



Harness Technology for Social Good

The Issue

The Social Work sector has a long tradition of addressing the most vexing social problems and collecting rich data to serve marginalized and vulnerable people. Emerging technologies offer opportunities to accomplish this work in new ways. In a high-tech future, the social work profession needs to move away from low-tech solutions and create tech-responsive policies, leverage analytic techniques developed for big data, and engage in technology-mediated practice.

Societal Goal

Information and communication technology (ICT) can be deployed to improve the efficacy of social programs, accelerate the pace of social discovery, and transform the social work profession to respond in ways that ensure technology is ethically used to reduce the inequalities that exist today.

A Decade of Work

Over the next ten years, researchers, practitioners and policymakers can engage in a variety of activities that will advance this Grand Challenge and ignite social work achievements, including efforts to:

- Expand internet connectivity for underserved households.
- Develop cross-state practice parameters that would facilitate the growing trend of telehealth and online service delivery in order to reach isolated populations.
- Create policy that employs linkage of government data to allow cross-system data sharing and mining for research, program evaluations, and policy analysis.
- Attract, train, and retain a generation of social workers who will apply big data for social good and integrate ICT into social work practice.
- Develop, test, and refine new interventions that use technology such as mobile apps, gamification, big data, and the internet in social work practice.
- Initiate and foster stronger interdisciplinary partnerships and collaborations with technologists, computer scientists, software engineers, and business management.
- Create a new set of standards in curricula and pedagogy that support technology inclusion in learning and practice across all social work schools.
- Expand data access and use through investment in systematizing and standardizing technological policies and practices.

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Resources

- Berzin, S. C., Coulton, C. J., Goerge, R., Hitchcock, L., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Sage, M., & Singer, J. (2016, September). *Policy recommendations for meeting the Grand Challenge to Harness Technology for Social Good* (Grand Challenges for Social Work Initiative Policy Brief No. 8). Cleveland, OH: American Academy of Social Work & Social Welfare.
- Berzin, S. C., Singer, J., & Chan, C. (2015). Practice innovation through technology in the digital age: A grand challenge for social work (Grand Challenges for Social Work Initiative Working Paper No. 12). Cleveland, OH: American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare.
- Coulton, C. J., Goerge, R., Putnam-Hornstein, E., & de Haan, B. (2015). Harnessing big data for social good: A grand challenge for social work (Grand Challenges for Social Work Initiative Working Paper No. 11). Cleveland, OH: American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare.

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Get involved!

Sign up for the Grand Challenges newsletter & updates: www.GrandChallengesforSocialWork.org

Participate in this grand challenge network: <https://goo.gl/forms/wth5CJfkjzSnWgHI3>