

2023- 2024

# BIG IDEAS

## Full Proposal Judging Handbook

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# 2023-2024 Big Ideas Full Proposal Judging Handbook

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Thank you for agreeing to serve as a full proposal judge for the 2023 - 2024 Big Ideas Contest!

One of the greatest contributing factors to the success of Big Ideas is the fantastic network of judges and mentors who support the Contest. Each year, hundreds of energetic and experienced industry leaders and professionals make it possible to identify and support the most promising ideas. Judges have the opportunity to get a first glance at the next generation of innovative ideas, and provide feedback to help shape and improve them. They also become part of the Big Ideas network, which includes opportunities to connect with other industry leaders in the social innovation space.

On behalf of the hundreds of students that participate each year in the Big Ideas Contest and the Big Ideas Staff, we thank you for your commitment to fostering student-led innovation. Your support is an invaluable resource that helps transform student ideas into real-world impact.

This handbook will provide you with key information about the Big Ideas Contest, full proposal components and judging criteria, an overview of the judging platform, and FAQs.

After reviewing this handbook, you can get started by going to:

<https://bigideascontest.submittable.com/login>

Finally, the Big Ideas team is always happy to answer any questions you may have.

You can email us at [pdenny@berkeley.edu](mailto:pdenny@berkeley.edu)

**The deadline for completing all reviews is:**

**Sunday, April 21st, 2024**

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This handbook will provide you with key information about the Big Ideas Contest, expectations for, final round judging criteria, key dates, and FAQs.

In addition to this handbook, judges resources are available at  
<https://bigideascontest.org/network/judges/>

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*“If you ever get depressed about the future of the world, go spend some time with the Big Ideas students.”*

*- Tony Stayner, Big Ideas Contest Judge*

# About the Contest

**Big Ideas Contest:** Big Ideas is an annual, multi-campus, innovation contest aimed at providing funding, support, and recognition to interdisciplinary teams of undergraduate and graduate students who have “big ideas” aimed at addressing pressing social challenges. Since its founding in 2006, Big Ideas has inspired hundreds of creative and high-impact student projects, many of which continue long after winning the Contest. By seeking out novel proposals and providing resources and support to help them succeed, Big Ideas has assisted students in making a difference all over the world.

**Mastercard Foundation Alumni Scholars’ Impact Fund (“Impact Fund”):** In addition to the annual Big Ideas Contest, this year’s programming was extended to include The UC Berkeley Mastercard Foundation Alumni Scholars program, powered by Big Ideas. This program runs parallel to the Big Ideas Contest, with similar application requirements, but is reviewed separately. It supports projects anchored in African countries that focus on creating economic opportunities for both alumni of the UC Berkeley Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program and members of their communities. The Impact Fund is managed at UC Berkeley through the Center for African Studies.

## Contest Structure

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This year the Big Ideas Contest has 8 tracks and is open to innovative undergraduate and graduate student teams from UC Berkeley. The Big Ideas Contest is split into a pre-proposal round in the fall and a full proposal round in the spring.

### Round 1: Pre-Proposal

Eligible students submitted their three-page pre-proposals on December 6th, 2023. 28 Big Ideas teams were selected as finalists to participate in the full proposal round of the Big Ideas Contest, based on judges’ scores and feedback. All pre-proposal teams received detailed feedback from the judges, regardless of whether or not they were selected as finalists. All pre-proposal applicants were notified in February 2024 regarding their status for the final round.

In addition to this, Big Ideas also has partnered with the Center for African Studies at UC Berkeley to offer an additional early-stage innovation program, with 5 teams selected as finalists in the Mastercard Foundation Alumni Scholars Impact Fund (“**Impact Fund**”). Finalists in these programs will work alongside Big Ideas finalists during the full proposal stage and be responsible for the same deliverables (described in the following sections.)

### Round 2: Full Proposal

Finalist teams will have the opportunity to develop and refine their pre-proposals into eight-page full proposals by April 10th, 2024 for Big Ideas teams and Impact Fund teams. In the full proposal round, all finalists will expand on the ideas presented in their pre-proposals, edit their proposals based on judges’ feedback, and refine their project

ideas through collaboration with a Big Ideas mentor (an industry professional matched with the team based on the mentor’s subject expertise and areas of strength). From the finalist pool, approximately 10-15 Big Ideas winners and 3 Impact Fund will be selected to receive an award.

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## 2023 - 2024 Social Impact Tracks

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### Workforce Development

Identify a workforce solution that prepares individuals with the knowledge and skills required to secure employment and advance their careers.

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### Global Health

Develop an action-oriented, interdisciplinary project that would alleviate a global health concern among low-resource communities.

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### Food & Agriculture

Envision a solution to improve our agricultural and food systems by enhancing food security, agricultural sustainability, food access and nutrition.

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### Financial Inclusion

Create novel products, services, tools or mechanisms that either address unmet needs of the financially underserved.

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### Climate Change & Sustainability

Support the adoption of climate management strategies and/or resource alternatives that enhance sustainability and have the potential for broad impact.

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### Education & Literacy

Develop a technology, program or policy to promote inclusive and equitable education, improve literacy, or enhance lifelong learning opportunities

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### Cities & Communities

Design a novel solution that engages and enhances the well-being of campuses, communities, and cities.

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### Art & Social Change

Create an innovative arts project that meaningfully engages with issues of advocacy, justice, and empowerment.

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# Full Proposal Components

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Finalist teams will have the opportunity to develop and refine their pre-proposals into full proposals due on Wednesday, April 10th, 2024.

Finalists are instructed to submit full proposals no more than 8 pages in length, single-spaced, including the required budget and implementation timeline. Teams are permitted up to 1 additional page for team bios (required). Unlike the pre-proposal application, appendices, up to 4 pages, are permitted in the final round. Below is a list of elements that Big Ideas recommends are included in every application. However, students are allowed to modify the order and presentation of the information as needed to tell their story. The required components are as follows:

## 1. Problem Statement

The problem statement is a clear description and background information on the identified problem. An effective problem statement is thoroughly researched, shows a deep understanding of the issue, and builds a strong case to support why the project is needed. This includes but is not limited to: research/statistics on the problem, and/or research/statistics about the target community or market.

## 2. Existing Solutions

Teams should include an overview of any existing services, programs, interventions, or products that have been designed or implemented to address this problem. Where applicable, applicants should discuss the limitations of these approaches, the gaps that still exist, and present research on what has been done in the past and where those solutions fell short.

## 3. Proposed Innovation

The team should provide a summary of the innovative project (e.g. program, service, product, etc.) how it works, and its intended impact. This is the “nuts and bolts” portion of the proposal and focuses on what the project will look like in its 1st year of implementation. It briefly explains any implementation challenges that may arise and how they will be addressed. It may note (but does not focus on) whether the project intends to scale up or expand in future years.

**3a. Progress to Date: Mastercard Foundation Alumni Scholars Impact Fund ONLY.** Impact Fund teams (not Big Ideas applicants) should summarize any progress made to date (Milestones achieved, partnerships, funding, publicity, awards/achievements, etc.)

## 4. Implementation Timeline

The timeline describes the key next steps for implementing the idea over the next year. Big Ideas awards will be disbursed in June/July 2024. Therefore, for the purposes of this Contest, the “next year” is defined as June 2024-June 2025. The majority of the application should focus on this timeframe,

however, teams may mention work conducted prior to or following this 1-year timeframe in order to convey the broader context or impact of the project.

## 5. Measuring Success

Teams should include information about how they will monitor or measure the impact or success of their project throughout the 1st year of implementation (June 2024-June 2025). This does not need to be a formal monitoring and evaluation plan, but can take the form of metrics and methods to make sure they can track their progress.

## 6. Budget

Includes both expected costs and revenue for the next year of the project (June 2024-June 2025.)

\*Note: The funding requested from Big Ideas can be no greater than \$10,000. If anticipated 1st year expenses are greater than \$10,000 total, the team should convey a realistic plan for securing additional funds (e.g., additional grants, fundraising, revenue generation, etc.)

## 7. Team Bios

A list of key project team members with brief biographies that explain the capability of the team to pursue their idea.

## 8. Application Video

Teams will submit a short application video between 60 and 90 seconds. The video is an opportunity for teams to introduce themselves, explain what they are doing and why, and detail anything else they want judges to know about the team or the project.

This is the first year Big Ideas has required an application video, thus we are utilizing the [Y-Combinator Application Video model](#). This format requires that teams speak directly to the camera, leaving out all production aspects (such as music, effects, images, slides, “post-production wizardry,” etc.) This is not a video making contest and no fancy editing is necessary (or desirable).

## Full Proposal Judging Criteria

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### Criteria 1: Innovative solution (30%)

Is your Big Idea a creative and innovative solution to a significant problem? Include in your proposal how your Big Idea does the following:

- Addresses a major societal problem, and conveys a clear understanding of that problem.
- Approaches the challenge in a new or unique way



- Provides a timely solution that should be implemented now

## Criteria 2: Effective implementation strategy (40%)

How would you operationalize your Big Idea over the next year (June 2024-June 2025) to put you on a path for long-term impact? Include in your proposal how your Big Idea implementation plan does the following:

- Assembles a team, including potential partnerships, with the right skills and experience, such as technical, business, field and marketing
- Demonstrates community or market familiarity, including cultural, ethical, and legal implications
- Identifies potential risks or obstacles, and proposes strategies to avoid or minimize those challenges.
- Incorporates a 1-year timeline, metrics for success, and budget that convey a clear plan for future growth
- **Impact Fund Teams (ONLY)** should emphasize and describe the project's presence in Africa.

## Criteria 3: Persuasive proposal (30%)

Can you convince potential partners and supporters to fund or assist your Big Idea? Include in your elevator pitch and proposal clear, concise, and compelling answers to the following:

- What problem do you solve, and why is this project urgent now?
- How does your innovation work?
- What progress will you make over the next year (June 2024-June 2025), and what will you do with any funds you are awarded?
- How will the world be different in the future with your innovative solution?

\*Note: The funding requested from Big Ideas can be no greater than \$10,000. Funding requests from Impact Fund Finalists can be no greater than \$25,000. If anticipated 1st year expenses are greater than the max funding request, the team should convey a realistic plan for securing additional funds (e.g., additional grants, fundraising, revenue generation, etc.)

## Judging Timeline and Commitment

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The official review period for judges begins Wednesday, April 11th, 2024. **All reviews must be submitted no later than Sunday, April 21st, 2024 (11:59pm). Each judge will be assigned 4 - 6 proposals to review.**

**The entire review process should take 60-90 minutes per proposal** on average (4-6 hours total.) Each judge will be asked to review no more than 6 applications in order to allow them sufficient time to carefully review each proposal and provide comprehensive qualitative feedback to each student team.

Winners will be notified in May and judges will receive a list of the winners shortly thereafter.

### Emphasis on Qualitative Feedback

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*“The feedback from the judges was incredibly helpful because it gave me insight into things that I honestly had not thought about.”*

*Diana Pascual Alonzo, Youth Leadership*

A critical goal of the Big Ideas Contest is to provide encouragement and support to all applicants. Thus, **we ask that judges provide substantive and constructive feedback to every proposal that is reviewed.**

Please provide applicants with critical insights into the strengths and weaknesses of their big idea. We know from conversations with past teams that **this feedback is one of the most valuable aspects of the** competition because it helps students refine and develop their big idea. Some teams that don't win an award this year will use the judges' feedback to re-apply to Big Ideas next year or enter other student innovation competitions.

When completing your reviews, please be mindful of the following:

1. Reviews should be written as though you are communicating directly with the applicants.
2. Applicants will receive only the qualitative feedback. Scores/ratings will not be shared with applicants and qualitative feedback will remain anonymous.
3. This is a learning experience for students. Please maintain a respectful and constructive tone.

## Privacy Policy

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It is required that judges maintain the confidentiality of the proposals before, during and after the judging process. For the duration of the Contest any communication with applicants must be initiated through staff representatives of the Big Ideas Contest.

## Capstone Event

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Each year, the Big Ideas Contest culminates with a Grand Prize Pitch Day and Awards Celebration.. This event presents a wonderful opportunity to meet the teams, celebrate their accomplishments, and learn more about the most innovative projects in this year's Contest. They are also a valuable opportunity to connect with your fellow judges and mentors and expand your network in the social impact space. **We hope you will join us!**

### Grand Prize Pitch Day & Awards Celebration

- May 1st | 4-7pm | B100 Blum Hall, UC Berkeley  
The Big Ideas community will gather for its annual Grand Prize Pitch & Awards Celebration to recognize the most outstanding innovations in the 2023-2024 contest. A select group of Big Ideas finalists (4-6) will be invited to participate in the Grand Prize Pitch event for the opportunity to win up to an additional \$10,000. Following the pitches, there will be a poster and demo session featuring all of the projects and innovators from the 2023-2024 Big Ideas Contest.

# Accessing Proposals and Submitting Feedback

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## 1. Portal URL:

This year we are using a new application platform, Submittable, which we expect will improve and streamline the application and review process. The Submittable judging portal can be accessed at: <https://bigideascontest.submittable.com/login>

If you participated in the pre-proposal round in November 2023, the process is the same as before.

## 2. Username and Password:

**New Judges** (i.e. you did not participate in the pre-proposal review in November 2023):

If you are a new judge this year you have been sent an invitation to create a Submittable user profile.

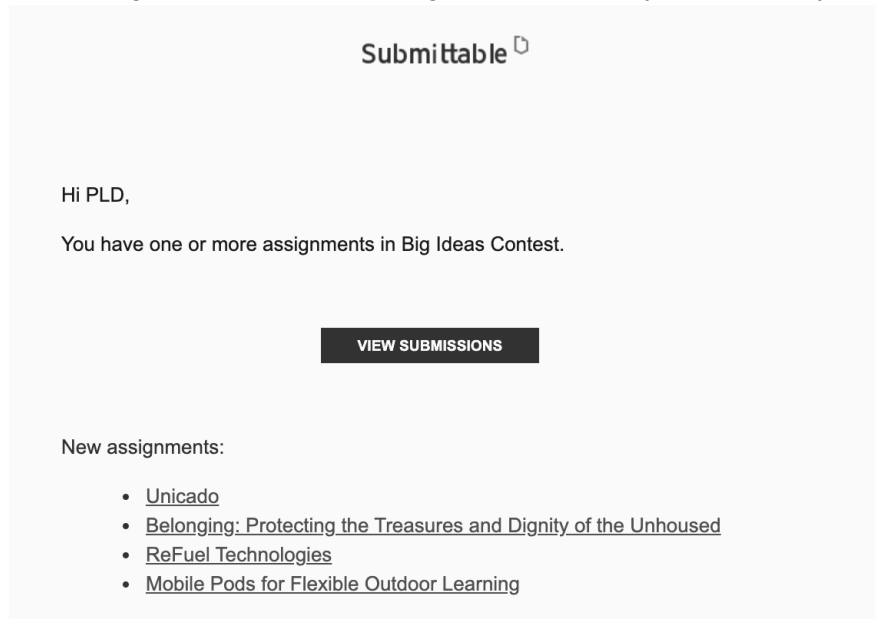
Please do this ASAP as we can not assign you any applications to review until this step is completed.

If you have not received this invitation from Submittable, please notify us and we resend this to you.

**Returning Judges**(i.e. you participated in the pre-proposal review in November 2023):

If you are a returning judge, you will log in to the review portal using the username/ password that you created previously.

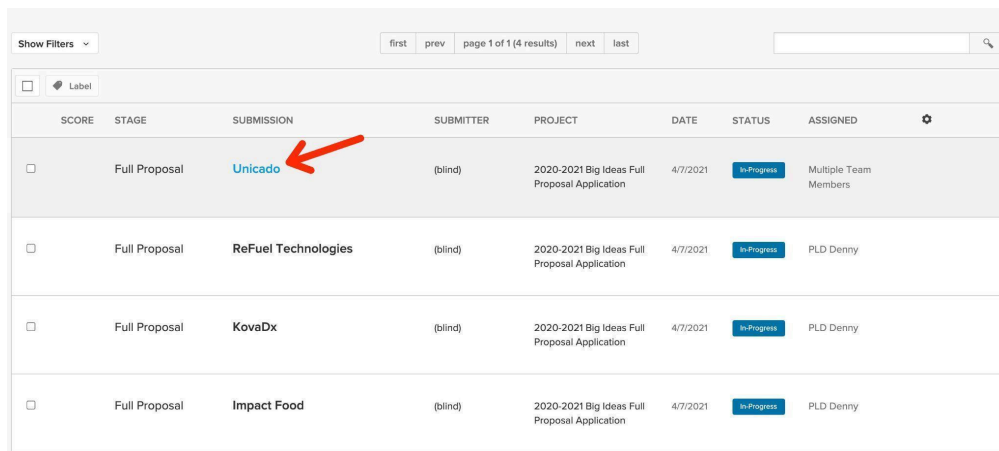
On Thursday evening, April 11th, everyone who has a Submittable profile will receive an email from Submittable letting you know that you have been assigned four applications to review. Click on the “View Submissions” and log into Submittable using the profile that you previously created.



### 3. Landing Page:

Once you log in, you will be taken to a landing page that shows the title of each submission. To begin reviewing pre-proposals, click on the name of the proposal.

**Note:** Each judge will be assigned to review four applications in the final round.

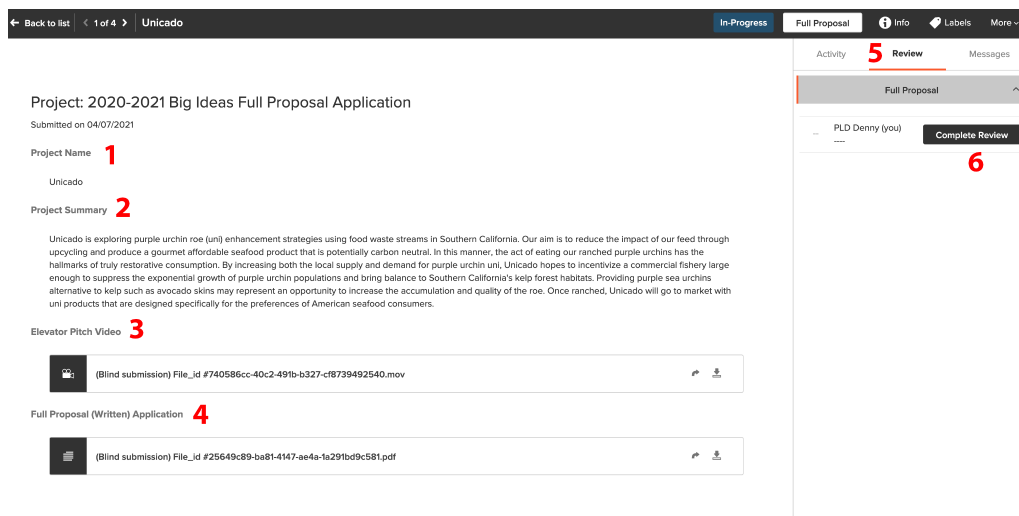


SCORE	STAGE	SUBMISSION	SUBMITTER	PROJECT	DATE	STATUS	ASSIGNED
<input type="checkbox"/>	Full Proposal	<a href="#">Unicado</a>	(blind)	2020-2021 Big Ideas Full Proposal Application	4/7/2021	In-Progress	Multiple Team Members
<input type="checkbox"/>	Full Proposal	ReFuel Technologies	(blind)	2020-2021 Big Ideas Full Proposal Application	4/7/2021	In-Progress	PLD Denny
<input type="checkbox"/>	Full Proposal	KovaDx	(blind)	2020-2021 Big Ideas Full Proposal Application	4/7/2021	In-Progress	PLD Denny
<input type="checkbox"/>	Full Proposal	Impact Food	(blind)	2020-2021 Big Ideas Full Proposal Application	4/7/2021	In-Progress	PLD Denny

### 4. Viewing Your Assigned Submissions:

Once you have clicked on a submission, on the left side of the page you will see the “Application” information which contains: 1. The project title, 2. The 150-word project summary, 3. The link to the 60-90 second elevator pitch video, and 4. The link to the 8-page written application

Once you are ready to begin reviewing the application: 5. Click the “Review” tab in the top left corner of the page, and 6. Click the “Complete Review” button.



← Back to list | 1 of 4 | Unicado | In-Progress | Full Proposal | Info | Labels | More

Activity | **5** Review | Messages

Project: 2020-2021 Big Ideas Full Proposal Application  
Submitted on 04/07/2021

Project Name **1**  
Unicado

Project Summary **2**  
Unicado is exploring purple urchin roe (pur) enhancement strategies using food waste streams in Southern California. Our aim is to reduce the impact of our feed through upcycling and produce a gourmet affordable seafood product that is potentially carbon neutral. In this manner, the act of eating our rancher purple urchins has the hallmarks of truly restorative consumption. By increasing both the local supply and demand for purple urchin uni, Unicado hopes to incentivize a commercial fishery large enough to suppress the exponential growth of purple urchin populations and bring balance to Southern California's kelp forest habitats. Providing purple sea urchins alternative to kelp such as avocado skins may represent an opportunity to increase the accumulation and quality of the roe. Once rancher, Unicado will go to market with uni products that are designed specifically for the preferences of American seafood consumers.

Elevator Pitch Video **3**  
[\(Blind submission\) File\\_id #740586cc-40c2-491b-b327-cf8739492540.mov](#)

Full Proposal (Written) Application **4**  
[\(Blind submission\) File\\_id #25649c89-ba81-4147-ae4a-1a291bd9c581.pdf](#)

PLD Denny (you) | **6** Complete Review

## 5. Adding your Review:

After clicking the “Complete Review” button you will see the judging scorecard for that pre-proposal. It will contain a mix of dropdown menus and comment boxes, where you will provide your feedback on each section. Before you begin reviewing the submission, you must agree to the “Privacy Policy” at the top of the page.

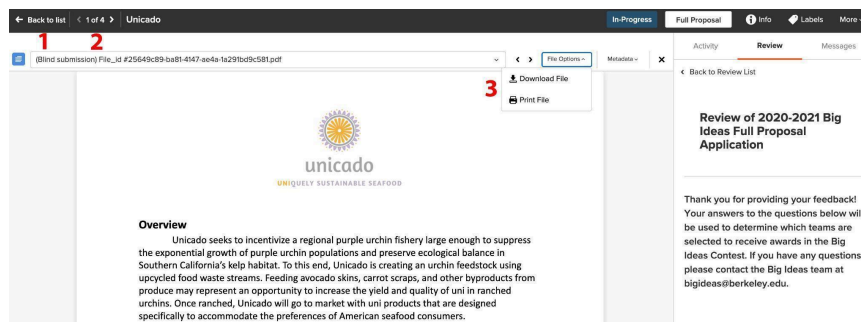
### Privacy Policy

By serving as a Big Ideas judge you agree to maintain the confidentiality of the proposals before, during and after the judging process. For the duration of the contest, any communications with applicants should be initiated through staff representatives of the Big Ideas contest only. Please check the box below to acknowledge that you have read and agree to our privacy policy.

I Agree to the Privacy Policy stated above \*

Note, once you click on a file, the written proposal or video will be viewable on the left side of your screen for reference while you complete your review. (You can scale the size of the windows to make the review box larger or smaller by clicking/dragging on the column divider line, depending on your view preference.)

To return to your list of assigned proposals, you can click on: 1. The “Back to List” button on the top left side of your window. Alternatively, you can: 2. Move to the next submission by clicking on the arrows next to “Back to list.” If you would like to download and/or print the files so that you can read them offline: 3. Click the “File Options” button and select your choice.



## 6. Award Recommendation:

New to the contest this round, we are asking judges to evaluate whether or not they feel the application is deserving of a Big Ideas award. The three dropdown options are “yes”, “no” and “maybe/unsure” and judges are asked to select one of these. For the four applications you have been assigned to review, we ask you to limit your “yes” response to no more than 2 applications.

Should this project receive a Big Ideas award? \*

Select...

- Yes (Recommend award)
- No (Do not recommend award)
- Maybe / Unsure

## 7. Saving Drafts and Submitting Reviews:

If you're in the middle of a review and would like to finish entering your feedback later, click "Save Draft" at the bottom of the review scorecard. This will allow you to begin where you left off or make any changes the next time you log in. If you do not wish to save your progress, you can simply click "Cancel" to exit. Once you have finished your review, click "Submit Review" and you can navigate to other pre-proposals or logout.

**Problem Statement and Product Overview**  
On average, people speak about 16,000 words per day - our education, employment, and socialization necessitate constant verbal communication [5]. For the approximately 1 million Americans who use American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary medium of communication in the U.S., this is tragically not an option [7]. When considering labor force statistics, unemployment and underemployment rates amongst deaf people are as high as 70% in the U.S. [5]. Furthermore, 1 in 4 deaf people decide to quit their jobs due to discrimination [1]. Due to a lack of accommodations and opportunities outside of low-income jobs, many people with hearing and speech impairments are discouraged to pursue employment and opt out of the labor force. Thus, approximately 43% of deaf people are not in the labor force, compared to 22% of the general population [3]. These people are restricted from equal opportunities to learn and rise in the workplace. Despite improvements in technology and accommodations that make it easier for deaf people to work, deaf job seekers say employers still do not believe they should be hired due to the difficulty in communication between employers and the deaf employees.

To bolster their opportunities and bridge the gap of communication, we are developing Signum, a video chat platform for people with hearing and speech impairments, using a machine learning model to translate video of American Sign Language (ASL) hand gestures to text. In the short-term, our video call platform would give 18-35-year old employees with speaking impairments the opportunity to communicate more effectively with their colleagues, and give them the chance to build their skills and succeed in the workplace. Rather than having to type or handwrite, employees with speaking impairments can use our platform to seamlessly communicate with ASL, which is twice as fast as typing on average, enabling a natural, comfortable conversation where ASL speakers can effectively collaborate in the workplace. In the long-term, we will implement Signum in conjunction with popular video chat platforms such as Skype, Zoom, and Cisco WebEx.

**Landscape Analysis**  
ASL translation software currently exists but is limited by expensive hardware that has very specialized applications. MautonSavoy Inc. has developed UNI, a portable mobile device that tracks hand movement to translate ASL to text [6]. Researchers at Michigan State University are building Deep ASL, a wearable camera that translates ASL gestures to text [4]. These products have the potential to improve the lives of those with hearing and speech impairments, but do not have applications in workplace video calling. Furthermore, an engineering team at an Australian healthcare company known as Coviva has developed

**1. Do you have any additional general comments about this proposal that you would like to share with the applicants?**

"The Signum team has produced a very concise and compelling proposal for their project. While the project appears to be very complex, it looks like the team is well positioned for success.

The first thing that the team needs to do, and appears to be very capable of, is to begin to prototype their system solution and to start working on the various iterations right now.

To do this, in the absence of its future personnel needs and requirements, my suggestion would be to have the current Signum team partner-up with people from the speech language pathology department so that they can get a better feel for the needs of their future clients and to get a beta group together that will help them with the product iterations."

**Do you think there are other similar ideas/projects that the team should investigate or organizations you think the team should pursue partnerships with?**

As mentioned above, the Signum team, if they have not done so already, needs to really define the needs and pain points of their target market. This can be done (again as mentioned above) by getting several hearing-impaired people interested in helping with the development of the project. This can be done by looking for possible candidates from the Linguist school at UC-Berkeley or some other educational institution.

1 Save Draft 2 Submit Review

## 8. Tracking Progress

Once you've submitted a review, in the list of your assignments you will see 1. a score for the proposal on the left side of the submission, and 2. a green check button to the right side of the submission.

Once all of your assigned submissions are marked with a score and a green check, you have officially completed your reviews! Note: You may go back and edit any of your reviews (even completed ones) up until the April 23rd review deadline. To do so, just click on the submission and click the editing button under the "Review" tab.

## Big Ideas Contest

View Your Site

Show Filters

first prev page 1 of 1 (5 results) next last

SCORE	STAGE	SUBMISSION ↑	SUBMITTER	PROJECT	DATE	STATUS	ASSIGNED
	Pre-proposal review	Jivo Health #GLOBAL HEALTH	(blind)	Big Ideas Contest	11/20/2020	In Progress	Phillip Denny
	Pre-proposal review	Mental Health Self-Help Groups in Rural India #GLOBAL HEALTH	(blind)	Big Ideas Contest	11/20/2020	In Progress	Multiple Team Members
85.0	Pre-proposal review	Signum (Test Submission)	(blind)	Big Ideas Contest	9/7/2020	In Progress	Phillip Denny

## FAQs

**1. When are my scores and feedback due?**

Judges' scores and feedback are due on April 21st, 2024.

**2. How do I access the judging portal?**

The judging portal can be accessed at: <https://bigideascontest.submittable.com/login>

**3. What should I do if my password doesn't work?**

If you've judged with Big Ideas in the past it is possible that the password provided will not work. Simply click "Forgot My Password" to generate a new password. If that does not work, please reach out to Phillip Denny by email ([pdenny@berkeley.edu](mailto:pdenny@berkeley.edu)).

**4. How many proposals will I be assigned?**

Each judge will read 4 applications in the final round. If you wish to review more applications please contact the Big Ideas team.

**5. About how long should it take to read, score, and comment on one proposal?**

We estimate that it will take judges approximately 60-90 minutes to read, score and comment on their 4 proposals. The entire review process should take 4-6 hours.

**6. Once I begin entering scores on the judging scorecard page on Submittable, can I save my work and return to the page later to finish scoring?**

Yes. Click "Save Draft" at the bottom of the judging scorecard page to save your work. You can return at any time prior to the judging deadline to complete or edit your scores and feedback by clicking "Review" at the top of the page. (Refer to "Saving Drafts and Submitting Reviews" in Section 7 above.)

**7. How many winners will be selected to receive Big Ideas awards?**

Up to 10 total teams will be selected to receive awards.

**8. How much financial support do winning teams receive and when will it be distributed?**

Award amounts this year are either \$5,000 or \$10,000. In addition, 4-6 teams will be invited to participate in the Big Ideas Grand Prize Pitch Day event on May 3 where they will have the opportunity



to win an additional \$10,000.

**9. What if I suspect issues related to plagiarism?**

Please contact the Big Ideas team immediately. We will look into the matter.

**10. What if I want to get in touch with a team?**

The Big Ideas team is happy to connect judges and students. Send us an email and we will facilitate an introduction if both parties indicate an interest in connecting. Please do not reach out to teams directly without first contacting the Big Ideas team.

**11. Who can I contact if I have questions during the judging phase?**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Phillip Denny by email ([pdenny@berkeley.edu](mailto:pdenny@berkeley.edu)).