

## Microsoft Community Impact Pitch-Off

The digital revolution has brought significant advancements enabling society to tackle challenges in new ways, creating widespread and meaningful impact. However, the digital divide remains and negatively affects sectors of the population. Advances in technology have led to the elimination of more traditional forms of employment, the transformation of economies and societal norms, significant impacts on the environment, and increasing disparity between people who benefit from these changes and those who do not.

At Net Impact, we have a passion for helping the communities in which we live and work. And Microsoft is committed to addressing important challenges for communities where their data centers operate. One such approach are the Datacenter Community Development (DCCD) initiatives. The DCCD initiatives work to establish trust and collaboration in these communities. Through community partnerships, Microsoft creates shared value while also advancing social opportunity, enhancing economic growth, and supporting environmental sustainability.

By responding to one of the prompts provided in this document, you will have the opportunity to present your idea for how to best leverage Microsoft's initiatives and local community priorities to address an important issue in your area. At the Community Impact Pitch-Off event, judges from Microsoft and the local community will select a winning idea that will take home \$1,000 in prize money and \$5,000 in implementation funds to put their plan into action in Spring 2020.

By participating in this opportunity, you will gain greater understanding of how to assess local challenges, create a strategy to address them, leverage collaborations and local resources, and demonstrable experience in taking an idea and turning it into a fully developed project.

Microsoft's TWCD initiatives are as follows:

- **Community broadband**

Helps communities deliver broadband service to underserved areas

- **Community workforce development**

Builds a skilled workforce in datacenter communities, integrating them into the 21st century economy and creating a pipeline of candidates for Microsoft datacenters

- **Community environmental sustainability**

Extends Microsoft's environmental commitments beyond the boundaries of our datacenters to support local communities

- **Community empowerment fund**

Supports local non-profits and sponsors projects to address local needs and ambitions

## Microsoft's Local Focus Areas

The Microsoft TWCD team is excited to support student-driven projects that address the following focus areas in the communities of Chicago (Illinois), San Antonio(Texas), Phoenix (Arizona), and Des Moines (Iowa) metro areas.

- **Workforce development & education**

Examples include but are not limited to projects that provide skills training for the jobs of the future, STEAM/IT education, career pathways, reskilling opportunities, etc.

Past project examples:

[Designing a project-based learning network pathway with West Des Moines Public Schools](#)

- **Environmental sustainability**

Examples include but are not limited to projects that support community renewable energy, improve air quality, reduce carbon, preserve biodiversity, etc.

Past project examples:

[Implementing hydroponic community garden to fight hunger](#)

- **Youth development & empowerment**

Examples include but are not limited to leadership programs, life skills programs, arts and culture programs, 21st century skills programs and job skills programs for youth, etc.

Past project examples:

[Inspiring the next generation of young digital farmers](#)

- **Inclusive & prosperous communities**

Examples include but are not limited to projects that improve civic engagement, affordable housing, transportation access and affordability, development or restoration of public spaces, support nonprofit needs etc.

Past project examples:

[Developing a software application to improve food bank operations](#)

## Timeline

- **October 4** - Applications open
- **Deadlines for submissions**
  - San Antonio Metro Area: November 10, 2019
  - Phoenix Metro Area: November 10, 2019
  - Chicago Metro Area: November 10, 2019
  - Des Moines Metro Area: December 3, 2019
- **Second to third week of November** - Campuses host pitch-off events
  - Texas State University San Marcos: November 15th, 2019
  - Arizona State University Phoenix: November 14th, 2019
  - University of Illinois Chicago: November 19th, 2019
- **January 2020** - Pitch off event held in Des Moines
- **Spring 2020** - Winning teams implement their project idea

Winners from each event are chosen to receive \$1,000 prize money and \$5,000 in project funds.

## Forming a Team

- Undergraduate students and graduate students are welcome to apply
- Teams must be between two and five members
- Each team should have a leader who submits proposals and is the primary point of contact between the project team, Net Impact and Microsoft
- If selected, each team member must sign a Participant Agreement form, committing to refining their proposal and attending the live pitch-off event

## Pitch-off Prompts

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 three 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?



- Microsoft is committed to helping close the digital divide. 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 being a good and responsible member of the communities in which they operate. In what ways can the company work to **build value for both the community and Microsoft**?

## Submission Details

Each participant is required to submit a brief initial proposal on the [Net Impact website](#) by **11:59pm Pacific Time on November 10th, 2019**.

- Proposals should address each of the application's questions. You are encouraged to preview application questions and the [selection rubric](#)
- Your proposal should address how it clearly meets your community's need
- Your proposal should align with at least one of Microsoft's focus areas listed above
- Successful proposals will encompass the selection criteria outlined below
- Participants 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 proposals will be invited to attend a virtual pitch-off prep session with Microsoft experts. Teams will 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 Microsoft panel.

The maximum possible score per proposal is 40 points. Categories below indicate the maximum scoring per section. Successful proposals and in-person pitches will be those that best demonstrate:

- **Localization (9 max. points possible):** The pitch clearly describes the 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.
  - Locally relevant (4 pts)- addressing an existing community need or local issue area. **Projects to be implemented within the metro areas of San Antonio (TX), Phoenix (AZ), Chicago (IL) and Des Moines (IA)**
  - Initiative aligned (5 pts)- the project design fits with Microsoft's local focus areas (see above)
- **Project sustainability (9 max. points possible)**

- Sustainability in the project design- proposal includes a plan for how this project will live beyond their involvement, i.e. plan for how collaboration with multiple stakeholders such as NGOs, municipalities, local community members and organizations, will carry on this project.
  - As part of this evaluation, participants should demonstrate that they have the time and experience to integrate these local partnerships into their actual project execution
- Microsoft volunteer engagement- the proposal design includes a plan for the engagement of Microsoft volunteers from local data centers
- **Feasibility (7 max. points possible):** The proposal could be reasonably implemented in spring 2020 given the team's skill set and capacity and a \$5,000 budget. Teams are encouraged to take advantage of Microsoft's existing assets, e.g. access to mentors and brand recognition.
- **Clarity of design (6 max. points possible):** The proposal clearly identifies project strategies and outcomes to address a particular topic that impacts their local community. The proposal will be evaluated based on:
  - Clarity of the proposal (3 pts): The proposal clearly and logically lays out a strategy for a project that addresses one or more local issues that are relevant to the pitch-off topics.
  - Project design (3 pts): The activities necessary to achieve the intended outcomes are clearly explained, practically considered, and linked directly to the proposal goals.
- **Innovation (5 max. points possible):** The proposal generates value to Microsoft and the local community by applying a unique concept, or an existing concept in a unique way
- **Bonus points (4 max. points possible):** Additional points may be awarded to recognize things like: extra attention put towards maximizing impact, or exceptional results in one of the other scored categories.

## Additional Resources

[Microsoft's Corporate Social Responsibility](#)

[Microsoft Data Centers](#)

[Microsoft Tech Spark](#)

[Microsoft Philanthropies](#)