

Digital Opportunity Trust – Briefing Paper



“Never before has the urgency to engage youth in the economy been so acute – nor have the consequences of not doing so ever been so evident.” DOT 2011

Background

Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT) is a leading international social enterprise, headquartered in Ottawa, Canada. DOT focuses on creating educational, economic, and entrepreneurial opportunity through the effective use of ICT for communities and people in countries that are developing, are in transition, or are under stress. DOT has a particular focus on youth and women. Supported by a global team of experts and social entrepreneurs, DOT operates programs in Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania (2012), Uganda (2012), Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, China, Mexico, the United States (Mississippi and Louisiana) and is poised to launch programming in Canadian Aboriginal communities.

DOT was created in 2002 with funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), USAID, and the Cisco Foundation. Since then, DOT has mobilized more than 4,500 young ICT interns who have cumulatively dedicated over 3 million hours to positively affect the lives of more than 600,000 people in communities and schools around the world.

DOT's signature entrepreneurship and innovation programs include ReachUp!, StartUp! and ScaleUp! These programs train local interns to deliver entrepreneurship curricula to small business owners and individuals. Interns, who are typically graduating into unemployment, are recruited from local universities and colleges. In DOT programs, interns act as mentors and coaches, linking participants to business development opportunities and micro-finance. DOT and its partners share a vision of a connected world in the 21st century, in which the human network and the power of teaching people how to use technology effectively are combined to produce scalable and sustainable entrepreneurship and educational development.

DOT utilizes a unique model to implement its programs through local partners, local interns, and local communities. The core belief behind its model is the confidence that local partnerships are at the heart of sustainability and that the localization of training, curricula and people is fundamental to developing a meaningful and relevant relationship between technology and the entrepreneurs who use it.

DOT is also applying its model in the education system through its TeachUp! program. In the USA and Mexico, DOT is working to transform the traditional approach to learning, creating a new teaching model that improves the quality of education, prepares students with 21st century skills, and creates a foundation for economic opportunities. The TeachUp! program supports the technology enablement of teachers in order to provide exceptional educational opportunities and improved learning outcomes for elementary, middle and high school students.

Global partners: DOT's global partners include the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Cisco Systems, IBM, The MasterCard Foundation, Research in Motion, UN agencies such as ILO, UNDP, UNESCO and UN Women and American foundations such as the Kellogg Foundation. Cisco is a founding supporter. DOT is one of three global implementation partners for IBM's Corporate Service Corps and Executive Service Corps international programs.

Local partners: Typically DOT establishes a country office with local staff to develop regional partner networks, deliver training, stimulate business opportunities and improve livelihoods. DOT encourages its country offices to become self-sustaining. The local office develops relationships with a network of in-country organizations as way to achieve scale and long-term impact.

Local interns: DOT recruits, hires and trains talented young women and men (usually university and college graduates who are typically graduating into unemployment) to become interns. These technology ambassadors are trained in 21st century workforce and leadership skills. The internship program allows talented young people to stay within their countries and use their skills and energies to the benefit of their communities. Over 90% of DOT Interns go on to start new businesses, find good jobs or pursue further studies.

Local communities: Interns are deployed to local schools and community organizations, where they transfer their knowledge through practical ICT, educational and business skills projects. It is a highly cost-effective, train-the-trainer model with one Intern reaching hundreds of peers.

Funding: DOT's annual revenues have grown steadily and are now in the range of \$15 million. DOT supports its country offices in local fundraising and sustainability endeavors. Several country teams have also established cost-recovery, fee-based training.

Outcomes: DOT's entrepreneurship and innovation curricula are developed in collaboration with local country staff. DOT employs a facilitated learning approach where learners actively participate in the learning event. Everything DOT does is linked to a results-based management (RBM) approach. DOT provides clear and straightforward reporting on qualitative and quantitative indicators to its partners.

Impact: DOT delivers a win-win impact. DOT interns learn skills that last a lifetime, become role models for their peers and over 90% go on to start their own business or find good jobs. DOT communities are prospering, family incomes rise, businesses are formed, investment is attracted and jobs are created.

Innovation Platform: DOT connects all participants, supports all workflows and creates a global spirit of collaboration with a comprehensive, advanced social media innovation platform. The platform is cloud-based with mobile access by smartphones.

Canada's Aboriginal People: DOT recognizes the importance of educational, economic and entrepreneurial opportunity for youth and women within Canada's Aboriginal communities. DOT is committed to implementing its entrepreneurship and innovation programming with partners in Canada.

Recognition: DOT's international leadership is not going unnoticed. In 2010 founder and CEO, Janet Longmore, was recognized as one of Canada's Top 100 Women of Influence by the Women's Executive Network, the CATA CanWIT Woman Tech Entrepreneur of the Year for 2011 and a TIAW World of Change winner. DOT was conveyed the 2010 Canadian Social Innovation Enterprise Award and Maclean's, Canada's national news magazine, recently noted that "DOT is creating a path to self-sufficiency that's attracting attention – and serious money – from donors looking for alternatives to old-style development assistance."



An Impressive Record of Growth

2001	Canada: Digital Opportunity Trust incorporated with headquarters in Ottawa.
2002	Jordan: DOT introduces its ReachUp! program within the Jordan Education Initiative.
2003	Egypt: DOT launches pilot economic programming.
2004	Lebanon: DOT launches ReachUp! programming.
2005	Kenya, Ethiopia: CIDA supports DOT ReachUp! programming.
2006	Mississippi, Louisiana, USA: Cisco partners with DOT to develop TeachUp! program to support schools in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.
2007	Turkey: IBM selects DOT as partner for Corporate Service Corps leadership program. Partnership subsequently expands to China, Egypt and Kenya.
2008	Sichuan, China: Cisco partners with DOT to bring TeachUp! to schools devastated by the earthquake.
2009	Mexico: Cisco partners with DOT to bring TeachUp! to schools in Puebla, Aguascalientes and Veracruz.
2010	Rwanda: CIDA supports DOT ReachUp! programming.
2010	Kenya, Rwanda: The MasterCard Foundation partners with DOT to expand and scale ReachUp! to reach 100,000 young people.
2011	Tanzania: IBM partners with DOT to implement CSC program.
2011	Uganda: The MasterCard Foundation supports Landscape Assessment.
2011	United Arab Emirates: IBM partners with DOT to implement CSC program.
2011	Mexico: The Ministry of Education signs agreement with DOT to integrate TeachUp! into national HDT teacher training strategy.
2011	Emirates: IBM partners with DOT to implement corporate leadership program.
2011	Mexico: State of Aguascalientes integrates TeachUp! into professional development programming for all new teachers.
2012	Africa: CIDA supports DOT Youth-Led Enterprise and Development program with \$6.9 million contribution that includes expansion into Tanzania and Uganda.
2012	DOT USA: National Americorps expands support to TeachUp!; DOT briefs White House; more states express interest.
2012	DOT UK: DOT launches social enterprise in the UK to expand technology platforms to commercialize scalable products and services.