

The J.M.K. Innovation Prize

Community-based
Change Agents Rise Up

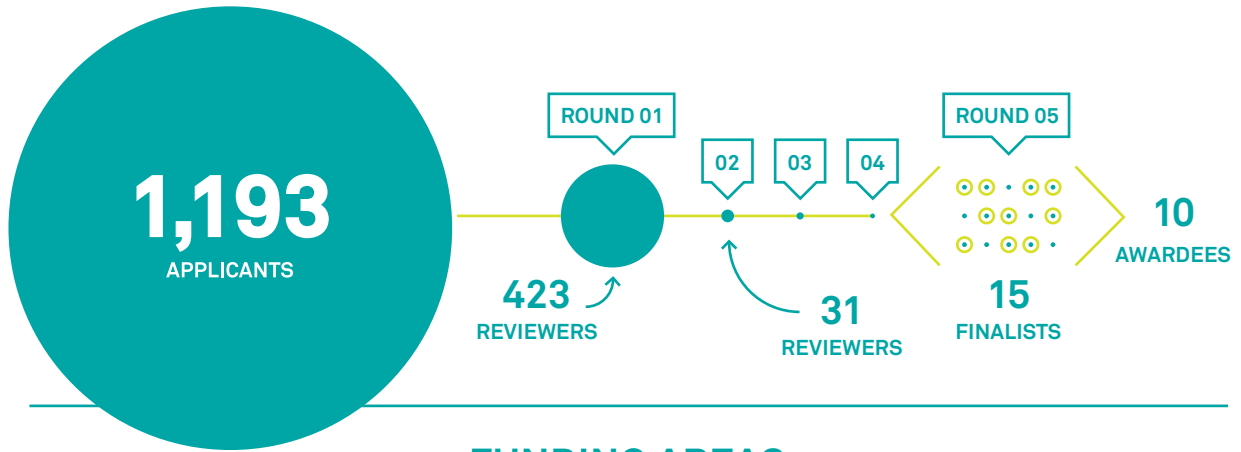
2017



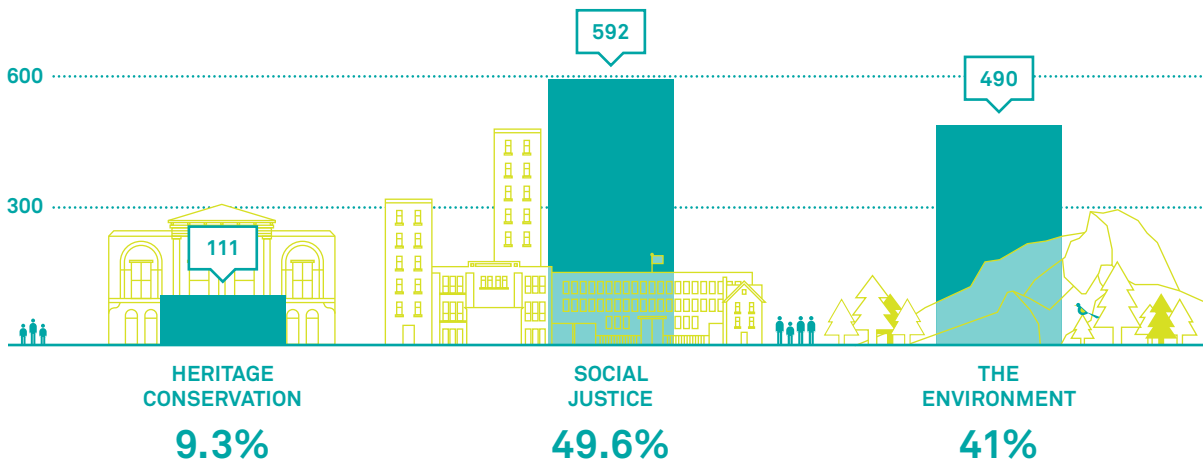
**The J.M.K.
Innovation Prize
Community-based
Change Agents
Rise Up
2017**

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

In 2017, we reached across America to seek out early-stage social innovators of outstanding ambition. More than one thousand applicants from 49 out of 50 states responded with change-making visions spanning the Fund's focus areas.

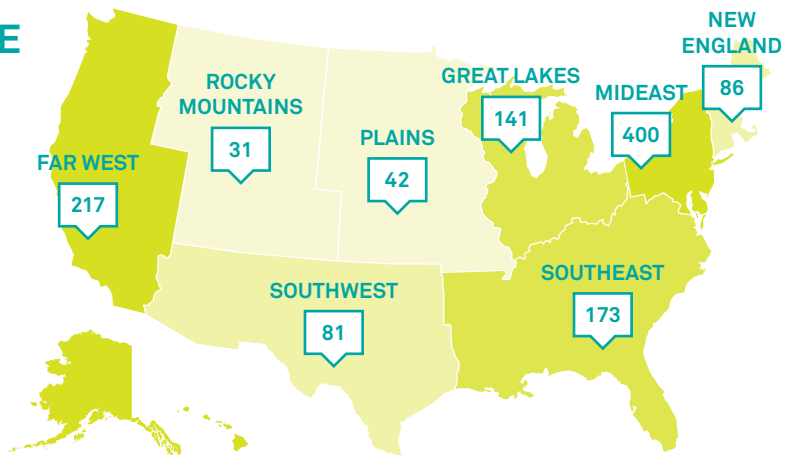
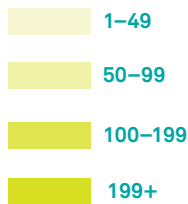


FUNDING AREAS



REGION OF RESIDENCE

APPLICATIONS PER REGION



Introduction

A Coast-to-Coast Incitement

Two years ago, we created The J.M.K. Innovation Prize in the belief that social entrepreneurship can spark transformative change. Drawing on three generations of Fund support for early-stage innovations, we put out a call across America for solutions to urgent social challenges. The result surpassed our wildest expectations—an outpouring of ideas from every corner of the country. We funded ten of the most impactful, ranging from place-based revitalization in Appalachian coal country to school lunches served with sustainable local fish. We couldn't be prouder of the difference these entrepreneurs are making among our nation's underserved communities and treasured cultural spaces.

When we envisioned this second round of the Prize, we could not have imagined it would coincide with a radical remaking of America's political landscape. This year's pool of 1,193 applications—spanning 49 out of 50 states—represents what one Prize reviewer called a “response to the new world order.” Amid a growing sense that our institutions have failed to solve entrenched social problems,

these proposals address an array of needs across the Fund's focus areas of social justice, the environment, and heritage conservation. Whether filling a federal funding gap for places battered by climate change, rebuilding America's broken juvenile justice system, or aiding vulnerable asylum-seekers, social innovators are rising to the occasion. Using new technologies, cross-sector collaboration, and a blend of for-profit and not-for-profit tools, these entrepreneurs are empowering change across the country.

With the assistance of hundreds of reviewers and subject-matter experts, we narrowed this extraordinary field to 15 finalists. We selected ten awardees to receive \$150,000 each, paid out over three years, plus a \$25,000 bank of funds for project expenses. The winners—and the pool from which they were drawn—are a powerful inspiration. To share what we've learned, we invite you to read on for seven takeaways from this year's thousand-plus proposals, as well as reflections of our past awardees on their journey as ascendant change agents.

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1

For-profit innovators are scaling up social impact.

In 2015, we limited the applicant pool to not-for-profit organizations, or those with not-for-profit fiscal sponsorship. This year, we opened the floodgates to for-profit projects, with striking results. Only half of 2017 applications are from existing not-for-profit organizations, suggesting a huge appetite for social entrepreneurship beyond traditional actors. Among the promising for-profit ideas from this year's applicants are a community-driven kitchen incubator owned and operated by refugee and immigrant women, and an app that makes it easier for the public to communicate with the police. But the category most clearly reshaped by for-profit applicants was the environment sector: 58% of all for-profit applicants focused on the environment. The reason? A new crop of social entrepreneurs who believe that environmental conservation can be achieved through sustainably funded business models. That's especially true when conservation is powered by new technology. "Entrepreneurs trying to come up with innovative technology gravitate toward private-sector endeavors," said energy and climate consultant David Van't Hof, a Prize reviewer. "That's a trend

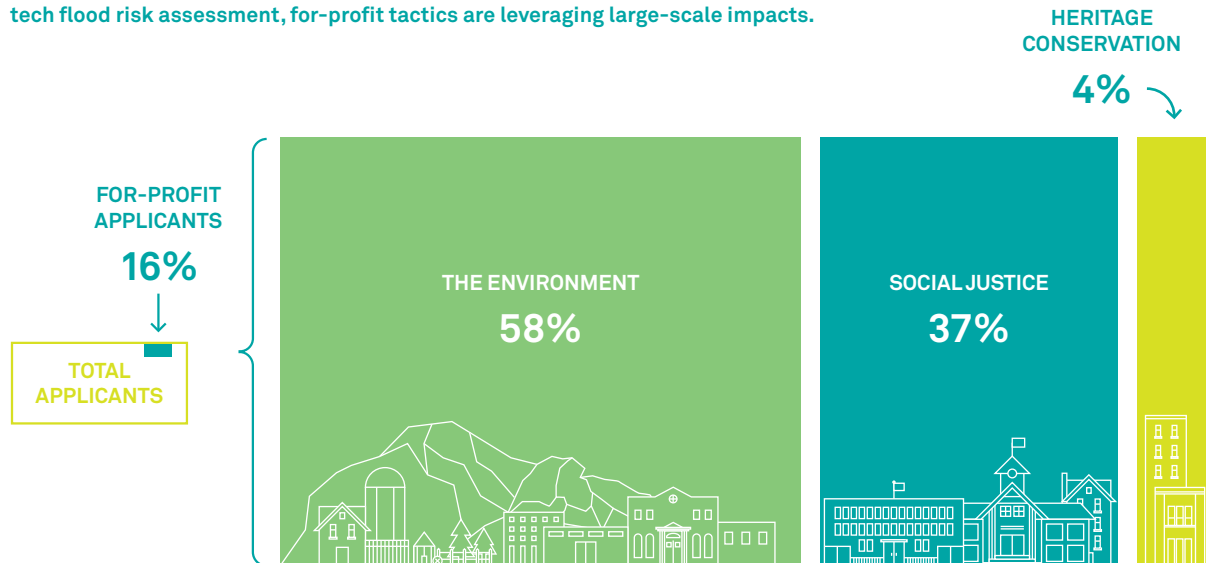
we're seeing globally. It's about getting more capital into these markets."

Tapping the power of the private sector to catalyze change was the express tactic of awardee Coral Vita, which uses land-based coral farming to restore coral reefs. Globally, the scale of the challenge is daunting: by 2030, according to the World Resources Institute, more than 90% of the world's reefs will be threatened by human activities and climate change. Those reefs in turn sustain ecosystems, protect shorelines, attract tourists, and boost fisheries—supporting 1 billion people and generating \$30 billion annually. Coral Vita founders Sam Teicher and Gator Halpern had seen the admirable work of not-for-profit coral regeneration efforts, but found their impacts when living from grant to grant tended to be limited. "It's impossible for NGOs and research institutes alone to scale up and solve this global issue," Halpern said. "It's capital-intensive to do large-scale, high-tech reef restoration."

Coral Vita's solution is to develop an industry around restoration that pulls capital from resort

Environmental activists are joining forces with for-profit visionaries.

While for-profit applicants represented a small share of the total pool, a majority of those entrepreneurs focused on the environment. From compostable bioplastics to high-tech flood risk assessment, for-profit tactics are leveraging large-scale impacts.



developers, coastal insurers, international development agencies, and others with a stake in coral health. The group grows native coral for six to 12 months in tank systems, then replants the coral in its natural habitat. Using processes developed by advisors at the Mote Marine Lab and Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology, Coral Vita accelerates the planting of slow-growing coral that serve as the foundation for reef development, and they also train coral to withstand warmer ocean conditions to buffer against climate change. Being for-profit, however, doesn't mean the group is insensitive to local community needs. "We'll be taking great strides to hire local reef scientists, or train fishermen to be part of our dive teams," said Teicher. "Our vision is to establish a global network of coral farms that build long-term relationships with the people in the places where we're working."



Coral Vita uses innovative tools to restore reef health while serving community needs. (Photo: Coral Vita)

2

Disruptive social enterprises defend immigrants and refugees.

The Trump administration's aggressive moves to tighten U.S. borders have prompted an avalanche of interest in blunting the tragic impacts on immigrants and refugees. Swapna Reddy, co-founder and director of the Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP), noted that recent actions against immigrants "have created terror and panic in the communities we represent. People are scared to take their kids to school or report domestic violence. It's pushed a lot of the clients we work with into the shadows."

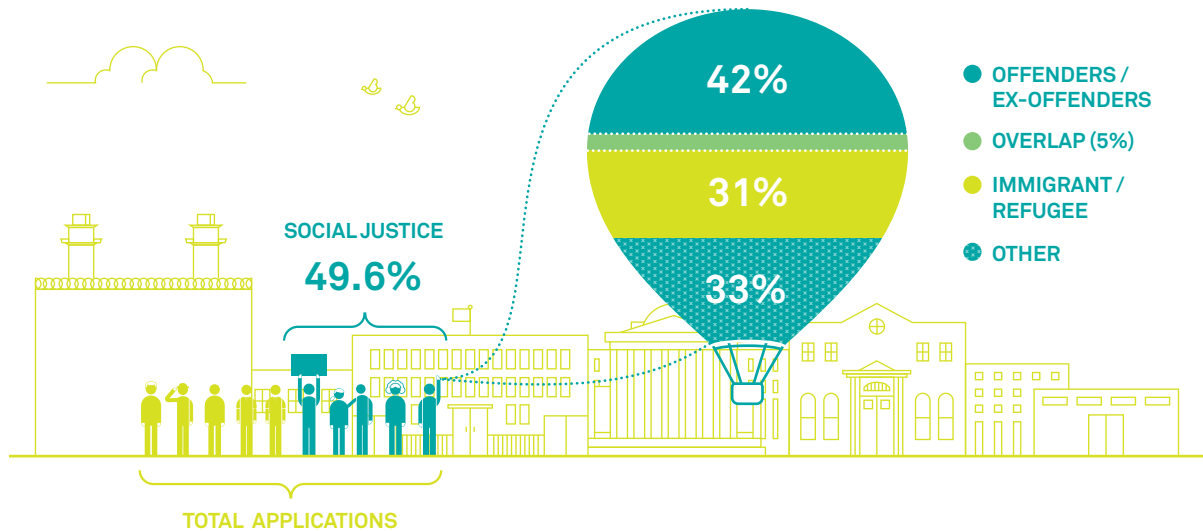
Perhaps most urgently, these populations need access to legal services—a sector highly resistant to disruption. So ASAP, a Prize awardee, offers a model for "lawyering in a crisis" by crowdsourcing short-term volunteers to provide rapid legal services to asylum-seeking families. The need is vast: Having traveled as law students to a detention center near the U.S.-Mexico border, Reddy and co-founder Elizabeth Willis were shocked at the conditions they encountered. The facility housed 2,400 refugee women and children, with just two on-the-ground legal service providers.

In response, ASAP formed in 2015 with 15 student volunteers, and they won every case forced to go to trial in that detention center. Today, the group has worked with over 500 legal volunteers across the country, successfully representing more than 300 asylum seekers in 28 states. By utilizing experts across the nation, ASAP deploys pro bono hours where they are most effective, while learning from legal innovations in a variety of venues. The organization also found that connecting refugees to one another can be as important as linking them with lawyers, so they launched a private online community where thousands of formerly detained, asylum-seeking mothers now share critical information through a peer-support network.

ASAP's approach, based on connecting immigrant communities to key resources and services, mirrors that of other Prize applicants who seek to forge links between immigrants and health experts, English coaches, career advisors, and more. For instance, one project offers co-located medical, mental health, and legal services for asylum-seeking families whose health and emotional

There is a surge of fresh solutions for the social justice field.

Of the Fund's three focus areas, the largest share of applicants selected social justice. Criminal justice reform was referenced by 42% of these applicants, while 31% mentioned immigrants or refugees as a target population.



well-being are in jeopardy. Another addresses the dead-end job prospects and social isolation of refugees by placing them in comparably well-paying employment as baristas at places like Peet's and Starbucks. A third reimagines the food delivery industry as a marketplace for emerging immigrant and refugee chefs. The diversity and vibrancy of these proposals offer cause for hope that a generation of change-makers can help us reach larger societal goals of combating xenophobia, challenging discriminatory government policies, and ultimately restoring America's status as a safe harbor for the world's most vulnerable.



ASAP crowdsources legal volunteers from across the country to defend asylum seekers. (Photo: ASAP)

3

Creative cross-fertilization is reshaping criminal justice.

As a seismic shift takes place in the American criminal justice system—from decades of mass incarceration to today’s growing emphasis on reducing jail populations—an influx of creative approaches from skills training to mindfulness is slowly changing our punitive practices and reinventing the roadmap for re-entry. Whether providing dulas to aid women who are giving birth in prison, or drawing on the role that art can play in facilitating re-entry, many applicants seek to address holistically the needs of people caught up in the criminal justice system.

Prize finalist *Designing Justice + Designing Spaces* illustrates the impacts of a multidimensional approach. “We sit at the intersection of the built environment, restorative justice, and restorative economics,” said Kyle Rawlins, development director for the group. As a case in point, the team is designing a mobile, pop-up resource village in the San Francisco Bay Area that will provide services for under-resourced communities such as assistance for the elderly, food for the hungry, or literacy and education programs. By addressing root

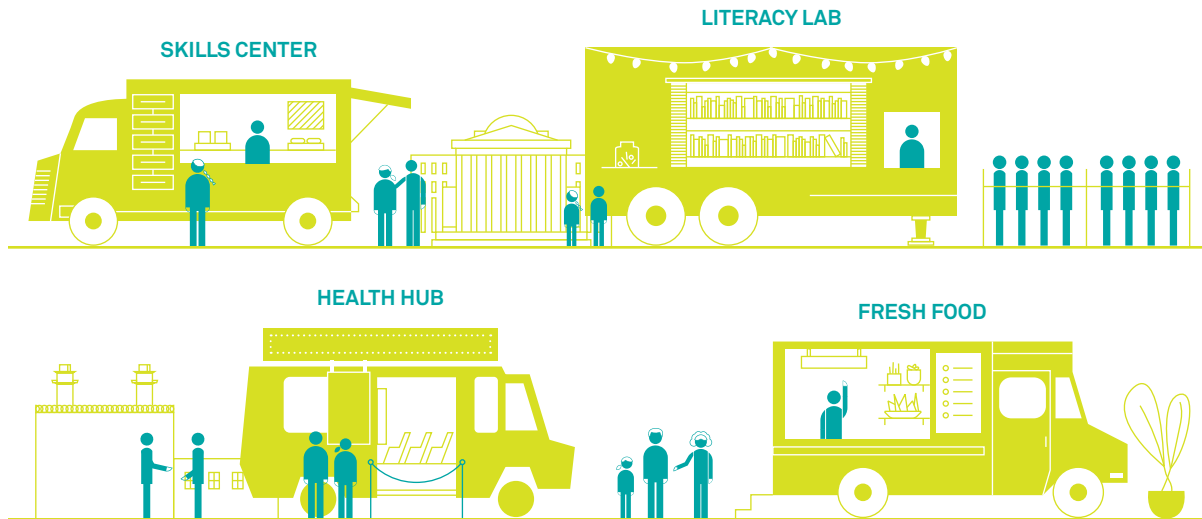
causes of incarceration—poverty, racism, or the lack of economic opportunity—the project uses the tools of architecture and real estate development to transform people’s lives from the ground up. “We can design neighborhoods as peacemaking centers that are an alternative to the criminal justice system,” Rawlins said.

Elsewhere, applicants considered the paramount role social capital plays in the justice realm. “Individuals who are coming home from prison most immediately need housing and employment,” said Debbie Mukamal, executive director of the Stanford Criminal Justice Center, and a Prize reviewer. “They’re returning to communities that are often totally disenfranchised and ill-equipped to address their range of needs. They lack the kind of social networks that we take for granted and we rely on all the time.” In other words, hard work and grit only get us so far. Finding a job or an apartment often depends on the right people opening doors.

Building social capital for “opportunity youth”—the 5.5 million young adults in America who are

A multidimensional movement is pioneering new justice models.

Across the board, applicants reimagined criminal justice through holistic solutions that tap the power of cross-pollination, from food trucks as wellness centers to a recidivism-data dashboard and justice-driven urban conservation.



neither in school nor working—before they find themselves in jail is part of the strategy for Prize awardee Esq. Apprentice. The group helps low-income people of color become attorneys through California’s law apprentice program, while pairing them with lawyer-mentors who join their social network. “I went to a top-ten law school, but I didn’t pass the bar on my first, second, or third try,” explained Rachel Johnson-Farias, founding director of Esq. Apprentice. “I was thinking, if I had this much trouble, how in the world are we going to get other young people of color to the places where they need to be?” The solution was legal apprenticeship, once a widely used career pathway for attorneys, but now available in just four states. Through four years of part-time study in a lawyer’s office or a judge’s chambers, apprentices can become fully licensed attorneys without going to law school—and without amassing

crippling debt that can drive young lawyers to soul-crushing jobs. Instead, Johnson-Farias said, “we can provide practical training and empower youth to be mindful attorneys who take care of themselves and their communities.”



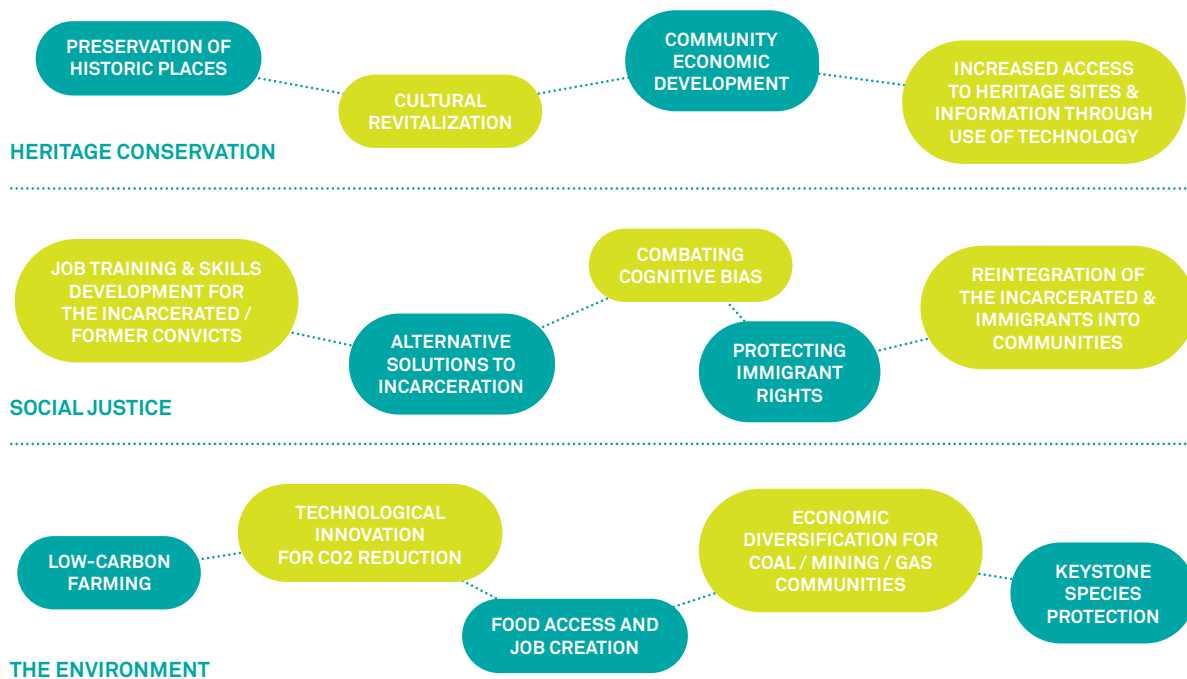
Esq. Apprentice offers California youth a pathway to community-centered legal careers. (Photo: Rachel Johnson-Farias)

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

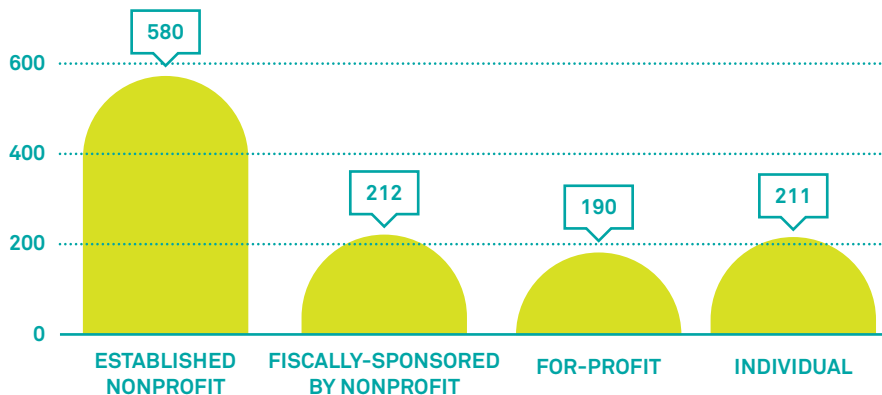
We explored the Prize’s 1,193 applications—a collective portrait of social entrepreneurship in America—to better understand where, how, and for whom emerging innovators are working as they nurture new models for change.

THEMES IN FUNDING AREAS

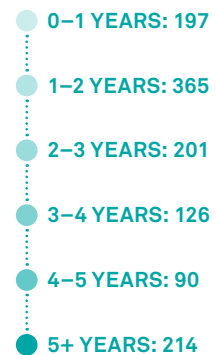
Within the Fund’s focus areas, we found applications clustered among a series of overarching social-impact strategies.



ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE



ORG. AGE

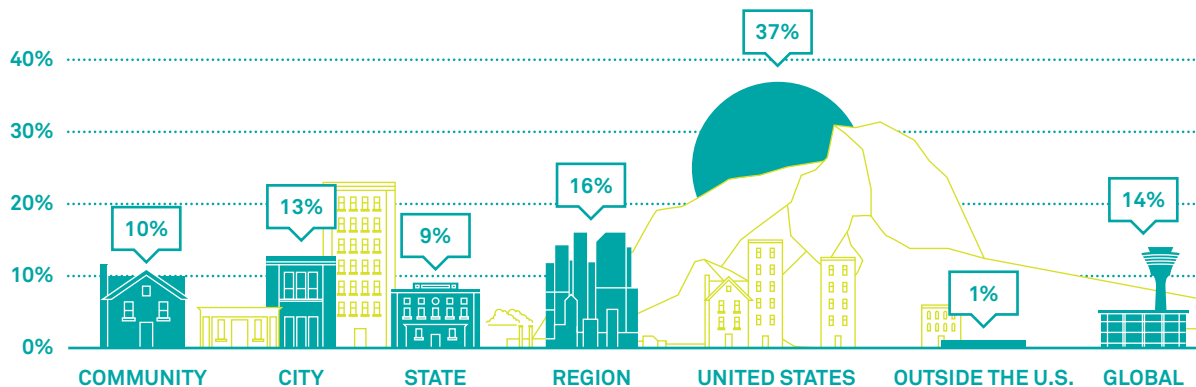


TARGET POPULATION

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



GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE



4

Our future depends on bridging the urban-rural divide.

Responding to the mounting challenges faced by America's rural communities, many social entrepreneurs have focused on rural revitalization. These initiatives seek to bridge the economic divide of declining rural economies, while at the same time addressing an opportunity divide that drives the young and talented out of rural areas that need them most. In the process, social innovators can help find common cause among urban and rural places, bridging a third, political divide that's brought disastrous consequences for the country.

The most impactful applicants addressed head-on the need for rural economic opportunities. One project used crowdfunding to rehabilitate historic buildings, while another proposed a way to provide economic diversification for coal communities, helping them develop and present to the global investment community their best ideas for reinvention. And a cluster of applicants focused on assisting immigrants in rural areas, where opportunity is even more constrained. "For individuals with limited English proficiency, there are barriers to economic mobility that lock

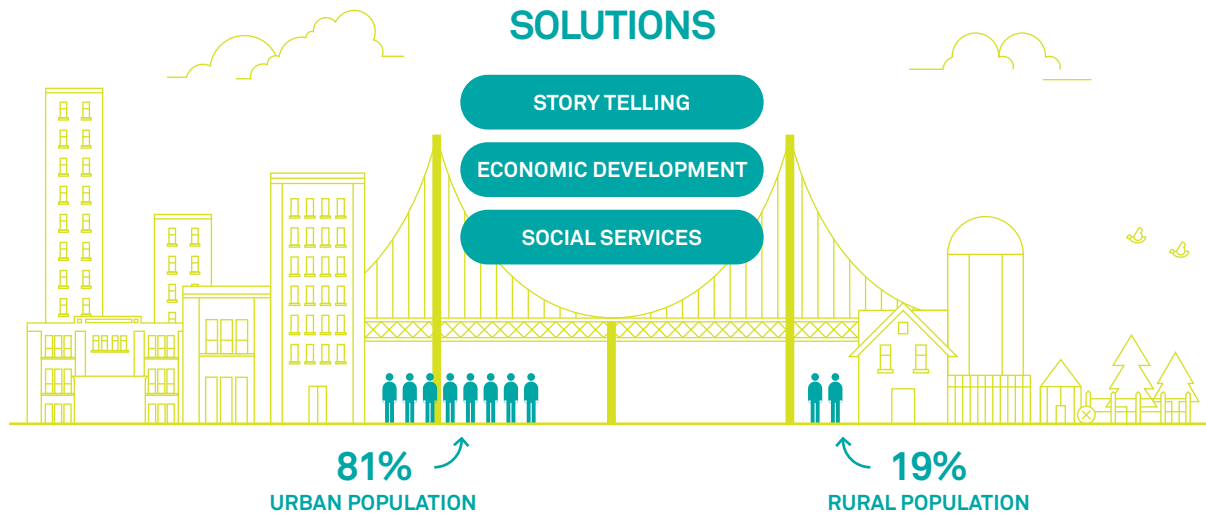
you into low-wage jobs," said Betsy Plum, vice president of policy for The New York Immigration Coalition and a Prize reviewer. "The most interesting proposals were those where people had the time and space to identify a gap."

Such was the case for The California Harvesters, a Prize awardee that resulted from an unusual cross-sector collaboration devoted to improving the lives of immigrant farmworkers. Working with a major agricultural company, the team discovered a surprising fact about America's farm economy: large growers can't find enough labor. "They have limited access to workers, and they had grapes that were literally dying on the vine," said Carmen Rojas, CEO of The Workers Lab, which launched The California Harvesters. "They are trying to figure out how to keep people working on their farms, and use their leverage in this current political and economic climate to do better by undocumented immigrants, who are the lifeblood of many industries."

The California Harvesters responded by creating a

Social innovators are bringing new tools to distressed rural places.

Cultural exchange to heal the urban-rural fracture. A pop-up artist residency program to gather regional histories. A legal commons for sustainable farmers. All seek to bridge what one applicant called “a dangerous divide” between urban and rural America.



strategy to provide worker-ownership to undocumented immigrants through a labor trust, which also negotiates with growers on wages and benefits. The project has secured its first trust members an hourly rate of \$1.50 over minimum wage, plus access to health benefits for the first time. The effort solved a market problem for growers while improving the lives of Central Valley farmworkers, where Depression-era living conditions prevail. “For generations, people have been toiling in our fields in some of the worst working conditions in our country,” Rojas said. “And we’ve done not much more than tinker around the edges in figuring out how to fix that. And it frankly took a cross-sector partnership—an owner, cooperative finance organization, lawyers, and non-profit organizations—to be invested in imagining something different.”



A labor trust created by The California Harvesters supports long-neglected immigrant farmworkers. (Photo: Renewable Resources Group)

5

Deeply rooted regional concerns are driving social innovation.

A close look at the geographic distribution of Prize applications shows how the work of social innovators is shaped by their cultural, political, and ecological contexts. Most strikingly, applicants from Far Western states disproportionately applied for grants focused on the environment. Whether it was an anti-poverty model for energy conservation in Oregon, or a Puget Sound oyster farmer's poignant story driving a climate-change campaign, the west's commitment to environmental conservation shone through. Reflecting this trend was Prize awardee Ho'oulu Pacific, whose "distributed agriculture" model uses small, household farms to grow fish and vegetables in aquaponic systems, then redistributes that food to local communities. The result is a win-win, providing income for farmers and healthy, affordable food for Hawaiians, who face some of the highest food prices in the nation.

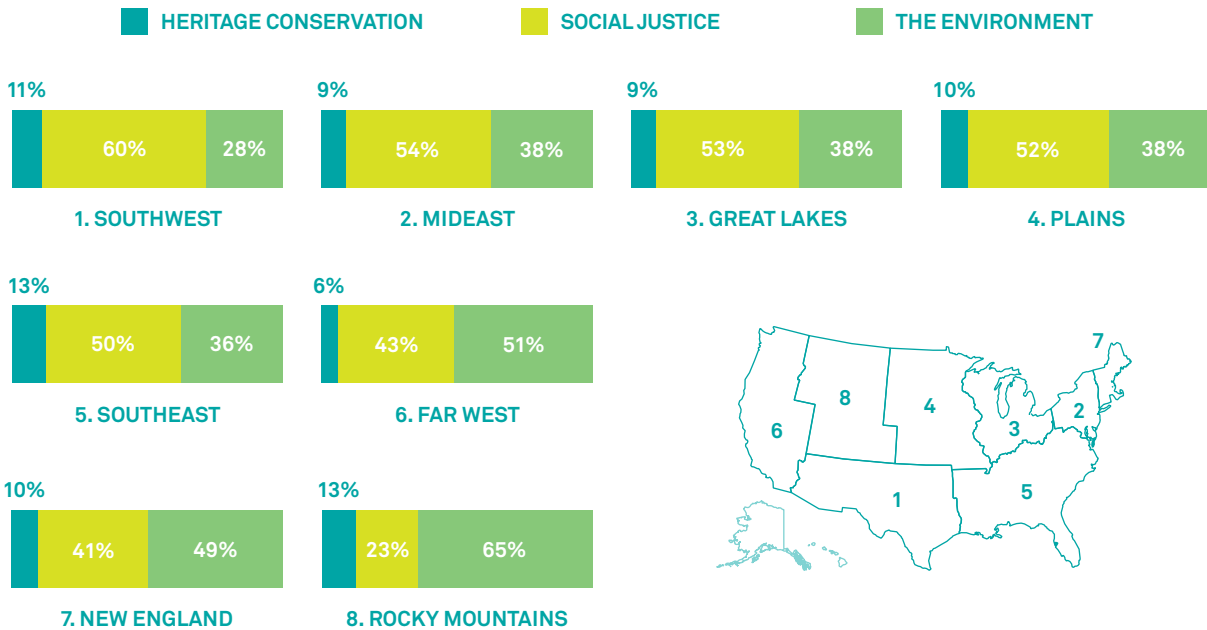
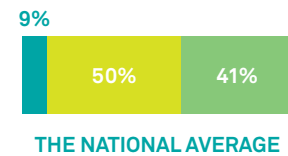
In another trend, the Mideast and Great Lakes regions applied proportionally more for social justice grants than other categories. For instance, one Detroit-based applicant focused on teaching underemployed women how to weld, paving the way

for greater gender equity in the industry. Another applicant sought to use boxing, music, and mentoring as tools to restore the lives of gang-affiliated young men in Chicago, providing an alternative path for high-risk youth. Such initiatives hint at the legacy of labor activism across the nation's former industrial heartland, as well as the infrastructure of advocacy for low-income communities in some of the nation's largest cities.

In the Southeast, which likewise showed a strong interest in social justice, the region saw another intriguing trend: a disproportionate number of applicants in the field of heritage conservation. One of those projects emerged from the rural Western Piedmont region of North Carolina, whose nationally important concentration of manufacturing firms draws on a proud heritage of furniture and textile production. "So many of our parks or streets are named for furniture companies, or for the folks who started them," said Sara Chester, co-director of The Industrial Commons, a Prize awardee. "There's a whole culture here of having skilled people making things. It's part of who we are."

Geography shapes social entrepreneurship.

Our analysis found regional preferences for certain funding areas. For example, even though only 13% of Southeast applicants targeted heritage conservation, the region was 43% more likely to submit in this category compared to the total pool.



The region’s job market was devastated during the 1990s and 2000s due to automation and foreign competition. At the same time, as in rural areas elsewhere, young people were fleeing to urban places. Seizing the opportunity to connect youth retention, cultural heritage, and economic revival, The Industrial Commons helps small to mid-size firms convert to worker-ownership. In the process, Chester and co-director Molly Hemstreet seek to engage a younger generation of worker-owners who are hungry for a more democratic workplace—and can preserve the region’s unique craft-production knowledge before it’s lost.



The Industrial Commons sparks rural revival through worker-ownership. (Photo: Opportunity Threads/The Industrial Commons)

6

Cultural heritage innovators fight for people as much as places.

Of the Fund's three focus areas, cultural heritage perhaps stands to benefit most from the Prize's emphasis on social innovation. While the other two focus areas of social justice and the environment tend to inspire projects with strong social impacts, the traditional U.S. practice of historic preservation has been more focused on buildings rather than people. "Many people working in heritage conservation start by saying: There's this great place. We don't want to see it disappear, so let's figure out a way to keep it," said Will Reynolds, the Fund's program director for heritage conservation and an adjunct assistant professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. "But the projects we're looking for in the Innovation Prize are those that really start with people."

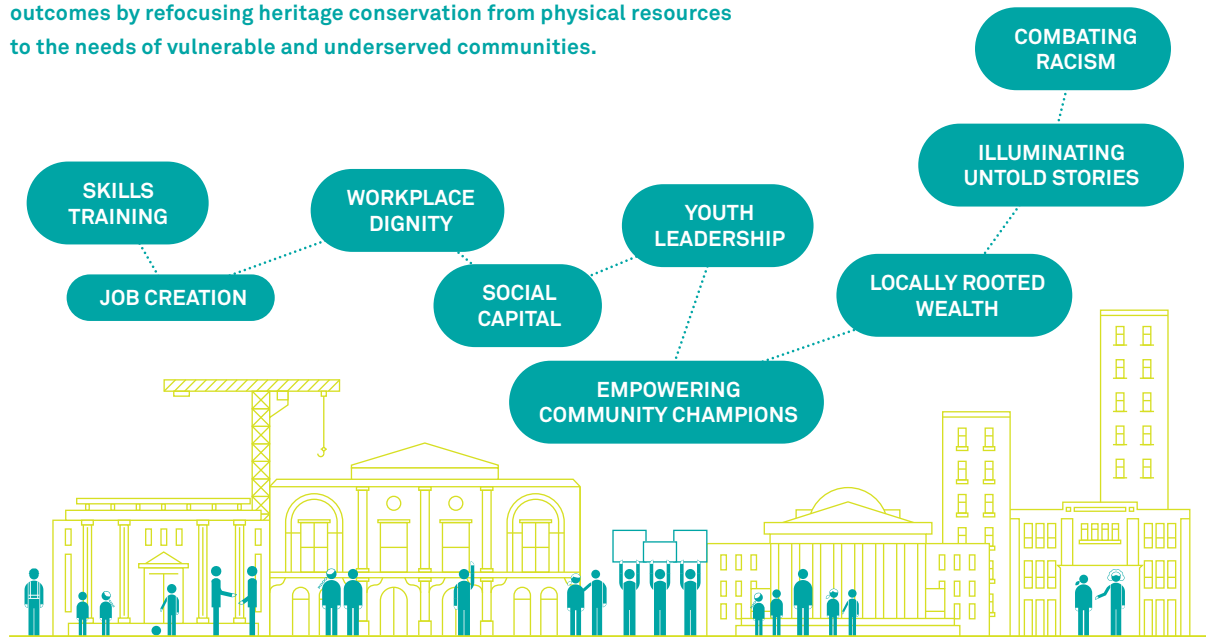
By starting with community needs, historic conservation can multiply impacts. For instance, many applicants to the Prize proposed to combine heritage work with skills training in places where the economic engines that once sustained them have sputtered. Others used conservation as

a means to create workplace dignity, build social capital, combat racism, grow locally rooted wealth, and cultivate youth leadership.

Among those applicants that leverage heritage tools to serve social needs, Prize awardee Rising Tides aspires to match pro bono volunteers with communities threatened by sea-level rise. Whether taking on archeological work in Alaskan villages or oral histories in Mississippi's historic black communities, the project seeks to safeguard heritage by connecting national expertise to some of the 13 million Americans who stand to be displaced due to rising waters in the next century. "The most environmentally vulnerable communities also tend to be socioeconomically vulnerable," said Victoria Herrmann, founder of Rising Tides. "Many small and medium-sized towns are geographically remote. Their civic councils are overburdened with work and under-resourced to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Our platform will bring technical assistance directly to community champions across America who are working to build social cohesion, preserve historic

Connecting people and place can multiply social impacts.

Innovation Prize applicants sought to spark a variety of positive outcomes by refocusing heritage conservation from physical resources to the needs of vulnerable and underserved communities.



sites, and empower local traditions to withstand rising tides.”

A related theme among applicants is an acknowledgment that heritage conservation can be enriched through storytelling. “Across America, there’s a growing trend toward greater celebration of narratives that have not been conventionally seen as important,” Reynolds added. For example, Prize finalist BlackSpace seeks to preserve culture in central Brooklyn’s African-American and Afro-Caribbean neighborhoods through resident-led walking tours and other media. Instead of presenting tours for visitors, BlackSpace envisions tours conducted by intergenerational local teams who will research cultural sites, tell their stories, and empower neighborhood youth as “culture keepers.” By connecting living people to a place, the project helps ensure that physical

resources—many of which may be architecturally undistinguished—will still be there in the future as sources of local knowledge and pride.



Rising Tides builds social cohesion while piloting new tools to save imperiled cultural heritage. (Photo: Eli Keene)

7

Technology unites at-risk communities like never before.

While creative uses of technology cropped up in every Prize category—ranging from the use of data analytics to mitigate beehive loss, to the creation of a set of civic emoji for extreme weather events—some of the most compelling tech-driven applicants also proved the simplest: using modern communications networks to make rapid connections when disaster strikes.

Two Prize finalists illustrate this trend in different contexts. Deploying an old technology to new ends, Good Call is a round-the-clock telephone hotline for those who are arrested. Especially for low-income communities of color, where arrests for minor offenses are common, it is often difficult to reach a loved-one or lawyer to get help quickly. Since public defenders often arrive mere minutes before an arraignment, this lack of communication can lead to undeserved jail time. In response, Good Call provides a one-stop number that anyone can call to connect to legal, family, and other support in the crucial moments after arrest and before confinement. Those preregistered with the service can also

have alerts sent to an emergency contact list to notify family or friends.

A second Prize finalist, Notifica, takes a similar approach for a specific population: undocumented immigrants facing the threat of deportation. “People’s number one defense mechanism is their own community,” said Adrian Reyna, who developed Notifica through his role directing digital programs at the immigrant-youth advocacy organization United We Dream. By alerting an individual’s contact list in the event of an immigration raid, Notifica uses ubiquitous instant-messaging technology to activate a network of social support. “We know we are able to employ a harm-reduction strategy if people have a mechanism to communicate quickly with attorneys, friends, family, and people who can take care of their kids,” Reyna explained.

Himself an undocumented immigrant who moved to the U.S. from Mexico at age 12, Reyna grew up keenly aware of the challenges faced by millions in America targeted by immigration and customs

Digital networks are revolutionizing the delivery of urgent social services.

Whether providing legal representation for immigrants facing deportation, or activating support networks for ex-offenders transitioning back into society, instant messaging has created powerful opportunities to connect people when it matters most.



enforcement. “Many people think enforcement looks like ICE agents knocking down doors and bringing people out,” Reyna said. “It does not work like that at all. It is a much more covert, almost vigilante style of operation. Our goal is to ensure that people have all the information they need and can protect themselves against the aggressive way agencies are carrying out enforcement.” Reyna worked with technology partners to ensure that once used, the app deletes all records of its use to prevent access by authorities.

As important as its instant messages, however, the app is designed to help immigrants create a plan with family and friends, both immigrants and

non-immigrants. In walking through their contact lists, they speak to one another about their hopes and fears. In this way, Notifica aspires to spark a national conversation about the lives of immigrants and their plight—a proactive approach not just to defending the most vulnerable, but to begin changing socially and economically ruinous policies. “This is the principle of organizing,” Reyna said. “We bring people together to have an open and frank conversation about the struggles that immigrant families have.” A similar axiom drives the work of Prize applicants across the board: only by forging connections between people will we have a fighting chance of making social change.

Lessons from 2015

The Long Game

When we first launched The J.M.K. Innovation Prize, we knew we needed to bring more than a cash award to the table for ten social entrepreneurs. We sought to create an infrastructure of support to help turn ideas into action. So over the three-year Prize term, we've brought the 2015 awardees together for capacity-boosting counsel from experts in organizational development, board cultivation, media coaching, leadership training, and more. Many awardees told us that the group's three convenings to date—the first in the Hudson Valley; the second in Monterey, California; and the third in rural West Virginia—have been among the most valuable aspects of their Prize experience.

During these gatherings, our diverse innovators forged a peer network around shared challenges and successes—sometimes sparking profound connections. “You’d think West Virginia coal country and Monterey fishing country could not be more different,” said Brandon Dennison, a 2015 awardee whose project, Reclaim Appalachia, creates place-based economic revival among West Virginia’s coal communities. “But I had this realization at

our convening in Monterey that the exploitation of workers in the agricultural industry was very similar to the exploitation of coal miners. Divers for seafood on the bottom of the bay talk about going far underwater, and it reminded me of the miners in Appalachia going far underground. You start to realize there are patterns shared among us, and it enriches the perspective we all have in not feeling quite so alone.”

That sense of sustaining bonds across disciplines struck Liz Vartkessian, a 2015 awardee who set out to reduce severe sentences in America’s criminal justice system by highlighting the life histories of those accused. She and Dennison found similar challenges in empowering people to act in their own best interests—whether showing new career paths to a laid-off coal miner, or inducing a juror to recognize how a person’s background may have influenced his or her actions. “In my organization, I’m trying to shift hearts and minds to be less retributive,” Vartkessian said. “Brandon’s trying to do something that is going to take a while, and there is going to be pushback. That’s part of the

process. It has buoyed me to know that this happens in a variety of different spaces, and I'm not going to achieve my goals in a year or two. This is the long game that we're playing."

Awardees agreed that the way forward is a matter of measured steps toward an ambitious goal. Elizabeth Monoian and Robert Ferry were 2015 awardees for their Land Art Generator Initiative, which develops public art installations that transform clean-energy infrastructure into cultural and economic assets. Since the award, the two have focused most visibly on board development, recently appointing five new members. Like many young not-for-profits, they found that while their initial board offered indispensable support, to reach the next stage of growth they needed a broader network of champions. "These people are national and international influencers in the sectors of renewable energy, architecture, engineering, and landscape architecture," Ferry said, "and it was really due to the coaching of the Fund that we were able to get to this point."

Others, too, found that scaling up massive change is a journey—and sometimes the road takes an unexpected turn. Whether a leadership transition or a strategic pivot, several 2015 awardees faced unforeseen challenges. Among them was Christopher Brown, co-founder of Growing Veterans, which uses community farming as a catalyst for ending veteran isolation. Shortly after the Prize was awarded, he sought to shift from his role as executive director and move to the organization's board, allowing him to pursue a clinical social-work license. At the same time, succession-planning and financial challenges strained the group's operations. Brown has now secured a successor and steered the organization toward sustainable growth. "We're getting all the right pieces in place," he said, adding that the Fund's flexibility—for example, in advancing an award installment to cover a temporary bud-



Awardees of the 2015 J.M.K. Innovation Prize explore the evolution of coal communities during a convening in West Virginia. (Photo: Robert Ferry)

get gap—has been critical. "We've worked with a lot of funders, but none of them has done even twenty percent of what the Kaplan Fund has done to help us in this crucial stage of development."

With its three-year term and program of support, we've tried to engineer the Prize to accommodate—even embrace—those inevitable changes of course. Indeed, in our report on the Prize two years ago, we argued that social entrepreneurs need the freedom to fail. We believe that more strongly now than ever. If all ten awardees are an unmitigated success, we're not risking enough as grant makers. And as this year's Prize shows, the stakes have only grown: greenhouse gas emissions are putting communities in peril; low-income youth of color urgently need an employment pipeline; our most vulnerable are threatened by anti-immigrant legislation. Now is the time to bet big on the next generation of undaunted social visionaries.

The Awardees

Sara Chester and Molly Hemstreet
The Industrial Commons
WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

Gator Halpern and Sam Teicher
Coral Vita
WASHINGTON, D.C. AND SAN DIEGO, CA

Victoria Herrmann
Rising Tides
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Rachel Johnson-Farias
Esq. Apprentice
CALIFORNIA

David Muhammad
**Neighborhood Opportunity and
Accountability Board (NOAB)**
CALIFORNIA

Swapna Reddy and Elizabeth Willis
Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project (ASAP)
NEW YORK

Carmen Rojas
The California Harvesters
CALIFORNIA

Cristina Tzintzun
Jolt Initiative
TEXAS

David Walfish
Ho'oulu Pacific
HAWAII

Tony Weaver Jr.
Get Media L.I.T.
GEORGIA

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 innovation. Over its 72-year history, the Fund has devoted \$250 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 social justice, the environment, and heritage conservation. 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 urgent social challenges.

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Program Director, Social Justice

Will Reynolds
Program Director, Heritage Conservation

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Melissa Samet
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