

The J.M.K. Innovation Prize

Learning from America's
Social Entrepreneurs



2015

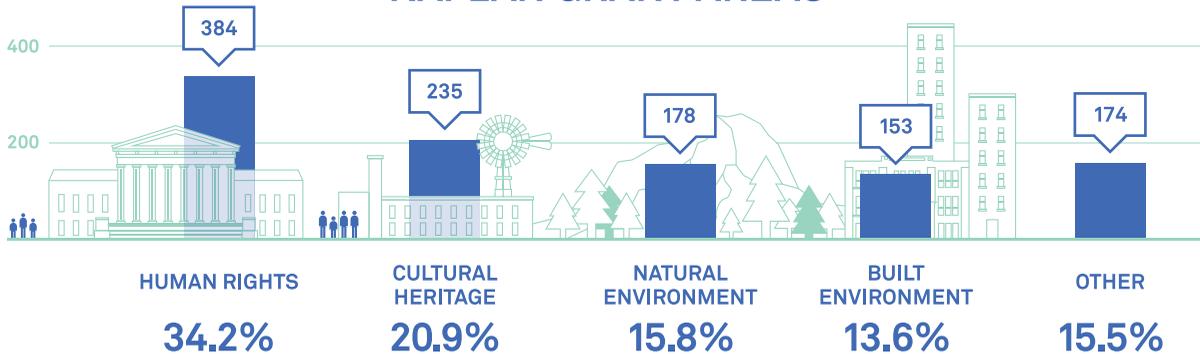
**The J.M.K.
Innovation Prize
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America's Social
Entrepreneurs
2015**

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

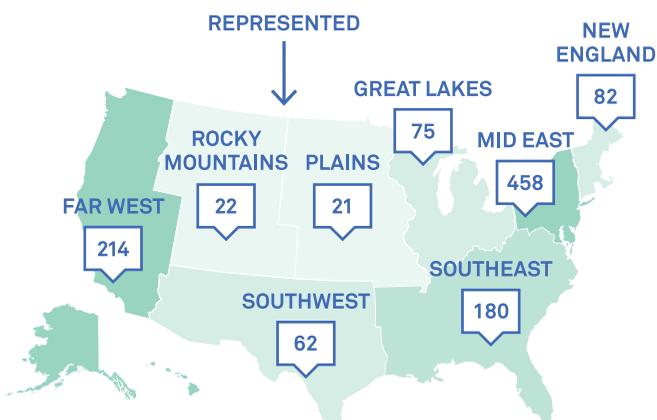
Over nine months in 2015, we reached across the United States to seek out and evaluate visionary, early-stage social entrepreneurs with wide-ranging passions, backgrounds, and geographic diversity.



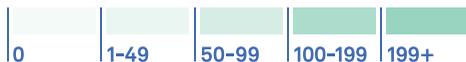
KAPLAN GRANT AREAS



45 STATES REPRESENTED



APPLICATIONS PER REGION



The Innovation Prize received applications from:

Alabama / Alaska / Arizona / Arkansas / California / Colorado / Connecticut / Delaware / District of Columbia / Florida / Georgia / Hawaii / Idaho / Illinois / Indiana / Iowa / Kentucky / Louisiana / Maine / Maryland / Massachusetts / Michigan / Minnesota / Mississippi / Missouri / Montana / Nebraska / Nevada / New Jersey / New Mexico / New York / North Carolina / Ohio / Oklahoma / Oregon / Pennsylvania / Puerto Rico / Rhode Island / South Carolina / Tennessee / Texas / Vermont / Virgin Islands / Virginia / Washington / West Virginia / Wisconsin / Wyoming

Note: Of the 1,138 Innovation Prize applicants, 14 were omitted from this report's analysis because they opted out or were judged ineligible. The data set explored here consists of the remaining 1,124 entries.

Introduction

A Groundswell of Game-Changing Ideas

In early 2015, we launched The J.M.K. Innovation Prize, seeking out social entrepreneurs across the United States who are spearheading game-changing solutions to our society's most urgent challenges.

Why an Innovation Prize? Innovation is in our DNA. From The J.M. Kaplan Fund's inception 70 years ago as a New York-based family foundation, we have championed risky, early-stage endeavors focusing on longstanding subject areas of cultural heritage, human rights, and the built and natural environments.

So with the support of social entrepreneurship experts and hundreds of nominators and reviewers, we embarked on the Prize to leverage this legacy of catalytic grant-making in the field of social innovation—an area of enormous promise for the philanthropic community as well as civic organizations, government, advocacy groups, and citizens seeking powerful new ways to make positive change happen.

We know there is a hunger for social innovation funding. Today, many outstanding ideas fail to find backing from established philanthropic sources. We sought to fill this gap, not only by providing capital to the social innovation field, but also by taking risks on projects that others may consider unfledged. In our view, the most meaningful opportunities lie in supporting an idea's generative, most untested stage. We also wanted to take social innovation funding into areas not typically served by the field—including historic preservation and environmental conservation. Throughout, we've been committed to future leaders whose vision and passion can be nurtured through the Prize's multi-year award.

We're floored by the groundswell of ideas we received. To share our excitement—and all we've learned about the tools and tactics of social innovators—what follows is an exploration of the more than one thousand Innovation Prize entries, distilled into seven takeaways we think offer key insights for the future of social entrepreneurship.

The Prize

A ‘Blind Audition’ for America’s Social Entrepreneurs

Jacob Merrill Kaplan founded our Fund on the democratic ideal that there are many roads to success. In this spirit, The J.M.K. Innovation Prize, launched on January 15, 2015, was designed to solicit boldly promising ideas—however untested or wherever they arise. We offered up to ten \$175,000 awards to U.S.-based individuals or teams working with a non-profit organization or fiscal sponsor to address our country’s most pressing needs through social-sector innovation. Each award consisted of up to three years of support at \$50,000 per year, plus \$25,000 for technical assistance or project expenses. Just as important, winners benefit from the Fund’s community of social innovation experts and fellow entrepreneurs as a peer-learning network.

The response was overwhelming: 1,138 applications from 45 states as well as Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Iñupiat leaders using heritage to confront Alaska’s soaring social challenges. A mobile maker space bringing tech-charged opportunity to the Mississippi River Delta. Brooklyn teaching artists creating justice programs for young offenders. The sheer diversity of ideas revealed talent, grit, and resilience in every corner of the country.

We built a rigorous evaluation process, recruiting 373 volunteer reviewers from the Fund’s network. Each application was scored by at least 6 reviewers, after which 202 entries were advanced to the second round. Fuller applications were read by subject matter and social innovation experts in

disciplines including justice, education, human rights, food systems, public health, energy, natural resources, and the arts. We celebrated fifteen finalists in New York City on September 28, 2015, with winners to be announced in November.

This outpouring of ideas reflected, in part, the Prize’s pared-down first-round application—only calling for a few paragraphs describing the applicant’s innovative idea and qualifications. “What impressed me most about the Innovation Prize was the low bar of entry,” said Irene Smalls, an author and literacy educator who served as a Prize reviewer. “Many people who submitted were close to the ground—they were articulate, passionate, and knew the needs of their population.”

Smalls likened the effect to that seen after major American orchestras began holding blind auditions in which candidates performed behind a screen. The result? A surge in newly hired musicians who were women in a field largely dominated by men. “The talent was always there,” Smalls observed. “When preconceived notions of what talent looks like are not allowed, true innovators come forth and real innovation happens.” To understand the wealth of talent we discovered in our own deliberately inclusive “blind audition,” we delved into the pool of applications, and spoke with reviewers and finalists who reflected on the Prize. Our conclusions, we hope, convey our conviction that more than we ever dreamed, social innovation is thriving in America.

The Takeaways

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Innovators are cross-wiring solutions to intractable social challenges.

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1

Innovators are cross-wiring solutions to intractable social challenges.

Among Innovation Prize entries, we found the strongest solutions to complex social problems are additive: hybrid approaches, cross-disciplinary thinking, and unconventional partnerships are what turn a good idea into a game-changer. Whether it's combining green buildings with social justice, or crossing microloans with homeless youth, boundary-jumping ideas allow social innovators to multiply impacts, broaden audiences, and support their mission in sustainable ways.

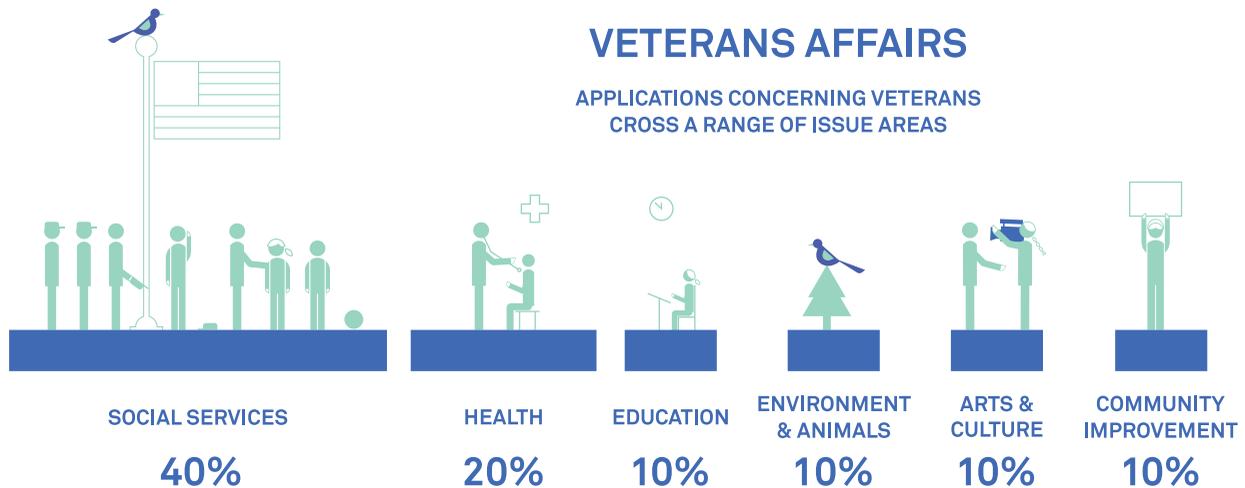
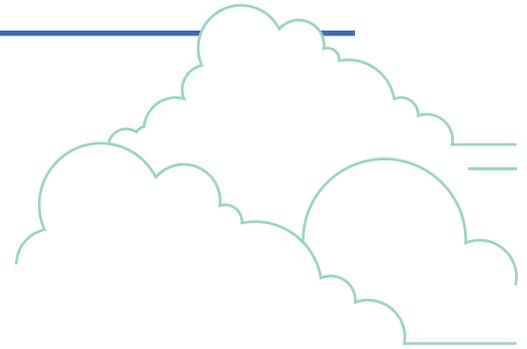
Few social fields are more hybrid-friendly than food. "Healthy, local food is good economic development, it's good for the environment, it's good for a person's well-being, and it builds social fabric," said Mary Ann Beyster, President of the Foundation for Enterprise Development and a Prize reviewer. Food-oriented projects cross the spectrum of social action, none more multifaceted than a Massachusetts-based effort to produce cricket chips as a sustainably farmed, high-protein snack food. Not only could the effort create urban jobs in low-income areas by farming insects—which can be humanely raised in small spaces—it

would also cut down greenhouse-gas emissions from the livestock industry while offering a low-fat meat alternative that can "get America eating bugs."

Programs serving veterans promise all the more surprising success through cross-wired social impact. Several Prize finalists are pioneering fresh approaches to reintegration in an effort to solve widespread veteran homelessness, suicide, and addiction. Through a blend of peer mentoring, community farming, and "dirt therapy," for example, the Growing Veterans' Peer Mentoring Program uses sustainable agriculture as a catalyst for ending veteran isolation. The combination, said Growing Veterans' Co-founder and Prize finalist Christopher Brown, emerged from his own journey as a veteran who found solace growing food. "Being able to raise plants, and reflect on the fact that you're nurturing life, can be powerful for anybody who's been in a place full of death and destruction," he said. Another veteran-focused finalist project, DE-CRUIT, combines therapy with a still more unlikely partner: Shakespeare. With elements of a veteran's program, actors' training,

Rethinking reintegration

From sustainable agriculture to Shakespeare, some of the most inventive hybrid solutions bring fresh ideas to the field of veteran reintegration.



and a psychological research study, the effort seeks to “re-wire” veterans from combat-ingrained “war wiring” by exploring Shakespeare’s poignant verse on wartime conflict.

Crossing boundaries opens portals to new constituents: community-based agriculture offers traction for veterans’ issues—food is something everyone can relate to—while the performing arts are a bridge between veterans, peer mentors, and a broader support network. If risk-taking is the essence of innovation, these projects embrace risk through the creative chemistry that results when categories collide.



Growing Veterans’ farm-based camaraderie helps end veteran isolation while supporting sustainable agriculture.

2

Income inequality offers a transformative lens for social practice.

The theme of economic empowerment proved one of the most powerful attractors for our pool of non-profit social entrepreneurs. We found 12% of Innovation Prize applicants seek to serve the economically disadvantaged, ranging from community-based crowdfunding platforms to innovative housing solutions for foreclosure affected families. In concert with renewed attention to equity issues across America, these applications suggest that rooting out income inequality can be a multiplier for social change.

In the criminal justice field, for instance, the Oakland, California-based Essie Justice Group found that nearly one in two Black women has a family member in prison—and consequently suffers from dwindling economic mobility due to financial stresses, child-rearing demands, and other strains that sap economic security. In response, the peer-support initiative offers a “healing to advocacy” agenda that empowers women with incarcerated loved ones to push for social and policy reform, while boosting economic resilience. The initiative’s focus on the little-

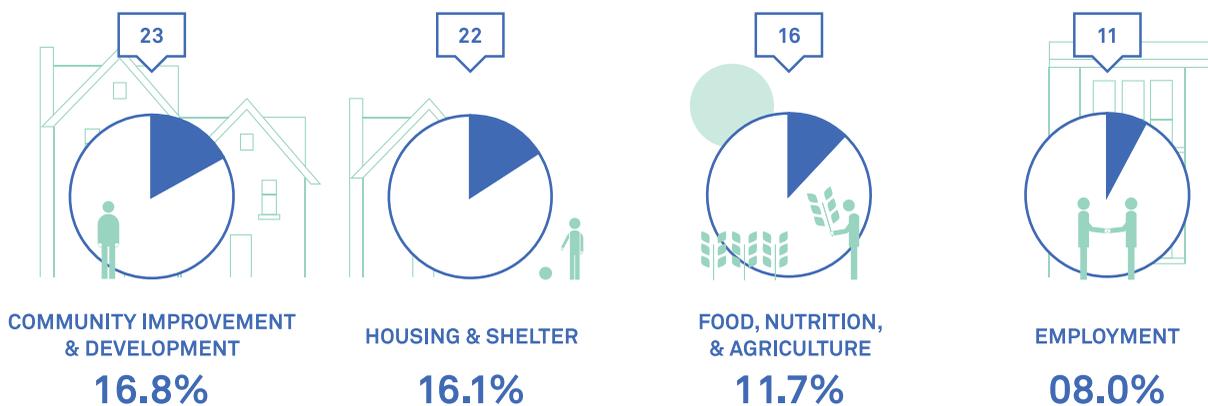
studied financial impact of incarceration shines a path-breaking light on the poverty entrapment affecting millions of mothers, wives, and daughters of those caught in America’s prison crisis.

Smart job-generating ideas offer another way to leverage income equity. After her father parlayed a military career into a successful civilian job as an electrical engineer, Dr. Anita Jackson saw first-hand the self-esteem and well-being that came with steady employment. Her finalist Prize initiative seeks to retrain veteran medics as physicians’ assistants through a network of historically black colleges and universities. “We need to increase the number of primary health providers in the U.S., especially in poor and rural areas,” said Jackson, who practices in rural North Carolina. “At the same time, veteran medics are the third-highest unemployed of all veterans. They have no career path.” Connecting these urgent needs is a perfect example of an economic solution that catalyzes broader societal change.

Even fields like historic preservation have tapped

Multiplier effect

Using the lens of economic empowerment, applicants are more effectively tackling root causes across a range of social-sector challenges.



ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE

WAS A TARGET CATEGORY FOR 12% OF PRIZE APPLICANTS, WHO ADDRESSED THESE TOP ISSUE AREAS

into economic empowerment as a driving force for impactful social practice. One applicant envisioned a land trust that would acquire derelict sacred sites for community use, offering a win-win solution for income-starved religious properties. Meanwhile, the project Brick + Beam Detroit, an Innovation Prize finalist, is creating a citywide network connecting residents and building trades to support the rehabilitation of culture-rich historic homes. “What really impressed me was that most applicants are imagining economic networks or looking at relationships between sites and entire towns,” said Michael Allen, Director of the Preservation Research Office and a Prize reviewer. “They’re doing economic and cultural awareness work that veers away from the specific preservation thinking that has dominated the field.” Instead, what has emerged is a methodological approach that’s transferable, teachable, and scalable—a broader, more integrative vision that an equity lens enables.



Brick + Beam Detroit forges social and economic networks for local rehabbers. (Photo: Alissa Shelton)

3

We won't solve America's incarceration crisis without investing in youth.

Among Innovation Prize applicants who defined a target population, the top focus by far is youth. Nearly 20% of all initiatives seek to serve children and young adults, reflecting a widespread belief that to make an impact, social action must engage the next generation. Whether it is Berkeley students nurturing climate-change leaders, or Alabama social workers pioneering supportive tools for LGBTQ youth, innovators across the board are focusing fresh energy on future change-makers.

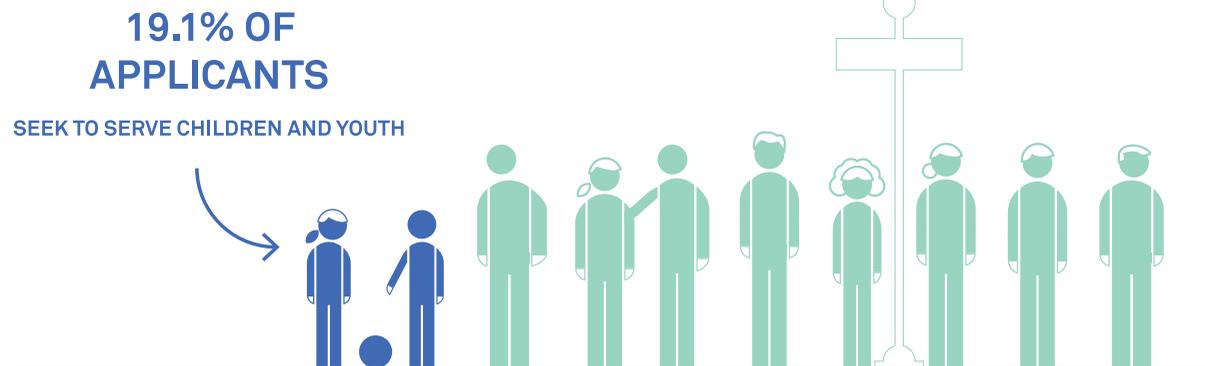
Such is the case for Prize finalist Yasmine Arrington. As an ambitious high-school junior preparing for college, Arrington found no financial aid programs for students like her, with a father in prison since she was a toddler. Her initiative, ScholarCHIPS, offers financial support, mentoring, and group workshops to recipients in the Washington, D.C. area who are among the millions of children in the United States with incarcerated parents. The initiative seeks not simply to provide tuition, but a full-fledged support network, something Arrington knew was essential to her success. To

address an “experience gap” among disadvantaged students, the program includes an emerging culture component using theater and art to boost student achievement. “We’ve found that exposure to arts and culture really sets students up for success,” she said. “It can even help students discover a talent they never knew they had, or a passion, or a career path.”

Behold the high-leverage opportunity at the intersection of youth services and criminal justice: a staggering 70% of children with incarcerated parents will one day be imprisoned themselves. A cluster of Prize entries present equally compelling tools to break the incarceration cycle. One offers cross-sector support for disconnected Latino youth in San Francisco’s juvenile justice system, using a collective impact strategy to shore up alarming service gaps. Another advances a disruptive approach to prison education: taking young adult students who are sentenced to prison and instead educating them in a residential campus—all using diverted funding that would have paid for their incarceration. Still another utilizes New York

Focus on the future

Almost a fifth of all Innovation Prize applicants are seeking new ways to empower children and young adults. Of those, some of the most urgently needed solutions aim to break the cycle of intergenerational incarceration.



City’s food truck industry to employ and teach transferable skills to young people returning home from prison. The formerly incarcerated spend six to eight months at a for-profit food truck that doubles as a “living classroom,” learning hospitality, culinary arts, and small-business skills. The food truck, in turn, becomes a platform for spreading the word about systemic justice-system reform.

In the youth justice arena—as in the broader social innovation world—many transformative ideas emerge from people like Arrington, with a pow-

erful personal story as a social entrepreneur. “The strongest applicants were very conscious of their own journey,” observed Innovation Prize reviewer and justice-reform consultant Carol Shapiro. “If you have a good story, you engage people. You are able to reframe an issue that others wouldn’t see.” And that has proven a persuasive way to give young people a seat at the table where police chiefs, parole officers, incarcerated parents, and others are pondering the complex challenges of re-entry, recidivism, race relations, and poverty in America.



ScholarCHIPS offers critical support for children with incarcerated parents.

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

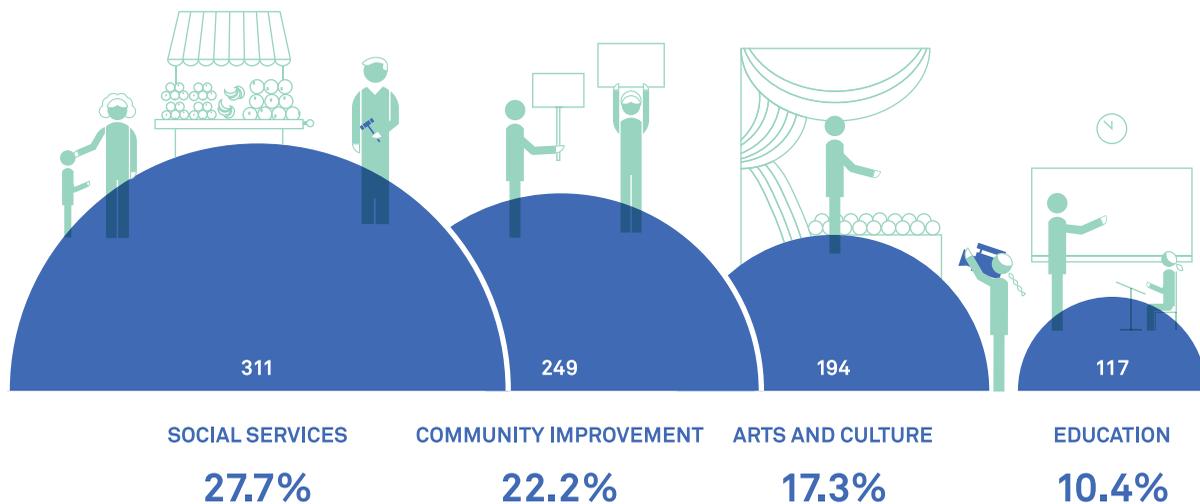
To better understand the collective energy and initiative of the Innovation Prize's first-round applications, we explored a number of key facets that underscore the trends and tactics used by today's social entrepreneurs.

LOCATION OF IMPACT

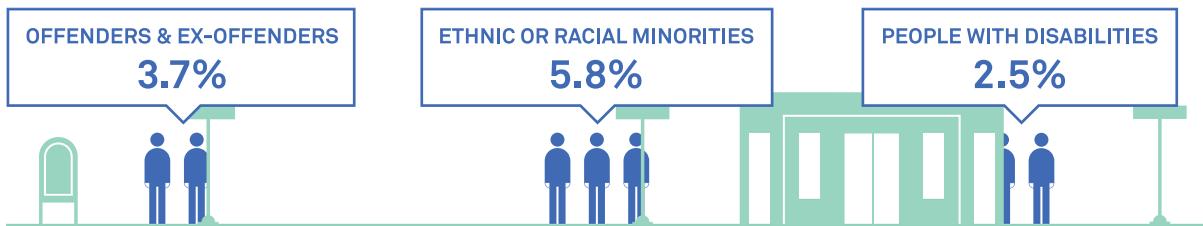
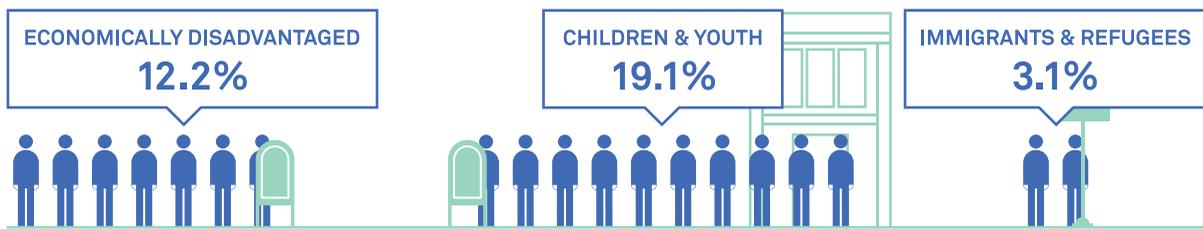
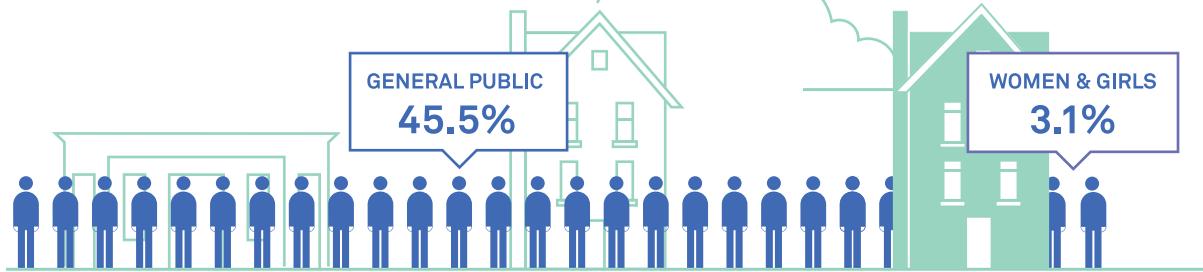


ISSUE AREAS

The two largest issue areas below are themselves comprised of a number of diverse subject fields. See page 25 for a breakout of the largest issue area, Social Services.



TARGET POPULATION



To generate this data and the insights it affords, we assigned each application a value for the philanthropic categories you see here. While we believe this accurately reflects the Innovation Prize entries, we caution that applicants were not asked to provide this information in the first-round submission. We have assessed each entry according to our own qualitative analysis of its focus and impact.



Note: The categories used to classify Innovation Prize applicants in this report were adapted from the Foundation Center's Philanthropy Classification System.



HEALTH
7.6%



ENVIRONMENT AND ANIMALS
6.4%



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
5.4%



OTHER
3.0%

4

Place-based innovation is retooling community activism.

Of necessity, many fledgling social innovators start out local and dial up ambitions as resources permit. But social innovation, we discovered, finds particularly fertile ground at the local scale: more than half of all Innovation Prize applicants targeted the city or community as their area of impact. By another metric, the top issue area addressed across all applications was community improvement and development. The upshot? A sea change in the way citizens, government, community groups, and philanthropy come together to support community transformation.

Call it place-based social entrepreneurship. Be it a bike-based organic waste co-op or a museum of rural America, wildly imaginative activists are finding new ways to nurture local social capital. That was the animating force of Innovation Prize finalist Brandon Dennison's project Reclaim Appalachia, an initiative that addresses the interconnected economic, cultural, and environmental distress of West Virginia's collapsing coal economy. For Dennison, social enterprise offers a tool to translate the region's vibrant cultural roots—

from storytelling and woodworking to banjo-strumming and quilting—into fresh opportunities amid a landscape of mine-scarred mountaintops, crumbling Main Streets, and hopelessness among young adults with few prospects for the future.

"We're smart, inventive people, but there's not a culture of taking those smarts and inventions and making a business out of them. Social entrepreneurship is a way to bridge that gap," said Dennison, Executive Director of the Coalfield Development Corporation, the initiative's parent organization. Reclaim Appalachia's solution is to hire unemployed young adults to rehabilitate formerly industrial and other derelict buildings as affordable housing and cultural anchors, while at the same time offering community college credits and life-skills training. "If a building has to be brought down, we can reclaim those materials and upcycle them into really nice furniture," Dennison added. "We are reclaiming the Appalachian spirit and culture of hard-working persistence. We connect it all to this Appalachian place."

Take the local

The top two areas of impact among Innovation Prize applicants are the city and community. These locally focused initiatives affirm a growing consensus that cities and the neighborhoods that comprise them can be gateways to transformative change.



Another deeply place-focused finalist project, Behold! New Lebanon, likewise mines a community's ingenuity to ignite a fresh sense of cultural and economic opportunity in rural New Lebanon, New York. Employing residents who present their stories, skills, and knowledge to visitors as "rural guides"—farm-dog trainers, printing artisans, bog ecologists—the project pioneers a "living museum of contemporary rural life" while creating a tourist destination that engages every sector of the town and revives its roots as a renowned place of innovation and invention.

As with similarly focused Prize entries, place unlocks a trove of innovation assets: the galvanizing force of community pride; authenticity rooted in local heritage; a cause-crossing bridge between the human and natural worlds; and the seed of grassroots economic revival. Armed with these ingredients, social entrepreneurs are seeing a sweet spot for change that's community-connected and close to the ground.



Coalfield Development's innovative training programs draw deeply on the Appalachian spirit of place. (Photo: J. Deacon Stone)

5

Water unites causes with catalytic social and environmental impacts.

Among applications focused on the environment— notable among the Rocky Mountain, Southwest, Far West, and Southeast regions—water has emerged as an all-encompassing concern, crossing the Kaplan Fund’s grant areas of climate change, conservation, land use, and oceans. As with the power of place, water can activate communities around interlinked social and environmental causes.

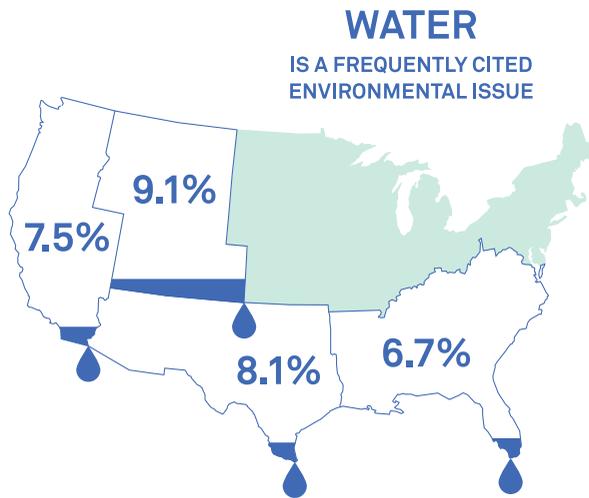
Groundwater contamination is one such challenge with a critical roadblock: the high expense of conventional water treatment. Millions of drinking water wells, especially those on the drought-ridden West Coast, are too expensive to treat because of a very small amount of a very dangerous contaminant, arsenic. In response, Prize finalist John Pujol is leading SimpleWater, a California-based organization that pioneered an electrochemical water treatment to make the task of removing arsenic from wells less expensive and more environmentally friendly. The initiative thus tackles public health and environmental concerns—56 million people are affected by arsenic contamination in America—while empowering distressed

communities. “We have a really cool opportunity to take a new piece of technology that has been tested in Bangladesh and India, and turn that into something we can use back here in the U.S.,” Pujol explained. “It combines this trifecta of technology, social, and environmental causes.” In part, the for-profit initiative has succeeded by partnering with the non-profit Environmental Coalition for Water Justice, which assists with policy, planning, and community organizing among disadvantaged populations in California. The upside could be immense, Pujol said: “We know we have an arsenic problem, but the broader implications of electrochemical water treatment are huge.”

Another California-based applicant using water as a catalyst for social change was finalist Alan Lovewell, whose Bay2Tray initiative addresses the ocean’s health through sustainable seafood networks, youth education, and economic empowerment for a community’s fishing industry. “Seafood is one of the best ways for us to connect to the ocean,” said Lovewell, who founded Real Good Fish, a community supported fishery in Monte-

Nature now

Applicants from the south and western regions most often target the environment as an issue area. Among these initiatives, water stands out as an overarching concern.



rey Bay. He sought to reach beyond the affluent customers who purchased his group’s locally-caught seafood to schoolchildren whose eyes and appetites would be opened to the ocean’s wonders. So Lovewell partnered with school districts to turn grenadier—a fish typically discarded as bycatch—into fish tacos for school lunches, while inviting fishermen to inspire children with tales from the sea. “The really cool flipside is the fishermen can walk away with that same experience,” Lovewell said. “They might think about their role and responsibility to the community in a whole new way.” That’s seafood with social value.

Innovation Prize entries suggest an almost limitless opportunity to highlight water—and its bounty—as a natural resource with social impact. Imagine a restoration of the degraded Chesapeake Bay watershed triggered by harvesting the invasive (yet delicious) blue catfish for hunger-relief organizations. Or rebalancing the Atlantic Ocean ecosystem through “seafood smart mobs” that

flock to fishmongers selling sustainable species. Or combating California’s drought through the social incentive of “Steelhead Credits” for reducing water usage while supporting the state’s iconic fish. In all these projects, economy, ecology, and culture combine to catalytic effect.



Bay2Tray’s sea-faring curriculum. (Photo: Maria Finn)

6

For-profit and non-profit social enterprises are trading tactics.

For a variety of reasons—strategic, financial, and philosophical—Innovation Prize applicants are re-drawing the boundaries between for-profit and non-profit social enterprise. In some cases, non-profits are leveraging for-profit tools to secure financial sustainability and scale. On the other side, for-profits are tapping into the street credibility of non-profit partners. And tech-powered social activists are co-opting the disruptive capacity of the Internet to catapult change-resistant sectors into the twenty-first century.

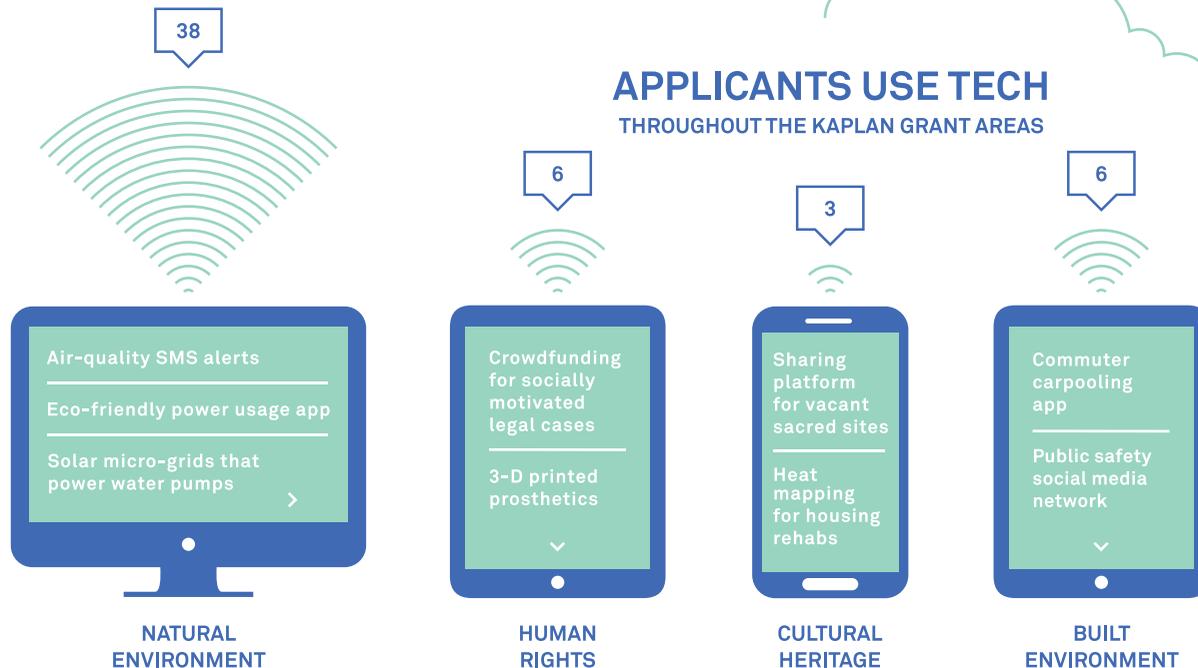
In the realm of renewable energy, the non-profit Solstice Initiative aims to use a market-based solution to deliver solar power to low- and moderate-income households. The Massachusetts-based initiative, an Innovation Prize finalist, partners with solar developers who install arrays to be shared across a local geographic area. This “community solar” approach allows those who rent their homes to reap energy savings with no upfront cost. “A market-based solution that is affordable and accessible to households also allows us to recover some of our costs, which means we

can scale up and impact more people,” said Solstice Co-founder and President Stephanie Speirs. “We believe everyone in America should have access to community solar, and a market-based approach is the only way to make that happen.” Just as important, Speirs added, is the dignity that comes with giving low-income residents consumer choice. By partnering with local organizations to host solar arrays, the initiative also nurtures a network of adopters more empowered to advocate for their collective interests.

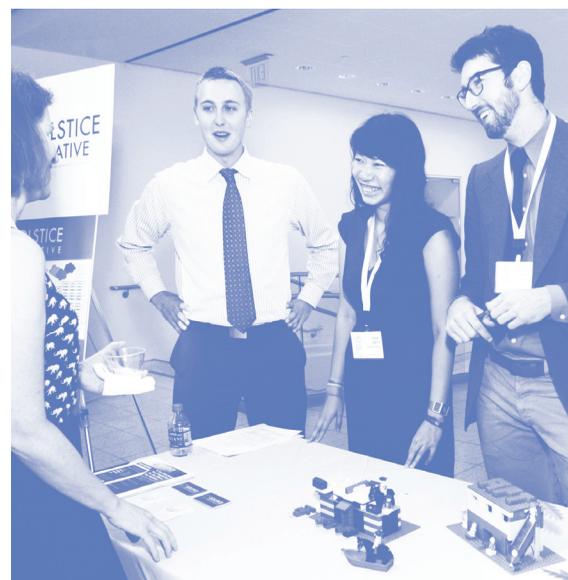
Meanwhile, using tools pioneered by for-profit Internet giants, tech-savvy social entrepreneurs are engaging low-income residents, environmental justice communities, and other populations left behind by the new economy. Among them is finalist Coworker.org, a non-profit platform that advocates for freelancers, independent contractors, and others in the gig-based workforce. Harnessing online tools to connect far-flung workers in advocacy campaigns—Starbucks baristas fighting a ban on visible tattoos; Uber drivers seeking to add customer tipping to the company’s app—Coworker.org

Algorithms for the people

Adopting a range of savvy, Internet-enabled strategies, non-profit entrepreneurs are co-opting tools pioneered by for-profit tech giants.



aspires to create a “new kind of civic space” where employees come together as agents of a democratic workplace. Another technology-driven finalist, Dr. Jon Schull, addresses the needs of a particularly underserved community: the one in 2,000 children born with upper-limb abnormalities. His initiative, Enabling the Future, recruits “digitally savvy humanitarians” with advanced production tools—crowdsourcing, mass customization, and distributed manufacturing—to deliver prosthetic hands and arms to children. More broadly, the project illustrates how social entrepreneurs can step in on behalf of disadvantaged populations when profit-oriented systems—in this case, the health care industry—fail to incentivize “affordable innovation.” Now, the regulatory, insurance, and business sectors are playing catch-up with Enabling the Future’s effort to advance global health equity.



Solstice Initiative expands the “community solar” marketplace. (Photo: Princeton eLab)

7

As much as anything, social entrepreneurs need the freedom to fail.

We found social innovation bubbling up across the nation with scarcely any philanthropic aid. Bootstrapped by Kickstarter and Indiegogo campaigns, today's social entrepreneurs are going it on their own, yet remain starved for the high-risk support that allows them to make the leap toward world-changing success.

Time and again, applicants told us, funding for early-stage ideas is both scarce and essential. In the for-profit world, investors have recognized that failure is the next best thing to success, allowing an entrepreneur to iterate and discover. But in the non-profit realm, traditional philanthropy all too often relies on proven solutions with little risk of flaming out. The way we see it, not every inspired idea will succeed. And that's not just okay—it's a fact of entrepreneurial life. "One thing I like in this innovative space is that some percentage of these projects could fail, but the Kaplan Fund knows that without embracing failure, you're never going to launch the one in ten that really do change the world," noted Marc Norman, a reviewer for the Prize and 2014-2015 Loeb Fellow at the

Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

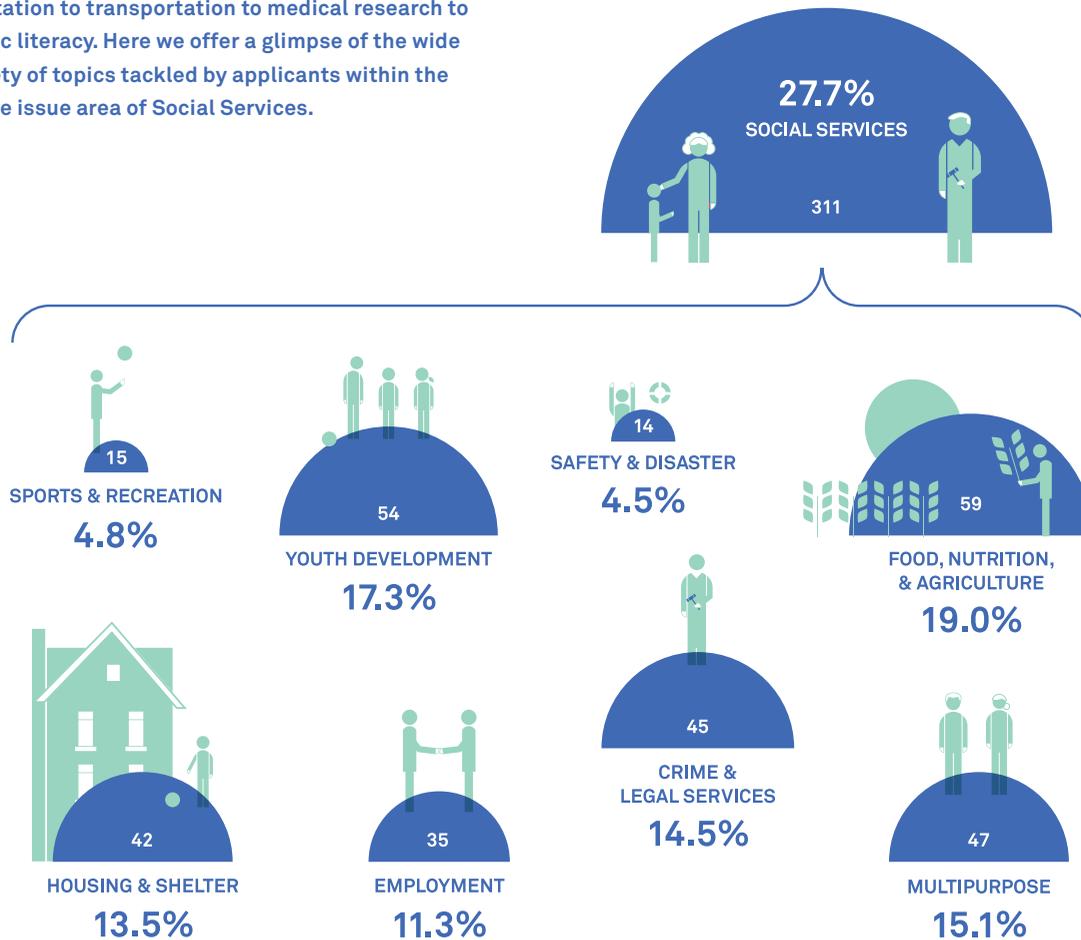
Put another way, as reviewer Michael Allen observed: "Nobody wants to fund the revolution." The J.M.K. Innovation Prize seeks to give a foothold to precisely those visionary entrepreneurs for whom the Prize's modest funding could make all the difference between a great idea and outrageously successful social change.

The Prize gave a shot to anyone in America who thought they had what it takes. Rural Arizona as a hacker hotbed? Welcome to "Hack My Hometown," a reality TV series that crosses hacker culture with the arts to reboot distressed communities. A crowdfunding platform for socially motivated lawsuits? Yes, where you can donate to the cases and causes that matter most. "Hugelkultur" that makes green roofs pay the mortgage? They stock your fridge with fresh produce, too.

Sound far-fetched? After all, forty years ago, it seemed nearly as bizarre to invite a few truckloads of farmers down to New York City to set

Innovation nation

America's social innovators are bringing fresh energy and ideas to an astonishing array of areas, from sanitation to transportation to medical research to music literacy. Here we offer a glimpse of the wide variety of topics tackled by applicants within the single issue area of Social Services.



up shop at what would become the city's first Greenmarket. And who would have imagined that city dwellers could band together to manage and restore an impossibly neglected place known as Central Park? It was still more ridiculous to save a hunk of doomed railway that, eventually, became the High Line. The Kaplan Fund was instrumental in all of these efforts. We hope you'll join us in supporting today's social revolutionaries—we're betting on it.

The Awardees

Ruth J. Abram

Behold! New Lebanon, New York

Yasmine Arrington

ScholarCHIPS for Children of Incarcerated Parents,
Washington, D.C.

Christopher Brown

Growing Veterans' Peer Mentoring Program, Washington

Gina Clayton

Essie Justice Group, California

Brandon Dennison

Reclaim Appalachia, West Virginia

Alan Lovewell

Bay2Tray, California

Michelle Miller and Jess Kutch

Coworker.org, Washington, D.C.

Elizabeth Monoian and Robert Ferry

Land Art Generator Initiative, Pennsylvania

Jon Schull

Enabling the Future: 3D Printed, Crowdsourced
Prosthetics and Beyond, New York

Elizabeth Vartkessian

Advancing Real Change, Inc., Maryland

About The J.M. Kaplan Fund

The J.M. Kaplan Fund, a New York City–based family foundation, champions inventive giving that supports transformative social, environmental, and cultural causes. Established in 1945 by philanthropist and businessman Jacob Merrill Kaplan, the Fund has since its inception been committed to visionary, early-stage innovation. Over its 70-year history, the Fund has devoted more than \$200 million to propel fledgling efforts concerning civil liberties, human rights, the arts, and the enhancement of the built and natural worlds. Today, the Fund is active throughout the United States and beyond, with focus areas including the environment, historic preservation, migration, and

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The Gotham Program, which supports breakthrough social and environmental action in New York City. The J.M.K. Innovation Prize continues the Fund’s legacy of catalytic grant-making, reaching across America to provide early-stage support for entrepreneurs with twenty-first-century solutions to our most urgent social challenges.

STAFF

Amy L. Freitag
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Angela D. Carabine
Grants Manager

Ann Birckmayer
Program Associate, Furthermore Grants in Publishing

Alexis Marek
Executive Assistant and Technology Associate

Ken Lustbader
Program Director, Historic Preservation

Suzette Brooks Masters
Program Director, Migration

Charles Moore
Program Director, Environment

William P. Falahee
Controller

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innovationprize@jmkfund.org
www.jmkfund.org

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