



Kaufman Center Kaufman Award Social Impact



The Kaufman Awards

Purpose and Vision

The **Kaufman Awards for Outstanding Social Innovation** recognize organizations, programs, and initiatives that achieve measurable, sustainable improvements in human and societal performance. Established by the **Kaufman Center and the Performance Improvement Institute (PII)**, the awards honor the legacy of **Dr. Roger Kaufman (1932–2020)**—a pioneer in defining “Mega Planning,” which links organizational success to societal value creation. The awards aim to spotlight practical, scalable models that transform communities, improve quality of life, and strengthen systems of education, economy, governance, and environment.

History

First launched in the early 2010s, the Kaufman Awards grew out of the international **Kaufman Center for Societal Performance** network. Building on decades of research and applications in social innovation and human performance technology, the program was created to connect academic rigor with real-world impact. The awards have since evolved into a **global benchmark** for performance-based social innovation, celebrating both nonprofit and for-profit initiatives across multiple regions and sectors.

Selection Criteria

Nominees are evaluated using a **comprehensive performance framework** derived from Kaufman’s *Mega–Macro–Micro* model. Projects are assessed on:

- **Outcomes** – demonstrable improvements in people’s lives, institutions, and communities.
- **Systems View** – integration across individual, organizational, and societal levels.
- **Sustainability** – long-term social, environmental, and economic viability.
- **Innovation** – creative use of technology, partnerships, and design to achieve systemic change.
- **Evidence** – measurable data and transparent evaluation of results.

Eligibility



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The Kaufman Awards accept **nominations and applications** from a broad range of organizations, including NGOs, academic institutions, corporations, and public agencies. Projects must demonstrate verifiable impact and alignment with social value outcomes, rather than short-term outputs. Both **nonprofit and for-profit models** are eligible, provided they contribute to the **public good** through innovation, inclusiveness, and measurable results.

Impact and Significance

Over time, the Kaufman Awards have become a **reference point for excellence in social innovation**, bridging the worlds of business performance and social responsibility. The awards promote a **science of societal improvement**, encouraging organizations to measure success not only in profits or productivity, but in contributions to human development, equity, and environmental stewardship. By sharing case studies and connecting innovators worldwide, the Kaufman Awards advance a new paradigm of leadership—one that links **doing well** with **doing good**.

Notable Recipients (2017–2025)

Over the past decade, the **Kaufman Awards for Outstanding Social Innovation** have recognized more than two dozen initiatives worldwide, spanning continents and sectors—from community transformation to research-driven innovation. Below are ten exemplary recipients that reflect the program's emphasis on measurable impact, systems thinking, and scientific approaches to social progress.

1. **Barrio 31, Buenos Aires – Research & Innovation (2018)**
Honored for pioneering urban transformation through evidence-based design and social innovation. The project integrated research in *nanoeconomics* and participatory governance to convert one of Argentina's largest informal settlements into a sustainable, inclusive neighborhood model.
2. **The Prosperity Paradox – Research & Innovation (2019)**
Based on the research of Clayton Christensen, Efosa Ojomo, and Karen Dillon, this initiative redefined development economics by linking innovation and market creation to poverty reduction. The award recognized the book's global influence in reshaping investment and policy frameworks.
3. **Poor Economics – Duflo & Banerjee – Research & Innovation (2020)**
Nobel laureates Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee received recognition for applying randomized control trials to poverty research, setting new standards for evidence-based policy design in education, health, and microfinance.



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4. **Woodson Center – Violence-Free Zones, U.S. – Research & Innovation (2021)**
Celebrated for data-backed community interventions that drastically reduced youth violence in U.S. inner cities by combining moral leadership, mentorship, and local empowerment.
5. **iCow, Africa – Research & Innovation (2022)**
This mobile platform revolutionized agricultural knowledge transfer, helping small-scale farmers increase productivity through real-time, data-driven advice. It demonstrated the transformative power of mobile innovation in low-resource environments.
6. **APOPOS, Tanzania – Research & Innovation (2023)**
Recognized for its ingenious use of trained rats to detect landmines and tuberculosis—an example of applying scientific ingenuity to save lives, combining biotechnology, behavioral research, and humanitarian application.
7. **Great Green Wall Reforestation, China – Research & Innovation (2023)**
Honored for large-scale environmental innovation integrating remote sensing, bioengineering, and community-based restoration to combat desertification across Asia and Africa.
8. **UPM Reforestation, Uruguay – Research & Innovation (2023)**
Awarded for combining sustainable forestry, industrial innovation, and rural development in Uruguay, demonstrating how private-sector investment can align profitability with ecological and social performance.
9. **Arizona–Sonora Megaregion (2019)**
A binational collaboration linking universities, industries, and governments across the U.S.–Mexico border to drive sustainable regional development through research, innovation, and social inclusion.
10. **SISYU – Barrio Mugica COVID Response, Argentina (2022)**
Recognized for a community-based public health system built on local governance, data monitoring, and civic leadership, which helped control infection rates in high-density urban areas through collaboration between citizens, NGOs, and public institutions.

Broader Recognition and Global Impact

Other notable awardees include **Whole Planet Foundation (2017)**, **Tom Shoes (2017)**, **Barcelona Activa (2018)**, **Never Again Rwanda (2019)**, **Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2022)**, and **CommuniCare South Africa (2024)**. Collectively, these initiatives represent the **global reach and**



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interdisciplinary impact of the Kaufman Awards—bridging science, entrepreneurship, and social transformation to advance sustainable development worldwide.

Kaufman Awards Recipients 2017-2025

1. Whole Planet – Whole Foods (2017)
2. Tom Shoes (2017)
3. Barrio 31 Buenos Aires - Research & Innovation (2018)
4. Barcelona Activa (2018)
5. Never Again Rwanda (2019)
6. Arizona-Sonora Megarregion (2019)
7. The Prosperity Paradox – Research & Innovation (2019)
8. Poor Economics -Duflo & Banerjee - Research & Innovation (2020)
9. ISPI China (2020)
10. PESCAR Foundation – Argentina (2020)
11. Woodson Center – US- Violence Free Zones – Research & Innovation (2021)
12. SINAE – Uruguay – COVID Response (2021)
13. Improvement Consulting – China (2021)
14. World Central Kitchen – US - COVID Response (2021)
15. Mo Ibrahim Foundation – Africa (2022)
16. iCow – Africa - Research & Innovation (2022)
17. SISYU – Barrio Mugica – Argentina COVID Response (2022)
18. APOPOS – Tanzania - Research & Innovation (2023)
19. Great Green Wall Reforestation – China - Research & Innovation (2023)
20. PUPIL - Ecology – Uruguay (2023)
21. UPM Reforestation – Uruguay - Research & Innovation (2023)
22. CommuniCare – South Africa (2024)
23. Haciendo Caminos – Argentina (2024)
24. American Giant Value Chains – US (2025)
25. Venado Tuerto – Rural transformation (2025)