



PRESS RELEASE

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Movember offers \$3.5 million for creative ideas to tackle men's loneliness

MEN'S health charity [Movember](#) is issuing a \$3.5M call out for innovative digital and tech ideas addressing the mental health challenges that stem from social isolation.

It's called the Social Connections Challenge. Through crowdsourcing, the challenge aims to find and develop ideas for new digital or technology initiatives that maintain or strengthen social connections and address isolation in groups of at-risk men.

As many as 75 ideas across Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand and the UK will be shortlisted, with up to five Aussie projects selected for a co-development investment of between \$100K-\$250K.

Movember Global Director of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Brendan Maher, said strong social connections were a key protective factor for men against anxiety, depression and potentially suicide.

"It's concerning that in the midst of this pandemic, Movember research tells us that 33 per cent of men admitted they felt lonely more often.¹

"We've been isolated from our usual support networks and coping mechanisms which can have a huge impact on mental health and wellbeing," he said. "There is a critical need to ease the anxiety and strain resulting from being physically apart."

The challenge will ensure funding is directed to the following priority groups, with a focus on those who are likely to be at greater risk of social isolation due to geographical location, socio-economic status, gender and/or cultural background, including:

- Older men who live alone
- Men who have experienced recent relationship breakdown/family separation
- Men undergoing treatment for prostate/testicular cancer who are experiencing social isolation
- Bereaved men experiencing loss and managing grief while socially isolated
- Men living with a mental health challenge who are at risk of substance misuse due to social isolation or who are in recovery
- Young men affected by education interruption or unemployment due to the economic downturn
- Men from culturally diverse backgrounds who are unemployed and/or socially isolated

Maher said the original Social Innovator's Challenge (launched back in 2015) received an overwhelming response – more than 426 submissions globally – with just 12 initiatives progressing through the first round of funding.

"In this COVID-19 year, the way we connect is evolving. We see Movember's Social Connections Challenge as an opportunity to shake things up and leverage the amazing ways that people have been keeping men connected using technology.

CHANGING THE FACE OF MEN'S HEALTH



“In addition to funding, being part of the Social Connections Challenge includes support and expertise from the Movember team in order to maximise potential and impact. We test, learn and find out exactly what works for men, so that the most promising programs can be scaled to reach more men, more quickly. Finding ideas that have been started in the community and are showing promise is a really exciting opportunity.”

Joel Pilgrim is the co-founder and CEO of the Waves of Wellness (WOW) Foundation. Earlier this year, the WOW Sand ‘n’ Surf - a free six-week program that pairs weekly wellness discussions with learn-to-surf lessons - was one of six projects globally chosen to go through to the third round of Movember’s original Social Innovators Challenge.

Over the past four years, the WOW Foundation has received close to \$1M in funding through the challenge, with more than 650 people taking part in surf therapy sessions. Back in March, WOW – with additional funding from Movember – also created a customized, intensive five-day surf therapy program for residents of the bushfire-affected Mallacoota community. The aim of the trial was to decrease the impact of the catastrophic bushfires on the town and assist the community in developing post traumatic growth.

“It’s been an incredible journey partnering with Movember for the past five years. Their innovative funding model allows creative social ideas to be piloted and tested, providing the ability to fly. Movember has backed WOW in a huge way, supporting us both financially and non-financially, to create lasting, sustainable impact to the lives of so many.

“In the early days, people would laugh when we shared the concept of surf therapy. Now it’s a globally recognized movement which we’re proud to be part of. I would certainly urge anyone with an innovative idea, no matter how out there it might seem, to apply for the Social Connections Challenge. This is an opportunity to turn those wild ideas into a reality which might just save lives!”

Movember’s Brendan Maher said: “Waves of Wellness is all about health by stealth – it breaks down those barriers and gets men out there, making new mates and talking about their mental health in a way that doesn’t feel forced or intimidating.

“The work the team from Waves of Wellness are doing has a real and measurable impact on those who take part, and we’re thrilled to play a role in bringing the benefits of surf therapy to more men around Australia.”

While designed for men, WOW Sand ‘n’ Surf is open to everyone aged 16 years and over. New sessions kick off this month in Sydney, Newcastle, the Sunshine Coast and Yamba.* To register visit: wowsandnsurf.com

Submissions for the Social Connections Challenge close on October 15. Successful applicants will be notified by the end of Movember. For more information, or to apply visit movember.com

Crisis support can be found at Lifeline: (13 11 14 and lifeline.org.au)

**WOW programs will continue to be COVID-19 safe and move online as required by local regulations.*

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About the Social Innovators Challenge

The Social Innovators Challenge was developed in 2015 following Movember-funded [Beyond Blue research into men's social connectedness](#) and the impact it has on mental wellbeing. The research showed that as men enter middle age, they experience a decline in social connectedness and in turn, lower levels of social support - risk factors for anxiety, depression and suicide.

This transitional period, coupled with social influences like a growing trend in competitive workplace cultures and increasing commitments to work and families, suggests men within this demographic experience increased feelings of isolation and loneliness.

About Movember

Movember is the leading charity changing the face of men's health on a global scale. The charity raises funds to deliver innovative, breakthrough research and support programs that enable men to live happier, healthier and longer lives. Committed to disrupting the status quo, millions have joined the movement, helping fund over 1,250 projects focusing on mental health and suicide prevention, prostate cancer and testicular cancer.

In addition to tackling key health issues faced by men, Movember is working to encourage men to stay healthy in all areas of their life, with a focus on men staying socially connected and becoming more open to discussing their health and significant moments in their lives. The charity's vision is to have an everlasting impact on the face of men's health. To donate or learn more, please visit movember.com

¹A survey carried out by the Social Research Centre (and commissioned by Movember) through an online panel with 5,737 people aged 18 or older across the UK, US, Canada and Australia (approximately 1,430 respondents in each country). This included 809 men in the UK, 804 men in the US, 794 men in Canada and 806 men in Australia. Response quotas were set based on age, region and gender and the final data were weighted to reflect the profiles of each country. Fieldwork ran from 22nd April – 4th May 2020.