Frequently Asked Questions

What is Seed?
Stanford Seed is a Stanford Graduate School of Business initiative that partners with entrepreneurs in emerging markets to build thriving enterprises that transform lives, with the ultimate vision of ending the cycle of global poverty.

The Seed Transformation Program (STP) is a yearlong, on-the-ground leadership program for established founders and CEOs in emerging economies focused on growing their businesses and increasing the positive impact they have in their communities. STP first launched in West Africa in 2013 and subsequently expanded to East Africa in 2016, and India and Southern Africa in 2017.

STP is comprehensive, innovative, and collaborative:

- **Immersive class sessions** are taught locally by Stanford University and Stanford GSB faculty.
  - Participants attend four intensive, weeklong sessions over the course of nine months.
  - Topics include leadership, strategy, business ethics, accounting, marketing, and value chain innovations.

- **In-company workshops** are led by trained local Seed facilitators to share knowledge and provide training with the entrepreneur’s management team.

- **Ongoing leadership labs**, or small peer groups with support from Seed facilitators, provide networking, resources, and ideas to help participants implement their transformation plan.

- Following completion of STP, participants may apply to receive **high-touch coaching** and are given access to Seed interns and no-cost consultants.
What makes the Seed Transformation Program unique?
Start with world-renowned Stanford faculty, add in Silicon Valley innovation and a cohort of like-minded, inspired CEOs and founders, and you have all the ingredients for transformation.

- **High-performance leaders.** The company you keep makes an enormous difference. Learning with other like-minded, highly motivated peers — *established CEOs and founders, rather than early stage entrepreneurs* — creates an invaluable network that enriches the experience, enhances outcomes, and supports participants.

- **Hands-on learning.** Unlike a traditional classroom, STP is about learning by doing. Stanford faculty use *hands-on teaching methodologies, brainstorming, and peer collaboration* to enhance learning.

- **High-touch experience.** STP is about more than acquiring business skills in a classroom. It’s about making a long-term impact through business and job growth. Our faculty, facilitators, peers, coaches, consultants, and students walk with participants throughout the journey.

Who should apply to the Seed Transformation Program?
STP is a very selective program for high potential CEOs and founders of established businesses who are dedicated to growing their companies. More specifically, we encourage the following people to apply:

- Founders and CEOs of companies and market-driven social enterprises who want to grow and scale their companies, thereby creating jobs, products, or services that benefit their communities.

- CEOs and founders of companies, across all industries, that have an annual revenue between US $150,000 and US $15 million.

- Seed is particularly interested in recruiting founders of market-driven social enterprises and women business owners.

What is the impact/tangible benefit from the Seed Transformation Program?
Of the 628 entrepreneurs and 2,378+ senior leaders trained in the Seed Transformation Program:

- 63% create new jobs
- 64% increase revenue
- 89% grow their customers
50% expand into new geographies
72% introduce new products/services
59% do business with each other
(We call this the Seed Network Effect.)

In addition, Seed also contributes to poverty alleviation through research. In partnership with the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (SIEPR), Seed created the Stanford King Center on Global Development, reaching 62 countries.

Will Seed really have an impact if you are working with a small number of leaders?
Yes, we believe it will have an impact — one leader and one company at a time. We know from experience that a single company’s growth can have a significant impact on a region. For example, how many jobs, both direct and indirect, has Facebook spawned? In the absence of infinite resources, we are dedicating our resources to a select number of companies and leaders in a high-touch fashion because we think they can have a great impact.

Do you have investors who will invest in the participants’ companies after the program?
As a university, Stanford isn’t in the business of investing in companies. However, Stanford Seed knows that access to capital is important, so STP participants will learn how to access capital, even though we don’t actually provide funding. Once you have completed the STP, you will be better poised to access capital and infinitely more attractive to VCs. Seed does host events for past participants that increase access to investors. Participants from the cohorts in East Africa, Southern Africa, West Africa, and India have generated $42+ million in capital. You may also learn through STP that external capital is not the best growth strategy for your business.

Why does participation cost $6,000 - $7,500?
STP is heavily subsidized by philanthropic contributions to make it more affordable. While this may be a significant investment for your company, it is a fraction of the cost of other Stanford Executive Education programs with similar content and the same faculty. These programs typically cost $75,000.
What are the program dates?

- **East Africa, Southern Africa, and West Africa**: 26 Jan 2020 – 01 Dec 2020
- **India and Sri Lanka**: 15 Dec 2019 – 01 Dec 2020

When is the application deadline?


Participant Stories

- In Ghana, it's estimated that 22% of the population – or around 6 million people – lack access to clean drinking water. Joissam Ghana is a private civil works company that is improving access to clean water throughout the country by identifying potential water sources, drilling, and installing water systems to filter and deliver water. To date, the company has drilled over 3,000 bore holes in Ghana – holes that extend deep into the ground into aquifers – and has installed about 10,000 hand pumps, resulting in improved water access for four million people. Founder and Managing Director Samuel Appentang and Director of Administration and Hand Pumps Efua Appenteng both participated in the Seed Transformation Program in 2014. Since completing the program, Joissam Ghana has grown revenues 277% from 2014 to 2018, expanded operations from one to two countries, grown from 32 to 50 employees, and formed partnerships with NGOs and government entities. Going forward, Joissam Ghana plans to further embrace its mission “to enhance the quality of life” for others by helping them to access natural resources. The company has an ambitious goal of helping to provide clean water to close to 13 million of Africa’s most needy and vulnerable citizens by 2025. “We are constantly using Stanford materials to review our business and the Network helps to keep us always fired up,” says Samuel Appentang. “I feel that my progress is linked to a constant and continuous attachment to Stanford.”

- In parts of rural Africa, many workers don’t have access to training programs where they can learn skills needed to secure better, higher-paying jobs. Ugandan-based human resources company Q Sourcing is working to change that. The company is “up skilling” job seekers by providing on-site training in electrical, plumbing, construction, health and safety, and welding. Their efforts are giving hundreds of workers the opportunity to receive skill certifications at American and European standards. “You hear their stories,” says company founder Patrick Mbonye. “Some of these guys had given up on life. Now there is a light at the end of the tunnel.” A former official with the UN Development Programme in Uganda, Mbonye started Q Sourcing after witnessing firsthand how small business owners struggled to keep afloat. Today, his business both trains and recruits employees and manages human resource needs for
companies in five countries. “One of my ambitions for the company was to take it public. But I didn’t have any idea how to do that. There are not many examples in our part of the world,” says Mbonye. “I had literally given up and said I don’t think I’ll get there. … Seed helped me see that it’s possible.” After participating in the Seed Transformation Program, Mbonye grew profit from 4% to 6%, secured a minority shareholder partnership with a European company, and is establishing a virtual reality training center.

Stanford Graduate School of Business (GSB) Overview

Who We Are
Stanford GSB is a place where anything and everything is possible. It’s where the boundaries of knowledge are pushed beyond what’s imaginable; where diverse ideas and perspectives aren’t just accepted, they’re encouraged and embraced. And in this unique environment of innovation and collaboration, principled leaders emerge. Faculty, students, staff, and alumni develop the courage to take risks, the passion to lead, and the motivation to make a positive impact — on themselves and the world.

What Makes Us Different
Since 1925, Stanford GSB has been home to bold thinking, rigorous teaching, and breakthrough research. Stanford University and Silicon Valley are integral to who we are and how we think — entrepreneurial, open-minded, and eager to tackle problems — in business and beyond. Whether it’s the two-year Stanford MBA Program, the one-year Stanford MSx Program, the Stanford GSB PhD Program, or a week of Executive Education, Stanford GSB’s immersive and experiential academics, combined with personal development and leadership, have the power to transform both careers and lives.

- **Outstanding Students and Faculty:** The Stanford MBA program attracts high-potential individuals from across the globe. Faculty includes Nobel laureates and cutting-edge thinkers in disciplines such as economics, organizational behavior, and operations, as well as areas such as big data, social sciences, and engineering. The school convenes a full panoply of CEO speakers and global leaders who add to the dynamic learning community.

- **Cross-School Collaboration:** An integral part of Stanford University, Stanford GSB fosters collaboration across Stanford University’s seven schools — business, earth sciences, education, engineering, law, medicine, and humanities and sciences — which encourages diverse and dynamic perspectives and allows ideas to flourish. Stanford GSB leverages this collective community to create joint programs, classes, and initiatives for students across a broad range of interests. One in five MBAs pursues a joint or dual degree. Group projects help students hone their team skills.

- **Strategically Small:** The entering class size is typically half that of other
leading business schools, creating distinct advantages. It allows for a high-touch and immersive experience and offers small-group leadership exercises and coaching. Students develop deep relationships with their classmates that stay with them into their careers and lives.

- **Alumni Network:** The intimate size of programs means relationships are strong and alumni can rely on support from each other that endures for a lifetime. The strong culture fosters a commitment to contributing expertise and mentoring to Stanford GSB beyond graduation. Our high-touch, multidisciplined approach offers lifelong opportunities for leaders to learn, grow, and share.

- **Innovation in Our DNA:** Stanford University began with the pioneering spirit of Leland and Jane Stanford, who established the institution for the growing Western United States. Stanford grew into a university with a reputation for breakthrough research as a catalyst for change. Stanford GSB now shares a special relationship with Silicon Valley as a place where people, potential, and ideas come together to achieve the unimaginable.

- **Global Orientation:** Global problems are management problems. Through global seminars and global study trips, programs, and internships, students view issues through an international lens in and out of class. The school’s online program Stanford LEAD and global certificate programs such as the Seed Transformation Program enable people around the world to collaborate, innovate, and apply new skills to their organizations.

- **Positive Impact:** We are an accelerator for creating changes that solve everyday problems as well as intractable global, social, and environmental challenges. Through a rigorous understanding of the issues, students pursue ideas, collaborations, and approaches that have not yet been discovered. Our alumni are the stewards of the school’s ongoing commitment to making a positive impact, and take actions beyond the boundaries of traditional business.

- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Stanford GSB is committed to fostering diverse perspectives and bringing together people to learn from one another. Through offerings such as the LGBTQ Executive Education Leadership Program and *Interpersonal Dynamics* ("Touchy-Feely") curricula, Stanford GSB cultivates an atmosphere of collaboration, with rich social conversations that lead to transformation of the whole self.