Microsoft Community Impact Pitch-Off

The technological revolution has brought about significant advancements in computing power and technology, enabling society to take on unprecedented challenges and move into the future by leaps and bounds. But the benefits of this revolution haven’t been distributed evenly. Advances in technology have led to the elimination of many traditional, manual labor jobs, the transformation of economies and societal norms, significant impacts on the environment, and increasing divides between people who benefit from these changes and those who do not. Microsoft is committed to addressing these challenges, particularly focusing on how they affect communities where the company operates datacenters.

At the Community Impact Pitch-Off, you will have the opportunity to present your idea for how to best address a challenge in your community to judges from Microsoft and the local community. The winning team will take home $1,000 in prize money and $5,000 in implementation funds to start putting their plan into action.

Timeline

- **October 30**: Deadline to submit short project proposals (300 words max)
- **November 3**: Top participants are invited to refine their ideas in a webinar and present them at a live pitch-off event
- **November 6**: Webinar led by Microsoft professionals for top participants
- **Late November**: Top participants pitch their ideas at events held at campuses in the San Marcos, Des Moines, Chicago, and Phoenix areas. Winners from each event are chosen to receive prize money and project stipends

Forming a Team

- Undergraduate students, graduate students, and professionals are welcome to apply
- Proposal submissions may come from individuals or teams
- Pitch-off presentations should be by teams of 2-5 members
Challenge Topic

Building strong communities through partnerships and local engagement is an essential part of Microsoft’s mission to operate responsibly and bring value to datacenter communities. Each community is unique in its demographics, employment, income, and social issues; but all provide essential support to Microsoft’s expanding datacenter fleet.

Microsoft wants to hear from you-- the next generation of sustainability experts and datacenter community members-- about how you might help datacenter communities to thrive. Taking inspiration from the four prompts below, participants should answer the question of how Microsoft can best focus their investments in a community to create maximum, positive impact with limited resources:

- How can Microsoft extend its commitment to environmental sustainability– including the company’s focus on using renewable energy, reducing water consumption, and eliminating waste – to the communities in which they operate?
- How can Microsoft leverage its technical knowledge and assets to address the digital divide in datacenter communities, where many neighborhoods are still without high-speed Internet access or affordable broadband options?
- Microsoft is committed to diversity and inclusion in its workforce. How can the company extend this commitment to help underrepresented groups gain digital skills to compete in the 21st century economy?
- Microsoft is committed to being a good and responsible member of the communities in which they operate. How can the company best engage with community stakeholders to understand local needs? In what ways can the company work to build value for both the community and Microsoft?

Submission Details

Each team is required to submit a brief initial proposal on the Net Impact website by 11:59pm Pacific Time on October 30, 2018.

- Proposals should be no more than 300 words
- Your proposal should address at least one aspect of the prompt and outline the elements you plan to elaborate on during the live pitch-off
- Teams are encouraged to use any available resources, including those provided by this brief, external research, and insights from existing community organizations and initiatives
- Formal language is not necessary; feel free to use bullets or lists to convey your ideas

After submitting an initial proposal, all entries will be evaluated. Top participants will be invited to attend a webinar with Microsoft experts to receive feedback as they prepare for their 5-minute, in-person pitch.
Selection Criteria

Initial proposals will be reviewed by Net Impact, and in-person pitches will be judged by a panel selected by Microsoft. Successful proposals and in-person pitches will be those that best demonstrate:

- **Clarity of design**: The proposal concisely addresses the pitch-off question and clearly identifies project strategies and outcomes. Sub-themes include:
  - Clarity of the proposal: The proposal clearly lays out a strategy that is easy to identify and understand.
  - Project design: The activities necessary to achieve the intended outcomes are clearly explained, practically considered, and linked directly to the proposal goals.
- **Authenticity**: The pitch clearly describes an existing community need or issue area and lays out how this project proposes to address the issue in a manner that is consistent with local priorities. Proposals may include reference to existing organizations and potential partners working in the chosen area.
- **Creativity**: The proposal generates value by applying a unique concept, or an existing concept in a unique way.
- **Feasibility**: The proposal could be reasonably implemented given the team’s skill set and a $5,000 budget. Teams are encouraged to take advantage of Microsoft’s existing assets, e.g. access to mentors, brand recognition.
- **Bonus points**: Additional points may be awarded to recognize things like: extra attention put towards research or impact, ideas that incorporate multiple stakeholders such as NGOs, municipalities, and community groups, or exceptional results in one of the other scored categories.

Background Information

Over the last two hundred years, global culture and economy have been shaped by a series of industrial revolutions. The first of these industrial revolutions was driven by the advent of the steam engine from which the railroad and mass production of goods were born. The second revolution was driven by electricity which made possible home appliances, sparked a revolution in architecture driven by electric pumps and elevators that support taller buildings, and drove the creation of mass communication through radio and TV. The third industrial revolution was driven by computerization, resulting in broad societal changes including the space race, changes in education, and the internet. The current and fourth industrial revolution is characterized by ubiquitous, inexpensive, powerful computing and storage solutions that make possible robotics, understanding the human genome, and self-driving cars.

Each of these industrial revolutions has had profound impact on society, created significant wealth and arguably has improved the human condition. At the same time, industrial revolutions are, by definition, disruptive. They eliminate traditional jobs, transform economies and societal norms, cause significant impacts on the environment, and create divides between people who benefit from these changes and people who are negatively impacted.
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an increasingly vital component of how corporations do business. At Microsoft, CSR is focused on addressing the challenges that come with the disruption caused by the fourth industrial revolution. Their investments in CSR help drive innovative approaches to product design, materials sourcing, and market opportunities. Their sense of responsibility helps drive employee engagement, as employees increasingly seek out and stay with employers whose mission includes a meaningful CSR component. Lastly, since corporations make a significant impact on society, a thoughtful approach to CSR helps to build a social fabric that is trustworthy, responsible and inclusive.

One such approach is the Datacenter Community Development (DCCD) initiative. The DCCD initiative works in communities in which Microsoft operates datacenters to reduce operational and brand risk to the company and capitalize on opportunities for making a positive impact, thereby establishing Microsoft as a trusted partner in these communities. Through community partnerships, Microsoft creates shared value that delivers business benefits to Microsoft while also advancing social opportunity, enhancing economic growth, and supporting environmental sustainability in these communities.

Through the DCCD initiative, Microsoft builds relationships with civic organizations, non-profit groups, business partners, and schools in datacenter communities. Through these partnerships, Microsoft resources and programs are matched with local needs to deliver on Microsoft and community priorities.

Projects are driven through four initiatives; highlights include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs/Initiatives</th>
<th>Example projects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Broadband</strong></td>
<td>Providing free public wifi in West Des Moines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnering with local groups to build and deliver affordable broadband to datacenter communities</td>
<td><strong>Community Empowerment Fund</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding projects that align with local priorities to achieve social, economic and environmental outcomes for all</td>
<td>Establishing a second harvest food bank in Quincy Designing a project-based learning network pathway with West Des Moines Public Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community Environmental Sustainability</strong></td>
<td>Helping to plug Western Cape water crisis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnering with community leaders to inspire ideas and ignite action to help resolve top environmental issues in datacenter communities</td>
<td><strong>Workforce Development</strong></td>
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<td>Delivering workforce programs to help community members find employment in the growing information technology sector – in Microsoft’s datacenter communities and beyond</td>
<td>Donating equipment to Big Bend Community College</td>
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