

Executive Summary

Project ULTRA, by ImpactReady

Jane and John want to set up a social enterprise in their local part of Birmingham to source Fairtrade cotton clothes and sell them to local market traders at bulk discount rates. They have been working hard to develop their contacts in India and Malawi; as well as lining up several buyers. Whilst they have an accounting system set-up, they have no idea how to start collecting and demonstrating their social impact, they have little time available, and they can't afford to pay for somebody to help them.

Pramilla is running a small non-profit organization in New Delhi helping abused women. She wants to grow her organization but is already running it using a skeleton staff and is struggling to get additional donor money because they are not convinced by her strategic planning. She has no idea where to start with addressing these concerns.

The social economy faces a Catch 22: small social impact organisations cannot improve capabilities without investment, but they cannot get investment without improving their capabilities. We aim to break this vicious circle, and turn it into a virtuous one.

A project team in a large NGO in Lagos are developing a new school feeding programme. They need to create a logframe and track their finances in a way that links expenditure to results. They are on a deadline and are not sure where to start with building a new tool to do this.

These three stories are typical of the problems faced by social impact organisations that we see everyday. Start-up and growing social endeavours tend to be short on investment and short on time. They have to tread the balance between working on their mission and working on their organization.

All over the world there are people trying to find a place to start with building best-practice into their organisations; rather than focusing their energy and skills on delivering their mission.

The reason that these change-makers spend so much time trying to figure out how to build management, finance and performance systems is that donors want to see evidence of capability and social impact before they invest. To demonstrate this impact, however, social impact organisations also need investment in the first place.

The social economy faces a Catch 22: small social impact organisations cannot improve capabilities without investment, but they cannot get investment without improving their capabilities. We aim to break this vicious circle, and turn it into a virtuous one by creating three web-based applications that lower the cost of social impact organisations being great. We will do for the back-end of social impact organisations what JustGiving has done for their fundraising, enabling social impact organisations to:

- 1/ articulate a powerful strategic vision
- 2/ create transparent financial management
- 3/ deliver on the promise of social impact measurement.

Existing attempts to solve this problem suffer from:

- high transaction costs (complexity, requiring extensive reading and research, developing bespoke solutions, and being unable to respond to different stakeholders requirements from the same data);
- high barriers to entry (only being available to registered charities, requiring specific computer programmes, requiring broadband internet access, or charging rates too high for most social impact organisations);
- low integration across disciplines (separating out the functions of finance, impact measurement, and strategic visioning).

8 reasons to vote for ImpactReady

1. Our service offering is truly unique and meets a proven need that we have discovered through personal and professional experience, and research done by LSE DESTIN students;
2. The three online organization management tools that we will provide will be freely available to everybody, everywhere, with an internet connection;
3. We will create low-cost upgrades to provide a sustainable business income and will always make the basic package free;
4. Any paid-for upgrades will always be made available for free to other D2Development-supported projects;
5. We will use open web standards, such as HTML5, to allow others to contribute to our project and to make our tools available to mobile devices;
6. Our technology platform will be built by web developers in Nigeria, contributing to growth of the legitimate IT sector in an emerging economy;
7. We will hedge risk by investing grant money in our web platform: a capital asset that can be liquidated to repay D2Development if the project does not work;
8. We will be standing on the shoulders of giants, implementing all of the usability and human-centred design philosophies proven by Apple, Google, Amazon and the creative industries.

Our suite of web apps will be powerful, intuitive, affordable.

Powerful

We will use powerful questions to guide users step-by-step through implementing best practice management practices in their projects – such as social impact evaluation, human-centred design and most significant change.

Intuitive

We will design our solutions with user-centred design thinking; taking advantage of usability thinking pioneered by the tech giants Apple, Google and Amazon. Our design research will embrace users from developing and developed countries.

Affordable

Our basic tools will always be free, to everyone with an internet connection. Once we have developed the basic free set, we will explore options to create very low cost add-on options to create a sustainable business.

ImpactReady

ImpactReady is a name that has been used by Joseph Barnes (Development Management, 2009) around a set of research collaborations with LSE DESTIN students to investigate enhancing social impact investments in high-potential, small organisations.

Joseph is an evaluation and change management consultant to international development organisations, as well as being founder and chairperson of the CHILD Trust. He will lead the project with Kellie Liket (Development Management, 2009), a fellow collaborator and PhD student in social impact measurement. Kellie is currently based in the US. They will be joined by Clemence Billoud (Development Management, 2009), a development consultant currently based near Geneva.



We have also engaged in initial discussions with a Nigerian application designer, Temi Olonosanki who returned to Lagos from the US to develop software using local talent. Temi previously worked on software for Lockheed Martin, and will provide the technical design talent for our project at a reduced cost.

- Together we will employ cutting edge user-based design research to create an experience and tools that meet the real needs of social impact organisations in a joyful and exciting way.
- In order to protect users and the project team, we will develop a fair terms of use with expert legal advice.
- Over the development period, we will build and curate a user base to pilot the tools that we create.
- We will explore key business partnerships in order to link online users with real-world support when they need it, and to generate a sustainable income to support the free tools.
- We will work to develop a network of contributors to expand the reach and capabilities of the service, including country-specific versions in key markets.
- Finally, we will use this proof of concept to attract additional investment and expand our services.



Funding from D2D is critical to this project and will be used as a kick-starter grant in order to demonstrate proof-of-concept and lay down important foundations for the future. D2D money will be primarily invested in the professional development of the web platform that we need. This will protect its value, as the platform will have inherent value in its own right.

Artistic Impression of a logframe tool

