



## Money4YOU & City, University of London, School of Mathematics, Computer Science and Engineering: 'Tech for Good' Internship Pilot Programme

Post-pilot report, February 2021

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### Summary of Aims

An overarching goal from the outset of this pilot project was to **support the development of socially responsible STEM professionals**. We aimed for students to develop a more thorough and nuanced understanding of what it means to be a socially responsible professional in STEM fields through practical and **invaluable work experience**. We also aimed to develop students' **general understanding of the nonprofit sector** and of social innovation and entrepreneurship through their placements.

In a complementary way, we aimed for student projects to have real, positive impacts on the lives of nonprofits' beneficiaries, and on the nonprofits themselves. Our vision was for students to help these organisations overcome issues in building and managing their digital systems, to help them carry out their work in the most effective way possible. The desired overall result of this was to **boost the organisations' capacity**.

### Summary of Operations

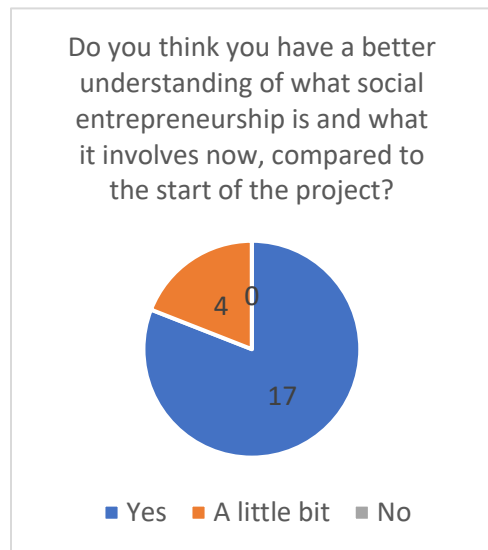
Money4YOU invited verified nonprofit organisations to submit proposals outlining their work and the technical problems that they needed solving. After agreeing a shortlist with CUoL, we invited 14 organisations to a pitching event, with CUoL simultaneously putting an open call out to first- and second-year undergraduates to attend. After the pitching event, students in teams of 2-5 chose 8 of the projects to work on as interns.

We then hosted induction sessions outlining general expectations, in which all students and organisations signed Memoranda of Understanding agreeing to ongoing communication and availability throughout the internship period. We also outlined a project timeline, workload expectations, and the expectation that students would meet with their organisation at least once a week to discuss and demonstrate their progress. Students and organisations also met in individual breakout rooms during the induction session for 20 minutes for a fuller discussion of the project needs and goals.

Following the induction session, each student team produced a list of project deliverables, agreed with their organisation. They worked on these deliverables throughout the 6-week internship period, with the volunteer technical support mentor to discuss any technical issues, and with CUoL for any administrative issues. Organisations met with project support from Money4YOU at drop-in sessions to

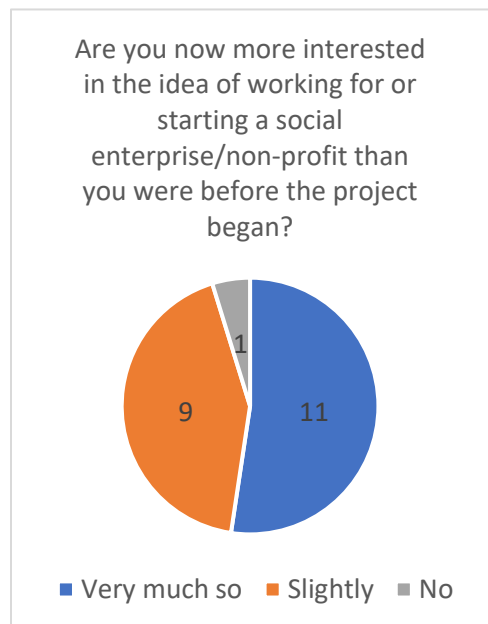
discuss progress as well. On a day-to-day basis, each project had its own channel in MS Teams containing the relevant students, representatives from organisations, and admin staff from CUoL and Money4YOU.

At the close of the internship period, all students were invited to present the process and outcomes of their projects to their peers, project leads and co-ordinators from Money4YOU and CUoL, and any organisations’ representatives who were able to attend. Project leads considered their presentations and then presented awards of £500 (first place), £300 (second place) and £200 (third place) to the student teams. Each student also received a certificate of completion.



## Results

### Feedback from Students



In the end-of-project poll, every student indicated that they thought they had “a better understanding of what social entrepreneurship is and what it involves now, compared to the start of the project”, with over 80% of students answering “Very much so”.

Some students also noted a better understanding of the social issues underlying their work, with one saying that “most of us were not completely aware of the given topic but working with the organisation and researching truly opened our eyes and further motivated us to deliver an amazing product.”

One particularly nuanced response from a student described a change in their understanding from a “rigid” definition of “someone who had a direct and immediate impact on someone’s life” to a realization that “a socially responsible professional might not be one that directly interacts with

beneficiaries, but those in the background too, enabling charitable organisations to do the great things that they do.”

Students also clearly showed an increased interest in the nonprofit sector, with all but one student indicating that they were more interested in starting or working for a social enterprise or nonprofit than they had been before the project. Every student indicated that they had a better understanding of social entrepreneurship as a result of the project when polled.

Some students articulated this in LinkedIn posts, including the below:

*“The experience was enlightening and I gained a lot of skills about working within a company, plus the actual skill of developing a website.”*

*“During this 6 weeks internship, I gained some insight into the running of a business, improved my communication skills as well as putting my knowledge of website development to good use. Most of all I have come out of this with more respect for what it takes to be a socially responsible individual.”*

Two thirds of students felt that they had all the technical support they needed, with the remaining students indicating that more technical support would have helped.

### Feedback from Organisations

All the organisations that worked with a student team described a fast positive impact from the project, with every organisation agreeing that the student team delivered working solutions at the end of the project timeline in line with requests. Numbers of each response to the questions asked of organisation in our feedback form are as follows:

	The student team understood the requests of the organisation well.	The team maintained effective communication throughout the project.	The team showed initiative in solving the challenges they faced.	The team gave their full effort in building what was necessary to solve the requests of the organisation.	The team delivered working solutions at the end of the project timeline in line with the requests.
Completely Agree	5	1	3	4	4
Agree	2	5	4	3	4
Somewhat agree	1	2	1	1	0

Some feedback from the organisations’ below:

*“I really appreciate how you have created a much sleeker, more functional and professional design.”*

*“I am very happy with the website and the team are too. Thank you so much for the updates, the logo, the design, the translations—it is all looking fantastic. Big big thank you!”*

*“Great and professional attitude to any issues we had with the domain, and with missing info/images made into placeholders until we are ready to update them.”*

*“The interns were very professional by being very committed. They grasped a good understanding of the problems to be solved by seeking further clarification where it was lacking and responded with good solutions within agreed times.”*

*“The students were very proactive and got to the tasks very quickly. If they needed any direction or information from me they were communicative on the Teams chat. The students were in general very self-sufficient and independent. They understood the issues and used their skills to the best of their ability to deliver the resolution needed.”*

*“[The students were] positive, forward thinking with a focus on excellence - as per the above they identified it was crucial to have the website optimised for mobile use. They really took time to understand the brief which is sent through and created something which is brilliant and takes our look and feel to the next level.”*

## **Recommendations**

Given that the pilot phase was so successful, the next round should be advertised further in advance and to a wider pool of students and organisations, to enable us to scale up the programme. It is worth noting that the model could easily be implemented with other departments and universities.

With a larger number of projects happening, monitoring from the project team will need to remain just as frequent and involved to make sure that issues do not hold up the project timelines. In particular, the project deliverables should be explicitly evaluated every two weeks to guard against gradual increases in scope.

It will also be important to provide robust technical support with a larger number of projects, and to this end, we should aim to recruit one tech mentor for every 3-4 student teams. These should be qualified web development professionals, preferably with experience in the nonprofit sector. Part of their role will be to make sure that the projects are extensible by both the nonprofit themselves and any future web or data developers who work on the website or database in the future.

## **Appendix: Student Projects**

<https://www.endthevirusofracism.com/>

<https://livingwayministries.net/>

<https://dazzling-jepsen-2b3936.netlify.app/>

<https://thesoulshackldncic.godaddysites.com>

<http://969.5ab.myftpupload.com/>