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About CHALLENGE.GOV

What is Challenge.Gov?

Challenge.Gov, managed by Technology Transformation Services (TTS), within the General Services Administration, supports federal agencies to mature and scale the use of prize competitions and crowdsourcing campaigns in order to advance their missions. The Challenge.Gov team delivers this support by offering advanced infrastructure, empowering members of the Challenge and Prize Community of Practice, hosting interactive learning experiences, and developing practical toolkits.

This Challenge.Gov platform is the central hub for prize competitions across the U.S. federal government. Through this platform, federal agencies can engage public solvers in prize competitions and crowdsourcing campaigns to identify innovative solutions to important issues.

Why should I post my prize competition or crowdsourcing campaign on Challenge.Gov?

Posting your prize challenge or crowdsourcing campaign on Challenge.Gov has many benefits. The platform allows you to:

Promote your prize competition or crowdsourcing campaign

- Publish details on the publicly accessible Challenge.Gov platform at **no cost to your agency**
- Allow potential solvers to amplify your challenge on social media and via email through the integrated “Share Challenge” feature
- View web analytics related to your prize competition page views

Manage your prize competition or crowdsourcing campaign

- Create and manage your own content directly on the portal—including establishing “go live” and “submission end” dates and times, posting “announcements”, providing FAQ’s, and announcing winners
- Collect and manage participant submissions either directly through the Challenge.Gov platform or through or through an external challenge site or email
- Facilitate multi-phase challenges—set which phases allow for open submissions and which are limited to winners of previous phases, provide phase specific rules and judging criteria, manage and track entries as they progress from phase to phase
- Access current and archived listings in a centralized “Challenge Management” portal
- Send bulletin messages and important updates to potential solvers who are following your prize competition or crowdsourcing campaign
- Send and track communications with participants and other Challenge Managers through the Message Center

Align with prize authority and security requirements

- Fulfills the America COMPETES Act and American Innovation & Competitiveness Act (AICA) requirement for announcement of Federal prize competitions on a publicly accessible Government website.
- Authority to Operate (ATO) by GSA obtained in September 2021.
- Provides a FISMA Moderate data security environment in Cloud.gov
- Adherence to the [21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act \(IDEA\)](#)

Note: Challenge.Gov highly recommends you engage your agency's legal counsel for advice regarding the America COMPETES Act and prize competitions.

What resources are available through Challenge.Gov to help my agency?

The Challenge.Gov team is committed to helping you mature and scale the use of prize competitions and crowdsourcing campaigns to advance your agency's mission. Our services are focused on:

- **Providing advanced infrastructure**, the Challenge.Gov platform, to support the secure hosting and management of federally sponsored prize competitions and crowdsourcing campaigns;
- **Empowering the Challenge and Prize Community of Practice** to continuously exchange knowledge, provide support, and facilitate hands-on experiences; and
- **Creating practical toolkits and other resources** to support federal prize competition and crowdsourcing campaign managers to continuously improve design, management, evaluation, and impact.

To stay up-to-date on upcoming events and resources available to support your work, [click here to subscribe to Federal Challenge Monthly, the Challenge.Gov community e-Newsletter.](#)

Is there a network or community of practice to help support my work?

Yes! The Challenge and Prize Community of Practice (CoP) is a thriving inter-agency community of over 800 dedicated federal employees who are focused on open innovation in government. Our community supports and encourages the use of incentivized competitions and crowdsourcing to attract and engage the public to help meet critical government needs.

Members of the Challenge and Prize CoP gather regularly to share ideas, review best practices, and discuss policies and procedures. These convenings are designed to thoughtfully serve the needs of our diverse community member personas. A few examples are:

- **Office Hours:** Open sessions to answer your pressing questions about prize competition design and management, and use of the Challenge.Gov platform.

- **Spotlight Chats:** Moderated discussions with innovation leaders to highlight individual success stories and lessons learned.
- **Deep Dives:** Interactive collaboratives that allow participants to present designs, test ideas, and refine processes in order to improve the quality of their prize competition or crowdsourcing campaign.
- **Thematic Forums:** Mini-summits that bring together open innovation practitioners and subject matter experts to explore specific topics of interest.

We also host a listserv for members to ask questions, announce new prize competitions, connect with other prize managers, and more. To join the community and access the Challenges Listserv, send an email to challenges-subscribe-request@listserv.gsa.gov with nothing in the subject (.gov or .mil email required).

Getting Started With the CHALLENGE.GOV Platform

How can I list my agency's prize competition or crowdsourcing campaign on Challenge.Gov?

If you're a federal employee, or contractor with a government email (.gov or .mil), you can use the challenge management features of the Challenge.Gov Challenge Manager Portal to create your agency's prize competition or crowdsourcing campaign profile. In addition to managing your profile content, you will also be able to set the "publication date" for when it will be visible on the public site.

How do I get access to the Challenge Manager Portal?

If you're a federal employee, or contractor with a government email (.gov or .mil), the first step is to set up a Challenge.Gov user account. To do this, click the "My account" button in the upper right corner of Challenge.Gov and follow the onscreen prompts. See the step-by-step instructions below for details.

Once your account has been created, a member of the Challenge.Gov Support Team will review your account and grant you access to the Challenge Manager portal. Please allow up to two (2) business days for your request to be processed.

Note: Challenge.Gov uses Login.gov to manage user accounts and system access. [Visit Login.gov for more information.](https://login.gov)

1. Click the "**My account**" button in the upper right corner.
2. Click the "**Accept and Sign-in**" button to acknowledge the terms of use.
3. Click the "**Create an account**" button.
4. Enter your government email address (.mil or .gov required).

5. Check the box to accept the [Login.gov Rules of Use](#).
6. Click the [**Submit**] button.
7. Check your email for a message from Login.gov with the subject line “Confirm your email”.
8. Click the “**Confirm email address**” button in the email message. This will take you back to the Login.Gov website.
9. Enter your desired Login.gov / Challenge.Gov password.
10. Click the [**Continue**] button.
11. Follow the onscreen prompts to set up a second layer of security. Visit [Login.gov help](#) to learn more about each authentication option.
12. Enter the one-time security code from your selected authentication method.
13. Click the “**Submit**” button
14. Click the “**Agree and continue**” button to send your new account request to the Challenge.Gov Support Team. This will take you back to Challenge.Gov. A “Your account is pending approval” message will appear on the screen.
 - **Note:** You will receive an email with a link to directly access the Challenge Manager Portal once your account has been activated.

I already have a Challenge.Gov user account. How do I log in?

Click the “My account” button in the upper right corner of Challenge.Gov to get started. See the step-by-step instructions below for details.

Note: Challenge.Gov uses Login.gov to manage user accounts and system access. [Visit Login.gov for more information](#).

1. Click [**My account**] in the upper right corner
2. Click [**Accept and Sign-in**] to acknowledge the terms of use
3. Enter the **Email address** and **Password** associated with your account
4. Click [**Sign in**]
5. Authenticate your account using the security method you selected when you created your account.

I'm having trouble logging in to Challenge.Gov. How can I get help accessing my account?

If you're having trouble logging into Challenge.Gov or accessing the Challenge Manager portal, send us an email at team@challenge.gov with the subject line “Challenge.Gov Challenge Manager account access issue.” Please be sure to send your email from the government email you used to set up your Challenge.Gov account.

General Questions About Prize Competitions

What is a prize competition?

A prize competition (also referred to as a “challenge,” “prize challenge,” “competition,” “incentive prize” or any combination thereof) is a type of project that allows the public to solve challenges presented by federal agencies and receive awards for the best solutions. The process for running a prize competition boils down to three steps:

1. Agency announces a prize competition and invites the public to solve it
2. Participants create and submit solutions to the problem
3. Agency evaluates solutions and awards prizes to the best ones

This process may sound similar to grants or contracts, but prize competitions differ in small and significant ways. In grants and contracts, an agency receives proposals to do tasks or research, chooses one entity to participate and then pays the monetary award incrementally for the work to be done. In prize competitions, an agency generally selects a winner or winners based on the work that has been done. In more complex, multi-phase prize competitions, phase winners may be selected as each phase ends. In prize competitions, only the winner(s) receives an award.

Unlike contracts which provide detailed specifications of the work that needs to be done, prize competitions define a smaller set of requirements, which allow participants to bring their creative solutions. This can be advantageous when a problem can be solved in many different ways, including ways that the agency is not even aware of. The open innovation approach can entice participation from those who may not have direct expertise in the problem subject matter area but can lend expertise from their diverse backgrounds.

Why should my agency sponsor a prize competition?

Prize competitions are a great way to spark innovative ideas to address agency challenges. They also offer unique benefits not available through grants or contracts. Specifically, they can:

- **Lower the barrier to entry for participation and encourage a more diverse pool of innovators.** They open the door to new entrepreneurs who may not have the necessary background or infrastructure necessary to apply to a federal grant or contract opportunity.
- **Allow federal agencies to award only the best results.** Contracts and grants are structured to fund work to be completed in the future. However, prize competitions are a “pay-for-results” model that award those who best accomplish the results, rather than efforts to accomplish those results. Awarding only the best solutions sourced through a competitive process, prize competitions are a proven pay-for-results model. **Attract new talent.** Prize competitions create opportunities for solvers to apply their expertise in a new sector and share their talent(s).

- **Raise awareness and seek private sector engagement in problem solving and innovation.** When several partners come together to sponsor a prize competition, they send an important signal regarding the magnitude of the problem and the federal government's interest in developing and advancing solutions.
- **Spur innovation and entrepreneurship.** Entrepreneurs often face an uphill battle to secure funding to move from innovative idea to working solution. Prize competitions make it easier for agencies to nurture private sector entrepreneurs and startups. Prize competitions allow the federal government to engage leading edge innovators and entities in problem solving and innovation.

How long does it take to run a prize competition?

The timeline for a prize competition is influenced by a multitude of factors such as partner needs, budget and staff availability, immediacy of the problem you are addressing, and requirements of the competition, to name a few. If you're managing your first prize competition and it's fairly straightforward, allocate at least eight months from discovery and design to awarding winners. You'll need to extend your expected timeline if the challenge is technically difficult and participants need significant amounts of time to meet the competition requirements; if you incorporate multiple rounds; or if the challenge becomes more administratively complex.

Do all agencies have legal authority to run a prize competition?

The [America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010](#) (COMPETES) provides the statutory authority for the head of a federal agency to run prize competitions. COMPETES leaves a great deal of leeway for legislative interpretation and the flexibility to create processes for running prize competitions. Be sure to check with your leadership, general counsel, budget officers, and, in some cases, your procurement team to get off on the right foot. In 2017, the authority was updated under the [American Innovation and Competitiveness Act of 2017](#) (AICA).

Not all agencies use COMPETES as the legal authority to run their prize competitions; NASA, for example, has used the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and National Aeronautics and Space Administration Act of 2005. Both the Department of Defense and U.S. Agency for International Development leverage their own legal authorities: DoD Direct Prize Authority and USAID Innovation Incentive Award Authority, respectively. See the [Congressional Report Service - Federal Prize Competitions report \(April 2020\)](#) for more information.