



Grand Challenges Canada®
Grands Défis Canada

**Bold ideas.
Big impact.**

**Annual Report
2024-25**





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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Building a better world through **innovation**

This past year marked an important moment of reflection and renewal for Grand Challenges Canada. As a Board, we took stock of fifteen years of experience funding bold ideas, learning from what has worked, and listening closely to the innovators, partners, and communities who shape our work.

That reflection came at a time of growing global uncertainty. Development financing is under pressure, geopolitical priorities are shifting, and systems that support health and wellbeing are increasingly strained. In this context, the Board's role is clear: to ensure that Grand Challenges Canada remains focused, financially sound, and well-positioned to deliver lasting impact.

This year, the Board worked closely with management to refine the organization's strategic direction for 2025–2030. This work strengthened our focus, reinforced our commitment to equity and locally led innovation, and sharpened our understanding of where GCC can be most catalytic.

Responsible stewardship remains central to this work. With the Government of Canada as our anchor funder, GCC has remained steady in an uncertain environment, deploying capital thoughtfully while leveraging additional resources from partners. That reliability matters.

It allows innovators to keep moving forward even when the broader landscape becomes unpredictable.

The year also brought important organizational evolution, including strengthened senior leadership and steps to align structure and governance with emerging priorities. As a Board, we are confident that these changes position GCC well for the next phase of its work.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to thank the Government of Canada for its continued trust, and to acknowledge the partners and innovators whose collaboration continues to shape our thinking. With a clear strategy, disciplined oversight, and a strong leadership team, Grand Challenges Canada is prepared to build on a solid foundation and help create lasting impact in the years ahead.

GUYLAINE SAUCIER

Board Chair

Grand Challenges Canada



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Innovating for **impact**

Every year, I'm reminded that innovation rarely follows a straight line. Ideas evolve, contexts shift, and progress often depends on whether the right support shows up at the right moment. This year made that clearer than ever.

Across our work, Grand Challenges Canada continued to back innovators tackling urgent challenges—from climate-driven health risks to maternal care, mental health, and humanitarian response. What stood out was not only the creativity of these solutions, but how often success depended on partnerships, timing, and the ability to adapt as conditions changed.

In a year marked by instability in global development funding, our role as a catalytic partner became even more important. We focused on supporting innovators through uncertainty, helping them build evidence, mobilize capital, and connect with governments and systems that could take their solutions forward. As part of this work, we are focused on bringing together funders, public-sector actors, and ecosystem partners to create pathways for adoption and scale.

At the same time, we were looking inward. As we prepared for our next strategic period, we reflected on where our efforts have been most effective and how we can sharpen our impact going forward. We began reviewing our portfolios, advancing new partnerships and funding approaches, and aligning our internal structure to better support the work ahead. This learning-by-doing approach—grounded in evidence and experience—continues to shape how we deploy capital and influence.

What has remained constant is our focus on impact. We back bold ideas not because they are easy or guaranteed, but because they have the potential to change systems and improve lives at scale. That requires patience, risk tolerance, and a willingness to learn—qualities we see every day in the innovators we support.

As we look ahead to the 2025–2030 strategy, our ambition is clear: to help proven innovations reach more people, faster, and in ways that last. With Canada's continued leadership, and with innovators and partners driving solutions from the ground up, we are confident that bold ideas—backed at the right moment—can help build a healthier, more equitable world.

KARLEE SILVER
Chief Executive Officer
Grand Challenges Canada

The Hon. Randeep Sarai visits m-mama in Tanzania, together with Grand Challenges Canada CEO Karlee Silver





What we do

Grand Challenges Canada is an innovation platform and one of the world's leading impact-first investors. With anchor funding from the Government of Canada and the support of partners around the world, we back Bold Ideas with Big Impact®, investing in solutions to overcome critical global health and development barriers. Our role is not simply to invest, but to help the right ideas navigate risk, build evidence, attract partners, and achieve lasting impact.

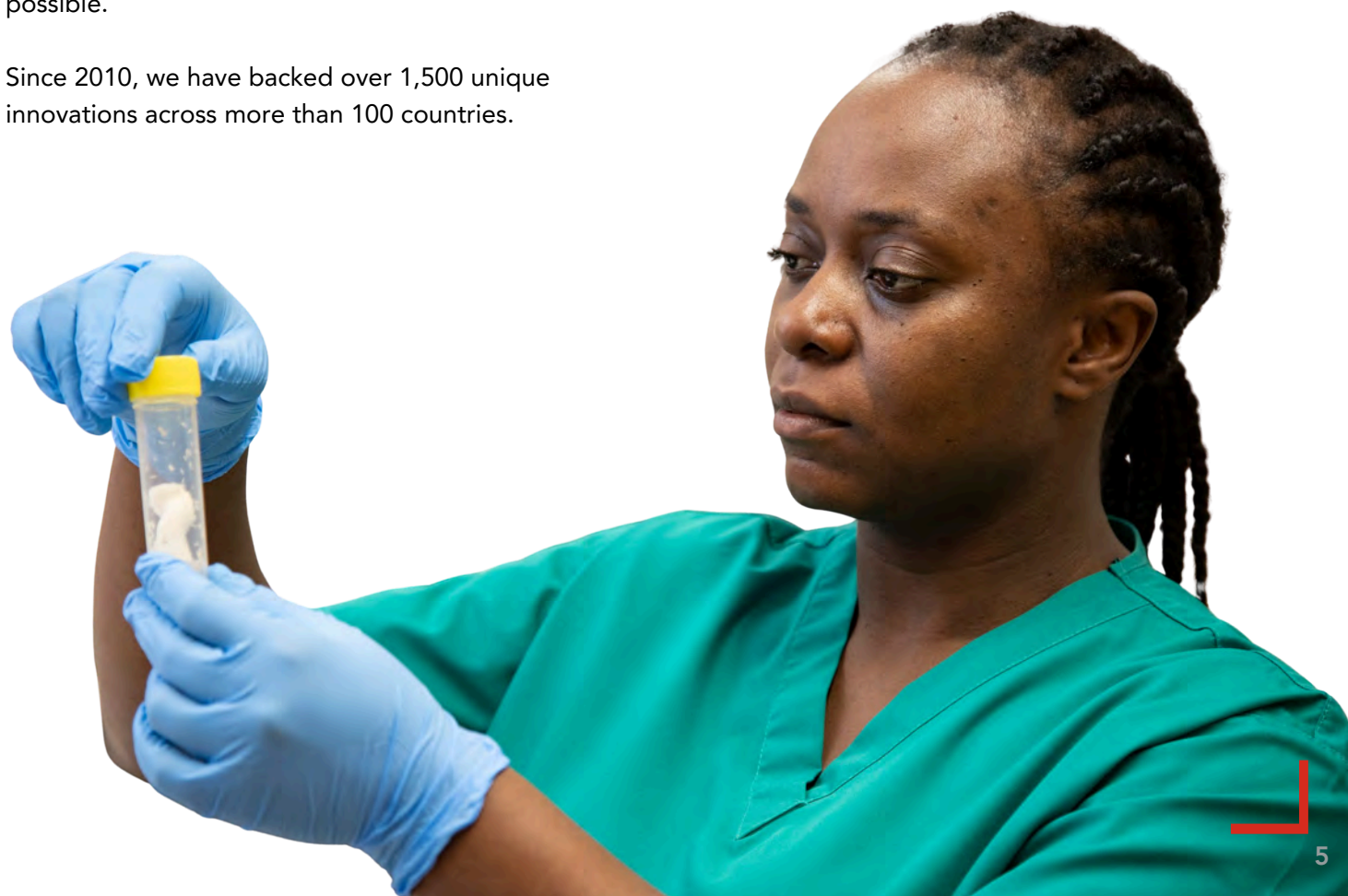
Across some of the world's most pressing health and development challenges, promising solutions too often stall before they reach the people who need them most. Early-stage innovation is risky, systems are complex, and pathways to scale are rarely straightforward. We exist to make it possible.

Since 2010, we have backed over 1,500 unique innovations across more than 100 countries.

Innovations supported by Grand Challenges Canada have directly reached more than 85 million people to date. Based on current projections, our active investment pipeline is on track to reach 750 million people by 2035. Two-thirds of our portfolio is led by innovators based in low- and middle-income countries.

We are also proud to support Canadian innovators as they test and scale solutions, strengthening Canada's innovation ecosystem and diversifying trade relationships while advancing global impact.

Our vision is simple and ambitious: a world where innovation helps everyone thrive.





The Grand Challenges approach

For solutions with the greatest potential, we help open pathways through governments, institutions, and markets so impact can be sustained over time.

This approach allows us to take smart risks while applying rigour as evidence grows, focusing resources where they can achieve the greatest long-term impact.

We begin by defining priority problems through a Grand Challenges approach, inviting bold ideas from around the world and advancing the strongest through structured, stage-based investment.

We invest early, where risk is highest and capital is scarce, enabling innovators to test solutions in real-world settings and generate credible evidence. As results emerge, we provide tailored financial and advisory support to strengthen models and navigate the “valley of death” between pilot and scale.

Flexible, patient capital

As an impact-first investor, we deploy flexible financing tools aligned with each stage of growth. Our toolkit includes grants, equity investments, loans, guarantees, and catalytic investments in impact funds.

We take early risk where traditional capital will not, blend public and private resources, and help attract follow-on investment as solutions mature.

By aligning financial structures with real-world pathways to adoption, we enable innovations to move beyond pilots and into durable implementation.

Our work is grounded in **Integrated Innovation™**, recognizing that social, scientific, and financial dimensions must align for solutions to be sustainable in the long term.

Proven results

An independent 2025 evaluation commissioned by Global Affairs Canada found that Grand Challenges Canada has deployed innovation funding in low- and middle-income countries in a “relevant, coherent, effective, efficient, accountable, and impactful” way, reinforcing the strength and credibility of our model.

Looking ahead

Solving complex global health and development challenges requires collaboration across sectors and borders. We work alongside governments, philanthropies, investors, researchers, and innovators to share risk, mobilize capital, and advance solutions designed not only to grow, but to last.



Our impact: By the numbers



Since 2010, we've funded more than 1500+ unique innovations in over 100 countries globally.*



\$7 billion

in returns to date, increasing the lifetime earnings of people we reach by over 25%



1500+

unique innovations supported



100+

implementing countries worldwide



85 million

lives reached with life-saving and life-improving innovation



\$2.42

leveraged for every \$1 invested by the Government of Canada



388

Canadian-led innovations



28 million

lives improved in unserved and underserved populations



123,000

lives saved with GCC-supported innovations



50,000+

jobs created as a result of GCC-supported innovation



66%

of GCC's portfolio is led by local innovators



40%

of the innovations we fund are led by women & gender-diverse individuals



450

policies influenced by innovations in our portfolio



HOW WE WORK

Designing for **scale**



HOW WE WORK

Designing for **scale**

Over fifteen years of investing in more than 1,500 innovations, Grand Challenges Canada has developed a clearer understanding of what enables lasting impact.

A portfolio review of our Transition-to-Scale investments found that more than one-third of innovations continue to sustain or grow their impact years after GCC funding ends.

Innovations with strong local leadership were significantly more likely to sustain impact, and those pursuing public sector pathways demonstrated stronger long-term adoption outcomes.

The review also identified consistent enablers of scale: catalytic funding, flexible support, government alignment, and strong partnerships. These findings are shaping how we refine our model.

Today, we focus on aligning catalytic capital, intentional demand, and locally led leadership — conditions that, when working together, increase the likelihood that promising innovations move from pilot to sustained impact.

Aligning innovation with public sector **demand**

We know that demand drives scale.

Innovations are more likely to sustain when governments articulate priorities early, and innovators design with integration in mind. Rather than supporting pilots in isolation, GCC works with public partners to clarify adoption pathways from the outset.

Through our Public Sector Demand and Scale Strategy, we collaborated with national counterparts in Kenya and Ethiopia to test structured pathways for adoption. This included aligning innovations with ministry-defined priorities, incorporating cost-effectiveness data into planning discussions, and assessing readiness across regulatory and procurement dimensions.

In East Africa, this work contributed to the launch of the Scaling Action Lab, a regional platform for governments and innovators to exchange implementation lessons and refine adoption pathways.

By strengthening alignment between innovation and public priorities, we improve the conditions under which solutions can be sustained beyond initial investment.



Catalytic capital must be patient & stage-appropriate

Catalytic capital unlocks growth at moments when traditional financing is limited.

Many high-potential enterprises stall in the “valley of death,” where early evidence exists but commercial capital and public demand are not yet aligned. Grants remain GCC’s primary instrument, enabling innovators to test feasibility and generate evidence in real-world settings.

As solutions mature, we may deploy additional tools — including repayable financing, equity, debt, guarantees, or outcome-based mechanisms — when appropriate to the innovation’s growth pathway and adoption readiness.

We accept higher risk and longer time horizons where needed in order to preserve impact as ventures mature. By structuring capital intentionally and aligning it with stage and context, we help unlock follow-on funding and strengthen pathways to sustainability. Over the past year, this approach mobilized significant co-investment.

Viebeg Technologies closed a USD \$3.6 million round with partners including the Sanofi Impact Fund and the Johnson & Johnson Foundation, expanding access to medical supplies across East Africa.

Neopenda mobilized CAD \$3.7 million in financing to scale newborn monitoring technologies in low-resource settings.

A results-based financing agreement with Fresh Life Initiative is testing pay-for-performance sanitation contracts in Nairobi, linking capital to measurable outcomes.

The Transform Health Fund achieved a USD \$111.5 million close, supported by GCC’s early catalytic commitment.

These examples demonstrate how thoughtfully structured capital — whether grant-based or repayable — can attract additional investment and accelerate responsible growth.





Lasting impact requires shifting power to **local leadership**

Evidence from our Scale and Sustainability portfolio review reinforced a clear insight: innovations with strong local leadership are more likely to sustain and grow impact.

In response, GCC developed a powershifting strategy that places greater decision-making authority and programmatic leadership with national partners while aligning capital with locally defined priorities.

This shift operates at multiple levels — from country platforms to institutional governance.

In Senegal, **Grand Challenges Senegal** completed its first two funding rounds, with a focus on artificial intelligence for health. These rounds marked the platform's first direct contracting with six grantees. GC Senegal led programmatic reporting, while GCC supported the calls through funding and capacity-building, strengthening local institutional capability and responsiveness to innovators. Their AI portfolio was showcased during the centenary celebrations of the Institut Pasteur de Dakar, elevating national visibility for locally driven innovation. Engagement with Global Affairs Canada's Senegal Program strengthened alignment between innovation funding and Canada's bilateral priorities.

In Ghana, GCC co-created a national funding call in the **Ghana Country Innovation Platform** with the Ghana Health Service, funding maternal and newborn health innovations aligned with government-defined priorities.

The call resulted in support for ten innovations across six regions and contributed to the establishment of a new innovation desk within Ghana Health Service. AMP Health provided management support and in-house capacity to GHS, strengthening internal coordination.

Powershifting also extends to how GCC shapes its broader strategy. GCC's **Innovator Council**—composed of innovators from diverse geographies and stages of growth—provides direct input into funding approaches, processes, and learning priorities. Their perspectives inform how we design calls, structure support, and refine our model, ensuring that decision-making reflects lived experience as well as institutional strategy.

By shifting leadership closer to innovators and national institutions, GCC reinforces the conditions under which innovation can be trusted, integrated, and sustained.

Two-thirds of GCC's portfolio is led by innovators based in low- and middle-income countries. Powershifting builds on this foundation by strengthening leadership, governance, and institutional capability at multiple levels of the innovation ecosystem.





Backing **bold** ideas

Catalytic capital, intentional demand, and locally led leadership are mutually reinforcing. When aligned, they create the conditions under which innovation can move beyond pilot stages and achieve sustained adoption.

Across our portfolios, these principles are translating into measurable results — expanding access to care, strengthening service delivery, and improving health and well-being in underserved communities.

The following examples illustrate how this model is being applied in practice.





BACKING BOLD IDEAS

Climate and health

Climate change is increasingly shaping health outcomes — driving the spread of infectious disease, worsening food and nutrition insecurity, and intensifying physical and mental health risks. Yet despite growing urgency, the climate and health field remains fragmented. Evidence is uneven, priorities are often externally defined, and many promising solutions struggle to move beyond early pilots.

In 2022, GCC and the South African Medical Research Council launched a global call for seed innovations in climate and health — applying our Grand Challenges approach to identify locally grounded solutions to clearly defined priority problems. From more than 770 applications, 42 early-stage projects were selected, the majority from Sub-Saharan Africa. These innovations are generating new evidence at the intersection of climate pressures and health, with a focus on infectious disease, nutrition, and mental health. As evidence emerges, GCC is advancing selected innovations to transition-to-scale, with new support from partners such as Arm. This staged investment model allows promising solutions to move from experimentation toward adoption and resilience-building.

At the same time, we are strengthening the demand side of the ecosystem. In January 2025, GCC launched the largest global survey to date on climate and health, conducted with the Science for Africa Foundation, the Geneva Learning Foundation, and the Global Grand Challenges network. More than 6,000 frontline workers, researchers, and innovators from across low- and middle-income countries contributed their perspectives.

The findings highlight urgent priorities — including malnutrition and food insecurity, vector- and water-borne diseases, heat-related illness, and mental health — and are directly informing the design of our next phase of work. To validate and deepen these insights, GCC convened a global panel of experts to review the survey findings and advise on strategic direction. The results will be published as a public good report, ensuring open access to evidence for governments, funders, researchers, and innovators worldwide.

Together, these efforts are shaping the development of a new Climate and Health Grand Challenge, co-created with the Science for Africa Foundation — aligning capital, demand, and locally informed priorities to strengthen resilience at scale.





BACKING BOLD IDEAS

Play Learn Thrive

Children in crisis settings face profound barriers to learning and development — from disrupted schooling and displacement to mental health challenges and limited caregiver support. Traditional emergency education responses often struggle to address these interconnected needs in a sustained way.

Building on Grand Challenges Canada’s track record in early childhood innovation through Saving Brains and experience in complex settings, and with new support from the LEGO Foundation, we launched Play Learn Thrive to address this gap with a systems-oriented approach.

The portfolio focuses on children aged birth to 12 in crisis-affected contexts, supporting innovations that strengthen holistic development through playful learning. It prioritizes solutions that enhance cognitive, social, and emotional resilience; build the capacity of educators and caregivers; and reflect community-driven, culturally responsive approaches grounded in lived experience.

In early 2025, GCC released the inaugural request for proposals, informed by consultations with children, caregivers, educators, and community leaders, as well as lessons drawn from previous portfolios. By grounding priorities in user insight and institutional realities, the call was designed to support solutions positioned for integration rather than short-term pilots.

Selected initiatives will receive catalytic funding alongside tailored non-financial support, including an online learning platform, technical assistance, and opportunities for peer learning. This integrated model reflects GCC’s broader approach — combining capital, evidence generation, and partnership-building to strengthen pathways to adoption within ministries of education, humanitarian agencies, and local school systems.

Over time, Play Learn Thrive aims to demonstrate how playful learning can become embedded within education systems in crisis and recovery contexts — helping children not only learn, but thrive.



BACKING BOLD IDEAS

Being



Grand Challenges Canada has invested in global mental health since 2011. These efforts underscored both the urgency of addressing mental health challenges and the structural barriers that prevent promising approaches from reaching scale.

In 2022, we launched the Being Initiative — a shared global platform focused on youth-led innovation for the promotion and prevention of mental health challenges across 12 priority countries. Being is delivered in partnership with Fondation Botnar and the UK Department of Health and Social Care, and brings together strategic collaborators including Orygen, United for Global Mental Health, and the Science for Africa Foundation.

From the outset, Being was grounded in country-level landscape analyses conducted in each participating country. Led by local partners who consulted widely with young people, practitioners, policymakers, and community leaders, these analyses identified the key drivers of youth mental health challenges in each context. The resulting insights shaped national priorities and funding streams, ensuring that investments are grounded in lived realities and local demand.

This reporting period marked a significant milestone: funded Being projects began implementation across participating countries. Investments span proof-of-concept, transition-to-scale, and ecosystem-strengthening streams, aligning capital with innovation maturity and system readiness.

By placing young people at the centre of solution design and learning — and pairing capital with ecosystem engagement and knowledge exchange — Being seeks to strengthen pathways to adoption and long-term sustainability.

Across Colombia, Ecuador, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Morocco, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Vietnam, young innovators are advancing solutions — from peer networks and arts-based approaches to digital tools and AI-enabled services — rooted in their communities.

Being reflects a shared commitment to shifting how youth mental health promotion is designed, delivered, and sustained — aligning evidence, partnership, and catalytic capital to advance lasting impact.



Being Innovation Lookbook

Get to know the innovations in the Being Initiative. Scan the QR code to view the latest lookbook.



TURNING IDEAS INTO IMPACT

Made
in 
Canada

Canadian Innovation, Worldwide Impact

Canada has long been a source of bold ideas with global relevance — and we are proud to invest in homegrown innovation alongside our global portfolio. Approximately 20 percent of our investments support Canadian researchers, social enterprises, and impact funds working to address urgent health, climate, and social challenges in Canada and around the world.

We help Canadian innovators overcome barriers, de-risk promising solutions, and bridge the “valley of death” between idea and scale. Through flexible financing and tailored venture advisory support, we accelerate the path from early innovation to commercial adoption, public-sector uptake, and systems reform. The impact extends beyond improved outcomes: Canadian organizations expand internationally, attract co-investment, create high-quality jobs at home, and open new markets — strengthening Canada’s innovation economy while advancing solutions to some of the world’s most complex challenges.

OGOW Health

In Somalia, preventable maternal and child deaths remain a persistent challenge — driven not only by limited services, but by gaps in information, coordination, and trust. OGOW Health is transforming this reality through digital tools that connect families to essential care — from antenatal visits to immunization and nutrition services — while strengthening the health system from the ground up.

By empowering mothers and caregivers with clear guidance on when and where to seek care, and equipping frontline health workers and policymakers with real-time data, OGOW improves service delivery, supports evidence-based decisions, and helps reduce preventable deaths. Today, OGOW’s tools are active in more than 700 clinics across 23 regions and 98 districts, and are trusted by partners including UNICEF, Save the Children, World Vision, and Action Against Hunger.





Safe Water Optimization Tool



In humanitarian crises, unsafe drinking water can turn deadly within days. The Safe Water Optimization Tool (SWOT), developed by York University and Médecins Sans Frontières, uses machine learning to transform routine water quality data into clear, evidence-based chlorination targets — ensuring water remains safe all the way to the point of consumption.

By helping responders tailor treatment to local conditions, SWOT protects communities from waterborne disease while reducing waste and maximizing the impact of limited resources. Already deployed in more than a dozen countries, reaching over 700,000 people, the tool is now scaling globally. It was featured in the U.K. Government’s White Paper as a leading example of effective, field-proven innovation.

Aerosan Toilets

Globally, 3.4 billion people lack safe sanitation. In Nepal, overcrowded urban areas leave tens of thousands sharing a single toilet. With support from Grand Challenges Canada, Aerosan Toilets — a Canadian social enterprise founded in Nova Scotia — is partnering with the municipalities of Kathmandu and Lalitpur to build eco-friendly sanitation hubs that treat waste on-site and generate clean energy. Local governments have donated land and infrastructure, while a women-led cooperative operates the facilities and shares in the revenue — creating dignified jobs and long-term sustainability. Already reaching more than 900,000 people and preventing 40 tonnes of pollution annually, Aerosan is on track to reach 60 sites and extend sanitation to 3 million people.



The Equality Effect

In Kenya, strong anti-rape laws existed on paper — but enforcement failures meant child survivors rarely saw justice. The Equality Effect’s groundbreaking 160 Girls Project is changing that reality through strategic reform of police and judicial systems. In partnership with the Kenyan National Police Service and Vancouver Police, the organization developed human rights–based investigative training that is now embedded in Kenya’s police curriculum.

The impact has been dramatic: in areas where arrests were once virtually nonexistent, 80 percent of reported child rape cases led to arrests within three months of training. Building on this momentum, the Equality Effect is connecting Kenyan and Canadian judicial leaders to ensure cases are handled fairly and sensitively in court. Recognized with the 2019 World Justice Challenge Award, the project is transforming how justice systems protect their most vulnerable citizens.





Turning ideas into impact

These impact stories show how catalytic capital, partnership, and locally led leadership work together to move innovation toward sustained impact. From early stage experimentation to government adoption and market integration, each example reflects our commitment to disciplined investment and real-world results.



TURNING IDEAS INTO IMPACT

Catalytic capital, confident girls: Be Girl's bold journey

When industrial designer Diana Sierra first visited Uganda, she met girls missing school because they couldn't afford menstrual supplies. Outraged by the injustice, she designed a simple solution. That spark became Be Girl — now a leading social enterprise reimagining menstrual health across Africa.

Be Girl produces reusable products like the PeriodPanty, coupled with education tools such as the SmartCycle and trainer programs for teachers and governments. Together, these solutions break stigma, build confidence, and keep girls in school.

The path was not easy. After testing a retail model in Mozambique, Be Girl pivoted to a business-to-institution approach, partnering with governments and UN agencies. The results speak volumes: Angola's Ministry of Education and UNFPA partnered to reach 200,000 girls, Mozambique launched its first national menstrual health curriculum reaching 250,000 adolescents, and more than 1 million products have been distributed to date.

GCC's support has been central throughout Be Girl's journey. A CAD \$800,000 seed grant in 2018 enabled the enterprise to design, test, and validate its products. Then, in 2025, a USD \$500,000 equity investment gave Be Girl the flexibility and credibility to expand education platforms, build a multilingual training system, and secure larger government and UN procurement contracts.

Today, Be Girl is on track to reach 1.2 million young people by 2030. This sequencing — grant to equity — demonstrates how flexible capital can unlock institutional procurement, shift markets, and sustain impact.





TURNING IDEAS INTO IMPACT

Financing peace through **renewable energy**

In conflict-affected countries, reliable electricity is often scarce or prohibitively expensive. Humanitarian operations and communities alike rely heavily on diesel. **Energy Peace Partners (EPP)**, co-founded by Canadian innovator Dave Mozersky, is changing that reality with an innovation that turns renewable energy into a tool for both sustainability and peace.

Their breakthrough, the Peace Renewable Energy Credit (P-REC), is the first energy certificate of its kind that links renewable power generation with tangible peace and development benefits.

For every megawatt hour of renewable electricity generated in fragile contexts, a P-REC is issued and sold to global corporations such as Microsoft, Google, and Block. The proceeds are reinvested into local projects: installing solar at the Malakal Teaching Hospital in South Sudan, bringing streetlights to Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and financing new mini-grids near Garamba National Park.

Through GCC's Creating Hope in Conflict: A Humanitarian Grand Challenge, EPP secured a CAD \$250,000 seed grant to test and prove the model. That catalytic support gave EPP credibility, de-risked private sector engagement, and enabled the first-ever P-REC transactions — together unlocking over USD \$500,000 in new renewable energy financing for conflict settings.

Today, EPP is scaling its pipeline across 11 countries, proving that with the right model, clean energy can deliver not only power but also stability and hope in some of the world's most fragile places. The model illustrates how catalytic seed capital can mobilize private sector participation in fragile contexts.





TURNING IDEAS INTO IMPACT

Hala Systems: Saving civilian lives

Since 2013, airstrikes have been a major cause of civilian deaths in Syria, with tens of thousands killed and injured. Early warning systems relied on manually activated sirens and human spotters, often delivering alerts too late to protect civilians.

Hala Systems set out to change that.

The organization developed Sentry Syria, an AI-enabled early warning system that integrates acoustic sensors, open-source intelligence, and human observation to predict the likely target and arrival time of airstrikes. Alerts are delivered through multiple channels — including mobile notifications, sirens, warning lights, and radio broadcasts — providing civilians with critical minutes to take shelter.

In 2019–2020, Grand Challenges Canada invested \$997,000 CAD to support the development and expansion of Sentry Syria. That catalytic capital helped Hala Systems demonstrate that advanced, data-driven civilian protection tools could operate reliably in active conflict zones. The investment also helped unlock \$19.7 million in complementary funding from governments, bilateral donors, and venture capital.

To date, Sentry Syria has reached more than 2.2 million people and contributed to improved safety outcomes for over 162,000 civilians. The system is now operated in partnership with the Syrian Civil Defence (White Helmets), strengthening local ownership and sustainability.

The impact extends beyond Syria.

Building on its track record, Hala Systems' technology has been adopted by the Government of Canada. As highlighted by Prime Minister Carney in September 2025, Canada's \$2-million investment is now applying Hala's technology in Ukraine to help locate forcibly displaced children and preserve evidence for international justice.

From early-stage support to government-scale deployment, Hala Systems illustrates how catalytic investment can transform high-risk innovation into practical tools that protect lives in the world's most fragile contexts.





Rotman Innovation of the Year Award

The Rotman Innovation of the Year Award was created in 2020 as part of Grand Challenges Canada's 10th anniversary, in honour of the late Joseph Rotman, the Founding Chair of Grand Challenges Canada. The award is given annually to innovations in our portfolio that have an outsized impact on saving and improving lives. Previous recipients of the award include:

Hewatele, a Kenyan-owned social enterprise that produces medical-grade oxygen for rural healthcare facilities

Ubongo, a Tanzania-based nonprofit and Africa's leading producer of children's edutainment

Fresh Life, a Kenya-based social enterprise that improves sanitation through access to toilets and safe waste treatment

Max Foundation Bangladesh for their 'Healthy Village' approach, which creates lasting change for children and communities.

Community Empowerment Lab (CEL), in recognition of its transformative work in scaling Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) across Uttar Pradesh, India.



TURNING IDEAS INTO IMPACT

Rotman Innovation of the Year: Jacaranda Health

How AI is changing maternal care in Kenya

In Kenya, a simple text message is transforming the future of maternal health. Jacaranda Health's "PROMPTS" service uses artificial intelligence to deliver **timely, life-saving information to expectant and new mothers.**

Mothers sign up at clinics or through community health workers and receive **free, personalized text messages** in Swahili or Sheng. They can ask anything — from whether it's safe to eat avocados during pregnancy to what to do if they are bleeding — and get rapid answers.

Behind the scenes, fine-tuned AI models triage thousands of daily questions, flagging urgent

cases to human agents and connecting mothers to the nearest equipped health facility.

The results are striking: antenatal visits, postnatal check-ups, and family planning uptake have all increased.

More than 3 million mothers Kenya, Ghana, and Eswatini have used the platform, at a cost of less than one dollar per mother.

Jacaranda's growth has been fueled in part by GCC's patient partnership.

As former co-CEO Sathy Rajan explained: "GCC has been with our organization since the beginning — the first funder on board every time we expanded. They were the patient, risk-tolerant partner we needed. That confidence spread to other funders, allowing us to grow. They trusted us to innovate, while holding us to high standards."

Today, Jacaranda is embedded in Kenya's national maternal health strategy — proof that risk-tolerant capital, paired with government alignment, can change systems.





Convening for **impact**

Innovation doesn't scale in isolation. It takes governments willing to adopt, funders ready to co-invest, and markets prepared to deliver. GCC plays a unique convening role, bringing these actors together in ways that shift systems.

On global stages — from Skoll to the World Health Assembly to UNGA — we have created spaces where innovators present alongside ministers and investors. These convenings offered opportunities to surface demand, broker partnerships, and secure commitments.

In several cases, these engagements have led directly to co-investment discussions, government adoption pathways, and scaled procurement.

Our convening power also strengthens our pipeline approach. Whether in early childhood development, youth mental health, or climate and health, GCC ensures that promising pilots connect with ecosystems that can sustain and scale them. By choreographing relationships and networks, we help ideas move from labs to policies, from communities to global markets.

This page: GCC convening on the sidelines of UNGA78 in New York. Following page (clockwise): Being Initiative partners gather in New York, GCC's Fawad Akbari and Mohini Bhavsar with Investment Committee Member Emi Mahmoud; GCC's Johanna Sanchez and Rahul Chandran discuss climate and health at GCC's UNGA side event; GCC's CEO Karlee Silver and board member Awa Marie Coll Seck discuss public sector scaling at an event in Geneva; GCC's Nicole Fulton with Julius Mbeya and Ash Rogers; and GCC's COO Akin Alaga.





Accountability & Governance





Living our values

As GCC enters its next strategic phase, we reaffirmed the purpose and values that guide our work. In a rapidly changing global context, clarity of mission, vision, and values matters more than ever. Our values guide not only what we do, but how we do it. As GCC enters its next strategic period, they provide a steady foundation for decision-making, partnerships, and the support of innovations that help people and communities thrive.

We seek impact

Impact is our north star. We focus on outcomes, not activity—supporting innovations that can remove barriers, improve access, and change systems. This means taking informed risks, learning from what works, and directing resources where they can make the greatest difference.

We are good partners

Lasting change does not happen in isolation. We work alongside innovators, governments, funders, and communities with trust, humility, and shared ownership. Whether convening across sectors or navigating uncertainty, we aim to be a reliable and thoughtful partner.

We promote equity

Equity shapes our decisions at every stage, from how funding opportunities are designed to how power and leadership are shared. Two-thirds of the innovations we support are locally led in low- and middle-income countries, and we continue to prioritize approaches grounded in lived experience and gender equity.

We are accountable and care for our work and each other

We take responsibility for how resources are used, how decisions are made, and how risks are managed. Accountability also means caring for the people behind the work—fostering a culture that supports inclusion, learning, and long-term resilience.





Management discussion and analysis

This past fiscal year marked a turning point for Grand Challenges Canada (GCC). As we reached the end of our current strategic cycle, we reflected on more than fifteen years of experience funding bold ideas and learning what it takes for innovation to achieve impact at scale. In this context, the Board approved a new strategic plan for 2025–2030, providing clear direction for the organization’s next phase.

The strategy sharpens where GCC can be most catalytic — focusing capital, strengthening partnerships, and accelerating adoption of proven solutions. We concentrated on positioning the organization to deliver greater impact at scale—deploying capital where it can be most catalytic, maintaining flexibility in how we support innovators, and continuing to leverage Canada’s investment to mobilize partners and resources around proven solutions.

To support delivery of the strategy, we strengthened leadership capacity with the appointment of a Chief Strategy and Partnerships Officer and began an organizational restructuring to better align teams, capabilities, and decision-making with strategic priorities. This restructuring is ongoing and will continue into the next fiscal year to support effective execution.

We also initiated a portfolio review to assess where investments have been most catalytic and how portfolios should evolve under the new strategic framework. This work is intended to inform future priorities, align resources with areas of greatest potential, and ensure that funding and

partnerships are positioned to support innovations as they mature. The portfolio review will continue into the next fiscal year.

Alongside this work, we advanced new partnerships, alliances, and funding approaches to strengthen GCC’s catalytic role, working with governments, funders, multilateral organizations, and ecosystem partners to support pathways to adoption and scale. Throughout the year, we emphasized disciplined risk management—balancing rigour and accountability with the flexibility required to support high-potential innovations. Strong governance, transparency, and learning underpin this approach, helping ensure that public and partner resources are stewarded responsibly.

This year marked a pivotal step in the evolution of the Indigenous Innovation Initiative (I3), as we began supporting its transition toward self-determination and Indigenous governance. This transition will continue into the next fiscal year.

As we look ahead, we enter the 2025–2030 period with a clear strategy, strengthened leadership, and an organizational structure continuing to evolve in support of delivery. Our focus remains on translating strategy into action—mobilizing capital, strengthening partnerships, and supporting innovations with the potential to achieve sustained, system-level impact.



Governance structure

Board of Directors

GCC's Board of Directors is composed of fourteen (14) members:

- 12 voting directors
- 2 non-voting directors

The Board provides strategic oversight, ensures strong appropriate governance and accountability, and supports GCC's growth as a leading global platform for innovation.

Committees of the Board

Audit, Finance & Risk Committee

- Oversees financial integrity, risk management, and internal controls.

All three committees are composed of cross-appointed Board directors. The Investment Committee also includes a select number of external experts to bring additional subject-matter expertise.

Governance & Human Resources Committee

- Provides oversight of board development, recruitment, and governance processes.

Investment Committee

- Advises on key investments and funding strategies.

Advisory Committees

Program Advisory Committee (PAC)

Provides strategic input on early-stage investments. Advisory to both Board and management. Composed of external experts who meet regularly with GCC management.

Indigenous Innovation Council

Provides strategic direction and community-rooted leadership to the Indigenous Innovation Initiative, supporting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis-led solutions in Canada.

Innovator Council

A diverse group of innovators advising GCC on power-shifting, inclusivity, and equity in funding processes.





GOVERNANCE

Board of Directors

Our Board of Directors provides strategic oversight and fiduciary responsibility for Grand Challenges Canada. They ensure our work remains bold, accountable, and aligned with our mission to save and improve lives through innovation.



Guylaine Saucier

Corporate Director and former CEO, Gérard Saucier Ltée
Board Chair



Alain Baudet

Past President, Canadian Institutes of Health Research



Cédric Bisson

Partner, Teralys Capital
Chair, Investment Committee



Marine Buissonnière

Independent Researcher and Advisor in Humanitarian Action and Global Health; Senior Advisor, Resolve to Save Lives



Daniel Carucci

Global Chief Medical Officer, McCann Health



Johanne Charbonneau

Retired Financial Executive / Corporate Director
Chair, Audit, Finance & Risk Committee



Awa Marie Coll Seck

Minister of State to the President of Senegal



Mohamed H.A. Hassan

President, The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS)



Karen Higgins

Executive Vice-President, Finance & Chief Financial Officer, The Co-operators Group Limited



Dr. Mercy Mwangangi

Former Chief Administrative Secretary, Ministry of Health, Kenya



Gerhard Pries

Founder and Executive Chair, Sarona Asset Management Inc.



Morris Rosenberg

Former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada
Chair, Governance & HR Committee



Dr. Karlee Silver

Chief Executive Officer, Grand Challenges Canada
Non-voting member



Dr. Peter A. Singer

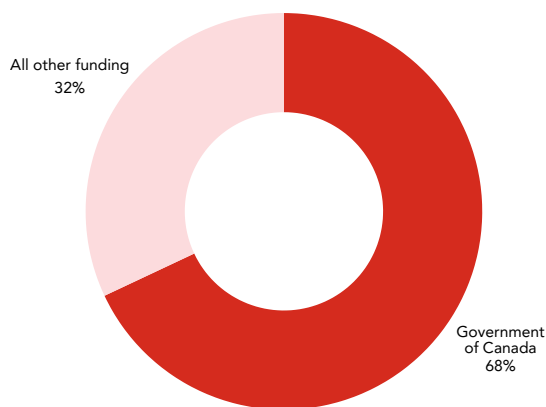
Founder, Grand Challenges Canada, and former Special Advisor to the Director-General, World Health Organization
Non-voting member





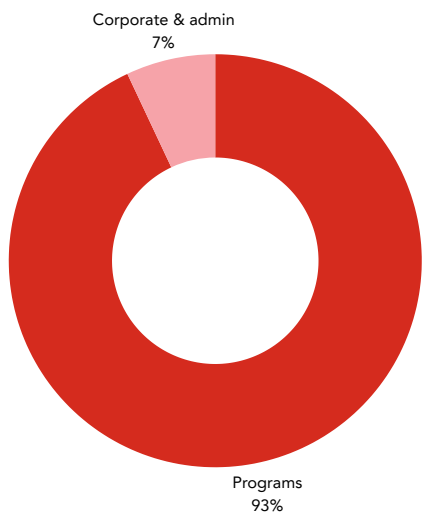
Financial statements

In FY2024–25, GCC disbursed \$68.6 million, mobilizing an additional \$2.42 for every \$1 provided by Canada. Over 92% of expenditures went directly to program delivery and innovation investments, underscoring our commitment to efficiency and impact. View the latest audited financial statements on our website: www.grandchallenges.ca/about-us/accountability/



Revenue

In FY2425, Grand Challenges Canada saw a significant increase in total revenue, reaching \$70.15 million, up from \$55.22 million in FY2324. The bulk of this funding came from the Government of Canada, contributing approximately 68% of total revenue, with the remaining 32% sourced from other partners, including Fondation Botnar, The LEGO Foundation, Arm Limited, USAID, and the UK FCDO. Notably, institutional support grants and targeted program funding drove the year-over-year growth.



Expenditures

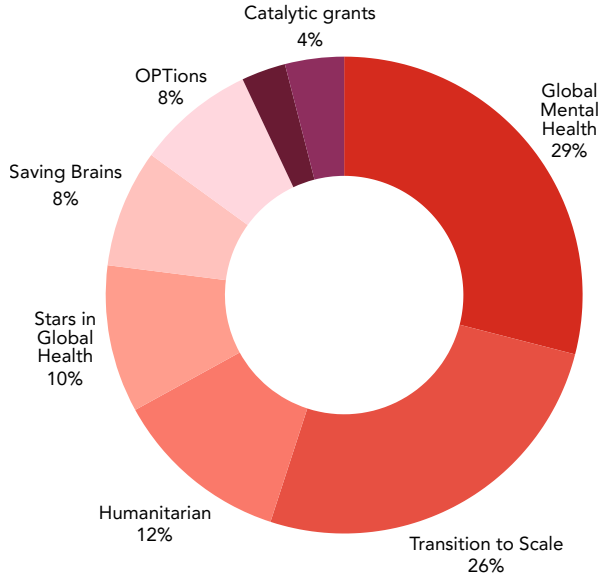
Total expenditures for FY2425 amounted to \$68.62 million, reflecting a 30% increase from the previous year. Program-related expenses dominated the budget, accounting for \$63.52 million or 93% of total spending. Overhead costs, including personnel, materials, and strategic advisory services, were \$5.10 million, consistent with prior year ratios. The increase in program spending aligns with expanded grant disbursements and support activities across portfolios.





Program funding breakdown

Program investments totalled \$46.28 million, with the largest allocations going to Global Mental Health (\$12.2M), Transition to Scale (\$13.6M), and Humanitarian Innovation (\$5.35M). Compared to FY2324, most programs saw increased funding, particularly Global Mental Health and Humanitarian, which more than doubled. New or growing initiatives like Indigenous Innovation and Catalytic Grants also received notable boosts, reflecting strategic shifts and expanded impact areas.



Statement of operations

The Statement of Operations shows a healthy financial position, with total revenue exceeding \$70 million and expenses at \$68.6 million, resulting in a modest surplus of \$1.53 million. Program expenses were the primary cost driver, with grants issued totaling \$42.27 million. Operational support, due diligence, and infrastructure investments were well-managed, and net assets increased to \$24.09 million, up from \$22.55 million the previous year.

We remain accountable through external audits, independent board oversight, and transparent reporting. Equity is central: two-thirds of our innovators are locally led in LMICs, and 40% are women- or gender-diverse leaders. Canada’s investment in GCC is more than financial support — it is a commitment to stewarding resources responsibly and multiplying impact on a global scale.





Looking ahead

The challenges we face are complex: climate change is reshaping health risks, conflicts are disrupting lives and systems, and political and economic uncertainty continues to test the resilience of communities. But we also know that bold ideas, when backed with the right support, can change this trajectory.

As we enter our next strategic period, Grand Challenges Canada will deepen its role as a catalyst—helping innovators move from promising pilots to sustainable, scaled solutions. Our focus will be on four big shifts:

- **Adapting to a changing world.** We will continue investing in innovations that respond to urgent global challenges, from climate-driven health threats to humanitarian crises.
- **Accelerating what works.** Proven solutions must reach more people, faster. We will expand our efforts to connect innovators with governments, investors, and partners who can take them to scale.

- **Choreographing systems change.** Scaling is not just about individual projects—it is about shaping the ecosystems that allow innovations to thrive. We will work across sectors and borders to strengthen these pathways.
- **Connecting local leadership to global impact.** Power must sit closer to the communities most affected. We will build on our work in Ghana, Senegal, and beyond to ensure local voices lead the way.

Our ambition is bold: to reach 750 million people by 2035. We know not every innovation will succeed, but those that do have the power to transform lives and systems on a massive scale.

With Canada's continued leadership, and with innovators and communities driving solutions from the ground up, we are confident that the best is yet to come.





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