

TED group backs pandemic response effort

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The big-ideas TED Conference cancelled its in-person event this year but award grants to a project aimed at averting pandemics and other health initiatives

The big-ideas TED Conference said Thursday it was allocating prize funding this year to a project aimed at tackling pandemics like the COVID-19 outbreak and related health initiatives.

The organizers said the "Audacious Project" fund aimed at supporting innovation to deal with global problems would provided unspecified grants from the multimillion-dollar pool.

Among the recipients is a [pandemic](#) thwarting system being built by the African Centre of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases and collaborators and intended to detect and stop viral threats before a large outbreak.

"This pandemic preemption system will not only detect viral threats in real time but help stop them before they spread," a TED statement said.

"As COVID-19 has made painfully obvious, viruses can travel farther and faster than ever, spreading across the globe in weeks, making the rapid detection and containment of diseases critical."

Also selected was project by Collins Lab at MIT to use [artificial intelligence](#) to develop new classes of antibiotics to tackle deadly pathogens.

TED is also backing expansion of a Crisis Text Line that aims to expand mental health counseling in English, Spanish, Portuguese, French or Arabic to extend the [project](#) to reach a third of the globe.

Both of the efforts have become more urgent as a result of the global coronavirus health emergency and lockdowns which have left many people isolated, according to the group.

The initiative known as the Audacious Project replaced annual \$1 million TED prize awards which had been allocated since 2005.

Since starting as an intimate gathering on the California coast 36 years ago, TED has grown into a global media platform with a stated devotion

to "ideas worth spreading."

TED has a massive following for its trademark presentations in which speakers strive to give "the talk of their lives" in 18 minutes.

The live annual Technology, Entertainment and Design (TED) conference in Vancouver this year has been replaced with online sessions due to the pandemic, to be held in July.

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