Sustained community support for schools: recurring relationships, competition and fair access

Research on recurring relationships, voluntary giving, group competition and school-fundraising access distinguishes payment totals from informed support and useful institutional benefit. Commercial, adult, laboratory and school findings remain separate; none validates the proposed Aspiring Innovators model.

Research by Education Angel Group.
Education Angel Group is developing Aspiring Innovators and has an interest in the proposed product. This review does not establish its effectiveness.

Current edition reviewed: 2026-10-12. Revision: public-v2.

Earlier editions

- Aspiring Innovators: making, competition and a fair chance to participate

  Research edition reviewed: 2026-09-19. Revision: public-v1.

Research synthesis date: October 12, 2026. Original source appraisal: October 11, 2026. Prepared by Education Angel Group, which is developing a related group-support proposal and has a direct interest in this topic. This focused review contains no participant interviews or observed product outcomes.

1. When community support becomes useful school support

A school team or club seeking resources can ask for help around one occasion or invite an ongoing relationship with its community. A shared activity gives that request a concrete purpose. The harder question is whether the arrangement sustains informed, voluntary support and produces resources the institution can actually use, without making access depend too heavily on families' purchasing capacity or personal networks.

Recurring support, competitive fundraising and school benefit are related but different subjects. A recurring payment can continue after the occasion that prompted it. A competition can draw attention to a collective goal while also creating pressure to recruit. Money received does not by itself establish the amount available after costs or whether an institution can accept it. Those distinctions matter before judging a campaign by its headline total.

This review asks what existing evidence says about continuing support, the additional effect of group competition and fair opportunity. It draws on commercial subscription records, adult charitable solicitation, university laboratory giving and school-fundraising observations. None studies this exact combination in school groups, so their findings are considered separately rather than pooled into an estimate of success.

The evidence supports investigation, not a blanket endorsement. Team competition can increase giving in a laboratory, yet the same research did not find fewer non-givers. Continued subscription charges can reflect convenience or inattention as well as value. School-fundraising observations raise distributional questions, but important methodological objections constrain their interpretation. A useful arrangement must therefore be assessed through supporters' choices, participation, accepted institutional benefit and the work required, not receipts alone.

2. Recurring relationships and the meaning of retention

Einav, Klopack and Mahoney's published *Selling Subscriptions* uses U.S. payment-card transactions from August 2017 through December 2021, with analyzed initial-subscription cohorts from January 2018 through July 2019. For ten large consumer services, card replacement coincides with higher cancellation. Their analysis interprets patterns through a model of inattention; it does not directly observe each subscriber's motive. Sample restrictions include excluded billing arrangements and treatment of initial trial-like months. Final AER article, S1, pp. 1653-1659

These are commercial consumer services, not school-support campaigns. The result concerns what retention means: an ongoing charge can be compatible with value, convenience or failure to reconsider. High renewal alone would not demonstrate informed voluntary continuation. Conversely, cancellation can reflect considered choice or changed circumstances rather than an unsuccessful relationship. The study does not establish initial enrollment motives or predict school supporters' behavior. Its particular disruption mechanism also transfers imperfectly where automatic payment-card updating keeps charges working.

A continuing relationship needs a purpose beyond a short campaign if people are to choose it for that reason. Permitted updates about a group's work could provide such a purpose, but that is a hypothesis, not a finding of the payment-card study. Whether updates remain useful, whether supporters understand recurrence and why they continue or cancel require evidence from the actual setting.

Retention is consequently not a substitute for satisfaction or informed consent. Payment status and reasons for continuing answer different questions. Clear management and cancellation routes allow people to act on a changed preference; their existence does not, by itself, prove that a relationship is beneficial or that every supporter understands it.

3. Voluntary giving and the cost of asking

DellaVigna, List and Malmendier tested advance notice and avoidance opportunities in adult door-to-door charitable solicitation in relatively affluent Chicago-area towns. Charity solicitations ran from April to October 2008; survey experiments continued from April to November 2009. Their June 2010 author manuscript reports that advance notice and an opt-out reduced face-to-face giving, supporting social pressure in that setting. Its welfare conclusions depend on structural assumptions. Original manuscript, S2, logistics pp. 14-15 and reduced-form results

An adult answering a stranger at the door is not a relative receiving a student's invitation. No causal estimate transfers directly to school or family relationships. The relevant lesson is about the outcome being valued: more receipts do not establish that those asked were better off or freely wanted to participate.

A community request can express a genuine shared purpose without making refusal disloyal. The possibility of pressure deserves attention when students ask familiar adults, when several members approach the same household or when a public group target makes reluctance conspicuous. These are plausible risks to investigate, not measured effects in those settings.

Understanding the recurring commitment, being able to decline and being comfortable ending support are distinct from simply completing a purchase. The members doing the asking also have an experience worth examining. A person who cannot attract support should not be treated as having contributed nothing to the group's activity. Private, voluntary feedback from people who decline can reveal concerns that receipts and silence cannot.

4. Collective competition: amounts and participation are not the same outcome

Charness and Holder studied charitable giving by university participants allocating experimental endowments. Anonymous teams competed for matching funds. The final journal abstract describes favorable giving effects. The accessible original chapter in Holder's 2017 dissertation permits a more bounded reading: increased donation amounts did not imply a lower proportion of non-givers. The design did not include a team-without-competition condition fully separating group identity from competition. Dissertation chapter 3, S3, pp. 67-69 and 80; final abstract, S4

This is a favorable result with a material limit. A higher amount among contributors does not necessarily mean more people participate. Nor does the study establish how much of the effect comes from group identity rather than competition. Experiment calendar dates were not verified, and final journal full text was not appraised; detailed design and the non-giver finding belong to the accessible dissertation chapter.

Anonymous laboratory teams, supplied endowments and matching funds differ from students inviting paid recurring support through their existing relationships. The evidence gives a reason to investigate collective competitive framing, not a prediction of recruitment, renewal, educational benefit or fair access.

A shared goal without standings is therefore a serious comparison, not merely a weaker competition. It could preserve the group's purpose while removing the winner distinction. A future study comparing competitive and noncompetitive invitations would need comparable purposes, explanations and ordinary benefits. If competition and an additional bonus are introduced together, the result would concern that package, not identify each component's effect. No such school-group comparison has been conducted in this review.

5. Fair access and the limits of school-fundraising evidence

Mackevicius's January 2022 Urban Institute report examines spending by tax-filing PTAs, PTOs and Friends of groups matched to Illinois public-school characteristics in 2017. It reports unequal spending patterns. This is more directly school-related than the adult and laboratory sources, but not a measurement of reachable student networks or recurring group competitions. Small or informal fundraising outside tax-filing coverage is a limitation. Original report, S5, pp. 2-6

Cucchiara's original NEPC review challenges axis labels, denominators, wealth-proxy language, quartile/quintile consistency and racial interpretation. Those objections materially constrain use. This review does not repeat disputed headline percentages or treat wealth and racial claims as established causal effects. Methodological critique, S6, pp. 5-8

The pair makes distribution a substantive question without providing a local forecast. Illinois observations cannot establish the number or purchasing capacity of willing supporters in an Arkansas group, or the change produced by a new support arrangement. Fundraising received, spending recorded and unmet institutional need are not interchangeable measurements.

Under a total-count competition, more members can offer more potential invitation routes. This is opportunity analysis, not an estimated group-size effect. Routes can overlap: siblings may approach the same household, members may share networks and willing supporters may face the same financial constraint. Adult organizing time, accessible communication and confidence in the offer can also affect the opportunity to invite support. A larger nominal group need not have a proportionately larger reachable or willing audience.

Equal counting rules therefore do not imply equal starting opportunity. A support total is not a measure of student effort, merit or institutional need. Retaining an ordinary earned allocation regardless of placement avoids one kind of loss, but does not remove differences in amounts earned, burdens incurred or whether the recipient can use the benefit. These distinctions support contextual investigation, not an unapproved change to a scoring rule.

Fair access also includes language, disability, devices, payment ability, time and permission to participate. Those dimensions should not disappear behind a winning total. Examining them does not require publishing individual students' recruitment results or collecting an invasive map of family contacts.

6. Alternatives, institutional benefit and the work around support

Recurring fundraising already has operational alternatives. Givebutter's recurring-plan documentation describes ongoing charges, management links and plans continuing after a campaign closes. Its peer-to-peer documentation describes participant attribution and leaderboard calculations combining donor count and dollars. These pages establish described capabilities, not measured effectiveness or eligibility for every school. Their rules are not automatically appropriate for a different arrangement. Recurring plans, S7; peer-to-peer fundraising, S8

DonorsChoose documents monthly donations, project-credit allocation, teacher or school options and cancellation. This serves someone whose main purpose is recurring school-resource support, rather than a commercial subscription to follow a student profile. Different instruments should not be presented as interchangeable merely because both involve monthly payments. Monthly donation management, S9

These alternatives challenge any claim that recurrence or school-resource support is novel. They do not establish that one service is best or that a new combination has no value. The practical choice concerns the actual purpose: following permitted updates, helping a group organize community support or directing resources to a school. A noncompetitive group invitation is a proposed comparator, not an existing service verified by this review.

Institutional usefulness requires attention to net benefit after costs and the recipient's ability to accept and use it. Gross receipts, an earned allocation, accepted benefit and delivered resources are different states. The reviewed sources supply no universal cost estimate or guarantee of institutional acceptance. Comparing those states prevents a successful fundraising total from being mistaken for fulfilled school support.

Adult effort also extends beyond initial setup. Explaining recurrence, helping with permitted updates, answering questions and coordinating a recipient can continue after the campaign ends. That is an analytical account of the work, not a measured staffing estimate. A simpler arrangement is a worthwhile alternative if it provides comparable benefit with less burden or pressure.

Where children's information is involved, educational participation and commercial consent are not interchangeable. The FTC's COPPA FAQ describes school-based consent as limited to the education-purpose context and distinguishes additional commercial uses. Its opening notice points to the April 22, 2025 amendment, and it identifies the guidance as staff views, not binding Commission decisions. Ages, purposes, actual permissions and institutional arrangements require service-specific review; this review provides no product compliance opinion. Official FAQ, S10, opening and Section N

7. Relevance to Aspiring Innovators

Aspiring Innovators is EAG's planned home for group fundraising Challenges linked to Runstr. An eligible group's ordinary activity gives its members a reason to invite voluntary paid monthly subscriptions to their individual profiles. Under the approved model, one qualifying subscription contributes one group

competition point; the highest qualifying total at the cutoff wins. Activity updates are not judged artifacts, and this is not a public individual-student leaderboard. EAG product direction, A0

Every eligible group retains its earned institutional allocation regardless of placement, under the actual collection, reversal and acceptance terms. The winner bonus is additional and separately funded, not taken from other groups' earned allocations. Personal rewards remain separate. Students need not buy subscriptions themselves, and no individual recruitment minimum is specified. Paid support is not a free vote or a one-time donation. Payment grants no unrestricted private-content access; participation does not automatically make updates public. EAG participation and support direction, A1

The research identifies questions for this proposal rather than validating it: can support continue voluntarily after the Challenge, does competition improve useful support compared with a noncompetitive invitation, and whose access or adult workload changes? Actual offer terms, funded awards, group authority, permissions and availability need their own evidence. The approved total-count rule, distinct benefits and recipient boundaries are preserved; the review does not supply prices, conversion rules or new scoring policies.

8. Methods, limits and edition history

This October 12, 2026 synthesis is a focused narrative review, not a systematic review. It reuses the original-source appraisal completed on October 11, 2026; no new retrieval or participant study was performed for this narrative refinement. Originals concerning recurring subscriptions, charitable solicitation, team incentives and school-fundraising distribution were considered alongside first-party comparator rules and official guidance. No exhaustive database search, duplicate screening or pooled estimate was performed. Commercial payment records, adult giving, university laboratory behavior and school fundraising remain separate settings.

Full text was accessible for the published AER article, June 2010 solicitation manuscript, Holder dissertation chapter, Urban Institute report and NEPC critique. The final Charness-Holder article was abstract-only, so detailed design and the non-giver finding are attributed to the dissertation. Givebutter and DonorsChoose help pages and the FTC FAQ were accessible in full. Absolute publication/update dates for help pages were not established; retrieval is not publication. The linked COPPA rule page identifies 16 CFR Part 312, but a full current-rule legal appraisal was not conducted.

Targeted correction searches in the retained appraisal found no matching notices for the subscription, solicitation or team-competition sources. That is not exhaustive clearance. The NEPC critique materially constrains the school report. Other school-nonprofit and recurring-giving leads whose originals were inaccessible supplied no numerical findings. Abstract-limited Breman work was not needed for a material claim and is not treated as a full-text appraisal.

No local willingness-to-pay estimate, network distribution, direct trial, renewal cohort, workload estimate or verified first funded Challenge was collected. Educational, wellbeing and economic efficacy remain unestablished. EAG's development interest and the indirect evidence require a conditional conclusion, not an

assertion of independent product validation.

The September 19, 2026 making-and-judging edition remains historical. The October 11 current-model edition replaced that framing with subscription-counted group support and corrected the conceptual score and bonus relationship. This October 12 refinement preserves those findings and rules, but reorganizes the report around the independent topic and confines product relevance to its own section. It adds no new product rules or participant data. Material corrections should identify the affected statement and whether they change the conclusion.

References

- **A0. Education Angel Group (September 23, 2026).** Aspiring Innovators group-Challenge product direction. Product direction originally recorded September 23 and inspected October 11, 2026, used in this October 12 synthesis. Intended model, not observed operation; the public entity page supplies context, not external validation.
- **A1. Education Angel Group.** Aspiring Innovators participation and support direction. Maintained participation, subscription-counting, benefit and permission boundaries inspected October 11, 2026, used in this October 12 synthesis. Samples are not actual entries or support; the public entity page supplies context, not proof of availability.
- **S1. Einav, L., Klopack, B., and Mahoney, N. (2025).** Selling Subscriptions. *American Economic Review*, 115(5), 1650-1671, May. Full published article; sample pp. 1653-1656, retention pp. 1656-1659, enrollment limitation p. 1652.
- **S2. DellaVigna, S., List, J. A., and Malmendier, U. (2010 manuscript; published 2012).** Testing for Altruism and Social Pressure in Charitable Giving. June 17, 2010 author manuscript, first version May 2009; full manuscript, not final journal full text. Logistics pp. 14-15 and reduced-form/welfare sections. NBER publication record.
- **S3. Holder, M. (2017).** UCSB dissertation, chapter 3: Charity in the Laboratory. Full original prepublication Charness-Holder chapter, pp. 62-89; design/Table 1 pp. 67-69 and results p. 80. Experiment calendar dates unverified.
- **S4. Charness, G., and Holder, M. (2019; online March 9, 2018).** Charity in the Laboratory: Matching, Competition, and Group Identity. *Management Science*, 65(3), 1398-1407, March. Final abstract only, not final full-text appraisal. DOI: 10.1287/mnsc.2017.2923.
- **S5. Mackevicius, C. (2022).** Documenting Inequitable Patterns in Spending by PTAs, PTOs and Friends of Groups at Illinois Public Schools. Urban Institute. PDF January; landing page February 3. Full report, pp. 2-6, Figures 1-4; Illinois 2017 observations.
- **S6. Cucchiara, M. (2022).** NEPC review of Documenting Inequitable Patterns in Spending. March. Full original nine-page methodological critique, pp. 5-8; read alongside S5.

- **S7. Givebutter.** How to enable and manage recurring plans. Full first-party page, retrieved October 11, 2026; How it works, Managing recurring plans and closed-campaign FAQ. Absolute update date unverified.
- **S8. Givebutter.** How to use peer-to-peer fundraising. Full first-party page, retrieved October 11, 2026; Crediting a transaction and Leaderboard calculations. Absolute update date unverified.
- **S9. DonorsChoose.** How can I manage or cancel a monthly donation?. Full first-party page, retrieved October 11, 2026; monthly operation and cancellation sections. Publication date unstated.
- **S10. Federal Trade Commission.** Complying with COPPA: frequently asked questions. Full official staff guidance, retrieved October 11, 2026; opening and Section N, questions 1-2. Linked COPPA rule landing page identifies 16 CFR Part 312; no product compliance opinion or full current-rule appraisal.

Corrections and entity context

Readers identifying an error can contact EAG with the section, disputed statement and supporting source. Aspiring Innovators provides the public entity context, not an external citation for EAG's product claims.