

Guidelines for Innovation Marketplace

TechCon 2016

What is the Innovation Marketplace?

The Innovation Marketplace, hosted by the U.S. Global Development Lab, is a competition showcasing the talent of students and young innovators who are using science, technology, innovation, and partnerships (STIP) to tackle global challenges.

Teams or individuals can compete in one of two categories: 'products & services' and 'research'.

Products & services are approaches, technologies, devices, or systems with at least an existing prototype by the time of submission.

Research includes projects or methodologies that have collected preliminary data by the time of submission.

The Innovation Marketplace will take place in mid-November on MIT's campus, which is located in the Boston area, as a feature of the Higher Education Solutions Network's (HESN) TechCon 2016. Throughout the course of the competition, individuals or teams of young innovators such as students, young professionals, or postdoctoral researchers will have the opportunity to gain exposure, build support for their innovative product or research, receive technical feedback, and practice their pitching skills. Although all accepted applicants will be able to attend TechCon, the final round of winners from each category will receive financial and/or mentorship support.

For questions about the Innovation Marketplace, please email techcon@usaid.gov.

Who is eligible to participate?

All young innovators (under 30) may compete, although exceptions may be made for current doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows. You do not have to be a student from a Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN) university to apply. Individuals and teams may apply, and they will not be evaluated differently.

Teams competing in the 'product & services' category must have an existing prototype or model at application time, while teams in the 'research' category must have preliminary data sufficient to generate a meaningful abstract.

What can teams win?

Participants will have a chance to win financial and mentorship support for their project. Winners will be chosen following a series of events at HESN's TechCon in mid-November, 2016. However, the competition is designed to benefit teams in the lead up to TechCon as well. The material you will create throughout the course of this competition can prove useful as you seek further support for your project. Judges and mentors will provide feedback, skill building opportunities, and chances to connect with others in your field during and leading up to this event.

How do teams apply?

1. *Create a profile on the [Global Innovation Exchange](#)*: The Global Innovation Exchange (or “the Exchange”) is a global online platform for innovations, funding, insights, resources and conversations, allowing the world to better work together to address humanity’s greatest challenges. The Exchange will be the central hub for participants to post information on their innovation. Not only will this make it easier to centralize your application materials, but by creating your account, you will be able to use the Exchange to apply for other funding opportunities, connect with teams working on similar issues, and draw inspiration from other existing innovations.
 - Click here to go to the Global Innovation Exchange [registration page](#)
 - Only one person needs to create a profile, although we invite everyone on your team to make profiles as well.
2. *Register your innovation*: Once someone on your team has registered, hover over the ‘Innovations’ tab on the top of the page and click “Add an Innovation”
 - Skip adding your mailing address
 - Add photos, videos, and other media that will help the judges envision your project
 - Fill out as many questions as possible, as this will help you get the most out of the Exchange’s community-centered platform
 - Judges will be using your innovation page and uploaded materials to score your application according to [these rubrics](#).
 - Under “Related Programs”, type in “Higher Education Solutions Network”. This will help us link up with you!
3. *Upload your material*: To add the additional application materials, please edit your Innovation page. You can do this during or after the creation of your Innovation profile. For each category within the Innovation Marketplace, we request different supporting material. If you are accepted, you will receive feedback on these materials to help you refine your project in time for the Innovation Marketplace in November.
 - *Research*: All projects in this category must submit a research abstract that explains your research in terms of background, existing knowledge gaps, research question

and approach, preliminary data, and its potential to be applied within global development.

- To upload, go to the “Tell us more about your innovation” section, where you will find a sub-section called “resources”. Click “Create Document” and upload the relevant file from your computer.
 - Maximum length: 500 words. Document type: pdf
 - *Products & Services*: All applicants in this category must submit a draft video that shares what the innovative product is, why you designed it, and how it’s going to change the lives of its target population. You must have a prototype before applying.
 - For simplicity, we suggest you upload this video or multimedia presentation to [Vimeo](#) or [YouTube](#) and then submit the link, but you can also upload to the Exchange directly in the “Add photos and videos about your innovation” section.
 - Length requirements: minimum 30 seconds, maximum 2 minutes.
4. *Hit send*: Use this [Registration Form](#) to send us your team’s information, the URL of your Exchange profile, and other important details. This is the final step in applying for the Innovation Marketplace -- the HESN team will let you know if you have been accepted by mid-June.

Applications must be completed by **May 31, 2016**.

What is the process for selecting winners?

Initial application selection:

- Using [these rubrics](#), the HESN team will select the cohort of Innovation Marketplace teams and invite them to attend HESN’s TechCon 2016, where the main portion of the competition will take place. If you cannot attend TechCon, you are not eligible to compete.
- Teams will receive feedback on their application around the end of June or beginning of July. By the end of September, teams will be asked to submit their final videos or abstract.
- Participants must also prepare something to showcase at their booth in the Innovation Marketplace. Depending on their project, this could be a prototype or display poster, although they are not limited to those two options.

TechCon 2016 competition:

- *Innovation Marketplace*: The main portion of the competition functions like a science fair or poster session, but with each booth comprised of teams and their projects. TechCon attendees will have a chance to interact with teams to learn about their projects and ask

questions. All TechCon attendees will be voting on their favorite projects in each category, and the top teams will go on to the next round.

- *Expert Panels:* Selected entrepreneurs and researchers will be evaluated by an expert panel. There will be two distinct panels for each category, and the panel will have a chance to ask contestants technical questions.
- *Live pitches:* The top teams, as chosen by the expert panels, will deliver short pitches to a room of TechCon attendees and make the case for why their project is unique and transformative. A final round of popular voting by the audience will select an overall winner from each category based on these pitches.

Do teams receive funding for travel?

USAID or the Higher Education Solutions Network will not be arranging travel logistics or providing funding for your team's travel to TechCon. If you are affiliated with a university, try talking to relevant departments or the career center to see if they provide any financial support for conference attendance. If you are a team from an HESN university, please ask your Development Lab if they are providing any support to accepted Innovation Marketplace teams.

However, USAID will provide visa letters for team members who require a U.S. visa to enter the country.

What are important dates and deadlines?

May 31: Full application to Innovation Marketplace is due

Mid-June: Invitations issued to accepted teams. Teams have one week to accept or reject the invitation.

September 30: Final materials due to HESN team

November 10-12: TechCon, where the Innovation Marketplace will take place

Of note, if you are affiliated with one of the HESN Universities, there may be earlier deadlines and an internal selection process. Please check with your program for more details.