

Cisco to Award \$1M USD to #TechForGood Startups and Entrepreneurs Addressing Social Issues and Climate Change

By Tae Yoo

NEWS RELEASE BY CISCO SYSTEMS INC.

Northampton, MA | December 07, 2021 08:16 AM Eastern Standard Time

Today, I am proud to announce that the sixth-annual **Cisco Global Problem Solver Challenge** is now accepting applications.

One of Cisco's signature Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs, the Challenge will award \$1 million in cash prizes to early-stage tech entrepreneurs who are addressing some of our toughest social and environmental problems.

We launched the **Cisco Global Problem Solver Challenge** in 2016 to jumpstart innovative ideas that benefit society, catalyze economic growth, and create jobs. Since then, we've awarded \$2.25 million USD to 63 start-ups in 20 countries.

This year, in response to the growing urgency to reverse climate change, we are introducing five new prizes:

- \$100,000 USD Climate Impact and Regeneration Prize
- \$50,000 USD Climate Impact and Regeneration Prize Runners-Up (x4)

These prizes will go to teams with solutions that can reduce or remove greenhouse gas (GHG) from the environment or regenerate depleted ecosystems.

The concept of "**regenerative sustainability**" is becoming increasingly important to stopping the progression of climate change. These solutions focus on improving social and ecological systems, which will in turn help to restore the planet. Composting is one familiar example of regeneration, because the organic materials used in compost pull carbon out of the atmosphere, versus emitting methane if they were simply thrown away into a landfill.

Playing a role in addressing climate change is a priority for Cisco, reflected in our recent commitment to reach **net zero greenhouse gas emissions** by 2040. We are excited about this opportunity to recognize five teams that share this commitment and are doing the important work of reducing emissions and regenerating ecosystems.

In addition to the five Climate Impact and Regeneration prizes, the following prizes will round out our \$1M USD prize pool:

- \$250,000 USD Grand Prize
- \$75,000 USD Regional First Runners-Up (x3)
- \$50,000 USD Second Runners-Up (x3)
- \$50,000 USD Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Start-Up Prize
- \$10,000 USD People's Choice Award
- \$15,000 USD Cisco Employees' Choice Award

We will accept applications until 5 p.m. PT on Friday, February 11, 2022 and winners will be announced in August 2022.

The importance of prize challenges

Cash prizes provide a significant funding source that start-ups can use right away, where they need it most. They also give teams the opportunity to refine their business plans and hone their messaging. The Cisco Global Problem Solver Challenge, for example, offers free pitch coaching webinars and other resources to applicants.

In the past five years, we have seen many of our winners grow, scale, and make a significant impact. For example, **Oorja** won our Grand Prize in 2019 for its pay-as-you-go community solar-powered water pumps. Their solution gives smallholder farmers (who **produce a third of the world's food**) access to year-round affordable irrigation without relying on expensive and polluting diesel fuel.

Oorja has been able to expand its services to include milling and cooling over the past two years and since winning the prize, they have also been recognized with other noteworthy awards such as the **Keeling Curve Prize**, which honors projects with the potential to reduce GHG emissions or promote carbon uptake.

"We applied for the Cisco Global Problem Solver Challenge to reach the level of impact that we wanted to have," says Oorja co-founder Clementine Chambon. "We have used the prize funding to get more projects on the ground, to validate our technological offering, and [to] make sure that it was really important to the farmers."

Other **past winning solutions** are making progress on a wide range of social and environmental issues – from eradicating malaria to improving child literacy to providing internet connectivity in rural communities and more.

Do you know about a start-up with a purpose that could benefit people, communities or the planet? Encourage them to apply to the Cisco Global Problem Solver Challenge 2022!

Learn more and **apply**.

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