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The Commitment to Action Toolkit and CGI U Program

OVERVIEW



The Clinton Global Initiative University (CGI U) is a growing community of leaders who take real, concrete steps toward solving pressing global issues. Throughout the year, students develop their own Commitments to Action: new, specific, and measurable initiatives that address pressing challenges on campus, in local communities, or around the world.

The Commitment to Action (CTA) model is the cornerstone of the CGI U program. Participants chosen for the program are selected based on their proposed commitment and personal connection to the problem they are addressing. Over time, we have learned that the CGI U Commitment to Action model provides a framework for developing a project from idea to action. While not every commitment is a successful one, alums have shared that going through the steps of developing a project has given them invaluable leadership skills in their personal and professional lives.

We have designed this toolkit to help educators and trainers introduce the CTA as a thoughtful, effective, and important exercise in developing leadership tactics and strategies particular to the social impact and social responsibility space.



CGI U SNAPSHOT

Highlights and data about the CGI U program



COMMITMENT STAGE

Three stages of commitment development



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Creating a Social Impact Project

The Commitment to Action is a positive and effective social impact project that is **new**, **specific**, and **measurable**. These initiatives can be small or large, local or global, financial or non-monetary in nature. The model provides a framework for individuals who are interested in pursuing personal and/or professional initiatives within social impact, social entrepreneurship, and civic engagement spaces. The structure helps to guide ideas from concept to implementation in a way that builds a strong foundation for scaling, should the time come.

Commitments can be made by individuals or groups, can cover a broad range of concerns, and geographic scopes, and may take many forms. The Commitment to Action is an opportunity to translate practical goals into meaningful and measurable results.

A commitment should be *new* in either concept or application. If your commitment is an expansion of an existing effort, consider focusing on a different geographic area, working with new partners, or shifting the focus or scope of the initiative.

"The Commitment to Action is an opportunity to translate practical goals into meaningful and measurable results."



A commitment should address a *specific* challenge with a defined course of action and detailed objectives. Define your commitment's goal, outline your planned activities, and identify how long it will realistically take you to complete your project or complete a specific stage or process of your project.

A commitment should achieve results that are *measurable* and can be reported. The impact of your commitment can be determined in many ways, whether you're measuring volunteers trained, houses built, children tutored, or hours of direct service provided.

WHAT IS THE CTA?





"Listen actively to those who will be impacted and will benefit from your project."

Identify, Assess, and Understand

It's not uncommon to see commitment types and issue areas change with global and social trends. We have learned that the commitments that often have the biggest impact and sustain over time- are the ones in which the commitment-makers have a personal connection and are built around their strengths and talents. Personal connections provide insights and perspective to an issue and/or community that can help provide innovative and effective solutions that are specific to the needs of that community. They can also make it easier to develop the right partnerships, build trust with the community that you are working in, and maintain motivation when the project will invariably become challenging or may stall. This is not to say that developing a commitment in an unfamiliar area or field cannot be done or will be unsuccessful. There are examples that show us quite the opposite. However, if you are working with limited resources and/or experience, familiarity, connection, and firsthand subject matter knowledge are extremely valuable assets.

Identifying the Problem

Build rapport with the individuals you want to work with and be as transparent about your intentions and plans as possible. Listen actively to those who will be impacted and will benefit from your project. Don't try to do everything at once, and stay open and adaptable. Also, be sure to think about an exit strategy. For example, it would be great to supply a community with a water well, but be sure that you consider whether or not they will have the money to maintain it long term and that there are community members trained to maintain and fix it over time.

Even if you want to make your project your career, you still need a contingency plan. For example, it would be great to supply a community with a water well, but be sure that you consider whether or not they will have the money to maintain it long term and that there are community members trained to maintain and fix it over time. Even if you want to make your project your career, you still need a contingency plan.

Assessing Need

Once you have identified the issue that you would like to address, figuring out the best way to approach it will likely take research, time, and planning. Sometimes in order to address one concern, we may need to address another.

For example, if you wish to create a website so that textile artists who live in rural communities may sell their work online, you may have to solve issues of internet and hardware access for that community before the website you build would be useful. Be sure to seriously consider the challenges that you may face as you plan out your commitment.

Understanding Community

Whether we are building online or offline networks, communities are complex and dynamic places. Whichever community defines your work, get to know it well. Research the community that you wish to work in, even if you are a part of that group. Do not be offended if your assistance or project is refused. Take the time to learn why. This feedback may inform your next steps, adjustments you should make, how to partner, or create your next project.





Storytelling

Your story or ability to assert your narrative is a powerful part of your purpose. Your project or commitment will provide context for the issue you are addressing, but your story provides meaning and shared experience. This shared experience is what will help others to connect with you and become champions for your cause or project.

To connect your story to your Commitment to Action, start with your personal story or story of self.

The **story of self** is the context needed to demonstrate why you have been called to a particular issue. After providing this context, you can begin to introduce the conflict. The conflict refers to the problem you are trying to solve and how it has impacted you. Lastly, you will need to incorporate a call to action aimed at addressing the conflict you have presented. Your passion and personal connection to the conflict will stimulate your audience's curiosity about your project and potential solutions.

Staying Authentic

Regardless of your introduction into the social impact space, the most valuable tool you will have will be your story. It is essential for potential collaborators, such as investors, to see who you are, why you are passionate about the issue you are trying to solve or raise awareness for, why you are the right person to take on this issue, and how you plan to address it.

You are your most important asset. When talking about or pitching your social venture, try to be as genuine as possible. You are what people will invest in. Being able to articulate what has motivated you to create your mission-driven social venture is key to engaging future participants and investors.

Finding a Balance

Metrics vs Impact: Impact is what we typically think of when discussing the progress of our social ventures. Impact is the effect your efforts are having on the community you are intending to help. It is where you will be able to find testimonials about how what you are doing is making a positive difference, but in ways that are hard to quantify.

Metrics are the concrete numbers you are able to gauge while developing and scaling your Commitment to Action. For example, if your Commitment to Action is to start a college readiness program for underserved high schools, you can gather metrics surrounding how many students have enrolled in your college readiness program and how many schools you have or plan to expand to.



There are many ways to approach a Commitment to Action. Three common commitment types are Service, Product and Awareness. Here are CGI U CTA examples of each type:

Service Commitment

Progress, Outreach, Work, Ethics, Resources (POWER)

Commitment By: Jasmin -Ayana Moy , Kenneth Jones

Year: 2016

Focus Area: Peace and Human Rights

In 2016, Jasmin-Ayana Moy and Kenneth Jones committed to create a positive platform for at-risk youth to provide support and resources to fellow students in Chicago. Their initiative is a collaboration between two nonprofits to provide inner-city youth with alternatives to drugs and incarceration with basketball and character building programs. They will partner with Books Over Balls to facilitate this initiative and develop a series of empowering comic books that highlight past student success stories. The team will measure success by their ability to release the first comic book and launch their pilot program by January 2017.

Awareness Commitment

All Walks Project

Commitment By: Erin Schulte, Jessica Hocken, Jasmine Anglen

Year: 2016

Focus Area: Peace and Human Rights

In 2016, Erin Schulte, Jessica Hocken, and Jasmine Anglen committed to develop an outreach program to reduce human trafficking in the United States. The program will, through education and awareness initiatives, empower students to understand what human trafficking is and how to prevent it from occurring. The team will partner with high schools and universities to expand the program from two pre-existing chapters at Arizona State University to chapters across the United States. They will measure success by expanding to 50 high schools and universities across the country by fall of 2017 and e-outreach of more than 1.5 million students.

Commitment Type



Service



Product



Awareness

Product Commitment

Lucky Iron Fish Project

Commitment By: Gavin Armstrong

Year: 2014

Focus Area: Public Health

In 2014, Gavin Armstrong committed to produce a fish-shaped iron tool to create a safe and effective solution for iron deficiency in Kandal, Cambodia. Gavin is developing an iron fish that releases 75 percent of the daily-required iron into food in the cooking process. He will produce the iron fish from recycled material and will manufacture it locally to promote skills development and boost the local economy. Each iron hook will be sold for \$5 and will have a five-year life span, making it more sustainable and affordable than existing iron supplements. Gavin will partner with the Red Cross and the World Food Program to bring the iron fish to the rural Kandal Province. He will measure success by his ability to train 100 locals in the production of the iron fish, distribute 10,000 iron fish by December 2014, and scale the process to produce and distribute 50,000 more iron fish by 2015.



To help track progress, we've identified three stages of commitment development:

Ideation Stage

Ideation is the process of forming and relating ideas. You are continuing to conceptualize and formulate what your commitment to action could be and analyzing your potential, but you haven't put your idea into action yet. During this stage, you might be continuing with your research on the subject matter and gaining topic expertise. Types of action may include:

- Additional research
- Refining an action plan
- Talking to your mentors, peers about your idea and plan
- Brainstorming sessions
- Collaborating or merging your ideas with existing efforts
- Taking classes to enhance skills

The ideation phase can take many forms and can last for a long time. It should be an exciting and dynamic period where you can be both analytical and completely impractical in thinking through what your goals are. However, the key to this phase is that you have not started actively putting your plans into motion.

Implementation Stage

Implementation is when all the planning and strategy that you've worked on during ideation moves from concept to action. During ideation you're more focused on solving the **what** and **why** of your commitment. The implementation stage is more focused on answering who, when, where, and how. This is also when you may start bringing your team onboard to be able to carry out your plan. You might be recruiting and training new team members, confirming venue locations or circulating the dates of potential action during this phase. The types of questions that you may ask yourself include:

- Who is doing what?
- Do you have enough funding to meet these initial goals?
- Have you confirmed travel needs?
- Is everyone clear on their goals and tasks?
- How are you communicating?
- How will your team share feedback?

The data and metrics that you are collecting should help inform you about what is working and what needs to be changed, adjusted, or let go.

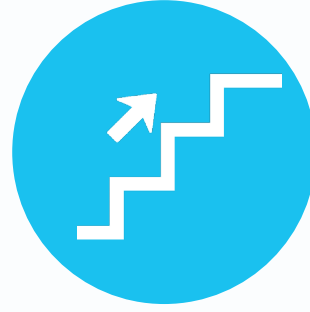
Commitment Stage



Ideation



Implementation



Scaling

Scaling Stage

Scaling your project or idea happens after you have implemented your initial idea. You may even have implemented several versions of your idea while trying to figure out which aspects of your plan worked well. You've built a solid foundation and you've learned what details and strategies can be replicated and expanded effectively and efficiently.

During the scaling process, you should have already developed realistic growth targets and plans based on your experience during the implementation phase. You've figured out what crucial skills you need on your team, trained any additional members, standardized processes, formed effective partnerships, and identified your core competencies and compared those to any competitors. You should be able to provide clear metrics and data about any actionable progress, particularly since these outcomes informed your decision to scale in the first place. The types of questions you should be able to answer with certainty are:

- How much money have you raised?
- Who are your funders?
- How much more money will you need to maintain operating costs for a year? 3 years?
- What are your plans for expanding?
- Can you share links to press and media attention received?
- Number of jobs created?

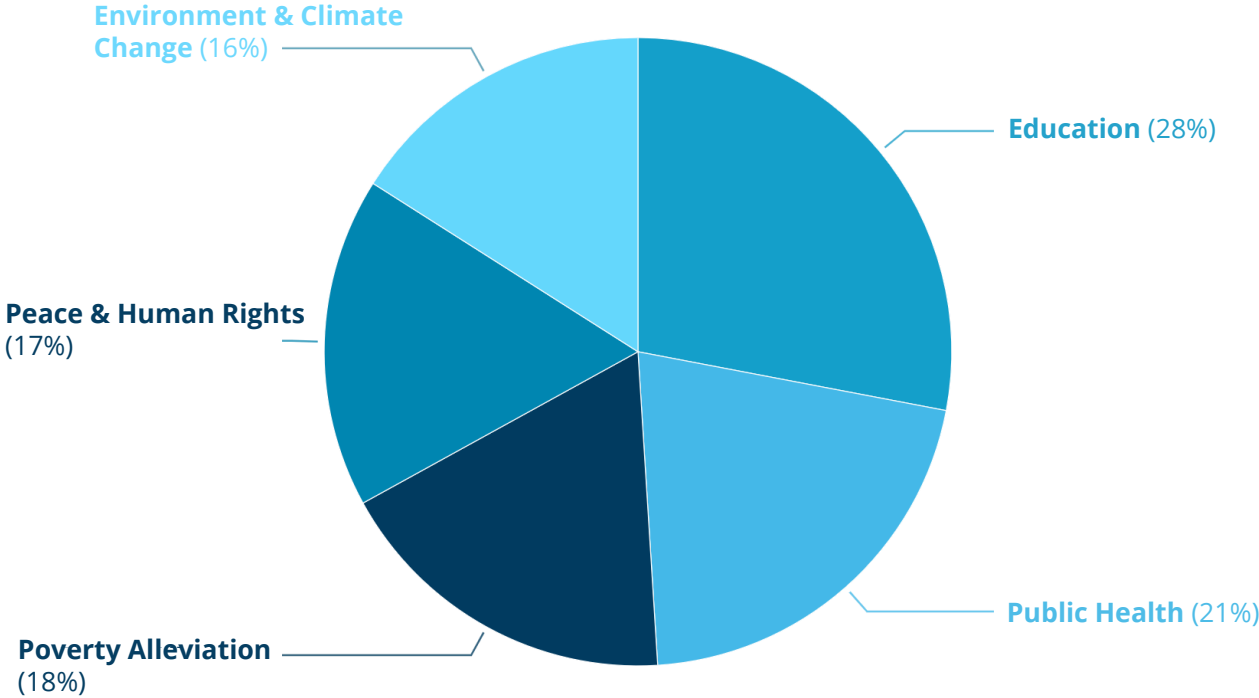
Clinton Global Initiative University works with undergraduate and graduate students across the world who have committed to take action and tackle pressing challenges. CGI U brings together students, university presidents, and national youth organizations to create and implement Commitments to Action across five Focus Areas: **Education, Environment & Climate Change, Peace & Human Rights, Poverty Alleviation, and Public Health.**

11 years. 10,000+ students. 7,000+ commitments. 150 countries.



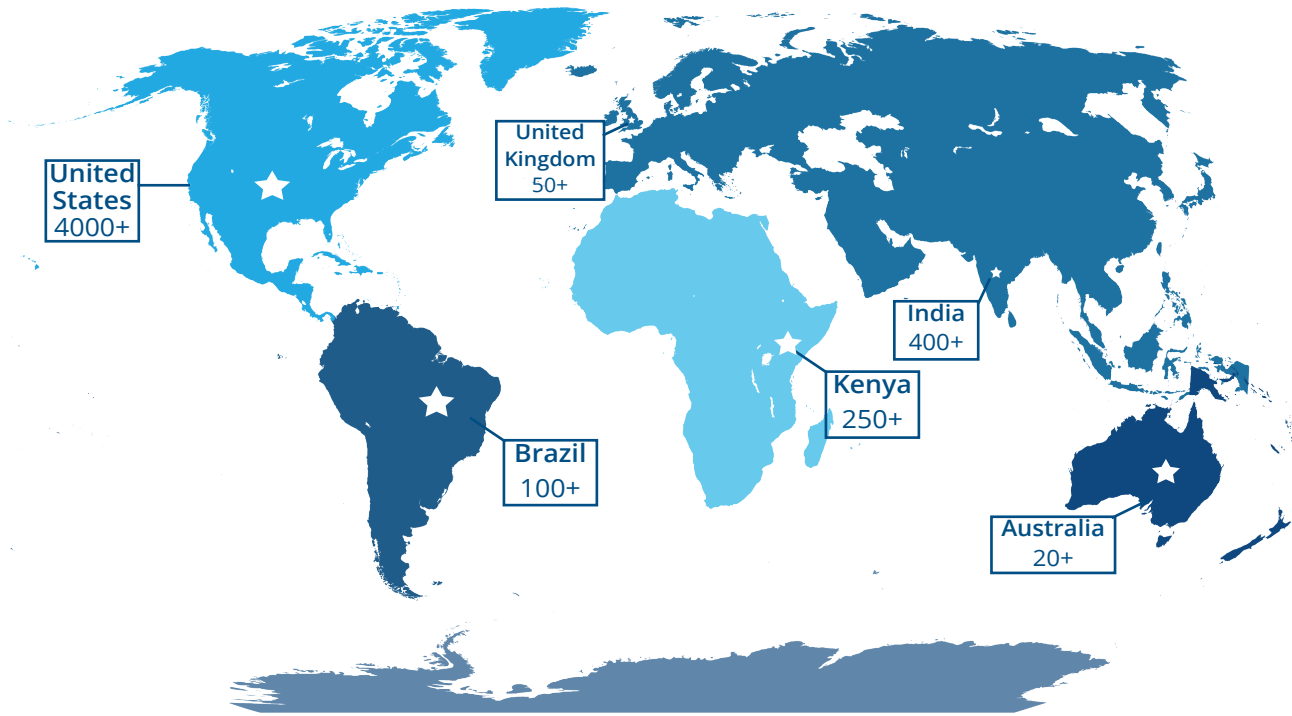
CGI U Focus Areas

This chart shows the percentage of commitments made in each focus area



Where in the World are CGI U commitments?

CGI U SNAPSHOT



■ N. America > 5,000 ■ Africa > 1,900 ■ Asia > 1,500 ■ Europe < 500 ■ S. America < 400 ■ Oceania < 50 ■ Antarctica ~0

★ Represents countries with the most CGI U commitments on the continent

CGI U Host Campuses

2008 Tulane University

2009 University of Texas at Austin

2010 University of Miami

2011 University of California, San Diego

2012 George Washington University

2013 Washington University

2014 Arizona State University

2015 University of Miami

2016 University of California, Berkeley

2017 Northeastern University

2018 University of Chicago

2020 University of Edinburgh, Scotland

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