate venture, angels, family offices, and catalytic and philanthropic capital relevant to i-lab ventures. This looks like sourcing new investors, running intake calls, and keeping a current picture of each investor's thesis, stage, sector, and check size.
- Matches investors to the i-lab's stage-appropriate climate teams, including Climate Circle Accelerator ventures, when a team is indeed ready for the conversation. These are high-thought, high-touch introductions.
- Helps teams prepare for investor conversations, including readiness, pitch materials, data room, and the ask, before introductions are made.
- Engages investors in i-lab programming, such as investor sessions, the virtual venture showcase, and the annual summit, so the relationship is two-way and returns year over year.
- Tracks investor introductions through to outcome, in the i-lab's shared systems, so the team learns what converts.

Pitch Competitions:

- For i-lab pitch events, helps review applications, assess readiness, and coach teams.

- Prepares teams to present: runs pitch prep and advising sessions and Q&A prep sessions for the climate ventures in competitions such as the Navab Fellowship and the Presidents Innovation Challenge and for accelerator showcase pitches such as the Virtual Venture Showcase and the Harvard Operations Pitch.

Cross-Functional Collaboration and Flexibility:

- Attends internal i-lab meetings as needed.
- Coordinates across the i-lab team, including Venture Acceleration, to execute program goals.
- As needed, represents the i-lab at climate ecosystem events and brings back new investors, programs, and partners for the team to use.
- Willing to jump in when needed to fill gaps. This is a small team running many programs at once; the person in this role is expected to notice what is uncovered and step in if relevant.
- Navigates a large, decentralized ecosystem with tact.

Basic Qualifications

- BA/BS degree required
- Direct experience advising or coaching early-stage founders.
- An existing network of climate experts, investors, and experience building and maintaining networks of investors, experts, mentors, advisors, or judges.
- Over 8 years of experience in climate or clean energy entrepreneurship, climate investing, venture building, or advising/coaching founders.
- Strong organizational skills and the ability to manage multiple priorities simultaneously.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, including the ability to give direct, usable feedback on a pitch.

Additional Qualifications

- Experience directly founding a climate startup, or working at a climate-focused venture fund, strongly preferred
- Experience serving as a judge or reviewer for a grant or venture competition

- Experience in two or more climate sectors (e.g., energy, mobility, built environment, food and agriculture, adaptation, carbon sequestration etc) preferred
- Familiarity with non-dilutive climate funding (e.g., government grant programs, prizes, alternative financing mechanisms)
- Broad and meaningful relationships within the Boston or global climate innovation ecosystem
- Proven ability to deliver results with minimal oversight and high degree of operational excellence

Additional Information

This is an 10~15-hour/week contract role where you will be employed and paid through a third party.

Hourly rate is $90.

This contract runs through June 30, 2027, with the possibility of extension.

This role is a contractor position and can be hybrid, in person, or remote. This role will generally require working hours between 9 am and 5 pm ET, with some evenings required to support events, workshops, and pitch days. Specific days and schedule will be determined between you and your manager.

A cover letter is required to be considered for this opportunity. Email applications to i-labclimate@harvard.edu with a cc to rebekah_emanuel@harvard.edu.