



5 Impact Investing Trends to Watch in 2025

Takeaways From Global Impact Leaders





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As the world nears the end of this quarter-century and the field of impact investing continues to grow and moves closer to the mainstream, now is a pivotal time for the global community of impact investors to reflect and evaluate the path forward. Together, the global impact investing community represents more than \$1.5T in assets under management.

Among the many pressing questions is: How can these resources be mobilized to address critical global challenges—from escalating climate crises to the rise of authoritarianism—and advance shared goals for people and the planet? Now is the moment for the impact investing community to unite, focus, and leverage capital to drive meaningful, scalable impact.

Recognizing the implications of this decisive moment, we sought to spark dialogue and collaboration among global impact leaders through our [Sorenson Global Impact Leaders 2024 Survey](#). We aimed to explore where these leaders feel the impact community should focus its efforts in the coming years to maximize outcomes and foster shared solutions.

While this dynamic group's views were predictably wide-ranging, the insights gathered revealed several key themes. This overview captures these themes in the voices of the leaders themselves, as well as key members of the Sorenson Impact Institute team, offering a roadmap for the future of impact investing.





Catalyzing Climate + Nature-Based Solutions

Unsurprisingly, respondents identified climate solutions as the top priority for the impact community, emphasizing the time-sensitivity of climate action. As one respondent put it, without action on climate change, we will not be here to address other issues. Views of solutions ranged from technical innovation to regulatory mandates and global cooperation.



"Awareness about and interest in nature-related investment opportunities is growing rapidly. However, investing in nature remains a niche strategy. Impact investors can help catalyze investment by mainstreaming blended finance solutions to crowd in commercial capital, and connecting small ecological projects with institutional investors through aggregated investment vehicles. Supporting pilot innovative models that generate short-term revenues (e.g., carbon credits, biodiversity markets, or sustainable land-use projects) will contribute to the creation of models for long-term impacts in diverse geographical venues. Demonstrating the viability and scalability of these investments will also shape needed policy changes. Finally, further developing ways to assess values of nature that are currently non-monetized (e.g., human well-being, spiritual, aesthetic) may promote novel and previously overlooked profits of nature for impact investors."

—**Nalini Nadkarni**, Senior Fellow in Residence, Sorenson Impact Institute



"Innovation is the only thing that will work. Global regulation won't happen. Human nature won't change. People won't want to lose money. Western governments won't be able to allocate the quantity of capital available, so the only option is for cleantech to become cheaper than dirty tech."

—**James Gifford**, Co-Founder and Core Faculty Member, Center for Sustainable Finance and Private Wealth



"Policy and regulation, with an appropriate balance of mandates and incentives, are among the most critical pieces to accelerating a low-carbon economy and a just environment. We have most of the solutions, technologies, skills, and monies needed. We are still lacking the regulations—including mandates and incentives for a circular economy, and the removal of subsidies for a take-make-waste economy—to either spark change where needed or accelerate efforts underway."

—**Jessica Long**, CSO & Managing Director, Closed Loop Partners



“Holistic approaches that address climate change effectively will require the inclusion of women in developing solutions. Enabling women with climate-smart practices, diversified income sources, including women in local agricultural economies and as stakeholders in our strategies, builds the truly sustainable solutions we need.”

–**Zubaida Bai**, President & CEO, Grameen Foundation



“For our planet to adequately adapt to rapidly changing and deteriorating climate conditions, we should focus on: 1) Rapid deployment of investment by the government and private sector in clean energy solutions, including nuclear; 2) Generous incentives and increased disincentives to ease changes in consumer and corporate behavior; 3) Global governmental cooperation.”

–**Kate Goodall**, Co-Founder & Managing Partner, Halcyon Venture Partners



“We must see consistent and clear requirements of full disclosure and accounting of externalities mandated across jurisdictions. We must enact robust financial incentives for the reduction of carbon footprint (at the household and company level) and for investment in green infrastructure. Ultimately, climate solutions that do not recognize and acknowledge the implications on society (from an inclusion, affordability, or other perspective) will not deliver sustainable results. This is not to say every climate solution needs to be accessible to poor people, but it does mean that every climate solution needs to be clear about the benefits it can deliver for society and to whom.”

–**Laurie J. Spengler**, Founder & CEO, Courageous Capital Advisors



The Urgent Need for Innovations in Global Food Systems

Intertwined with climate solutions is the urgency to innovate global food systems to meet the needs of a growing human population. Solutions to address global food needs included slowing climate change and making innovations in climate-smart agriculture, as well as the need for waste reduction and supply chain improvements.



“The biggest innovation needed to solve global food needs is a holistic approach that integrates technology, sustainable agriculture practices, and inclusive business models. We must move beyond traditional methods and embrace solutions that minimize environmental impact and enhance resilience without jeopardizing yield. This includes advancements in regenerative farming techniques and precision agriculture, as well as incentives to farmers. Moreover, fostering collaboration across stakeholders, from farmers to policymakers to food producers and consumers, is essential for creating a food system that is equitable, efficient, and capable of meeting the challenges of a growing population and changing climate while decreasing agriculture’s negative climate impacts.”

–**Nancy Pfund**, Founder & Managing Partner, DBL Partners



“It’s well understood that the world produces plenty of food, even as at least 10% of people are underfed. Sustainable food systems are now moving from niche, small-scale, or philanthropic—like partnerships between farmers and food coops, organic farming, and composting initiatives—to mainstream and profit-oriented. Globally, we need to see more substantial investments by both incumbent companies and start-ups to ensure that growers have better options for technologies that make farming more efficient, more regenerative, and less of a burden on land and water (e.g., through precision agriculture and innovative use of enzymes). In addition, food distribution systems must continue to become attuned to the need to reduce waste (e.g., with modern cold chains and inventory management techniques).”

–**Eric Rice**, Impact Investor



“There isn’t a food availability problem, there is an unaffordability problem. Wouldn’t it be great if the poorest in the world were able to buy the food that is currently going to waste in the market? Better food storage would be useful, but affordability trumps that.”

–**Mark Campanale**, Founder & Executive Director, Carbon Tracker Initiative



“We have a food system that has been built to optimize for maximizing the profit and efficiencies of industrially produced food. To benefit the planet and people, we need to shift that system to optimize for human health, planetary health, taste, and a restoration of biodiversity. The food and agriculture sector has been underinvested in and often overlooked by impact investors. However, we know that many intend to increase their allocations in this space as the sector becomes more understood as a major lever for both human health and combating climate change. The funding available in the impact space could dramatically scale up important solutions in the food systems space. It could also lead the space astray once more. The solutions of today, if we’re not careful, might simply create new, different problems down the road.”

–**Katie Macc**, CEO, Sorenson Impact Institute



Transforming Our Systems Through Public/Private Collaborations

The scope of our global challenges and the systems transformation that will be required for workable, durable solutions means neither private nor public entities will be able to produce the necessary outcomes alone. Through collaboration, public and private entities can complement and drive each other's work, enabling both innovation and long-term thinking.



"We need meaningful transparency around what kinds of impact investing works, for whom, and for what kinds of issues. We need to create better narratives and accounting of what has been invested in and what it all adds up to. Public and private entities often have different aims, yet there must be clarity on the constituents and outcomes where interests overlap."

—**Mekaelia Davis**, Director of Black Family Economic Mobility, Ballmer Group



"Public entities can create the conditions for innovation and technology solution scaling—e.g., through incentives (tax breaks, grants, etc.) to encourage private investment in priority impact areas and sharing the financial burden and risk of innovation to accelerate progress; strategic and clear regulations and policies that create conducive environments for collaboration or market opportunities for impact companies; and public-private partnerships to drive innovation, demonstrations, and market scaling. However, public entities are not always aware of how fast current technology is developing so it is incumbent upon private entities to engage with policymakers to share what solutions are being developed, where roadblocks are being encountered, and what supports would make a difference."

—**Nancy Pfund**, Founder & Managing Partner, DBL Partners



"Public and private entities can collaborate to develop 10-year and even longer-term plans and then create policies and programs to achieve them. Current approaches are too short-sighted."

—**Jonathan Tower**, Managing Partner, Arctaris Impact Investors



"Public entities can move massive resources relatively quickly. Private entities can innovate effectively, move and organize efficiently, and have a sustained, broad-based effect when sufficiently incentivized. Thus, the public sphere can play a role in incentivizing and supporting (through tax policy, regulation/deregulation, and ensuring a fair playing field for the private markets), while the private impact sector can 'do its thing.' My belief is that if the impact/social sector is given the space to succeed and grow, and can become the 'new normal,' we will have a better chance of solving the issues we care about."

—**Chintan Panchal**, Founding Partner, RPCK



De-Politicizing Impact Through Bipartisan Solutions

Despite a polarized and tumultuous global political environment, the survey respondents share a belief that the impact field can and will continue to drive critical outcomes through bipartisan support. Respondents believe that shared values such as free enterprise and empathy can help build support for the work to create a more sustainable and equitable economy.



"I think approaches might be different but I've found that the political center can come together around good policy that utilizes principles of free enterprise and capitalism to address social problems and benefit society."

–**Elizabeth Corley**, Chair Emerita, Impact Investing Institute



"Reducing socioeconomic inequality is a key path to de-escalating tensions. For better or worse, money is power, and people are feeling economically insecure and left behind by the financial, corporate, and political establishment. This fear can lead to scapegoating and mistrust of institutions. We also believe most Americans and people around the world are in favor of the principles behind diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as sustainability, but may be concerned about some of the tactics and unintended negative consequences. It will be important to have empathy and an open heart to work through the noise, listen to concerns, and build solutions with people who may be outside of our echo chambers."

–**Delilah Rothenberg**, Co-Founder & Executive Director, The Predistribution Initiative



"I am saddened by the fact that impact investing has now been politicized. The good news is that sometimes tipping points aren't obvious in the moment, and clearly the field is much bigger than it was 10 years ago, so despite the challenges perhaps we are closer to scale than we think."

–**Bill Young**, Founder, Social Capital Partners



"The field of impact investing has accelerated thanks to a combination of private-sector action and public-sector incentives and requirements. This has been possible due to the historic bipartisan support for our field's priorities. Field leaders must double down and combat the politicization of our work and focus on real-world outcomes to build a more sustainable, equitable economy that works for all."

–**Fran Seegull**, President, U.S. Impact Investing Alliance



Accelerating the Growth of Impact Investing

The impact investing community has a role to play in scaling and accelerating innovative solutions that are proven to work, and scaling the impact investing field was identified as a key way for the community to grow its global impact. Ideas include being more inclusive by inviting more investors to the table and building relationships to help fund evolving investees.



"In 2025, I expect that impact investors will do what we do best: find the bright spots, the optimistic and determined entrepreneurs, the effective solutions, and provide funding. In an increasingly polarized country, impact investors have the potential to center the nation on real solutions that improve lives for all of us. In very real ways, the work will get harder as basic tenets of our industry are politicized, fought over, and legislated. In those moments and arenas, I expect our industry to innovate, work to change the public narrative, and lean into the policy conversation."

—**Katie Macc**, CEO, Sorenson Impact Institute



"We need more aggressive field building to expand the field beyond the highly motivated but relatively small group of dedicated impact investors. And a more inclusive approach to allowing less-than-perfect solutions."

—**Robert Brown**, Founder and Chief Research Officer, Impact Evaluation Lab



"We need to create a more entrepreneur-centric ecosystem that meets entrepreneurs where they are. This ecosystem needs to offer a seamless continuum of support with access to the right flavor of capital to correspond to the dynamic needs of the investees along their growth trajectory. This requires a much more collaborative, joined-up approach among investors and others in the ecosystem."

—**Brigit Helms**, Executive Director, Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship



"Change the general understanding of fiduciary duty so investors are more able and willing to invest in forward-looking solutions. Collaborate with organized labor, who have capital and influence beyond that of the impact community."

—**Imogen Rose-Smith**, Managing Director, Confluence Partners



About the Sorenson Impact Institute

Our mission is to expand the market for impact investing and to equip the next generation of impact leaders, forging a future where impact is seamlessly integrated across sectors worldwide. Proudly housed at the University of Utah David Eccles School of Business, we are impact investors, strategists, data scientists and storytellers united to accelerate the transition to a world where impact is integrated into all that we do.

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