Google.org

Innovating for impact:

Insights from the Google.org Impact Challenge

Contents

Executive summary

The Google.org Impact Challenge (GIC) began as a question: If local nonprofit innovators and social entrepreneurs had significantly more resources, could they scale their impact and become sustainable engines for change?

In the spring of 2013, we announced the fi st Google.org Impact Challenge. It was an open call that asked applicants to share a big idea for how to make their community and beyond a better place. We partnered with local community leaders to find the organizations with the most potential to deliver meaningful change. Selected organizations received funding and a strategic package of technical support from Google and its global network of partners.

In the seven years since we launched this initiative, we've provided $90 million to more than 300 organizations across every inhabited continent. We're now taking a step back to share learnings from our ongoing grantmaking approach. We hope that together we can continue to support innovative ideas that accelerate positive change for many years to come.

What we've learned so far

We found three key themes across the more than 300 organizations we've worked with over the past seven years. We believe these insights can inform how organizations and their leaders can foster social innovation.

- **Insight 1:** Flexible funding fosters innovation and increases potential.

- **Insight 2:** Community engagement uncovers moonshot solutions.

- **Insight 3:** Wraparound support multiplies impact.

Future opportunties

Nonprofits, funders, policymakers, and social enterprises—across public and private sectors—all play a role in fostering innovation in the social sector. We see many opportunities ahead to accelerate positive change by understanding and ultimately removing the obstacles faced by changemakers striving to better their communities and beyond. To build on our insights in this report,　we've included action items for how funders, policymakers, and even nonprofits can further nurture innovation in the social sector.

What is the GIC?

The Google.org Impact Challenge (GIC) provides community-driven nonprofits and social enterprises with the support they need to make their community—and beyond—a better place. The best and boldest ideas are given a strategic package of funding, mentorship, and technical support as part of Google.org's broader mission to utilize Google's resources to help solve humanity's biggest challenges.

How it works

Google.org works closely with neighborhood organizers, local leaders, and community changemakers to find and empower their best ideas. Every GIC involves multiple levels of community engagement.

Support partners provide guidance.

We partner with local social sector leaders who support the entire process, from program design to application review to post-program capacity building.

Organizations apply.

Nonprofit innovators and social entrepreneurs submit their proposals.

Experts select finalists.

A diverse panel of local experts selects the finalists, aided by our support partners and industry experts. The panel represents a cross-section of local experts: politicians, philanthropists, activists, entrepreneurs, and other notable community members.

People vote.

When it makes sense for a particular GIC, the local community is invited to vote for its favorite idea. Over 7 million community members from around the world have voted in our GICs.

Selected organizations are announced.

The selected organization who receives the most community votes is deemed the People's Choice, and they, along with the other organizations selected by the local experts, are announced and celebrated.
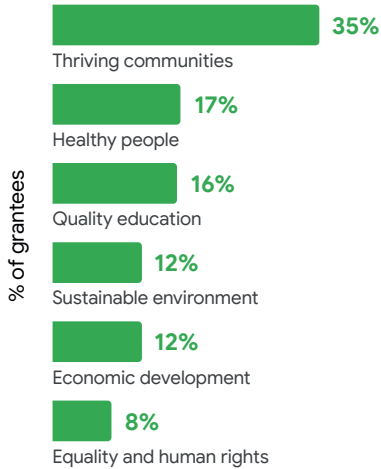
Google.org provides training and support.

Each selected organization receives funding and a strategic package of support, including workshops and mentorship. They also gain access to Googlers with unique technical expertise and local support partners.

How it makes a difference

Issue areas addressed by grantees[1]

- Thriving communities — 35%
- Healthy people — 17%
- Quality education — 16%
- Sustainable environment — 12%
- Economic development — 12%
- Equality and human rights — 8%

% of grantees

From 2013 to 2019, we received 22,677 proposals across 32 GICs spanning six continents. This incredible pool of applicants was narrowed with the support of 250 community leaders, including Richard Branson, Shakira, Nwankwo Kanu, Stephen Curry, Rigoberta Menchu, and Helle Thorning-Schmidt. Together, we discovered and supported more than 300 groundbreaking organizations, including:

- A Brazilian organization that redistributed 20% of food thrown away by small businesses, saving 1.8 million meals

- An Australian nonprofit that used an app to connect people at risk of or experiencing homelessness to food, shelter, health, and other support   ervices, processing over 2.2 million searches per year

- A French organization that distributed "Ideas Boxes"—educational tools meant to spark learning and imagination—to refugees across Europe and Africa

- A Canadian nonprofit that provided affordable hearing aids to more than 35,000 children around the world

To date, we've provided more than $90 million and provided additional support specific to the unique needs of each organization.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT
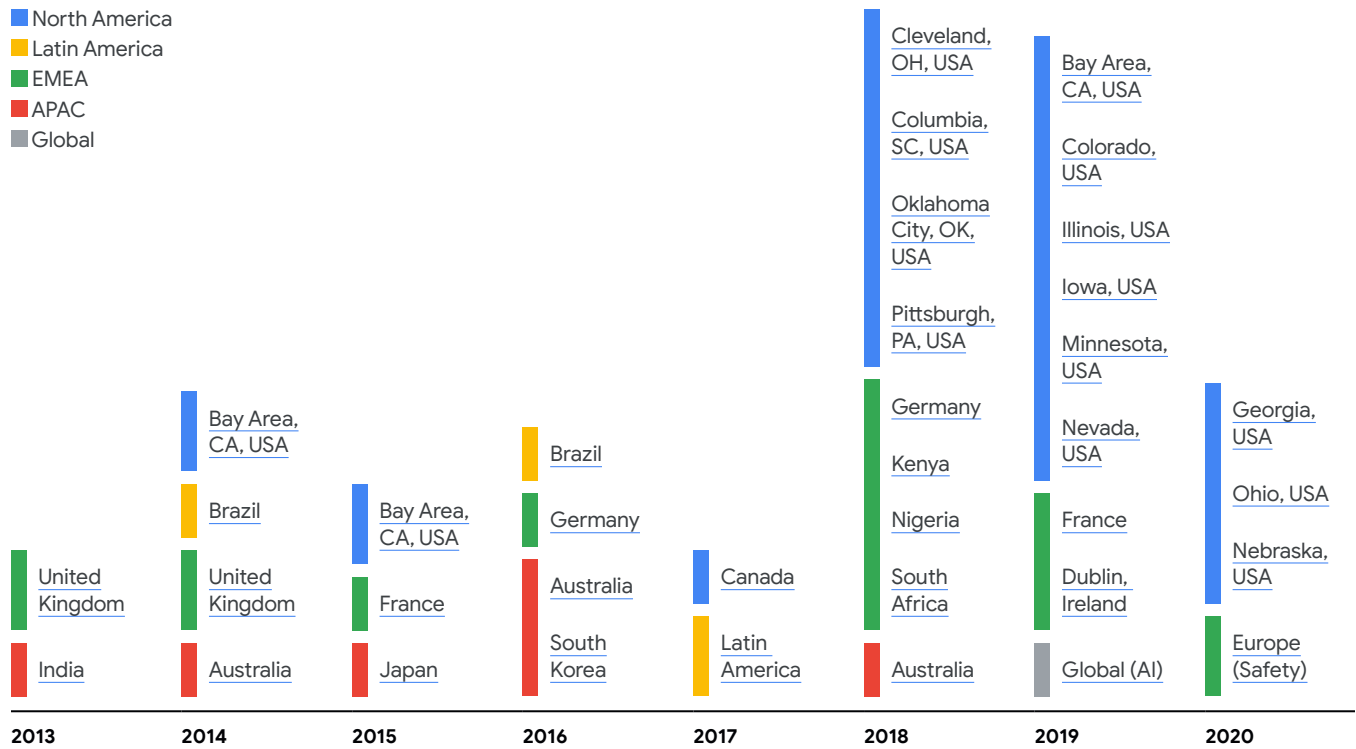

Colombian Civil Air Patrol
Colombia

What they're doing with grant dollars: Uniting the passion of private pilots with that of health professionals to bring medical and surgical brigades to the most remote parts of Colombia. Post-grant results reflect an increased focus on improving quality of care by enhancing efficiency and data-driven decision-making. Converting paper-based health records to digital records has reduced the time to process health information by 90%.
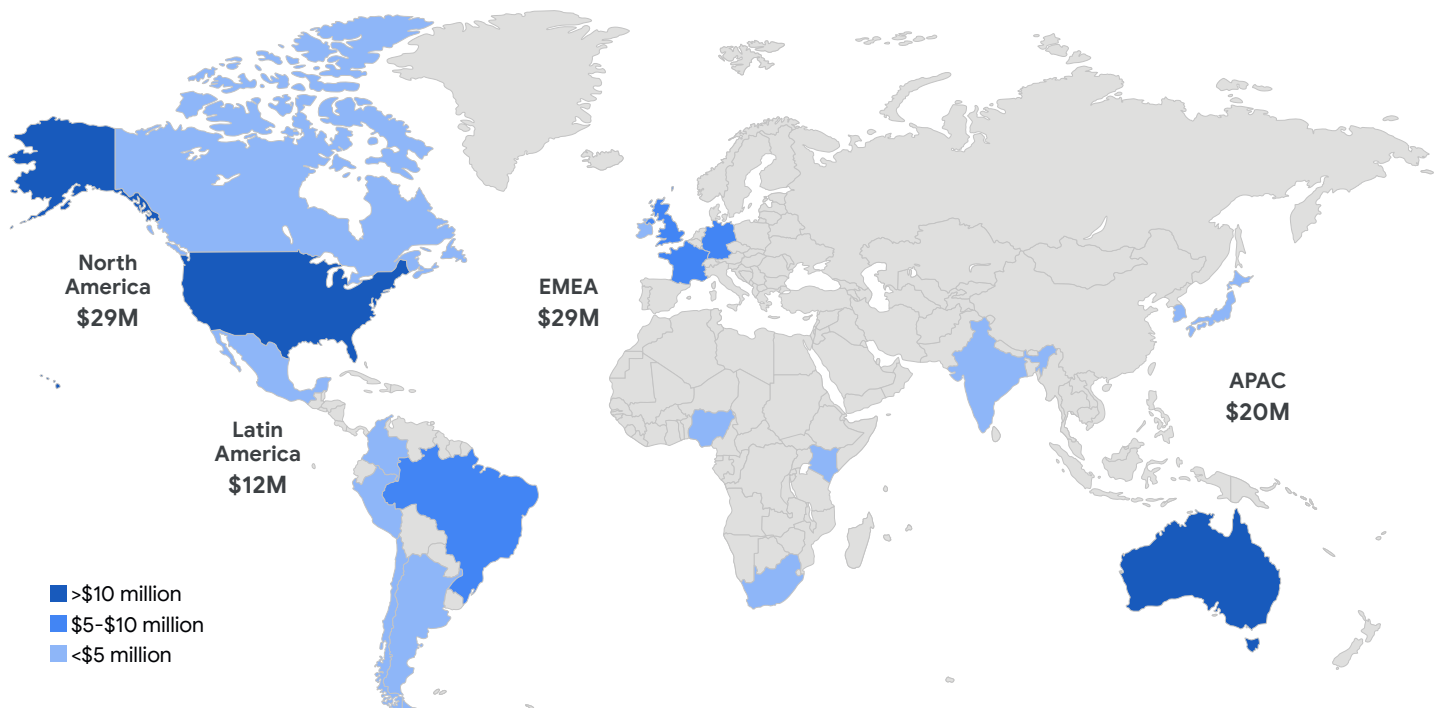
> "Technical support from Google was very important because our team does not have advanced technical capabilities. But through GIC we had access to experts, like software engineers."

History of Google.org Impact Challenges to date

Legend:
- North America (blue)
- Latin America (yellow)
- EMEA (green)
- APAC (red)
- Global (gray)

2013
- United Kingdom (EMEA)
- India (APAC)

2014
- Bay Area, CA, USA (North America)
- Brazil (Latin America)
- United Kingdom (EMEA)
- Australia (APAC)

2015
- Bay Area, CA, USA (North America)
- France (EMEA)
- Japan (APAC)

2016
- Brazil (Latin America)
- Germany (EMEA)
- Australia (APAC)
- South Korea (APAC)

2017
- Canada (North America)
- Latin America (Latin America)

2018
- Cleveland, OH, USA (North America)
- Columbia, SC, USA (North America)
- Oklahoma City, OK, USA (North America)
- Pittsburgh, PA, USA (North America)
- Germany (EMEA)
- Kenya (EMEA)
- Nigeria (EMEA)
- South Africa (EMEA)
- Australia (APAC)

2019
- Bay Area, CA, USA (North America)
- Colorado, USA (North America)
- Illinois, USA (North America)
- Iowa, USA (North America)
- Minnesota, USA (North America)
- Nevada, USA (North America)
- France (EMEA)
- Dublin, Ireland (EMEA)
- Global (AI) (Global)

2020
- Georgia, USA (North America)
- Ohio, USA (North America)
- Nebraska, USA (North America)
- Europe (Safety) (EMEA)

Global distribution of grant dollars

North America $29M

Latin America $12M

EMEA $29M

APAC $20M

Legend:
- >$10 million
- $5-$10 million
- <$5 million

From obstacles to outcomes

World Wide Hearing
Canada

Challenges for changemakers

Working with the LEAP | Pecaut Centre for Social Impact and Boston Consulting Group, we surveyed and interviewed grantees about their experiences both with the GIC and more broadly as innovators in the social sector. Eighty grantees from 17 countries responded to our survey. The interviews and responses represent a diverse range of organizations, from promising social entrepreneurs who started their projects as recently as 2017 to organizations that have been serving their communities for more than a century and helping them to innovate with bold new approaches.

One area of the survey that we were particularly interested in was understanding the challenges these changemakers faced. With that in mind, we asked them to rank the obstacles they experienced in scaling their organizations. While the biggest obstacles varied by geography, issue area, and organization size (among other factors), three obstacles consistently surfaced in both the survey and in interviews with our support partners: inflexible funding for early-stage ideas, few pathways to a sustainable organizational model, and difficulty att acting and retaining talent.

Challenges ranked as a top three obstacle to scale

% of respondents

90%
Inflexible funding for early-stage ideas

56%
Few pathways to a sustainable organizational model

48%
Difficulty att acting and retaining talent
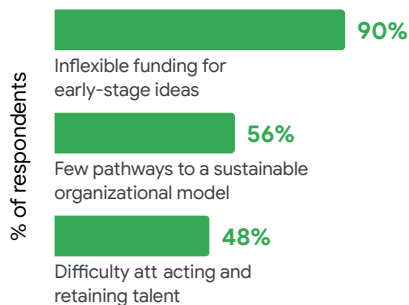
Obtaining flexible funding

Funding, particularly flexible funding for early-stage ideas, topped the obstacle list with 70% of respondents ranking it as their number one obstacle to scale and 90% including it as one of their top three obstacles.[2] Part of the problem is a general lack of access to funding, but more specifically, we believe that it's especially difficult to access unrestricted capital for projects that are perceived to be early-stage, too risky, or both.

Developing sustainable organizational models

"Developing a sustainable organizational model and strategy" was the second-most common challenge for grantees, with 56% of respondents ranking it among their top three obstacles.[3] Grantees cited the limitations of relying on short-term, project-based funding and how that affects their ability to plan and scale the impact of their organizations over the long term. As an organization increased its size (measured by the number of full-time employees), it was less likely to rate organizational model sustainability as an obstacle. This implies that, to some degree, developing an organizational model helps with scaling. Even among larger organizations,[4] 50% of respondents ranked "developing a sustainable organizational model and strategy" among their top three obstacles, which reinforces the notion that this challenge is widespread among changemakers.

Attracting and retaining talent

"Attracting and retaining talent" came in third on the obstacle list, with 48% of respondents ranking it among their top three.[5] The prevalence of this obstacle did not vary meaningfully by organization size. This leads us to believe that the challenge of attracting and retaining talent may, in part, be systemic to the social sector. Similar research conducted by McKinsey & Company and the Omidyar Network supports this conclusion and shows that, unlike the other two challenges, attracting and retaining talent gets harder, not easier, as an organization scales.[6] Discussions with our support partners reinforce these findings. In fact, many said the most common questions by grantees in post-challenge support were related to hiring practices and how to hire the right people, particularly with regard to technical or specialized talent.[7]

Overcoming obstacles

90%

of organizations raised additional funding after receiving a grant, and **68%** of those attributed it to GIC participation.

Although the GIC was not designed specifically with the obstacles outlined above in mind (inflexible funding, few pathways to a sustainable organizational model, and difficulty attracting and retaining talent), it was important to us to understand how our work has helped organizations overcome those obstacles. Of the top three obstacles, funding is perhaps the most straightforward. Nearly every survey respondent (96%) rated the value of GIC funding support as "high" or "very high," with 90% raising further funding after GIC and 68% attributing their additional funding to participation in the GIC.[8] The difficulty of developing a sustainable organizational model is an obstacle the GIC set out to address. In fact, it's one of the drivers behind our partnerships with social sector intermediaries (i.e., our support partners) and our continued collaboration with them on post-challenge workshops and training programs.

More than half of the grantees we surveyed have had further corporate (53%) and nongovernmental organization (58%) partnerships since participating in the GIC. Examples include international partnerships with entities such as the World Bank and the World Food Programme and local partnerships with First Nation communities and government entities. They also include private sector partnerships with organizations like Social Ventures Australia, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, the LEAP | Pecaut Centre for Social Impact in Canada, and ponteAponte in Brazil. According to our survey respondents, partnerships like these have helped drive sustainable organizational strategies and models by unlocking additional streams of funding, expanding the organization's reach and scale, and guaranteeing access to target populations.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

Fundación Ecoinclusión
Argentina

What they're doing with grant dollars: Eliminating plastic pollution by transforming waste into materials to be used in community buildings for vulnerable members of society. GIC support enabled the organization to lay the groundwork for future scalability by streamlining their operations and establishing a process for managing people and networks instead of as individuals executing an end-to-end process.

"Now we are managers of a network: managing people who get a steady income from picking plastic, all the way to the shredders and the production of bricks using plastic that would otherwise be buried."

Similarly, attracting and retaining talent is another challenge that the program addresses both directly and indirectly. Our support partners have led training programs and workshops on a variety of topics, including talent sourcing, retention strategies, and human resources. In many cases, the funding itself can enable hiring. About 80% of surveyed grantees reported greater marketing and visibility since being selected for GIC funding, which many respondents explicitly cited as a positive factor in attracting talent. Overall, we found that an average of 10 full-time employees (FTEs) were added to an organization after being selected in GIC, with the largest absolute increase in FTEs achieved by GiveDirectly Inc., which grew by 125 FTEs since receiving GIC funding in 2018.[9]

Organizations that have grown by at least X FTEs since receiving GIC funding[10]

% of grantees

1 FTE	79%
5 FTE	43%
10 FTE	28%
	10%
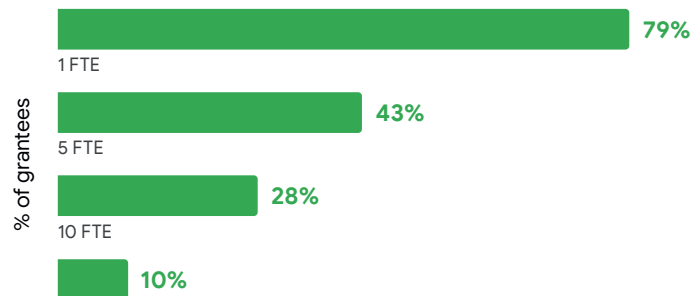
International Psychosocial Organisation
Germany

What they're doing with grant dollars: Combining mental health support with cultural dialogue to provide value-based, holistic psychosocial care to refugees. This includes training refugees and migrants to deliver culturally sensitive counseling in their native languages and reaching new users virtually through an online counseling platform. Since 2016, the organization has trained 122 people in value-based counseling.

"What cannot be underestimated is that winning the GIC award helps give us a stamp of approval. All funding afterwards has been much easier to access because of winning a GIC grant."

Infoxchange
Australia

Outcomes achieved

Many of the grantees the GIC invested in were small or unproven, but held huge potential. We believed that by investing in these innovative, dynamic organizations we could accelerate their impact. But were we right? Did our investments make a difference for communities and for the organizations themselves?

   In seeking to measure impact, our analysis found three key outcomes that unite grantees' efforts across the diversity of our grant portfolio: more lives impacted, more communities reached, and more funding secured.

More lives impacted

Incrementally, the grantees we surveyed assisted 7 million people after participation in the GIC. This translates into one incremental life impacted for every $3 we granted, or an average of about 90,000 additional lives per grantee.[11] Grantees working on health or environmental programs saw the largest growth in lives impacted with increases of roughly 23.5x and 21.7x, respectively.[12]

$1

For every $1 of GIC funding given, grantees gained an additional $1 in funding that they directly attributed to participating in the GIC.

Interestingly, when we compare the numbers of lives impacted across organizations of different sizes, small organizations showed the largest increase.[13] This is likely due, in part, to the high marginal returns of scaling less mature organizations, though we believe it also speaks to the potential of early-stage funding for innovative solutions in the social sector.

More countries reached

More than half of surveyed grantees increased their reach into a new country. Overall, we observed an average 1.8x increase in the number of locations served when we compared their 2019 results with their reach prior to participating in the GIC. In absolute terms, survey respondents expanded their reach to 351 incremental countries within that same period.[14] The largest increases in reach were seen at organizations working on issues related to healthy people (7.3x) and equality and human rights (2.3x).[15] Organizations in countries such as Canada, Germany, and South Africa were more likely to expand their reach, both nationally and internationally, while others in countries such as Brazil, Colombia, and South Korea often continued to focus on issues within their borders, showing strong focus on domestic challenges.

More funding secured

For every $1 of GIC funding given, grantees gained an additional $1 in funding that they directly attributed to participating in the GIC.[16] Accounting only for our survey respondents, this equates to more than $46 million in additional funding, an average of $850,000 in additional funding per grantee.

FUNDEE SPOTLIGHT

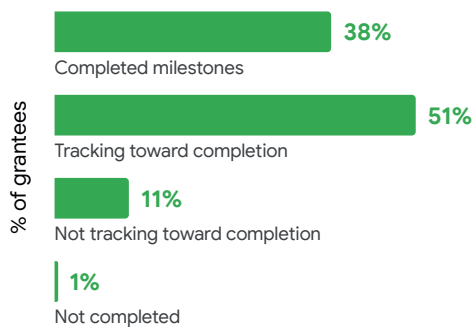### RLabs (ZIto Digital Platform)
South Africa

What they're doing with GIC funding: Tracking and incentivizing positive behavior in young people using a mobile and blockchain platform that enables them to gain professional experience through community work. That behavioral information is then validated and stored in a database that can be used when applying for jobs.

Pratham Books
India

Grantee projects by status of milestone completion[19]

% of grantees

38%
Completed milestones

51%
Tracking toward completion

11%
Not tracking toward completion

1%
Not completed

A shift in mindset

As we consider the performance of the portfolio of projects funded to date, we're excited to see that 89% of ventures had either completed or were tracking toward completion of their milestones.[17] These rates are higher than one would expect in the pursuit of social innovation. We believe that one reason for this outsized success rate may be a shift in mindset among grantees.

For many grantees, the GIC has sparked creative thinking that not only produces innovative programming but also contributes to their ability to overcome funding constraints, develop creative business models in competitive markets, and attract talent and advocates that drive the mission of an organization forward.

The Flight Deck, a 2015 Bay Area grantee, told us, "The GIC had a profound impact on our organization and the field by shifting our way of thinking." This mindset shift is also found among many of Google.org's other grantees. In a separate study done in collaboration with Stanford's Data Impact Lab, we found that 97% of grantees credited Google.org with changing their mindset about what was possible by helping them overcome skepticism and become more interested in scaling their organizations.[18] This message was reinforced in our survey findings, as respondents alluded to similar experiences.

Insights for innovation

The Rumie Initiative
Canada

Sharing our findings

At Google.org, we believe that philanthropy can take calculated risks to support innovative approaches to addressing some of the world's most intractable problems. Innovation can rewrite expectations and shift the economics of impact, reducing both the amount of funding and time needed to achieve results. The GIC team has identified insights that we think apply broadly to the social sector. We hope that by sharing these findings, we can help accelerate innovation.

- **Insight 1:** Flexible funding fosters innovation and increases potential.

- **Insight 2:** Community engagement uncovers moonshot solutions.

- **Insight 3:** Wraparound support multiplies impact.

1 Flexible funding fosters innovation and increases potential.

Given that the majority of our grantees ranked funding as one of their top three challenges, the issue was top of mind for us during discussions with grantees. In one interview, Tariq Fancy, founder and chairman of The Rumie Initiative (GIC Canada participant) and chief investment officer of sustainable investing at BlackRock, outlined an important idea. "If the funders don't open the door to risk-taking, then no risks will be taken. If no risks are taken, then there won't be any innovation," he said.

Many of our support partners echoed this sentiment. "[Grantees] had tried impact investing; they had tried every avenue of for-profit funding," one partner said. "But it was just too risky, too early-stage, or too hard to value, so they couldn't get impact investing. They also couldn't access typical grants, so they were in this limbo of being very impactful and clearly having a good model but not having any access to funding." Similarly, we found that even in developed markets, there's a big gap in funding for early-stage ventures and in discretionary funding to run research and development or innovation.

Systemic challenges in the social sector (e.g., fear of failure, reputational concerns, and limited perceived upside in risk-taking) can distort he incentives for innovation. Our aim with the GIC program is to use our influence as a funder to upend the power dynamics and poor incentive structures in philanthropy. We support a culture of experimentation, learning, and innovation among grantees in three distinct ways:

Fund organizations at different levels of maturity.

We've diversified our grantmaking strategy across a broad range of issue areas, geographies, and organizational maturities so that we can afford to fund both promising early-stage innovators with a compelling vision and century-old organizations looking to experiment and accelerate their impact.

In the 2017 Canadian GIC, we funded both the Victoria Hand Project, an up-and-coming organization providing 3D-printed prosthetic hands that was established in 2016, as well as the Canadian Red Cross, a humanitarian organization founded in 1896 that was looking to scale a new pilot project for disaster management.


Victoria Hand Project

Provide flexible, patient funding.

While our project-based grant structure encourages organizations to apply for funding for a specific initiative or proposed concept, our funding is flexible. We allow grantees to iterate, pivot, and alter their direction based on what they learn over time. The goal is to provide social sector organizations with the same runway and iterative learning that are common among traditional start-ups and private sector companies.

Support early-stage ideas and embrace nonmoral failure.

Even experiments that fail provide valuable lessons for the sector. We should applaud the aspiring social innovators and funders who take on risks to challenge the status quo, tackle old problems in new ways, and pave the way for further innovation.

FUNDEE SPOTLIGHT
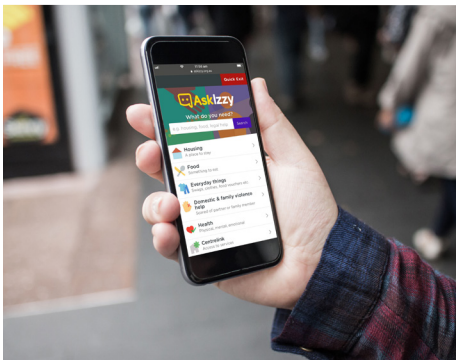
Infoxchange
Australia

What they're doing with GIC funding: Building on more than 30 years of social justice work to connect those at risk of or experiencing homelessness with housing, food, financial support, health services, and more through Ask Izzy, a free mobile app. Google engineers and product managers helped build the app, and Google arranged for it to be publicly launched by former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, among other promotional support. Since then, the site has had more than 2 million searches.

This visibility and credibility halo helped Infoxchange secure approximately AUD $4 million in corporate funding, which enabled the organization to hire staff to increase its community support capacity. In 2019, Infoxchange helped 2 million people in need and partnered with 25,000 not-for-profit, community, and government services.

"GIC helped to attract other partners and other funders to us. Google took the risk, and then opened the doors."

Many of our grantees highlighted the importance of flexible funding as a lever for sustainable impact. A staff member at the African Prisons Project said, "Grant spending conditions [by funders] can be restrictive and undercut the effective delivery of project milestones. The flexibility of the GIC grant has allowed us to invest resources in project areas in the way we needed." This organization has gone on to open a total of nine prison-based legal aid clinics in Kenya, offering free legal services to 7,000 inmates and assisting in 1,500 releases.

In fact, many organizations made a point to draw a direct line between funding and the ability to innovate. A South Korean grantee from our 2016 cohort said, "The funding opened up the opportunity to experiment [with] new ideas." And an Australian grantee from our 2014 cohort went so far as to say, "Without the GIC, we could have never gotten our innovative but risky idea off the ground."

INSIGHT 1: Flexible capital fosters innovation and increases potential.

Opportunity

Social sector contributors who are looking to accelerate impact should consider how they can foster innovative projects, solutions, and organizations that are targeting the world's most intractable problems.

WHERE TO START

Funders: Make the bets that can change the economics of an intractable problem. Your capital often has the highest potential return on investment when it's targeted at a gap in the sector (e.g., toward early-stage innovators or in flexible or unrestricted ways), as this can make significant progress toward solving persistent social issues.

Social entrepreneurs and organizations: Experiment, take risks, and foster a culture of innovation. Instead of asking yourself, "Is this going to work?" try asking, "If it works, would it matter?" If it doesn't work, consider showcasing examples of nonmoral failure and sharing your learnings to help benefit the sector.

Policymakers: Allocate more funds to early-stage organizations or projects in existing government funding and R&D programs. Explore more flexible grant structures that allow social entrepreneurs and organizations to learn, iterate, and even pivot based on their experiments.

Inspiring examples: Canada's Experimentation Direction, Finland's Place to Experiment, UK's What Works Networks

2 Community engagement uncovers moonshot solutions.

When we work with local communities in our grantmaking, we're able to find new solutions to intractable problems that we likely wouldn't have discovered on our own. Participation redistributes power and enables those who have been excluded from processes in the past to be deliberately and thoughtfully included in the decisions that affect them. It's a response to and a correction of the asymmetry of power between funders and the communities they serve.

Participatory philanthropy requires that we actively engage communities in decision-making, seeking out the expertise and experiences of those who are closest to the problems we're trying to solve. This approach is informed by our belief that the people closest to the challenges are also often closest to the solutions.

Our approach to fostering community participation in GICs now includes multiple design decisions that address the needs of the communities we're working in, as defined by that community. We believe that this can reduce redundancy, fill gaps in available services, and make grantees and funders co-creators of lasting solutions. We work to create space for par icipatory practice in four key ways:

Launch an open and accessible call.

Our call to social innovators uses a broad subject matter lens and open application process to pull together a pool of applicants that represents the communities and issue areas within the region. We strive to conduct communications in the local languages, and Googlers with regional expertise provide support o maximize our ability to offer help.

Partner with local social sector leaders.

Social sector partner organizations serve as a proxy for the community's voice throughout the challenge design, application review, and post-challenge support processes. These organizations are hired based on their nuanced understanding of the people and issues in that community. With their help, we're able to provide our grantees with real and lasting value that's built on an understanding of specific needs, including gaps in the sector, relevant regulatory frameworks, and fundraising dynamics.

Participatory design in action

The Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, a 2015 Bay Area grantee, credited the GIC for enabling its shift toward open-call prototyping, an inclusive approach that other cities have since adopted.

"The major redesign of public space typically occurs with a single designer and with limited community input. With an open-call prototyping process, any citizen with a creative idea—from the experienced designer to the everyday citizen— was able to contribute ideas for a better Market Street. We effectively involved everyone from San Francisco's diverse neighborhoods, empowering community members to deeply engage in the future of their cities."

Empower a panel of local experts.

While our team and the local support partner develop a short list of the most promising applications, a carefully selected panel of local experts helps guide the selection process. Panels of activists, existing grantees, fellow funders, politicians, journalists, and even socially minded athletes and celebrities review applications and host live pitches. By working with prominent and thoughtful experts, we hope to shift our role from arbiters to facilitators in a participatory, community-based funding decision.

Acknowledge the People's Choice.

In most GICs, we set aside one grant, sometimes worth as much as $1 million, for the public to select from a shortlist of finalist organizations. We believe that the people immediately affected by the work should have a direct say in how to build their own communities.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

Arctic Eider Society
Canada

What they're doing with grant dollars: Helping Inuit and Indigenous Arctic communities adapt to climate change. Participatory solution design has helped the Arctic Eider Society with connectivity and collaboration across remote Arctic communities, creating a unique tool to support capacity building and self-determination in research, education, and stewardship for Indigenous populations.
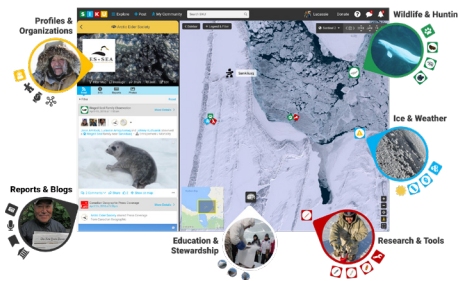
The society built partnerships and community relationships across the region—including with The Weather Network, Ocean Wise, and the RBC Foundation—to inform the co-creation of SIKU, a living, app-based, open-source archive of Inuit knowledge that has impacted more than 100 Indigenous people since its launch in December 2019. The organization also collaborated with Northern school boards and community leaders to create training and educational materials.

INSIGHT 2: Community engagement uncovers moonshot solutions.

Opportunity

Social sector stakeholders that are intent on solving the right problems, in the right ways, need to include and leverage the perspectives and lived experiences of their target communities within the solutions they design and the methods by which they fund them.

WHERE TO START

Funders: Look for relevant lived experiences or thoughtful user research at the organizations you fund. Involve the organizations and marginalized communities in decisions about how to allocate funding.

Social entrepreneurs and organizations: Ensure that you consult with and include your target communities throughout your design process. Co-create your solutions based on the knowledge and experiences of community members. For example, you can partner with individuals or organizations that serve as a voice for the community you're helping and include them in the design process. Moreover, you can ensure that members of the community are represented in your organization or on your board of directors and advisors.

Policymakers: Consult with the people you're serving throughout the policy design process. This will help you learn about the problems to focus on and how to approach them. Consider exploring policy frameworks that could drive innovation by incentivizing more participatory decision-making and human-centered design.

Inspiring examples: Bloomberg Philanthropies' What Works Cities and UK Policy Lab

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GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT
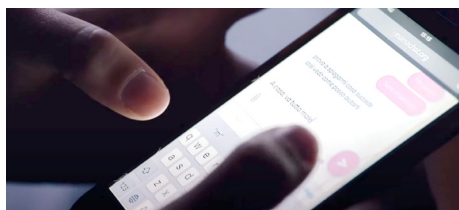
Mama Chat
Italy

What they're doing with grant dollars: Fighting violence against women, inequality, eating disorders, and postpartum depression and anxiety through anonymous, professional, and accessible listening. To make it simple and safe for anyone to ask for help, chat communication is specifically designed without registration and payment barriers. Since it launched a few years ago, Mama Chat has seen over 4,000 users.

3 Wraparound support multiplies impact.

Grantmaking is only one step in a longer journey to help social innovators reach their full potential. Many elements of the GIC come together to support the value that grant funding provides and to multiply the impact that social service organizations can deliver. As the GIC program has evolved, we've increasingly prioritized ancillary support. And while the specific scope and nature of our support varies depending on the GIC and grantee, we've identified four categories of wraparound support that came up repeatedly in our survey and through interviews with grantees and support partners alike:

Capacity building and professional support.

There are many structured and unstructured ways that the GIC and our support partners invest in building our grantees' capacity to absorb and deploy their funding in an effective and efficient way. This includes context-specific training and workshops, coaching and project support, and ad hoc assistance with setting, assessing, and reassessing grantee milestones. While the specific anecdotes varied, a common thread across the survey responses was an appreciation for the work of our support partners. Many grantees used open-ended comment boxes to express their gratitude for their support partners' efforts. Similarly, we want to acknowledge that many of the impacts and outcomes that we've outlined throughout this report could not have been achieved without the continued collaboration and support of our community partners.

Googler mentorship and support.

Core to our mission at Google.org is bringing the best of Google to innovators who are committed to creating a world that works for everyone. Our Google volunteers have been instrumental in helping us meet our mission, and we're incredibly grateful for the time and expertise they've given to the GIC. A 2016 GIC grantee emphasized the wide range of support a Googler can offer, including mentorship, technical support, and organizational development. This grantee described Google support as "invaluable," while others mentioned that the consultations with Googler volunteers were a highlight.

Networking and visibility.

Sometimes all an organization needs is to be seen and heard by the right people. That's why we invest in marketing to announce our finalists and grantees. Some organizations explicitly attributed their new partnerships to the visibility that being selected for a GIC grant provided. While specific anecdotes vary, more than half of surveyed grantees said they thought additional corporate and nongovernmental organization (NGO partnerships resulted from the increased visibility GIC brought.

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

World Wide Hearing
Canada

What they're doing with grant dollars: Connecting children to their environment through hearing by providing access to affordable hearing aids and quality healthcare using a holistic, community-based approach around the world.

> "When it was announced that GIC was supporting us, potential donors reached out to us as well as potential project partners. Some of those potential donors became long-standing supporters of our work."

Credibility and halo effects.

The importance of brand association came up repeatedly in conversations with grantees, lending credence to the notion that being selected as a GIC grantee can in and of itself serve as a multiplier for impact. "GIC was fantastic for brand awareness and for further credibility of our work," said a respondent from GreenFingers Mobile, a GIC South Africa grantee. For technology-driven organizations, Google's standing in the technology industry is a major benefit.

The intangible quality of gaining credibility is leading to tangible effects like follow-on funding. "Receiving an award from GIC gave our organization proof of credibility to pursue applications for other large grants, such as those from the United Nations Development Programme," said a representative from the Justice Defenders, a GIC Kenya grantee.

Scale is also a benefit. "Being recognized by the GIC has added credibility to our organization and has opened many doors for us," said a representative from the Victoria Hand Project. "It has helped us expand operations to different parts of the world and more easily bring in donations."

It's especially exciting to observe these effects organizations selected for People's Choice funding such as UNSHAKEABLE, a 2019 grantee in Nevada, because it further reinforces the value of involving the public in grant allocation. "We received so much increased awareness for our organization as a result of the People's Choice Award," said a representative from UNSHAKEABLE. "Two new nonprofits reached out to possibly partner with us, and a half-dozen women connected with us asking how they could help us help the women we serve."

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

The Rumie Initiative
Canada

What they're doing with grant dollars: Educating children in underserved communities around the world using affordable technology that enables the distribution of digital learning resources to communities with limited internet access. Training and support from Google on product development, Android app development and troubleshooting, Google Analytics, and content creation enabled the organization to build the Indigenous LearnCloud portal to address the lack of access to localized educational content for youth in Canadian Indigenous communities.

Aided by partnerships with telecom companies to amplify its impact, The Rumie Initiative in 2019 set growth targets for using this new micro-learning platform to impact over 500,000 learners by 2022, 10 million learners by 2024, and over 50 million by 2028.

"Google support has been invaluable to us this year. In pa ticular, we have leveraged the expe tise of Google staff members as mentors."

Opportunity

Social sector stakeholders can multiply their impact by providing additional support beyond funding.

WHERE TO START

Funders: Incorporate support that goes beyond funding . This can help grant recipients build their capacity to absorb and deploy funding effectively. Consider sharing learnings about what works to help increase the prevalence of wraparound support models throughout the sector.

Inspiring examples: Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation and Y Combinator[20]

Social entrepreneurs and organizations: Seek out partners that provide resources beyond funding. Encourage your existing partners to consider other types of nonmonetary support to help you drive meaningful impact.

Policymakers: Foster collaboration and partnership between organizations. This can supplement funding with additional layers of capacity building, expe tise, and support Consider directly funding support   providers and incentivizing other organizations with relevant expe tise to provide wraparound support o social sector organizations.

Inspiring examples: Ashoka, Institute for Strategic Dialogue, LEAP | Pecaut Centre for Social Impact, MaRS Solutions Lab

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GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

Pratham Books
India

What they're doing with grant dollars: Providing kids with easy access to language-appropriate reading materials by building a collaborative platform called StoryWeaver that lets people share, translate, and create children's e-books. Through StoryWeaver's open-source technology, stories can be translated and even modified to expand the diversity of storybooks available to children, especially in their native languages.

In three years, StoryWeaver scaled from 800 storybooks to 20,000 new e-books across 131 native languages and enabled over 200 million total book reads.

"The mission of Pratham Books is to see a book in every child's hands. To that end, the GIC grant has enabled the creation of and access to reading resources in over 205 languages and has helped us to reach millions of children."

Colombian Civil Air Patrol
Colombia

A foundation for social innovation

At Google.org and at Google more broadly, we believe in fostering the potential for innovation—accelerating how we address the world's most intractable social issues. It's our hope that sharing the findings and insights from our Google.org Impact Challenges will inspire more innovation, experimentation, and community-driven solutions to global problems.

Together, we have an opportunity to help do more to make our communities—and the world beyond—an even better place.

Appendix

Thank you to our partners

Report contributors

with data collection support from the **Stanford Data Impact Lab**.

Challenge support partners

Endnotes

1. Based on survey respondents (n=80) to the Google.org Impact Challenge Grantee Survey (November 2019). Data does not include select 2019 GICs (Bay Area, Colorado, Minnesota, and Nevada), which represent more than 15 additional ventures across various issue areas.

2. Based on survey respondents (n=80) to the Google.org Impact Challenge Grantee Survey (November 2019) who ranked "funding" in their top three biggest obstacles: "Please rank in order the following obstacles in scaling your organization."

3. Based on survey respondents (n=80) to the Google.org Impact Challenge Grantee Survey (November 2019) who ranked "developing a sustainable organizational model and strategy" in their top three biggest obstacles: "Please rank in order the following obstacles in scaling your organization."

4. Larger organizations are defin d as those with 30 or more full-time employees.

5. Based on survey respondents (n=80) to the Google.org Impact Challenge Grantee Survey (November 2019) who ranked "att acting and retaining talent" in their top three biggest obstacles: "Please rank in order the following obstacles in scaling your organization."

6. Rebecca Doherty and Alfonso Pulido, "3 Ways Social Entrepreneurs Can Solve Their Talent Problem," *Harvard Business Review*, June 29, 2016.

7. The remaining challenges, in order of prevalence, included rallying nonfi ancial support r volunteers (31%), regulatory and political barriers (24%), and unclear or competing objectives and goals (15%).

8. Based on survey respondents (n=80) to the Google.org Impact Challenge Grantee Survey (November 2019).

9. Ibid.

10. Based on survey respondents (n=80) to the Google.org Impact Challenge Grantee Survey (November 2019), comparing the "# of full time staff" in he year prior to GIC funding to the current year 2019.

11. Based on survey respondents (n=80) to the Google.org Impact Challenge Grantee Survey (November 2019).

12. Ibid.

13. Small organizations are defin d as those with 15 or fewer full-time employees.

14. This figure represents the total nonunique increase in the number of countries reached by all survey respondents (e.g., two different grantees expanding their operations to the USA would count as two incremental countries reached by the cohort)

15. Based on survey respondents (n=80) to the Google.org Impact Challenge Grantee Survey (November 2019).

16. Ibid.

17. This figure is based on a subset (n=186) of grantees for which Tides, our grant administration partner, was able to make an assessment based on whether a given project had or was tracking toward receiving all of its associated milestone payments as of November 2019.

18. "Data Impact Lab," Stanford University.

19. These figures are based on a subset (n=186) of grantees for which Tides, our grant administration partner, was able to make an assessment based on whether a given project had or was tracking toward receiving all of its associated milestone payments as of November 2019. Percentages have been rounded up to the nearest decimal.

20. While Y Combinator is known for its unparalleled support mo el in scaling early-stage start-u s, each of its cohorts also usually includes two to four nonprofi s.