

MANDELA WASHINGTON FELLOWSHIP CATALYST GRANT

2024-2025

Health Access Challenges

Motivate caregivers to complete infant immunizations

Can you design an initiative that increases routine childhood immunization rates in low-coverage areas to prevent childhood deaths? Through this partnership between IREX and D-Prize, up to \$20,000 will be awarded to teams with a plan to launch a pilot of this work, and who have a vision to reach 100,000 children within five years and scale country-wide.

The Poverty Problem

Infectious diseases remain a significant burden for children in developing countries. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that in 2019, 19.7 million children around the world did not receive routine immunizations. Most of these reside in just 10 countries: Angola, Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, and the Philippines.¹

The Proven Intervention

Childhood immunizations can prevent a large number of diseases, including diphtheria, hepatitis B, measles, mumps, pertussis, pneumonia, polio, rotavirus diarrhea, rubella and tetanus.² The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that childhood immunizations currently prevent 2 to 3 million childhood deaths per year, but that an additional 1.5 million childhood deaths could be averted with increased immunization coverage.³

[The WHO recommends a standard suite of childhood vaccines, to be delivered on a specific schedule.](#)

Unfortunately, there are areas of the world where a supply of vaccines is available, but where caregivers fail to start and complete the schedule.

Your Distribution Challenge

The Mandela Washington Fellowship Catalyst Grant will award up to \$20,000 to teams who can create or scale an initiative that creates demand for vaccines among direct caregivers (parents or other immediate guardians), leading directly to more children receiving immunizations who otherwise would not get them.

¹ WHO Immunization Coverage Factsheet 2020: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/immunization-coverage>

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

You must have a vision to reach 100,000 children within five years. The Mandela Washington Fellowship Catalyst Grant is meant to enable the first step toward this vision by supporting a small test pilot of your idea, that immunizes anywhere from 100-500 children.

Designing Your Social Enterprise

D-Prize believes that a successful distribution entrepreneur must have compelling answers to the following questions:

(1) *Why is the intervention appropriate for your local market?* D-Prize encourages entrepreneurs to focus on operating regions where the supply of vaccines is stable and dependable, but where immunization rates are still low.

- Solving vaccine supply issues, such as standardizing immunization schedules, promoting safe injection technologies, improving stock, and protecting potency through proper cold chain storage are all critical issues, but ones that are outside the scope of this challenge.
- When proposing your operating region, please include evidence that vaccine supply is readily available in that region.
- D-Prize further recommends you target a region where treatment completion rates are the lowest. If possible, please include evidence of treatment completion rates in your proposal.

(2) *How will your model increase demand for immunizations among caregivers (parents or other immediate guardians)?* Your operations can influence caregivers' decisions to start and complete vaccination schedules through incentives, reminders, or other means. D-Prize encourages you to propose demand-creation models that have been proven or have positive evidence that it works.

- For example, there is positive evidence that offering monetary incentives to caregivers can increase uptake of immunizations. [New Incentives](#) is one social venture using this model.
- Similarly, there is some evidence that reminders of immunization appointments can increase uptake. [Charity Science Health](#) is one social venture using this model.
- There are many other ways of creating demand among caregivers. Whichever model you select, D-Prize encourages you to include evidence that this model has worked in other geographies or with other comparable interventions.

(3) *How will you measure the marginal impact of your work?* One challenge will be proving your work leads to *marginal or incremental impact*. Said another way, you must prove that your model led to *more children completing immunizations* than if your organization did not exist.

- You will have to track this data yourself, as in most operating regions there is no existing data gathering and reporting.
- During the early pilot stage, you should consider a process for tracking impact that is simple and efficient. For example, you could collect data from local health authorities and show that there is 90% immunization coverage after your pilot compared to historical baseline data (which is likely 50% or lower coverage). Or alternatively, you could show 90% coverage in your pilot region compared to a lower (50% or lower) coverage in a neighboring area. Regardless of your plan, simply tracking how many children complete treatment is not enough to prove *incremental impact*.

- As you grow, you will need to consider more robust measurement processes that consider \$ per DALY or \$ per death averted and commit to changing your plan if the evidence suggests a new approach.
- Please follow the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), as results are forthcoming from their research into the use of incentives to improve immunization coverage.⁴

(4) *Can your operation scale?* D-Prize seeks ideas that will result in a massive increase in childhood immunizations, with a target of reaching 100,000 beneficiaries within 5 years and expanding nationwide. You should explain the current size of the market in need, and your vision to reach this need.

The ideal social enterprise will also have a plan to raise significant funding to scale, either through investment or philanthropy.

Ready To Apply?

Complete your Round 1 Mandela Washington Fellowship Catalyst Grant application at www.d-prize.org/MWFRound1.

Need More Information?

Learn more about the Mandela Washington Fellowship Catalyst Grant timeline, evaluation process, and eligibility at <https://mwfellows.info/CatalystGrant2025>.

Questions? Email MWFAumni@irex.org.

⁴ <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/improving-immunization-coverage-through-incentives-reminders-and-social-networks-india>