

BIG IDEAS JUDGES FAQs

Who are Big Ideas judges?

Judges are professionals from a variety of fields with one thing in common: a passion for innovative ideas. In order to ensure we provide teams with the best feedback possible, and help them to think deeply about their topic and the field it falls into, we look for judges who have a minimum of 5 years of professional experience and at least ONE of the following:

- Professional skills critical to supporting early stage startups (e.g. Business plan development, Scalability and design thinking, Financial Modeling, IP Strategy, Market Research, Organizational design, Branding/consumer engagement)
- Expertise in an industry/field that is directly related to one of the 9 Big Ideas Contest categories (e.g. ICT, International Development, CleanTech, Social Justice, Big Data, etc).

What do Big Ideas Judges do?

Judges help the Big Ideas team determine who will advance to the final round of the contest and who will be selected to receive awards. Judges review student proposals, score them, and provide detailed feedback on how the student or team could improve upon their idea or proposal. This feedback is extremely valuable to students, who receive it anonymously and rely heavily on it to improve their idea!

How/when do judges participate in Big Ideas?

Big Ideas judges help the team by serving as a judge in one of the contest categories. All judging happens online, so judges can participate remotely in their free time during the judging window, and will be able to save and come back to their reviews at their convenience. Judges can participate in the Pre-Proposal Round and/or the Final Round of the year's contest:

- **Pre-Proposal Round:** This year's Pre-Proposal review period will run from Nov 16 – Dec 7. The deadline to sign up as a judge is Nov 6.
- **Final Round:** This year's full-proposals are due March 9th, and Final Round judging will happen between Mar 14 – Apr 1. The deadline to sign up as a judge is Mar 7.

What is the time commitment?

During the Pre-Proposal round, judges are asked to review 6-8 pre-proposals. Each proposal is 3 pages long and most judges report spending ~30 minutes reviewing each of them and providing feedback. Including training, judges spend a total 3-6 hours on these responsibilities. During the Final Round, judges will review all of the final proposals in their assigned category. Each proposal is 10-15 pages long, and most judges report spending ~45 minutes reviewing each of them. The total time for final round judging will vary depending on the number of final proposals in each category.

Do judges receive training?

Yes! There is training for judges at the beginning each of round's judging window. Judges training is conducted as a live webcast so that judges can join remotely, and it is also recorded for those who are unavailable at the scheduled time or prefer to access the training later.

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How am I assigned a category?

Each judge is asked to apply by completing an interest form, where they share their background and experience, as well as their preferences in terms of the category they would like to review. The Big Ideas team assigns categories based on responses and will typically confirm your category as soon as you sign up. Judges who express flexibility are often placed once we receive all student applications, and we know where we can best leverage everyone's expertise!

Can I participate in multiple categories - or change categories?

Yes! Many judges change categories between rounds and years. The Big Ideas team will do their best to consider preferences and match judges based on their areas of interest and expertise. Judges are also welcome to judge multiple categories in any one round – if they are willing to commit to reviewing 8-10 proposals for each category they judge.

Where does judging happen?

All judging is done entirely online, so that judges can participate remotely in their free time. Judges will get access to their assigned proposals, as well as brief overviews of all the proposals submitted in their category at the beginning of the judging window. They will then have ~3 weeks to review their assigned proposals at their convenience. All proposals are due by the end of the judging window – but can be saved and returned to anytime before then.

How many judges read each proposal?

On average, between 4 and 6 judges will read each proposal. Each judge will read between 8-10 proposals for their category during the pre-proposal round, and between 6-8 proposals for their category during the final round. Because there are many more submissions than each judge will review, each judge will also be sent (via email) a list of short summaries of all submissions for the category they are judging.

Can I be involved in both the Pre-Proposal and the Final Rounds?

Yes! We love it when judges choose to participate in both rounds of the contest. Every year, we have judges who choose to judge in both rounds, and judges who choose to do only one or the other. We also have many judges who choose to serve as a Mentor in the Final Round. It is entirely up to you and the time you are willing to commit!

Can I contact teams or share their ideas?

Most teams are in the early stages of their ideas, and have yet to begin the process of protecting their intellectual property (where applicable). Unless a team explicitly states that their idea is open and they are willing for it to be publicly shared, we treat all submissions as strictly confidential. Judges are not given contact information in the proposals, but the Big Ideas team can help facilitate communication between judges and students/teams if both parties agree to it.

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