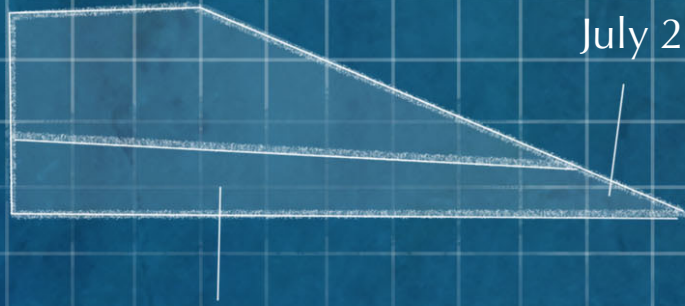
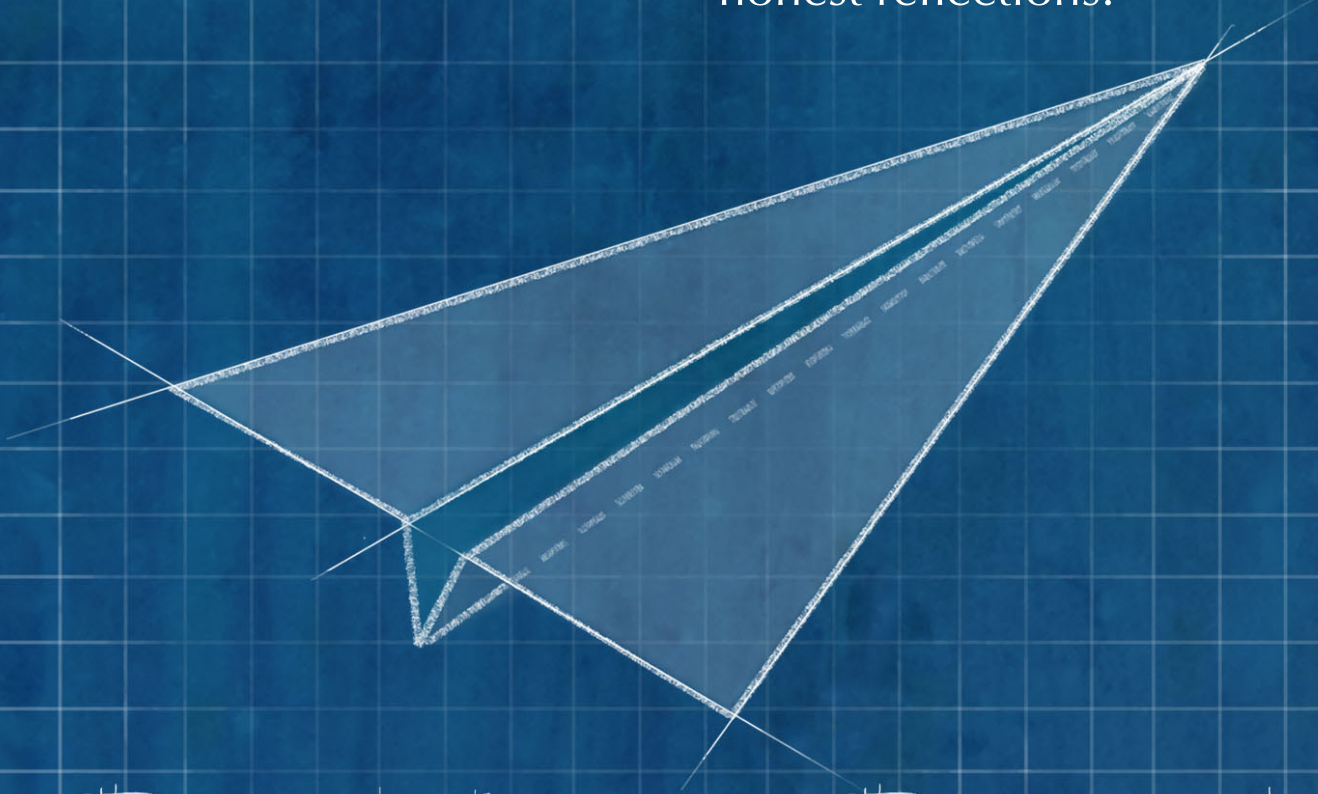


July 2013



How to manage a student-led innovation contest: proven contest management strategies, lessons learned, and honest reflections.



Big Ideas@Berkeley TOOLKIT

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“Cal Berkeley is again in the vanguard as a new generation of student activists emerges to help address some of the most pressing social issues of our era: energy efficiency, Third World poverty and disease, and sustainable housing, among others. The quiet activism pursued by today’s activists may not generate as many headlines as the actions of their well-known predecessors, but they may ultimately have greater impact as they mobilize the edge to transform the core.”

- John Hagel and John Seely Brown,
“Student Activism Can Change the World.”
Business Week, 5/30/2008



Introduction

Big Ideas@Berkeley is a year-long, annual student innovation contest aimed at providing funding, support, and encouragement to interdisciplinary teams of University of California undergraduate and graduate students who have creative solutions to address pressing social, environmental, or economic challenges. The Big Ideas program is managed by the Blum Center for Developing Economies, an interdisciplinary Center established in March 2006 at UC Berkeley to improve the wellbeing of the poor by developing innovative technologies/systems and by inspiring a new generation of global changemakers.

Since the Contest's founding six year ago, the Blum Center has continually modified the design and management of the Contest, and as a result, has learned a great deal about successful and unsuccessful strategies for supporting student-led innovation. Thanks to continuous reflection and iterative change, the Blum Center has developed a proven, replicable model for managing innovation contests on university campuses.

This Big Ideas Toolkit describes these proven contest management strategies, along with our lessons learned, best practices, and honest reflections on the process of managing a student-led innovation contest. It is intended as a living document rather than a finished publication. As the Contest grows, the Toolkit will be informed and updated based on new activities and feedback from students and our partners.

Specifically, the Toolkit shares the goals of Big Ideas and how the Contest has been intentionally designed to meet those goals. Along with an overview of how the Contest is managed, the Toolkit contains an appendix of the tools that are used each Contest year (e.g., student application requirements, recruitment emails to judges, judging scorecards, evaluation surveys) that can be replicated or adapted to fit the needs of Big Ideas Contests at other colleges and universities.

At its core, Big Ideas believes that the best projects spring from collaboration. Big Ideas@Berkeley strongly encourages interdisciplinary collaboration among student teams, and in the same vein, the managers of Big Ideas@Berkeley seek to partner and collaborate with other universities which may be looking to initiate or expand a student-led innovation competition of their own. The Blum Center is happy to discuss any aspect of the Toolkit, provide additional resources, and explore the possibility for collaboration.

For additional information, or to request access to the on-line version of the Big Ideas Toolkit, please visit our website (<http://bigideas.berkeley.edu/toolkit>) or contact us at bigideas@berkeley.edu or 510-666-9120.

Executive Summary

Mission & Goals

Big Ideas@Berkeley is a year-long, annual innovation contest aimed at providing funding, support, and encouragement to interdisciplinary teams of UC undergraduate and graduate students who have “big ideas.”

Big Ideas is both an education model and a research platform. It trains students to develop their ideas, transforms the way they think about their role in society, and provides them with funding and support to launch social ventures.

Unlike business plan competitions or many other innovation contests held on university campuses, Big Ideas aims to support students from all disciplines who are at the very beginning stages of developing an idea. Business plan competitions are designed to encourage and vet entrepreneurs. The Big Ideas Contest is designed to encourage and create a platform for global social changemakers. Winning student teams can be entrepreneurial, but ultimately it's not about making money, it's about creating social change.

Program Management

The core management of the Big Ideas program includes a program director (75% staff position), two part-time graduate students, and one part-time undergraduate.

Funding & Support

The Big Ideas ecosystem is made possible by generous support of a few key donors.

Topic-specific Contest categories (see Categories and Category Development below) are each sponsored by a campus partner, or external partner. These category sponsors provide funding for the prize awards, support publicity efforts, and help recruit judges and mentors.

On a limited basis, Big Ideas enlists the support of “in-kind” (non-funding) sponsors who can offer critical advice, support, and exposure for a particular category.

Category Development

The 2012-13 Big Ideas Contest included nine separate categories. Global Poverty Alleviation, Information Technology for Society, and Improving Student Life are the longest running and most popular categories.

At the end of each Contest year, Big Ideas staff conduct a review to determine a) which categories to renew (or not), b) which categories should be modified, and c) where there may be opportunities for new categories.

When contemplating a new category, three key factors are considered.

1. Is the category consistent with the mission and scope of the Big Ideas Contest?
2. Will there be enough student interest to support the category?
3. Are there sponsorship and funding opportunities to support the category?

When drafting a new category, it is important that the category description be clear and concise enough that prospective applicants understand the category's intent, but also sufficiently broad in order to attract potential applicants from a variety of disciplines.

Contest Structure

Big Ideas@Berkeley spans the course of an entire academic year and includes the following milestones:

August: Contest Begins
August to October: Information Sessions, Workshops, Networking Events
November: Pre-proposal Deadline (5 pages)

December: Finalists Announced

January to March: Mentorship Period

Mid-March: Full Proposal Deadline (10 pages)

April: Winners Announced

Proposals must be student-led initiatives and include at least one matriculated student from an eligible campus. Projects that are extensions of faculty-led research are not eligible.

The Pre-proposal round places a greater emphasis on the originality and creativity of the idea. In contrast, the Full Proposal shifts the emphasis to the viability and potential impact of the idea.

Big Ideas also hosts three additional events in the spring semester that provide exposure for the students and also promote and market the Big Ideas Contest:

- People's Choice Video Contest
- Grand Prize Pitch Day
- Big Ideas Awards Celebration

Contest Resources

Big Ideas@Berkeley has developed an evolving network of support services and opportunities for feedback to assist students at each phase of the Contest as they develop their ideas. These resources currently include:

- Information Sessions
- Writing & Budgeting Workshops
- Editing Blitzes
- Graduate Student Advising
- Networking & Team Building Opportunities
- Judging Feedback

Mentorship

In the 2012-13 Contest year, 46 finalist teams were paired with mentors. Big Ideas finalists cite the mentorship as the most important and impactful resource provided to applicants during the Contest.

Starting in mid-January, Big Ideas finalists are matched with mentors: Bay Area professionals from a diverse set of fields including business management/administration, engineering, agriculture, and health services.

Finalists and mentors work together approximately two hours per week for eight weeks to refine the teams' project ideas, develop partnerships, and craft ten-page Full Proposals.

The most effective mentorship recruitment strategies utilize the faculty and professional networks of each category sponsor (including in-kind sponsors). Additionally, it is important to identify and build relationships with effective mentors to increase the likelihood that they will participate in future years.

Judging

In the 2012-13 Contest year, Big Ideas received 160 Pre-proposal applications (representing 550 students from across 75 majors). To manage the review process for this number of applications, 87 Pre-proposal judges were recruited. From the applicant pool, 54 finalists were selected to develop and submit Full Proposal applications. Big Ideas recruited 32 Full Proposal judges to review them.

Pre-proposal judges are expected to read and score a subset of between six and eight applications in their assigned category. In contrast, Full Proposal judges are expected to read all of the Full Proposals submitted in their category (between three and ten, depending on the category).

In the Pre-proposal round, judges focus primarily on the creativity and originality of the idea, while in the Full Proposal round judges focus primarily on the project's potential social impact and viability.

Much like mentors, the most effective judge recruitment strategies utilize the faculty and professional networks of each category sponsor (including in-kind sponsors). Building relationships in order to retain effective and reliable judges is critical.

Online Contest Platform

Over the past three Contest cycles Big Ideas@Berkeley has used three different on-line platforms. These platforms all had their strengths and drawbacks, and as a result, none of these has emerged as a perfect option. Based on past experience, Big Ideas@Berkeley staff are using the following metrics to re-evaluate additional platforms over Summer 2013:

- Flexibility
- User Interface
- Content Management
- Appearance/Identity
- Customer Service
- Cost

Student Outreach

Big Ideas@Berkeley uses a variety of strategies to maximize outreach opportunities. These strategies include face-to-face efforts (e.g., tabling), indirect efforts (e.g., informing academic advisors of the Contest), and use of social media. A summary of these strategies is provided in the Student Outreach section and additional resources can be found in the Tools appendix.

Prize Awards

Big Ideas prize money is an award for an innovative idea. It is not a grant with requirements, benchmarks, and deliverables, but a monetary prize for articulating a creative, impactful idea. (However, although teams are not required to implement their ideas, nearly all of them do so.)

Winning teams typically receive an award ranging from \$1000 to \$10,000. The average prize award across categories typically amounts to \$5000. The exact amount is determined primarily on the final overall scores and, to a smaller extent, on the amount of money requested by each team.

Evaluation and Feedback

Big Ideas@Berkeley conducts both formal and informal evaluations that rigorously evaluate the Contest's programmatic goals and identify areas for improvement. This process includes both formal surveys of mentors and judges and (most importantly) applicants.

More recently, Big Ideas@Berkeley initiated an informal evaluation process that includes reaching out to past winners and conducting personal interviews to assess their progress and future plans. This has been an extremely effective tool for collecting project updates and developing a greater sense of connection to and commitment from past winners.

“The power of [Big Ideas@Berkeley] is that it allows students to experiment earlier in their lives. They don’t need to wait to complete a PhD and get a faculty appointment to try something new. I think that’s very important, otherwise we waste a whole kind of generation, just waiting for the credentials to do something they have some capacity to do earlier.”

-Nora Silver, Director,
Center for Non-Profit & Public
Leadership, Haas School of Business



Big Ideas@Berkeley Mission & Goals

Big Ideas@Berkeley is a year-long, annual innovation Contest aimed at providing funding, support, and encouragement to interdisciplinary teams of UC undergraduate and graduate students who have “big ideas.” It is a proven, replicable model for tapping the creativity and energy of students, particularly at research universities, to address the challenges of the 21st century.

At its core, the goals of Big Ideas are two-fold: a) to transform the way students learn and think about their role in society, and b) to seed the creation of new ideas by providing students with the resources and skills necessary to turn their ideas into sustainable ventures with social impact.

Notably, these goals are of equal significance to Big Ideas—neither supersedes the other in importance. All of the contest components described in this Toolkit have been intentionally designed with these two goals in mind.

Big Ideas@Berkeley gives students a platform from which they can adapt theoretical coursework into hands-on, applied projects with real-world impact. The Contest challenges students to step outside their traditional academic boundaries, take a risk, and use their education, interests, and skills to solve important social, economic, and environmental challenges. It promotes autonomy, initiative, and teamwork early in students' careers, thereby broadening their career perspectives and understanding of how they might use their education as a platform to improve society.

Unlike business plan competitions or many other innovation contests held on university campuses, Big Ideas aims to support students who are at the very beginning stages of developing a big idea, before they are investor-ready or prepared to enter the marketplace. Students who enter the Contest often have never entered other innovation or business plan Contests and typically have not written a grant proposal. Typically, prospective applicants have developed their big ideas after enrolling in classes that sparked their interests, visiting a country where they have witnessed injustice or poverty, or working with a population whose needs they believe have not fully been met. Students who already have developed an implementation plan, have begun implementing their project, or have an established social venture are encouraged to instead apply to a traditional business plan competition (e.g., the Global Social Venture Competition or the Bplan Competition, both at UC Berkeley).

Big Ideas@Berkeley Contest	B-Plan (Entrepreneurship) Competitions
Focus on social impact	Focus on generating profit
Inspire and develop creative ideas for new products and services	Advance pre-existing, commercially viable businesses
Campus-based, multidisciplinary team-based approach	Centered within Business & Engineering departments
Broad representation from both undergraduate and graduate students	Principally involve grad students

To support these earliest stage ideas, the Contest is designed to be a year-long process that assists students in developing the skills necessary to launch successful projects (e.g., critical thinking and reflection, market analysis, and pitch development skills). In other words, the philosophy of the Contest assumes that students enter the Contest with creative ideas that are designed to make social impact, and Contest resources are designed to assist students in making their project ideas feasible, scalable, and appropriate for the population they wish to serve.

Further, the Big Ideas@Berkeley Contest is designed to encourage and create a platform for global social changemakers. Unlike traditional business plan or entrepreneurship competitions, which are designed to vet entrepreneurs, the ultimate goal of Big Ideas is to support students as they create lasting, positive social change. As a result, winning projects may be entrepreneurial and create for-profit venture, but more importantly, they must focus on social challenges. For example, Big Ideas teams tackle issues such as improving smallholder farmer incomes, creating transparency around political platforms, providing dental care for the homeless, and bringing light to hospitals and clinics in rural Africa.

Big Ideas@Berkeley History

In 2005, the UC Berkeley Office of the Chancellor created a competition called Bears Breaking Boundaries to mobilize resources to support UC Berkeley students. Initially the competition was jointly funded by the Omidyar Network, an investment group created by eBay founder Pierre Omidyar; the Associated Students of the University of California (ASUC); and numerous institutes and research centers across campus. The competition was designed to encourage student-led research initiatives and to increase the role that students play in pioneering research, education, and service activities on campus. The competition involved multiple categories, as shown in the sidebar.

In its first five years, the structure of the Bears Breaking Boundaries competition was primarily a white paper contest: Student teams were invited to submit papers describing their big ideas without specific guidelines about what to include in their proposals. After a single round of judging, winners were selected within multiple categories to receive awards ranging from \$1000 to \$10,000 to be used as scholarships or to advance their project ideas.

In 2010, The Blum Center for Developing Economies at UC Berkeley began managing the Bears Breaking Boundaries competition and renamed it Big Ideas@Berkeley. The Blum Center is a multidisciplinary center that aims to join together world-class faculty, inspiring new curriculum, and innovative technologies, services, and business models to create real-world solutions for the poor. Given its focus on driving innovation and student experiential learning, the Blum Center continues to manage the Contest as a resource for UC Berkeley and several other eligible UC campuses.

Notably, many other universities host innovation contests that are housed within business schools and overseen by business school faculty and staff. Big Ideas believes, however, that to succeed in an entrepreneurial endeavor, all students, regardless of discipline, benefit from approaching social challenges from a wide range of viewpoints. The Big Ideas@Berkeley Contest benefits from being housed at a center focused on global issues and from partnerships developed with business, engineering, social sciences, public health, economics, and other key departments. With this interdisciplinary approach, the Big Ideas@Berkeley Contest is uniquely positioned to offer to early-stage changemakers a wide range of perspectives and resources from multiple disciplines.

2006 Big Ideas Categories

1. Curricular Innovation
2. Green Cities
3. Neglected Diseases
4. Clean Energy
5. Information
Technology for Society
6. Social
Entrepreneurship
7. Science and
Technology Policy
8. Serious Games
9. Improving Lower
Sproul Plaza
10. Designing the
Next "X Prize"

Early on, the Blum Center sought feedback on the Contest from Social Sector Solutions (S3), a fifteen-week strategy consultation provided by the Haas School of Business. Following an extensive review that included surveys of students and past winners, the S3 team made several recommendations for improvements:

- Make Big Ideas more accessible to students from all disciplines: Surveys indicated students from every discipline were equally interested in participating in student innovation competitions. However, the vast majority of students who actually entered these types of contests came from engineering and business school programs. The S3 team recommended that Big Ideas emphasize a multidisciplinary team approach and broaden category descriptions and outreach efforts to attract a diverse set of students.
- Make Big Ideas more accessible to undergraduate students: Although 80% of first and second year undergraduates indicated they would be interested in participating in an idea contest, only 30% had heard of Big Ideas. The S3 team concluded that Big Ideas needed to ramp-up its marketing efforts to increase awareness of the Contest, especially among lower level undergraduates.
- Provide an ecosystem of resources to assist and encourage students as they develop their ideas: Although 72% of students surveyed said they would be interested in participating in a business plan or idea contest, less than 10% had actually done so. The S3 team concluded that, by offering additional resources (mentorship, workshops, networking) Big Ideas would encourage broad student involvement, provide needed supports to all students who wished to enter the Contest, and level the playing field between undergraduate and graduate student applicants.

Incorporating feedback from S3, the Blum Center moved the Contest from a one-round white paper competition to a two-round, resource-rich Contest that aims not only to fund, but also to support and encourage early-stage changemakers in solving pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. Furthermore, Big Ideas developed uniform branding and style guides and increased its marketing and outreach in an effort to attract more students, especially undergraduates and students from underrepresented departments.

For more information about the history of Big Ideas@Berkeley and the importance of student-led innovation, see the following:

- UC Berkeley NewsCenter, "\$100,000 competition to fund UC Berkeley students' best ideas to change the world", March 1, 2006, <http://bit.ly/12sTG1j>
- Bloomberg Business Week, "Student Activism Can Change the World", By John Hagel and John Seely Brown, May 30, 2008, <http://buswk.co/17FdVSK>
- Science News, "Taken for Granted: A Big Idea about Fostering Innovation", October 3, 2008, <http://bit.ly/1262ag9>

Program Management & Responsibilities

As the Big Ideas Contest has grown, both in terms of the number of applications received each year and in terms of the resources and supports offered to students, Big Ideas staff has also grown. During the 2012-13 Contest year, the staff roles included the following:

Program Director

(Staff Position -- 75%):

The Big Ideas Program Director is responsible for developing, managing, and implementing all aspects of the Big Ideas@Berkeley program. This includes both short-term objectives and long-term planning. The primary responsibilities of the Program Director include development of new categories and sponsorships, recruiting efforts for mentors/judges, management of the online application and review process, awards management, and hiring.

Manager and Student Advisor

(Graduate Student -- 30% Fall/Spring; 80% Summer):

The Manager and Student Advisor is a Graduate Student (GSR) position. In addition to assisting the Program Director with all aspects of the Big Ideas@Berkeley program, this position serves as the primary advisor to contestants and prospective applicants. This position is also responsible for leading workshops and trainings, as well as managing evaluation efforts (e.g., developing and implementing surveys, analyzing survey data to development recommendations for program improvements).

Outreach Coordinator and Student Advisor

(Graduate Student -- 30% Fall/Spring):

The Outreach Coordinator and Student Advisor is a Graduate Student (GSR) position. In addition to serving as an advisor to applicants and prospective applicants, this position assists with the outreach and recruitment for judges and mentors. Additionally, this role is responsible for providing continuing mentorship and support to past winners, monitoring the progress of funded projects, and providing connections and recommendations for scaling up Big Ideas projects.

Marketing/Branding Coordinator

(Undergraduate -- 30% Fall/Spring; 80% Summer):

Using advanced graphic design skills, the Marketing and Branding Coordinator develops informational and promotional materials and ensures brand consistency across all Big Ideas publications. This role also identifies opportunities to market and promote the Big

Tips

The composition of the Big Ideas Staff and committees should reflect the goals of Big Ideas. The staff and committees should represent the diverse, multidisciplinary nature of the Big Ideas program with involvement of both graduate and undergraduate students. Ideally the skill-sets of the two graduate student advisors should be as complementary as possible (humanities student vs. STEM student, domestic vs. international experience, service/education-oriented approach vs. technical approach).

When hiring, place an emphasis on recruiting students who have participated in other innovation/entrepreneurship programs or organizations. These students bring with them knowledge, connections, and commitment to interdisciplinary problem solving. These are especially important attributes for the student advising positions.

Ideas Contest across all disciplines and eligible campuses.

Advisory Committee:

The advisory committee is a broad, multidisciplinary working group of key faculty and staff (six to eight individuals total). The advisory committee meets two to three times per year and offers insights and recommendation on how to improve the overall effectiveness of the Contest. It is designed to solicit advice and facilitate engagement of key departments and centers that can sponsor and help promote specific categories of the Big Ideas Contest.

Student Advisory Committee:

The student advisory committee is a multidisciplinary panel of recent past winners of the Big Ideas Contest (eight to ten individuals total) who meet once per semester. The goal of the student advisory committee is to provide guidance and improve students' experience throughout the Big Ideas Contest. This committee gives advice on the effectiveness of current student resources and recommendations for additional resources. The committee also focuses on ways to encourage additional student involvement by providing feedback on Big Ideas promotional materials and student outreach strategies.

Student Assistants:

Big Ideas relies on the Blum Center's team of work-study student assistants to support it with a variety of administrative and creative responsibilities, including clerical tasks, website and social media content management, and communications.

Tools

- Graduate and Undergraduate Student Job Postings

Big Ideas Funding & Category Development

Funding & Support

One of the major tenets of the Big Ideas program is that successful innovations have the ability to attack complex problems from a wide-range of viewpoints. To this end, Big Ideas seeks to foster interdisciplinary collaborations not just within the student body, but also across the campus. Big Ideas thus serves as a commons for the entire UC Berkeley campus, breaking down the departmental silos that too often exist on university campuses by bringing together individual units (e.g., centers, departments, programs) and making them stakeholders in the Contest and its processes. When opportunities for categories and sponsorships arise, this is the critical lens through which they are assessed.

The Big Ideas ecosystem is made possible through the generous support of key donors. Although donor funding provides much of the operational support for the Contest, each category within the Contest is sponsored by a particular center, department, or external partner. These category sponsors provide funding for the prize awards, as well as support in helping to broadly promote the Contest.

On a limited basis, Big Ideas has also offered “in-kind” category sponsorship opportunities to centers or departments in exchange for their advice and support with outreach to students, recruitment of mentors and judges, and other types of non-financial support. These types of key partnerships can raise the profile of the Contest and generate additional student interest. It also significantly reduces the administrative burden on the Contest staff to publicize categories and recruit judges and mentors for those categories.

Categories and Category Development

The Big Ideas Contest aims to encourage participation from as many students as possible from eligible campuses, and is designed to encourage interdisciplinary participation. As a result, Big Ideas has developed a set of categories that, together, stretch across multiple disciplines, and individually, are broad enough to accommodate projects of many different types.

In the 2012-13 Contest year, Big Ideas@Berkeley consisted of nine categories that spanned broad areas, including Information Technology for Society, Sustainable Energy Alternatives, Child and Maternal Health, Promoting Human Rights, and Creative Expression for Social Justice. Thanks in part to these broad category areas, students who compete in the Contest hail from a variety of different majors and departments on campus.

In 2012, 160 student teams submitted proposals to the Contest which represented 550 students overall. Together, these applicants represented over 75 different majors.

The way Big Ideas@Berkeley categories developed over time is analogous to the structure of a U.S. shopping mall. In every U.S. shopping mall there are anchor stores that are large, established, and highly visible stores that help draw consumer traffic to a mall. In addition, there are the established but smaller primary stores. Finally, there are secondary stores that tend to be smaller and less permanent. Global Poverty Alleviation, IT for Society, and Improving Student Life have long served as the anchor categories for the Big Ideas@Berkeley Contest. They are most established, longest running, and best-known



categories, and thus draw students to the Contest. Creative Expression for Social Justice, Clean Energy, and the Scaling Up categories are established but smaller primary categories. Each year, Big Ideas@Berkeley also offers secondary categories that are new and topical, such as the Maternal & Child Health, Promoting Human Rights, and Financial Literacy categories of the 2012-13 Big Ideas@Berkeley Contest.

At the end of each Contest year, Big Ideas staff conducts a review to a) determine which categories to renew (or not), b) decide which categories should be modified, and c) evaluate opportunities for new categories. Each existing category is assessed based on the following criteria:

- Level of student interest (i.e., total number of proposals received)
- Level of multidisciplinary interest and interdisciplinary collaboration (i.e., total number of disciplines/majors represented and interdisciplinary collaboration within teams)
- Overall strength and potential impact of proposals that received funding
- Feedback from student applicants
- Ongoing partnership and funding (donor) opportunities

Using the above criteria, the anchor categories, which tend to be higher profile categories with strong partnerships, are typically renewed each year. In some cases, the category titles and descriptions are revised and broadened to encourage a higher number of proposals from a wider range of disciplines (see the Energy Efficient Technologies example in the Tips section). In cases where few proposals are received and/or no sponsorship opportunities exist, a category may be dropped.

When developing new categories, three key factors are considered. First, the new category should fit within the mission and scope of the Big Ideas Contest (refer to sections on Mission & Goals and History). Secondly, the category should draw upon a specific and new area of emphasis or expertise apparent within the collective student body. Finally, there should be potential sponsorship and funding opportunities to support the category, either on-campus or externally.

The two examples provided below illustrate how different strategies are utilized to fund and support Contest categories:



Example 1:

The Global Poverty Alleviation category (sponsored by the Blum Center) and IT for Society category (sponsored by Center for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society) have thrived due to the high number of centers, departments, faculty, and students interested in or focused on information technology and international development. This has ensured a stable stream of student interest and financial support for these categories, reducing the need for Big Ideas@Berkeley staff to seek out in-kind sponsorship to assist with publicizing the category and recruiting judges and mentors.



Example 2:

Over the past year, Big Ideas@Berkeley has collaborated closely with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as part of its “Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN).” This goal of this network is to harness the intellectual power of great American and international academic institutions and that catalyze the development and application of new science, technology, and engineering approaches and tools to solve some of the world’s most challenging development problems.



Building off this new partnership with USAID, the Blum Center and Big Ideas@Berkeley discussed the possibility of developing new categories that a) would be of interest both to USAID and university students and b) could encourage innovative solutions to pressing global challenges. This led to the creation of the 2012-13 Big Ideas Promoting Human Rights category. After funding and support was offered by USAID, Big Ideas approached the Human Rights Center (HRC) at UC Berkeley to act as an in-kind sponsor. As a result of their sponsorship, HRC provided assistance drafting the category description, promoting the Contest, and recruiting judges and mentors. The financial support of USAID coupled with the in-kind sponsorship of HRC ensured the success of this category.

Tips

Develop clearly defined yet sufficiently broad categories. The central challenge when framing a new category is to make sure it is clear and concise enough that prospective applicants understand the category's intent while also making it sufficiently broad enough to attract potential applicants from a variety of disciplines.

For example, in 2011, Big Ideas developed the Energy Efficient Technologies category, which sought "innovative ideas in energy efficiency and a pathway to assure widespread use." The title and narrow description resulted in a small number of exclusively technology-oriented proposals, almost all from engineering students. In 2013, the category was reframed as the Clean and Sustainable Energy Alternatives category and emphasized proposals could focus on developing a renewable energy technology as well as other ideas such as land/watershed management, climate change adaptation, and others. Specific examples of a range of topics that fit into this category were included along with the description. The broadened definition and examples generated interest from a variety of departments and tripled the number of proposals received.

Balance funding and growth opportunities with the Contest's mission and goals. There is no shortage of good ideas or potential categories. One challenge in running an ideas contest is to remain consistent with the mission and goals of the contest, while also remaining "advantageously opportunist" towards new ideas and sponsorship opportunities. The first year that the Blum Center managed the Big Ideas Contest, the Contest consisted of sixteen categories. Many categories overlapped, some were too narrow to draw sufficient student interest, and others were extensions of class research projects. This led to confusion among prospective applicants and was difficult to manage from an administrative standpoint. When considering a new category, or bending to accommodate the desires of (potential) funders, it is important to keep in mind the Contest's mission along with the criteria for evaluating categories outlined above.

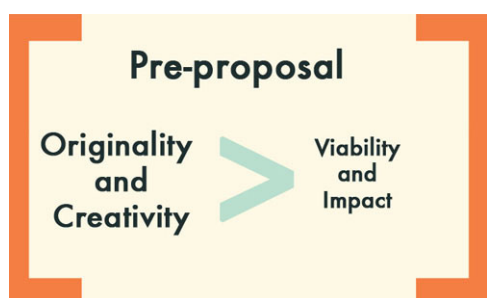
Tools

- 2012-2013 Category Descriptions

Big Ideas@Berkeley Contest Structure, Rules, & Application Requirements

The Big Ideas Contest is intentionally structured to provide students an opportunity to develop their project ideas over the course of an academic year.

The sponsors of each individual category determine which campuses are eligible to compete in that category. All applicants must include at least one matriculated student from an eligible campus. Additionally, the team must be able to demonstrate that they are student-led initiatives and not extensions of faculty-led research. For complete eligibility requirements, refer to the Official Contest Rules document in the Tools section.



Pre-proposal Application Process

In the fall semester, students submit a short project proposal (dubbed the "Pre-proposal") to the category of their choosing. Although the Pre-proposal requirements are tweaked year-to-year based on student feedback, the Pre-proposal is currently a five-page document in which students explain their idea, its intended impact, their projected expenses, and their initial ideas about how the project will be implemented. Because Big Ideas@Berkeley is

a contest designed for students at the very beginning stages of project design, students are only required to explain how their project will look in its first year of implementation. Pre-proposals are judged primarily on the extent to which they propose a creative solution to a social problem and the project's intended social impact. In other words, Pre-proposals are intentionally not judged primarily on project viability. However, judges are explicitly asked to comment on the feasibility of proposed projects, so that students may use this feedback as they tweak and rethink their project ideas in the final round of the Contest.

Full Proposal Application Process

From the pool of applicants in the Pre-proposal round, a team of judges selects a group of finalists in each category to continue on to the second round of the Contest (dubbed the "Full Proposal" round) in the spring semester. In the Full Proposal round, students are expected to have significantly refined their project ideas and proposals, thanks in part to the mentorship and supports provided as part of the Contest support system (see the following section on Contest Resources). In short, the Full Proposal is a ten-page document that fully outlines students project ideas, the project's intended impact, a viable and detailed implementation plan, plans for impact evaluation, and project budget. Based on the quality of the full proposals, judges select multiple winners from each category. Unlike the Pre-proposal round, Full Proposals are judged primarily on the project's potential social impact and the viability of the project plans. As in the Pre-proposal round, applicants are only asked to explain their project as it will look in the first year of implementation.



Although the heart of the Big Ideas Contest lies in the written proposal rounds, Big Ideas also hosts three

additional events in the spring semester that serve to promote and market the Big Ideas Contest.



People's Choice Video Contest: All applicants (i.e., applicants who submitted a Pre-proposal application) are invited to submit a two-minute video about their project to the Big Ideas Contest platform. Voting for the Video Contest is open to the public, and the winner of this Contest receives a \$2500 award. The purpose of the People's Choice Video Contest is provide exposure for the Big Ideas Contest and the project ideas that are submitted each year, and to provide teams with an additional way to share their project ideas and garner funding for those ideas. Notably, applicants who do not advance to the Full Proposal round of the Contest are invited to participate along with finalists, and as a result, the People's Choice Video Contest provides all applicants with an opportunity to continually gain feedback, revise, and resubmit their project ideas.



Grand Prize Pitch Day: In the spring, based on the quality of their Full Proposals, six finalist teams are invited to pitch their ideas in front of a panel of judges. During the 2012-13 Contest, Big Ideas created two separate pitch categories and asked three teams to participate in each. The first of these categories focused on local (i.e., campus, Bay Area, or domestic) issues and the other focused on global issues. First, second, and third place winners were selected for each pitch category. In other words, all teams who participated in the Grand Prize Pitch Day received an award in addition to any award they received for their written proposal. Like the People's Choice Video Contest, the Grand Prize Pitch Day serves to publicize the Contest and the submitted ideas. Grand Prize Pitch Day also allows the six participating teams to gain experience and expertise pitching their idea in-person to prospective funders.



Awards Celebration: At the end of each Contest year, all winning teams, mentors, judges, and supporters are invited to celebrate the achievements of the closing Big Ideas Contest. The Awards Celebration typically includes a keynote address and opportunities for winners from that year's Contest cycle to speak about their achievements. The event is also open to the public and serves as a showcase for the winning ideas. All winners are encouraged to bring and display a poster that shares their project ideas. Finally, the winner of the People's Choice Video Contest is revealed at the Awards Celebration, and all winners are given information about how to receive their prize awards. (This ensures maximum participation from the award winning teams.)

Tools

- Big Ideas@Berkeley 2012-13 Contest Timeline
- Official Contest Rules
- Pre-proposal Application Requirements
- Budget Template
- Full Proposal Application Requirements
- Full Proposal FAQs for Finalists
- People's Choice Video Contest Application Requirements
- Email Notifications to Finalists and Non-finalists
- Email Notifications to Winners and Non-winners
- Pitch Day Invitation Email

Contest Resources

The Contest is intentionally designed to maximally support students through the process of submitting a Big Ideas application and developing their big ideas. The goal is to provide students with the resources they need to get ideas out of their head and onto paper, then help students to develop the skills necessary to shape those ideas into actionable plans with the potential for real-world, sustainable social impact.

Big Ideas@Berkeley has thus developed a network of support services and opportunities for feedback to assist students at each phase of the Contest, each designed following a review of other campus innovation and business plan competitions and modified based on feedback from students who have participated in Big Ideas@Berkeley. It is important to note that by offering these resources to all applicants during the Pre-proposal stage of the Contest, Big Ideas ensures that even those teams that do not move on to the Full Proposal round benefit from participating in the Contest. Perhaps thanks to these resources, an increasing number of applicants not chosen as winners have chosen to revise and resubmit their proposals in subsequent Contest years.

Information Sessions

Information sessions are designed to be one part inspiration and one part information. These sessions typically feature a talk by a past Big Ideas winner who reflects on his or her experience during the Contest and the progress they have made. Past Big Ideas winners who have spoken at information sessions include Alejandro Valez and Nikhil Arora, Co-founders of Back to the Roots Ventures, and Laura Stachel, Co-founder and Medical Director of WE CARE Solar. These speakers serve as a draw for the event and set the stage by inspiring students to think about their own potential to impact society.

Following the inspirational talk, students are provided with information about Contest basics (e.g., the Contest timeline, Contest rules, examples of past winners). A Big Ideas mixer typically follows information sessions, where students are invited to mix with other students who are interested in participating (and perhaps find team members

Tip

Strike a balance between process-focused and product-focused advising. Big Ideas@Berkeley is designed to help students develop both a) the skills they need to be successful innovators and b) innovative and impactful projects that address social needs. As a result, advising hours strike a balance between being process-focused (i.e., focused on developing skills related to the process of designing innovative projects, such as critical reflection skills) and product-focused (i.e., focused on developing a successful Big Ideas project).

In other words, Big Ideas advisors are trained not only to provide feedback on projects (e.g., direct, explicit, expert advice about adding or changing components of projects), but are also trained to ask questions of applicants that promote reflection (e.g., “How would you know if your project is successful?” “How do you know that the community will respond well to this project?” “What have you tried that has not worked?” “To whom could you turn if you run into difficulty in the implementation phase?” “How do other organizations find funders or support for their work?”).

Finding a balance between these two approaches is often challenging for advisors, as applicants typically attend office hours looking for expert consultation. However, Big Ideas stresses to advisors that the long-term benefits of helping students develop critical thinking and project management skills far outweigh the benefits of short-term, project-specific advice.

for their project—a formidable challenge for most student teams in the beginning phase of the Contest) and ask Big Ideas staff questions about the Contest.

Writing & Budgeting Workshops

During writing workshops, Big Ideas Graduate Student Advisors (see section on Program Management & Responsibilities) present information on best practices for clearly and convincingly communicating ideas and crafting each of the Pre-proposal application sections. These workshops provide information to students who have never submitted a proposal or grant application. Big Ideas advisors also provide writing workshop attendees with example past proposals and the option to either a) read and critique example proposals as a group, or b) workshop their own drafts or project ideas with the group.

Editing Blitzes

Editing blitzes were added to the network of support services during the 2012-13 Contest year in response to applicant feedback indicating that they would benefit from last-minute feedback on drafts of their proposals. During Editing Blitzes, held the day before each proposal deadline, teams are invited to drop-in with drafts of their proposals and specific questions for Big Ideas staff and past winners to review and answer. Editing Blitzes are the students last opportunity to get input from Big Ideas staff and advisors in order to make final tweaks to their proposal submissions.

Graduate Student Advising

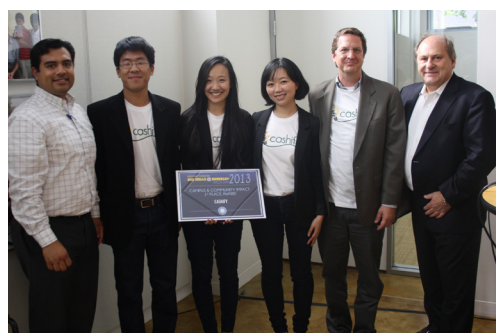
Big Ideas Graduate Student Advisors are available year-round to assist students in writing proposals and developing their project ideas. Advisors are hired based on their expertise in content areas that align with Big Ideas categories. As such, Big Ideas Advisors can often provide expert consultation to students.

However, Big Ideas believes that non-expert, non-hierarchical consultation is perhaps a more effective resource for Contest applicants. As a primary goal of the Big Ideas Contest is to develop in students the ability to think critically about project ideas and their impact, Advisors often strive to model the process of critical inquiry (e.g., asking questions like, “How will you know if this component of your project works the way you’d like it to?” or “It sounds like you need more information before you can continue with your project design. Who can you talk to provide you with more information about this topic?”). As a result, Big Ideas advising hours are more often process-focused than product-focused, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that students come away from the advising session with an understanding of how to critique and think in a deep, iterative way about their project ideas. For more information on non-expert, process-focused advising, see the preceding Tips section.

Networking & Team Building Opportunities

As the Big Ideas Contest has grown, there has been an increase in requests by applicants for networking and team building events. Students, especially those in the sciences, STEM disciplines, and professional schools, tend to interact only with students within their departments and have little opportunity to connect with students with different areas of expertise and skillsets. Big Ideas@Berkeley believes that it is beneficial to provide students with opportunities to meet, interact, and partner with others from outside their disciplines to encourage creative, interdisciplinary thinking.

Nearly all Big Ideas events (e.g., info sessions and workshops) conclude with a mixer that allows students to talk informally with one another about their projects, or ask questions of Big Ideas staff. During the 2012-13 Contest, Big Ideas@Berkeley also partnered with entrepreneurial centers and clubs from across the campus (e.g., Engineering, Business, Public Policy, Natural Resources) to hold the first Innovators@



Cal event. The event featured a talk by Danae Ringelmann, Cofounder Indiegogo, followed by a mixer. The Innovators@Cal event was publicized as an opportunity for students to communicate with others across disciplines and learn how to approach a problem from different viewpoints. Because it was jointly organized and broadly publicized, the event generated significant student interest from across the campus. Thanks to the event, interdisciplinary teams were formed and expanded. Because feedback on the event was overwhelmingly positive, additional Innovators@Cal events are now planned for the 2013-14 Big Ideas Contest cycle.

Judging Feedback

During both the Pre-proposal and Full Proposal judging rounds (see Judging section for more information about judging), judges are asked to provide both quantitative feedback (i.e., Likert scale rankings of the proposals' strength in particular areas) and qualitative feedback (i.e., feedback written to the team about areas of strength and areas for improvement in their proposals).

At the end of each round, all applicants (finalists and non-finalists, winners and non-winners) are given the qualitative feedback so that they may use the judges' advice to strengthen their proposals and/or project ideas in the future. Students have overwhelmingly reported in surveys and during informal conversations with Big Ideas staff that providing judges' feedback proved helpful and informative to their team.

Tools

- Pre-proposal Information Session Prezi
- Pre-proposal Writing Workshop Prezi
- Pre-proposal Examples
- Full Proposal Information Session and Mentorship Kickoff Prezi
- Full Proposal Examples
- Full Proposal Information Session Handout
- Student Advising Request Form

Mentorship

By and large, Big Ideas finalists cite the mentorship as the most important and impactful resource provided to applicants during the Contest. Applicants report on surveys (see Evaluation section) that working with a mentor greatly improved their final submission, helped them more deeply understand their area of intended impact, and improved their experience in the Big Ideas Contest.

Starting in mid-January, Big Ideas finalists are matched with mentors—Bay Area professionals from a diverse set of fields including business management/administration, engineering, agriculture, and health services, among others. Together, finalists and mentors work approximately two hours per week for eight weeks to refine the teams' project ideas, develop partnerships, and craft their ten-page Full Proposals. Students work with their mentors via in-person meetings, phone calls, or emails to develop impactful projects and viable implementation plans. The mentors are asked to serve in an advisory or consulting capacity to the project—they are not intended to participate in the actual writing of the Full Proposal.

Recruiting Mentors

Over the course of the fall semester, Big Ideas staff work to recruit as large and diverse a pool of potential mentors as possible. Mentor recruitment and matching is particularly challenging each year, largely because the specific mentorship needs of each team are diverse and do not become fully clear to the teams or Big Ideas@Berkeley staff until the end of Pre-proposal review process in December. However, Big Ideas begins recruiting potential mentors long before Pre-proposals are submitted.

Although the benefits of the mentorship process are clear to the applicant teams, the incentives for mentors to participate are more ambiguous. However, thanks to evaluation data and conversations with more than 75 mentors who have participated in the mentorship program, Big Ideas has identified the most-cited reasons for becoming involved as a mentor:

- Mentors report that mentorship played a role in their own professional development, and they hope to repay the favor by mentoring a student team.
- Mentors indicate a wish to contribute to projects that have potential to make a lasting social impact.
- Mentors appreciate the opportunity to preview and get (re)inspired by the next generation's most creative ideas.
- Mentors benefit from the opportunities to expand their professional networks and build University connections through Big Ideas trainings, mixers, and special events.
- Mentors also report that their mentees provide them with opportunities to learn and grow professionally.

The following strategies were used during the 2012-13 Contest to contact and recruit a large pool of potential mentors with expertise within the nine Contest category areas:

- Category sponsors were the best individual resource for identifying prospective mentors. Sponsors were contacted and asked to provide a list of individuals who they thought would be interested in mentoring finalist teams. This strategy was most effective when the sponsors themselves reached out to their lists. However, in most cases, Big Ideas staff did the initial outreach and subsequent follow-up to these prospects.

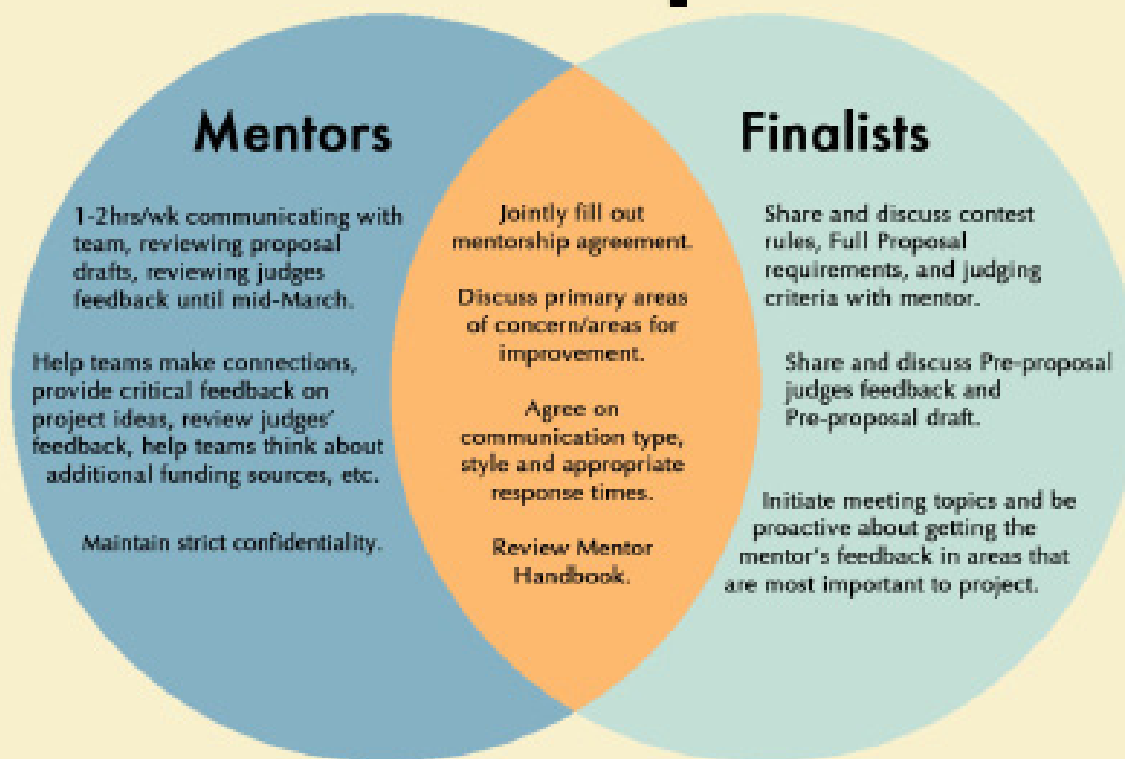
Tips

- Focus early on mentor recruitment and follow-up constantly: From an administrative standpoint, mentorship recruitment is one of the most time-consuming and difficult aspects of running the Big Ideas competition. In order to develop a deep and qualified pool of mentors, it is important to start the recruitment process early and have a dedicated staff person responsible for outreach and follow-up.
- Don't downplay the mentorship commitment: The most effective mentors are those who are committed and energetic. If a mentor is worried by the expectations or commitment, it is likely that mentor will not be an ideal candidate.
- Start with a Mentor Interest Form vs. Mentor Application Form: Prospective mentors are initially directed (through various outreach channels) to a webpage with a very short Mentor Interest Form. Big Ideas then personally follows up with each interested mentor to gather more detailed information on their professional experience and areas of content expertise. Though slightly more time-consuming, this strategy has helped recruit more mentors, as opposed to directing interested mentors immediately to a longer mentor application form.
- Focus on building relationships with great mentors: It is important to identify and build relationships with effective mentors to increase the likelihood that they will participate in future years. Increase their sense of connection to the Contest by acknowledging their effort (e.g., thank you notes, swag), extending personal invitations to Big Ideas events and networking opportunities, sharing Big Ideas news and newsletters, etc.
- When the 2012-13 Contest launched, Big Ideas staff immediately reached out to mentors who had participated in 2011-12, many of whom were eager to participate again. As Big Ideas continues to grow, retaining high quality mentors will make the mentor recruitment process much more manageable.
- Individuals who served as Big Ideas judges were also contacted via email and phone to serve as mentors. Pre-proposal judges were allowed to nominate particular teams that they would like to support and work with based on the proposals that they had reviewed during the Pre-proposal judging round. Notably, individuals who were contacted to serve as judges but refused (often citing other commitments) were also given the opportunity to serve as mentors instead.
- Business card fold-outs (see Tools section) were created by design staff and delivered to businesses, foundations, and accelerators who might have employees or partners interested in mentoring.
- Big Ideas used its growing presence on Facebook and Twitter to advertise the mentorship opportunity.
- Big Ideas staff conducted extensive online research for each of the teams who did not match well with preexisting mentors. Online research allowed staff to identify individuals who had knowledge or expertise within very specific areas, and these individuals were cold-called or emailed.
- At regular intervals, the Blum Center and Big Ideas sends out announcements and newsletters. During the fall semester, these communications contain a short message about mentorship opportunities and a link to the Mentor Interest Form on our website.

Pairing Mentors & Teams

Once potential mentors indicate their interest, they are asked to fill out a Mentor Application Form (or asked to provide the information requested on the form during a phone call). On this form, potential mentors provided information on their mentorship experience, professional experience, areas of content expertise, and geographic areas in which they had worked or had specialized

Mentorship Roles



knowledge. After finalists are announced at the end of the fall semester, finalist teams are provided with their Pre-proposal judges' feedback and asked to submit a Student Mentorship Application. This Application mirrors the Mentor Application (e.g., asks about what areas of expertise they would like their mentor to have).

Using the students' applications and the mentors' applications, Big Ideas finalists are matched by staff based primarily on the team's requested mentor attributes and mentor's stated areas of expertise and experience. Big Ideas staff has found that, although matching teams and mentors based on content expertise is certainly important, the most successful mentorship relationships occur when both mentors and teams are engaged and willing to communicate frequently and openly with each other, regardless of how good the original match between the team's interests and mentor experience was. In other words, engagement is often a better predictor of mentorship success than a mentor's credentials, and eagerness to participate in mentorship should be a primary consideration when selecting and matching mentors to teams.

Tools

- Student Mentorship Application Form
- Mentor Application
- Mentorship Handbook
- Mentor Match Email
- 5 Reasons To Be a Mentor Postcard (front and back)
- Recruitment Email to Mentors
- Mentor Thank You Email

Judging



Big Ideas@Berkeley believes that selecting appropriate judges and crafting appropriate judging criteria are critical to the Contest's success: Without both of these components, Big Ideas would be unable to identify from the large pool of applicants those with the most innovative and impactful ideas.

Judge Qualifications

Each year, Big Ideas@Berkeley selects a pool of judges (see Judge Recruitment sub-section for detailed information on recruitment strategies) who have content expertise within a particular category.

Judges in the Global Poverty Alleviation category, for example, typically are faculty or professionals with expertise in international development studies who have spent a significant portion of their careers working to end poverty domestically and abroad. Judges in the Creative Expression for Social Justice category, similarly, may be faculty or professionals with expertise in the use of dramatic, performing, or visual arts to effect social change. Put differently, judges are selected on the basis of their credentials and their fit with the Contest categories.

Tips

Emphasize written feedback: During the judge recruitment and the review stage, stress the importance of providing comprehensive qualitative feedback to the applicants. Along with mentors, this feedback is cited by applicants as one of the most valuable resources provided by the Contest.

Follow-up and build a deadline cushion: Judges are busy professionals and so it is imperative to send constant reminders and follow-up emails throughout the judging period. Even with frequent reminders, there will inevitably be judges who need an extension to complete their reviews, so build a cushion into the review timeline.

Number of Judges

Each Pre-proposal and Full Proposal is read by a minimum of four judges, in order to provide an average score that is a reliable and valid indicator of each proposal's strength. Given the large number of Pre-proposals received (sometimes up to 40 in one category), Pre-proposal judges cannot read every proposal submitted within their assigned category. As a result, each judge is expected to read and score only a subset of the Pre-proposals submitted in their category—usually between six and eight. In contrast, Full Proposal judges are expected to read all of the proposals submitted in their category (between three and ten, depending on the category).

It is worth noting here that each year Pre-proposal judges remark that it is difficult to score the Pre-proposals assigned to them without knowing something about the entire pool of Pre-proposals in their category. In other words, it is difficult to rank each proposal without knowing its relative strength compared to all other proposals. As a result, although Pre-proposal judges are only assigned a subset of Pre-proposals in their category to read, they are given paragraph long summaries of all of the proposals within their category.

In the 2012-13 Contest year, Big Ideas received 160 Pre-proposal applications, and successfully recruited 87 Pre-proposal judges.

From this pool 54 finalists were selected and submitted Full Proposal applications, and Big Ideas recruited 32 Full Proposal judges to review them.

Judge Training and Judging Timeline

After judges have been recruited for each round of the Contest, a training is held by Big Ideas@Berkeley staff (typically during the lunch hour, with lunch provided to incentivize participation) to familiarize judges with the mission and goals of Big Ideas and the proposal judging process. This training highlights differences between Big Ideas and other innovation or business plan competitions, provides detailed explanations on evaluating various elements in the proposals, and walks judges through how to submit their scores via the online Contest platform (see Online Contest Platform section).

The information provided during this training session is provided in a Judging Handbook that is available to judges on the Big Ideas website and is sent via email to all judges. Additionally, the judges' training session is made available via a live webcast and a recorded version is made available to judges who are unable to attend the in-person training.

After the training session, judges are given approximately three weeks to submit their scores.

Judging Criteria

As detailed in the Contest Structure section, the judging criteria from the Pre-proposal round focuses on the extent to which the teams propose a creative solution to a social problem and the project's intended social impact, while Full Proposals are judged primarily on the project's potential social impact and the viability of the project plans. That said, the items on the judging scorecard for each round largely do not change from the Pre-proposal to the Full Proposal round; instead, the largest change between the Pre-proposal and Full proposal scorecards are the relative weights of each judging item. The following table indicates the broad areas assessed by judges, and their relative weights in each round:

Judging Item	Pre-proposal Weight	Full Proposal Weight
Innovative and creative idea	45%	5%
Addresses a pressing social issue	25%	15%
Realistic one-year budget	10%	10%
Project viability	10%	35%
Professional quality of proposal	10%	5%
Research and/or market familiarity	0%	20%
Impact evaluation plan	0%	10%

Judge Recruitment

The best resource to help recruit judges are the departments and organizations that sponsor particular categories. For instance, the Center for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society (CITRIS), which sponsors the annual IT for Society category, pulls from its broad network of faculty and industry professionals to assist Big Ideas staff in finding judges. As noted in the Big Ideas Funding & Category Development section, on a limited basis Big Ideas also has offered in-kind sponsorships to organizations and centers with close ties to particular categories in exchange for their support in recruiting judges and mentors, and promotional support. These types of in-kind collaborations helped tremendously with judges' recruitment and reduced the administrative burden associated with recruitment on Big Ideas staff.

The incentive for judges to participate varies, but many choose to participate for one of three reasons: a) the opportunity to give back while also getting a first-hand look at some of the most innovative student ideas as they are being developed, b) the opportunity to build their own professional networks by attending Big Ideas events and mixers where they can meet other judges, professional mentors, faculty and students, or c) a professional courtesy to the category sponsor. It is worth noting that, generally speaking, judges who are incentivized by "giving back" and "professional development/networking" tend to be more committed and reliable judges.

In addition to working with category sponsors, the following strategies were utilized to recruit judges during the 2012-13 Contest year:

- Judges from previous Contest years were emailed and asked if they would like to serve again as a judge for the Contest.
- Big Ideas@Berkeley staff conducted online research, looking up organizations and departments on the UC Berkeley campus that might know of individuals to serve as judges.
- Big Ideas staff utilized their professional networks and personal connections to identify potential judges.
- The Big Ideas@Berkeley webpage advertised the opportunity to volunteer as a judge and contained a very short webform that interested individuals could fill out.
- Big Ideas maintains a listserve of email addresses of all past applicants, mentors, judges, sponsors, event attendees, and individuals who have at one time expressed interest in learning more about Big Ideas. Big Ideas, at regular intervals, sends out announcements and newsletters about the Contest, and included in these emails are short messages that link to the Judge Application Form on our website.

Tools

- Pre-proposal Judging Scorecard
- Full Proposal Judging Scorecard
- Pre-proposal Judging Handbook
- Pre-proposal Judges Training Prezi
- Full Proposal Judging Handbook
- Full Proposal Judges Training Prezi
- Judge Recruitment Email
- Judging Deadline Reminder Email
- Judges Training Invitation Email

Online Contest Platform

To facilitate easy and efficient application and judging processes, Big Ideas@Berkeley uses an online Contest platform that features three portals:

- A judging portal where judges can login to a secure webpage, view proposals assigned to them, and submit their scores and written feedback. Big Ideas@Berkeley also requires that the judging portal allow for anonymous judging (e.g., administrators can hide one judge's reviews of a proposal from another judge reviewing that same proposal, and administrators can hide the identity of judges from applicants).
- An applicant portal that allows student teams to login to a secure webpage to edit, upload, and submit a PDF document that contains the text of their written proposals. The applicant portal also contains an entry form that asked students to provide their names, email addresses, fields of study, etc. In the final round of the Contest, administrators also embed survey questions into the entry form to assess students' development over the course of the Contest (see Evaluation section) and to assess students' perceptions of things like the resources provided during the Contest. Notably, Big Ideas@Berkeley requires that the applicant portal be embedded into the Big Ideas webpage using an Iframe so that it can be easily accessed by potential applicants.
- An administrator portal that allows Big Ideas@Berkeley staff to manage both the judging and student portals (e.g., edit applicant entry form questions, assign proposals to judges, review which judges have submitted their feedback, review materials that student teams submit). The administration portal also allows Big Ideas@Berkeley staff to set Contest deadlines (e.g., indicate a cutoff deadline by which students must submit their proposals via the student portal).

Online Application & Review Platforms Used To Date

In 2011, when the Blum Center first began managing Big Ideas@Berkeley, the application and review process was conducted manually. Students submitted their proposals by email and their applications were then shared with judges who reviewed and ranked the proposals. However, as the Contest grew, it became necessary to take advantage of the speed and efficiency offered by online review platforms. There are numerous platforms currently available that allow contests to collect applications, distribute them for review, and track progress.

Over the past three Contest cycles, Big Ideas@Berkeley has used three different online platforms. These platforms all had their strengths and drawbacks, and as a result, none of these has emerged as a perfect option. However, the experience of using multiple platforms provided information on what features are most important when considering an online platform. Big Ideas@Berkeley staff are using the following metrics to re-evaluate additional platforms over the 2013 summer:

- **Flexibility:** The platform needs to be flexible and should allow managers to create different judging criteria, create different categories, assign percentages to review criteria, query and sort information, and generate customized reports.
- **User Interface:** The platform needs to create an easy and intuitive user experience for applicants and judges.

- Content Management: The content management process (creating forms, assigning judges, generating emails) needs to be quick and intuitive.
- Appearance/Identity: The platform should have a clean and professional appearance and also allow Contest managers to incorporate their own branding.
- Customer Service: The platform needs to have a good IT support team.
- Cost: Platforms can vary widely in cost (and, notably, cost is not a perfect indicator of performance).

During the 2011-12 Contest year, Big Ideas@Berkeley used YouNoodle to facilitate the judging and applications processes. Big Ideas experienced some difficulty with the content management system (e.g., restrictions in which types of questions could be asked on applicant entry forms) and with the user interface (e.g., unintuitive judging interface). There was also no option to tailor the appearance of the platform so that it would reflect the Big Ideas identity.

As a result, during the summer of 2012, Big Ideas@Berkeley staff conducted an initial review of other contest platform providers. During the review, the cost of using each platform was weighed with the features of each platform, along with the ease of use for the potential users and administrators. Based on the findings from this review, Big Ideas@Berkeley switched to WizeHive during the 2012-13 Contest year. Overall, Big Ideas@Berkeley found WizeHive's user interface to be extremely straightforward, but found the content management system to be less intuitive and more difficult to manage (e.g., editing applicants entry form fields, assigning judges to proposals within each category, and creating different judging criteria for different categories were all challenging). Wizehive is also relatively expensive for the services they provide (costing about \$9000 for the 2012-13 Contest year).

As previously mentioned, Big Ideas Staff will be reevaluating online platform options over Summer 2013. Findings and conclusions will be incorporated into future iterations of the Toolkit.

Tools

- Summer 2012 Review of Online Contest Platforms

Student Outreach

This section highlights both outreach strategies used to promote the Big Ideas Contest to potential student applicants and the print materials used to advertise the Contest. For information about outreach to prospective mentors, judges, and sponsors, see the sections on Mentorship, Judging, and Funding and Category Development, respectively.

Student Outreach Strategies

Everyday UC Berkeley students are inundated with information about student organizations and opportunities to participate in campus life activities. Creating interest and excitement around the Contest amidst many competing opportunities is no small feat, and as a result, Big Ideas@Berkeley uses a variety of strategies to maximize outreach opportunities. These strategies include face-to-face efforts (e.g., tabling), indirect efforts (e.g., informing academic advisors of the Contest), and use of social media. Outlined below are the strategies that were used in the 2012-13 Contest year and comments on their effectiveness.

In-Person Outreach Efforts

- Classroom announcements: Undergraduate student staff or Big Ideas affiliate instructors make classroom announcements when the Contest has started. This strategy is effective especially if there is a category relevant to the class material or subject.
- Advisors' Luncheon: Each year at the beginning of the fall semester, Big Ideas@Berkeley hosts an advisors' luncheon, where Big Ideas@Berkeley staff invite academic and student services advisors from across departments to an overview of the Big Ideas Contest. During the luncheon, staff provide advisors with marketing materials (e.g., a Big Ideas tote bag stuffed with posters, informational brochures, etc.) which they can display in their offices and hand out to students. Big Ideas markets to advisors, to ensure that advisors will inform their students of the Contest. Fifty-three percent of 2012-13 finalists indicated that they learned about the Contest from an advisor, indicating that this strategy is particularly effective.
- Tabling: Undergraduate student staff assist in tabling during UC Berkeley events, such as UC Berkeley's summer student orientation and welcome week activities. At Big Ideas tables, student staff provide information about the Contest and hand out informational flyers or the Contest's signature paper airplanes (see Tools section).
- Big Ideas Events: Events hosted by Big Ideas such as workshops, information sessions, and Contest events such as Pitch Day are also venues for marketing the Contest.
- T-Shirts & Giveaways: Big Ideas@Berkeley orders t-shirts each year to hand out at Big Ideas events (such as writing workshops and information sessions). T-shirts serve as mobile billboards: When students and staff wear them, they advertise Big Ideas to other students and increase brand awareness. The same is true for tote bags, pens, and other giveaways.

Social Media Outreach Efforts:

Evaluation results indicate that very few, if any, students learn about Big Ideas from social media sites. However, it is likely that students who first learn about Big Ideas@Berkeley from their advisors, advertisements, or by other means join Big Ideas social media networks to gain additional information and

stay informed about the Contest.

- Facebook: Big Ideas@Berkeley created a Facebook page where staff post information about upcoming events (e.g., writing workshops, information sessions, etc.) and post pictures from these events. The cover photo on the Facebook group page serves as a page billboard, advertising and alerting group members to upcoming deadlines. Big Ideas social media staff change the cover photos weekly to ensure that the Big Ideas@Berkeley group is frequently seen in group members' news feeds. To ensure that as many students as possible navigate to the Big Ideas Facebook page, group members are also tagged in photos from events.
- Twitter: Big Ideas created a Twitter page where Big Ideas social media staff tweet about upcoming events or share interesting updates from past winners.
- LinkedIn: Big Ideas created a LinkedIn group in an effort to stay connected with past winners, however, LinkedIn is typically a less popular social network for students, and therefore less effective.
- Vimeo/YouTube: Vimeo and YouTube are mostly used to house the People's Choice Contest Video submissions. By posting the videos on these sites, Big Ideas hopes members of their social media networks will like and share videos, thereby raising awareness about and promoting the Contest.

Tips

- Brand the Big Ideas identity by keeping everything consistent
- Try to make materials multipurpose
- Tailor designs/messages to: Students, Potential Donors, Judges/Mentors
- Fonts: Headers are **Futura Medium**
- Fonts: Body Text and Captions are Optima and *Optima Italics*
- Large Posters use **Futura Medium** because it's legible from a distance and is bold and fun
- Inspiring words encourage student applicants via social media or print marketing

Big Ideas recognizes that increasing its presence on social media platforms will likely help Big Ideas connect with a greater number of potential applicants. Big Ideas is currently exploring the possibility of creating a social media presence on the following sites: Google+, Instagram, Tumblr, Pinterest, Reddit, etc.

Print Materials

In addition to in-person and social media outreach efforts, Big Ideas creates a number of print materials to market the Contest. Creating newspaper advertisements, posters, and flyers with consistent designs that students are repeatedly exposed to increases the likelihood that students will become aware of the Contest, seek out additional information, and be encouraged to apply. Survey results indicate that eighteen percent of the finalists from the 2012-13 Contest heard about Big Ideas Contest from a poster on campus. These results indicate that print materials are an effective form of outreach to students. Below is a list of the various print materials produced during the 2012-13 Contest year.

- Newspaper Ads: Newspapers advertisements were run in UC Berkeley's student newspaper, The Daily Californian. Big Ideas typically purchases advertisement space in newspaper special editions, such as the Homecoming and Back to School editions.
- Quarter sheets: Quarter sheet flyers are distributed to UC Berkeley's dining halls and displayed on dining hall tables to advertise the Contest as well as specific Contest events (e.g., information sessions and writing workshops).

- Posters: Posters are regularly posted across the UC Berkeley campus. Some of these posters are generic and are applicable to any department, some advertise particular Contest categories, and some are targeted to students in particular departments. The following types of posters are designed each Contest year:
 - Branding Posters are posted before the Contest officially starts in heavily trafficked areas such as the main plaza on campus, billboards, and in popular interdisciplinary buildings.
 - Once the fall semester begins, Announcement Posters are put up across campus announcing the start of the Contest, each year's categories, and the Pre-proposal deadline.
 - Category Posters are printed with specific category descriptions and targeted at the areas on campus that specifically tie in with that category. For example, Creative Expression for Social Justice Category posters are posted in the Art, Film, Architecture, Political Science, Sociology, and Peace and Conflicts Studies departments.
 - Photo Campaign Posters also announce the Pre-proposal application deadline and showcase past winners and their ideas to highlight the diversity of both winning ideas and student teams.
- Event Handouts: Events such as Pitch Day and the Awards Celebration have programs (usually a folded one-pager with information about the event, the Contest, and the categories) that are handed out to attendees. Big Ideas staff also hand out one-pagers at conferences they present at or attend.
- Paper Planes: Paper planes serve as general information flyers used primarily for tabling.

Tools

- Invitation to Advisors' Luncheon
- Big Ideas@Berkeley Design Guidelines
- Big Ideas Photo Campaign Posters
- Big Ideas Contest Announcement Poster
- Big Ideas Category Posters
- Big Ideas Inspirational/Generic Posters
- Big Ideas Quarter Sheets
- Big Ideas Paper Airplanes
- Big Ideas T-shirt Design
- Big Ideas Tote Bag Design
- Big Ideas Daily Cal Ad Design
- Facebook Example Cover Photos



Paper Plane Logo

Big Ideas uses the paper plane as its logo, because our mission is to support students' ingenious first attempts at social change and support students as their ideas take flight. It is generally thought that paper planes originated in Asia thanks to the widespread manufacture of paper and the popularity of origami. Over a thousand years later, the pioneers of aviation used paper planes to spur breakthroughs in powered flight. Da Vinci tested his ornithopter, an aircraft that flies by flapping its wings, using parchment models, and following his lead, Sir George Cayley, Clement Ader, Charles Langley, Alberto Santos-Dumont, and the Wright brothers all put their aviation ideas to the test with paper replicas. In this way, the paper airplane was an integral tool in aviation innovation and has become a symbol of creative beginnings.

Prize Awards

Because the goal of Big Ideas@Berkeley is to encourage and incentivize creative thinking around solutions to social problems, Big Ideas prize money is given as an award for developing a creative, feasible, socially impactful idea. Put differently, the Big Ideas prize is explicitly not a grant to carry out implementation of applicants' project plans, but a monetary prize for articulating a creative, impactful idea.

Notably, awarding prize money for ideas—as opposed to issuing grants for implementation—allows the credit and responsibility of each project to remain with student teams. As a result, issuing prizes for ideas allows Big Ideas@Berkeley to avoid intellectual property issues (e.g., allows students as opposed to the university to retain ownership of their ideas) and issues of legal liability.

Because Big Ideas prize money is not considered a grant, Big Ideas@Berkeley places no restrictions on how Big Ideas prizes are used by teams nor does Big Ideas@Berkeley require teams to submit a formal report itemizing how their prize money is spent. Although teams have the leeway to apply their prize towards scholarship or personal expenses, a recent survey demonstrated that 27 of the 28 winning teams from last year were still working on their project.

Prior to receiving their award, winning teams are asked to sign an award letter (see Tools section), where they agree to the following:

- To participate in six-month and twelve-month check-in phone calls initiated by Big Ideas@Berkeley staff during which they provide an update on the status of their project.
- To acknowledge Big Ideas@Berkeley's support in all materials publicizing or resulting from their Big Ideas award.
- To respond to reasonable requests for interviews from individuals referred by Big Ideas and to attend and prepare presentations for Big Ideas events.
- To allow Big Ideas@Berkeley to publish project summaries in web and printed resources.

Number and Amount of Awards

Each year, Big Ideas@Berkeley selects multiple winners within each category to receive awards. Although the exact number of awards changes year to year, during the 2012-13 Contest, Big Ideas selected 37 teams as winners, and gave each winning team an award ranging from \$1000 to \$10,000. The average prize award across categories typically amounts to \$5000.

The exact amount awarded to each team is determined primarily by the overall scores the proposals received in the final round of judging, but also to a smaller extent by the amount of money requested by each team in their project proposals. The number of winners selected in each category depends both on the amount of prize money available within each category and the number of entries to each category.

Disbursing Awards

Each university or college has its own financial procedures and processes that need to be taken into consideration when disbursing awards to Big Ideas winners. Big Ideas@Berkeley staff provide winners with three options for receiving their prize awards:

- Distribute a personal award directly to the students on the team. (Selecting this option will require that the recipient/s report this prize as income on their tax returns.)
- Transfer the award to the team's campus student group account. (Big Ideas staff provide support to help students register their team as an official student group with the campus.)
- Transfer the award to a faculty advisor's campus research account.

In addition, there have been several Big Ideas winners from University of California campuses other than Berkeley. These winners are given two award options:

- Distribute a personal award directly to the students on the team. (Selecting this option will require that the recipient/s report this prize as income on their tax returns.)
- Big Ideas staff prepare an inter-location transfer that sends the funding from UC Berkeley to the General Accounting Office of the students' campus. The students can then instruct their General Accounting Office to transfer the award to a faculty advisor's account or a student group account (subject to all campus policies and procedures).

Tools

- Award Options Letter
- Award Expectations & Terms Letter

Evaluation and Feedback

Big Ideas@Berkeley firmly believes that rigorous program evaluation is key to understanding whether or not the Contest is meeting its goals. As a result, Big Ideas@Berkeley conducts both formal and informal evaluations each Contest year.

Formal Evaluation

Each year, Big Ideas@Berkeley surveys its applicants to better understand a) the extent to which students developed skills that Big Ideas believes are critical to project management and entrepreneurial success (e.g., grant-writing skills, project management skills, leadership skills) and b) the extent to which the process of participating in the Contest was easy, straightforward, and supportive for students. In other words, formal evaluation seeks to understand skill development and provides Big Ideas staff with Contest management feedback from students.

In the 2011-2012 Contest year, both applicant teams selected as finalists and those not selected as finalists were surveyed in the spring semester before final decisions were made. Surveys were created using Google Forms and the links to the forms were sent to applicants via email.

Despite sending multiple reminder emails, the surveys were completed by only a small portion of finalists and non-finalists (less than 20%), and Big Ideas staff were therefore unable to analyze results from a representative sample. As a result, Big Ideas@Berkeley offered \$5 Amazon.com gift cards as an incentive for participation, and although this improved the response rate, only about half of finalists and even fewer applicants who were not chosen as finalists completed the survey.

Given these difficulties with response rate, during the 2012-13 year, Big Ideas@Berkeley embedded the applicant survey into the online Contest entry form. As a result, each applicant was required to answer survey questions in order to submit their application. To ensure that applicant's would respond as candidly as possible, they were assured that survey answers would be de-identified and would have no impact on their proposals' scores. In addition, although Big Ideas@Berkeley believes that all students who enter the Contest (even those not selected as finalists) benefit from participation, surveys focused only on finalists in the 2012-13 Contest, as this group of applicants was expected to experience greater educational gains.

Survey questions were developed by Big Ideas@Berkeley staff and are refined each year to ensure that they provide accurate measurements of skill development and provide opportunities for feedback on Contest components. See the Tools section for the 2012-13 survey questions and an example evaluation report.

In addition to surveying applicants, each year, Big Ideas also surveys judges and mentors to better understand their experiences and to improve training and support for judges and mentors in future years. Typically, only a small fraction of judges and mentors participate in these surveys, but their feedback (largely provided in response to open-ended questions) is used to make changes to the judging criteria, judge training, and mentorship programs each year.

Informal Evaluation

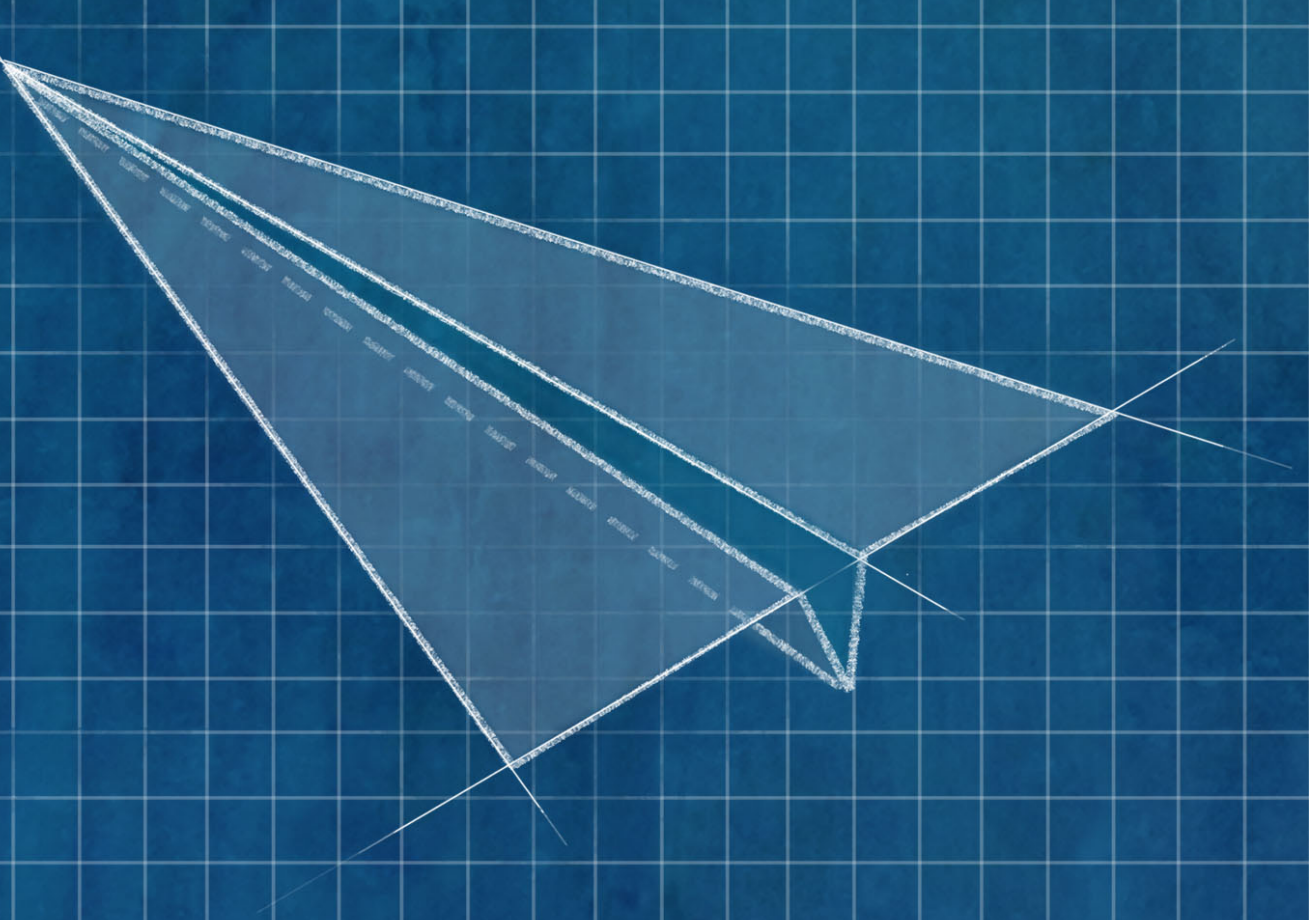
Although formal evaluation provides useful information on skill development and feedback on the application process, Big Ideas@Berkeley also evaluates the extent to which teams continue to work on their Big Ideas projects and the impact that those teams are making.

To assess project progress and their impact, Big Ideas@Berkeley first created a LinkedIn group to connect past winners. Big Ideas@Berkeley staff hoped that the group would provide a forum for past winners to share their accomplishments with each other and with staff, but the LinkedIn group has proven relatively inactive, and has therefore not been a particularly effective informal evaluation tool.

In the fall of 2011, Big Ideas@Berkeley began conducting follow-up phone calls with the group of 2010 winners. During these phone calls, Big Ideas staff asked past winners if they were still working on their projects, what progress they had made to date, if they had won any additional contests or grants, and their plans for future work. These phone calls allowed Big Ideas to keep up-to-date with winners' stories, which have been used in Big Ideas@Berkeley newsletters, in pitching Big Ideas@Berkeley to potential category sponsors, and as informal evidence of the impact of the Contest in grant proposals. Keeping in touch with past winners has also allowed staff to develop a greater sense of connection to and commitment from past winners to the Contest.

Tools

- Finalist Survey Questions
- Phone Call Follow-up Interview Protocol
- Mentor Survey
- Pre-proposal and Full Proposal Judge Survey
- 2011-12 Sample Evaluation Report



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