



**Addressing
Marine Plastics**
A Systemic Approach



New Plastics Economy Innovation Prize –Impact & Learnings Report

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview, impact assessment and learnings from the \$2 million New Plastics Economy Innovation Prize, led by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

Launched in May 2017, the Innovation Prize called for innovators, designers, scientists and entrepreneurs to help create solutions to keep plastics out of the ocean. A prize pool of \$2 million was awarded to 11 winners, who all entered a 12-month accelerator programme that ended in December 2018. The Foundation partnered with several world class organisations to launch and deliver the Innovation Prize, including The Prince of Wales's International Sustainability Unit, OpenIDEO, NineSigma, and Think Beyond Plastic.

The Foundation considers the Innovation Prize an outstanding success, both in accelerating the development of the 11 winners and in catalysing the wider plastics upstream innovation landscape. Through a combination of the prize money, coaching, and exposure to media and the Foundation's network, the Innovation Prize helped the winners raise an additional ~\$8 million by mid-2019 – a 4x impact factor vs the original \$2 million prize pool.

The Innovation Prize widely promoted the need for upstream innovation and redesign to solve ocean plastics. It led to over 200 media articles with a combined reach of over 100 million people, as well as a social media reach of over 8 million people. The Innovation Prize engaged several influential individuals in the high-profile launch and award ceremonies, exposing them to upstream innovation and redesign thinking. These individuals included HRH The Prince of Wales, Dame Ellen MacArthur, Wendy Schmidt, fashion designer Stella McCartney, Unilever CEO Paul Polman, Coca-Cola CEO James Quincey, GEF CEO Naoko Ishi, Christiana Figueres, Mayor of Surabaya Tri Rismaharini, EU Commissioner for the Environment Karmenu Vella, and (via video) former US Secretary of State John Kerry. The Innovation Prize inspired many global companies in the Foundation's network to embark on fundamental redesign and innovation.

This large-scale promotion of upstream innovation and redesign was critical to the overall success of the New Plastics Economy initiative. From a starting point in 2016 where fundamental redesign and innovation were low on the agenda, currently over 400 organisations including businesses representing over 20% of the global plastic packaging market have, as part of the Foundation's Global Commitment, signed up to a vision and commitments with at its core the targets to innovate towards 100% reusable, recyclable, or compostable plastic packaging; to eliminate unnecessary plastic packaging; and to innovate from single-use to reuse models.

Following its launch, the Innovation Prize also helped catalyse the creation of innovation funds collectively worth ~\$300 million – or a 150x impact factor vs the original \$2 million prize pool.

Designing and running the Innovation Prize has resulted in several key learnings that are currently informing the Foundation's work on innovation, and that have been captured here.

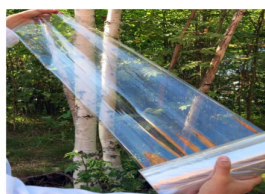


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1. Innovation Prize objectives and timeline

1.1 Objectives

The Innovation Prize was launched with a two-fold objective of:

- 1) **Accelerating the development of specific innovations** that help keep plastics out of the ocean, by awarding 11 innovators with a \$2 million prize pool and a 12-month accelerator programme to help the winning innovators turn their innovations into marketable solutions.
- 2) **Promoting and catalysing the broader plastics upstream innovation and redesign agenda**, thereby contributing to the overall New Plastics Economy objective to move the plastics debate from the symptoms (“ocean plastics”, “clean-ups”) towards root-cause, circular economy solutions (“innovate and re-design so plastic doesn’t become waste in the first place”),

1.2 Timeline

The Innovation Prize timeline consisted of four phases: **scoping, challenge design, challenge launch & awards, and acceleration**. The whole process, illustrated in Figure 1, spans over three years. Details for each of the phases can be found in the appendix of this document.

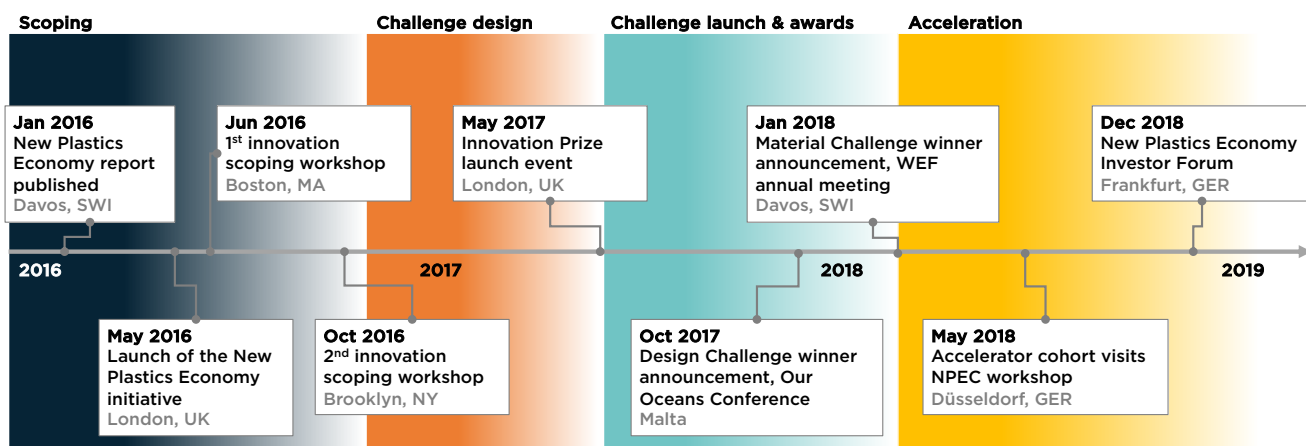


Figure 1: Timeline and Milestones of the Innovation Prize



2. Impact

2.1 Accelerating the development of the Innovation Prize winners

While it is not yet possible at this point in time to judge to what degree any of the individual innovators will grow into large, successful companies, we can confidently say that most have made very significant progress since winning the competition, which can be directly or indirectly linked to the prize pool, accelerator programme, and wider promotion, recognition, and networking with the Foundation's network resulting from those.

Based on what the winners have reported back to the Foundation, we estimate that the additional funding and support received to date by the winners amount to about \$8 million, a 4x multiple of the initial prize funds:

- **Algramo** received a \$625k pro-bono service through the Deloitte D2i fellowship, which led to an important pivot in their business model: they are now moving away from private label products and will instead offer their delivery model for global brands. This has led to advanced discussions with several global companies in the Foundation's network, including Unilever, with which a live pilot was launched in May 2019 to bring reusable and refillable packaging to households in Santiago, following an introduction made during a Foundation workshop in May 2018. The system operates through an app with which users order refills and a network of electric tricycles that respond to the orders. Scale-up to more products, brands and locations are planned if the pilot is successful, with Nestlé being taken on since the launch with Unilever. Other key milestones include:
 - selected as one of the winners in the [MIT Solve challenge 2019](#)
 - started a series A round in January 2019 to raise \$2 million, in conversations with investors from the EU, US and Latin America;
 - selected as top Chilean social entrepreneur in 2017;
 - Algramo Founder José Manuel Møller selected as World Economic Forum [Young Global Leader](#) in 2019
- **Skipping Rocks Labs** was [chosen by Sky Ocean Ventures as one of its first two investments earlier in 2018](#), partly thanks to the contacts facilitated through the accelerator programme. So far, Skipping Rocks Lab has received additional [£800,000 in crowdfunded investment](#). In addition, they:
 - developed a commercial scale machine and reached the milestone to deliver more than 50,000 ketchup sachets;
 - did two trials with 10 JustEat restaurants, where 92% of participants responded they wanted more;
 - developed a partnership with Lucozade Ribera Suntory;
 - are in planning stage with other partners for sauces, energy gels and cosmetic applications;
 - have upgraded their brand name from Delta to [NOTPLA](#) and expanded their team.
- **MIWA** has spent significant resources on developing both the hardware and software side of their innovation to enable standardised, reusable containers to be handled smoothly throughout the supply chain. A public showroom was built to introduce consumers to the system and gather feedback. As a consequence of feedback in the accelerator, increasing focus was placed on online grocery shopping and distribution. Notable milestones include:
 - development of pilot business solution with planned launch in 2019; working with partners PRO-BIO and Country Life on the supply chain side, and Kosík.cz for on-line food retail;



- a so far non-public collaboration with one of the top FMCG brands on how to integrate their products in the MIWA system;
 - discussions with several brick and mortar retailers about introduction of the system in stores;
 - more than 300 stakeholders had expressed interest in the MIWA business proposition by end of 2018;
 - financing targets have been set for 2019-2020 to EUR 3.5 million, and talks are being held with several investors from the impact investment community and beyond.
 - an experienced executive director was hired to drive marketing and help organise the increasingly complex activities of a growing team;
 - MIWA organising and participating in an expert panel was organised in the Czech Senate to discuss the benefits of circular economy and need for supportive legislation, which was met with very positive feedback;
 - invited to be part of an exclusive accelerator programme hosted by StoraEnso.
- **CupClub** has significantly evolved its concept and developed product to their first set of customers, including [Waitrose / John Lewis](#) and a major airport (still confidential). They have closed a pre-seed round of >£200,000 funding with Seedcamp and R/GA Ventures as institutional investors. In addition, they:
 - were [one of the winners](#) in the “[NextGen Cup Challenge](#)” ran by McDonalds / Starbucks / Closed Loop Partners on the OpenIDEO platform, which included in-kind design support and prototyping with an IDEO team and access to funding partners;
 - are developing a partnership with a large beverage brand and pursuing investments of £1-2 million for its next round;
 - are drafting plans to expand pilot projects beyond London, with top candidates currently being Seattle and Hong Kong;
 - have expanded team from being only a founder to a dozen people;
 - have run several trials on corporate campuses, including two locations of Google in Sunnydale / Mountain View.
- **Altas Nova** have focused on technological development and produced their first prototypes. They have secured development partnerships with industrial partners and had talks with venture funds flexible packaging value chain stakeholders. Additional recognition was given through Spanish media.
- **FullCycle Bioplastics**, with their resource-intensive technical development, closed an additional fundraising round in 2018. They have hired additional R&D staff as well as finalised a key commercial agreement with a strategic partner to build a plant for the simultaneous organic waste recovery and material production, scheduled to come online in Q2 2019. In addition to this, they:
 - made significant progress in development of target materials for their compostable multi-layer film project;
 - were accepted into the [Elemental Accelerator](#) portfolio.
- **VTT Finland**, as a technical institute, have focused on developing manufacturing partnerships. Discussions with several brands have ramped up, which means that development can be made from an application focus, shortening the time to market. VTT have continued to win recognition for their cellulose-based transparent film. For example, they [won the 2018 Ecopack challenge](#) with the prize being a product development project with Marks & Spencer, and the Sustainability Award 2018 award from Packaging Europe.
- **Fraunhofer ISC** have continued to improve their coating material and build international relationships. As a research institute, their main focus is to find licensees of the technology, and they have made several important connections throughout the year at trade fairs and



conferences (including the Investor Forum in Frankfurt), for which the Prize opened many doors. Concrete progress includes:

- signed a cooperation agreement with Evonik, who will develop a version of the coating exclusively for Amcor;
- working with Unilever, DuPont and for other companies to tailor the coating for specific packaging requirements, as part of an EU-funded project.

Several innovators quote the Innovation Prize as being instrumental in attracting investors' interest. In addition, several impact investors have mentioned to the Foundation that the winners are in their pipeline.

The accelerator has continued to expand the winners' global visibility by facilitating their exposure to media, by facilitating presentation opportunities at conferences and other events, and by connecting them to major industry players through the New Plastics Economy network.

Key examples include (not exhaustive):

- 8 of 11 winners joined the May 2018 New Plastics Economy participant workshop, where they took part in a panel and talked with the NPEC participant organisations
- 8 of the winners presented at the Investor forum in Frankfurt, alongside several other exciting innovators.
- Algramo, CupClub & MIWA were invited speakers at Volvo Ocean Race events
- MIWA took part in events organised by Ashoka, the European Union, UN and others.
- Fraunhofer ISC, VTT Finland and CupClub were invited speakers at Packaging Innovations 2018 in Birmingham
- 5 winners were showcased at the 2018 Achema conference in Frankfurt.; 4 winners went to the 2018 ChangeNOW Summit in Paris.
- CupClub and MIWA were featured at the 2018 VERGE conference in Oakland, CA
- Algramo took part in the 2019 UNEA meeting in Nairobi, as part of a startup showcase with significant focus on reusable packaging solutions.
- Full Cycle Bioplastics presented in the inaugural PHA World Congress in Cologne, the first to bring stakeholders working on the emerging, bio-based and compostable polymer together.

2.2 Promoting and catalysing the upstream innovation agenda

2.2.1 Shifting the public debate

The Innovation Prize widely promoted the need for upstream innovation and redesign to solve ocean plastics, thereby playing a crucial role in the overall success of the New Plastics Economy initiative.

The Innovation Prize led to over 200 media articles, including BBC news, Reuters, Guardian, Financial Times (print), FastComapny, DesignWeek and Dezeen, with a combined reach of over 100 million people, as well as a social media reach of over 8 million people.

The Innovation Prize engaged several influential individuals in the high-profile launch and award ceremonies, exposing them to upstream innovation and redesign thinking. These individuals included HRH The Prince of Wales, Dame Ellen MacArthur, Wendy Schmidt, fashion designer Stella McCartney, Unilever CEO Paul Polman, Coca-Cola CEO James Quincey, GEF CEO Naoko Ishi, Christiana Figueres, Mayor of Surabaya Tri Rismaharini, EU Commissioner for the Environment Karmenu Vella, and (via video) former US Secretary of State John Kerry. The Innovation Prize inspired many global companies in the Foundation's network to embark on fundamental redesign and innovation.

With over 660 submissions in total, the Innovation Prize successfully reached a wide group of innovators and designers, encouraging them to think circular.



The winners have received widespread coverage by media and reports. Some highlights include:

- Dozens of separate articles published about the Innovation Prize and its winners in both international (e.g. [Financial Times](#), [Reuters](#), [BBC](#), [Guardian](#), [GreenBiz](#)) and regional (e.g. covering a range of geographies like Chile, Indonesia, Europe) news outlets.
- Several winners feature in the UN Environment report “[Exploring the potential for adopting alternative materials to reduce marine plastic litter](#)” as case studies of alternative materials or business models.
- Evoware, Skipping Rocks Lab and TrioCup¹ featured in National Geographic’s [special edition Planet or Plastics](#)
- The Innovation Prize winners were mentioned in the Morgan Stanley report *Sustainable Packaging* (2018) as examples of packaging innovation that could help solve the plastics environmental crisis, illustrating the increasing interest by institutional investors in the topic.
- Evoware is in the process of being filmed for a GEF mini-documentary on plastics
- MIWA and CupClub [featured in Sky News](#) directly after the Our Ocean announcement; MIWA later featured in a [special Sky News piece](#) recorded at their headquarters in Prague.

2.2.2 Catalysing the innovation landscape

Following its launch, the Innovation Prize helped catalyse the creation of innovation funds collectively worth ~\$300 million.

New VC funds focusing specifically on upstream solutions to plastics pollution since the Innovation Prize was launched include Creolus (creating a ~£50m fund), Sky Ocean Ventures (£25-50m), Circulate Capital (~\$90 m) and Fifth Season Ventures (their 2nd fund, aiming at \$100m by 2025) to name a few. Others, such as TinShed Ventures (Patagonia’s VC arm), Ultra Capital, Forward.one, Generate Capital, and Archipelago Eco Investors are dedicating resources to innovations in plastics and have several relevant innovators in their pipelines. The New Plastics Economy team has had several conversations with these investors to help them understand the potential in different innovations, and several of the winners are by now already in their investment pipelines or portfolios.

Exposing the New Plastics Economy corporate participant group to the winners has also helped change the conversation about packaging innovation and re-design for circularity. Some major consumer goods companies are directly working with some of the winners. Unilever has already initiated a collaboration with Algramo, and has more recently been joined by Nestlé. MIWA is piloting (confidentially) with a major consumer goods company. More broadly, consumer goods companies such as Unilever, Nestlé, Mars, Danone and PepsiCo are now exploring alternative materials and delivery models, with for example [Nestlé recently launching a packaging research institute](#) dedicated to solutions to eliminate waste from single-use plastics. The trend in reuse solutions has also picked up significantly in the last 6 months, with several pilots ongoing and the Foundation’s recent [REUSE handbook](#) being downloaded over 10,000 times in its first months.

Large institutional investors are increasingly paying attention to the plastics system, as evidenced by several reports released by Morgan Stanley, CitiGroup, Bank of America Merrill Lynch and CreditSuisse during 2018. At the New Plastics Economy workshop in London on May 22, a panel on finance was notably attended by Audrey Choi, Chief Marketing Officer of Morgan Stanley.

¹ TrioCup has by now been rebranded to WavaCup and has an upgraded, patent-pending design



Furthermore, the New Plastics Economy team has worked with the Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI), a UN-founded organisation promoting responsible investment principles, to help them support their 1000+ members in their understanding of the plastics system. Members include large asset managers but also private equity, whose influence range from working with big value chain firms on their innovation and investment decisions to making direct investments into startups. In 2018 PRI launched an oversubscribed working group on plastics, to which the New Plastics Economy team has provided some guidance to navigate the innovation landscape.

Ripple effects from the Innovation Prize can also be observed in the accelerator and incubator space, where a larger number of challenges and programmes have plastics as their focus. Examples include:

- The 2019 [MIT Solve challenge](#) with circular economy being one of the four focus areas (with the Foundation participating in the judging panel);
- The 2019 National Geographic [Ocean Plastic Innovation Challenge](#) in collaboration with Sky Ocean Ventures (with the Foundation participating in the judging panel);
- The 2019 [Smurfit Kappa Better Planet Packaging Design Challenge](#) focusing on finding recyclable paper-based alternatives to plastic packaging;
- Impact Hub in the Netherlands have run two consecutive plastics-focused challenges in 2018 and 2019, searching specifically for systemic solutions;
- Think Beyond Plastics has run innovation challenges in 2018 and 2019 largely aligned with the New Plastics Economy narrative (with the Foundation participating in the judging panel);
- The 2018 [OpenIDEO NextGen Cup Challenge](#) sponsored by Starbucks, McDonalds and Closed Loop Partners, focusing at finding recyclable, compostable or reusable alternatives to single-use cups;
- Inspired by the circular economy approach, Nike ran the '[Design With Grind](#)' challenge on the OpenIDEO platform in 2018;
- Dutch innovation catalyst Enviu launched its '[Zero Waste Living Lab](#)' in 2019, which seeks to accelerate innovative circular solutions in emerging markets;
- Packaging Europe's 'Sustainability awards' of [2018](#) (with the Foundation participating in the judging panel) and [2019](#) got a significantly more pronounced emphasis on circular economy.
- Danone ran an internal innovation challenge focussing on circular economy and social empowerment in 2018, adopting the Innovation Prize methodology to assess proposals. The Foundation team took part in reviewing the proposals.

3. Learnings

The Innovation Prize was the first significant innovation challenge led by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. The experience has generated several important insights, summarized below:

- **Innovation challenges can be highly effective as catalysts for change.** The cash prize and accelerator programme, combined with the media attention and networking opportunities, can provide a strong incentive for innovators to push their solutions forward to participate in the challenge, and can help the winners turn their innovations into marketable solutions. In addition, innovation challenges can be a powerful communications tool to inspire industry, policymakers, the wider innovator community, and the public.
- **The accelerator programme was crucial in helping the innovators turn their innovations into marketable solutions.** A cash prize is only part of the support needed, and several of the winning innovators quoted the accelerator programme, connections into the network, and visibility generated in the media as equally important to help them develop marketable solutions than the cash prize.
- **Innovation challenges need to be complemented with broader efforts to build the innovation ecosystem.** Disrupting innovations cannot change the plastics system on their



own – this was the very reason the New Plastics Economy initiative was set up. But the winners need both direct additional support as well as the indirect help of shifting the value chain stakeholders and other ecosystem elements to be more ‘ready’ for their solutions. This includes help with additional funding from investors to help overcome the ‘valley of death’ separating early-stage ideas from being venture capital-ready startups, as well as a platform where they can find and interact with potential partners and customers. Equally, industry incumbents need help in finding suitable innovations for their needs to become more circular. We believe that the broader New Plastics Economy programme is playing a key role in creating such an ecosystem and making the market receptive of new innovations, most crucially through the [Global Commitment](#) which serves as an engine to generate demand for new and innovative solutions. It is also worth mentioning that the collaboration with Think Beyond Plastic on the accelerator programme has prompted them to continue working on providing exactly this necessary support for innovators, investors and value chain companies.

- **A challenge with a timeline of ≤ 1 year can be successful at accelerating existing innovator solutions and shifting the global debate, but is less likely to generate fully mature solutions or source entirely unknown solutions.** Since innovation challenges ‘source’ solution from an existing innovator community, they are more likely to highlight good propositions that have already been invented than generate completely new ones. Completely new and radical innovations² would need a longer challenge timeline, and likely a prize incentive that motivates higher commitment and venturing into more unknown territories. It is also difficult to ‘have it all’ when it comes to novelty and scale; a challenge to source market-ready solutions needs to be less radical than one looking for early stage innovations.
- **The context offered by the Foundation’s overall New Plastics Economy programme and network was very helpful to the Innovation Prize success.** The Innovation Prize could build upon the Foundation’s network, leading for example to several collaborations between the winners and global companies. It could also build upon the Foundation’s technical expertise to scope and design the challenges, and judge the submissions.

² These innovations are sometimes called ‘moonshots’, which in the plastics space might be a new ‘super polymer’ to replace the conventional materials, a simple way to completely separate additives from polymers, or materials with superior protective properties that would still easily break down into bio-benign components if ending up in nature.



Appendix: Detailed Innovation Prize timeline

A1. Scoping

After identifying the need for disruptive innovation in the 2016 report *The New Plastics Economy – Rethinking the future of plastics*, the New Plastics Economy (NPEC) team began scoping in mid 2016 how to catalyse this much-needed disruptive innovation. The team looked both at *which* innovations were the most needed, and *how* to best catalyse them, with the dual objective described in the section above.

The scoping work involved two in-person workshops in Boston and NYC, a visit to MIT Media Lab, and interviews with 100+ stakeholders from industry, the innovator community, academia and NGOs.

Which innovation to focus on

It quickly became evident through this work that there was a disproportionate attention on *downstream* interventions (clean-ups and recycling technologies) in the existing innovation landscape, and not enough on *upstream* interventions (new materials, product designs, reuse business models). In parallel, the report *The New Plastics Economy - Catalysing Action* launched in Davos in January 2017 found that 30% of all plastic packaging needs fundamental redesign as in their current form and material composition they will otherwise never be reused or recycled.

Hence, the scope was fixed on upstream (materials/redesign) solutions, preventing plastics from becoming waste in the first place, and this for particularly challenging packaging applications – the often very small and lightweight packaging like candy bar wrappers or ketchup sachets. Within this overall scope, we kept the solution space (design, materials, business models) quite open as another insight from the scoping work was that there was no one silver bullet innovation that could fix everything.

How to catalyse those innovations

A range of innovation mobilisation options were considered, from fundamental research to establishing collaborative pilots or corporate partnerships. With the dual objective in mind of accelerating specific innovations *and* promoting and catalysing the wider innovation landscape, an innovation competition coupled with an accelerator programme was deemed most appropriate given its appeal to many innovators and communications potential.

A2. Challenge design

Because the very different types of solutions and innovators required for *design* and *materials*, the overall challenge was split in two, and different implementation partners were selected for both challenges.

The \$1 million Circular Design Challenge – with OpenIDEO

The \$1 million Circular Design Challenge invited applicants to rethink how we can get products to people without generating plastic waste. The Challenge focused on small-format packaging items (10% of all packaging) such as shampoo sachets, wrappers, straws and coffee cup lids, which are currently almost never recycled and often end up in the environment. Anyone with a good idea for how to get products to people without using disposable packaging could enter this Challenge.

Significant effort was put into expanding Challenge participants' understanding of the issue, by creating a series of use cases for items such as sachets and tear-offs (with personal stories reflecting user experiences in different geographies), video interviews, Foundation-led webinars as well as rigorous guidelines of what 'circular' solutions would entail. In addition, the Challenge kicked off with an initial research phase enabling participants to immerse themselves in the context and various challenges of small-format plastics packaging.



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The Circular Design Guide was used as a well-received asset to guide Challenge participants by suggesting several of the tools and exercises from the Guide as part of the research phase.

Running on the OpenIDEO platform, the Challenge reached a world-wide network of designers, makers and innovators, exposing them to packaging redesign and offering them a community to collaborate on their ideas.

For more information on the Circular Design Challenge, see:
<https://challenges.openideo.com/challenge/circular-design/brief>

The \$1 million Circular Materials Challenge – with NineSigma

The \$1 million Circular Materials Challenge looked for ways to make all plastic packaging recyclable. It focused on the around 13% of packaging, such as crisp packets and food wrappers, that is made of layers of different materials fused together. This multi-layer construction provides important functions like keeping food fresh, but also makes the packaging hard to recycle. The challenge invited innovators to find alternative materials that could be recycled or composted.

The partner for the Circular Materials Challenge was NineSigma, which allowed tapping into NineSigma's network of more than 2 million technical innovators to find potential solvers.

For more information on the Circular Materials Challenge, see:
<https://ninesights.ninesigma.com/servlet/hype/IMT?userAction=Browse&documentId=e05916bf4caa4b9ad9f08d36521e1a1b&templateName=&documentTableId=1008809492095626294>

A3. Challenge launch and awards

Launch

The innovation prize launched on 18 May 2017 in London, in collaboration with The Prince of Wales's International Sustainability Unit. HRH Prince of Wales delivered a keynote at the event, as well as several other highly influential individuals including Dame Ellen MacArthur, Wendy Schmidt, GEF CEO Naoko Ishi, Unilever CEO Paul Polman, PepsiCo Vice-Chairman Mehmood Khan, Veolia Executive Estelle Brachlianoff, Mayor of Surabaya Tri Rismaharini, and (via video) former US Secretary of State John Kerry.

For more information about the Innovation Prize launch, see:
<https://newplasticseconomy.org/news/ellen-macarthur-foundation-and-the-prince-of-wales-international-sustainability-unit-launch-2-million-innovation-prize-to-help-keep-plastics-out-the-ocean>

Judging and awards

The Circular Design Challenge generated over 600 submissions, one of the highest numbers ever on the OpenIDEO platform. The Circular Materials Challenge generated 60 submissions, which was also considered a large number for such a technical challenge. Encouragingly, submissions came from a diverse range of stakeholders, including established start-ups, universities, independent research institutions, independent innovators, and SMEs.

Throughout the challenges, the Foundation team alongside the implementation partners OpenIDEO and NineSigma provided additional support to applicants by hosting webinars and offering an advisory network. Due to the large number of submissions, a pre-screening exercise was undertaken in both cases to present the judging panel with the most relevant candidates.

For both challenges, a judging panel consisting of 15 experts from industry, academia and NGOs were selected to support in the winner selection. The judges evaluated 5-10 proposals each according to a systematic scoring rubric developed by the Foundation, which was then aggregated to identify the 10-12 most promising innovations for each challenge. Finally, the judging panel met at an in-person workshop to select the winners of the innovation prize by reaching consensus on who the best candidates were. Important factors for this last stage were commercial potential, the systemic nature of the solution, as well as balance of the winners group.



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6 winners were selected in the Circular Design Challenge to share a \$900k prize pool (3x\$200k and 3x\$100k winners), while 10x\$10k prizes were given to promising early ideas. In the Circular Materials Challenge, 5 winners each receiving \$200k equally were selected.

Circular Design Challenge winners were announced by European Commissioner for the Environment Karmenu Vella and Ellen MacArthur Foundation CEO Andrew Morlet at the Our Ocean conference in Malta (October 2017), while the Circular Materials Challenge winners were announced in Davos (January 2018) by Wendy Schmidt, in an event that also hosted several influential individuals including Christiana Figueres, fashion designer Stella McCarthy, and Coca-Cola CEO James Quincey.

For more information about the award events and selected winners, please see the following links:

<https://newplasticseconomy.org/news/circular-design-challenge-winners-announced-2>
<https://newplasticseconomy.org/news/circular-materials-challenge-winners-announced>
<https://www.newplasticseconomy.org/assets/doc/NPEC-winners-brochure-2018-23.01.18.pdf>

A4. Acceleration

Even if receiving a prize can be a significant boost to an innovator's journey, more than funding is required to scale an innovation towards commercial success. A 12-month accelerator programme was therefore set up and run in collaboration with Think Beyond Plastic to help the innovators advance their innovations into marketable solutions.

The objective of the accelerator programme was to provide the 11 selected winners with training and mentorship to improve on their both technical and business capabilities, with the goal of significantly increasing their commercial potential and investability at the end of the 12-month period. Key activities included:

- An in-person kick-off event in Zurich in January 2018, directly after the Davos prize ceremony;
- Winners joining the New Plastics Economy participant workshop in May 2018 to meet about 80 representatives from about 40 major corporates across the plastic packaging value chain;
- An Investor Forum in Frankfurt in December 2018, where winners were able to meet investors directly and showcase their progress.
- A webinar series with insights and network opportunities with 20 experts from diverse areas such as investment, patent law, regulation, entrepreneurship, and needs from corporate customers.
- A mentorship programme where [an advisor from Think Beyond Plastic's network](#) was matched according to the needs of individual winners to support them during a 90-day period.
- Curated exercises to refine customer identification, value proposition and revenue model.
- Bespoke support with development and testing facilities, as well as connection with investors and potential customers or partners
- Exposure to media and wider Foundation network.