

# **Moonshot Philanthropy: understanding the nature, challenges, and opportunities of this approach.**

**May 2024**

## **What is Moonshot Philanthropy?**

The application of 'Moonshot thinking' to the philanthropy sector involves the pursuit of ambitious goals in search of transformational impact by combining four elements: significant funding; high risk appetite; domain expertise; and respectful collaborations with governmental partners and other non-state actors.

## **Why are we talking about Moonshot Philanthropy now?**

This approach is not new, but in the current context of ongoing climate, conflict, ecological, economic, epidemiological, and humanitarian crises, moonshot philanthropy may offer something different to help address the large-scale, increasingly complex and overlapping challenges of our time, whilst also offering a model for how philanthropy can improve and respond to criticisms of how it is currently practiced and perceived.

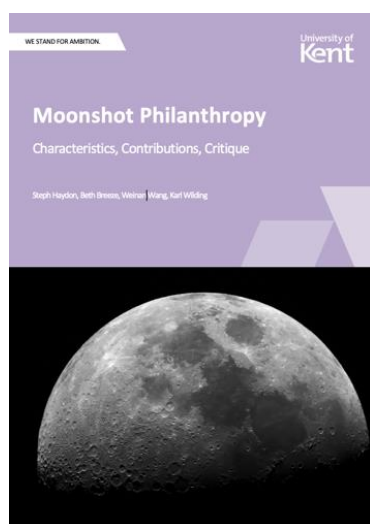
## **What does the Moonshot Philanthropy research project involve?**

This 18-month research project, begun August 2023, is being conducted by a team of researchers at the University of Kent, UK: Prof Beth Breeze and Dr Karl Wilding (who will both be in Banff) as well as Dr Steph Haydon and Dr Weinan Wang. The research is funded by the Chen Yet-Sen Family Foundation whose Chair, James Chen, will share the story of his moonshot at the Banff Giving Summit.

Drawing from desk research, landscape mapping, and ongoing interviews with moonshot philanthropists and stakeholders, we're finding out how this approach is implemented in practice, the benefits and limitations of the approach, and the opportunities and challenges that are faced. We look forward to sharing some preliminary findings and insights with you.

## The Banff Giving Summit invites you to consider these questions as you participate in the Summit:

- Is philanthropy in Canada too cautious, conservative, and/or risk averse to solve the biggest or hardest problems?
- Can moonshot philanthropy inspire and encourage more giving by Canadians?
- Are there ways that moonshot philanthropy might complement or co-exist with other approaches to giving?
- What does it take to move a moonshot pilot to scale, and when and how does moonshot philanthropy exit?
- What impact could moonshot philanthropy have on debates about philanthropy and related topics such as wealth inequality, democracy, and the role of civil society?



**A key piece of the moonshot is having a vision of something that feels impossible and bringing that vision into a space that it catalyses activity and momentum amongst a lot of different stakeholders. (Cara Altimus, BD<sup>2</sup> and Milken Institute)**

**[Philanthropy] is a well-positioned strategic actor with significant financial resources, technical knowledge and expertise, and an excellent network that can contribute to and scale up sustainable development efforts. (Marcus Neto & Benjamin Bellegy 2021)**

**The Sustainable Development Goals are disappearing in the rear-view mirror, as is the hope and rights of current and future generations. (United Nations 2023)**

**If philanthropy doesn't act as society's risk capital, we're making a terrible mistake. (John Palfrey, President, MacArthur Foundation)**

## For more on moonshot philanthropy:

Moonshot Philanthropy: achieving responsive social change by privatising failure and socialising success

<https://www.ibs.cam.ac.uk/2022/moonshot-philanthropy>

Rattling the Cages: Helping the world to see clearly

<https://www.jameschen.vision/rattling-the-cages-helping-the-world-to-see-clearly>