

Social Enterprises— Philanthropic ventures that do not rely on donations to operate!

Leaders from all sectors are calling for ventures that blend the best of business and philanthropy. Social enterprises do just that- using market-driven mechanisms to address problems ranging from environmental clean up to employing ex-offenders to bringing fresh produce to neighborhood “food deserts”.

The **Social Entrepreneurship Venture Challenge** takes a two-pronged approach to support for aspiring social entrepreneurs-- connecting them first with skilled business advisors and seasoned entrepreneurs to vet them and then introducing them to potential investors whose interests are a match for their proposed ventures. Contestants are addressing a broad range of needs in three categories— community development, education & health, and food systems. Here are a few of our semi-finalists:

Colibri's goal is to reduce poverty and increase quality of life through affordable and accessible solar. Providing solar lamps to families lighting their homes with candles, kerosene, and flashlights requires bridging both the distribution gap and the financing gap. Currently active in Nicaragua and focused on Latin America, co-founders Morgan Babbs & James Downer bring needed technological and financial experience along with a passion for social entrepreneurship. Morgan first worked helping Nicaraguan micro-bank MiCrédito launch a solar financing program. James draws on botany and ecology work in Costa Rica, as well as degrees in computer science and international relations.

“The issue with access to electricity rests not in a lack of solution or affordability, but rather in a lack of distribution. Small solar lighting solutions exist in multiple forms, with various light setting and charging capabilities. Our world revolves around technological innovation, but it is irrelevant if we fail to consider the rest of the equation: distribution. If product is king, distribution is God.”

ThriveLA is addressing the two main issues that lead to homelessness: lack of affordable housing and lack of employment, while helping people regain a sense of purpose, belonging and respect. Their strategy is to develop a model for self-sufficient communities of ultra-affordable, off-grid tiny houses in which all the community members have jobs within the community, including as farmers doing vertical farming. They are targeting veterans for their initial communities which are expected to have between six and 30 community members.

“We are intent on solving many problems with one comprehensive solution, including the lack of affordable housing, lack of employment, high cost of living, need for sustainability, and lack of community...The blueprint we are creating is designed to be scalable, and we hope to eventually have hundreds or thousands of such self-sufficient communities.”

Eat Offbeat delivers authentic ethnic meals made by refugees. It will introduce customers to new cultures and cuisines, while facilitating refugee integration into the local job market and community. It will also incubate the most entrepreneurial chefs and help them start their own food businesses, hence multiplying the impact.

Prepared fresh daily, their meals introduce customers to new “off-the-beaten path” cuisines through ready-to-heat artisan meals, delivered to their door. Based on pilot testing in New York City, Eat Offbeat will break even by month 15 with a volume of 5,000meals/month, or .2% of the market and turn cash flow positive by month 27 with 12,000 meals/month, or .6% of the market. They expect gross profits to exceed \$1Million within their third year of operation.

“Our chefs have inherited centuries-old recipes. Eat Offbeat builds on their culinary heritage and home-cooking skills to provide you with an authentic “eat-like-a-local” experience. By ordering from Eat Offbeat, you’re helping create opportunities for talented refugees resettled in the NY area, and contributing to making them feel valued and welcome.”

codeSpark’s mission is to ignite curiosity about computer science and turn programming into play. The LEGO Foundation recently honored codeSpark as one of 30 global companies “re-imagining learning.” They are making “the ABCs of computer science” available to all kids with access to the internet via a word-free interface, gender inclusive design and highly engaging mechanics. They served over 1 Million children in our first year. They have raised \$1.7M but seek another \$3M-\$5M to transition to a subscription business model and get to profitability.

“We founded codeSpark because we believe all kids are natural builders and programming is one of the most rewarding and powerful ways to build. We are inspired by the great building toys of the past like Lincoln Logs, Erector sets and Legos. We are a Pasadena, CA based team building world-class learning games for kids. We are powered by optimism and a belief that silliness is highly under appreciated.”



The Social Entrepreneurship Venture Challenge is a program of ASE. To date, sponsors include Annenberg Foundation, California Community Foundation, Goodwill of Orange County, Pacific West Bank, Saddleback College, and the Slow Money Network