



News from Massachusetts Institute of Technology Initiative on the Digital Economy

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MIT's 2018 Inclusive Innovation Challenge (IIC) Launches in North America; Over \$1 Million to be Awarded to Organizations Reinventing the Future of Work

MIT IIC collaborates with Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation to celebrate and support North American entrepreneurs that are improving economic opportunity for workers. Registration now open for 2018 IIC.

Detroit selected as host of the IIC North America regional competition event, taking place in September

CAMBRIDGE, MA, March 15, 2018 – Today, the [MIT Initiative on the Digital Economy](#) (IDE) announced that it will expand the global reach of its [Inclusive Innovation Challenge \(IIC\)](#). Collaborating with the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, the IIC will seek to identify and promote entrepreneurial organizations in North America that are using technology to improve economic opportunity for low and moderate income earners. Entrepreneurs operating primarily in North America and/or those that are based in the region can register today through May 29, 2018 at MITinclusiveinnovation.com.

“The grand challenge of our era is to use digital technologies to create not only prosperity, but shared prosperity,” says Erik Brynjolfsson, Director of the MIT Initiative on the Digital Economy. “We can only address this Challenge by relying on the innovative genius of entrepreneurs from the global community.”

The MIT IIC was launched two years ago to recognize and celebrate organizations around the world that are using technology to solve a grand challenge of our time — to create not only prosperity, but shared prosperity by reinventing the future of work in the digital era. This year, the IIC has expanded to a global tournament model, collaborating with partners in five regions -- North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. The North America region is defined by Canada and the United States.

Regional Judges will select 12 regional IIC winners to receive monetary prizes, recognition, and promotion at the IIC North America Celebration held in Detroit, Michigan this September. (Four Regional Champions will each win \$20,000, and eight Finalists will each win \$5,000.) Following this high-profile event, four North America Regional Winners will be selected to advance to the IIC Global Grand Prize Tournament & Celebration hosted at MIT in Cambridge, MA in October 2018. One million dollars in prize money will be awarded to four Global Grand Prize Winners, selected from Regional Winners from around the world.

“The Inclusive Innovation Challenge lies at the heart of our foundation’s mission, helping catalyze innovative solutions that improve the quality of life and future of work for the communities we serve,” said Lavea Brachman, vice president of programs, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. “We are thrilled to further support the IIC by hosting

the North America regional challenge event in Detroit, a city and community at the forefront of innovation and inclusive innovative solutions.”

In the first two years, over 1,500 inclusive innovation organizations responded to the IIC, illustrating the momentum of the growing global future of work movement. Over 230 Core Judges have reviewed applications and more than \$2 million has been awarded to entrepreneurs and innovators who are demonstrating different ways to put powerful new technologies to work to improve people's economic opportunity.

For-profit and nonprofit organizations of any size, age, or type and from any nation are encouraged to apply. Eligible organizations are:

- Using technology to reinvent work and create economic opportunity for people below the top rung of the economic ladder;
- Demonstrating traction and impact—They are beyond the “idea phase” and are enhancing shared prosperity today.

Organizations that do not yet meet the above criteria are encouraged to apply in the 2019 Challenge.

Based on data from the 2016 global Challenge, the MIT IIC determined that Inclusive Innovators accomplish their goals primarily in four ways. These four paths to increased shared prosperity make up the 2018 IIC Award Categories: Financial Inclusion; Income Growth & Job Creation; Skills Development & Opportunity Matching; and Technology Access.

“There is good reason to be hopeful about the future of work in North America. There are many ways for digital technology to benefit more people, and scalable solutions exist, ” says David Verrill, Executive Director of the MIT Initiative on the Digital Economy. “The IIC North American Challenge will help identify and promote those solutions working in the region today.”

The IIC is funded with support from Google.org; ISN®; The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation; Merck KGaA; Accenture Digital; Via Varejo; Joseph Eastin; Gustavo Pierini; and Gustavo Marini.

Join the Movement

The MIT IIC is dedicated to the promotion of sustainable, scalable global inclusive innovation. We engage U.S. and international media to report on solutions that can be harnessed today. We also connect winners with key ecosystem players and investors, while providing insights to government and policy makers. Smart capital investment and policies, we believe, can give us the best of both worlds: all the benefits that come from the technology breakthroughs of today and tomorrow and jobs that provide dignity and a good paycheck. We invite you to join us by embracing and supporting inclusive innovators and their equitable solutions to reinventing the future of work for all humans, not just an elite few.

- Media may contact Shannon Farrelly at farrelly@mit.edu for additional information and to schedule interviews.
- Learn more at MITinclusiveinnovation.com
- To support the IIC, contact us at iic@mit.edu.
- Follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/MIT_IIC) and [@MIT_IIC](https://twitter.com/MIT_IIC).

[The MIT Initiative on the Digital Economy \(IDE\)](http://ide.mit.edu) explores how people and businesses will work, interact, and prosper in an era of profound digital transformation. Working alone and with public and private sector partners, the IDE supports and conducts groundbreaking research in the areas of productivity and employment, big data, new digital business models, and social analytics. The IDE sponsors fellowships; hosts competitions, conferences, and roundtables; and supports other events that inspire new ideas. The IDE believes that challenges posed by the digital economy not only are solvable, but that technology will create new opportunities for people and businesses to thrive. ide.mit.edu [@MIT_IDE](https://twitter.com/MIT_IDE)

[The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation](http://www.rcwjrf.org) is a grantmaking organization dedicated primarily to sustained investment in the quality of life of the people of Southeast Michigan and Western New York. The two areas reflect Ralph C. Wilson, Jr.'s devotion to his hometown of Detroit and greater Buffalo, home of his Buffalo Bills franchise. Prior to his passing in 2014, Mr. Wilson requested that a significant share of his estate be used to continue a life-long generosity of spirit by funding the Foundation that bears his name. The Foundation has a grantmaking capacity of \$1.2 billion over a 20-year period, which expires January 8, 2035. This structure is consistent with Mr. Wilson's desire for the Foundation's impact to be immediate, substantial, measurable and overseen by those who knew him best. For more information visit www.rcwjrf.org.