



ClimateSpark

Social Venture Challenge

 **TORONTO** Atmospheric Fund

 **TORONTO COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**
The Art of Wise Giving™



Final Report

March 2012

Table of Contents

The ClimateSpark Social Venture Challenge	1
Challenge Development – Core Partnerships	1
Online ideation and “Climate Camps”: New social innovation methods	2
Ignite	6
Platform development	6
The online challenge: Ignite	7
Judging.....	10
Online community development.....	11
Accelerate.....	12
Expert recruitment and matching.....	12
Accelerator structure.....	13
Accelerator outcomes	13
Launch	15
Funder Pitch Session and Investor Lunch	15
Launch Gala	16
Evaluation	17
Conclusion.....	17
Appendix A: The Ten Finalists.....	19

The ClimateSpark Social Venture Challenge

The objective of the ClimateSpark Social Venture Challenge (SVC) was to identify and support social ventures that could offer a significant greenhouse gas emissions reduction benefit through scaled-up delivery of their product or service. We defined social ventures as enterprises that paired a social and commercial mission and that, while serving the broader community interest, had a plan for long-term financial sustainability. The three stages of the Challenge were:

Ignite: An online crowd-sourcing competition where the online community commented on and rated venture contestants. A panel of designated experts also took part in commenting and rating and a combination of community, expert and partner votes were used to select semi-finalists and finalists.

Accelerate: A two-day venture development bootcamp that paired finalists with expert advisors for business mentoring and general skills development related to creating and pitching a business plan. Accelerate also included individual sessions on refining and quantifying emission reduction opportunities.

Launch: This stage came in two parts: A pitch session to a panel of philanthropic and venture investors and a Gala where some investments were announced and the community had a chance to meet face-to-face.

Challenge Development – Core Partnerships

ClimateSpark SVC was the second challenge developed by the [Toronto Atmospheric Fund](#) (TAF) to help identify promising enterprises with greenhouse gas emissions reduction potential. The first ClimateSpark was undertaken in 2010 and was limited to an online challenge and gala and focused on a for-profit business audience. From the first challenge, we drew an understanding of the need for daily management and coordination of the challenge and saw the potential for further venture development steps, such as a business bootcamp. ClimateSpark SVC therefore represented both a change to the target audience and an expansion and evolution of the initial approach.

In the wake of the first ClimateSpark Challenge, TAF began discussions on cooperation with the [Toronto Community Foundation](#) (TCF), which was interested in trying a new approach with its Green Innovation Award. The Green Innovation Award was previously managed through a traditional application and review process. Both organizations were interested in involving Toronto's growing social venture community in finding solutions to critical issues like climate change, and in engaging the broader community through an open innovation process.

As TAF and TCF continued to discuss approaches, they also became aware of plans by the [Centre for Social Innovation](#) (CSI) to run a “community venture development camp” on behalf of [Live Green Toronto](#) as part of Live Green's community animation program. Such a mentoring and development process seemed like a good way to enhance the online component of ClimateSpark and





Online ideation and “Climate Camps”: New social innovation methods

For most of us, innovation is cloaked in mystery. There is no formula for innovation -- it just appears. Sometimes it appears in response to a sudden or growing challenge. Other times it is the product of a particularly creative individual or team that is struck with a flash of insight and which possesses a remarkable capacity to translate vision into action. In these cases, innovation is seen to have a magical quality that is not easily cultivated or replicated.

This view of innovation is being radically and effectively challenged. Increasingly, practitioners are developing ways to intentionally innovate. Intentional innovation is about the deliberate application of methodologies to stimulate and develop new ideas of all kinds, from commercial products and services to projects that address social and environmental challenges. There has been a recent surge in these new methods and their analysis as organizations around the world seek to consciously develop and harness their innovation potential.

Specifically, we have seen a trend toward to more “open innovation” methods. Open innovation refers to the notion that innovation can be pursued and achieved through practices that engage users and thinkers outside of organizational or institutional boundaries. Rather than expect all innovation to occur within an organizational structure, an increasing number of companies, governments and social organizations are opening the process of innovation to include citizens, customers, clients and supporters. We see this through a number of tactics, including innovation competitions, crowd-sourcing, in-person ‘intensives’ and web-based platforms.

The ClimateSpark Social Venture Challenge assembled a number of these new methods in service to its goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. CSpark was framed as a prize-based competition that invited a broad public to participate as contestants and as commenters. A web-based platform allowed for broad reach and engagement, and a two-day “venture development bootcamp” leveraged a wide variety of experts in support of a diverse array of innovative ideas.

CSI agreed to become a partner in the Challenge, lending its expertise in the area of social innovation methods and facilitation. All three partner organizations, TAF, TCF and CSI, were pleased with the opportunity to blend together three separate endeavours and turn them into one integrated whole, with the idea that by doing so each organization could avoid duplication of effort and leverage each others’ resources, networks and complementary skill sets to achieve greater outcomes for all parties.

Live Green Toronto later decided that its needs did not fit within the ClimateSpark SVC frame, so CSI embarked on developing two separate mentoring initiatives: one for Live Green Toronto called the Community Innovation Summit and one for ClimateSpark (Accelerate).

To assist with attraction of suitable contestants and social venture investors, the core partners also approached the [Social Venture Exchange \(SVX\)](#) to provide assistance with identifying and attracting social ventures to the Challenge. While an initial agreement was reached to include SVX as one of four core partners for ClimateSpark SVC, SVX was ultimately unable to remain as a core partner due to the need to attend to other priorities, but was helpful in engaging [Venture Deli](#) instead to assist with contestant recruitment.

TAF and TCF were both interested in using the Challenge to provide possible opportunities for their own investment and granting. Working in partnership with the [Canadian Environmental Grantmaker’s Network \(CEGN\)](#) and Venture Deli they also sought to attract more philanthropic, government and private funders to consider co-funding of the ventures resulting from the Challenge. An initial goal was set to leverage TCF’s \$50,000 prize and TAF’s \$100,000 grant envelope with an additional \$350,000 in potential funding. By the time the Launch

component arrived, two other foundations and three private investors agreed to participate in a funding panel and hear pitches from the ten ClimateSpark SVC finalists.

What made it work?

TAF, TCF and CSI worked together very well and brought complementary skill sets and networks to the Challenge, increasing its reach, scope, profile and overall impact. There was a strong alignment in purpose and expectations as well as commitment and flexibility that facilitated quick response to evolving issues or emerging opportunities (including the opportunity to create a short documentary film of the Challenge process, which can be viewed on the ClimateSpark website).

It was useful to have one partner (TAF) serve as an overall lead / convener. Contracting a part-time coordinator was essential to ensure that issues were dealt with expeditiously and that partners were kept on track with their responsibilities. An experienced communications consultant, [Green Living Communications](#), brought key insights forward from the first ClimateSpark and provided dedicated overall communications coordination. Regular meetings among organizing partner representatives (weekly or twice monthly depending on the stage of the Challenge), ensured smooth communication and kept all parties “in the loop”.

The section that follows outlines the responsibilities of each of the three core partners and other supporters.

Core partners:

Toronto Atmospheric Fund responsible for:

- Convening partnership
- Challenge design and process
- Outreach and promotion
- Fundraising
- Hiring project coordinator (with partner input) and hosting the contract
- Developing and overseeing online platform development
- Convening funder panel
- Organizing gala and investor luncheon
- Financial reporting
- Selection of 10 finalists
- GHG quantification consulting

Centre for Social Innovation responsible for:

- Challenge design and process
- Outreach and promotion
- Fundraising

The three core partners had a common sense of purpose and built synergies that really improved the final outcomes





A part-time coordinator helped keep track of all aspects of the complex multi-part challenge

- Design and implementation of Accelerator venture bootcamp
- Supervision of ClimateSpark film production
- Facilitating Launch pitch session
- Selection of 10 finalists

Toronto Community Foundation responsible for:

- Challenge design and process
- Outreach and promotion
- Media sponsorship
- Selection of 10 finalists
- Green Innovation Award selection

Contractors:

Green Living Communications

- Developed platform and provided technical support
- Site monitoring and moderation during Ignite
- Worked with project coordinator on all online communications
- Supported partners in all aspects of ClimateSpark
- Coordinated all web, design and social media aspects of ClimateSpark
- Coordinated judging process

Project Coordinator

- Supported and kept all ClimateSpark partners organized and on track
- Organized and chaired weekly meetings
- Worked with communications staff to manage outreach
- Was the primary communications lead for ClimateSpark community (contestants, community members, general public)
- Primary support for contestants through Challenge
- Early outreach to ventures to “seed” challenge
- Convening and directing experts
- Led gala and investor luncheon organization
- Kept the “big picture” in mind and communicated and filled gaps where needed
- Led prize sponsorship efforts
- Tracked and updated budget
- Coordinated judging process
- Filmed spot interviews at Accelerate

Venture Deli

- Outreach to venture community to recruit contestants
- Assisted organizing partners to recruit funder panel members

Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network

- Outreach to grantmaking community
- Participation in the Funder Panel and Pitch session

Other partners

Experts

- Approximately 20 experts were recruited to participate in the online challenge. These experts had a variety of backgrounds – investing, marketing, economic development, community development, environment – providing a range of well informed perspectives on the contestant's ideas.

Sponsors:

- We were fortunate to have TD Bank as lead sponsor for the challenge.
- The Toronto Star joined as a media sponsor, providing four half-page ads and online media.
- Deloitte, the Ontario Ministry of Research and Innovation, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, and Evergreen all provided additional funding.
- The making of a short film capturing the purpose and progress of the Challenge was made possible by Dreamnow.org.
- Centennial College provided an in-kind sponsorship with business and communication students providing assistance to contestants.
- A number of prize sponsors helped us create an attractive weekly prize collection, including the top prize of a motorized scooter donated by Live Green Toronto.



Leaders



Media Partner



Mentors



Event Partners



Ignite

Quick facts

The online component of the challenge attracted:

- 61 contestants
- 2,300 community members
- 19,500 site visits over three months

Platform development

TAF chose to develop its own online platform for this version of ClimateSpark for:

- Greater control and direct access to site configuration
- Better customization
- Longer term cost savings
- Greater responsiveness to user needs

The site was built on a Drupal CMS platform using various off-the-shelf modules that were further modified to suit needs and compatibility.



The platform was tested during a “pre launch” phase in August 2011 and further minor modifications were made during the live Challenge period. Overall, the site was quite stable and easy to manage. There were occasional problems with the user registration system, particularly lost confirmation emails, but these were addressed through direct user support (resending confirmations, manually registering).

While the site was relatively easy to use, further enhancements could be made. Some users found the “Star rating” module confusing as it did not provide a direct tactile “user feedback” and some contestants found the two-part comment reply form confusing.

The site included some basic reporting tools and data aggregation pages (low / high votes) for monitoring and troubleshooting purposes. Spamming was a constant problem despite a Catchpa system, but thanks to user moderation was kept in check. Going forward, reporting functions should be enhanced and some security functions automated.

Recommendations for online platform improvement:

- Enhance reporting tools
- Provide better user feedback on actions
- A simple “how to” video introduction for site users

The online challenge: Ignite

The online part of the Challenge was broken into two rounds. The first round lasted seven weeks and the second round four weeks.

The ideas

There were a total of 61 ideas posted in Round 1. Ideas ranged from a new way to clean boats to a recycled paper clothes hanger. A number of proposals dealt with increasing use of renewable energy or improving access to sustainably grown food, while still others focused on reusing or recycling goods or increasing community engagement around environmental action.

Most contestants posted only one idea; one posted two; and one posted over a dozen (but was subsequently convinced to scale this back to two).

The majority of entries came after the half way point of Round 1. This reflected both the need to get the word out about the Challenge and the late start made by the organization charged with cultivating entries. The user community similarly rose exponentially through the Round, peaking with around 100 new registrations a day in the final five days.

With 61 proposals, it became quite difficult for site users to actually get a sense of all or most of the proposals. Clusters might have helped (e.g., food, renewable energy, waste).

Top ranking clearly helped draw attention, but ranking could be driven more by a contestant's ability to drive users to the site than quality of the proposal, so simply relying on this metric was an imperfect solution for site users. Attention should certainly be given to mechanisms to better showcase the range of proposals when the list gets this lengthy (rotating featured idea, clusters, meet ups).

Commenting per proposal ranged widely in Round 1, from fewer than six to close to 70. This reflected both longevity – time on site – and community interest. The community clearly gravitated toward more substantive proposals or ones with clearer rationales.

Contestants and the online community

Site traffic was fairly steady for the first month of the contest, running at around 250 visitors per day. In the final two weeks of Round 1, traffic climbed steadily reaching a peak of 1,170 visitors on the round's final day. Round 2 saw higher average traffic levels, with around 400 visits per day, peaking at 759 visitors on the final day. Visitors spent an average of seven minutes on the site, visiting 5.7 pages per visit. Traffic was fairly evenly split between new and returning visitors.

There was definitely a small core of “power users” who commented frequently and often at length. Some of these had arm's length (or less) connections to



ClimateSpark resulted in more attention, more money, more eyes and ears focused on our work – all of which added to and improved our plans and presentation.

ClimateSpark Finalist



contestants; others seemed simply taken with the Challenge. Overall, their input often sparked further discussion and we therefore sought to single these folks out for special rewards.

Comments were generally earnest and thoughtful, although moderation to discourage empty “rah, rah” commenting (e.g., “great” “terrific idea”) was sometimes required. Star system votes fairly clearly aligned with the tenor of the comment stream. There was almost no issue with abusive or inappropriate commenting.

Splitting the comment function into two parts, a general comment and an “improvement suggestion” section worked well in prompting users to offer more than general observations. However, some contestants found replying using this split form somewhat confusing.

Some contestants engaged at least daily with the community by replying to comments or commenting on other competitor’s proposals (usually quite constructively). Others needed to be prompted to provide response and would sometimes find themselves working through a large backlog of comments. Others made only weak effort to reply, but these were also often the least successful proposals. Contestants were encouraged to subscribe to the RSS feed for their proposal, but an email notification of new comments might have worked better. For the proposals that drew more attention, it was a task for contestants to stay on top of the comment stream for their proposal.

Most contestants made only modest changes to their proposals based on site feedback. It would be interesting to see what they would have done if Round 2 had followed Accelerate rather than coming before it.

An issue arose at the end of Round 1 with a couple of contestants registering false accounts and “low balling” competitors (giving all other contestants a single star vote). Fortunately, their activities were not difficult to track and disqualification followed for two of the worst offenders. We also added a code of conduct to clarify our policies on “grey area” actions.

Points and rewards: Keeping the community engaged

The prime tool for keeping the community engaged was weekly email blasts and prize draws. Community members earned points for actions like commenting and voting with each point equally one entry in the weekly prize draw. However, many registered users (30-40%) never voted or commented, but seemed content to just be passive observers (at most). It would be worth exploring how to motivate this large segment in future challenges and their motivations for joining but not acting.

Contestants, in particular, found the “points” system a bit confusing. Initially, some thought they should be striving to accumulate points as opposed to encouraging the community to vote on their proposal through star ratings. As well, the “one point per action” level proved to be too low in allowing users to accumulate a significant bank of points and feel like they were truly gaining an advantage. Ramping up rewards as the round proceeded helped to encourage further participation.

The points trading functionality did not prove terribly useful (at least as deployed), although it did help identify linkages between those engaged in low balling! Again, contestants were not clear on how to use this function and users mostly weren't aware they were being awarded points by contestants.

In Round 2 we added the Spark Market feature to keep community interest up and offer some variety for community members. It attracted a relatively small subset of users, who found it an intriguing way to support their favourites. But because it was not a zero sum game (participants retained their initial investment in almost all cases) it did not function as a true prediction market. Some contestants found it a distraction, especially as it was not used to determine finalists. However, technically, the market worked smoothly and performed according to plan with popular ideas rising in price and unpopular ideas falling.

Online experts

We recruited approximately 25 people to serve as “experts” (including some staff from partner groups). Their comments were highlighted in the general comment stream and contestants were encouraged to pay particular attention to feedback from these folks. About 15 were actually active during the challenge. Expert engagement took a big dip at the beginning of Round 2, but thanks to repeated prompting from the Challenge coordinator picked up toward the end of the round.



Recommendations for running online challenge:

- Provide contestants with a participation “handbook” explaining all the online functions and how to use them to best advantage.
- Implement ways to make it easier to compare and assess proposals
- Highlight the contributions of highly engaged community members in a way similar to expert comments (e.g., let them become VIPs)
- Make the Spark Market part of the judging process
- Consider separating rounds with the bootcamp
- Embed a simple code of conduct in the entry / registration form that is in addition to more comprehensive Terms & Conditions (which nobody reads)
- Make it easier for contestants to monitor activity on their proposal (e.g., email alerts).

Judging



It was great how ClimateSpark drew in a wide and diverse range of people to participate online, as experts, for the gala and as investors.

ClimateSpark Finalist

How it worked

Judging was pro-rated with 30% of final mark based on community votes; 50% based on expert votes; and 20% based on partner votes (three partners combined vote). For all categories, votes were weighted to factor in the number of votes cast for a proposal in order to prevent a handful of high votes on a late entry providing an unfair advantage.

There was fairly strong consensus among all three groups in Round 1 judging. However, there was more divergence in Round 2 judging. This partly reflected that a couple of proposals seen as weak by the experts / partners had been quite successful in getting supporters motivated as well as the more competitive field in Round 2. Judges felt pressed for time on Round 1 voting, but there was pressure to keep online momentum flowing, so the judging window was kept fairly tight (2 days). Judges had almost a week to supply marks for Round 2.

The judging system did work well in balancing community support with a more informed assessment of a proposal's strengths and weaknesses, although some contestants questioned the effort involved in motivating / engaging the community given their underweighting in voting. However, experts and partners were encouraged to review community response to help inform their judgements.

Eight experts took part in Round 1 judging and seven took part in Round 2 judging.

Recommendations on voting:

- Give the community a greater say in Round 1 voting
- Extend Round 1 judging window to four days
- Make participation in judging an explicit expectation for experts
- Display weighted star vote on website rather than average star vote
- Create an online voting system for partners and experts to avoid transcription errors and reduce time involved in compiling votes
- Arrange a conference call for expert and partner judges to exchange observations and concerns before voting

Online community development

We relied heavily on direct outreach to partner networks and allies to drive traffic to the site. We crafted messages for use by partners in newsletters, in blogs and on Twitter and Facebook and called on more than a dozen outside organizations to feature these on at least three separate occasions. We also strongly encouraged contestants through weekly emails to mobilize their own supporter networks. The result was a 2,300 member user community and more than 19,500 site visits and 115,000 page views.

Close to half of visitors came directly to the site, an indication of the strength of direct promotion efforts. A third were referred by other sites (mostly partners). Facebook (mostly contestant and partner pages) and Twitter (ClimateSpark twitter feed and others) led in referrals to the site, accounting for 15% of site traffic.

Advertising in the Toronto Star caused only modest traffic bumps, but did provide excellent exposure for sponsors and was used to feature the winning contestants. The Challenge was featured in NOW Magazine as well, but did not get a lot of other conventional media pickup.

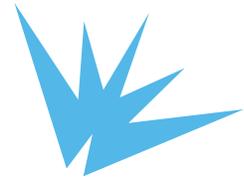
We also sought to capture events as they unfolded to help tell the story of ClimateSpark, with quick snapshot video interviews of participants at Accelerate and a full story video explaining the purpose, elements and outcomes of ClimateSpark. Both of these pieces have proven quite useful to keep interest in the Challenge going after the wrap up of the Ignite component.

Recommendations on building the community:

- Provide greater recognition for “outreach partners”
- Emphasize recognition (for sponsors and contestants) when using media sponsorship
- Approach less conventional outreach networks (arts, culture)
- Provide sponsors (particularly prize sponsors) with an outreach package

It was great to see ideas develop, especially with a keen eye to the business case.

ClimateSpark Expert



Accelerate



Quick facts

Experts provided customized mentoring to our ten finalists

- 2 days of group and individual sessions
- 35 voluntary expert mentors
- 50 mentoring sessions

We liked the emphasis on individual sessions with experts, all of whom were really well matched to our project and our needs.

ClimateSpark Finalist

ClimateSpark Accelerate was a two-day venture development bootcamp aimed at strengthening the viability and impact of the best ten ideas as determined in Ignite. It offered a mix of group and individualized sessions to the ten finalists and attracted subject matter expertise that the contestants wouldn't otherwise have access to. Experts comprised a mix of general business development expertise and content-specific consultants/experts.

The finalists each received a \$1,000 stipend to cover the costs of preparing for and attending the session and to help them prepare a business plan based on the feedback garnered through Accelerate. As well as improving their business case, contestants were encouraged to make connections among themselves. The event took place at CSI Annex.

Expert recruitment and matching

A two-track planning process was used to prepare a highly customized contestant experience: we compiled a large database of experts and their areas of expertise; and we surveyed contestants on what expert assistance they felt they needed most. Most of the experts were recruited via the networks of the three partners, but a few remaining slots were filled through a call for assistance sent to the entire CSI community. The experts all agreed to participate on a voluntary basis and most seemed motivated by the chance to use their skills to assist the development of interesting and worthwhile ventures. Feedback from the experts after the event was that they thoroughly enjoyed the experience and the chance to be “mentors” for exciting new ideas.

With information on needs from the contestants, we began to build a structure for Accelerate, including deciding between individual and group sessions and matching experts with contestants for issue-specific mentoring.

We saw a common need for assistance with presentation skills and help on calculating emissions reduction impacts. We therefore hired an expert facilitator to deliver a two-part group session on effective presentations, with the first part on day one covering theory and the second part on day two offering a chance for practice. We then tapped into TAF's expertise to provide every contestant with a one-on-one consultation on calculating and enhancing their proposal's emissions impact.

We endeavoured to match each contestant with at least three experts in other

individual sessions based on their stated support needs and our own assessment of where their proposal needed attention.

This mix of common and individual sessions for 10 different contestants did make scheduling difficult, but through sheer elbow grease we managed to successfully match experts and contestants according to both need and availability.

Experts received project summaries and contestant bios in advance to help them prepare for sessions with contestants.

Accelerator structure

The event kicked off with a big welcome session with some icebreakers to loosen up the room and connect people. We kept the setting very casual, with lots of couches, areas for discussion, and toys on tables to inspire creative thinking. Further fuel was provided by breakfast pastries, lunch, and snacks, juice, coffee etc. throughout. Contestants were free to come and go between sessions and did not have to attend for two days straight. A number of volunteers circulated as greeters, connectors and helpers. Overall, it was a very vibrant, fun atmosphere with very positive feeling throughout the two days — and utter exhaustion at the end.



Accelerator outcomes

Accelerate was very well received by both the contestants and the experts. The contestants rated all aspects of the camp as excellent and said they made valuable connections both with fellow contestants and with experts. The experts also said they “thoroughly enjoyed” participating in the session and found it gave them interesting insights into some new ventures.

Above: Young Urban Farmers talk with ClimateSpark expert Keir Brownstone. Below: CSI Director Tonya Surman discusses social venture development.

It taught us a lot about the basics of starting up a venture, and gave us some good contacts. I think ultimately it will speed up the process for us and allow us to launch our venture earlier than if we didn't attend Climate Spark.

ClimateSpark Finalist



Providing venture-specific advice was key to the success of Accelerate



Recommendations for climate camp development:

- Cultivate a big pool of experts in advance and leave sufficient time for complex matching – if you are going to try an elaborate matching scheme for a wide spectrum of projects, you need to be deeply networked in your community. If this can be done far enough in advance of the contest launch, the availability of well-known and highly regarded professional experts could be a draw to pull more participants into the contest.
- Experts need to be clear on desired objectives for the session, and understand the overall Challenge process and how they fit into it.
- Get great experts – capable people excited about the work. The motivation is personal fulfillment, not financial gain.
- Venue matters – the atmosphere is critical in order to achieve opportunities for casual networking as well as space for more private consultations. And make sure to infuse the days – given their intensity – with fun – like the opportunity to interact with all finalists, organizers and experts at the final wine and cheese reception.
- Work to really understand the challenges that projects are facing – and not just the superficial or obvious ones.
- Leave sufficient time – perhaps four to six weeks – between an intensive session like this and the development of a business plan.
- Ask the finalists to come to the session prepared with specific questions and goals.
- Don't underestimate the power of bringing people together and make sure that there is ample time for “organic” networking – perhaps seed this with some clearer introductions at the outset or even a session or two that are cross-collaborative – for example, having the various groups “workshop” their pitches in front of other contestants (there is some tension in this given that this is a competition with a prize, but despite this the finalists seemed keen to meet and get to know each other.)



Funder Pitch Session and Investor Lunch

Quick facts

- Launch panel participants earmarked \$725,000 in grants and financing for the finalists.
- 4 foundations (TAF, TCF, Trillium, Salamander)
 - 3 private investors
 - Ontario Centres of Excellence

To increase potential follow-on funding for finalists and to support collaboration among funders, ClimateSpark assembled a funders panel made up of four grantmaking foundations (Ontario Trillium Foundation, Salamander Foundation, TAF and TCF); two angel investors; one institutional investor (Best Funds) and the Ontario Centres of Excellence. This group represented \$725,000 in potential investment.

TAF worked in partnership with the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network to identify potential philanthropic members of the panel and also to assemble a group of funders and investors for a full-day session undertaken in December 2011 to assess the opportunity for different funders to work more collaboratively to support climate actions in Canada (see the report).

The panel received business plans from all finalists and attended a pitch session to meet finalists in person. They were invited to consider finalists and to report back over the course of 2012 with any positive funding decisions. TAF supported one finalist with a two-year grant of \$150,000 and another with bridge financing of \$250,000. Toronto Community Foundation split their \$50,000 Green Innovation Award between two finalists.

Recommendations for funding pitch session:

- Provide more clarification of follow-on funding issues to contestants - although it was touted as "potential" funding (i.e., no obligation for funders to allocate their dollars unless a suitable fit was found) some contestants misunderstood and were discouraged that deployment of the full potential sum was not announced at the gala
- Provide more time for contestants to prepare business plans to better incorporate bootcamp input before pitch session.
- Give contestants more detail on the funders and their interests and better clarify whether they are offering "new money" or simply using the challenge as a way to find candidates for conventional grant rounds.

The funder pitch session forced me to clearly and concisely articulate what is special about ZooShare

Daniel Bida, ED,
ZooShare Biogas
Co-operative and
ClimateSpark winner



Joan Prowse from Green Heroes pitches the investor panel

Launch Gala

Quick facts

Close to 300 guests celebrated ten finalists

- \$40,000 Green Innovation Award for Zooshare Biogas
- \$10,000 Green Innovation Award for Young Urban Farmers
- \$150,000 two-year grant for Summerhill Shuttle

The Gala would have been improved by introducing all the finalists and giving them a couple of minutes to explain their venture.



This sold-out event attracted approximately 270 attendees from a variety of backgrounds — marketing, education, and business. Held at the same venue as the previous ClimateSpark Gala, finalists had a special area where they could meet guests and highlight their proposals. They were also identified with large medallions to make them visible in the large crowd.

Presentations were broken into two segments: A short welcome and purpose statement; and awards presentation. Thanks to a larger venue, we had a large seating area and presentations could have run longer. The crowd was naturally keen to network and there was no need for “ice breaking” exercises. Most tickets were sold through the partner networks. Messages to the online community did not result in significant sales. Beer (zero cost) and wine (half cost) sponsorships made the event very cost effective.

Recommendations for event organization:

- Better showcase finalists and their work by taking more time in the formal remarks to introduce the individuals and their ventures (might have also done this with poster boards containing more information about each venture).
- Could have better explained the judging criteria used to allocate the TCF prize and could have taken more time generally to provide presentations - people were interested and hungry for information and there were chairs!
- Be very clear about COMP ticket rules (some overbooking of these).



Presentation of the TCF Green Innovation Awards to ZooShare (left) and Young Urban Farmers (right).

Evaluation

Because the ClimateSpark Social Venture Challenge was an “experiment” for the organizers, we took care to evaluate the initiative at various stages including:

- A pre-launch focus group with people we considered to be ideal potential contestants to see what they thought of the format of the contest and whether they thought participation would be useful. One key outcome from this group was the finding that many respondents didn’t see their activities as social ventures and wouldn’t have considered themselves eligible for the contest.
- A survey of contestants at the close of Ignite of the contest to assess their experience of the online platform and activity. A key outcome of this survey was the need for a clearer overview of the Challenge process and how to use the website effectively.
- A survey of the finalists at the close of Accelerate to gauge their experience. Key outcomes included a need for more time and encouragement for the various finalist groups to interact with and help one another, and a need for a longer timeline between Accelerate and Launch to allow for more time to prepare the business plans.
- A survey of the experts at the close of Accelerate to gauge their experience. Key outcomes were the importance of personal satisfaction in motivating those involved and the need to more publicly recognize this contribution.
- A survey of finalists at the close of the contest. Key outcomes were recognition that the contestants saw the Accelerate component as being of major value but were confused by the blended financing approach of the funder panel. Also that contestants did see the significant work involved as having been good value in return for professional advice and exposure received.
- A wrap-up ½ meeting among the ClimateSpark core partners to assess the outcomes of the contest based on the objectives.
- Creation of this report to share with others who may be interested in trying out some or all of the ClimateSpark SVC approaches.

Conclusion

ClimateSpark SVC was a strong success, attracting numerous entries, a large community and a great deal of enthusiasm. It highlighted the potential for social ventures to play a role in addressing the climate crisis and presented positive opportunities for action. The strong alignment and synergies of the three partners was a key element in making the Challenge a success. The three-step process also proved to be a valuable evolution of the Challenge model, increasing the effectiveness of our engagement with ventures and bringing new funders to the table.

I liked all the aspects of ClimateSpark very much. Each had their own charm and benefit. But most important was the connections and friendships made and the valuable insight gained to further our project.

ClimateSpark finalist



**ClimateSpark
is a work in
progress and we
are committed
to learning and
applying best
practices in
engaging the
community
in developing
climate
solutions.**

TAF

Final recommendations:

- Needed greater clarity (earlier) around definition of a “social venture” and what would be considered a viable non-profit partnership. Put more emphasis on ventures having a clear revenue model.
- Create a better pitch for the value of entering the challenge: exposure, professional development assistance, chance for partnerships, etc. Contestants focused strictly on cash prize instead of other opportunities. Experience of Accelerator (and film) will allow us to communicate the broader opportunity better in future.
- Line up prize sponsors early - need bling to motivate community and to help make the Challenge fun.
- Communicate weekly with community, experts and contestants (separately for each). Highlight opportunities and happenings. Create a more prominent “What’s New” section on front page.
- Provide greater acknowledgement for experts and Accelerate mentors - really providing a lot of value to contestants and a lot of value to challenge.
- Allow expert and partner judges to confer before voting to allow for more informed decision making / exchange of views.
- More fundamentally, reconsider the best role for the online crowd sourcing piece. Is it a good way to find viable ideas or is it better used to help refine the ideas that are sourced in other ways? How can it be used to offer participating ventures more value, e.g., testing of their ideas, asking for support / recruiting clients, connecting to professional services.
- Consider process variations like putting selected contestants through a bootcamp first to strengthen and focus ideas before putting them out for online commenting / voting.
- Work with contestants to better tailor financing options to their needs and to improve their understanding of non-grant finance opportunities.

Capturing the process

We wanted to capture all parts of the Challenge. That was straightforward with the online Ignite phase, but more difficult for Accelerate and other in-person elements. With the assistance of Dreamnow.org, we were able to hire filmmakers to record the Accelerate bootcamp, the investor pitch session and the celebratory gala as well as insights from the three partner organizations. The video is posted at climatespark.ca.

Appendix A: The Ten Finalists

Summerhill Shuttle (entered as 10/10 Commuter Challenge)

We think it's time to take the lessons learned from sophisticated demand side management programs in the electricity/gas sector to the transportation sector. Clearly, people in Toronto are open to participating in these types of initiatives. We've changed out our lightbulbs, exchanged our old appliances, and are taking to our smart meters. The opportunities to drive similar behaviour change around commuting habits can help to transform our city. But it's beyond a simple rewards program — it's about creating a vision of how we want to move around. And we think this is the first step in creating that vision.

Goals:

- To engage 10% of motorists in the City of Toronto to reduce their VKTs over a 4 month period by 10%
- To reduce 63,542 tonnes of GHGs
- To encourage Toronto motorists to switch to other mobility options – such as TTC, carpooling, bicycle etc.
- To create a grassroots, social marketing campaign that gets people to take real action in their lives, thus reducing their dependency on their vehicle, improving quality of life and local economic development

Sample comments

To me the best part of this project is the indepth information on many people's driving habits that can be received, using better data allows for better solutions to be modeled. Good plan.

More info:
summerhillgroup.ca

Carbon Savings

Carbon Savings is committed to reducing society's demand on natural resources by promoting environmentally preferred products (EPPs). To do this, Carbon Savings focuses on public awareness by helping people to understand how to conserve water and energy and then to estimate the financial and environmental benefits associated with each method. This is done through calculators which help people estimate their annual savings, payback period and CO2 reductions.

The organization was founded on the following premises:

- People would prefer to reduce their impact on the environment as long as it does not affect their standard of living
- The majority of people are motivated to action based on financial considerations
- People are hesitant to spend money when the resulting savings are unknown

I agree that it can be difficult for consumers to grasp or fully appreciate the financial and environmental consequences of many purchases, the calculators Carbon Savings creates could really help to clarify that.

More info:
carbonsavings.org

In order to support the transition towards a low carbon economy, Carbon Savings has decided to concentrate its efforts on a two pronged approach. The first is to help homeowners and businesses find tangible methods to conserve energy and water. There are roughly 30 household technologies that are good for the environmental and have a fast payback period, yet many of them are unfamiliar to the public. As a result, Carbon Savings is building a compre-

hensive and easy-to-use website for consumers to view all of their options and learn about each one.

The second approach is to help companies communicate the benefits of their EPPs to the public. This allows manufacturers and retailers to promote their products by demonstrating the economic and environmental benefits to the customer. In essence, the calculators become interactive marketing tools to help companies sell more products. At the end of the day, increased sales translate into greater adoption of conservation.

GreenHeroes

The GreenHeroes Take Action Campaign is designed to help transform audiences from mere viewers to involved do-ers by connecting them to people who heroically ventured forth and acted on an idea to help protect the planet. These out-of-the-box thinkers have created movements inside the mainstream that have led to emission reductions and more.

At the heart of the GreenHeroes Campaign are well-produced stories told by great storytellers. These stories are delivered as short portable, webisodes distributed on multiple distribution channels and as a series of TV episodes. New to this phase is a call to action social media game that uses the outreach power of our broadcaster and partner networks and our own GreenHeroes fan base to promote and reward activities that reduce energy consumption.

The GreenHeroes Campaign also encourages the audience to become the story by nominating people they know through a contest and connecting them to organizations who can use their energy and interest via our take action campaigns, a daily blog and next, a GreenHeroes game.

GreenHeroes launched last year as a series of 24 x 3 minute webisodes, a series of 6 x 30 minute TV episodes on TVO, and an integrated multi-platform campaign. This combined broadcast, on-line, and street-level promotion resulted in over 600,000 page views and above average dwell times of between 4-6 minutes on our GreenHeroes website.

TVO has committed to license an additional 21 webisodes and seven half hour TV shows and supply funds towards gamifying our existing site and developing the social media game. With this broadcast support, we successfully applied for development funding from the Bell Fund and are now working with bitHeads/Bedlam to develop ways to gamify our web presence and to create a province-wide call to action challenge. This challenge could be delivered as a pilot social media game to garner citizen involvement in Toronto that could then be scaled locally, nationally or worldwide.

The strength, and also the biggest challenge of this project is its participatory community outreach platform and the way that will result in a multitude of innovative ideas being generated and shared by the Green Heroes community.

More info:
greenheroes.tvo.org

NRG_Blog (entered as Inter School Collaboration for Conservation Quantification)

Through the partnership of two schools (Leo Baeck Day School and Robbins Hebrew Academy), we will develop an innovative curriculum in the

Grade 7 science program that will develop awareness in students of their overall energy usage.

Students will quantify their energy use both at home and in school using web-based technologies. Also, students will be able to reflect on their discoveries with their fellow students locally (at the school), across the campuses (both Leo Baeck and RHA), and across the ocean (Israel). Building on the success of the program, students from other schools and organizations

will gain access to this curriculum and contribute to their own NRG_blog space.

By raising awareness in students, several key outcomes are anticipated.

- Students will become conscious and active conservers of the energy they use in their everyday lives.
- Students will share this experience with their home and in turn, affect change at the home level.
- Schools will action their own change by reducing their overall energy footprint.

These social outcomes will reduce the amount of CO₂ and other greenhouse gases (GHG) entering the environment. Energy conservation will be practiced by all parties as the project gains momentum.

Lightweight Vegetable Rooftop Gardens

Toronto offers an abundance of flat, open rooftop spaces that are perfect for vegetable gardens. Green roofs are rapidly gaining popularity in Canada, but their potential could be greatly increased if we consider the question: what if we use rooftops for agriculture? In Toronto we have a vast potential to grow tonnes of food on our rooftops, yet large rooftop gardens are rare. This is due to the short growing season, as well as the cost and structural constraints of incorporating a rooftop garden suitable for growing vegetables.

Rooftop Gardens Inc. designs are unique because they are lightweight and enable year-round food production:

- Designs incorporate the use of lightweight semi-hydroponic or aeroponic containers;
- In Ontario, the average load capacity for a flat roof is 195 kg/m² and an intensive green roof generally imparts loads of around 450 kg/m² and up. A semi-hydroponic garden built by Rooftop Gardens Inc., complete with water, soil, mature vegetation, and a greenhouse will weigh no more than 100 kg/m²;
- Containers are watered via drip irrigation which results in little wasted

This is a great opportunity for students to learn to be global citizens and build awareness of energy conservation and the environment. It should be made mandatory for all school curriculums to include. It is a hands on experience that will engage students.

More info:
rhacademy.ca
leobaeck.ca

I've had the pleasure of seeing the Sky-Garden firsthand and its an inspiring sight; volunteers working together with the common interest of local food production, the serenity in the city provided by the rooftop setting, and direct and indirect greenhouse gas emission reductions. An easily scalable idea with a great potential.

More info:
foodandwaterinstitute.org

water, no soil erosion and uniform distribution;

- Organic fertilizers and compost teas are easily added to the irrigation system and distributed to plants;
- Irrigation and fertilization can be automated with a timer to minimize maintenance;
- Gardens can be made more self-sufficient through on-site composting, seed saving, and rainwater capture
- We provide access to organic vegetable seeds and plants that have been grown for generations on a rooftop, and are thus adapted to the environment
- Four-season gardening is achieved using innovative lightweight, inflatable greenhouses that enable the continuous harvest of cool weather crops such as salad greens throughout the winter months.

Direct emission reductions within the city are related to savings on heating and cooling costs. Studies have shown that vegetation on a building exterior (rooftop, walls) can provide a measure of insulation and reduce the energy needed to control the temperature of the interior of the building. Rooftops are particularly important because, for many urban buildings, they have the hottest temperatures in the summer and they are the site of the most heat loss in the winter.

Low Carbon Condominium

... a do-able plan that will have an immediate impact, and also offer a model that can be used elsewhere. One big strength: could help change the municipal parking requirements for new residential development. Current requirements are such money wasters!

More info:
optionsforhomes.ca

Options for Homes is already well known in the GTA as a developer of cost effective ownership housing. We developed the first three condominiums in the Distillery. Our most recent development is the 643 suite Heintzman Place in the Junction.

We are now planning to develop a new condominium with the lowest carbon footprint in North America.

Our more recent buildings already have features incorporated into them that contribute to energy efficiency and a low carbon footprint. Heintzman Place has solar hot water panels that provide for about one third of the hot water needs of the residents. It also has a heat recovery system, high efficiency boilers and chillers and our own car share — Options for Cars — that further contribute to a lower footprint.

But we're planning to go further than this on one of our upcoming projects. We will build into this condominium all the energy saving features of Heintzman Place and, in addition, we'll get rid of parking for privately owned cars altogether. The building will have parking spaces for up to ten Options for Cars vehicles as well as space for bicycle parking. All purchasers of a condo suite will automatically have a membership in the car share.

This would be Toronto's second car free condo — the first is on University Ave. But the combination of solar hot water heating, green building features and no

private car parking will make this project arguably the lowest carbon footprint condominium in North America.

The low carbon condominium will show that this kind of building not only makes sense from an environmental perspective but that it also has market appeal and can therefore be successfully replicated.

SolarShare Community Solar Bonds

SolarShare bonds are about ‘community power’; opening the door to everyone to participate in the solar economy in Ontario, and reaching individuals who would otherwise not have access to solar generation (those living in apartments, shaded homes, or having limited capital for project investment). It exemplifies what the Green Energy Act and the Feed-in-Tariff program were designed to enable: profitable businesses generating green energy and green returns to the community.

SolarShare has taken on the initial investment, risk, and work in installing solar power projects across Ontario. The co-op currently owns 18 projects representing over 600 kW of capacity, and has launched an offering of Community Solar Bonds to the public.

Individuals and businesses in Toronto and across Ontario are invited to become members of the co-op and purchase SolarShare bonds. The \$1000 bonds earn 5% annual returns over a 5-year term, generating revenue from 20-year power purchase contracts.

The co-op model supports the interests of communities in developing new solar power projects, instilling a sense of ownership and allowing members to feel enthusiastic about uniting with other individuals who want to participate in the green energy economy and develop community owned power.

unstash: peer-to-peer platform for sharing

‘Unstash’ is a peer-to-peer online service for collaborative consumption. Our mission is to make sharing awesome again. We tackle the often unspoken cause behind greenhouse gas emissions and climate change — our unending consumption of goods.

While we tend to focus on solutions like transportation and energy use when dealing with climate change, the reality is ‘the stuff we consume accounts for nearly half of green house gases’

We’re creating a platform for people to easily list, share, and track things that they own within trusted communities. Maybe you have a power tool you bought once, and never used again. Or maybe you bought a Nintendo Wii that’s collecting dust. Or maybe you need a tent for a camping trip but don’t want to buy one for a single occasion. Maybe we have more than we think — it’s just not sitting under our own roofs.

Every single time we work together within trusted communities to borrow

Projects that don’t rely on the committed few have a much greater chance to succeed, and this investment is excellent in multiple ways. The return is strong, the investment can be modest, and the vision is fantastic.

More info:
solarbonds.ca

The strength is it breaks the temptation to have to own, increase community which is sorely missing in your average neighborhood. Only weakness is make sure you can get what you share back, or does that defeat the whole point of sharing?!

More info:
unstash.com

rather than buy we divert carbon emissions upstream in a substantial way.

Unstash wants to help Toronto embrace 'access' over 'ownership'. We're designing the experience to be dead-simple to use, safe, and even fun. We believe sharing is the new shopping and together we can help people save money and deepen community ties, all the while creating a more sustainable future.

I find the potential to expose and train more people to local food production is the best part of this project. The sustainability and security of producing food locally is becoming ever more evident. Great project!

More info:
yufcsa.com

Young Urban Farmers CSA

Young Urban Farmers CSA is a non-profit organization with the goal of reconnecting people to fresh, locally-grown food. We do this by converting Toronto's backyards into a sustainable source of fresh, delicious produce for its urban inhabitants and distributing the food via a community shared agriculture (CSA) model. Fuelled by a passion for healthy living, local organic produce, and environmental responsibility, we hope to spark a new revolution in sustainable urban living by building community foodsheds while providing the freshest, tastiest, urban-grown produce to Toronto residents.

Started in 2009, YUF CSA is an entirely youth-led and youth-run organization. We operate a community shared agriculture program in 3 neighbourhoods across the City of Toronto: Lawrence Park North, Wychwood, and Riverdale. In 2011, 14 homeowners donated their yard (front and/or back) for us to convert into an intensive vegetable garden. Our team of enthusiastic volunteers then takes care of managing the garden doing everything from the planning and prep to the digging and planting, through to the watering and harvesting of the delicious produce. The veggies are then distributed among land-sharers, our volunteers, as well as local community members who purchase a share of the produce from the gardens.

Urban vegetable gardens support our cities and our climate by reducing the distance food has to travel from food to plate. They also reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase plant biodiversity, reduce the urban heat island effect, engage the community in a social project, and allow people to enjoy fresh, delicious produce right from a local neighbourhood backyard.

This is a good location for a project so that people can learn about the potential of bio-fuels. The concept too that an idea like this could work on Canadian farms is compelling. A good initiative.

ZooShare

ZooShare Biogas Co-operative Inc. is a non-profit renewable energy co-operative that is developing a 500 kW community-owned biogas plant on the grounds of the Toronto Zoo, turning the Zoo's annual manure output and food waste from GTA-based grocery stores into electricity, heat, fertilizer and cash for the Zoo.

The bulk of the capital needed for the project will be raised from Zoo members and local citizens who support our mission via the issuance of Community Bonds. This allows the project to be controlled by those it will have the greatest impact on, while also allowing individual investors to support the local environment with their retirement portfolios.

ZooShare is helping Toronto on a number of levels - greenhouse gas emission reductions of over 10,000 tonnes per year, reduced risk of groundwater con-

tamination from manure at the site, reduced waste to landfill, financial contributions to the Zoo of at least \$50,000 for the next 20 years. The heat produced by the generator will be provided free-of-charge for use in a future greenhouse, which may be used to grow feed for animals, allowing the Zoo to realize additional cost savings.

ZooShare's mission is to be the catalyst for the growth of community-owned biogas plants through education and investment. Visitors to the site will get a chance to get an up-close look at an operational biogas plant, and learn more about the benefits of the technology and community power in general, while annual surpluses will be re-invested in other community-owned biogas plants, exponentially increasing the positive impact we can make.

More info:
zooshare.ca



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