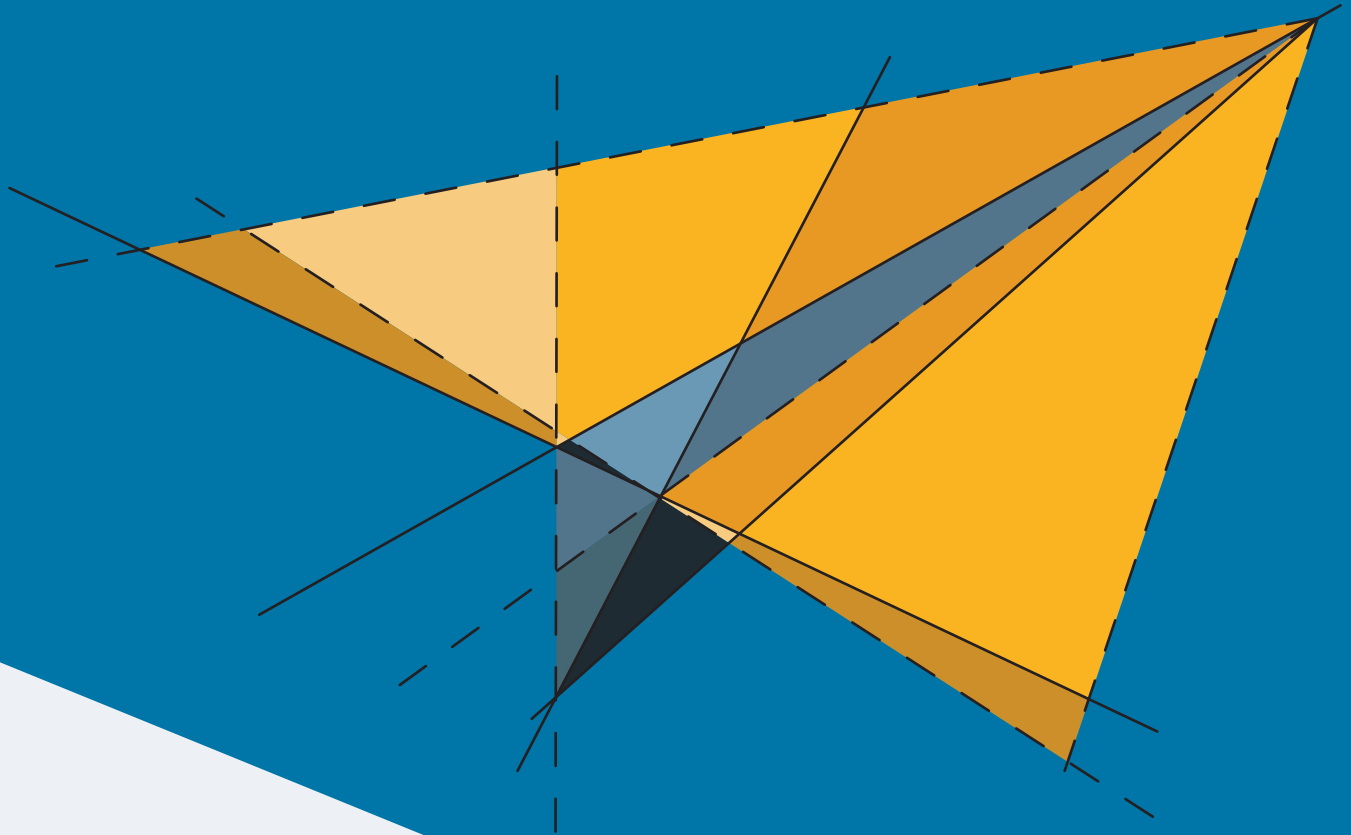


RUDD FAMILY FOUNDATION

BIG IDEAS

@BERKELEY



Big Ideas Toolkit

How to manage a student-led innovation contest:

10 years of proven contest management strategies, best practices, and lessons learned.

October 2016

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Introduction

Big Ideas@Berkeley is a year-long, annual student innovation contest that provides funding, support, and recognition to interdisciplinary teams of undergraduate and graduate students who have creative solutions to address pressing social challenges. The Big Ideas program is managed by the Blum Center for Developing Economies, an interdisciplinary center established in 2006 at UC Berkeley to improve global well-being by developing innovative technologies and systems, and by inspiring a new generation of changemakers.

Since the Contest's founding over 10 years 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.

Made possible by the generous support of the Rudd Family Foundation and the Global Development Lab's Higher Education Solutions Network at the U.S. Agency for International Development, 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. 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 year that can be replicated or adapted to fit the needs of innovation competitions at other colleges and universities.

Following the publication of the first edition of the Toolkit in 2013, the Blum Center released a second edition in 2016 to incorporate new insights and additional lessons learned over recent years. As Big Ideas expands, the Toolkit will be continually informed and updated based on changing activities and feedback from students and partners. It is intended as a living document rather than a finished publication.

At its core, Big Ideas believes that the best projects spring from partnerships. Big Ideas strongly encourages interdisciplinary collaboration among student teams, and in the same vein, the managers of Big Ideas seek to partner and work with other universities 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 possibilities for collaboration.



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Executive Summary

Mission & Goals

Big Ideas is an academic year-long, annual innovation contest that provides funding, support, and recognition to interdisciplinary teams of undergraduate and graduate students who develop creative solutions to pressing social problems. Contest goals are two-fold: 1) to support innovative projects with promising potential for social impact, and 2) foster a diverse pipeline of young innovators through targeted outreach, support, and educational opportunities.

Big Ideas encompasses 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 innovation contests held on other 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 impact.

Big Ideas@Berkeley History

Since 2006, Big Ideas has supported over 1,400 projects with more than 4,000 students competing, funded nearly 400 winning social ventures, distributed \$1.6 million in funding, and established a network of over 1,200 industry professionals. Winners have gone on to secure an additional \$150 million in funding.

To encourage greater participation from undergraduate students across a variety of academic disciplines, and to provide participants greater access to resources as they develop their ideas, the Contest pivoted from a one-stage to a two-round process that focuses on the growth of its contestants over the nine-month program.

These efforts have shown remarkable success in increasing diversity amongst its participants, expanding the competition from 62 entrants in 2006 (38% women, 24% undergraduates) to 795 entrants in 2016 (47% women,

62% undergraduates), and prompting participation from students in over 100 majors from 50 different countries.

Program Management

The Big Ideas contest is managed by the Blum Center for Developing Economies at UC Berkeley. The Contest has benefitted from the Blum Center's positioning as an interdisciplinary research unit by enabling it to foster campus collaboration across departments without prioritizing certain academic foci over others.

In its current incarnation, as a contest with 16 participating universities and over 250 applications annually, the Big Ideas contest requires 2 full time positions (Program Director, Program Manager) and 3 part-time student positions (Network Coordinator, Graphic Designer, Student Assistant).

Funding & Partnerships

Contest sponsorships cover operating expenses for the program. Category sponsorships allow donors to directly fund promising social ventures in their particular area of interests, prominent examples including the Autodesk Foundation for the Hardware for Good category, and the Center for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society (CITRIS) for the IT for Society category. Partners also agree to support the Contest with outreach and publicity needs, such as advertising the contest to students, judges, and mentors.

Category Development

Categories change from year to year. The way Big Ideas categories have developed over time is analogous to the structure of a shopping mall. In every shopping mall there are anchor stores that are large, established, and highly visible chains that help draw consumer traffic to a mall. In addition, there are the established but smaller secondary stores. Finally, there are floating shops that tend to be smaller and less permanent. Similarly, three types of categories—anchor, secondary, and floating—are recommended to create balance for the contest.

Each year, categories are evaluated based on: 1) level of student interest; 2) extent to which it inspires interdisciplinary collaboration; 3) overall strength and

potential impact of proposals that receive funding; 4) feedback from student applicants; 5) ongoing partnership and funding opportunities.

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 engage potential applicants from a variety of disciplines.

Contest Structure & Requirements

The contest currently consists of two rounds over nine months. The first half requests a 3-page Pre-proposal application focused on creativity, and the second half requires a 10-15 page Full Proposal application focused on viability. Throughout the course of the competition, numerous events and resources are available to participants to facilitate their skills development.

Outreach & Marketing

The most effective outreach strategies are email campaigns, posters, and word of mouth. Classroom announcements, news articles, events and tabling, and social media are other good ways of spreading the word.

Resources for Student Innovators

Big Ideas resources provided to student participants are: information sessions, writing workshops, networking and team building events, advising office hours, practitioners in residence consulting opportunities, editing blitzes, mentorship, and judge feedback.

Advising

Big Ideas advising hours are more often process-focused (i.e., focused on developing skills related to the process of designing innovative projects, such as critical reflection skills) than product-focused (i.e., focused on developing a successful Big Ideas project), 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.

Practitioners in Residence sessions (consultation opportunities with industry and topic area experts), complement Big Ideas general advising by offering specific

product, category, or skills-focused feedback.

Mentorship

Each year, Big Ideas recruits approximately 75-100 mentors to pair with teams. To recruit mentors, Big Ideas leverages partnerships, former judges and mentors, professional networks, and will occasionally conduct cold calls to reach out to new mentors.

Finalists and mentors work together approximately 1-2 hours per week for 6-8 weeks to refine teams' project ideas, develop partnerships, and craft Full Proposals. Big Ideas finalists cite the mentorship as one of the most important and impactful resources provided to applicants during the Contest.

Judging

Each year, Big Ideas recruits approximately 250-300 judges to help score proposals. Typically, one judge is recruited for every anticipated Pre-proposal and two for every Full Proposal to ensure that each proposal is read by a minimum of six different judges in each round.

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.

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 proposals submitted in their category.

Online Contest Platform

Big Ideas recommends that the contest platform used is flexible, simple, easy to manage, cost-effective, and offers strong customer service. It should have three interfaces: a judging portal, an applicant portal, and an administrator portal.

Prize Awards

Big Ideas prize money is an award for the 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 \$1,000 to \$10,000. The average prize award across categories is approximately \$5,000. The exact amount is determined primarily on the final overall scores and, to a lesser extent, on the amount of money requested by each team.

Additional Contest Opportunities

Additional prize opportunities are offered to students, which are designed to build their skill sets in a number of areas. These events include poster sessions, video contests, and pitch contests. In the 2015-2016 contest, these additional resources provided teams with the opportunity to win up to an additional \$8,000 for their project ideas.

Evaluation & Feedback

Each year, Big Ideas conducts impact assessments that measure 1) the size and diversity of the applicant pool, 2) the transformative nature of the program on applicants, and 3) the amount of progress achieved by Big Ideas winners to date. It surveys applicants, judges, mentors, and former winners to obtain this information. It also conducts a process evaluation to gain general feedback on the program's offerings.

Cross-Campus Expansion

Multiple campus expansion has both benefits and drawbacks. Expanding the Big Ideas contest to some of the top universities in the world has undoubtedly raised the size and stature of the competition, improved the quality and diversity of submitted projects, and provided entrepreneurship training resources to more students. However, managers should consider challenges associated with branding, sponsorships and eligibility, outreach, and resource offerings when deciding to grow the contest to other universities.

Post-Contest Support

After they leave Big Ideas, alumni typically cite a gap in support services for their proposed innovations. To bridge this gap, Big Ideas has provided the Scaling Up Big

Ideas category, Social Innovator OnRamp Resource Guide, and Social Innovator OnRamp Resource course.

Big Ideas has also established strong working partnerships with on and off-campus entrepreneurship support programs that seek to facilitate and scale social ventures (e.g. accelerators, incubators, other competitions, and crowdfunding initiatives) to provide Big Ideas alumni with concrete post-contest opportunities.

It also leverages the growing Big Ideas network of sponsors, partners, judges, and mentors to stay engaged and continue to support students' projects after they leave the competition.

“The power of the small grant 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. Otherwise we waste a whole generation just waiting for the credentials to do something that they have some capacity to do earlier.”

- Dr. Nora Silver

Founder & Faculty Director

Center for Social Sector Leadership, UC

Berkeley-Haas School of Business

“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, 2008



Mission & Goals

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

At its core, the goals of Big Ideas are two-fold: to support innovative projects with promising potential for social impact, and foster a diverse pipeline of young innovators through targeted outreach, support and educational opportunities. By investing in the innovators and entrepreneurs themselves, Big Ideas helps to grow a generation of interdisciplinary changemakers who value innovation, social impact, and risk-taking.

All of the components described in this Toolkit have been intentionally designed with these goals in mind. Big Ideas 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, passion, 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 an idea, typically before they are investor-ready or prepared to enter the marketplace. Most students who enter the Contest have never entered other innovation or business plan contests or run a pilot version of their project. Often, prospective applicants develop their big ideas after enrolling in classes that sparked their interests, visiting another country and identifying an unaddressed challenge, and/or working with a population whose needs have not fully been serviced. Big Ideas aims to foster a pipeline of these early-stage innovators—especially those that are underrepresented in startup environments and/or lack access to key entrepreneurial resources—by providing a low risk platform and top quality support services in order to help them launch their ventures.

The contest is designed to be an academic 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 underlying logic of the Contest assumes that students apply with creative ideas designed to make social impact, and are provided with resources designed to assist them in making their project ideas feasible, scalable, and appropriate for the population they wish to serve.

Further, the Contest encourages and creates a platform for global social changemakers. Business plan or entrepreneurship competitions are designed to vet entrepreneurs, but 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 ventures, but they, more importantly, focus on social challenges. As a result, 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 Contest | Business Plan Contest |
|--|--|
| 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 undergraduate and graduate students | Principally involve grad students |

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 below.

2006 Big Ideas Categories

Curricular Innovation
Green Cities
Neglected Diseases
Clean Energy
Information Technology for Society
Social Entrepreneurship
Science and Technology Policy
Serious Games
Improving Lower Sproul Plaza
Designing the Next “X” Prize

In its first five years, the structure of the Bears Breaking Boundaries competition was primarily a white paper contest: Student teams were provided with general guidelines and invited to submit papers describing their ideas to improve society. After a single round of judging, winners were selected within multiple categories to receive awards ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000 to be used as scholarships or to advance their project ideas.

Pivot in Approach

In 2010, UC Berkeley’s interdisciplinary Blum Center for Developing Economies began managing the

Bears Breaking Boundaries competition and renamed it Big Ideas@Berkeley. Following an extensive review that included surveys of students and past winners, the Blum Center pivoted the Contest’s approach to incorporate the following 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.
- 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 innovation contest, only 30% had heard of Big Ideas.
- 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.

In response to this analysis, in the fall of 2010, Big Ideas changed its format from a one-round competition to the current structure it utilizes today, a multidisciplinary two-round, resource-rich contest that aims not only to fund, but also to support and encourage early-stage changemakers. By offering additional resources (mentorship, workshops, networking, team building) Big Ideas encourages broad student involvement, provides needed support to all students who wished to enter the Contest, and levels the playing field between undergraduate and graduate student applicants. The pivot led to a stark improvement in undergraduate student participation, from 24% in 2006 to an average of 67% in the past four contest years. 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.

Expansion to multiple universities

As Big Ideas grew from year to year and diversified its funding sources and partnerships, it also expanded contest eligibility to schools outside of UC Berkeley. Initially, the majority of categories offered through the contest were only open to UC Berkeley students. In 2013, Big Ideas opened the majority of its contest categories to the entire University of California school system. In 2014, through the Blum Center's Development Impact Lab, Big Ideas established a working partnership with USAID's Global Development Lab and incorporated an additional six schools, including one located outside of the US (Makerere University in Uganda). To learn more about how Big Ideas manages a global innovation competition, see the chapter on Cross-Campus Expansion.

10 Year Impact

Since its founding, Big Ideas has grown to become one of the largest and most diverse social innovation competitions in the country. Whereas 30,000 UC Berkeley students were eligible for Bears Breaking Boundaries in 2006, over 500,000 students are currently eligible for the Big Ideas competition. To date, the Contest has provided \$1.6 million in seed funding to social impact projects. It continues to grow each year, with the 2015-2016 contest accepting more applications and recruiting more judges and mentors than any other year in the history of the Contest.

Big Ideas has played an immense role in fostering the innovation ecosystem at UC Berkeley and other participating universities. It has shaped the dialogue on the importance of social entrepreneurship programming on college campuses, and incorporated more triple bottom line thinking into school-based startup landscapes. Specifically, Big Ideas believes it affects UC Berkeley and other participating campuses in the following ways:

It inspires and accelerates the output of university-based social ventures. Big Ideas has supported over 4,000 students submitting more than 1,400 projects, and provided seed funding for almost 400 for-profit enterprises, non-profit organizations, and community-based initiatives. Those winners have gone on to collectively secure over \$150 million in additional investment, meaning

for every \$1 invested by the Contest, teams obtain, on average, an additional \$100. Big Ideas strengthens and expedites the development of social impact projects through nine months of goal setting, tailored feedback, mentorship and networking, team building, seed funding, and validation. It also inspires the creation of new initiatives by challenging socially-minded students to start their own projects, and providing them with a low-risk environment to do so. Big Ideas encourages students to be proactive in their attempts to tackle pressing social challenges, and provides them with a suite of tools to support their efforts.

It responds to a demand from students for greater exposure to real world problem solving. In recent years, UC Berkeley has seen a huge rise in demand of project-based classes. The Contest responds to student requests for a more professionally-focused, applied, education and greater exposure to industry. Its nine-month application process instructs students to design a product or service, identify a market, develop a compelling proposal, seek funding sources, express ideas in written and verbal forms, establish networks, design an implementation plan, and formulate a budget. It is also a unique opportunity to practice interdisciplinary collaboration outside of academic silos, an accurate representation of how issues are resolved in the real world. Due to limited enrollment spaces in project-based classes, many students lack these hands-on opportunities. Big Ideas supplements traditional schooling by teaching students to combine the theoretical aspects of classes with the applied aspects of fieldwork.

It fosters an inclusionary environment and builds a diverse pipeline of entrepreneurs. The Big Ideas contest attracts a broad pool of student entrepreneurs representing a diverse mix of academic disciplines, ages, countries of origin, genders and ethnicities. The Blum Center has worked to widen this pool by expanding support resources, incorporating a wide breadth of contest categories and increasing outreach efforts to ensure that the contest draws diverse applicants from across the eligible campuses. These efforts have shown remarkable success, expanding the competition from 62 entrants in 2006 (38% women, 24% undergraduates) to 795 entrants in 2016 (47% women, 62% undergraduates), and prompting participation from students in over 100 majors from 50 different countries of

origin.

By virtue of being based at UC Berkeley and expanding eligibility to schools across the globe, the Contest also ensures that its much-needed resources are available to students who traditionally lack access to entrepreneurial support services and capital. Considering that an estimated 41% of all undergraduates in the University of California system qualified for Pell Grants in 2014, Big Ideas provides an important additional opportunity for students from low-income families who are traditionally underrepresented in the startup environment. On the Berkeley campus alone, an average of 17% of incoming freshmen are first-generation students, 40% of undergraduates speak English as a second language, and 10% are international. By opening the contest to schools such as Makerere University in Uganda, the contest also extends its unique offerings to populations with limited access to student innovation support services. This diversity ensures that the innovative enterprises generated by participating students at public universities around the world represent a perspective that is often left out of traditional entrepreneurship training programs.

It encourages students to become global changemakers. Big Ideas teaches its participants that there is never a problem too large, or a stage too early to start a venture. Undergraduate students are rarely recognized as producing innovative, cutting-edge ideas. The contest is proof that one does not need a decade of professional experience or a PhD to develop a compelling solution to a social issue. Since the contest's pivot in strategy, the majority of winning teams were led by undergraduate students, with plans to implement projects in 30 different countries.

Big Ideas changes the way students perceive themselves as innovators, broadens and potentially transforms their career trajectories. Students take the lessons they learned through the contest into their professional careers. In the 2014-2015 contest cycle, the number of respondents disagreeing with the statement "I consider myself an innovator" declined by 75%. Furthermore, in the last contest year, 93% of finalists reported interest in working for a social venture at some point in their career, and startups were the top-ranked

career preference compared to other sectors (business, government, non-profit etc.). This is representative of the Contest's unique ability to transform students' relationship with the entrepreneurial field and influence the way they think of their role in society.

It establishes the university as a leader in student innovation. Competitions like Big Ideas significantly raise the profiles of host campuses, by showcasing the groundbreaking work being produced by students. This rich entrepreneurial landscape is reflected in the high numbers of successful enterprises generated on campus. In August 2014, private equity and venture capital research firm PitchBook published an analysis of the undergraduate institutions of more than 13,000 founders, and UC Berkeley ranked second. According to PitchBook's data, 336 alumni with undergraduate degrees from UC Berkeley founded 284 companies that raised \$2.4 billion in investment between 2009 and 2014.

The contest also provides an array of channels for industry leaders and top organizations to become involved with the school, and a pool of ambitious and skilled students for potential employers to draw from. To date, Big Ideas has recruited more than 1,200 judges and mentors to participate in its program, and partnered with numerous organizations and campus entities to execute the contest. This builds the school's reputation for fostering student innovation, which helps recruit more entrepreneurial prospective students, and experienced faculty and staff. It deepens connections with campuses' graduated social innovators by developing networks where alumni can stay connected to the program and the university.

For more information about student-led innovation, see:

- UC Berkeley News Center, "\$100,000 competition to fund UC Berkeley students' best ideas to change the world", March 1, 2006.
- Bloomberg Business Week, "Student Activism Can Change the World", by John Hagel and John Seely Brown, May 30, 2008.
- Science News, "Taken for Granted: A Big Idea about Fostering Innovation", October 3, 2008.
- UC Newsroom, "How Do You Grow an Entrepreneur?", by Brian Back, September 28, 2016.

Program Management

Interdisciplinary Home

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 across the entire campus. Big Ideas serves as a “commons” for the entire UC Berkeley campus, breaking down the departmental silos that too often exist on college campuses by bringing together individual units (centers, departments, programs) and making them stakeholders in this competition and its processes. When opportunities for categories and sponsorships arise, this is the critical lens through which they are assessed.

Big Ideas is managed by UC Berkeley’s Blum Center for Developing Economies. An interdisciplinary research center on the Berkeley campus, the Blum Center aims to join together world-class faculty, inspiring new curriculum, and innovative technologies, services, and business models to create real-world solutions to help combat poverty. Given its focus on driving innovation and student experiential learning, the Blum Center is well positioned to give early-stage innovators the necessary training and networks to achieve wide social impact, and continues to manage the Contest as a resource for UC Berkeley and other eligible 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 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 contest is uniquely positioned to offer to early-stage changemakers a wide range of perspectives and resources.

Staffing Requirements

As the number of applications has risen consistently each contest year, Big Ideas has added human resources

accordingly. During the 2016-2017 Contest year, staff roles include the following:

Program Director (Staff Position - 100%):

The Big Ideas Program Director is responsible for developing and managing all aspects of the Big Ideas program. This includes both short-term objectives and long-term planning. The primary responsibilities of the Program Director include: establishing the vision and strategy of the contest, developing sponsorships and new categories, maintaining relationships with partner organizations and schools, reporting, hiring, and advising.

Program Manager and Student Advisor (Staff Position - 100%):

The Program Manager and Student Advisor is a full time staff position. In addition to assisting the Program Director with the implementation of all aspects of the Big Ideas program, this position serves as the main point of contact to participating student teams. Responsibilities of this position include: contest outreach and marketing, managing online application and review processes, facilitating workshops and trainings and executing Big Ideas events, and advising contest participants. Typically, the Program Manager dedicates 4-5 hours a week towards advising office hours. Additionally, this role is responsible for developing and implementing surveys and developing conclusions to help analyze and improve the effectiveness of Big Ideas, 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. Over the summer, the Program Manager is responsible for conducting the learning analysis in order to make programmatic adjustments for the following year.

Network Coordinator and Student Advisor (Graduate Student -- 50% Fall/Spring):

The Network Coordinator and Student Advisor is a graduate student position. The primary responsibilities for this position include recruiting judges and mentors for the Pre-proposal and Full Proposal Rounds, leading trainings for the judging and mentorship processes, and assisting with the organization of Big Ideas events. In addition, the Network

Coordinator also serves as an advisor to applicants and prospective applicants, typically dedicating approximately 4 hours per week towards advising office hours.

Graphic Designer (Undergraduate -- 25% Fall/Spring):

Under the guidance of the Program Manager, the undergraduate graphic designer develops informational and promotional materials and ensures brand consistency across all Big Ideas publications. The responsibilities of the graphic designer range from sketching icons for contest categories, to developing programs and posters for events, to designing infographics for reporting purposes. Big Ideas has typically hired 2nd and 3rd year students to fulfill this role.

Student Assistant (Undergraduate – 25% Fall/Spring):

Big Ideas also relies on an undergraduate work-study student assistant to support it with a variety of administrative and creative responsibilities, including clerical tasks, website and social media content management, data management, event assistance, and communications.

Additional Support from Students

Big Ideas also draws from other student assistants working at the Blum Center for support with press, events, and photography/videography. These students are needed only several times per year, and can be contracted at an hourly rate.

Tips

- The composition of the Big Ideas staff should reflect the goals of Big Ideas. It 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 employees should be as complementary as possible (humanities student vs. STEM student, domestic vs. international experience, service/education-oriented approach vs. technical or business approach).
- Prioritize candidates with a strong entrepreneurial background, wide network, and advising experience. When hiring for the Program Manager and Network Coordinator roles, Big Ideas places an emphasis on the following attributes: first, the contest should recruit

candidates who have participated in other innovation/ entrepreneurship programs or organization. They bring with them knowledge, connections, and commitment to project development and problem solving. Second, candidates with a wide professional network should be prioritized. This is especially relevant for the Network Coordinator, where the quality and quantity of the judge and mentor pool is a result of the student's ability to tap into existing networks. Third, candidates with some experience in education or mentoring also tend to serve as excellent student advisors, as they understand how to provide constructive critiques and challenge students without discouraging them.

Tools

- Staff Position Descriptions

“There’s a value to giving [young people] more autonomy early in their career. There’s a value to encouraging them to identify something that they’re passionate about.”

**-Thomas Kalil
Founder, Big Ideas@Berkeley**

Funding & Partnerships

The Big Ideas ecosystem is made possible through the generous support of key donors. Although philanthropic funding provides much of the operational support for the Contest, each Contest category is sponsored by a particular organization. These category sponsors provide funding for the prize awards, as well as support in helping to build networks and broadly promote the Contest.

Contest Sponsorship

Contest sponsorship is the first step in getting a large-scale competition off the ground. The Big Ideas contest benefits from the generous support of the Andrew and Virginia Rudd Family Foundation, which provided a multi-year gift to support operational expenses. The Rudd Foundation has been integral to providing the support needed to establish and maintain the program's overhead by allowing Big Ideas to focus its fundraising initiatives on category sponsorships. It has also facilitated a great deal of continuity and knowledge carry-over within the contest by providing the resources necessary to allow for a long-term staff commitment. Ultimately, this type of sponsorship allows the program to concentrate efforts on improving upon its own effectiveness each year.

Category Sponsorship

The Big Ideas contest relies on a great deal of category sponsorship. In a category sponsorship, the majority of funding provided goes directly to prize funding for winners. A smaller percentage of each category sponsorship may be used to help fund operating costs. The 2015-2016 contest provided approximately \$300,000 in direct award funding to the winners of the nine categories, averaging approximately \$35,000 for each category.

In some cases, Big Ideas will approach prospective funders based on their interests and likelihood of financing an existing category. Other times, Big Ideas will engage with a potential category sponsor with broader interests (e.g. in student innovation) and negotiate the development of a category based on their priorities. Occasionally, a donor will have very clear expectations for a category. For instance, the Autodesk Foundation's goal to "support the people and organizations using design for positive social impact" led to the development of the "Hardware for Good"

category. Big Ideas will often assess whether these topics round out the set of focus areas for the year. As some categories lend themselves much more readily to external sponsorships, different strategies are required of different categories. (See the chapter on Category Development for more information).

Category sponsors have access to a wide body of talented and diverse students and industry leaders, and the most innovative ideas emerging from some of the top universities in the world. In exchange for sponsorship, funders also receive branding and logo recognition at Big Ideas, co-design rights of the category, sponsorship of a category kick off or poster event, reserved appointments for judge and mentors, and a presentation at the annual Big Ideas Awards Celebration event.

Big Ideas has long-term relationships with many of its category sponsors. For example, both the Associated Students Union of California and the Center for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society (CITRIS) have sponsored contest categories since its founding in 2006. It is also possible for multiple entities to fund the same category; the Food Systems category was funded by both Michigan State University's Global Center for Food Systems Innovation and the Berkeley Food Institute in 2015.

Partnerships

On a limited basis, Big Ideas forms "in-kind" partnerships with 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. Former partners include the Berkeley Energy & Resources Collaborative, and Arts Research Center, Data and Democracy Initiative, and UC Berkeley Human Rights Center.

Both partnerships and sponsorships are essential resources for participating teams after they graduate from the Big Ideas contest. Big Ideas winners have gone on to develop their own relationships with Big Ideas partners

and sponsors that are sustained long after they graduate from the program. As they leave the contest, Big Ideas will often cultivate relationships between winners and partners/sponsors to help them seek further support for their initiatives and expand their networks. Partners and sponsors can also increase a winner's visibility; numerous Big Ideas initiatives have received substantial press through the UC System, UC Berkeley and USAID websites.

Tools

- Category Sponsorship Outreach Email
- Sponsorship Overview - Category
- Sponsorship Overview - General

Case Study



Promoting Human Rights

The Promoting Human Rights category, offered in 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, is an example of how category sponsorships are leveraged to develop new categories.

Big Ideas collaborates closely with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as part of its Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN). The goal of the HESN is to harness the intellectual power of great academic institutions around the globe and 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 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 2012-2013 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 a partner. 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 partnership of HRC ensured the success of this category.

“By competing in the process, you are forced to undergo scrutiny from experts and experienced judges and by winning Big Ideas, you’re given a rare chance to prove that your idea can work!”




**- Nicholas DeRaad, GoodWheels
2013-2014 Big Ideas Winner**

Category Development



The Big Ideas Contest aims to spur interdisciplinary participation. As a result, Big Ideas has developed a set of contest categories that, together, stretch across multiple disciplines, and individually, are broad enough to accommodate projects of many different types. In the 2016-2017 Contest year, Big Ideas consisted of nine contest categories that spanned broad areas. 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.

The way Big Ideas categories developed over time is analogous to the structure of a shopping mall. In every shopping mall there are anchor stores that are large, established, and highly visible chains that help draw consumer traffic to a mall. In addition, there are the established but smaller secondary stores. Finally, there are floating shops that tend to be smaller and less permanent. Global Health, Energy & Resource Alternatives, Information Technology for Society, Improving Student Life, and Scaling Up Big Ideas have long served as the “anchor” categories for the Big Ideas contest. They are most established, longest running, and best-known categories, and thus draw students to the contest. Art & Social Change and Food Systems categories are established, but smaller “secondary” categories. Each year, Big Ideas also offers “floating” categories that are new and topical, such as Hardware for Good and Financial Inclusion categories.

|  Anchor |  Secondary |  Floating |
|---|--|---|
| Energy & Resource Alternatives | Art & Social Change | Financial Inclusion |
| Global Health | Food Systems | Hardware for Good |
| Improving Student Life | | |
| Information Technology for Society | | |

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 Big Ideas@Berkeley History). Secondly, there should be potential sponsorship and funding opportunities to support the category, either on-campus or externally. Third, the category should draw upon a specific and new area of emphasis or expertise apparent within the collective student body. Finally, the category should round out the selection of topics covered in a given contest year by not creating substantial overlap with other existing categories.

At the end of each Contest year, Big Ideas staff conducts a review to determine a) which categories to renew (or not), b) 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)
- Extent of 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 long-term partnerships, are typically renewed each year. In some cases, the category titles and descriptions are revised and broadened to encourage a higher number of applications from a wider range of disciplines. In situations where few proposals are received and/or no sponsorship opportunities exist, a category may be dropped. Other times, topics are found to be too general and overlapping of other categories, in which case they are also discontinued.

Case Studies

| Too Broad → Narrowed | Too Narrow → Restructured | Too Narrow → Discontinued |
|--|---|--|
| <p>The Global Poverty Alleviation category was offered in the 2012 - 2014 contest years, and thrived due to the high number of center, departments, faculty, and students interested in or focused on international development. This ensured a stable stream of student interest and financial support for this category, reducing the need for Big Ideas staff to seek out partnerships to assist with publicizing the category and recruiting judges and mentors. However, an examination of the 2013-2014 contest showed that most of the submissions in Global Poverty Alleviation were also eligible for other categories such as Promoting Human Rights, IT for Society, and Open Data. Furthermore, many of the projects were global health focused. As a result, the category was changed in 2014-2015 to Global Health, which better represented of the types of projects submitted in that category. Global Health also helped round out topics offered that year in a more holistic way.</p> | <p>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 & Sustainable Energy Alternatives category and emphasized that proposals could focus on developing a renewable energy technology. 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. This was rebranded in 2015-2016 contest to Energy & Resource Alternatives to further broaden the category, although the description largely remained the same.</p> | <p>The Mobiles for Reading category was offered in the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 contest years, but was discontinued thereafter. The category, which asked students to “develop novel, mobile technology-based innovations or methods that can improve reading outcomes for children in developing countries” was too narrow in its definition. It excluded teams with projects that focused on domestic education, adult literacy, were not developed on a mobile platform. As a result, it created confusion around eligibility, and in some cases forced teams to change the foundations of their projects in order to fit requirements for this category. The category received a low number of proposals each year, and required a great deal of advising from Big Ideas staff because of its specific requirements. After reflecting on these issues, the decision was made to discontinue the category after two years.</p> |

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. It is quite common for students' projects to fit into multiple contest categories.

For instance, in the 2015-2016 contest, a team proposed a mobile application that provided students with detailed information on restaurant ingredients to help them make more informed dining choices. This project qualified for the Improving Student Life, IT for Society, Food Systems, and Global Health categories. After reviewing each category description, the team found their project's mission fit one category more strongly than the others. Clear definitions and descriptions allow students to make better choices about which category is the strongest fit for their project.
- Balance Funding/Growth Opportunities with Mission & 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.
- Beware of Mission Creep. Securing funding is critical to launching a new category, however the new category must also align with the other "key factors" cited above. Namely, the new category must also fit within the mission of the Contest, and it should align with the interests and expertise of the collective student body. Managers should collaborate closely with potential sponsors during the category development process, and push back when necessary to ensure that the key category evaluation criteria are met. Developing a category that meets the narrow goals of a sponsor, but is not broad and diverse enough to generate sufficient student interest, will result in a great deal of staff effort with little return on investment. It can stretch available resources to the point where the performance of other categories may suffer as a result.

Tools

- 2015-2016 Category Descriptions





“The best part about participating in the Big Ideas competition was getting hands-on experience with the intricate process of turning a simply idea into a fully researched, fully staffed, fully funded project. Our entire team learned that coming up with the initial idea was the most straightforward part of the process. As we began to develop the idea, we bumped into gaps in research and practical barriers that pushed us to reach our goals.”

- Campus Cooks, 2015-2016 Big Ideas Winner

Contest Structure & Requirements



Structure

The Big Ideas contest is intentionally structured to provide students an opportunity to develop their project ideas over the course of an academic year. Big Ideas supports promising teams in the development of their proposals over the course of a two-round nine-month contest cycle, starting in September and concluding in May. In the fall semester, students submit a short project proposal (dubbed the “Pre-proposal”) in November to the category of their choosing. A team of judges selects a group of finalists in each category to continue on to the second half of the Contest (dubbed the “Full Proposal” Round) in the spring semester. This round includes a six to eight-week advisory with a Big Ideas mentor, culminating in the submission of a longer Full Proposal in March. Winners are determined following a second round of judging. For a comprehensive list of contest dates, including for support workshops and end of the year events, refer to the 2015-2016 Timeline document in the Tools section.

Requirements

All participating teams must include at least one matriculated student from an eligible campus, who serves as the Team Lead of the project. The team must be able to demonstrate that the ideas submitted are student-led initiatives and not an extension of faculty-led research or a non-governmental organization’s programs. For complete eligibility requirements, refer to the Official Contest Rules document in the Tools section.

Pre-proposal Application Process

The Pre-proposal aims to inspire students to focus on innovative project and product design. Pre-proposal requirements are adjusted year-to-year based on student feedback, but its primary components have remained consistent over the past few years. The Pre-proposal is a three-page document that prompts students to identify a problem, conduct a landscape analysis, explain their idea and its intended impact, and begin to think about how their solution will

Originality + Creativity > Viability + Impact

| Components | Criteria |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Problem Statement | Innovation (40%) |
| Existing Solutions | Potential for Impact (20%) |
| Proposed Innovation | Viability (15%) |
| Team Bios | Category Challenge (15%) |
| | Quality (10%) |

be implemented. Because Big Ideas 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 and explicitly not primarily judged 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 potentially rethink their project ideas in the final round of the Contest.

Tips

- **Ensure that students prioritize the innovation design before moving too far in their implementation plan.** Prior to the 2015-2016 contest year, the Pre-proposal was designed as a five-page document including a budget and timeline. In 2015, Big Ideas eliminated these two requirements due to feedback from Pre-proposal judges that in many cases, the ideas were too early-stage to accommodate these elements. The design of the proposed solution needed adjustment before it could adequately consider project expenses and an implementation timeline. Thus, Pre-proposal requirements were adjusted so that the timeline and budget were only a requirement for the Full Proposal round, after teams could modify the design of their projects based on Pre-proposal judge and mentor feedback.

Full Proposal Application Process

In the Full Proposal round, students are expected to have significantly refined their project ideas and proposals, thanks in part to the mentorship, skills development workshops, advising and feedback provided during the Pre-proposal and Full Proposal application stages. The Full Proposal is a 10 to 15-page document that includes all the components of the Pre-proposal, but also asks for a viable and detailed implementation plan and timeline, plans for measuring success, and project budget. Based on the quality of the full proposals, Full Proposal judges select multiple winners from each category. Unlike the Pre-proposal round, Full Proposals are judged primarily on the project's 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.

Originality + Creativity < Viability + Impact

| Components | Judging Criteria |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Problem Statement | Viability (40%) |
| Existing Solutions | Community or Market Familiarity (15%) |
| Proposed Innovation | Potential for Impact (15%) |
| Implementation Timeline | Realistic Budget (10%) |
| Measuring Success | Measuring Success (10%) |
| Budget | Quality and Creativity (10%) |
| Team Bios | |

Tips

- Be strict on proposal requirements, but flexible on formatting. It is important that participating teams understand that the proposal components are not an outline, but a guiding framework for content. An application is incomplete if it does not address the required components, but students can present this information in multiple forms of presentation. Some teams choose to copy these components directly into their proposals as headers, while others opt for a format that makes more sense for their project. Big Ideas tries to encourage the creative presentations of ideas while also ensuring that there are no significant gaps in proposal content.
- Require additional sections to strengthen proposal quality. The 2015-2016 contest introduced “Existing Solutions” as a separate proposal requirement. This development was based on feedback from a number of judges who felt proposals generally lacked substantial consideration of other effective solutions tackling the same problem. Adding this application requirement strengthened overall proposal quality by compelling teams to conduct landscape research on potential competitors or collaborators.

Tools

- 2015-2016 Timeline
- Budget Template
- Email Notifications to Finalists and Non-Finalists
- Email Notifications to Winners and Non-Winners
- Full Proposal Application Requirements
- Full Proposal FAQs
- Full Proposal Judging Criteria
- Official Contest Rules
- Pre-proposal Application Requirements
- Pre-proposal FAQs
- Pre-proposal Judging Criteria



Outreach & Marketing

Student Participation

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

Students are inundated with information on opportunities to participate in campus life activities. Creating interest around an innovation contest amidst many competing opportunities is no small feat. As a result, Big Ideas uses a variety of strategies to maximize outreach opportunities. These strategies include face-to-face efforts (e.g., tabling, class announcements), 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 last few years and comments on their effectiveness:

Primary Outreach Efforts

Email Campaigns: Big Ideas finds that email campaigns are the most effective way to encourage student participation and conducts a robust email effort in the first half of the contest. Typically, three types of emails are sent out before the Pre-proposal deadline:

- Big Ideas issues a monthly newsletter that provides information on contest deadlines, alumni updates, upcoming events, and additional opportunities for social innovators. All student participants, judges and mentors, and alumni are subscribed to the list. Others can also sign up via the Big Ideas website or at a Big Ideas event.
- General contest promotional emails are sent to a wide audience including undergraduate and graduate academic departments, campus centers, student groups, and innovation, research, and entrepreneurial networks. The content of these emails focus on general contest information, prize amounts, deadlines, and upcoming information sessions.
- Category-specific emails are tailored to academic departments, classes and professors, and student groups. They provide an overview of the category requirements and a few examples of winning projects,

in addition to contest information, prize amounts, deadlines, and information sessions. Big Ideas has found these emails to be particularly effective in driving interest around the contest.

The Final Round requires far less contest promotion, as participants are selected through the existing pool of Pre-proposal applicants. Email reminders are sent out to encourage participation in additional contest opportunities such as the People's Choice Video Contest, and at end of the year events such as Grand Prize Pitch Day and the Awards Celebration.

Word of Mouth: A quarter of all Big Ideas applicants reported that they heard about the contest through a friend or colleague. After 10 years, Big Ideas benefits from an extensive network of alumni, professors, and other social impact leaders able to spread the word about the contest. This type of outreach is more difficult for a newer contest to build, but contest staff can still build strong partnerships with academic and student leaders to help spread the word. Continuing to engage contest alumni by including them on a newsletter distribution list, or announcing kickoff information via email, will also encourage them to spread the word.

Posters: Posters are the next most effective way to reach students. They are regularly posted across the UC Berkeley and other participating campuses. 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:

- Once the fall semester begins, Contest Kickoff Posters are put up across campuses announcing the Contest's launch, categories, and 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, Art & Social Change Category posters are posted in the Art, Film, Architecture, Political Science, Sociology, and Peace and Conflicts Studies departments.
- Event Posters also advertise upcoming information sessions and writing workshops for students interested in participating.

Secondary Outreach Efforts

Press Releases and News Articles: At the beginning of each Pre-proposal application period, Big Ideas puts together a press release that kicks off the contest, advertised through its blog. This article typically contains general contest information and is posted on the front page of the UC Berkeley news website. Newspaper advertisements are also run in UC Berkeley's student newspaper, The Daily Californian. In the second half of the contest year, Big Ideas articles typically highlight the finalists participating in Grand Prize Pitch Day, and document the full list of winners from the year. The Big Ideas blog also frequently features past winner updates that are advertised through its newsletter.

Classroom announcements: Big Ideas staff 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, or if the class is project or research-based. Professors can also be encouraged to integrate some of their deliverables with Big Ideas requirements to allow for students' ease of participation.

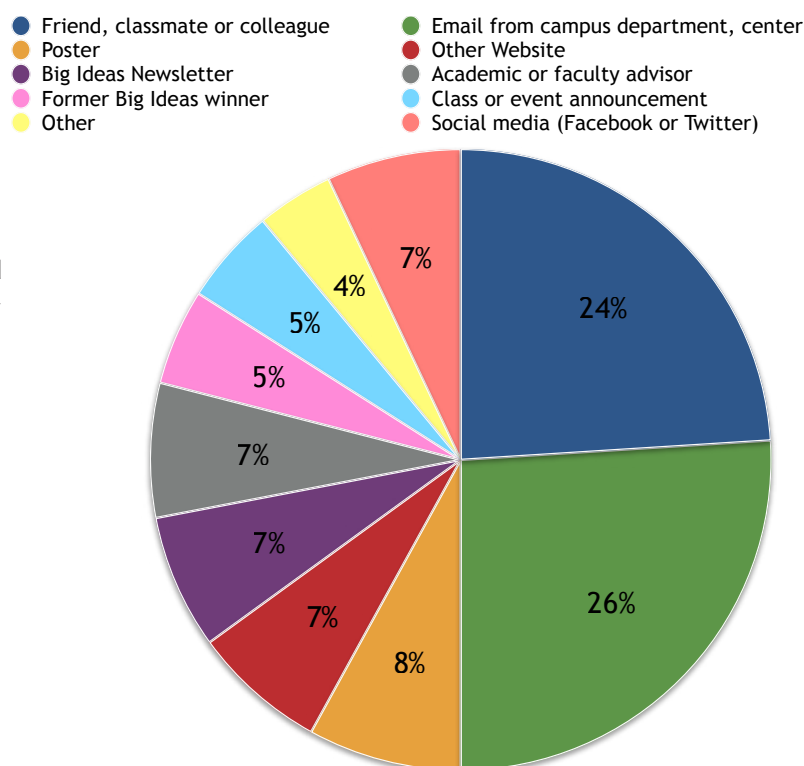
Events & Tabling: At the beginning of the year, Big Ideas identifies major upcoming events that are likely to draw large numbers of students interested in international development, social impact, innovation, or entrepreneurship. Big Ideas has made event announcements at the Berkeley Entrepreneurs Expo, Launch Startup Expo, Berkeley Festival of Ideas, Haas Food Entrepreneur Event, and Clinton Global Initiative University events. To raise more visibility amongst Berkeley's general student population, Big Ideas also set up tables at the UC Berkeley's summer student orientation, welcome week activities, and prospective student days. Big Ideas also takes advantage of events and workshops hosted by the Blum Center (which typically draws a large global development-focused student body) to further market contest participation.

Social Media Outreach Efforts: Evaluation results indicate that very few students learn about Big Ideas from social media sites. However, it is likely that students who first

learn about Big Ideas from their advisors, advertisements, or by other means join Big Ideas social media networks to gain additional information and stay informed about the Contest. Social media platforms are especially useful for finalists or winners looking to advertise their success to their classmates and friends, and shares/retweets are common on Facebook and Twitter platforms.

Facebook/Twitter: Big Ideas 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 group is frequently seen in group members' news feeds. Big Ideas has also tried creating event pages to encourage attendance at events, without much success.

How did you hear about Big Ideas?



Big Ideas created a Twitter page where Big Ideas 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. Without an incentive to keep Big Ideas alumni engaged, it is also difficult for an online social network to remain relevant to teams after they leave the competition.

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.

T-Shirts & Giveaways: Big Ideas 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 goes for tote bags, pens, etc.

Tips

- **Timing is key.** Especially for a contest that coordinates across 16 universities, scheduling outreach, events, and deadlines with consideration to the various academic calendars can be tricky. Be sure to ensure application deadlines straddle finals weeks between semester and quarter-school systems, and that contest promotion is strategically timed.
- **Tailor messaging to your audience.** The 2015-2016 contest saw an increase in applications by 37%, largely the result of targeted messaging to specific departments and student groups on campus aligned with that year's categories, and advertisements at other high-profile socially focused contests on campus. (e.g. Emails sent to the UC Berkeley Center for Neglected Diseases highlighting the "Global Health" category.)
- **Use personal contacts.** Big Ideas staff can tap into their respective classmate, colleague, and friend networks to spread the word, especially on remotely-based campuses. This has been an effective means of tapping into more development or entrepreneurship-focused student populations.
- **Do not hesitate to send frequent reminders.** Given the extensive amount of mail that flood into students' inboxes each day, Big Ideas has found that there are never too many reminders detailing information related to contest participation or deadlines.
- **Get on as many people's radars as possible.** As word of mouth is one of the most effective ways of garnering attention around Big Ideas, it is important to constantly be pitching and advertising the contest to individuals who may not always seem to be the most interested parties.

Tools

- Big Ideas@Berkeley Promotional Video
- Contest Kickoff Press Release
- Contest Promotion Emails - Generic, Category-Specific, Partnership
- Contest Promotion Toolkit for Partners
- Sample Outreach Calendar
- Contest Kickoff Promotional Posters - Generic, Category-Specific
- Pre-proposal Brochure & Timeline
- Quarter Sheet Handouts

“When we were in the very beginning stages of talking about producing a larger-scale documentary project about formerly incarcerated students, this goal seemed far-fetched and frankly unattainable as a student. Applying to Big Ideas was quite possibly the best choice we could have made in order to make this project a reality. We have grown so much through goal-setting, proposal writing, mentorship, and guidance. I now know that we really can have a positive impact on people’s lives—and on the world around us.”

- FITE Film: From Incarceration to Education and Resource Connection, 2015-2016 Big Ideas Winner



Resources for Student Innovators

The Contest is intentionally designed to support students as much as possible throughout the process of submitting a Big Ideas application and developing their proposal. The goal is to provide students with the resources they need to get ideas out of their heads and onto paper, then help them to develop the skills necessary to turn those ideas into actionable plans with the potential for real-world, sustainable social impact.

Core Resources

Big Ideas has thus developed a suite of support services and opportunities for feedback to assist students at each phase of the Contest, which was 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. 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

In the Pre-proposal Round, information sessions are designed to inspire students and provide information on contest rules and requirements. 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 an inspirational presentation by a past winner, students are provided with information about Contest basics (e.g., the Contest timeline, eligibility, requirements, and examples of past winners). A Big

Ideas mixer typically follows information sessions, where students are invited to meet other students interested in participating (and perhaps find team members 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.

In the Full Proposal Round, the information session takes place as a Final Round Kickoff Event where all finalists and their mentors are invited to listen to an overview of the Final Round from Big Ideas staff. This session goes over the requirements and timeline of the Full Proposal Round, as well as advertises additional prize opportunities that teams can participate in (such as video contests and pitch events). Importantly, it outlines the expectations of the mentorship period and establishes clear roles for team members and their mentors (see the Final Round Kickoff Event section in the Mentorship chapter for these guidelines).

Writing Workshops

In writing workshops, Big Ideas staff present information on best practices for clearly and persuasively 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. While the information sessions are aimed at providing more general knowledge on contest participation, writing workshops offer more guidance on proposal content. The sessions break down the required components of each proposal in detail, and outline best practices and common mistakes made in previous years. 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.

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 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. For the last few years, Big Ideas has partnered with entrepreneurial centers and clubs from across the campus (Engineering, Business, Public Policy, Natural Resources) to hold an Innovators@Cal event at UC Berkeley. This event consists of three parts: 1) a speech from a social innovator, 2) a pitch opportunity for participating students, and 3) a mixer and team building session for student innovators to meet one another. Former speakers include Danae Ringelmann, Cofounder of Indiegogo, Krista Donaldson, CEO of D-Rev, and Michael Faye, Cofounder of GiveDirectly. The Innovators@Cal event was publicized as an opportunity for students to learn about the startup environment at UC Berkeley, form teams 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, numerous interdisciplinary teams were formed and expanded.

Due to increased demand for such opportunities, Big Ideas also started hosting an Idea Generation Dinner as an additional opportunity for students to form Big Ideas teams. The Idea Generation Dinner follows the same format as Innovators@Cal, except without the keynote speaker. The difference between the two events is that the Idea Generation Dinner caters to students with explicit interest in submitting a project that falls under a Big Ideas category, whereas Innovators@Cal draws from a broader audience of students interested in UC Berkeley's entrepreneurship landscape.

Advising Office Hours

Big Ideas staff is available throughout the entire year to assist with advising on proposals. In both rounds, advisors hold drop in office hours (depending on the number of staff, typically a total of 10 hours are offered per week) that students have access to. In the week prior

to each deadline, Big Ideas staff extends office hours throughout the entire day so that students may schedule advising sessions at their convenience. For teams located remotely, video conferencing via Google Hangout or Skype is recommended. To learn more about effective advising strategies, see the chapter on Advising.

Editing Blitzes

Editing Blitzes were added to the network of support services during the 2012-2013 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, past winners, and past judges and mentors 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. In the 2015-2016 contest year, Big Ideas extended the Editing Blitz to last from 9am – 9pm two days before the Pre-proposal and Full Proposal deadlines. Initially these editing blitzes were held the night before the deadline, however, due to feedback from teams, they are now scheduled two days prior to the deadline. This allows teams additional time to incorporate the feedback that they receive during the Editing Blitz into their proposals.

Mentorship

A mentorship with a leading industry leader is one of the cornerstones of the Big Ideas experience, and is cited as one of the most impactful services offered to applicants by participating teams. After finalists are chosen from the Pre-proposal Round, teams are offered a six-week mentorship opportunity with a Big Ideas mentor. Mentors are matched to finalists based on whether their backgrounds match the skills gaps identified by teams in their mentor request form. The Big Ideas mentorship is a unique opportunity for Big Ideas contestants to gain real world perspectives on their proposed innovation, and expand their network beyond academia. For a comprehensive overview on mentorship recruitment, matching, and best practices, read the full Mentorship chapter.

Judge Feedback

Big Ideas teams also benefit greatly from the amount of detailed feedback they receive from each judging round. The Contest goes to great efforts to ensure that not only are proposals being scored based on the established criteria, but that judges are also providing a substantial amount of written feedback to the teams so that they may incorporate these expert opinions into the design of their innovations. Thus, even teams that do not advance to the Final Round or are declared winners are able to benefit from the process and improve their programs. To learn more about how to encourage judges to provide useful feedback, see the chapter on Judging.

Supplementary Resources

Additional Skills Workshops

Outside of its core services, Big Ideas continues to expand its offerings to fill skills gaps identified by students. Based on the survey feedback from past contest years, Big Ideas teams most frequently requested additional guidance on product design, building a strong network, and estimating the working capital necessary to start a social venture. Big Ideas has thus organized additional workshops on budgeting, networking, and impact design. The Spring 2016 Impact Design workshop provided event participants with an approach to integrate traditional design skills such as engineering and architecture with a human-centered approach to problem solving, and received a great deal of positive feedback from teams. In the future, Big Ideas hopes to remain responsive to students' changing needs, and offer a greater number of similarly useful workshops to its applicants.

Practitioners in Residence (PIR) Sessions

Through the Blum Center, Big Ideas provides all of its contestants access to the PIR program, which connects on-campus innovators and social entrepreneurs with a wide range of experts from Industry, non-profits, government, and social enterprises. Big Ideas teams are offered priority access to 30-minute one-on-one consulting sessions with a range of entrepreneurs and other practitioners working

on projects for social good. The program provides unique opportunities for real-world perspectives and mentoring, and offer students feedback on topics ranging from health technologies, financing social ventures, developing metrics systems, and intellectual property law. Former PIRs include Elliot Anderson (Sanku Fortification), Sheila Desai (USAID India Mission), Paul Towne (CARE), Barb Krause (Global Social Benefit Incubator), James Bernard (Microsoft Education), Louise Fox (World Bank), Sylvia Lee (Skoll Global Threats Fund), Glenn Yago (Milken Institute's Financial Innovation Lab), and Hash Zahed and Ryan Pokrasso (SPZ Legal).

Tools

- Information Session Advertisement Posters
- Pre-proposal Information Session Prezi
- Pre-proposal Information Session Event Recording
- Writing Workshop Advertisement Poster
- Pre-proposal Writing Workshop Prezi
- Pre-proposal Writing Workshop Event Recording
- Pre-proposal Writing Tips
- Pre-proposal Example
- Innovators@Cal Eventbrite
- Innovators@Cal Advertisement Poster
- Final Round Mentorship Kickoff Event Recording
- Final Round & Mentorship Kickoff Prezi
- Full Proposal Writing Workshop Prezi
- Full Proposal Writing Workshop Event Recording
- Full Proposal Example 1 & Example 2
- Full Proposal Writing Tips



Advising

Big Ideas staff are available year-round to assist students in writing proposals and developing their project ideas. The team typically offers 10 open office hours per week with a variety of advisors with diverse expertise. In the couple of weeks leading up to proposal deadlines, Big Ideas extends office hours to the full business day, allowing students to drop in any time while a staff member is present.

Advisors' professional experience is taken into consideration in the hiring process to round out the team's 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 can be just as effective a resource for Contest applicants. A major goal of the Big Ideas contest is to develop in students the ability to think critically about project ideas and their impact, and learn to communicate their projects effectively. A common challenge for highly technical projects is being able to make their product descriptions digestible to a wide audience. If an advisor is unable to understand a description of the student's innovation, it is a telltale sign that the project needs more clarity.

Big Ideas advising hours are more often process-focused (i.e., focused on developing skills related to the process of designing innovative projects, such as critical reflection skills) than product-focused (i.e., focused on developing a successful Big Ideas project), 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. 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 "Has this approach already been tried? If so, why is it no longer being implemented by someone else?").

In other words, Big Ideas advisors are trained to provide feedback on projects (e.g., direct, explicit, expert advice about adding or changing components of projects), but also to ask questions of applicants that promote reflection. This same philosophy applies to the provision of key research resources. Often times, students will attend advising hours to obtain feedback on a certain idea, and

the advisor will know of similar initiatives or products being implemented of which the team is not aware. Instead of pushing a student to change the direction of their project, the advisor should encourage the student to look into similar models and determine whether their own product is competing or complementary.

Finding a balance between process and product-focused advising 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. Specific inquiries outside of advisors' realm of expertise can always be redirected to others within the Big Ideas network—Practitioners in Residence, judges and mentors who are willing to take questions from teams, affiliated academics, or other relevant experts. See the Advising Guide in the Tools section for a complete overview on process-focused advising.

Tips

- Encourage students to map out a theory of change for their project. An effective learning exercise is to have students explain the underlying logic model of their innovation. Frameworks, such as a theory of change, help students identify key information gaps that form the basis of their idea.
- Push teams to conduct a thorough landscape analyses. Years of feedback from judges have shown that identifying similar existing solutions is consistently the weakest part of students' proposals, despite emphasizing this heavily in advising hours, and even building in an explicit component into the proposal for a landscape analysis. Part of the problem is inevitable; with their many years of experience and exposure to industry, judges will always know of programs that students are unaware of (another reason why the judge feedback is so important).

Tools

- Sample Advisor Profiles
- Student Advising Guide
- Student Advising Tracker

Mentorship

In addition to the advising provided by Big Ideas staff, Big Ideas finalists cite the mentorship as the most important and impactful resource provided to applicants during the Contest. Since Big Ideas implemented its mentorship program in 2012, it has successfully recruited 220 mentors that have played pivotal roles in teams' developments. Applicants report on surveys (see the Evaluation chapter) 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—industry professionals from a set of diverse fields including business management/administration, engineering, agriculture, and health services, among others. Together, finalists and mentors work approximately one to two hours per week for six weeks to refine the teams' project ideas, develop partnerships, and craft their Full Proposals. Students work with their mentors via in-person meetings, phone calls, or email exchanges 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.

Mentor Recruitment

Over the course of each fall semester, the Big Ideas staff works 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 staff until the end of Pre-proposal review process in December. However, Big Ideas begins recruiting potential mentors long before Pre-proposals are even submitted.

There are many reasons why someone may want to participate as a Big Ideas mentor. Thanks to evaluation data and conversations with more than 75 former mentors the most-cited reasons for becoming involved as a mentor are the following:

- Mentors report that mentorship played a role in their own professional development, and they hope to

repay the favor by mentoring a student team.

- In a similar vein, mentors are often alumni who wish to stay connected to their alma mater and who are committed to giving back to the university.
- 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.

Mentor & Judge Outreach Strategies

In 2015, Big Ideas streamlined the judge and mentor recruiting processes to one major outreach push in the beginning of the year, supplemented by smaller efforts throughout the rest of the contest cycle. This was due to the fact that marketing approaches for judges and mentors were quite similar, and conducting outreach at three separate occasions throughout the year (for Pre-proposal Judges, Mentors, and Full Proposal judges) led to redundant and inefficient communication. Big Ideas thus employed the following strategies to enlist a large pool of potential mentors and judges with expertise within the nine Contest category areas:

- Utilize category sponsor and partners' connections. Category sponsors and partners are one of the best resources for identifying prospective mentors and judges. For instance, 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. Sponsors are contacted and asked to provide a list of individuals who they thought would be interested in mentoring or judging in the Big Ideas contest. This strategy was most effective when the sponsors themselves reached out to their lists. In most cases, Big Ideas staff did the initial outreach and subsequent follow-up to these prospects.

- Reach out to former judges and mentors. When the 2015-2016 Contest launched, Big Ideas staff utilized its existing judge and mentor network to reach out to individuals who have participated in former years. Given that many of these experts at one point were interested in serving as a judge or mentor, it is highly likely that this pool of people will participate again. Furthermore, former judges and mentors have been tested and verified for excellence. As Big Ideas continues to grow, it is better able to retain a high quality network, which makes the mentor recruitment process much more manageable with each year. Pre-proposal judges are allowed to nominate particular teams that they would like to work with as a mentor based on the proposals that they had reviewed during the Pre-proposal judging round. Likewise, teams will also request to be mentored by certain judges if the feedback that judge provides is especially enlightening.
- Utilize personal networks. Big Ideas managers and coordinators typically have between four to eight years of professional experience, and utilize their existing networks to recruit mentors and judges.
- Advertise at events. Big Ideas is well integrated in social innovation networks that exist in the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. It taps into these networks, and advertise opportunities at large events to draw in students and professionals working in this space. In the past, Big Ideas has recruited judges and mentors at the Berkeley Entrepreneurs Expo, Social Capital Markets, Berkeley Festival of Ideas, and Haas School of Business Food Entrepreneur Event.
- Cold call new recruits. Where the above mentioned outreach strategies fall short, often times Big Ideas needs to cold call topic area experts to fill its judge or mentor quotas. In the case of mentors, sometimes there won't be a strong match between a finalist team's needs and the skills offered by the existing pool of interested mentors. Thus, Big Ideas conducts extensive online research on potential professionals who may be able to fill the required expertise gap and reaches out to them via email or phone. In most cases, mentioning that the innovation contest is based

at a reputable university, and providing substantial information on the team's background and their needs for a mentor leads to a high response rate.

- Advertise in newsletters. 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 the Big Ideas website.

Pairing Mentors & Teams

Once potential mentors indicate their interest, they are asked to fill out a Judge & Mentor Application Form. On this form, potential mentors provide information on their mentorship experience, professional experience, areas of content expertise, and geographic areas in which they had worked or had specialized 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 Finalist Mentorship Application Form. This form mirrors the Judge & Mentor Application Form (e.g., asks about what areas of expertise they would like their mentor to have). Importantly, it has teams describe in one sentence who their ideal mentor would be, which is used as the basis for matching.

In the 2015-2016 contest year, Big Ideas recruited 136 interested mentors by the time finalists were determined, but only 49 teams requested mentors. Using the students' request forms 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. Where there is no strong fit, Big Ideas reaches out to its pool of former mentors and judges and/or conducts online research to see if an additional person would be interested in mentoring a Big Ideas team.

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.

After a match is identified, Big Ideas will contact the mentor to reconfirm their commitment, share information about the team and project, and verify their interest in being matched with the finalist team. After the mentor confirms their willingness and commitment to mentor the team, the mentor and team are introduced over email and invited to participate in and hold their first consultation at the Final Round Kickoff Event (see the templates for the Mentor Matching Emails in the Tools section).

Final Round Kickoff Event

The Final Round Kickoff Event is the first time teams and mentors connect with one another, and signifies the launch of the second half of the contest. During the event, teams and mentors are provided an overview of the expectations for the mentorship period, and requirements for the Full Proposal. The purpose of the event is to make sure that students and their mentors are on the same page in terms of the anticipated final round deliverables and the terms of the mentor-mentee relationship.

During this time, teams and their mentors are provided a set of recommendations on how to best engage each other during the mentorship:

- Teams should be the ones to take initiative, and prepare an agenda for each meeting to best effectively utilize their time. Mentors are very busy and teams should not make light of the dedicated weekly hour allotted to them.
- Mentors and teams should review contest rules, criteria, and Pre-proposal feedback together.
- Mentors and teams should establish work objectives, plans, and deadlines from offset, using the Mentorship Worksheet (provided in the Tools section) to set clear goals.
- Mentors and teams should set up regular meeting times, communication modes, and efficient knowledge sharing channels from the offset.

- Students should leverage their mentor's expertise and not be afraid to inquire about additional skill sets or introductions.
- Mentors should be proactive in asking teams' questions and challenging their assumptions.
- While mentors may have a clear idea of how to improve the project, they should ensure ownership of the idea stays with the team. As such, mentors should not be writing the Full Proposal.

Regular Checkups

It is important for Big Ideas staff to follow up with teams over the course of the mentorship. Both teams and mentors reported that getting the first mentorship meeting off the ground is the most challenging part of the process due to busy schedules. They recommended that Big Ideas push both teams and mentors to set up a meeting early on to avoid delays in starting the mentorship.

Within 10 days following the Final Round Kickoff event, Big Ideas staff members follow up with each finalist team about the status of their signed Mentorship Agreement Form, and asks them to fill out the Mentorship Progress Update Survey (see Tools section). The survey asks teams a) how happy they are with the match and b) whether they have had their first meeting with their mentor. It allows the Big Ideas team to adjust the mentorship if necessary (sometimes Big Ideas will provide the team with an additional mentor to supplement their existing one if the team reports dissatisfaction with their match), and identify mentors that may require reminders to be more responsive to their teams. Big Ideas often acts as a facilitator or moderator in the relationship in case there is a misunderstanding or misalignment between the team and mentor.

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.

- Be explicit about the difference in mentor and judge experiences. Big Ideas should emphasize that participating as a judge may be better suited for individuals with less flexible schedules who are interested in learning about a broad range of ideas. The mentorship may be more attractive to those who want to dive deeper into one project, connect substantially with a student team, and are focused on taking an idea to the next level. It's important to understand the constraints of the audience being targeted, and to deliver clear and distinct marketing strategies for each role. Just because an individual does not express interest in serving as a judge does not mean that they are unwilling to serve as a mentor.
- 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. In other words, if a prospective mentor is at all concerned about the time commitment, it is not useful to try to talk them in to mentoring.
- 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.

Tools

- Finalist Mentorship Application Form
- Final Round & Mentorship Kickoff Prezi
- Final Round Kickoff RSVP Form
- Judge & Mentor Application Form
- Judge & Mentor Feedback Survey
- Judge & Mentor Thank You Email
- Mentor Matching Emails
- Mentor Matching Spreadsheet Template
- Mentorship Agreement Form
- Mentorship Goals Worksheet
- Mentorship Handbook
- Mentorship Progress Update
- Recruitment Materials - Judge & Mentor Email
- Recruitment Materials - Mentor FAQs
- Recruitment Materials - Mentor Overview
- Recruitment Materials - Mentor Request Email
- Successful Mentorship Tips

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

- Tony Stayner, Big Ideas Judge & Mentor

Judging

Big Ideas 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 those with the most innovative and impactful ideas from the large pool of applications received each year.

Judge Qualifications

Each year, Big Ideas selects a pool of judges (see the Mentor & Judge Recruitment section in the Mentorship chapter for detailed information on recruitment strategies) who have content expertise within a particular category. Judges in the Global Health category, for example, typically are faculty or professionals with expertise who have spent a significant portion of their careers working to address health-related issues domestically and abroad. Judges in the Art & Social Change 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.

Judge Recruitment

In the 2015-2016 contest, Big Ideas recruited 270 judges for the Pre-proposal round (266 Pre-proposals) and 121 judges for the Final round (54 Full Proposals). It is generally recommended that 1 judge is recruited for every anticipated Pre-proposal submission, and 2 judges recruited for each Full Proposal submission to ensure that each proposal is read by a minimum of 6 different judges in each round.

The incentives for judges to participate vary, but many choose to participate for one of three reasons: 1) 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; 2) 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 3) 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. Due to the similarities

in outreach strategies between Judge and Mentor recruitment, the process was integrated in 2015 into one large outreach effort in the beginning of the year (see the section entitled Mentor & Judge Outreach Strategies in the Mentorship chapter for a full overview on the types of approaches used).

Judge Assignments

Each Pre-proposal and Full Proposal is reviewed by a minimum of six 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 70 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, with the exception of a few larger categories like Global Health, Full Proposal judges are expected to read all of the proposals submitted in their category so they have a complete picture of the projects as they score each proposal (between five and ten, depending on the category).

It is worth noting here that Pre-proposal judges sometimes remark that it is difficult to rank each proposal without knowing its relative strength compared to all other proposals, since they only read a subset in the first round. Big Ideas thus provides Pre-proposal judges with paragraph-long summaries of all of the proposals within their category so they have a better idea of the types of innovations being proposed across the entire category (see the Pre-proposal Summaries Example - Food Systems in the Tools section).

Judge Training and Judging Timeline

After judges have been recruited for each round of the Contest, a training is held by Big Ideas staff 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 the Judge Training Prezi and

Judge Training Recording in the Tools section for more information).

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 (see the Pre-proposal and Full Proposal Judging Handbooks in the Tools section). Additionally, the judge training 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 and provide written feedback.

Judging Criteria

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 (for a detailed description on the criteria used to assess each proposal, see the Judging Criteria example in the Tools section).

Judging Feedback

During both the Pre-proposal and Full Proposal judging rounds, judges are asked to provide both quantitative feedback (i.e., Likert scale rankings of the proposals' strength in particular areas) and comprehensive 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 report in surveys and informal conversations with Big Ideas staff that providing judges' feedback is among the most useful resources provided through the competition. They say the feedback is helpful and informative to their team and that the level of detail in the feedback is rarely offered in other competitions. Furthermore, providing comprehensive written feedback to all teams ensures that both finalist and non-finalists receive a key takeaway from the Pre-proposal round. Numerous

non-finalists have used the Pre-proposal feedback as a resource for further developing and refining their project for other funding opportunities and for resubmission to Big Ideas the following year.

Tips

- Emphasize high-quality 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 in 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 allow some flexibility with the judging deadlines-- typically 3 to 5 days and if possible, a weekend.
- Suggest that judges be critical, but constructive, in their feedback. Judges will often be too complimentary in their comments, and other times too harsh. It is important to communicate to judges that their comments should be written as if they were directly addressed to the team. The most effective feedback raises questions and considerations that the team has not addressed in their proposal, without demoralizing the team from pursuing a solution.

Tools

- 2015-2016 Winners Summaries
- Full Proposal Judge Training Prezi
- Full Proposal Judging Handbook
- Full Proposal Judging Scorecard
- Judge & Mentor Application
- Judge Training Invitation Emails
- Judging Deadline Reminder Email
- Pre-proposal Judge Training Prezi
- Pre-proposal Judging Handbook
- Pre-proposal Judging Scorecard
- Pre-proposal Summaries Example - Food Systems
- Recruitment Materials - Judge & Mentor Email, Judge FAQs, Judge Overview



“I didn’t believe that as an undergraduate student that I would have the opportunities to make a significant effect in the life of someone else- or thousands of people. However, I realized that being part of Big Ideas is not about proving how successful, worthy, and deserving we are- but rather, seeing the need and choosing to not turn away from it, to work hard to allow the necessary changes to happen.”

- Safe Space, 2015-2016 Big Ideas Winner

Online Contest Platform

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

1. A judging portal where judges can login to a secure webpage, view proposals that are assigned to them, and submit their scores and written feedback. Big Ideas also requires that the judging portal allow for anonymous judging (e.g., administrators could 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). It is preferable to also have a survey option attached to the judging portal to encourage higher responses from judges for the distributed feedback survey.
2. An applicant portal that allows student teams to login to a secure webpage to fill out and edit an application form, and upload and submit a PDF document that contains the text of their written proposals. The application form must be able to accommodate students' demographic and contact information, and have larger spaces for other proposal-related inputs (i.e. space for a 50-word summary). Administrators also embed survey questions into the entry form to assess students' development over the course of the Contest and to assess students' perceived skills development (see the Evaluation chapter for more details).
3. An administrator portal that allows Big Ideas 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, etc.). The administration portal also allows Big Ideas staff to set Contest deadlines (e.g., indicate a cutoff deadline by which students must submit their proposals via the student portal).

Platforms Used to Date

In 2010, when the Blum Center first began managing Big Ideas, the application and review process was conducted manually. Students submitted their proposals by email and their applications were 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.

Since 2010, Big Ideas used three different online platforms (YouNoodle, Pitchburner, WizeHive). These platforms all had their strengths and drawbacks. However, the experience of using multiple platforms provided information on what features are most important when considering an online platform:

- **Flexibility:** The platform needs to be flexible and should allow managers to create different judging criteria, categories, query and sort information, generate customized reports, and incorporate contest branding.
- **Simple User Interface:** The platform needs to create an easy and intuitive user experience for applicants and judges.
- **Numerous Content Management Options:** The content management process (creating forms, assigning judges, generating emails) needs to be quick and intuitive.
- **Good Customer Service:** The platform needs to have a responsive and accommodating IT support team.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Platforms can vary widely in cost (and, notably, cost is not a perfect indicator of performance), which should be weighed against the available features.

For the past three years, Big Ideas has used WizeHive as its contest platform. After conducting a review of contest platform providers in 2012, weighing the cost, available features and ease of use of each platform, it was determined that WizeHive was the best choice for the needs of the contest. Overall, Big Ideas finds WizeHive's front end user interface to be straightforward, but the back end content management system less intuitive and more difficult to manage (e.g., ensuring only certain fields appear based on previously inputted information, editing applicants' entry form fields, dealing with multiple accounts for different contests using the same email, and creating different judging criteria for different categories were challenging). Wizehive is also relatively expensive for the services they provide (costing approximately \$6,000 for the 2015-16 Contest year). Contest participants (students and

judges) on the whole report positive feedback regarding their experiences with the platform.

Looking ahead, Big Ideas may want to integrate more metrics and social networking capacities into the application platform, which would allow it to streamline its data systems in one central place. In future years, it will conduct another assessment as to which platform may be best suited for the contest as it continues to grow.

Tips

- As with each new data management system, platform management gets easier with time. By the time the Big Ideas team was using WizeHive in its third year, it experienced far fewer challenges than in the past couple of years. The learning curve is always high with a new platform, and will become substantially easier in subsequent iterations.
- Test, test, and test again. There is no such thing as too much beta-testing for the platform before launching it. One of the most effective strategies used in the 2015-2016 contest was having Blum Center staff create test profiles as applicants and judges to account for every different scenario that could possibly arise in the process.
- Build a relationship with customer support and familiarize them with the platform design. Often times, platform glitches that are seemingly impossible to solve can be easily fixed through customer service support. It is important to establish a relationship with them early on and talk through some of the potential challenges that may occur. This will greatly remove some of the pressure when problems arise and immediate action needs to be taken. In the last few years, Big Ideas has even requested that the point of contact be on call during key deadline days.

Tools

- Review of Online Contest Platforms



Prize Awards

Because the goal of Big Ideas is to incentivize creative thinking around solutions to social problems, Big Ideas prize money is given as an award for developing a 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 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 places no restrictions on how Big Ideas prizes are used by teams, nor does Big Ideas require teams to submit a formal report itemizing how their prize money is spent. However, it is also important to note that through the academic year-long application and review process, the vast majority of teams that win funding are passionate about their ideas and dedicated to implementing their project. A 2014 survey of winners from 2012-13 demonstrated this, reporting that 88% of the winning teams were still working on their project and 47% had secured additional funding.

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

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

Number and Amount of Awards

Each year, Big Ideas selects multiple winners within each Contest category to receive awards. Although the exact number of awards changes year to year, during the

2015-2016 Contest, Big Ideas selected 41 teams as winners, and gave each winning team an award ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000. The average prize award across categories typically amounts to \$5,000.

The exact amount awarded to each team is determined primarily by the overall scores proposals received in the final round of judging, and the amount of prize money available within each category.

Disbursing Awards

Each school has its own financial procedures that need to be taken into consideration when disbursing awards to Big Ideas winners. It is important to note that regardless of how the prize is disbursed after winners are determined, in the Full Proposal application, it must be made clear to the team that the Team Lead has absolute authority in determining to whom and how that award will be disbursed. Big Ideas staff provide UC Berkeley winners with three options for receiving their prize awards:

1. 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.)
2. 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.)
3. Transfer the award to a faculty advisor's campus research account.

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

1. Distribute a personal award directly to the students on the team.
2. Big Ideas staff prepare an inter-campus transfer that sends the funding from UC Berkeley to the General Accounting Office of the students' campus.

Tools

- Award Expectations & Terms Letter
- Award Options Letter

Additional Contest Opportunities

After finalists submit their full proposals, Big Ideas also offers additional prize opportunities to students to expand their project development skill sets beyond proposal writing.

Category-Specific Poster Sessions

- **Eligibility:** All finalists from each category can be required to compete in an additional poster and pitch session. Big Ideas only requires this of the IT for Society category because of the sponsor's specific requirements.
- **Award:** Big Ideas builds in the pitch and poster session into the total Full Proposal score as an additional 20%.
- **Description:** Finalist teams will participate in a poster session for their category and hold a Q&A session with judges and attendees. The presentations will count towards teams' final round scores.
- **Judging:** The judges that reviewed and scored each category's Full Proposals are required to attend and score teams based on their presentations. At the end of the presentations, the judges deliberate to determine the final winners.



People's Choice Video Contest

- **Eligibility:** All contestants from the entire year (i.e., all applicants who submitted a Pre-proposal application).
- **Award:** \$2,500 monetary prize
- **Description:** In the Video Contest, teams post a short video online, and the public votes on their favorite innovative solution to a pressing social problem. The purpose of the People's Choice Video Contest is to provide exposure for the Big Ideas contest and the project ideas that are submitted each year, and to give an additional way to share their project ideas and garner funding for those ideas.
- **Judging:** Voting is open to the public, and the video with the most votes at the end of a designated voting period receives a monetary prize.



- **Platform:** Big Ideas uses Votigo as a platform to upload and advertise video entries, which can be integrated with Facebook for ease of sharing and voting.

Grand Prize Pitch Day

- **Eligibility:** Winning teams from the current Contest year are nominated by Big Ideas staff to participate in the event.
- **Award:** 1st place - \$5,000; 2nd place - \$3,000; 3rd place - \$1,000
- **Description:** After winners are selected, 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 2015-16 Contest, Big Ideas created two separate pitch categories—Campus & Community Impact and Global Impact—and asked three teams to participate in each. The Campus & Community round focused on local (i.e., campus, Bay Area, or domestic) issues and the Global Round focused on worldwide challenges. Like the People's Choice Video Contest, the Grand Prize Pitch Day serves as an event that publicizes 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.
- **Judging:** An esteemed panel of judges for each round is recruited through the extensive Big Ideas and Blum Center network. It is possible for the Pitch Day judges to have also participated during the regular contest, but they cannot have judged or mentored one of the teams in their respective round. Former judges include representatives from the US Agency for International Development, the University of California Office of the President, and Big Ideas Alumni. Each panel of judges selects first, second, and third place winners for each pitch round after a deliberation. All teams who participated in the Grand Prize Pitch Day received an award in addition to any award they received for their written proposal.



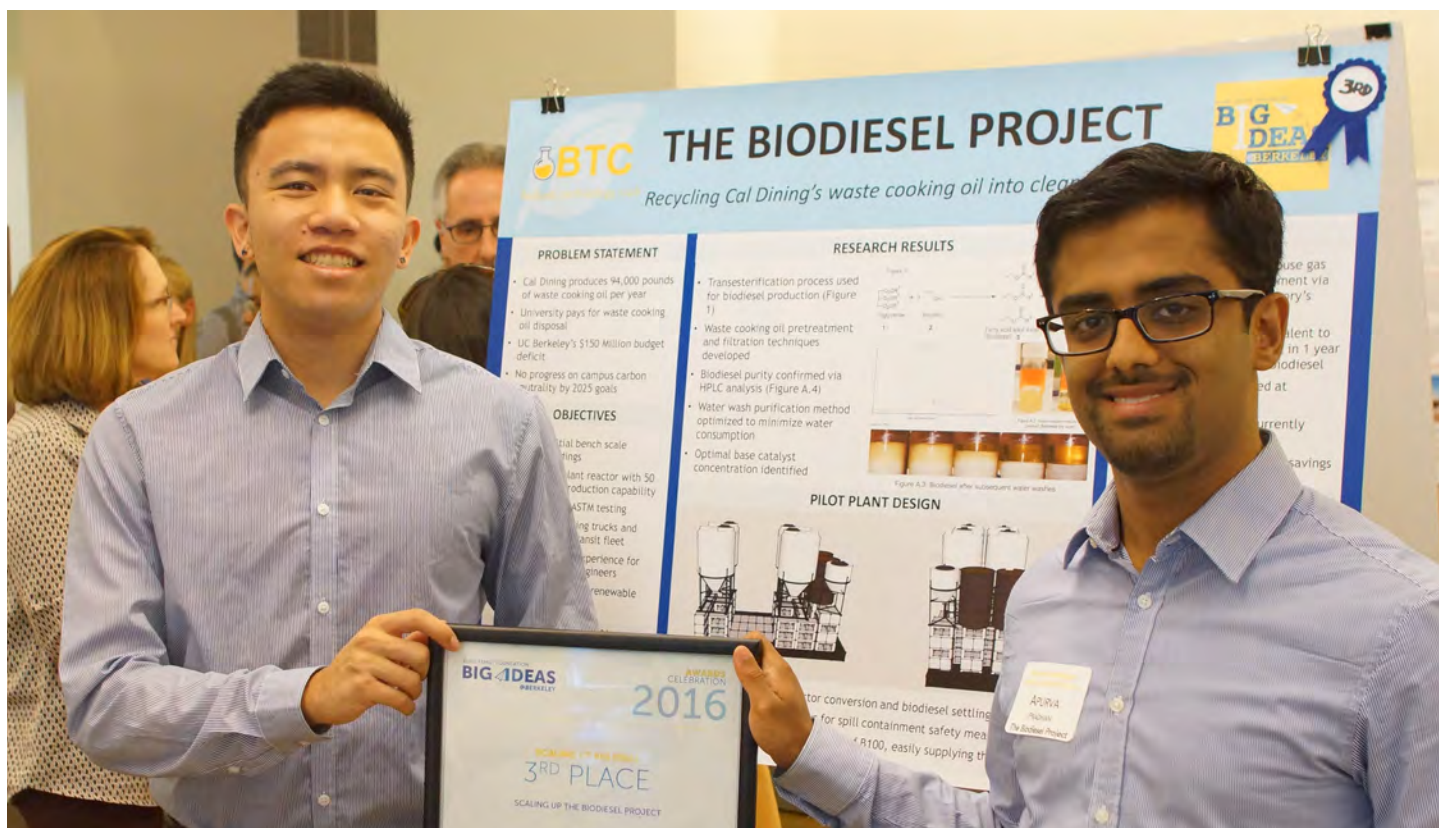
Awards Celebration

- **Eligibility:** The event is open to the public, but only winners can participate in the poster session.
- **Description:** 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. All winners are also strongly

encouraged to submit a poster for their project, which allows them to garner visibility around their idea, present their project visually, and practice pitching their idea to event attendees. 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

- 2015 Pitch Day Event Recording
- Awards & Pitch Day Mailchimp Invitation
- Awards Celebration Poster
- Awards Celebration Program
- IT for Society Poster Session Requirements
- People's Choice Video Contest Application Requirements
- Pitch Day Judges Presentation
- Pitch Day Judging Scorecard
- Pitch Day Program



Evaluation & Feedback

Big Ideas firmly believes that rigorous program evaluation is key to understanding whether or not the Contest is meeting its goals. As a result, Big Ideas gathers feedback to conduct an impact assessment and process evaluation each contest year to measure the program's impact and learn about how it can better improve its offerings.

To accurately measure outcomes, the Blum Center has rigorously monitored and evaluated the Contest using: annually gathered data; surveys of applicants, judges and mentors; external evaluators; and the social science expertise of UC Berkeley graduate student researchers. In the last few years, Big Ideas has integrated statistical analysis techniques into its monitoring and evaluation systems. For instance, in order to determine whether teams experience improvement in certain skills, a before and after analysis is conducted, controlling for certain key variables like student status or start-up background.

Big Ideas utilizes three surveys each year that provide information that feeds into both analyses: a Pre-proposal Feedback Survey (for all student contest participants), a Full Proposal Feedback Survey (for finalist students), and a Judge & Mentor Feedback Survey. Additionally, on a routine basis Big Ideas issues an Alumni Feedback Survey to former contest winners in order to capture more information on teams' progress after they leave the contest. Survey questions are developed by Big Ideas 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 2015-2016 Metrics Framework to learn about the types of questions asked in each survey).

Impact Assessment

The Blum Center measures Big Idea's impact in three key ways:

1. The size and diversity of the applicant pool
2. The transformative nature of the program on applicants in terms of improvements in skills development and entrepreneurial aspirations
3. The amount of progress achieved by Big Ideas winners to date

These three metrics reflect the broad scope of the Big Ideas pipeline, which transforms early-stage undergraduates and graduate students into a comprehensive network of innovators.

The size and diversity of the applicant pool

The Big Ideas contest aims to attract a broad pool of student entrepreneurs representing a diverse mix of academic disciplines, ages, genders and ethnicities. It uses the following guiding questions to inform its evaluation process:

- Do Big Ideas submissions incorporate a variety of diverse perspectives and approaches (in terms of students'

| Field | | Applicants | Winners |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|---------|
| Female Team Leads | | 47% | 49% |
| Undergraduate Team Leads | | 62% | 46% |
| Business School Team Leads | | 14% | 15% |
| Average Number of Team Members | | 2.0 | 2.5 |
| Countries of Origin | | 52 | 20 |
| Number of Majors Represented | | 106 | 36 |
| Project Country Locations | | 29 | 11 |
| Ethnicity | Mixed | 8% | 7% |
| | Asian | 33% | 39% |
| | Black or African American | 15% | 7% |
| | White | 24% | 24% |
| | Hispanic or Latino | 6% | 7% |
| | Decline to State | 14% | 15% |
| Startup Backg | Someone in my family has started | 62% | 51% |
| | I have worked for a startup comp | 30% | 29% |
| | I have started a venture or initiati | 43% | 54% |

backgrounds and academic foci)? Does Big Ideas also encourage participation from student populations that typically lack access to key entrepreneurial support services (e.g. female, low-income, minority students)?

- How much startup background do applicants typically have?
- Are there key determining characteristics that determine the success of an applicant?

To answer these questions, a series of indicators are collected across all participant teams (see a full list of survey questions in the Big Ideas Metrics Framework).

The transformative nature of the program on applicants

Big Ideas seeks to better understand the extent of its contribution to applicants' development over the course of the program. It uses the following guiding questions to inform its evaluation process:

- To what extent do students develop skills critical to project management and entrepreneurial success through the Big Ideas program (e.g., grant-writing skills, project management skills, leadership skills)?
- To what extent did these skills help them develop a highly innovative and viable project?
- To what extent do students change the way they think about their roles in society?

In order to assess the impact of the Big Ideas program on students' development over the course of their participation, Big Ideas uses a mix of quantitative and qualitative evidence to gauge how students value the provided services.

Quantitative evidence

Big Ideas team leads are asked to rank their confidence in a number of different skills areas at the time they submit their Pre-proposal and Full Proposal applications. They are also asked to report on the likelihood of implementing or working for a social venture in the next year, and rank their top sectors of interest. The results of these two surveys are analyzed to see if there is any significant difference between the two rounds of reporting.

In the 2015-2016 contest year, Big Ideas found the following:

- Finalist teams reported greatest increase in confidence in their ability to: estimate the need within a particular market for a product or service; clearly and concisely explain their social venture in written or verbal form; and develop a plan for implementing their venture.
- Teams that took advantage of Big Ideas resources in the Final Round were more likely to win & receive higher amounts of funding. 1st place winners used an average of 3.8 Big Ideas support services, winners 3.2, and non-winning finalists 2.9. Each additional Full Proposal resource utilized by a team correlates with a \$400 increase in award amount allotted.
- Non-UC Berkeley students are much less likely to access contest resources (15% of non-UC Berkeley students signed up for Pre-proposal Advising compared to 39% of Berkeley applicants, and on average UC Berkeley teams used 3.6 Full Proposal resources compared to 2.5 utilized by non-UC Berkeley teams).
- Big Ideas raises the prospects of teams implementing social ventures. 16% of teams report a greater likelihood that they will start a social venture in 12 months between the Pre-proposal and Full Proposal deadlines (even before funding decisions are announced).

Qualitative evidence

The quantitative approach is also supplemented with free answer responses in the surveys, where teams can describe in detail what they perceive the impact of Big Ideas to be. Year after year, the mentorship and advising hours with Big Ideas staff are overwhelmingly cited as the most useful contest offering. Specifically, it was having a dedicated industry professional who was able to connect teams with the resources they need, and offer a great deal of specific feedback on the design of the project. The different perspectives and availability of last minute feedback provided by Big Ideas staff were also reported to improve upon the quality of submissions. The amount of detail provided in the judging feedback is also mentioned as an important resource utilized by teams.

In their responses, teams also mentioned that they achieved a great deal in developing their proposal writing,

team building, and project management skill sets. The framework and deadlines of the application provided teams with a set of deliverables that forced them to be accountable. In order to strengthen their projects to meet the criteria demanded of the Big Ideas application, applicants sought partners, conduct market surveys, built prototypes, and test their hypotheses. For many teams, Big Ideas was the extra push they needed to actually execute a social venture.

Sample responses include:

- “The competition made my team really think about our implementation plan, and exactly what resources we potentially needed or were lacking currently. We had to think more about the social impact side and not just focus on the technology of our device.”
- “The best part about participating in Big Ideas was the incredible amount of self-growth; I’ve learned how to talk with people, overcome implementation obstacles, delegate tasks to my team. I think this project has taught me how to be an adult!”
- “The best part about participating in the Big Ideas competition was getting hands-on experience with the intricate process of turning a simple idea into a fully-researched, fully-staffed, fully-funded project. Our entire team learned that coming up with the initial idea was the most straightforward part of the process. As we began to develop the idea, we bumped into gas in research and practical barriers that pushed us to reach our goals.”

Tips

- Embed the surveys in the application platform. Prior to 2012, surveys were conducted using a Google Form after finalists submitted their Full Proposal. 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 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.

Thus, the contest moved towards embedding the survey in the application form for both rounds, which has led to a 100% response rate. To ensure that applicants would answer as candidly as possible, the applicant is assured that their survey answers would not be associated with their project and would have no impact on their proposals’ scores.

- Avoid bias problems in responses by surveying applicants at two points in time. Big Ideas previously measured skills development progress by asking participants to recall the growth they experienced over the course of the year at the end of the contest. Thus, the Contest would receive 100% positive responses rates when students were asked if they felt that they became more creative in thinking about solutions to problems, enhanced their critical thinking ability, or were better able to transform innovative ideas to applications. By surveying them at the Pre-proposal and Full Proposal applications, Big Ideas is thus able to capture a more representative picture of the amount of improvement students made through participating in Big Ideas

Progress achieved by winners to date

Big Ideas also evaluates the extent to which teams continue to work on their Big Ideas projects and the difference that those teams are making as part of its impact assessment. Initially, Big Ideas created a LinkedIn group to connect past winners and keep track of their updates. Big Ideas 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 evaluation tool. Thus, Big Ideas gathers information on past winners primarily by issuing alumni surveys and conducting phone interviews.

Alumni surveys and phone interviews

Alumni surveys are sent out every couple of years to capture information on graduated teams. Big Ideas captures three key metrics to help assess its influence: additional revenue generation, number of people working on the project, and number of beneficiaries or clients

served to date. The Alumni Survey also requires a more detailed response about the progress projects made to date. It prompts the respondent to report on the team's current involvement of the project, whether any key pivots have been made in the project, and its current state (design, pilot, scale etc.). It also asks alumni to describe any key challenges they are facing in implementation, and what gaps are preventing them from taking the project to the next level. Questions also focus on how the program can better prepare or support teams to deal with these obstacles and teams' plans for future work (see the Alumni Update Survey in the tools section).

Phone interviews cover the same content sent out in Alumni Surveys. Outreach to former Big Ideas winners was conducted in 2011 (to 2010 winners), and again in 2014 (to 2012-2013 winners) via follow-up phone calls to teams that did not respond to the survey. The phone interviews ask the same questions prompted in the survey, but is a more effective means of reaching past winners. These phone calls allow Big Ideas to keep up-to-date with winners' stories, which have been used in Big Ideas newsletters, in pitching Big Ideas to potential category sponsors, and as informal evidence of the impact of the Contest in grant proposals. Reconnecting with past winners has also allowed staff to develop a greater sense of connection to and commitment from past winners to the Contest.

Tips

- Conduct both online surveys and phone interviews. Alumni surveys have very low response rates, which is an ongoing challenge. As a result, phone interviews are conducted to supplement missing data points that the surveys fail to capture. Following up with Big Ideas alumni over the phone was found to be a more effective means of reaching teams after they graduate, and better in sustaining the relationship with teams over time.
- Continuity and transparency is key. Due to the fact that alumni outreach is conducted every few years by different Big Ideas staff, former winners are sometimes frustrated with the multiple surveys or phone interview conducted with repeat information. Alumni outreach typically falls under the work program of a short-term contracted staff position, and knowledge carryover is challenging. It is important for the person conducting alumni outreach to build upon existing conversations with teams, and be transparent that their responses are being taken into account through adjustments made to the program. The use of Salesforce has been instrumental in establishing continuity for Big Ideas.

Process Evaluation

Big Ideas also uses all three surveys and input from staff to conduct an informal process evaluation each year to assess its execution of the program each year. The team collects a great deal of feedback from students, judges, and mentors on whether they utilize the resources offered and found them to be effective. It explores which of its strategies are the most effective in conduct outreach to students and recruitment of judges and mentors. It also gauges whether participation in the Contest is seamless for students, judges, and mentors (see all three surveys in the Tools section for sample process evaluation questions).

Big Ideas develops a set of recommendations each year on how the program can be adjusted for the better next year, and uses these lessons to inform its long-term strategy. The process evaluation allows the team to prioritize resources in future years, and constantly reflect upon how it can best service teams going through its program.

Tools

- Alumni Update Survey
- Full Proposal Applicant Feedback Survey
- Judge & Mentor Feedback Survey
- Metrics Framework
- Pre-Proposal Applicant Feedback Survey

Cross-Campus Expansion

Big Ideas has its roots on the UC Berkeley campus, but has expanded its eligibility to campuses beyond UC Berkeley. In its early years, at the request of a category sponsor, students from UC Davis, UC Merced, and UC Santa Cruz were eligible to apply for the IT for Society category. It wasn't until the 2013-2014 cycle, at the request of the University of California Office of the President, that the contest expanded to all 10 campuses of the University of California System. Then the contest expanded to 16 campuses in 2014-2015 (incorporating the other 5 USAID Higher Education Solutions Network campuses.)

Expanding the Big Ideas contest to some of the top universities around the world has undoubtedly raised the size and stature of the competition, and improved the quality and diversity of submitted projects. Big Ideas has successfully leveraged its partnerships at each campus to promote the contest widely, leading to an increase in applications each year. By involving schools from across the country and internationally, Big Ideas gives winning teams greater recognition and exposure to a larger audience. By involving schools such as Uganda's Makerere University, the contest integrates perspectives from student populations that may not receive the same amount of acknowledgement for their projects, especially from US audiences. It also offers a unique platform for students at numerous other campuses, where opportunities and resources for entrepreneurs may be more limited, to become involved in student innovation endeavors, and gain access to experiential educational opportunities to solve real world problems. It also means that there are more networks to tap into for judges and mentors.

Broadening eligibility to 16 campuses does not come without challenges. One of the strengths of the Big Ideas contest is its reputable brand and the high-touch resources it is able to offer students on the UC Berkeley campus. Despite strong partnerships established with eligible universities, and added efforts to provide resources remotely, this high-touch approach has been difficult to mirror on other campuses (on average, UC Berkeley finalists in the 2015-2016 contest utilized 3.6 Full Proposal support offerings, and non-UC Berkeley finalists used 2.5). The fact that the competition originated from and is based at UC Berkeley may also be a deterrent for students from other

schools to participate.

As the contest has expanded to multiple universities, Big Ideas has made the shifts to accommodate broad multi-campus participation.

Branding

Until the last contest year (2015-2016), the competition was branded as Big Ideas@Berkeley, which may have caused some confusion for the 15 other campuses eligible to compete. In 2015, the contest began to drop "@Berkeley" in most of its outreach communications, while still noting in materials that the Contest was founded and is administered at UC Berkeley. This was done to signify the multi-university dimension of the competition, and to encourage more students from to take advantage of this opportunity to receive funding, support and recognition for their creative ideas to improve society. Notably, in November 2015, the first contest year following this revision, the Big Ideas contest received a 37% increase in applications.

Sponsorships, Partnerships, & Category Eligibility

Campus eligibility to compete in the Big Ideas contest varies by category. Some categories, such as Food Systems, are open to 16 campuses, whereas other categories, such as Improving Student Life, are open to only UC Berkeley. Decisions on category eligibility are made jointly between the category sponsor(s) and Big Ideas staff. While category-unique eligibility can sometimes create confusion for students, it has been effective in attracting new category sponsorships from different campuses.

Outreach

Communications around category eligibility has somewhat been a challenge, as students who are often exposed to the Big Ideas contest do not realize that eligibility is unique for each campus. Each year, Big Ideas develops specific outreach materials for its three different networks: UC Berkeley, UC System, and Higher Education Solutions Network schools, posted on a system-specific promotion page that is sent to its partners. Every email sent out a department, school, center, or student group on

another campus is very explicit about which categories those students are eligible for, since eligibility can be confusing (see an example of the 2015-2016 Category Eligibility Chart, and examples of Outreach Email Templates - Generic, Category, Partner Promotion in the Tools section).

To effectively promote Big Ideas at other campuses, the contest relies heavily on its partners to assist with its outreach. At the beginning of each contest, Big Ideas shares with its partner campuses its system-specific promotion page, as well as an outreach strategy that includes posters, email templates, and sample social media messages to post. Additionally, Big Ideas will ask its partners to recommend additional centers and student networks it can advertise to.

At the UC campuses, Big Ideas' key partners are the respective Blum Centers on each campus within the Blum Center Federation. Within the Higher Education Solutions Network, each USAID-affiliated Development Lab serves as a key partner for participation and promotion of the Contest.

| UC System Blum Centers | HESN |
|---|---|
| UC Davis Blum Center for Developing Economies | The College of William & Mary AidData Center for Development Policy |
| UC Irvine Blum Center for Poverty Alleviation | Duke University Social Entrepreneurship Accelerator |
| UC Los Angeles Blum Center on Poverty and Health in Latin America | Makerere University ResilientAfrica Network |
| UC Merced Blum Center for Developing Economies | Massachusetts Institute of Technology Comprehensive Initiative on Technology Evaluation |
| UC Riverside Blum Poverty Initiative | Massachusetts Institute of Technology International Development Innovation Network |
| UC San Diego Blum Cross-Border Initiative | Michigan State University Global Center for Food Systems Innovation |
| UC San Francisco Global Health Sciences | Texas A&M University Center on Conflict and Development |
| UC Santa Barbara Blum Center for Global Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development | |
| UC Santa Cruz Blum Center on Poverty, Social Enterprise, and Participatory Governance | |



Big Ideas has also developed two comprehensive lists of relevant academic bodies at its partner schools. One of these lists contains major departments and communication channels at all eligible schools, all of which receive a general Big Ideas informational email when the contest launches. The other list is sorted by category and contains departments, classes, centers, and student groups on each campus that might be particularly interested in applying to that specific category. This latter list receives a tailored email describing the eligibility and requirements of the specific category, and strongly encourages students to apply. Big Ideas has found that this tailored approach is especially effective in reaching prospective applicants.

Big Ideas ensures that all branding and marketing materials are consistent and clear, and students are always encouraged to speak with a Big Ideas advisor if they have any questions about their campuses' eligibility (see the chapter on Outreach & Marketing for more tips on how to promote the contest successfully).

Resource Offerings

Making sure that students from other contests have equal access to high-quality resources provided by the is the most challenging part of expanding the competition to multiple campuses. As a result of the contest originating from and being based on the UC Berkeley campus, Berkeley students inevitably are more aware of the resources available to them through the contest. With opportunities such as networking events, hands-on workshops, attendance at innovation-related events based in the Bay Area, and participation in end of the year events, it is impossible to provide remotely located students the same access that UC Berkeley students have.

However, Big Ideas has made great efforts to make these resources available to all students. All events held on the UC Berkeley campus— Information Sessions, Writing Workshops, Final Round Kickoff Event, and Grand Prize Pitch Day are webcasted live to encourage participation from students at other campuses. Recordings of those events are also archived on the Big Ideas website. Students are also able to arrange one-on-one consulting opportunities, such as Advising Office Hours, Editing Blitz appointments, and meetings with Practitioners in Residence, over Skype or phone. Even pitch-related events, such as the required Category-Specific Poster Sessions, are set up so that students can present through video conference. In the past three years, Big Ideas has also flown top-rated teams from the College of William and Mary, MIT, and UC San Diego to attend Grand Prize Pitch Day and vie for the chance to win additional funding by pitching before a panel of judges. It constantly seeks ways to better reach out to students on other campuses and support their participation in the contest.

Tips

- Big Ideas has learned to be flexible with its services. In order to accommodate rigid student schedules and huge time differences, Big Ideas staff will often extend its office hours to cater to the availability of the student. Each workshop or event is recorded and made available online after the fact for students to watch on their own time. These adjustments have been especially useful for the students located in Uganda, where the time difference can be very difficult to manage.

Tools

- 2015-2016 Category Eligibility Chart
- Promotional Resources at UC System and HESN Campuses
- Partner Promotion Guide

Post-Contest Support

At the end of the Contest year after Big Ideas winners receive their award, students often inquire about the different types of additional support channels they can access to help them continue to implement their projects. When surveyed about the value of the contest and its resources, alumni teams are extremely satisfied with the program and are grateful for its contribution to their ventures. However, over half of alumni teams report the need for additional post-award implementation support. After leaving the contest, teams can often find themselves with a variety of unexpected challenges they don't feel prepared to confront, and do not know where to turn to for advice.

To fill this gap faced by winning teams, the Blum Center developed several solutions for teams: 1) the opportunity to re-apply to Big Ideas to obtain more seed funding and mentorship support, 2) a list of funding sources, accelerators & incubators, networks, and other resources that students can access on their own, 3) a fast track opportunity to enroll in a Blum Center-offered social innovator course, and 4) crowdfunding support for projects. Additionally, all alumni are added to the Big Ideas newsletter list at the end of each year, where they will continue to receive emails and communication about upcoming opportunities they can access.

Collaborations with Incubator and Accelerator Resources

Despite the rapid increase in the number of incubator or accelerator programs on the UC Berkeley campus (and nationally), these opportunities are still limited relative to the number of teams that compete in Big Ideas. Additionally, most incubator programs have specific areas of focus that limit the number and types of teams that can apply for these start-up programs (software/hardware, for-profit, bioscience, etc.) As a result, historically only a handful of Big Ideas teams have gone on to secure placements in these types of programs.

In an effort to make these types of resources more accessible to students, the Big Ideas team has actively worked to build partnerships and increased collaborations with the growing number of incubators and accelerators on the UC Berkeley campus, within the Bay Area, and

nationally. Over the past year Big Ideas formalized partnerships with start-up catalyst programs such as Better Ventures, the CITRIS Foundry and Echoing Green to provide “fast-track” opportunities for Big Ideas teams during the application process. Additionally, Big Ideas increasingly is collaborating with on-campus incubators (SkyDeck, Foundry, LAUNCH, QB3) to host events and opportunities that increase awareness about the start-up resources available to entrepreneurs and to expose them to new networks.

Scaling Up Big Ideas Category

Scaling Up Big Ideas is a category that was implemented in the 2011-2012 contest year to continue to support Big Ideas teams in their ventures. After implementing their projects and gathering feedback on their project ideas, winning teams often are ready to expand their projects to additional communities, develop solutions to related problems, or otherwise scale their projects. Acknowledging that the initial award provided to winners is probably insufficient in helping alumni reach their next goals, Big Ideas opened up the Scaling Up category to allow former winners to apply for more seed funding for their projects, and access the topic area experts in the Big Ideas and Blum Center networks.

The Scaling Up category is open to all matriculated undergraduate and graduate students who previously won a Big Ideas award but have not previously won a Scaling Up award.

In addition to following the same requirements asked of other Big Ideas categories, former winners must demonstrate that they have generated excellent results in implementing their original winning project idea, and describe plans to scale their project. Like all other teams competing in Big Ideas, Scaling Up contestants must submit a Pre-proposal and a Full Proposal to convince judges that their projects have made enough progress to justify another round of funding.

The category has numerous benefits. It continues to provide financial support for student-driven projects that struggle to secure external funding. It encourages students to make progress on their social ventures, and to adapt their projects based on lessons learned from the first few years.

Scaling Up also helps to deepen the relationship between the Big Ideas program and its winners, and allows staff to track progress of its awardees over multiple years.

Social Innovator OnRamp Resource Guide

There is a rapidly growing body of resources available to help aspiring social innovators grow sustainable and effective initiatives. But the networks are fragmented, and it can be difficult for new innovators to find what they need. Thus, the Blum Center compiled the Social Innovator OnRamp Resource Guide to help the more than 3,500 students who have participated in the social innovation competition.

The website curates a wide range of resources for early-stage social innovators, whether they are community organizers, social entrepreneurs, or people in industry, the social sector, and academia. It showcases funding and training resources, key organizations that are shaping the social impact movement, and links to reports, debates, and analysis. There are also resources for “second stage” social impact organizations focused on creating realistic strategies for growth. The website also allows students to filter the results according to geographic location, eligibility, key deadlines, and resource type. In order to effectively crowdsource information, the website also lets innovators recommend resources to other teams.

Social Innovator OnRamp Course

The UC Berkeley Social Innovator OnRamp Course was piloted in Fall 2014. It was immediately over-enrolled in its first semester, illustrating the high level of demand for early-stage innovator resources. The class is structured as a “scaffold” of key skills and concepts useful for budding entrepreneurs, and allows students to spend time furthering their ventures with the guidance and input of external experts and mentors.

UC Berkeley Big Ideas winners are offered a “Fast Track Opportunity” into the course, where successful enrollment and completion of the course allows teams to bypass the Pre-proposal application requirement of that year’s Big Ideas contest. The hands-on course introduces students to case work, best practices, and the tools necessary turn ideas for the social sector into viable

products and services. Throughout the class, students further shape, evaluate and grow their own projects and ideas with support from instructors. The class also invites guest instructors in the areas of product design, product launch, social enterprise, and social investing.

The Fall 2014 Social Innovator OnRamp consisted of 20 student innovators from 11 teams. The students hailed from 12 fields of study, ranging from first-year undergraduates to fifth-year PhD candidates. The cohort included 60% women innovators. This pilot course yielded profound insights on the needs of student entrepreneurs, including physical workspace, dedicated time built into their course loads and co-learning opportunities for the cohort of teams.

Crowdfunding Options

To date, Big Ideas has piloted three different crowdfunding models for Big Ideas teams after they leave the contest. The first was a **Big Ideas Marketplace**, a bsite from which Big Ideas winners could advertise their projects, and request direct cash and in-kind donations. After a few years, the Marketplace was taken down due to the administrative burden on Big Ideas staff to monitor accounts and process donations, and the continuing challenges with stagnating content. The troublesome design of the platform and a lack of set deadlines to donate, meant that the Marketplace was largely inactive during its lifespan and did not effectively invite donations as intended.

In 2014, Big Ideas piloted an Indiegogo Crowdfunding Campaign, raising \$23,745 across seven campaigns over a 37-day period. In this campaign, Big Ideas partnered with Indiegogo to feature some of its top former winners on the crowdsourcing bsite. It targeted its judge, mentor, and alumni networks as major funding sources for the projects.

While the campaign helped teams raise additional funding, there was much room for improvement. Teams’ primary criticisms were a lack of clarity around the support offered through the Big Ideas--Indiegogo partnership, and the extent of the commitment it took to run a compelling campaign. Teams felt that they needed more guidance with online marketing and promotion, and the feedback they received from Indiegogo was insufficient. Some of the

teams' fundraising goals were too high and unrealistic. It was also concluded that the outreach pool was too narrow. Participating teams noted that most of the people that ended up donating-- friends, family and other supporters-- already had been reached out to in the past. Running seven simultaneous campaigns also led to competition for donations amongst projects.

The UC Berkeley Crowdfunding Initiative managed through University Development and Alumni Relations (UDAR), was launched in 2015. Although limited to UC Berkeley students, this has been the most effective crowdsourcing model. To date, 11 Big Ideas teams have been able to secure \$98,103 through the platform (averaging nearly \$9,000 per team) over the course of a 30-day period. Despite being only two years old, the initiative has been impressive at leveraging UC Berkeley's extensive alumni network. It also provides great deal of support to participating teams to craft effective arguments on the website, and requires them to conduct most of the outreach to their respective networks. Big Ideas then helps teams advertise their campaigns through newsletters and emails. Thus, this solution leverages three different outreach campaigns conducted by the Crowdfunding Initiative, the team itself, and Big Ideas networks. Moving forward, Big Ideas will continue to use the Crowdfunding Initiative as its primary crowdsourcing effort for Big Ideas alumni.

Tips

- Utilize partner organizations to assist with crowdsourcing efforts. Early on, Big Ideas realized that it did not have the human resource capacity to run its own crowdsourcing platform. Partnering with other existing initiatives allows Big Ideas staff to relieve most of its administrative burden, provide expert guidance to participating groups on crafting convincing pitches, and leverage wider networks beyond just the Big Ideas community. Having a third party manage the crowdfunding platform and outreach campaign has led to much more effective fundraising efforts for teams. Contests can also explore a range of possibilities for co-branding options in order to garner more visibility around its projects.
- Encourage teams to set reasonable fundraising

goals. Establishing deadlines for donation periods, conducting targeted outreach to wide audiences is crucial for student teams. Offer lots of advising to help them in this process. If working with a partner to establish a crowdfunding campaign is not an option, Big Ideas recommends implementing lessons learned from its experience with the Marketplace and Indiegogo Campaign.

Tools

- Scaling Up Category Handout
- Social Innovator OnRamp Advertisement
- Social Innovator OnRamp Resource Guide




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