



Mandela Washington Fellowship Summit

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Leadership for the Future: Resilience and Inclusion

Launch of the Mandela Washington Fellowship Catalyst Grant Transcript for Launch of the Catalyst Grant

Speakers

- Kristin Lord, President and Chief Executive Officer, IREX
- Adepeju Jaiyeoba, Founder, Brown Button Foundation and Mother's Delivery Kit (2014 Mandela Washington Fellowship Alumna, Nigeria)
- Will Snider, Operations Lead, D-Prize
- Yolanda Sangweni, Senior Director of Programming, National Public Radio

Session Transcript

Kristin Lord: Greetings, everyone! Welcome to the launch of the 2021 Mandela Washington Fellowship Catalyst Grant. I am Kristin Lord, President and CEO of IREX, and I will be moderating this very brief, but very exciting, new session. IREX is proud of its role as an implementer of the Mandela Washington Fellowship, which is a program of the United States Government. And we are very pleased to have partnered with D-Prize to offer this exciting opportunity for 2021 Mandela Washington Fellows. This partnership is important to us at IREX. We promote more just, prosperous, and inclusive societies around the world by investing in people, particularly, by cultivating leaders and empowering youth. So you see, in this grant, we and our partners will accomplish both. We're also pleased that our partner, the Department State, shared our enthusiasm for this partnership for the benefit of all the Fellows.

I would now like to introduce two people who are very familiar with the work of D-Prize: Adepeju Jaiyeoba and Will Snider. Adepeju and Will, before you introduce yourselves, I'd like to advise the Fellows, that while the session will not include time for audience questions, additional information about the D-Prize can be found in the 2021 Mandela Washington Fellowship Catalyst Grant section of the Virtual Resource Page, which I'm guessing, you're all familiar with by now. Adepeju, could I ask you to introduce yourself briefly?

Adepeju Jaiyeoba: Hello, everyone, my name is Adepeju Jaiyeoba, 2014 Mandela Washington Fellow.

Kristin Lord: And Will, would you like to introduce yourself?

Will Snider: Sure, so I'm Will Snider. I'm the Operations Lead at D-Prize. I'm thrilled to be here. I met some of the 2021 Fellows yesterday at the Expo and really excited to help launch the Catalyst Grant today!



Kristin Lord: Great! Will, I'm going to start the first question with you: What is the Mandela Washington Fellowship Catalyst Grant? What role does impact funding play in scaling and overall success of social ventures?

Will Snider: The Catalyst Grant is a social business competition. It is open exclusively to 2021 Mandela Washington Fellows and offers up to \$20,000 each of pilot funding to a winning team or individuals who put together proposals for new ventures distributing, what we call, "Proven Poverty Interventions". These are goods or services that we now have a measurable impact on the lives of those living in poverty. And then to your question about the role of funding. As we all know, any business that you run, whether it's a social venture, a nonprofit, or for-profit: it requires capital to operate. And there is a lot of existing money out there from donors and investors, but a lot of it is reserved for proven, existing organizations that are several years into operations. The Catalyst Grant, the Mandela Washington Fellowship Catalyst Grant, is focused on launching entirely new ventures and providing high-risk capital for the pilot of something totally new. For any Fellow here who is curious, you don't have to have registered, you don't have to have started your idea. In fact, this is something that you're going to have to put together a two-page concept note, and after a team of evaluators goes through it, you could get pilot funding to launch that dream venture of yours.

Kristin Lord: What a wonderful opportunity. And now, Adepeju, over to you. You're a previous Leadership Impact Award Winner--congratulations--and a recipient of D-Prize funding, so why did you think it was so important to share this opportunity with IREX and the whole Fellowship Community?

Adepeju Jaiyeoba: For me, it was simple and straightforward because I have worked with D-Prize for a couple of years. And they have funded my venture and helped also to scale. I have been part of the Mandela Washington Fellowship Group. I know the quality and caliber of young Africans in that group. I know that the MWF is representative of some of the best brains in Africa, and it was to me a match made in heaven. If we look at the prize, and the funding, and their interest in Africa, then we look at MWF as a body that constitutes the right set of people to be able to bring these ideas to life in the right environment. And for me, it was just perfect; it was "no-brainer". I thought that this match would help Fellows do better things for their community, help Fellows develop their communities better, and work with the right tools and resources to help them with their skills and impact their communities.

Kristin Lord: Thank you, Adepeju, and if we have time at the end, I may ask you to tell me more about what the Prize allowed you to do. So let's see if we can squeeze that in. But Will, back to you first. The MWF Catalyst Grant is open to all 2021 Fellows from all the tracks. Could you speak about how this opportunity is relevant for Fellows on a Public Management track, specifically, and how Fellows in this track might leverage Catalyst Funding for this work? I'm guessing we are being asked to ask you this

question because there is an assumption that it's for some Fellows and not others, but really, it's for all.

Will Snider: It is for all, and we want to see as many applications as possible. And for people in the Public Management track, you may be sitting in the session saying, “I’m not on the Business track. This is not for me.”

But actually, your experience, your education, and your focus on government makes you an ideal candidate to launch a new venture. No matter what, any of the winners of the Catalyst Grant and the ventures that they found will have to interact with government in some way. The skills that you have from the Public Management track are going to be really relevant. We also have two specific challenges: one around government transparency, and the other around road safety that may line up really well with the experience of someone who is on the Public Management track. I would also say, Adepeju, who is a winner, Adepeju trained as a lawyer. So you never know who is going to become an entrepreneur. An entrepreneur is just a talented person who is hard-working, intelligent, committed to, and in the case of the Catalyst Grant impact. And that really applies to every single Fellow already. So you're already eligible and qualified. All you need to do now is apply.

Kristin Lord: Wonderful, I hope a lot of people take this advice. Adepeju, can you tell us a little about what the D-Prize allowed you to do, and please offer any advice for Fellows. I mean, you are someone who successfully accessed funds for the D-Prize. What advice do you have for Fellows who might want to follow in your footsteps?

Adepeju Jaiyeoba: Thank you, Kristin. So the D-Prize funding actually allowed us to introduce a product offering into the delivery kit, as well as run the pilot. The product offering we introduced was my (unintelligible). We were able to also run the pilot (unintelligible), and as a result of that pilot that we ran, we were able to offer some advice to the family health department of the Federal Ministry of Health of Nigeria. We received a recommendation letter from the government because they are able to run this pilot, as well as implement this product offering as a result of the prize funding.

With respect to the advice that I would like to give Fellows interested in applying for this MWF D-Prize funds, I would say, for me, start with scalable solutions that are going to help reduce poverty; also, the judicious use of resources. And for me, what I understood in implementing my D-Prize award, was that I wanted to be able to judiciously use resources for the best outcome for the community that we were impacting. That is a key feature of one of the things that the prize always looks out for. We also have to make sure that this is something we were piloting--it was okay to fail--but we have to fail very fast. It was a pilot; we knew that if it was successful we would be able to let the community own it and move on to scaling up to other new communities. That was also something, so scalability is important. We were able to pass across that message in our application that if this works well we will be able to let

the community own the solution and scale it up in other areas. And that is exactly what we did with the prize funding. And so for me, I would say scalability and judicious use of resources. I would say make sure that whatever ideas that we are proposing actually directly impact the community, that makes the community better, and make sure that everybody gets better at what they do.

Kristin Lord: That's fantastic. And Will, we have a bit more time. I'm going to ask you as well: Do you have any advice for Fellows who might want to apply for this amazing opportunity?

Will Snider: The most helpful advice I could give is just to pay close attention to the challenges themselves. The Catalyst Grant will come with a series of sixteen challenges, and each one is around a particular product or service that we know has impacted the lives of those living in poverty. So, Adepeju with Mother's Delivery Kit applied to our Maternal Health Challenge, which is about distribution of Misoprostol. It has a lot of specific--the challenge document on maternal health-- Having specific questions about how you plan to form this new venture, run this pilot. I would just respond to all of those Questions. The easiest way to make it through to the next round is to really stay within the scope of the challenge itself. But beyond that, I would say that I would second Adepeju's remark around scale. We are really looking here, not for small-scale ventures that focus on one community, or even one region. Obviously, that is what the pilot will be: it will focus on a small number of beneficiaries. But we want you to have the vision to expand and serve thousands, or hundreds of thousands, or even a million beneficiaries over the next decade of operation. This is funding for the first three months of your operations, but we really want to see the ambition to scale.

Kristin Lord: That's great advice from both of you. Thank you so much for joining us today. Fellows: I encourage you to apply and remember to go to the Resources Page on the Summit site. Thank you to all of the guests. Thank you so much.

Yolanda Sangweni: Thank you, Kristin Lord, the CEO of IREX, Will Snider of D-Prize, and, of course, Adepeju Jaiyeoba, 2014 Alumna. Fellows, the next session is about Growing Your Network: The U.S. Government Offices and With Each Other. Fellows, if you choose to join one of the rooms of the Ask Anything session. It is important that when you enter the room, you take a seat and you make space for other participants to enter the room. If you are participating in the room, please exit the room so that others who wish to join the presentation can do so. I correct myself: If you do not wish to participate in the room, please exit so that other people can join. Following the Ask Us Anything session is an Open Forum Networking Session, and join us at 12:05 p.m. Eastern Standard Time for the closing session. We have an exciting announcement in store for you.