The J.M.K. Innovation Prize

Growing Grassroots Resilience

2019

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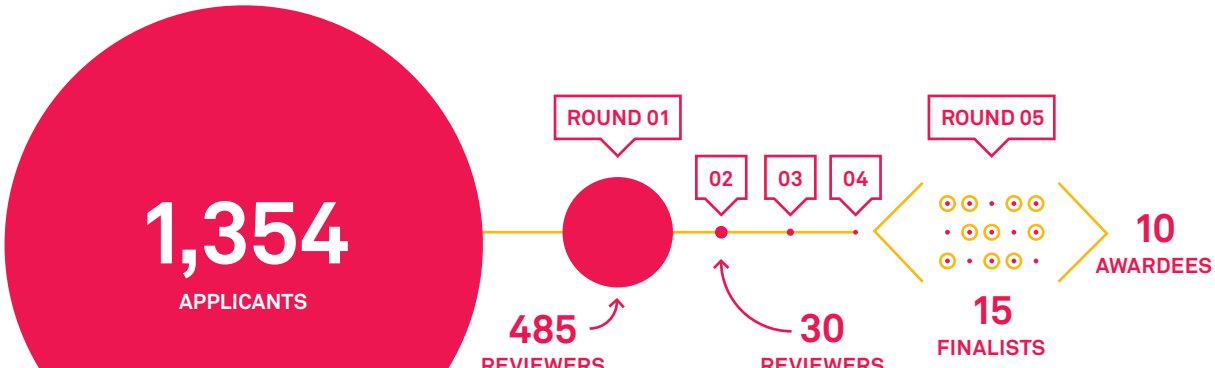
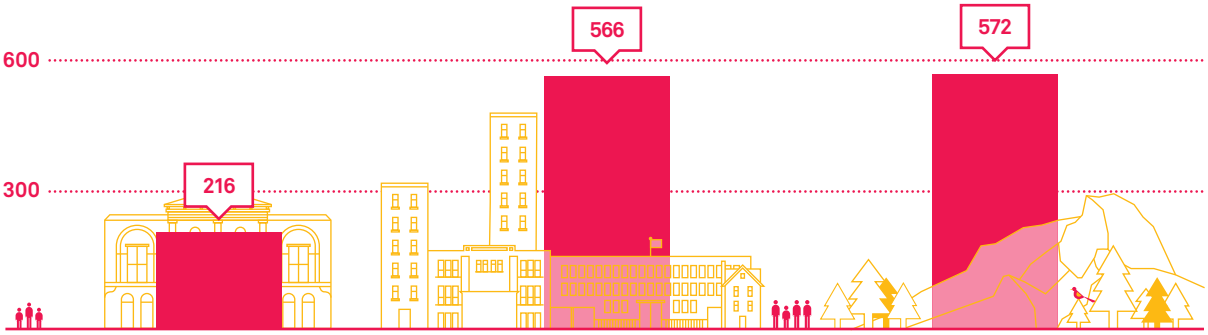
The J.M.K. Innovation Prize: An overview

In 2019, a record number of applicants from all 50 states, as well as Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and Native tribes, responded to The J.M. Kaplan Fund's call for wildly creative solutions to social and environmental challenges.



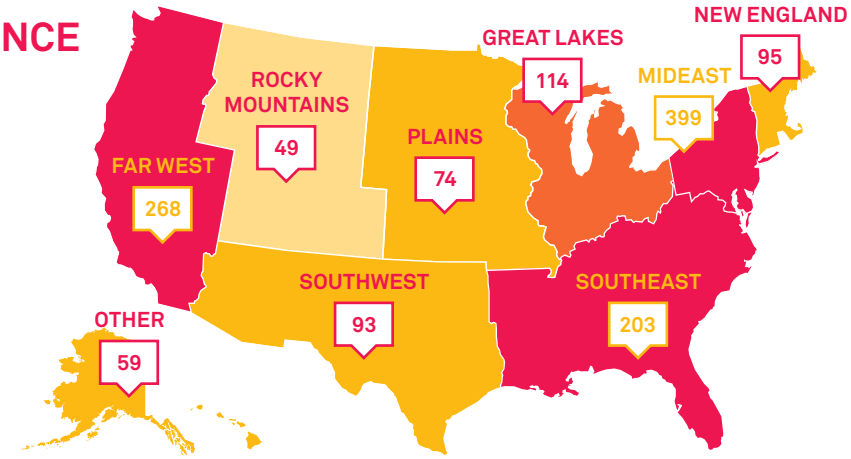
FUNDING AREAS



REGION OF RESIDENCE

APPLICATIONS PER REGION

- 1–49
- 50–99
- 100–199
- 200+



Introduction
True Grit

Since we launched The J.M.K. Innovation Prize in 2015, the challenges facing America's social entrepreneurs have sharply mounted. Yet when we put out the call for this third round of the Prize, a record 1,354 applicants from all 50 states answered with no-holds-barred optimism and ambition. Across a pool distinguished by early-stage initiatives—44% of all proposals featured ideas less than two years old—we found innovators partnering with public-sector activists, tackling gentrification, empowering frontline climate fighters, and much more in the quest for world-changing solutions.

These applicants showed how top-down inequities can be conquered through bottom-up action. "A surprising number of ideas were micro and community-based in nature," one Prize reviewer observed. "From a grassroots perspective, people are asking: What can I do in my community?" Whether that's eco-friendly homes for Indigenous populations in Arizona, or healing-centered support for system-impacted LGBTQ+ people in Nebraska, the power of individuals coming together to create change is palpable.

Above all, we found an abundance of resourcefulness and moxie. We heard from incarcerated former gang members on Rikers Island who are leveraging hard-won experience to support high-risk young adults. We found descendants of Appalachian coal miners who are turning acid mine drainage into artist-grade pigments while restoring long-ruined streams. We discovered a first-generation American Muslim lawyer in South Dakota helping to quash hate-filled legislation. This is what resilience looks like in America today.

As in our two previous rounds of the Prize, we have selected ten awardees to receive up to $175,000 each over three years. Throughout their Prize term, awardees will also take part in peer learning opportunities to guide their innovation journey. Though we could only elevate ten awardees, we've found many more worthy of support, and have spotlighted powerful ideas from the entire pool of applicants in this report.

From the Fund's inception more than 70 years ago, we've never wavered in our belief that modest investments in bold ideas can make outsize impacts. We are beyond excited to share lessons we've learned from these undaunted visionaries—and some of the small ways in which the Prize has contributed to large-scale social change.

The Takeaways

1

Amplify the agency of directly impacted innovators.

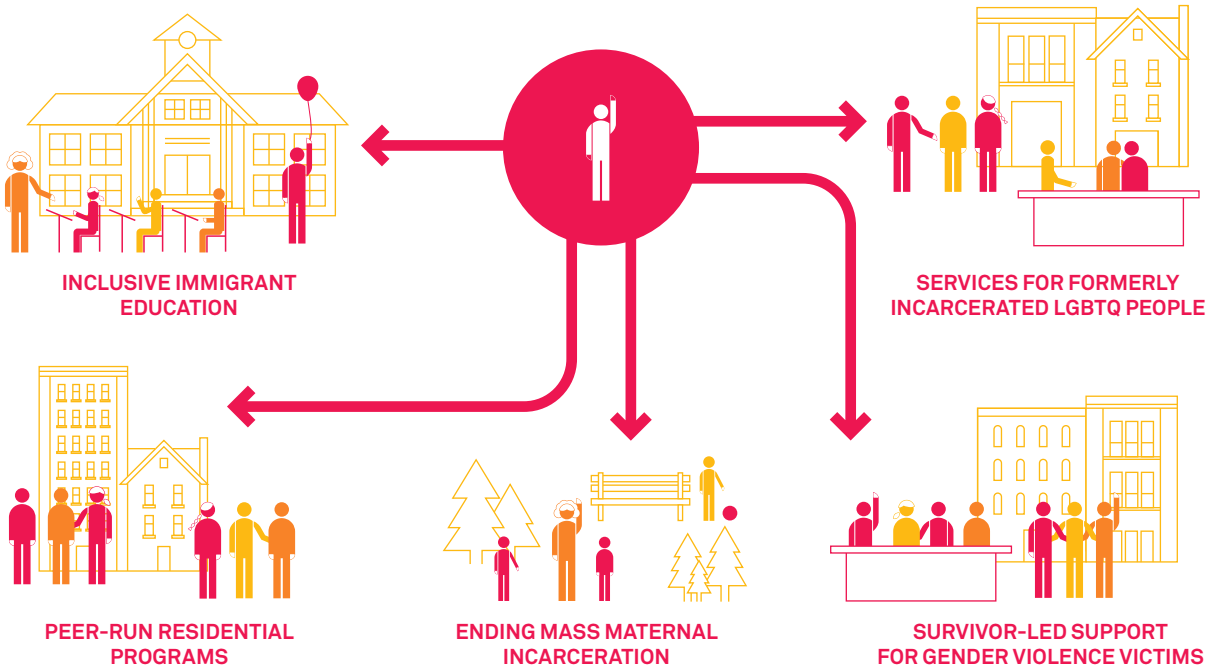
A notable set of applicants to the 2019 J.M.K. Innovation Prize elevates leaders most directly touched by mass incarceration, immigration enforcement, and other system impacts. From a survivor-led support group for sex-trafficking victims to a Muslim immigrant lawyer fighting anti-refugee bigotry, directly impacted leaders are leveraging hard-won life lessons for the cause of social justice. As two incarcerated Prize applicants told us—writing from a Rikers Island jail—their background as criminal justice system-impacted men who grew up in the Bronx is critical to giving at-risk youth the tools they need to envision a fresh future: "Coming home from jail to nothing has taught us first-hand what these needs are and how important they are." As these applicants argue, amplifying the agency of directly impacted innovators is key to propelling social change.

Social enterprises are uplifting these leaders through a wide variety of initiatives. For example, Omaha, Nebraska–based Black and Pink, a Prize awardee, has pioneered a program that serves system-impacted LGBTQ+ people in need of support upon release from prison or jail. Entirely staffed by system-impacted individuals, the reentry program has offered housing assistance, employment readiness training, and other services—but most of all, roles of power and leadership for LGBTQ+ individuals. "If you look at leaders in the mainstream reform movement, there are no queer folks at all in the forefront," said Dominique Morgan, national director of Black and Pink. Morgan is now drawing on his own journey as a queer, Black, system-impacted man to reframe the complex issues facing LGBTQ+ people through a lens that is both trauma-informed and culturally appropriate. "Most programs say: We need to fix you," Morgan explained. "We approach system-impacted folks through a different framework, drawing on our own lived experience, that really empowers them."

For ImmSchools, another Prize awardee, current and former undocumented immigrant educators are central to addressing the needs of students who are immigrants or in mixed-status families—

New pathways to healing and justice

Social enterprises are tapping the power of directly impacted innovators to advance solutions that are trauma-informed and rooted in community.



those in which family members have a different immigration status, such as undocumented parents who live with citizen children. While federal law guarantees children a K-12 education regardless of immigration status, such families still face monumental barriers. "Thousands of students have been coming to school afraid and traumatized about potentially losing their parents to deportation," said Viridiana Carrizales, co-founder and CEO of ImmSchools, who herself grew up in Dallas as an undocumented student. She and co-founder Vanessa Luna—a former recipient of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program—launched ImmSchools to provide training in inclusive practices and curricula that embrace immigrant children—and celebrate them as resourceful community members. "As immigrants, we are people who make the best out of nothing," Carrizales said. "Imagine living in this world where you are constantly hearing that you don't belong. And yet these kids come to school every day smiling and ready to learn—that's resilience."

Black and Pink creates roles of power for system-impacted, LGBTQ+ people. (Photo: Abiola Kosoko)

2

Indian Country is a crucible for catalytic change.

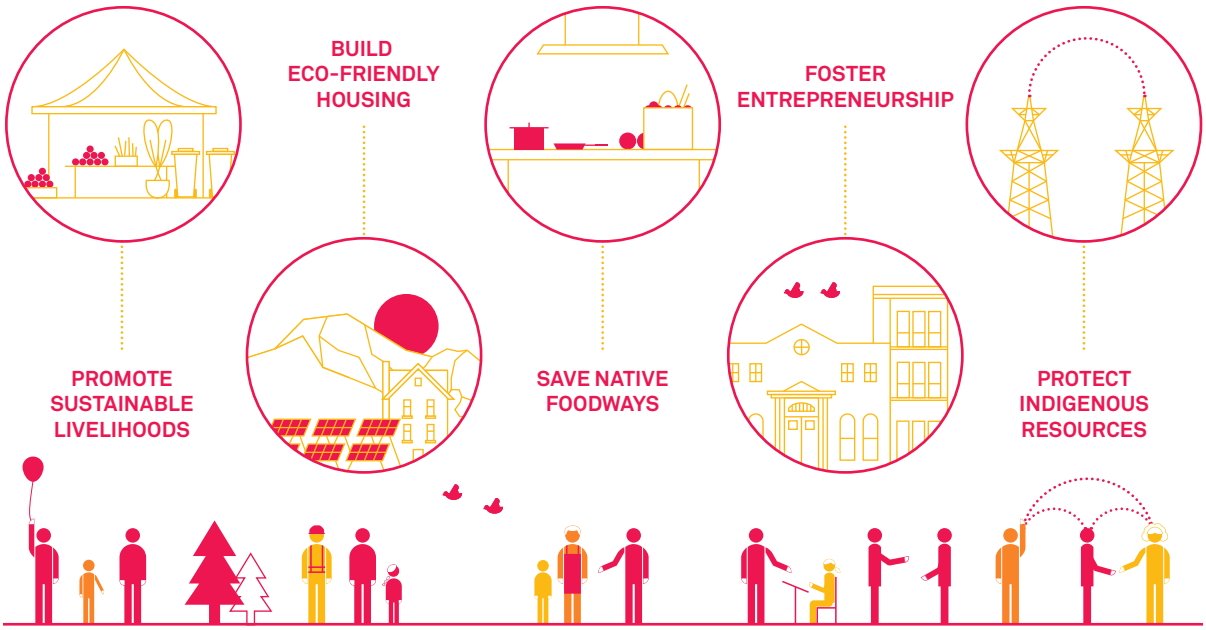
The Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota is emblematic of the challenges facing America's Indigenous communities. Spanning more than two million acres of dramatic Badlands and prairie, Pine Ridge is one of the poorest places in the nation. Its residents are beset by low life expectancy, shocking infant mortality, and immense rates of poverty. "Economic despair has always been the norm," said Sean Sherman, co-founder of NATIFS, a Prize finalist dedicated to addressing the economic and health crises affecting Native communities. What's more, according to Native Americans in Philanthropy, only 0.4% of dollars from large U.S. foundations are directed toward Native causes. That's a startling gap in support for people who often fight on the front lines for some of America's most awe-inspiring heritage.

This year, we found social innovators boldly filling that gap across Indian Country—the collective term for land under the jurisdiction of tribal governments. Some are tackling a housing shortage of at least 200,000 units through participatory architecture, technical assistance, and eco-friendly design. Others are confronting a legacy of extractive economic development, working to support an Indigenous economic base tailored to the needs of Native entrepreneurs. A number are equipping Indigenous groups with environmental monitoring tools, virtual reality, and other technology to help them collect data, create maps, and bolster campaigns to protect heritage sites and ecosystems. Still others are devoted to advancing ancestrally-grounded climate resilience, promoting Indigenous languages, reducing Native recidivism, and training "earth lawyers" to protect sovereign lands—an upwelling of energy and initiative on tribal lands that show how heritage conservation can advance broad social impacts.

For Sherman, a member of the Oglala Lakota tribe who was born in Pine Ridge, the solution emerged through his vocation as a chef and food educator. NATIFS—short for North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems—taps the potential of Indigenous foodways to be a catalyst for improving health, promoting economic development, and preserving tribal culture. "When I was growing

Empowering Indigenous peoples

Innovative efforts among tribal communities show how social justice can be advanced through diverse issue areas such as food, housing, environmental health, and heritage.



up, we only had one grocery store, with nothing of value in it that was healthy and nutritious," Sherman recalled. "Today, people are surviving off gas-station food and fast food. A lot of these tribes have lost so much knowledge around food and their land." In response, Sherman is creating an Indigenous Food Lab in Minneapolis that can be replicated across America. "We want to entice Indigenous peoples to harvest wild plants, help them create community kitchens, and connect them with heirloom seeds that have deep stories they can carry with them," Sherman explained. By reuniting Native peoples with nutritious and spiritually fortifying traditional foods, NATIFS counters large-scale challenges—decades of injustice, vast health disparities, and ruinous environmental practices—through the smallest of acts: literally planting seeds of change.

By reclaiming food heritage, NATIFS boosts tribal health and heals ancestral trauma. (Photo: The Sioux Chef)

3

Mission-driven health care heals systemic social ills.

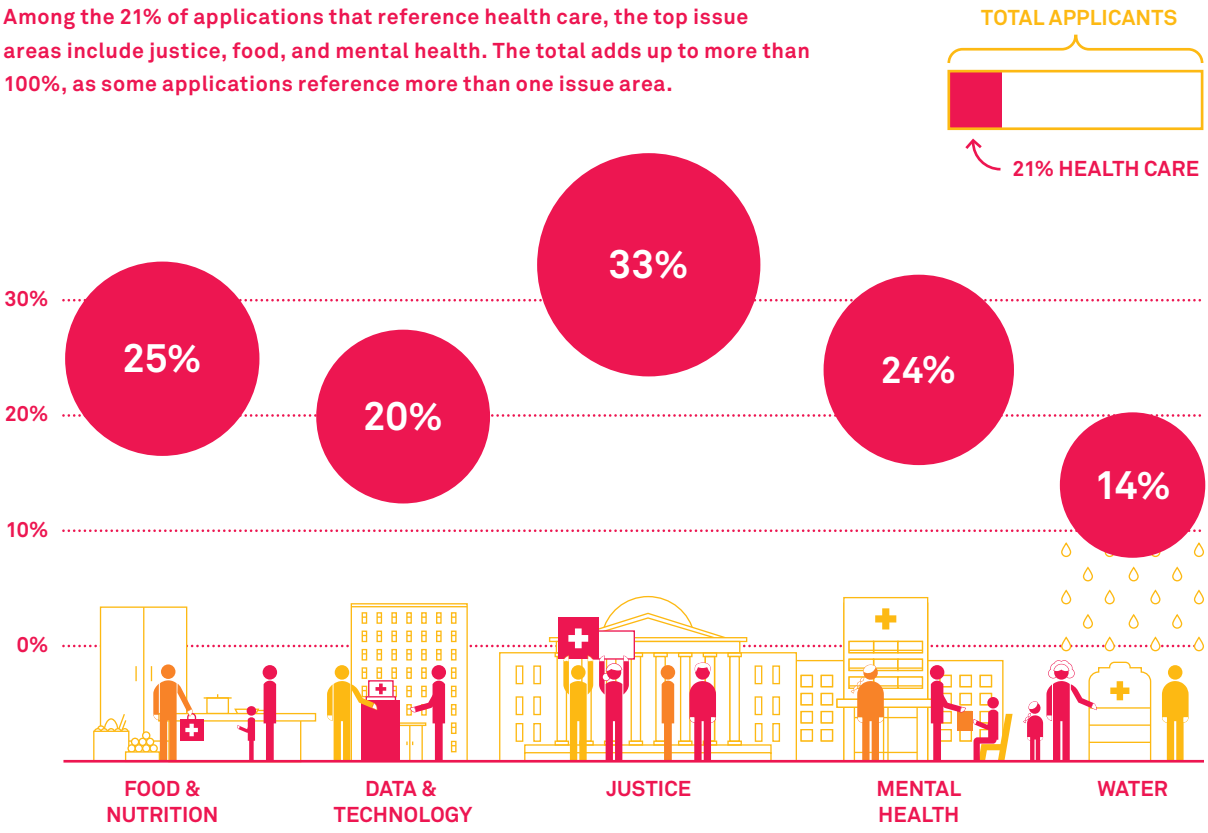
A considerable number of this year's Prize applicants are focused on health: more than one in five reference health or health care, pointing to a convergence of cross-disciplinary innovators who are linking health, place, and community empowerment. From building health equity to abolishing medical debt, health professionals and their allies are reframing health care through the lens of social justice.

Among health-related applications, by far the greatest share (41%) focus on children and youth, for whom linking health and justice can have far-reaching impacts. Take health literacy education: according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 30 million adults lack even basic health literacy skills. This gap is linked to poor health status, poor health outcomes, and greater health-care expenditures. "That burden tends to fall disproportionately on low-income and minority communities," said April Inniss, the founder of Prize applicant eekMD. "It's a huge problem with huge health and economic impacts." Through her clinical practice, Inniss found that she could use early childhood education to improve children's long-term physical, emotional, and financial well-being, while reframing a national conversation about how and in which communities we build these twenty-first-century skills. As a self-described "pediatrician on a mission," Inniss launched eekMD and its Mini Medical School that uses fun-filled games to teach children about health. Now creating a medical mystery podcast for kids, Inniss also aims to help children actualize a broader concept of health, including an understanding of the health impacts of environments. This "health in all policies" perspective—in which health considerations are embedded across sectors—offers potentially game-changing solutions that inspire healthy lives and places, paying dividends long into the future.

Beyond this focus on youth, a significant share of health-related Prize applications (28%) are reaching economically disadvantaged populations, while a similar number (27%) serve the incarcerated or formerly incarcerated. These high-need populations are benefiting from what one applicant described

A prescription for social justice

Among the 21% of applications that reference health care, the top issue areas include justice, food, and mental health. The total adds up to more than 100%, as some applications reference more than one issue area.



as a new wave of "rebelliously dedicated health-care professionals" who seek to reinvent public hospitals as hubs of "transformational poverty care and social medicine" that maximize services for undocumented, uninsured, and unhoused patients. Meanwhile, another Prize applicant founded a social enterprise in the belief that medical debt, in and of itself, is a social injustice. Working to provide financial relief for people burdened by medical bills, the project has "reverse-engineered" technologies used by the debt collection industry to buy and abolish hundreds of millions of dollars of medical debt for the economically disadvantaged. Such innovations show how the world of health care presents a sprawling opportunity to tackle soaring social challenges that touch nearly every aspect of individual and community well-being.

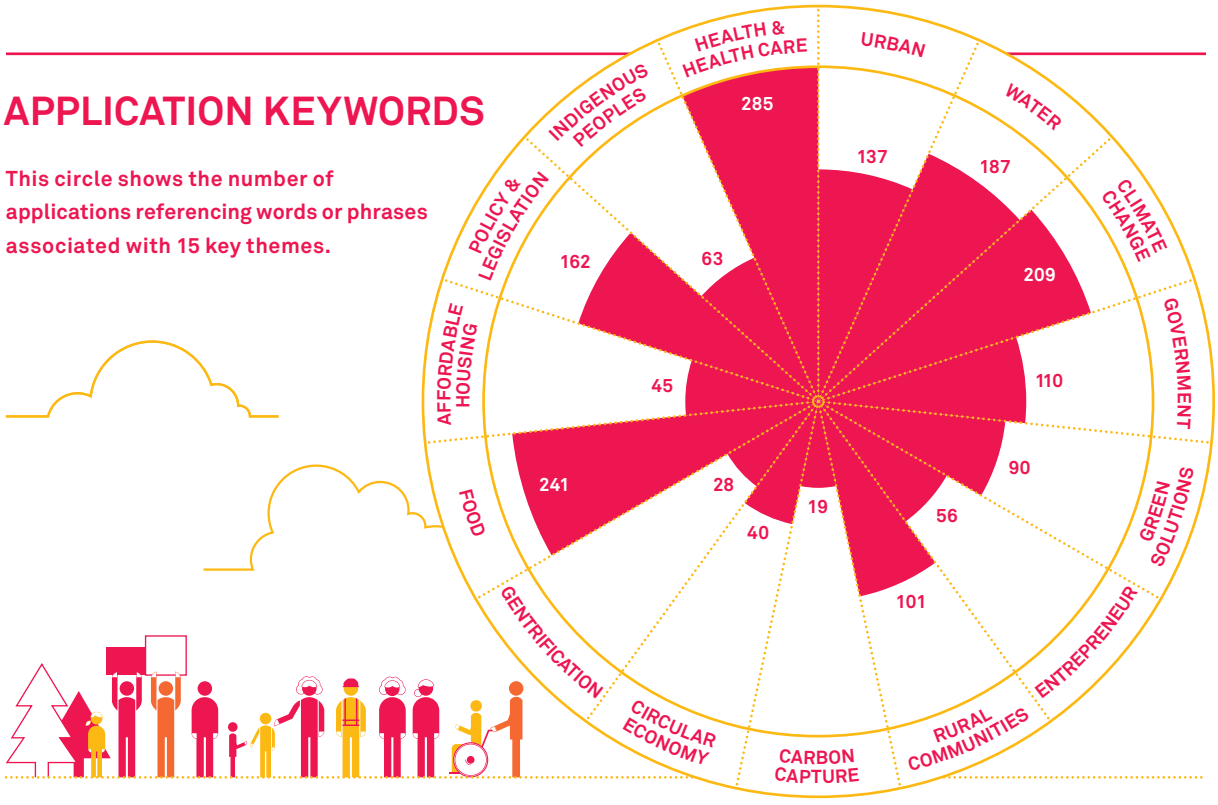
Through health literacy, eekMD empowers young people as advocates for community wellness. (Photo: eekMD)

The J.M.K. Innovation Prize: By the numbers

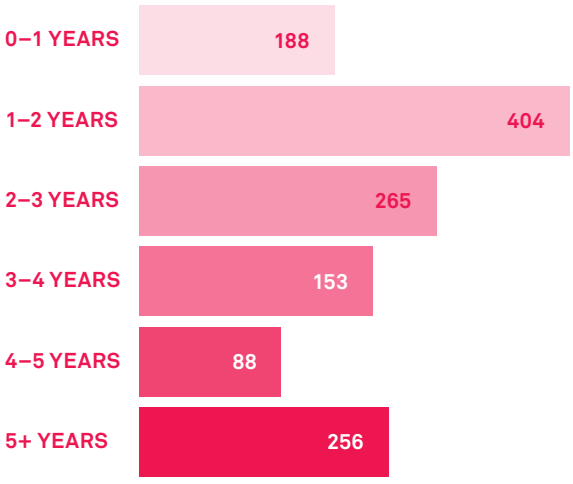
The Prize's 1,354 applications offer a snapshot of social innovators aiming to strengthen community resilience through an array of change-making enterprises that span issue areas, geographic scales, and target social groups.

APPLICATION KEYWORDS

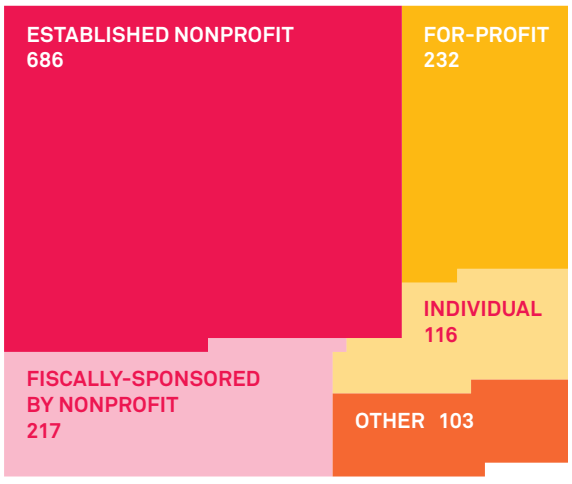
This circle shows the number of applications referencing words or phrases associated with 15 key themes.



LENGTH OF TIME ON IDEA



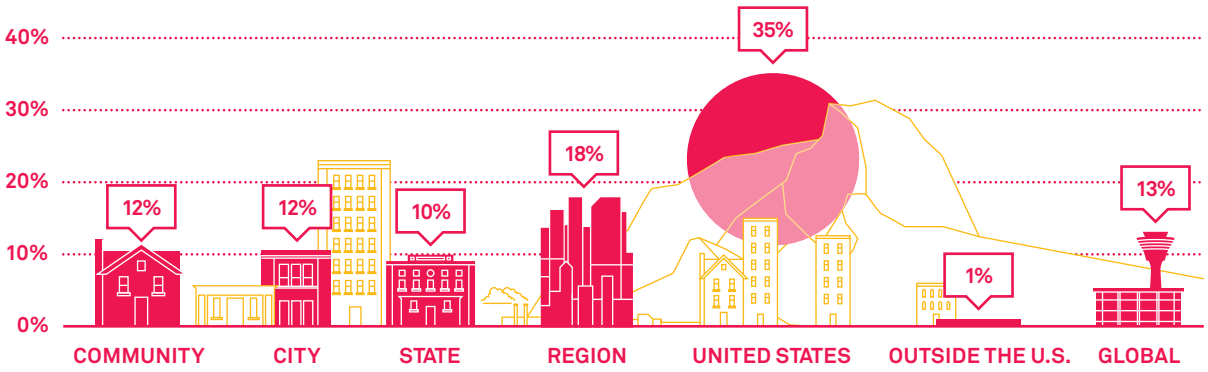
ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE



TARGET POPULATION

Percentages indicate the number of applications that reference the listed target population. The total adds up to more than 100%, as some applications seek to impact more than one population.

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE



4

Heritage advocates are forging new models to counter gentrification.

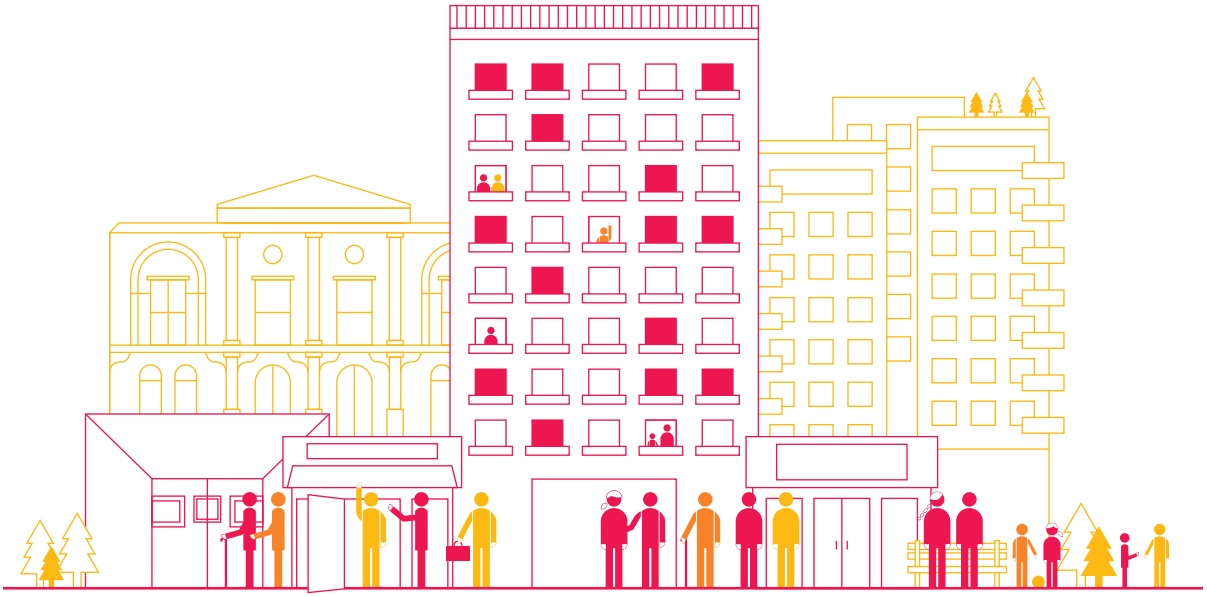
In the realm of community development, perhaps no challenge looms as large as the need to preserve culture and affordability in America's fast-gentrifying districts. As property values rise and residents grow vulnerable to displacement, gentrification has proved a vexing issue for historic preservation advocates who are sometimes perceived as part of the problem. "Gentrification is an intense challenge in a small number of hot-market cities," noted Patrice Frey, president & CEO of the National Main Street Center, and a Prize reviewer. "But within those places, it is a huge challenge, and it's one where I think preservation must engage more fully with partners in the affordable housing and urban development fields to generate strategies for minimizing displacement." Some of the most promising solutions advanced by Prize applicants, Frey found, include those that leverage community ownership models, allowing heritage advocates to work in concert with residents to push back runaway real-estate pressures.

In Miami, Florida, for example, an equitable development plan focused on the Allapattah neighborhood's Dominican-American business corridor seeks to build pathways of ownership for small, family-run businesses. Through a proposed land trust, these micro-enterprise owners will have an opportunity to purchase storefront commercial space in what has become one of the region's most vibrant communities of color. "They may not be able to invest a million dollars in a building, but they may be able to pay $300,000 for a storefront, and have the security that their rent is not going to go up," said Mileyka Burgos, executive director of The Allapattah Collaborative CDC, a Prize finalist. By providing technical assistance to small business owners and promoting their contribution to the community, the Collaborative works to preserve the cultural legacy of the district's multigenerational low- and middle-income families. "In fifty years, someone will look back at these businesses and say: That's where my grandmother opened a restaurant, and that's why I ended up at the University of Miami," Burgos added. "That's really what preservation is about."

Prize applicants are pursuing a range of other tools to combat gentrification, especially through the preservation of affordable housing. As Frey observed,

Community-owned cultural anchors

Preservation innovators are embracing new ownership strategies that protect affordable housing stock, build social fabric, and create economic engines to sustain and expand culturally rich communities.



"In most instances, the most affordable housing is the housing we've already got. If you end up demolishing that place and building something new, you are almost assured of higher rents." Indeed, several applicants from the housing-scarce San Francisco Bay Area are exploring new models of real-estate acquisition to protect existing residents. One would crowd-finance property purchases through cooperative membership shares; another deploys innovative financial products that allow affordable-housing developers to compete with all-cash buyers. These efforts highlight the need for the heritage field to put equity center-stage as it fights to preserve some of the nation's most culturally dynamic places.

Miami's Dominican-American Allapattah district is a testing ground for strategies to build equity among communities of color. (Photo: The Allapattah Collaborative CDC)

5

People-centered climate action recharges planet and place.

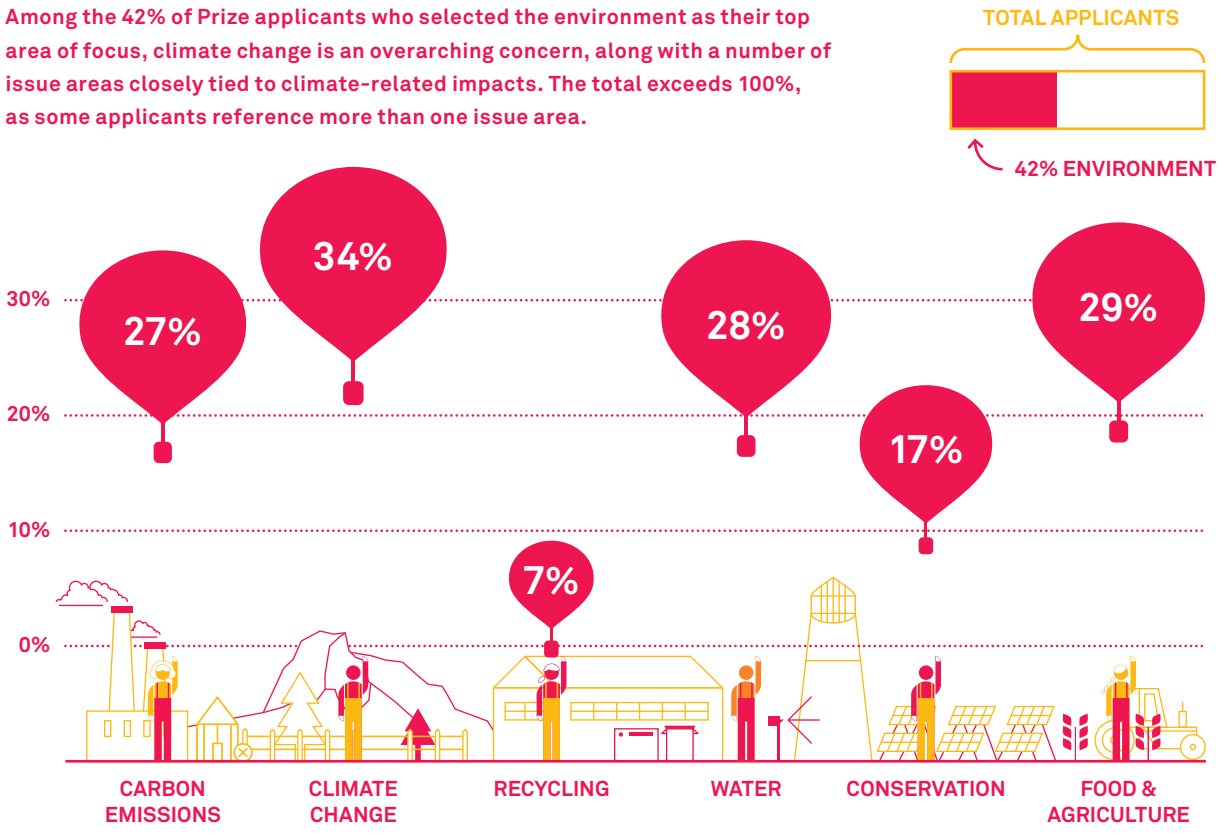
Across the significant share of Prize applications focused on climate change, one ambition stood out: innovators are harnessing carbon-cutting tools in concert with more structural solutions to create climate-resilient communities. "You're seeing a lot of recognition of the role of a systems approach in taking on climate," noted Erik Snyder, a Prize reviewer and CEO of the Drawdown Fund. Consider one notable frontline population: farmers. Farm profitability is down 46% since 2013, while one-third of global emissions come from industrial agriculture. In response, new models are shifting farming practices based on resource extraction to those rooted in regeneration. Getting there, however, requires time and resources that farm owners rarely have in reserve. As a result, Snyder said, "Farmers are married to unsustainable, soil-extractive practices, and they can't afford the transition. How can we change that process?"

Several Prize applicants seek to answer just that question. One initiative advances a carbon-credit model that allows corporate and rural America to partner in the climate fight. Farmers are paid for each ton of carbon sequestered through climate-beneficial practices, enabling them to regenerate land, slash chemical inputs, and reap economic rewards from companies in need of carbon credits. Similarly, another applicant reimagines the food system by building a farmer-oriented program that draws on billions of dollars in corporate demand for ecosystem service credits. Both ideas work at the intersection of climate and rural resilience to enhance soil health, provide cleaner air and water, and regenerate economically-distressed communities.

Initiatives like these draw welcome attention to the plight of rural populations, which are among those often left out of the mainstream environmental movement. The climate-justice organization Our Climate Voices, a Prize awardee, was launched to spotlight such communities—along with youth, people of color, women, LGBTQ individuals, and others—to show how our everyday lives are linked to large, structural challenges. "When we started three years ago, people were mostly talking about the forest, and the oceans, and glaciers

On the front lines of climate resilience

Among the 42% of Prize applicants who selected the environment as their top area of focus, climate change is an overarching concern, along with a number of issue areas closely tied to climate-related impacts. The total exceeds 100%, as some applicants reference more than one issue area.



melting," explained Aletta Brady, founder and executive director of Our Climate Voices. "But most people are living with structural inequities that are much more urgent on a day-to-day basis." Through first-person stories, the initiative connects climate reform to issues such as environmental racism, poverty, and community health. "We know that policies—or any kind of system solutions—are going to be imperfect if we are not engaging the leadership of people who are at the center of the crisis," Brady said. "If we're only talking about taking carbon out of the atmosphere, we're not supporting the communities that are being impacted." Looking at climate action as a form of social justice, these stories affirm that the most powerful environmental solutions are also those that put people first.

Our Climate Voices presents stories from farmers, youth, LGBTQ people, migrants, and others whose first-hand encounters with climate impacts have inspired passionate activism for concrete climate solutions.

6

Government can be a pivotal innovation partner.

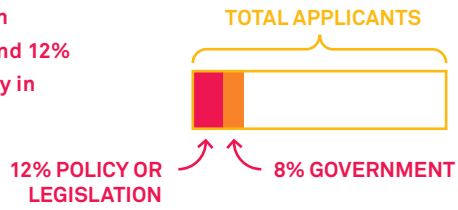
"Local government isn't typically considered innovative or progressive," one Prize applicant told us. But that is changing as local and state leaders—dismayed by partisan gridlock in Washington—have stepped up as social-justice champions. "A lot of cities are doing imaginative and innovative work at the local level, in a way that's radically different from the national conversation," observed Nisha Agarwal, senior adviser to the deputy mayor in the New York City Mayor's Office, and a Prize reviewer. Whether pioneering more humane jails or making democracy more engaging, municipal governments and other public agencies can be labs for social change. "It's important that cities understand there is so much they can do," Agarwal added. "We're our own form of activism."

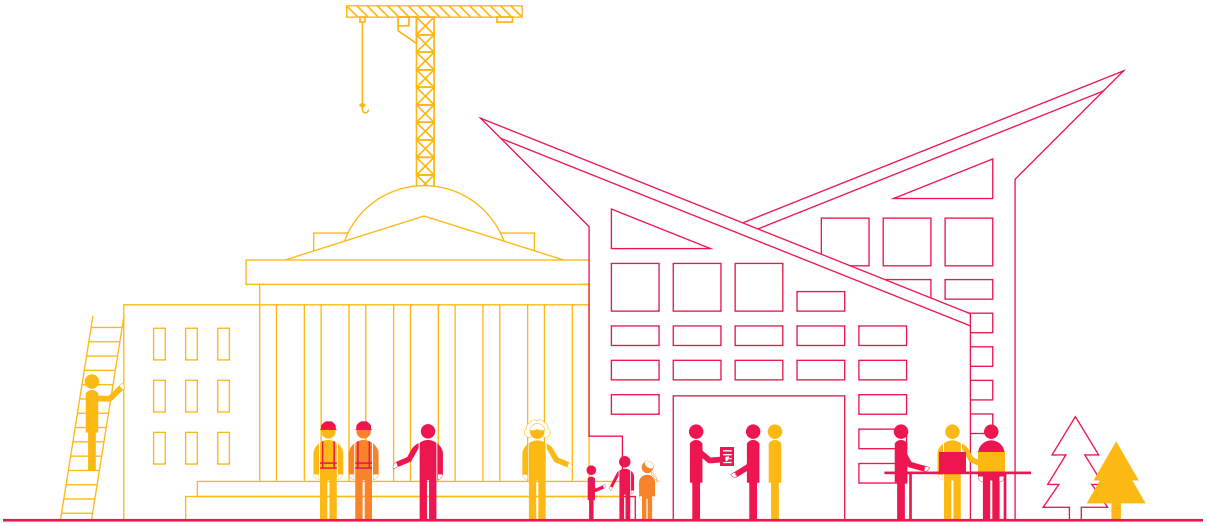
This year's Prize applicants offered abundant evidence of public-sector activists at work. We heard from probation officers using journalism as a healing-centered engagement tool, and from county sheriffs integrating creative placemaking into policing. And we found that public-sector innovation isn't limited to the local level. For example, one Prize awardee, the Campaign for Historic Trades, has jump-started a promising training program in partnership with the National Park Service and its Historic Preservation Training Center. "We've crafted a situation that draws on the best of both the public and private sectors," said Nicholas Redding, executive director of Preservation Maryland, the project's nonprofit partner. "We all play to our own strengths." In this case, the Park Service provides paid training at preservation projects across the country, while Preservation Maryland focuses on recruiting trainees and placing them in permanent employment after their training is completed. "We've been able to accelerate this in a way that most standalone public-sector or private-sector workforce development programs can't do," Redding explained.

The partnership—the first of its kind for the Park Service—bridges a gulf between preservation and job creation. Estimates suggest that at least 200,000 more construction workers are needed to meet current demand, a shortage that has particularly hit the preservation trades. By focusing

Rethinking public agencies as activism hubs

A range of Prize applicants are enlisting public institutions as partners in social innovation. Across 2019 applications, 8% reference government and 12% reference policy or legislation, emphasizing the role government can play in catalyzing new solutions to social challenges.





recruitment on young adults and recent veterans, the project can help fill this gap while also addressing a lack of diversity in the preservation field. In that regard, the Park Service's portfolio is a perfect setting for the program, embracing a cross-section of the American experience. "This incredible collection of American stories is the ideal classroom to train the next generation of historic tradespeople," Redding said. "You are getting really good experience out in the field, restoring a place that matters, and doing it with some of the best-trained people in the country." By pairing the nimble skills of a nonprofit with the resources of a highly regarded federal agency, the campaign has forged a revolutionary approach to providing quality jobs while boosting equity and relevance for the preservation movement.

The Campaign for Historic Trades fills a gap between preservation and job creation by training young adults and recent veterans for high-demand preservation trades. (Photo: National Park Service)

7

Upcycling initiatives yield surprising social value.

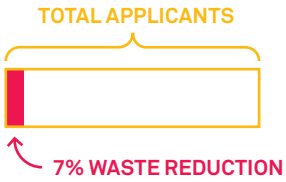
Some of the most intriguing applications to the 2019 Prize are rethinking refuse as a platform for social justice. Through composting, upcycling, zero-waste, and closed-loop initiatives, innovators are combating climate change while providing economic and social benefits to communities of all types. One applicant pointed out that if food waste were a country, it would be the third-largest generator of greenhouse-gas emissions. The answer? A job-centered program that recycles food waste in low-income neighborhoods, then transports finished compost back to the farm using food delivery trucks that would otherwise return empty. Another applicant is pioneering "eco-hygiene" products such as compostable menstrual pads made from banana fiber, an agricultural by-product. The resulting pads are safe for the user and better for the environment, degrading within six months of disposal. And a third proposal envisions a "maker center" that salvages building materials alongside workforce development and policy efforts that reimagine waste diversion through a preservation lens.

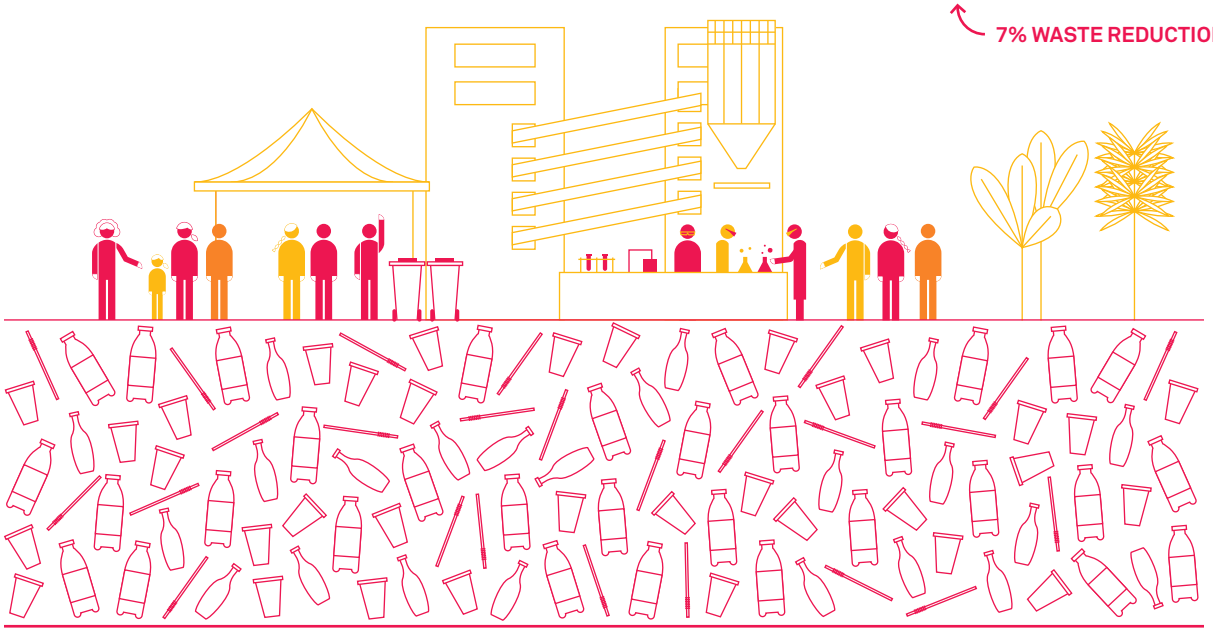
A similar approach has been taken in rural Appalachia, where more than 6,000 stream miles have long run orange with iron oxide from acid mine drainage, a polluting by-product of abandoned coal mines. "When some kids draw streams, they pick up the orange crayon because that's what they know," said Michelle Shively, director of project development for True Pigments, a Prize awardee. Working with director of operations Paul Patton, Shively and the project team are harvesting that iron oxide and turning it into commercial-grade iron pigments for high-quality, artist-grade paint. In the bargain, they're bringing dead streams back to life and creating green jobs in places long scarred by the extractive coal economy.

The journey for Shively and Patton—both the grandchildren of coal miners—evolved as they grappled with coal's toxic legacy. "None of us started out trying to make paint," Shively explained. "We were just trying to clean up these streams." But the team found that disposing of two million pounds of iron oxide every year from

Closing the loop

Among places scarred by environmental injustice, innovators are using a variety of salvage-driven strategies to restore ecologies and rebuild economies.





just a single mine discharge was cost-prohibitive. "The game-changing part of it is that by selling the pigment, we can pay for the water treatment," Shively said. What's more, the project's proposed full-scale facility would produce 1% of America's consumption of iron oxide pigment—a significant reduction of the industry's carbon footprint. And in places where coal profits were long sent somewhere else, revenues from pigment sales will now fund watershed restoration projects and help rebuild public health—all while doubling the annual payroll of the local community. By blending environmental justice, sustainable development, and ecological renewal, True Pigments shows how creative approaches to salvage can drive social impact.

The ingenious reuse of iron oxide helps True Pigments restore long-polluted Appalachian streams. (Photo: True Pigments)

Beyond the Awards
Ripple Effects

Over three rounds of The J.M.K. Innovation Prize, we've celebrated thirty visionary ideas for tackling social and environmental challenges—a remarkable journey in surfacing social innovators and backing them with our wholehearted support. Beyond the awards, however, the Prize has enriched and amplified our work in a multitude of ways. In casting the widest possible net across America, it has alerted us to trends—like those we've highlighted in this report and in our preceding publications on the Prize—that shape our strategies for social change. It's helped us discover sensational successes in far-flung locales we'd never encounter otherwise. And the cohort experience has connected us with change-makers whose efforts inform and extend our own. In short, the Prize has become part of our DNA, even as it has helped spur action far beyond the Fund. In the stories that follow, we share examples of how the Prize has touched off social impacts in ways we could never have predicted.

The Imperial Regional Detention Facility in Calexico, California, houses 700 detainees in one of the most isolated immigrant jails in the country. In 2018, we sought access to the facility for a first-hand look at America's immigrant detention system. For this we turned to Christina Fialho, co-founder and co-executive director of Freedom for Immigrants. She was one of two social visionaries the Fund highlighted during the public launch of the Innovation Prize in 2015 as just the kind of innovator we wanted the Prize to support. Freedom for Immigrants, which later became a grantee within the Fund's social justice portfolio, was essential in guiding our visit to Calexico—the centerpiece of a Prize convening exploring the immigration landscape. "That was a very impactful trip," Fialho recalled, noting that it was the first time the group had brought visitors to a facility who were not part of a regular visitation program. "We used that experience to craft a similar event with the producers and writers of *Orange Is the New Black*."

During that subsequent visit, Freedom for Immigrants brought the team behind the acclaimed Netflix series to California's largest detention facility. Several episodes of the show's 2019 season thus featured Freedom for Immigrants by name along with its free hotline connecting people in immigrant jails with pro bono lawyers and other resources. Shortly after the season premiere, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement shut down access to the line, thrusting Freedom for

Immigrants into the national spotlight and leading to new partnerships for the organization as its critical work continues.

The convening touched off other consequential events as well. Among the visitors to Calexico was Veyom Bahl, managing director for survival at Robin Hood, the New York-based poverty-fighting organization. "I had worked on immigration issues for a long time, but mostly from the perspective of a funder or program designer," Bahl said. "To get a sense first-hand of what those systems look like from the perspective of those who are directly affected was incredibly powerful." The experience led Bahl to think about his portfolio at Robin Hood, which focuses on addressing immigrant poverty: "The tenacity of innovators like Freedom for Immigrants lit a fire for us to say: What can we do in New York City?" As a result, Robin Hood helped create a bond fund that frees certain detainees from New York detention centers. In turn, The J.M. Kaplan Fund is working to support the bond fund with its own investment, another positive effect of the Prize's catalytic nature.

BlackSpace is another promising organization the Fund first met through the Innovation Prize. A 2017 finalist, this collaborative of cross-disciplinary Black urbanists subsequently received support through the Fund's social justice program. BlackSpace spent six months developing tools that center makers and historians in a community-change process for the historically Black Brooklyn neighborhood of Brownsville. The grant's flexibility allowed the group unusual freedom to frame a community-based process without any preconceived agenda. "For the first time as a collective, it gave us the opportunity to produce things in the real world at the pace we wanted to," said Emma Osore, a co-founder of BlackSpace. "We don't always get that space in our professions or as Black communities to think about and make what we want to see in the world."

Freedom for Immigrants has gained a national profile through inspired efforts to end the isolation and abuse of people in immigration detention. (Photo: Freedom for Immigrants)

Momentum kept building after the Fund pointed BlackSpace to the Brooklyn Community Foundation, which awarded the group an incubator prize that came with 18 months of coworking space. The latter benefit proved indispensable in giving BlackSpace a base from which to capitalize on a growing number of wins. The group has now co-produced neighborhood heritage conservation tools, hired a part-time program manager, and launched active chapters in Chicago and Oklahoma. "We couldn't have done all that without the Fund's initial undergirding support," Osore explained. "They've really gone beyond the grant and said: Hey, you need to meet this person, look in this corner, open this door. At major points of our growth there has been a J.M. Kaplan Fund connection—they are a part of our founding fabric." From the Fund's perspective, the feeling is mutual. We wouldn't be who we are without grantees who push us to think in radical ways about making social change—one ripple at a time.

The Awardees

Aletta Brady
Our Climate Voices
MINNESOTA

Viridiana Carrizales and Vanessa Luna
ImmSchools
TEXAS AND NEW YORK

Rolf Halden
One Water One Health
ARIZONA

Ebele Ifedigbo
The Hood Incubator
CALIFORNIA

Taneeza Islam
South Dakota Voices for Peace
SOUTH DAKOTA

Dominique Morgan
Black and Pink's REAP Reentry Program
NEBRASKA

Kelly Orians and Ben Smith
The First 72+
LOUISIANA

Michele Pistone
VIISTA
PENNSYLVANIA

Nicholas A. Redding
The Campaign for Historic Trades
MARYLAND

Michelle Shively and Paul Patton
True Pigments
OHIO

About The J.M. Kaplan Fund

The J.M. Kaplan Fund champions transformative social, environmental, and cultural causes through inventive grant-making. Established in 1945 by philanthropist and businessman Jacob Merrill Kaplan, the Fund has since its inception been committed to visionary innovation.

Over more than three generations of family stewardship, the Fund has devoted more than $250 million to propel fledgling efforts concerning civil liberties, human rights, the arts, and the conservation and enhancement of the built and natural worlds. Today, the Fund is active across the United States and beyond, operating grant programs focusing on the environment, heritage conservation, and social justice. To continue its legacy of catalytic giving, in 2015 the Fund launched The J.M.K. Innovation Prize, reaching across America to provide early-stage support for entrepreneurs with twenty-first-century solutions to urgent social and environmental challenges.

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Beth Hartman
Seth Horstmeyer
Kirsten Levingston
Kung Li
Carl Lipscombe
Theresa Pasqual
Kavita Pawria-Sanchez
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Insha Rahman
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