

# United Planet Receives Grant to Connect Young People Across Regions Through Virtual Exchange

*A grant from J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative will enable the Youth2Youth Impact Investing program to prepare young people for the future.*



BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, UNITED STATES, May 15, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, the Stevens Initiative [announced United Planet](#) is one of 11 schools, higher education institutions, and nonprofit organizations to receive funding to run virtual exchange programs that connect young people in the United States and the Middle East and North Africa.

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*Oudou Sanogo, Director of Virtual Exchange at United Planet*

The [Youth2Youth Impact Investing](#) Program is implemented by United Planet and is supported by the J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative (JCSVEI). JCSVEI is a U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs program administered by the Aspen Institute.

“We are honored to welcome 11 new grantees today. Together, we are embarking on a journey of discovery and continued growth in the virtual exchange field. This marks a major milestone towards our vision of a world where virtual exchange is part of every young person’s life,” said

Christine Shiao, Executive Director of the Stevens Initiative. “Each grantee embodies the spirit of innovation and collaboration necessary to help young people unlock their creativity, foster critical thinking skills, form friendships, and feel connected to the world. Their dedication to lifelong learning will help us create opportunities that transcend boundaries, inspiring a brighter, more interconnected future for all.”

Virtual exchange connects young people from around the world for learning and collaboration, immersing them in digital spaces to gain practical skills and build friendships along the way. It is a powerful tool to reimagine what global learning looks like, how it can be conducted, and how many people participate.

The Youth2Youth Impact Investing is a global initiative aimed at fostering sustainable and inclusive economic development through youth-led social entrepreneurship. It empowers young individuals to address economic challenges and drive positive change in their communities. Leveraging the principles of impact investing and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) #8 (Promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all) and #9 (Building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation), the program equips participants with the skills and knowledge to become leaders in creating meaningful economic opportunities.

Oudou Sanogo, Director of Virtual Exchange & Educational Technology at United Planet, expresses his gratitude for the grant: "We are thrilled to be one of the 11 grantees and look forward to the creative power of young people in the U.S. and MENA to unlock possibilities in their communities. We can't wait to guide them in becoming social entrepreneurs and broadening their intercultural perspectives."

The 2024 J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative Grantees will reach nearly 10,000 young people across the U.S., the Middle East, and North Africa.

Other grants include:

- Digital Promise's Building Apps Across Cultures
- Florida International University's Virtual Tabadul: Creating Language-Learning Community Through Virtual Reality
- Global Nomads Group's (GNG) Overcoming Bias in AI
- Miami Dade College's Climate Stories
- Seattle University School of Law's Transitional Justice Legal Exchange
- Shenandoah University's (SU) Virtually Going Global
- Take Action Global's Taking Climate Action Together
- Texas International Education Consortium's Community Climate Connect
- University of Florida's Hands-on Energy and Thermo-fluids (HEAT) Program
- World Learning's STEAM Innovations

More Information

United Planet is a non-profit organization with a mission to create a global community, one relationship at a time. Established in 2001, United Planet offers personalized, immersive, service-learning, international experiential learning, and internship experiences in more than 40 countries. Volunteers and interns have helped address important global issues—such as health, children and education, and environmental sustainability while developing leadership and other 21st-century skills, building bridges across divides, and forging cohesive and productive cross-border relationships both in-person and online.

The Stevens Initiative is an international leader in virtual exchange, which brings young people from diverse places together to collaborate and connect through everyday technology. Created in 2015 as a lasting tribute to Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens, the Initiative invests in virtual exchange programs; shares research, resources, and promising practices to improve impact; and advocates for broader adoption. Learn more: <https://www.stevensinitiative.org>.

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) builds relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through academic, cultural, sports, professional and private exchanges, as well as public-private partnerships and mentoring programs. These exchange programs improve foreign relations and strengthen the national security of the United States, support U.S. international leadership, and provide a broad range of domestic benefits by helping break down barriers that often divide us. Visit [eca.state.gov](http://eca.state.gov).

The Aspen Institute is a global nonprofit organization committed to realizing a free, just, and equitable society. Founded in 1949, the Institute drives change through dialogue, leadership, and action to help solve the most important challenges facing the United States and the world. Headquartered in Washington, DC, the Institute has a campus in Aspen, Colorado, and an international network of partners. For more information, visit [www.aspeninstitute.org](http://www.aspeninstitute.org).

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