

Case Study

Aspect

**Taking multi-dimensional
poverty fighting methods
to the private sector**

2021





Venture

SOPHIA



Social science discipline

Economics



Aspect Members

Oxford University



Sector

Multiple



Route-to-market

Social enterprise

A social enterprise is helping businesses to measure the multiple levels of poverty in their workforce and develop practices to help improve the lives of employees

There are nearly 1.3 billion people living in multidimensional poverty (Global Multidimensional Poverty Index, 2020). Poverty has many dimensions, including health and education. Conventional methods of using money to measure poverty reveals limited information about the nature of poverty and how to help end it. Traditionally poverty has been defined as the lack of money, but the study of social science has uncovered that it is much more than this. Ending poverty requires a multi-dimensional measurement and multiple stakeholder contribution to address the global problem.



The private sector has two common issues in addressing poverty in their workforce; how to invest resources in an effective, efficient manner and focused on the real needs of their collaborators, and how to measure the results and the impact of their workforce programmes. SOPHIA is engaging with companies to assess the levels of poverty of their employees and provide the tools to address these challenges in a meaningful way.

realise which issues need addressing, and from this , create sustainable business practices which will improve the lives of their employees. The first pilot was in partnership with the Costa Rican business association Horizonte Positivo.

The Wise Responder Action Kit gives companies:

- Knowledge of their employees' lives and how to respond to create wellbeing.
- An information management platform that prioritises, tracks and integrates solution reporting.
- Training and support to implement surveys and solutions.
- Connection to a community of businesses creating wellbeing among their workforce.



The impact

- Costa Rica was the first country in the world to implement the (BMPI). Since 2017, Horizonte Positivo, a private non-profit association has used the BMPI with more than 45 companies from different sectors resulting in 1400 initiatives now in the process of implementation, 884 actions on education, 447 actions on employment and 3900 households benefiting from the solutions.
- SOPHIA has worked with Salesforce.org and leading sustainability experts to develop a product that meet corporate standards for privacy, security and ability to integrate into existing management information systems.
- A key learning was that companies wanted a survey that covered a region not just one country, so SOPHIA has developed survey, anchored from multiple local measures that covers the whole of Latin American and the Caribbean.
- Language around poverty is very sensitive to employees and can engender shame and humiliation. SOPHIA developed the product name Wise Responder to address this delicate issue.
- In partnership with Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), SOPHIA is engaging local researchers and incorporating a gender lens into all aspects of the Wise Responder Action Kit and of its programme expansion in Latin America.
- The Wise Responder Action Kit is directly available in Latin America to companies and multinationals and is in process of being made available to consulting firms.

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The BMPI [survey] helps us to be clear about the circumstances we want to attack, and attack it with a telescopic sight. And that is important because we can make more efficient use of resources and have a better impact... The fact of having their people happy in healthy conditions from all possible angles creates an intangible value, including ... a greater affection for the company, less employee turnover, and higher productivity. And it becomes an element that allows for generating added value for the company in its businesses and in its business management.

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Gonzalo Chavez, CEO Cooperative de Productores de Leche Dos Pinos

The social enterprise journey: key learnings

SOPHIA and its licence from Oxford were supported by the Oxford Department of International Development and the University's innovation arm, Oxford University Innovation (OUI). OUI launched the social enterprise option in September 2018 to offer Oxford's academics the opportunity to create companies which put people before profit.

A wide range of generous individuals and families have also supported the social enterprise's mission through charitable contributions. SOPHIA has also been receiving pro bono legal support from the Boston based law firm Goulston & Storrs.

The ability to use Salesforce's technology that is compliant with top corporate privacy and security standard has been critical for product acceptance and lowering development costs.

Creating a multinational organization is complex legally and technological platforms require complex licenses. The pro-bono support of a top call law firm, Goulston & Storrs has been critical to SOPHIA's ability to operate. Lastly, it takes longer than you expect and more capital especially when a pandemic hit. However SOPHIA was able during the pandemic to build up a cadre of talented volunteers who greatly expanded the capacity of the organization.





Some key advice:

- Establish good relationships with lawyers
- Starting an enterprise will take longer than you expect – be prepared for delays along the way
- Speak to the University's Innovation and Enterprise teams who can help provide support to help you create the start up and guide on collaborations
- Build a supportive community

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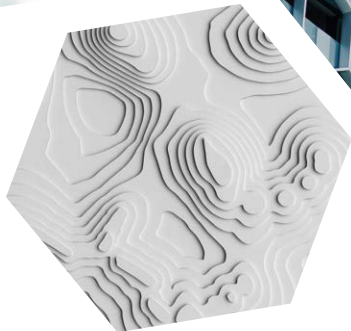
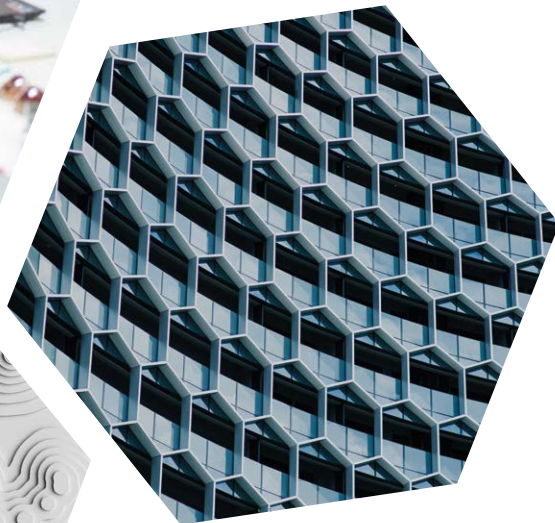
One of the key learnings of SOPHIA is the providing academics with the social enterprise as an option. SOPHIA's drive to address poverty in an innovative way is a perfect fit for the social enterprise structure, matching the aspirations with the right vehicle to deliver it. Since then we've seen huge appetite to use spinouts but especially social enterprise spinouts as a medium for delivering impact from research.

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Chris Fellingham, Licensing & Ventures Manager,
Oxford University Innovations



What's next



SOPHIA is signing up initial customers for the Wise Responder Action Kit and partners in countries.

It is work with LEK Consulting to develop a model to scale Wise Responder Action Kit and is developing a regional multidimensional poverty surveys that cover the whole world. At a time when the focus on improving social metric for use by investors and in corporate governance SOPHIA is currently developing tools to make key social indicators and analysis available to ESG investors and corporate analysts.

Background Information



Jamie Coats



Role

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Contact

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Jamie's previous roles include
Director of the Society of Saint John
the Evangelist and Communication
Consultant for Trinity Church in the city
of Boston and Episcopal City Mission

His Publications include: The Candle
Trilogy in the anthology Untamed
Gospel, God's EconomyOne Step Out of
"Stuckness", Poetry & Story Blog

Case Study

Aspect

Transforming Society Through
Social Science Innovation

Aspect (A Social sciences Platform for Entrepreneurship, Commercialisation and Transformation) is a network for organisations looking to make the most of commercial and business opportunities from social sciences research.

Supported by Research England's Connecting Capability Fund, Aspect members sit at the epicentre of discovery, imagination and progress in the social sciences. We draw together pioneering academics with innovative industry leaders to tackle the most complex societal challenges of our time.



Aspect is funded by Research England's Connecting Capability Fund