



## PKG IDEAS Social Innovation Challenge

### IDEAS INITIAL PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Welcome to the 2022-23 IDEAS Social Innovation Challenge!

The IDEAS Social Innovation Challenge is MIT's annual social entrepreneurship program housed in the PKG Public Service Center. A 20+-year old program, IDEAS offers you and your team members an opportunity to apply your education and expertise in collaboration with community partners and stakeholders to address entrenched social and environmental challenges worldwide. We offer practical and educational workshops, advisors, feedback and funding of up to \$20,000. We want to support your social innovation journey through as many of your stages as possible at the PKG Center.

#### WE ARE NOT:

- A competition
- Or a business plan competition

#### WE ARE:

- An experiential learning program
- A home for anyone who wants to roll up their sleeves and work on big audacious social and/or environmental issue(s). All you need is commitment, humility, heart and mind for the challenge.
- Welcoming to all kinds of societal and environmental challenges globally, you tell us what, where, and why.
- Welcoming to all the kinds of ways one can address a societal and environmental issue (ie. arts, business, movement building, etc.)

*Over 200 awarded IDEAS teams have implemented innovative projects in 44 countries, impacting hundreds of thousands of lives. Nearly 50 percent of IDEAS projects are still active in some form today. We encourage you to check out their stories and profiles on our website (see below).*

**For the 2022-2023 cycle, our application deadline is on Wednesday, January 18, 2023, 6:00 PM EST.** Keep reading to learn more about eligibility, how to apply, and the nuts and bolts of the program.

## How to participate in IDEAS



1. **EXPLORE:** If you are new to IDEAS and the concept of social innovation or social entrepreneurship, you can attend our [Chat & Chew Series](#) offered on Fridays, October 28<sup>th</sup>, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022!
2. **IDEATE:** Do you and/or your team feel that you've got a good handle on the challenge that you care about most, that you and/or your team are best suited to address? Do you and/or your team have some solutions grounded in the perspective of those most directly impacted but want some more thought partnership? Are you looking for teammates? Are you looking for a team? Our IDEAS Virtual Generator event on Wednesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022 will be a great place to pitch yourself and your ideas. If you missed this incredible global event, you can still connect with the incredible community on the [Virtual Generator Discord page here](#).
3. **REGISTER:** Sign-up for our mailing list on our webpage (see footer). We'll keep you updated on events, and on when our application portal is open for submissions.
4. **PREPARE:** Prepare a thoughtful proposal based on what you have learned and initially co-ideated with those most impacted by the challenge. You may want to join our Chat & Chew Workshops Series or one of our [Proposal Writing Workshops on Wednesdays, November 30, 2022 \(in-person\) or January 11, 2023 \(virtual\)](#). See the [Project Eligibility & Criteria](#) and [Application Prep Materials](#) sections as well.
5. **APPLY:** Again, our submission deadline is Wednesday, January 18, 2023. See the [How to Apply](#) section on how to do so. .
6. **INTERVIEW:** After the entry round, you'll receive feedback from a team of reviewers. You'll also pick a time to meet with IDEAS staff to discuss your ideas and the reviewer comments.

7. **REVISE:** If a selected finalist team, your team would be invited to submit a Final Proposal along with a 3-minute recorded video pitch and summary for our Virtual Showcase via [a partnership with MIT Solve](#) by Wednesday, March 22, 2023. Our anonymous jury of judges would review your written proposal and the whole world would have the opportunity to rate and engage with your proposal via the Virtual Showcase platform. *Upon submitting your final proposal, your team will be immediately eligible to receive a \$1,000 seed grant!*
8. **HONE:** As a finalist team, your team would attend a required six workshop seminar series in Spring 2023 called *Tackling Social Change: Approaching Complex Problems* from March to April. This series is designed to help you carefully prepare to present at the April judging process and implement during the summer following your award. We will host this series in a hybrid format to allow you to bond with your MIT peers while also allowing the participation of your non-MIT teammates. Mark your calendar for the following sessions as attendance is required by at least one team member:
  - a. Session 1 (In-person): IDEAS Finalist Series Kick-off – Thursday, March 9 | 12:00 - 2:00 PM (EST)
  - b. Session 2 (Virtual): Systems Approaches – Thursday, March 16 | 12:00 - 2:00 PM (EST)

NO SESSION week of March 20 (final deliverables are due instead)

  - c. Session 3 (Virtual): Developing a Theory of Change and Impact Metrics – Thursday, March 30 | 12:00 - 2:00 PM (EST)
  - d. Session 4 (Virtual): Office Hours with Mentors – Thursday, April 6 | 6:00 - 8:00 PM (EST)
  - e. Session 5 (Virtual): Crafting a Compelling Narrative – Thursday, April 13 | 12:00 - 2:00 PM (EST)
  - f. Session 6 (In-person): Series Wrap-up – Thursday, April 20 | 12:00 - 2:00 PM (EST)
9. **AWARD:** As a selected finalist team, your team would load a pitch video on the [Virtual Showcase platform](#) via our partnership with MIT Solve which will go live by the second week of April and will remain live leading up to the judging process on Saturday, April 22. You would pitch your project live but virtually to judges on Saturday, April 22 during an assigned 30-minute time slot between the hours of 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM EST. The awards will be held live at the Media Lab from 12:00 - 3:00 PM EST. There, additional grants will be announced for four teams in the magnitudes of \$7,500, \$10,000, \$15,000, or \$20,000. Those who are not awarded a juried grant will have the opportunity to secure a Crowd Favorite award of \$2,500 from public interactions with their team profile via the Virtual Showcase.
10. **IMPLEMENT:** As a Finalist and Crowd Favorite Award Grant Recipient, you would have the benefit of a continued support system while implementing your idea over the following summer (through August 2023). As a Juried Award Grant Recipient, you would have the benefit of a continued support system while implementing your idea over the following 16-month grant (through August 2024). You would have access to mentors. You would benefit from support from the IDEAS staff as a sounding board during your implementation stage.

## 1. Project Eligibility & Criteria

### Eligibility

*Team structure:* Each team must be led by one or more full-time MIT students for the duration of the application process (through April 2023). A full-time MIT student on the team must also have significantly contributed to the innovative design, process, model, technology, or other key components of the project. Consider bringing in people beyond MIT students that will contribute the right skills to round out your team. THERE IS NO TEAM SIZE REQUIREMENT.

Although you may enter a project for which you already have established a formal entity (501(c)(3), LLC, C corp, B corp, for example), your project cannot have acquired significant investment (>\$100,000). Funding will go to the MIT student(s) on your team, not to any organization you have created. We strongly encourage teams to partner with a community partners to understand the problem, develop the solution, and implement the project. A community partner can be a non-profit organization, a government body, a partner or client company, a community leader, a school, etc.

*Service-focused & ethical:* IDEAS is a program of the MIT PKG Public Service Center. As such, all projects must have a service focus, working to address an unmet need for an underserved societal or environmental challenge. We are looking for projects in which the social mission is explicit and ethics is central. Projects must not put any person or living creatures in harm's way.

*Location:* While projects can take place in the US or abroad, we are guided by MIT's Travel Risk Policy for determining whether students can travel to certain locations. Please be sure to check whether your project location is on this list: <https://icc.mit.edu/travel-abroad/safety-and-security/international-travel-risk-policy-country-warning-levels>. We do not permit students to travel to High Risk locations, and we work with students on a case-by-case basis for other countries with travel warnings. If you are planning to travel or are traveling with PKG Center funds, we reserve the right to ask you to change, delay, or otherwise alter your travel plans if we think it necessary for your safety.

As the Institute is still closely monitoring travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic, proposals where some can be completed locally, remotely, or with on-the-ground teammates are highly encouraged.

*Participation:* All MIT and non-MIT participants *may only join ONE team* per academic year. Your team must be available to attend all required events—reviewer feedback session, the spring finalist seminar series, the Innovation Showcase & Awards Ceremony, and, if applicable, any other necessary programming.

*Repeat applicant:* We welcome back all past applicants even those who were among our finalists cohort in past years. Past applicants may submit the same idea or a new project.

### Criteria

*Innovation:* a transformative solution to a complex community problem or issue. Innovation can be a product, a process, technology, market-based solution, or service that is either entirely new or is being used in a novel and beneficial way. Innovation creates value and new opportunities for the community and offers benefits that are an improvement on previous efforts.

*Impact:* creating social value at a meaningful scale for individuals, communities, or systems. In addition to scale (depth and breadth of influence), impact also considers the permanence of a change, dependence vs. empowerment, and a full exploration of stakeholders and how they will be influenced (positively or negatively) by your work.

*Feasibility:* potential for significant progress to be made in 16 months using the IDEAS Social Innovation award funds; potential for long-term effectiveness and sustainability over time; a team with the necessary commitment, skills, and relationships to implement an idea is in place.

While projects of all kinds are welcomed, IDEAS is not a business plan competition. Rather, IDEAS is a space for impactful and feasible context-relevant innovations. Context-relevant innovations are informed by the systemic context and the needs and wants of stakeholders most affected by a challenge. Proposals might be related to a student's venture (non-profit (also known as for-purpose), benefit corporation, for-profit, etc.) or the pilot/seed of future ventures, but we do not provide direct funding for ventures.

## 2. How to Apply

The due date for Initial Proposals is Wednesday, January 18, 2023, 6:00PM (EST). Our application portal ([SMAPPLY](#)) will be open shortly after finals. View this [short step-by-step video](#) on submitting your initial proposal on our portal. We encourage you to sign-up to our mailing list on our website (link below) for our announcement when we open up the portal!

On the submission site, as an MIT student team leader, you need to set up an account on behalf of your team. You'll be asked to complete a number of tasks in sequence before you are able to submit your proposal which include: submit basic information about your team, questionnaires, and more.

Once you submit your Initial Proposal, we'll assign a set of reviewers to read your submission and write helpful comments for you. We'll schedule a meeting with your team and the IDEAS staff to review the comments and talk through opportunities and resources particular to your team.

**Note on Intellectual Property:** Intellectual property produced by teams entering the MIT IDEAS program remains your own, unless other agreements have been entered into voluntarily by your team, which may include assignment of your intellectual property to MIT. If you have questions about whether MIT may have rights to your intellectual property, contact the [MIT Technology Licensing Office](#). Anyone who sees your proposal will have time-bound access and will not be able to access your proposal without completing a nondisclosure agreement.

## 3. Application Prep Materials

Use the Initial Proposal to tell us about your intent; it does not need to be a fully formed proposal yet. However, the more information you can provide, the better! The Initial Proposal is your opportunity to detail the scope of your project, its context, and why you're the team to move it forward.

You are welcomed written proposals as well as other creative formats, as we strive to be an inclusive program. And, annually, we interact with students from 10 or more majors. We want you to tell us how your project meets our three criteria in the manner that best suits you to communicate it (ie. video or powerpoint). If you plan to submit a written proposal, we ask that you keep Initial Proposals 3 to 4 pages. Powerpoints may contain 10-11 slides. If you are submitting a video, please copy your video link into a file. *Please note that you have to submit a .pdf.*

We've prepared a proposal asset for you. You may use this to craft your brief initial proposal or to consider our questions and incorporate them into your preferred format. Access it here: <https://bit.ly/IDEASappprep>.

#### 4. What's Next?

Approximately 2-3 weeks after submitting an Initial Proposal, you'll sign up for a 30-40-minute meeting with IDEAS Staff to discuss your project concept and reviewers' feedback. This is also an opportunity to ask any questions you have about the IDEAS process and brainstorm with our staff. We're here to help! It is required that your team attend a review session with us if you would like to be considered for the Final Round.

##### Recommended next steps:

- Sign-up for our newsletter via our website (below) so that you can get the latest event and program updates. Our website also has a resource connector that you might find useful.
- Connect with students, faculty and different program administrators to learn about the various other programs across MIT [here](#). Be sure to search the Slack workspace name **'mit-se-innovation'** to locate and join. *This is an MIT community-only resource. Once you have joined, you may invite any member of the MIT community.*