



Winners of the first Big Education Challenge set to address food insecurity, SEND, and climate anxiety

- Three bold ideas focused on food insecurity, SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), and climate anxiety have been selected as winners of the first [Big Education Challenge](#).
- The three winners will receive funding from the Big Education Challenge to pilot their projects over the next two years (2024-25). Three runners up will also receive funding to further develop their ideas.
- In 2023, the £1m prize fund provided seed funding and capacity-building support to 15 finalists tackling diverse challenges in education.
- The prize fund, the first of its kind run by the education charity Big Change, set out to identify, support and reward bold ideas with the potential to transform education and learning.

Under embargo: 24 January 2024, 0001 GMT: New projects to support young people with visual impairment, tackle food insecurity, and provide training pathways to address climate anxiety have been chosen as winners of the Big Education Challenge, the £1 million prize fund from education charity, Big Change.

The prize fund is the first of its kind run by Big Change and was set up to identify, support and reward bold ideas with the potential to transform education and learning in the UK.

The joint-winners of the Gamechanger Prize for experienced social entrepreneurs each receive £225k funding. They are:

- **CanTeam** led by **Jonathan Harper, aged 42**, CEO Future Foundations, transforms school canteens into vibrant community hubs by equipping schools to offer nutritious and delicious food after school, co-designed and delivered with young people, their families and the local community. CanTeam creates a sustainable solution to food insecurity, encouraging healthy eating, and enabling young people to learn and thrive.
- **Force of Nature**, led by **Clover Hogan, aged 24**, addresses students' climate anxiety by providing training pathways to help young people prepare for their roles in a green economy, building their confidence, developing their skills, and helping them find the climate solutions they wish to lead.

The winner of the Groundbreaker Prize for 18-25 year olds receives £60k funding, is:

- **Paige Connect** – led by **Sergio Gosalvez, aged 23**, supports young blind and partially-sighted people to connect with learning and work independently or alongside others. By using technology to upgrade existing braille writers, Paige Connect enables better communication and collaboration with sighted teachers, family and friends.

Sergio Gosalvez, Paige Connect, said: “Braille is currently written manually by embossing paper using a braille writer. The writing cannot be stored, shared, or understood by people who cannot read braille, which is unacceptable in this digital age. Paige Connect will enable parents to read a translation of braille via an app – allowing them to assist their children’s education as they would a sighted child. This could be life changing for the 29,000 blind pupils in the UK, two-in-three of whom are estimated to be educated in mainstream schools.”



Jonathan Harper, CEO Future Foundations, said: “I am delighted that CanTeam has won the Big Education Challenge, too many young people and families are not accessing affordable and nutritious food, and with the support of Big Change we can pilot at scale. As a father of three, I am witness to the daily struggle’s families face. By serving food after school, creating a sustainable solution to food insecurity, encouraging healthy eating and enabling young people to learn and thrive, we can revolutionise the way our young people eat and create more sustainable and equitable communities.”

Clover Hogan, Force of Nature, said: “Young people have inherited the climate crisis, yet we're being locked out of decisions governing our future. We need to equip this generation with the knowledge and tools to take action, and the opportunities to influence change. With support from the Big Education Challenge, we’re piloting training to help hundreds of young people develop skills in public speaking, advising decision-makers and supporting peers and teachers within schools. We're so grateful to Big Change for this follow-up funding, and excited to build on the momentum of the work we started in 2023.”

The winning projects are still at the early stage of development and will now go on to pilot their ideas. During 2023, each project leader received expert support and funding alongside other finalists to help them develop and test their idea.

The Big Education Challenge has also awarded a total of £170,000 in funding to three runners-up. These projects are helping young people deal with loss and trauma by developing social emotional skills, offering digital internships for young people who might otherwise struggle to access creative careers, and providing entrepreneurship skills and mentorship for young people at risk of joining gangs.

Essie North, CEO, Big Change said: “In launching the Big Education Challenge, we called for ideas that could help transform education and the winners are doing just that. They have turned their experience into insight and action - bravely testing and bringing their new ideas to life. These leaders, and all the finalists, are challenging assumptions about what education is and its purpose, about who gets to lead change, and the nature of the solutions needed.

“Discovering these brilliant ideas and people should give us all hope. Change in education is hard, and it takes brave and passionate people working together to make it happen. We are incredibly proud to support their journey, to show that change is possible, and I can't wait to see the impact they will have on this and future generations.”

For more information and to keep up-to-date on the Big Education Challenge:
big-change.org/challenge.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

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Additional quotes available on request – including from all runners-up.



Additional information

Full list of runners-up projects:

- **The Firefly Project** - Received £100,000 - led by **Jenna Maudlin, aged 38** – to support schools to help young people understand and deal with loss and trauma, developing their social and emotional skills through design-based workshops and resources.
- **Studio Self-Made** - Received £35,000 - led by **Emma Redfern, aged 24**, is a creative online education platform that offers digital internships for young people who might struggle to access creative careers. These young people enhance their creative portfolios with practical work experience through a network of small businesses.
- **Potential** - Received £35,000 - led by **Farhad Gohar, aged 18**, provides mentorship and support to young people at risk of joining gangs or of exclusion from school, helping them to develop entrepreneurship skills and create legitimate enterprises.

About the Big Education Challenge

- Launched in November 2022, the Big Education Challenge is a £1m prize fund set up by UK-based charity [Big Change](#) to find, support and reward bold ideas with the potential to transform education and learning in the UK.
- After a decade of experience as a funder, Big Change established the Big Education Challenge to catalyse and accelerate change from the bottom up, helping reach more diverse people and bold ideas.
- Out of over 280 applications, 15 finalists (13 of whom were aged 18-25) were selected to receive six months of expert support and funding from Big Change and The Young Foundation to develop and test their ideas. The winners and runners up were selected from this group.
- Big Change and partners are committed to learning from what works in the design and delivery of the first Big Education Challenge, and adapting its approach based on those lessons.
- Funding for the £1m Big Education Challenge prize fund has been raised through a group of generous donors and philanthropists committed to transforming education.

About the Big Change

Big Change's vision is to see a society where all young people are set up to thrive in life, not just exams. As a charity based in the UK, we act as a catalyst to transform education and learning. We work in partnership to understand, advocate for and unlock support for transformation, working at the grassroots and the grasstops, locally, nationally and globally. In the UK we focus on two areas of work: The Big Education Challenge - a £1m prize fund to support and reward bold ideas with the potential to transform education and learning, and the Big Education Conversation, which supports inclusive conversations about the purpose of education in order to shape a new vision and ideas for change.