GivingPoint: Transforming the Youth Community Engagement Experience

United States

Ansley Jones Colby

Organization type: nonprofit/NGO/citizen sector

Budget: $100,000 - $250,000

Website:
GivingPoint is transforming youth civic engagement by providing a unique model of change: equipping youth with building blocks that fuels their passion, creates memorable experiences and elevates high potential social innovators. Building Block 1: Technology Innovation GivingPoint has 3,500 members regularly returning to mygivingpoint.org to help youth get fully engaged in their communities. We provide a roadmap with three building blocks to help youth develop, respond effectively to social challenges and drive change.

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

GivingPoint offers socially conscious teens ways to gain entrepreneurial skills, build their Civic Transcripts, and develop new solutions to pressing problems. In fact, just this month, a California GivingPointer is launching a global partnership with the Magic Wand Foundation to provide much-needed school supplies and clothes to a charity in Orlando, Florida.
First, we are enhancing our leading-edge technology to support youth and grow our initiative. We are enhancing our virtual education modules with flash technology and adding more compelling content to make them more entertaining and interesting.

To do that, we are partnering with nonprofits, schools and businesses that offer knowledge and expertise to write state-approved curriculum. With these improvements, teachers nationwide can utilize our platform to complement their lesson plans.

We are building strategic alliances with corporations that share our mission to offer e-learning tools on key topics that affect youth. For instance, we are partnering with SunTrust to provide interactive Financial Literacy training to help teens learn how to save, budget, set goals, and become financially responsible so they can become more effective contributors to society.

Success can be prevented if we cannot feed our building blocks with socially conscious teens and build support systems to sustain our model.

GivingPoint’s roadmap will build a strong technological foundation that develops thousands of youth and teaches them the skills they need to discover, stay connected to and get good at using their passions to improve their communities.

As they develop skills, learn how to create change and leverage our technology to set and achieve stewardship goals, we expect over 50% of them will move up the building block and take action by participating in meaningful service-learning projects that capitalize on their skills and talents.

As they participate in momentous experiences that change their lives and result in positive impact for society, they have an opportunity to move up the building block further and emerge as potential young social entrepreneurs. We expect 10% of our GivingPointers to materialize as fellows. Here, they will receive the financial, educational and emotional support they need to put their ideas into action.

What will it take for your project to be successful over the next three years? Please address each year separately, if possible.

Year 1: Enhance Our Technology to Develop and Engage Youth

To be successful, we must continue to attract, educate and develop youth on our proprietary technology platform that unlocks their human potential. To do that, we must continuously develop novel interactive e-learning tools, interesting education modules and cutting-edge social networking assets that helps them find and support their spark. We must grow our “tribe” and generate financial and intellectual resources from nonprofits, schools, foundations, businesses and individuals to expand our platform and sustain our technology building block.

Year 2: Expand Our Service-Learning Experiences

As we succeed in helping youth understand and engage in the world around them through our technology platform, we must assemble widespread support and build strong partnerships with nonprofits, schools and businesses to execute meaningful service-learning programs that touch the hearts and minds of our volunteers. We must form joint ventures with the organizations that have the common vision to create a more compassionate,
humanistic society with youth. With these partnerships, we will expand our experiential programs that cause emotional reactions that motivate youth to become committed changemakers. The more resources we have, the more experiences we can provide, the more value we can add to society and the more social innovators will emerge to drive change and lasting impact.

Year 3: Support and Nurture High-Potential Social Innovators

By year 3, we will focus on building our fellowship programs that nurture and train the GivingPointers who show ambition, commitment, strong desire and abilities to become social entrepreneurs. It is critical that we form strong partnerships with nonprofits such as Ashoka to share knowledge and resources. We must also generate sustainable finances to create unique immersion training initiatives, social entrepreneurship workshops, job opportunities, internships, mentor relationships and apprenticeships to fully develop the next generation of young social innovators.

What would prevent your project from being a success?

Our success can be prevented if people do not utilize our platform to bond with and support socially conscious youth. Success will be prevented if we fail to do seven things:

1) Create a safe technological environment that inspires youth to find their clear passion and use their talents to live their mission. Passion is the key to civic engagement success to anyone, everywhere in the world. Mygivingpoint.org must provide a simple, clear way for youth to get started on knowing who they are, how they can best contribute, what nonprofits match their passion, and how to act upon their spark. Our powerful innovation must tap into and harness the latent energy and desire that youth have to get connected and give back.

2) Produce the meaningful service-learning experiences that ignite emotional bonds and teach understanding, empathy, compassion, and kindness. These experiences must compel youth to come back to GivingPoint or continuously contribute to society on their own.

3) Nurture the inspired youth who are longing to be the next generation of global civic innovators with essential financing, knowledge and access to diverse networks to turn their ideas into action.

4) Sustain our building block model with strong partnerships and support systems at every level that boost our abilities to transform youth civic engagement.

5) Demonstrate our capabilities to fully engage youth in their communities and teach life skills. We must construct key metrics and measure our progress to prove that our unique building block model is effective and efficient in harnessing youth passion for the greater good.

6) Establish early momentum. Since we are blazing new trails in the youth development sector, we need to learn quickly, move fast and respond appropriately.

7) Obtain visibility, exposure and credibility among the influencers in the civic, nonprofit, government and business sectors.

How many people will your project serve annually?

100110,000

What is the average monthly household income in your target community, in US Dollars?

$1000 - 4000

Does your project seek to have an impact on public policy?

Yes

Sustainability

What stage is your project in?

Operating for 15 years

Is your initiative connected to an established organization?

If yes, provide organization name.

How long has this organization been operating?

1 5 years

Does your organization have a Board of Directors or an Advisory Board?

Yes

Does your organization have a non-monetary partnerships with NGOs?

Yes

Does your organization have a non-monetary partnerships with businesses?

Yes

Does your organization have a non-monetary partnerships with government?

Yes

Please tell us more about how these partnerships are critical to the success of your innovation.

Our strategic partnerships provide diverse resources (communications, finance, and other expertise) that make our unique civic engagement innovation a success.

Building Block 1: Technology Platform

We need nonprofits and schools to endorse our innovation and integrate our model into their respective environments. We rely on them to verify youth volunteer hours (through our automated email authentication system). We also rely on our partners to provide us with gripping content for our online education modules that meet national education standards.

Building Block 2: Experiential Volunteerism
We depend on nonprofit and school partnerships to execute meaningful service-learning projects where teens can learn empathy, strengthen social ties and improve their understanding of the human condition.

Building Block 3: Fellowships
GivingPoint needs relationships with nonprofits that have rich history and experience supporting social entrepreneurs to learn from and develop our capabilities to nurture the passionate GivingPointers who emerge as potential young social entrepreneurs.

What are the three most important actions needed to grow your initiative or organization?

1) Assemble resources from diverse donors. GivingPoint was recently awarded a $250,000 challenge grant to expand our technology and service-learning building blocks. To date, we have raised nearly $120,000. We only have five more months to secure the remaining $130,000. If we win this competition, we can double the impact with our challenge grant.

Without financial support:
- the next inspirational educational module that awakens a passion in thousands of youth across the globe won't be built.
- the next impactful service-learning moment that touches hundreds of youth hearts and minds won't take place.
- the next budding social innovator who has the desire to earn Giving Points and apply for grants that get directed to charities won't be able to develop as a citizen philanthropist.

2) Demonstrate that GivingPoint resonates beyond our current universe. We are working feverishly to target and form partnerships with the best organizations that can benefit from our shared vision and help us convey our value to society.

3) Garner widespread support to illustrate the value of the GivingPoint Civic Transcript

Every teen on GivingPoint has a personalized Civic Transcript (CT), which reflects their commitment to create positive change and provides validation of their civic legacy. It reveals a person’s character, dedication and leadership capabilities. This innovation has already helped four Atlanta teens win college scholarships. Forest Ogunyankin, a teen from Dunwoody, Georgia, wrote, “I can proudly say that my GivingPoint profile was instrumental to my bid for the Simon Scholarship. They were very impressed by my volunteer accomplishments, my ability to create solutions to problems and the amount of money I had raised to help starving families. It is one thing to volunteer, but being able to offer new ideas and money to non-profits you serve is a luxury unavailable to most teens!”

The Story

What was the defining moment that you led to this innovation?

Ask any teen the question, “what are you socially passionate about?”. The answer you are likely to get is, “I don’t know.”

Like most youth, Derek Smith’s children struggled with the question. They joined organizations and volunteered, but they were not inspired. They were utilized as resources for nonprofits to get things done, but they were not motivated to get fully engaged in community. They were not being taught how to leverage their strengths for the greater good.

Many teens today volunteer and participate in fundraising projects at their schools and places of worship. Rather than spending time doing what they truly enjoy, they are typically just told what to do. So, they leave the volunteer experience feeling unsatisfied and undervalued.

Many teens are never given the opportunities to give back. They never have the chance to gain a deep understanding of the situations and circumstances in which they thrive. They are not given the experiences that would create awareness of the volunteer activities that bring them the most happiness.

As Derek saw his children progress through high school, he observed an alarming gap in society. Youth were surrounded by technological influences that isolated them from the human side of their growth and social development, but they were not given the meaningful experiences that would balance that influence. Today’s youth are not being taught how to awaken their passion within, apply empathy or respond effectively to social challenges.

Finding your passion changes everything. When we follow our passion and wake up our inner spark, we begin to make very unique contributions. By tapping into our inner strengths, deepest passions and authentic talents, we discover our life’s purpose and begin to look at the world differently. Once we enjoy doing something to benefit others, we are more likely to sustain the intensity, desire and focus to drive successful change. As success is pursued, it becomes a source of strength and joy. It becomes the foundation for life-long commitment in the civic sector.

The next generation is our greatest resource, but they are also at the greatest risk for becoming lost and isolated in our technology-driven world. To create a better future, the next generation must be able to answer the question, “What is your social passion?” at the center of their being. The time is now.

Tell us about the social innovator behind this idea.

Derek Smith spent his entire career in the technology field and studied the incredible benefits and detrimental consequences that technology has brought to the human condition. He has seen the ways technology can be isolating and all consuming. He realizes that society will never reject the technology that dominates our daily lives, but he believes humanity deserves the awareness and tools to balance their perspectives. That is why he is committed to bringing solutions to bear that will generate a human renaissance and create a more connected, compassionate, socially responsible world.

Despite the many challenges and technological influences that youth must overcome to succeed in life, Derek understands that youth have the desire to discover themselves, relate to the world around them and give back in significant ways. Derek is passionate about growing the citizen sector and filling the world with passionately engaged youth who can harness their passion to strengthen communities.

Derek founded GivingPoint in an attempt to provide a mechanism to stimulate youth to understand the world around them, nurture their passion, create strong bonds, and take action to impact long lasting change. GivingPoint helps young people become aware of the needs of others and critical societal issues affecting their lives.

In addition to focusing his talents to empower youth to develop a better world, he is the Chairman and CEO of the Institute of Global Prescience, an interdisciplinary non-profit research, education and service organization dedicated to the pursuit of prescience – foreknowledge that anticipates global events and trends that are yet unseen. The Institute seeks to harness the passion of individuals to anticipate issues through clue detection.
engines that identify inflection points in technological, financial and social systems.

Derek is the former Chairman and CEO of ChoicePoint, a leading provider of decision-making technology and information and a recognized leader in corporate citizenship, information security and personal privacy protection. Under his leadership, ChoicePoint gave birth to innovative products and services that created a safer and more secure society. ChoicePoint helped recover more than 1,000 missing children. It created the first national background screening service for non-profit volunteers that identified over 200,000 convicted criminals attempting to work with children – including 2,700 registered sex offenders. Additionally, ChoicePoint’s philanthropic initiatives and employee volunteer efforts won the company recognition from groups as diverse as the US Department of Justice, the US Chamber of Commerce, Hands on Network and Points of Light Institute.

How did you first hear about Changemakers?
Through another organization or company

If through another, please provide the name of the organization or company

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