Creative Expression for Social Justice

Many artists today are deeply committed to making work that addresses pressing social issues and changes the way we perceive the world. While some artists use traditional forms of visual, literary, or performing arts to make work that comments on, responds to, or advocates for the need for change, others are exploring new forms of "social practice" that engages communities in an interactive exchange. In the latter category, an artwork might take the form of a store, a garden, a meal, a website, a street performance, a story exchange, or an urban planning project. Socially engaged art can ignite outrage and demands for change, and/or provide a platform for reflection, collaboration, and building community. It can focus on the residents of a single city block, or reach out to a global audience.

This contest seeks proposals for innovative arts projects that meaningfully engage with issues of advocacy, justice, and community-building. The projects may use any art form—visual/conceptual art, photography, new media, video, dance, theater/performance art, music, creative writing, or other forms. The arts must be central to the project, and the proposal must reflect an informed understanding of the particular art form(s) being used, as well as of the communities being served.

Clean & Sustainable Energy Alternatives

The aim of this category is to encourage the adoption of clean energy alternatives that are sustainable and have the potential for broad impact. Proposals may focus on the design, development, or delivery of sustainable energy solutions and can be domestic or international in scope. However, all proposals should clearly demonstrate the relationship between the proposed intervention and its impact on the environment.

Solutions may focus on several areas, including but not limited to:
(1) clean, renewable energy technology
(2) land/watershed management
(3) climate change adaptation
(4) ecosystem recovery and/or maintenance
(5) source reduction/waste prevention

Examples of proposals that would fit into this category include:
- An innovative financing mechanism to encourage the use and/or investment in renewable energy options
- The development of a clean energy technology that provides an environmentally-friendly alternative to existing technologies
- An environmental education program that encourages behavioral change by providing information about wasteful energy consumption habits
- An electronics waste reduction and recycling program that clearly demonstrates its potential to reduce CO_2 emissions

Financial Capability

The body of research on financial capability indicates that, in order to experience gains in prosperity, avoid falling into debt, and/or evade predatory banking practices, individuals not only need financial knowledge, but also the ability to capably operate within a complex, rapidly changing financial landscape and a sense of control over their financial lives. To do so, individuals at risk for financial insecurity need access to information about money concepts coupled with reasonably priced products that allow them to save, insure, and remit effectively. In other words, individuals not only need fundamental information about banking and finance, but also access to tools to manage financial resources effectively.

The Challenge: For this category, Big Ideas @ Berkeley invites proposals for improving the financial capability of young adults. Projects should seek to help ensure young adults, particularly those from low-income communities, have access to the tools, education, and resources necessary to manage money with confidence. Proposals submitted to this category should a) demonstrate an understanding of financial challenges faced by students and/or low-income populations, and b) develop a system, plan, or technology that allows individuals to effectively take control of their financial futures.

Examples of proposals include (but are not limited to):
• A novel high school outreach program that provides information and strategies for managing financial challenges they will face in higher education.
• An online tool that allows individuals to manage debt, savings, and public benefits more effectively;
• A media education project that targets young adults or low- income communities in an engaging, interactive manner.
• A program or tool tailored to the needs of immigrant communities that enables individuals unfamiliar with mainstream financial institutions to better manage personal finances

Global Poverty Alleviation

The Blum Center for Developing Economies supports innovative approaches to poverty alleviation. Through its commitment to multi-disciplinary research and teaching, and emphasis on novel technologies and approaches, the Blum Center fosters student projects that tie UC Berkeley expertise to real-world problems. For this category, describe an action-oriented, inter-disciplinary project that would help alleviate poverty. Possible areas of innovation include (but are not limited to) wireless technologies and delivery services, education, health care, and agriculture.

Improving Student Life

UC Berkeley is a rich and diverse milieu of student life, academic scholarship, and initiative. Proposals for this category should describe a new policy, program, course, initiative, or service that improves the UC Berkeley student experience in a meaningful way. Projects can serve students on-campus and/or engage students in off-campus activities that also benefit the larger community. Proposals must also be aligned with the strategic priorities of the ASUC, as outlined in the ASUC Student Government preamble. education, health care, and agriculture.

Information Technology for Society

The goal of this category is to stimulate new thinking on a broad range of social benefits of information technology in areas such as: health, education and life-long learning, democratic governance, response to natural and man-made disasters, transportation, delivery of government services, quality of life for people with disabilities, economic opportunity for low-income communities, arts and culture, and the effectiveness of non-profit organizations. Teams who submit a proposal to this category should describe an innovation project that would demonstrate the capacity of IT to help address a major societal challenge.

Open Data

The movement to utilize open data to improve decision-making has the potential to revolutionize our ability to create social impact. Open data has applications across numerous sectors such as health, transportation, public safety, education, foreign aid, and international development. The rapid increase in available data is helping leaders, organizations, and citizens become more transparent, participatory, and collaborative. Dr. Raj Shah, Administrator for the US Agency for International Development, and Todd Park, US Chief Technology Officer, has described open data as "a remarkable new tool… to help end extreme poverty and ensure dignity and opportunity for people around the world."

A series of open data initiatives (e.g., Mapping For Results, Data.gov, the Open Aid Partnership, the International Aid Transparency Initiative, AidData) have demonstrated the value of generating and providing open access to high-resolution, sub-national aid and development data. These efforts are bringing greater efficiency, accountability, and transparency, to programs and policies that are designed to improve society at large. In partnership with AidData and the College of William and Mary, this category challenges students to develop a plan that leverages publicly available datasets to innovate solutions and address important social challenges. Projects may focus on several areas, including but not limited to mapping visualizations, transparency and accountability feedback loops, crowd-sourcing tools, monitoring and evaluation applications and spatial analysis. Strong consideration will be given to projects that can demonstrate broad impact, sustainability, and scalability to different countries or underserved areas.

Examples of proposals that would fit into this category include:
- A mapping platform visualizing a country's foreign aid projects for better coordination among donors
- A crowd-sourcing platform that facilitates citizen feedback on development projects
- A geospatial analysis tool to determine where to build service facilities and transportation infrastructure
- An application allowing users to determine the location, distance, and capacity of their local hospitals
- A website enabling citizens to report corruption and improve government transparency
- A mapping tool using crowd-sourcing technology to distribute rescue and relief during disasters
- A visualization tool enabling users to map government investments and layer them with other geospatial variables (poverty, maternal health, literacy, etc.) to inform resource allocation decisions
- A disaster management platform of crowd-sourced information regarding the status of transportation systems and roads being down

Promoting Human Rights

Although the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights was designed to be a common standard of human rights for all peoples in all nations, human rights violations exist in almost every part of the world; Amnesty International's 2009 World Report states that individuals are tortured or abused in at least 80 countries, face unfair trials in at least 50 countries, and are restricted in their freedom of expression in at least 70 countries.

In part, these human rights violations occur because over half of the world's population lives in countries that lack the rule of law, defined by the United Nations as "a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards." Countries that lack the rule of law often do not meet the most basic needs of their populations, failing to offer economic opportunity, provide basic justice, or ensure physical security. In such places, corruption often becomes endemic, reflecting and/or resulting in a slow erosion of human rights.

The challenge for this competition is to develop a proposal that will, in some way, combat the causes or consequences of corruption and thus directly or indirectly foster the rule of law. Alternately, a proposal might focus more generally on preserving or promoting the protection of individuals' essential human rights.

Examples of some focus areas could include, but are not limited to: issues such as genocide or mass atrocities including physical and mental cruelty, corruption, gender inequality, slavery, political oppression, civil rights abuses, or forcible relocations.

Scaling Up

Since 2006, over 250 student teams have received recognition for their "Big Idea" in UC Berkeley's Bears Breaking Boundaries and Big Ideas contests. For the 2012-2013 contest, awards are available for student-led initiatives that have previously won a Big Ideas or Bears Breaking Boundaries contest, who have since generated excellent results and are in need of additional support to scale up their project. For the purposes of this category, "scaling up" is defined as outreaching to a new geographic area or underserved population, or adding additional services to an ongoing project serving the same geographic area described in your original winning proposal. In other words, the purpose of the Scaling Up Award is meant to fund a new component of your original project.