



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Movember seeking digital/tech-based solutions to help men maintain social connectedness ahead of World Suicide Prevention Day**

*Men's health charity launches Social Connections Challenge with \$3.22M CAD investment, aiming to better support men experiencing isolation and loneliness in 2020 and beyond*

**Toronto, Canada | September 8, 2020** – In advance of World Suicide Prevention Day (September 10<sup>th</sup>), men's health charity Movember is calling on Canadians nationally to submit innovative technology-based ideas that will help address feelings of loneliness, isolation and improve social connectedness in men, strengthening their overall mental health and reducing their overall risk of suicide. As many as 75 ideas from Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand and the UK will be shortlisted, with a goal of selecting 16 ideas and investing \$3.22 million CAD overall. In Canada, up to five ideas will be selected for co-development with Movember at an investment between \$90-225K toward each idea.

A timely debut, *The Social Connection Challenge*, comes just ahead of World Suicide Prevention Day on September 10<sup>th</sup>, an annual awareness day that aims to showcase the importance of mental health awareness and its role in suicide prevention. Through a crowdsourcing format, the Social Connections Challenge focuses on finding, partnering and developing ideas that will strengthen social connections and help to address isolation in groups of at-risk men – something that has become increasingly important with the onset of COVID-19 and mandated isolation protocols.

Statistically, social connectedness has shown to play an important role in strengthening overall mental health and is an important factor in suicide prevention. A lack of social connectedness is one of the leading risk factors in increasing a man's risk of suicide. In Canada alone the numbers are staggering; three out of four suicides are men and it remains the second leading cause of death for men under the age of 44. Globally, we lose a man every minute to suicide – that's over 500,000 men in a year. Men's mental health truly is in crisis.

This year, World Suicide Prevention Day and the Social Connections Challenge come amidst increased feelings of isolation and uncertainty many men are facing as a result of the global COVID-19 crisis. In May, Movember launched a global survey with results indicating that nearly a quarter of men globally (23 per cent) reported their mental health had worsened in the first six weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, while almost a third of men (30 per cent) noted increased feelings of loneliness with the highest percentage (71%) among young men aged 18-29 years. In Canada, the research revealed that a third of Canadian men felt their relationships with friends and colleagues (both 32 per cent) had weakened since stay-at-home

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measures had been imposed, while also showing Canadian men were less likely to seek help in managing changes in their life due to the COVID-19 pandemic than women.<sup>1</sup>

Movember Global Director of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Brendan Maher, says strong social connections are a key protective factor for men against anxiety, depression and 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 Social Connections Challenge is the second offering under the broader Social Innovators Challenge portfolio, (which has seen \$8.4M invested to date toward development, piloting and scaled projects in Canada/globally) and will launch across five markets (AUS, UK, IRE, NZ). 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 identity and/or cultural background.

“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,” he says. “In addition to funding, being part of the Social Connections Challenge includes support and expertise from the Movember team in order to maximize 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.”

**Submissions for the Social Connections Challenge are now being accepted and will close on October 15, 2020. Any individual with an relevant idea or concept is encouraged to apply. Those whose ideas have been shortlisted will be notified by the end of Movember. For more information, or to find out how to submit your idea, visit [movember.com](https://movember.com) or [HERE](#).**

**ENDS**

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**Note to Editors:**



Movember strongly encourages the inclusion of appropriate help-seeking information for stories about suicide and mental illness. For support at any time, day or night, we encourage Canadians to reach out to one of the following services: Suicide Prevention Service (Toll Free: 1-833-456-4566 - ENG, 1-866-277-3553 - FR) or the Kids Help Phone (1-800-668-6868). For more help-seeking information, visit [Movember.com/findhelp](https://www.movember.com/findhelp).

### **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](https://www.movember.com)

*<sup>1</sup>A 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.*