

# BIG IDEAS

## 2018-2019 MENTORSHIP HANDBOOK

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY**

100 Blum Hall, #5570  
Berkeley, CA 94720

[bigideas@berkeley.edu](mailto:bigideas@berkeley.edu) | (510) 664-7424

# With Special Thanks to our Sponsors



Andrew and Virginia  
Rudd Family Foundation



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

In addition to this handbook, mentor resources are available at <https://bigideascontest.org/participate/mentors/>

# 2018-2019 Big Ideas Mentor Handbook

**Thank you for agreeing to serve as a mentor for the 2018-2019 Big Ideas Contest!**

Big Ideas mentors have the opportunity to preview and provide feedback on students' innovative ideas. By serving as a mentor, you'll have an opportunity to give back while also getting a first-hand look at some of the most creative ideas being developed by graduate and undergraduate students. In addition, mentors will have the opportunity to build their own professional networks by attending Big Ideas events where they can meet other mentors, contest judges, faculty, and students.

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

## **2018-2019 Big Ideas Contest Statistics**

- >300 Pre-Proposals Submitted
- ~1000 Student Participants
- 54 Finalist Teams
- 12 Eligible Universities
- Up to \$300k in Prizes

The Big Ideas team is always happy to answer any questions you may have.

You can contact Network Manager, Francis Gonzales at [francis.gonzales@berkeley.edu](mailto:francis.gonzales@berkeley.edu) or reach him by phone at: 510-664-5361.

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# About the Contest

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

This year the Big Ideas Contest has 8 categories and is open to innovative student teams from 12 leading universities, including:

- University of California Berkeley
- University of California Davis
- University of California Irvine
- University of California Los Angeles
- University of California Merced
- University of California Riverside
- University of California San Diego
- University of California San Francisco
- University of California Santa Barbara
- University of California Santa Cruz
- Hebrew University (Israel)
- Makerere University (Uganda)

## Contest Structure

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The Big Ideas Contest is split into a pre-proposal round in the fall and a full proposal round in the spring.

### Round 1: Pre-Proposal

Eligible students submitted their three-page pre-proposals on November 14, 2018. Depending on the number of applicants per category, between 5 and 9 teams were selected as finalists to participate in the full proposal round in each Contest category, based on judges’ scores and feedback. All pre-proposal teams received detailed feedback from the judges, regardless of whether or not they were selected as finalists. All pre-proposal applicants were notified in mid-December 2018 regarding their status for the final round.

### Round 2: Full Proposal

Finalist teams will have the opportunity to develop and refine their pre-proposals into up to eight-page full proposals by March 6, 2019. In the full proposal round, finalists will expand on the ideas presented in their pre-proposals, edit their proposals based on judges’ feedback, and refine their project ideas through collaboration with a Big Ideas mentor (matched with the team based on the mentor’s subject expertise and areas of strength). From the finalist pool, between 3 and 5 award winners will be selected in each category.

# 2018-2019 Big Ideas Categories

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## **Art & Social Change**

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

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## **Connected Communities**

Design a novel solution that leverages technology to engage and enhance the well-being of campuses, communities and cities.

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## **Energy & Resource Alternatives**

Propose a solution to spur the adoption of energy and resource alternatives that are sustainable and have potential for broad impact.

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## **Food Systems**

Address a major issue confronting global food systems and develop a solution that promotes food security, sustainability, access, waste and nutrition.

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## **Global Health**

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

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## **Hardware for Good**

Build a hardware technology, or leverage an existing product in a novel way, that is both socially and environmentally responsible.

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## **Workforce Education & Development**

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

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## **Scaling Up Big Ideas**

For previous Big Ideas award winners who have advanced their ideas, and want to take their projects to the next level.

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# Full Proposal Components

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Finalist teams will have the opportunity to develop and refine their pre-proposals into full proposals due on Wednesday, March 6th, 2019.

Finalists are instructed to submit full proposals no more than 8 pages in length, single-spaced (including the required budget and implementation timeline, but not references or appendices). Big Ideas recommends the format below to ensure applicants include the required proposal elements, however, students are allowed to modify the order and presentation of the information as needed to tell their story.

## **The basic required components are as follows:**

### **1. Problem Statement**

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

### **2. Existing Solutions**

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

### **3. Proposed Innovation**

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

### **4. Implementation Timeline**

The timeline describes the key next steps for implementing the idea for the 1st year only. Big Ideas awards will be disbursed in June/July 2019. Therefore, for the purposes of this Contest, the 1st year is defined as June 2019-June 2020. Teams may mention work conducted prior to or following this 1-year timeframe in order to convey the broader context or vision for the project -- but it should not be considered in their scoring.

### **5. Measuring Success**

Teams should include information about how they will monitor or measure the impact or success of their project throughout the 1st year of implementation (June 2019-June 2020). This does not need to be a formal monitoring and evaluation plan, but can take the form of metrics and methods to make sure they can track their progress.

## 6. Budget

Includes both expected costs and revenue for the 1st year of the project (June 2019-June 2020).

Note: The average Big Ideas award is approximately \$5,000 and proposals should not request more than \$10,000 from Big Ideas. The requested amount from Big Ideas is typically seen in the “Funding Gap” section of the [budget template](#) we have suggested for use. Teams may also include any plans to leverage additional funding sources, if appropriate.

## 7. Team Bios

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

## 8. Past Progress (Scaling Up Big Ideas finalists ONLY!)

List the name of the original project, the year it received a Big Ideas award, and a quick description of the original project idea. Report on project progress since the time of the original award, and detail any milestones and accomplishments (e.g. number of people reached, products delivered, partnerships developed, additional funding secured, registering as a formal entity, employees hired, or social impact). Include key lessons learned and best practices, and if applicable, pivots or strategy revisions.

# Full Proposal Judging Criteria

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Entries will be judged according to the criteria below. Please note: There are slightly different judging criteria for finalists in the Hardware for Good category. Finalists and Mentors in that category should refer to the Hardware for Good section below for additional information.

### **Viability (40%):**

Given the project description and the team members’ expertise, skills, and training, the team will likely be able to meet their proposed goals. (Please keep in mind that we asked teams to explain how their project would look and consider implementation in only the 1st year of their project.) For example:

- The proposal demonstrates consideration of potential obstacles to implementation/ adoption and has proposed convincing solutions to address these challenges.
- The team has considered all relevant aspects of development, considered/developed viable marketing goals, effective marketing strategies, and realistic training and recruitment procedures for personnel or volunteers, if applicable.
- The team has identified and developed relationships with potential community partners, where applicable.
- The project team members and partners possess the necessary skills and experience to be successful in implementing the project.

### **Community or Market Familiarity (15%):**

The team demonstrates a great deal of familiarity with the market or community they plan to enter (either through research, professional, or volunteer experience). The proposal discusses similar programs, projects, or products that currently exist (especially with regard to the target population), the issues that

have emerged with those other initiatives, and specifically how their project compares. The proposal demonstrates that the applicants have given sufficient consideration to the cultural, ethical, and legal implications of their proposed intervention.

**Potential for Impact (15%):**

The proposed project addresses a pressing and important social problem. The team provides the reviewer with sufficient statistics and research to understand the problem, and makes a clear and compelling case that their project addresses this need.

**Realistic Budget (10%):**

The proposal includes a thorough and realistic budget that outlines all relevant expected expenses and revenue for the project’s 1st year. The budget demonstrates that the applicants have given sufficient consideration to necessary supplies, equipment, travel expenses, etc. The funding requested from Big Ideas is no greater than \$10,000. If the projects’ expenses are greater than \$10,000 total, the team has a reasonable plan to raise additional funds (e.g., the team has plans to submit additional grant applications, fundraise, etc.).

**Measuring Success (10%):**

The proposal demonstrates a viable plan for measuring success in achieving the project’s goals. The exact measurement tools (e.g. survey instruments) need not be developed at this stage, but the proposal should explain what will be measured, when/how it will be measured, and justify how those measurements lead to the achievement of the team’s desired impact.

**Quality and Creativity (10%):**

The project is innovative, the overall merit of this idea is high, and this is an idea worth funding.

**NOTE FOR MENTORS IN THE HARDWARE FOR GOOD CATEGORY**

The Big Ideas Contest has formed an exciting new partnership with the Lemelson Foundation to incorporate principles of sustainable design and circular economy into the Hardware for Good category.

Teams submitting in the Hardware for Good category will be judged on the following Sustainable Design and Circular Economy Criteria.

**Sustainable Design and Circular Economy Criteria (10%):**

The extent to which the full-proposal project incorporates sustainable design and circular economy principles. The extent to which the process of assessing the project with the VentureWell Inventing Green Toolkit and/or an approved life-cycle assessment tool impacted the proposed product, design process, and/or materials sourcing.

- The Sustainable Design and Circular Economy Criteria will replace 10% of “Viability” criteria listed above.
- The responses will be limited to 500 words and required in the webform section of the application (free response text box.) Applicants therefore do not need to include this section in the main body of their 8-page final proposal (.pdf upload).

# Mentorship Agreement

## Mentorship Overview

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The Big Ideas mentorship program is designed to support students in critically analyzing the viability of their project ideas before they are asked to submit a full proposal in the final round of the Contest. In the pre-proposal round, judges gave strong consideration to the creativity and innovation of the projects. In the final round, judges will increasingly consider the extent to which their projects are viable in their first year of implementation. **As a result, mentors assist students in thinking through the implementation and design of their project ideas, with an eye toward viability and impact.**

## Mentorship Commitment

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Big Ideas teams and their mentors are expected to work together for approximately **1-2 hours per week** via email, telephone, or in person meetings (to be negotiated with team members) from January 27 to March 6. During these engagements, mentors assist students in reviewing the feedback teams received from pre-proposal judges, coach teams through implementation plan development, connect teams with relevant members of their network, and provide constructive feedback on the project and final proposal. Mentors are advisors to the project and should not contribute extensive research or writing to the proposal.

## Mentor Expectations

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Big Ideas Mentors are expected to review and adhere to the University of California “[Statement of Ethical Values and Standards of Ethical Conduct](#)” which commits everyone in the UC community to the highest ethical standards in furtherance of the University’s mission of teaching, research, and public service. It identifies the University’s core ethical values as integrity, excellence, accountability, and respect (<https://ethics.berkeley.edu/code-conduct>).

Additionally, Mentors for the Big Ideas Contest agree to the following obligations:

- Place the interests of the team first
- Develop and maintain the trust of the team
- Serve as a resource to a network of contacts
- Help teams with goal setting and tracking
- Provide motivation and constructive feedback
- Disclose any potential conflicts of interest in a timely manner

## Confidentiality

Many Big Ideas applicants hope to launch ventures following the Contest. Mentors agree to not use information disclosed by the teams except for the sole purpose of advising the teams. Big Ideas Mentors will maintain a strict policy of not disclosing sensitive or proprietary information except as explicitly

agreed upon by a team and for the purpose of advancing the interests of the team before, during, and after the mentorship engagement.

## Terms of Engagement

Mentors will be asked to end their engagement if any of the following occur:

- The Mentor is not actively engaged with Big Ideas or their team.
- The Mentor commits a breach of confidentiality.
- The Mentor does not act in accordance with the expectations outlined in this document (above).

## Mentee Expectations

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The expectations for Big Ideas teams in regards to the mentor program are as follows:

1. Establish clear objectives, work goals, and deadlines at the outset of the mentorship and be accountable to those goals.
2. Discuss expectations and boundaries of the mentorship relationship at the 1st meeting. Teams must keep in mind that Big Ideas mentors are volunteering their time and often have challenging schedules. Teams must be as flexible as possible to accommodate these scheduling constraints, and be responsive in their communication with their mentors.
3. Determine the frequency and method of communication. If possible, set up a regular time for meetings each week.
4. Develop an agenda for each meeting and share in advance with your mentor.
5. Be upfront about potential scheduling difficulties that may occur, including travel and work or school deadlines.
6. Review the judging criteria for the final round and the judge feedback before mentorship begins to determine the areas to focus on with your mentor.
7. Utilize your mentor's expertise, but understand that your mentor's role is to offer guidance and support, not to lead your project or proposal development.

## Additional Resources

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- Seven Habits of Highly Effective Mentors (SSIR):  
[https://ssir.org/articles/entry/seven\\_habits\\_of\\_highly\\_effective\\_mentors](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/seven_habits_of_highly_effective_mentors)
- What it Takes to be a Good Mentee (Fast Company):  
<https://www.fastcompany.com/3043724/what-it-takes-to-be-a-good-mentee>

# Mentorship Agreement Form

By signing this agreement, both mentors and teams acknowledge that they have read and understood the terms of the Big Ideas Mentorship program outlined above.

Mentors will serve in an advisory role and offer 1-2 hours of their time between January 27<sup>th</sup> and March 6<sup>th</sup>. Teams will lead the engagement and utilize their mentor's expertise to advance their Big Idea. Both mentors and students agree to respect each other's time and request assistance from Big Ideas staff should an issue arise during the mentorship period.

**Please complete this form and return to the Big Ideas Contest via email ([bigideas@berkeley.edu](mailto:bigideas@berkeley.edu)) by Friday, February 1<sup>st</sup>.**

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*Signature of mentor*

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*Date*

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*Signature of team leader*

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*Date*

# Mentorship FAQs

## **Who participates in the Big Ideas Contest?**

All students on the 12 eligible campuses are encouraged to participate, regardless of their academic major. In past years, participants were approximately 60% undergraduate and 40% graduate students. The eligibility of each finalist team has already been verified during the pre-proposal round. Students come from a wide range of fields, including scientific and technical studies, liberal arts, law, public health, and business.

## **Is Big Ideas a business plan competition?**

No. Not all Big Ideas will result in the creation of commercial ventures. Applicants are encouraged to submit project plans with a business model (for-profit, non-profit, hybrid) and a realistic budget that will enable their venture to have the intended social impact.

## **Who judges the Big Ideas contest?**

Judges hail from a variety of fields and have diverse expertise to assess ideas and provide valuable feedback. Judges are academics, industry experts, social entrepreneurs, and non-profit and creative professionals.

## **Do mentors edit or help write proposals?**

Mentors are responsible for helping students think through issues of project design and implementation. Mentors are not responsible for idea generation, completing portions of the proposal, or proofreading/editing proposals.

## **How are teams paired with mentors?**

Big Ideas individually matches student teams with mentors who can provide necessary expertise and the specific skills requested by the finalist teams.

## **Is mentorship mandatory?**

No. Student teams are not required to work with a mentor, but all finalists were given the opportunity to complete a mentor matching form, signifying their desire and commitment to work with a mentor during this phase of the Contest.

## **What should student teams do if the feedback they received from judges is contradictory? Must student teams address all comments made by pre-proposal judges?**

Judges reviewed pre-proposals independently, meaning that some judges may disagree on the relative strengths and weaknesses of a proposal. In collaboration with their mentor, student teams can determine to what extent the weaknesses pointed out by pre-proposal judges should be addressed. However, we strongly encourage student teams to consider their pre-proposal feedback as they work to strengthen their proposals for the final round.

## **Who do I contact if I have any issues or concerns?**

Please email [francis.gonzales@berkeley.edu](mailto:francis.gonzales@berkeley.edu) or call (510) 664-5361. Also, students are welcome to attend drop-in office hours with Big Ideas advisors. Please check the Big Ideas website for the list of our updated hours: <https://bigideascontest.org/advising/>

# BIG IDEAS

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