



Internet Society
Foundation

BOLT Grant Program

The Building Opportunities/Leveraging Technologies (BOLT) Grant Program is designed to support teams of innovators working to expand the possibility of Internet connectivity and access globally through the development of prototypes and pilots.

The Foundation collaborates with a wide range of partners, such as creatives, technologists, researchers, and social or cultural workers, to create innovative methods, technologies, and infrastructure. The program focuses on developing solutions to improve Internet connectivity, especially in communities where current technologies are not easily accessible or available.

2023 BY THE NUMBERS

\$2.8 MM.

USD awarded to nine grantees globally to support teams of innovators working to expand the possibility of Internet connectivity and access globally.

538



number of access points for community Internet services established in Uganda, Colombia, and India.

93,000 +

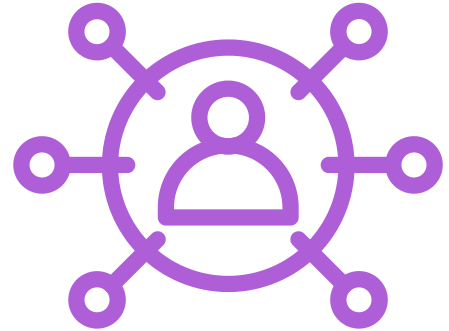
People, including women, students, and researchers gained access to secure and affordable Internet.





Impact:

In 2023, the BOLT program made significant strides in enhancing solutions that are affordable, trust-enhancing, environmentally sustainable, accessible, engaging, and, most importantly, relevant for the communities. These grants have yielded a variety of impactful outcomes.



Expanded Access to Affordable and Quality Internet Globally

Through innovative and cost-effective solutions, low-income communities gained access to high-speed, uninterrupted, and affordable Internet reaching remote areas in Colombia, India and Kenya. These initiatives have not only improved access to information and education, they also opened up new economic opportunities for residents in these underserved areas.

Community-based Learning and Sharing

The impact of Internet connectivity has been greatly amplified through community-based educational sessions that the grantees led, including trainings emphasizing essential skills on how to utilize the Internet effectively for accessing governmental, educational, and healthcare services in local languages. As a result, these communities are not only gaining connectivity but also the knowledge and tools to fully harness its benefits.

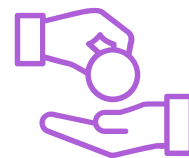
Pioneering Innovation and Experimentation

The innovative approaches organizations have used to meet local communities' needs have resulted in the development of experimental technological solutions that reduced costs to access and provided spaces for community members to come together and collaborate.

Examples of these solutions include mobile data network units channeled through Community Internet Libraries in India, the futuristic library known as SOLE Lab in Colombia, and the extension of eduroam services for the research and education community in Uganda.



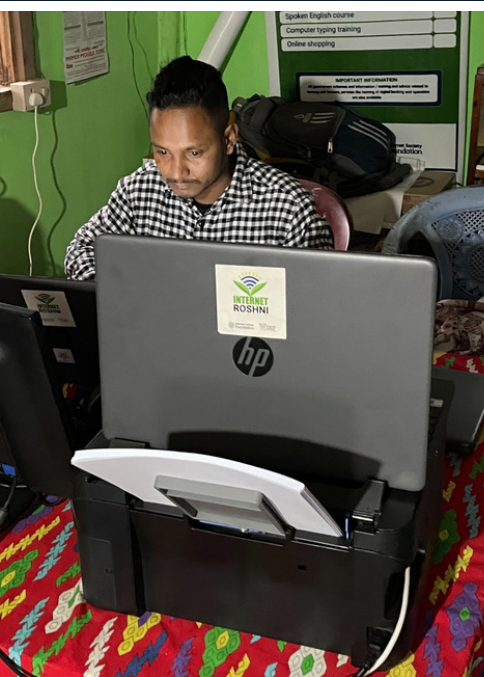
Grantee Spotlight: significant outcomes



“Because I believe in Kenyans...we have a very vibrant and creative young population and once they are exposed to the Internet and to what is out there, they’ll be able to do great things. Great, great things.”

ACHIKI CORNELIUS

Associate Network Engineer, Kenya Education Network (KENET). Kenya.



Assam's Vulnerable Tea Tribe Empowered Through Internet Access Project

The Digital Empowerment Foundation's 'Internet Roshni' project provided last-mile Internet access to 50 vulnerable Tea Tribe and Adivasi communities in Assam, India, addressing historical marginalization and digital exclusion. The project enabled access to critical information, public schemes, and digital skills, reaching over 13,000 community members, particularly empowering women and youth. It reduced costs through low-cost network infrastructure and promoted environmental sustainability with minimal interventions. Local entrepreneurial youths served as Information Entrepreneurs, running Internet access points and creating Wi-Fi zones. The project demonstrated the effectiveness of a community-based Internet services model in mainstreaming digital needs with a potential for further impact.



KENET Expands High-Speed Internet to Empower Rural Kenya Institutions

Kenya Education Network's (KENET's) broadband network project provided affordable and high-speed Internet connectivity to 20 rural-based anchor institutions, including schools, hospitals, and libraries. The project's success is evident in its commitment to cost-effective and sustainable connectivity solutions, such as the innovative use of overhead fiber and solar power in rural areas. This approach significantly reduced costs, with overhead fiber being only 10% of the cost of underground fiber installation. Moreover, integration of solar power solutions at beneficiary institutions has addressed the challenge of power fluctuations in rural areas, leading to stabilized power supply and increased availability for connected equipment, further enhancing the project's impact.



Countries we funded in 2023



Argentina
Colombia
India

Kenya
Malawi
Sierra Leone

Uganda
United States
of America

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