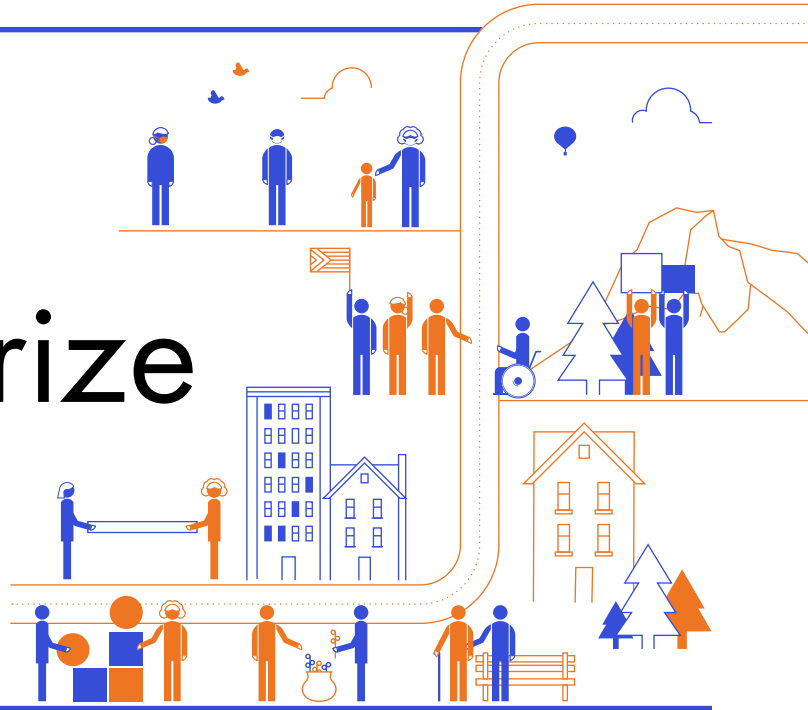


2023

The J.M.K. Innovation Prize

The J.M.K. Innovation Prize seeks to identify, support, and elevate innovators who are spearheading transformative, early-stage projects in the fields of the environment, heritage conservation, and social justice.



Forging New Paths to Social Impact

In a time of increasingly convergent social and environmental challenges, our need for ambitious new ideas could not be clearer. Accelerating climate change, increasing threats to cultural heritage, and persistent injustices all underscore the imperative for fundamental shifts in approach. We know that transforming the future of our climate and society will require new voices and models for change-making. We also know that leaders of budding movements and solutions are hard at work in the gaps between and beyond the reach of traditional funding streams.

Time and again, through hardship and against systemic forces, we've seen innovators defy conventions and reach across established disciplines to forge new paths to social impact. We created the J.M.K. Innovation Prize to support and elevate them.

Since 2015, over four biennial cycles, we've called on change-makers across the country to submit projects with transformative potential. To date, we've supported 40 wildly creative social and environmental initiatives, ranging from Catholic sisters engaged in land reparations to rural entrepreneurs converting mining runoff into pigments for high-quality paints. Leveraging a legacy of catalytic grant-making at The J.M. Kaplan Fund, the Prize seeks out visionary nonprofit and mission-driven for-profit organizations that work within, across, or in a manner related to one or more of the Fund's three program areas.

In 2023, we will award up to 10 Prizes, each including a cash award of \$150,000 over three years, plus \$25,000 in technical assistance funds, for a total award of \$175,000. Awardees also receive guidance through the Fund and its resource network, accessing tools and training to help turn their innovative ideas into life-changing social impacts.

1. The Environment

Slowing the pace of climate change and mitigating climate impacts.



2. Heritage Conservation

Protecting the places that communities care about most.



3. Social Justice

Strengthening democracy and reforming the criminal justice and immigration systems.



Designed for Early-Stage Challenges

We know that there is precious little funding for untested ideas in the social innovation field. We designed the Prize to fill this gap in philanthropy, nurturing ideas that other funders may deem too risky or nascent. Anticipating the challenges of a startup organization, the Prize combines unrestricted funding with consultative support from our staff and partners. A flexible bank of technical assistance funds also allows awardees to deploy resources when and where they're needed most – whether replacing crucial farming equipment or upgrading their website.

Above all, we know each organization must follow its own path. With its three-year term, the Prize gives awardees room to evolve at their own pace, with support tailored to their needs as innovators.



An Innovation Community

Over four rounds of the Prize, we've seen how community among awardees can spark new innovations and help turn ideas to action. Over the three-year term, we bring awardees together for two convenings each year. These meetings spotlight a fellow awardee organization, foster peer learning, and offer mentoring from experts in organizational development, leadership training, and more. From Coastal California to rural Appalachia our awardees have shared in powerful conversations and learning by being embedded in one another's work and reflecting on their role as change agents.

Throughout their Prize term and beyond, awardees also benefit from the Fund's considerable resource network. Whether providing guidance on nonprofit management or an introduction to a fellow funder, the Fund and its staff are there for awardees – both to celebrate the successes and offer strategic counsel amid the stresses of a social innovation startup.

"We've received several federal grants that were very strict, and the unrestricted nature of the J.M.K. Innovation Prize allowed our organization to flourish, particularly considering our focus on social-enterprise models."

Molly Hemstreet & Sara Chester, The Industrial Commons

"Many early-stage prizes in the innovation field are focused on speed, scale, and markets at the expense of depth and connection. What we so appreciated about the J.M.K. Innovation Prize is that we were part of a cohort of people who approach their work from a community-centered perspective, and who are working on longer, more lasting timeframes."

Michelle Miller & Jess Kutch, Coworker.org

"J.M. Kaplan Fund staff have been cheerleaders and morale-boosters, which is an important if often overlooked role in philanthropy."

Brandon Dennison, Coalfield Development Corporation



The Prize Process

Applications are open to individuals or teams representing nonprofit or mission-driven for-profit organizations. The Prize will be awarded to projects or ideas that:

- Represent a game-changing answer to a clearly identified need;
- Innovate within one or more of the Fund's three program areas;
- Demonstrate the potential to develop an actionable pilot or prototype with Prize funding; and
- Hold out the promise to benefit multiple individuals, communities, or sectors through a clearly articulated theory of change.

A first-round application will be made available on the [JMKFund.org](https://www.jmkfund.org) website on **February 7** and will be open until **April 28**. Select applicants will be invited to submit a more detailed second-round application in the late spring. Finalists will present their ideas to the trustees of The J.M. Kaplan Fund in the fall, with awardees formally announced in November 2023.

About The J.M. Kaplan Fund

The J.M. Kaplan Fund champions transformative social, environmental, and cultural causes through inventive grantmaking. Established in 1945 by philanthropist and businessman Jacob Merrill Kaplan, the Fund has since its inception been committed to visionary innovation. Over more than 75 years, the Fund has devoted \$280 million to propel fledgling efforts concerning civil liberties, human rights, the arts, and the conservation and enhancement of the built and natural worlds. The J.M.K. Innovation Prize continues the Fund's legacy of catalytic giving, reaching across America to provide early-stage support for entrepreneurs with twenty-first-century solutions to urgent social and environmental challenges.

Read about our previous awardees, and sign up for email updates at: [JMKFund.org](https://www.jmkfund.org)

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Follow us: [@TheJMKaplanFund](https://www.instagram.com/TheJMKaplanFund)

