U.S. GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT LAB Powered by USAID

TOOLS FOR INNOVATION PROGRAMMING

Platform Toolkit

LIFECYCLE STEPS

TOOLKITS

About the USAID U.S. Global Development Lab

USAID's legacy of developing and implementing innovative breakthroughs—from the seeds of the green revolution, to microfinance and oral rehydration therapy—has saved lives, created economic opportunity, and advanced human development. For the first time in history, we have the scientific and technological tools to put an end to extreme poverty and its most devastating consequences within the next two decades.

Building on the belief that science, technology, innovation and partnership can accelerate development impact faster, cheaper, and more sustainably, USAID established the U.S. Global Development Lab (The Lab) in April 2014. The Lab is designed to experiment and test new ideas, models, interventions, and approaches and to accelerate the ones that work across the Agency and in Missions around the world.

The Lab's mission is twofold:

- To produce breakthrough development innovations by sourcing, testing, and scaling proven solutions to reach hundreds of millions of people.
- To accelerate the transformation of the development enterprise by opening development to people everywhere with good ideas, promoting new and deepening existing partnerships, bringing data and evidence to bear, and harnessing scientific and technological advances.

To learn more about The Lab, visit: **www.usaid.gov/GlobalDevLab**

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This collection of tools was informed by in-depth interviews and discussions with the champions and the managers of the following USAID programs: Securing Water for Food: A Grand Challenge for Development; All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development; Saving Lives at Birth: A Grand Challenge for Development; Powering Agriculture: A Grand Challenge for Development; Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN); and Development Innovation Ventures (DIV).

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Platform Toolkit

KEY LEARNINGS

Many of USAID's innovation program teams have preferred customized platforms to fulfill their unique needs. While there is no common standard for platform design and teams have used various platform service providers, there are processes and best practices for scoping and design.

When designing the platform, visual tools such as shared screens will help ensure that the platform developer and the USAID program managers share a common vision.

Attentive moderators, platform managers, and program managers should be ready to manage the spike in activity during the last 48 hours of a competition.

When sponsoring competitions that cast a wide net for sourcing innovations from of a diverse set of non-traditional actors, an online platform is a useful tool for application acceptance, coordinating and managing application evaluation, and assisting program teams with data collection, application review, and pushing communications to applicants and reviewers.

This document identifies and explains the particular features of platforms and the user behaviors they can induce, and will help guide program teams in selecting and designing a platform that reflects program design goals.

The document addresses the following:

- **Key Platform Terms.** Understand what a platform is vis-a-vis application acceptance and evaluation and what services are furnished by a third party solution provider.
- **Establishing the Need for a Platform.** Evaluate whether your program requires a platform, understand who might be using your platform, and what functionalities are relevant to the user groups.
- **Determining Platform Behaviors.** Understand ways to design an online environment that promotes desired behaviors.
- **Choosing a Platform Provider.** Understand the options available for platform providers and the benefits and limitations of each.
- **Designing the Platform.** Understand the processes for designing a platform, launching application acceptance, and mapping platform activities.
- **Communications and Platforms.** Understand how the platform can complement the communications strategy, grants management, acceleration activities, and monitoring and evaluation activities.

Key Platform Terms

WHAT IS A PLATFORM?

While there are many different forms of computing platforms, for the purposes of this discussion, **a platform is a web-based tool and suite of administrative and management services that help program managers accept applications from innovators, process evaluations from reviewers, and obtain data on operations.** Platforms can reduce some of the burden associated with program management by:

- Collecting applications and reviews from several sources in one place (without overwhelming inboxes).
- Collecting data from applications and reviewer evaluations in a uniform, easy-to-analyze format.
- Coordinating communication with reviewers and applicants via the contact information entered into the platform.
- Allowing program managers to track applications and reviews in real time (for example, identifying a reviewer who consistently scores lower than his or her peers).
- Avoiding the pitfalls of using paper and shipping services between the program team and reviewers for sensitive material under tight timelines.

TIP

The following are ***key terms*** associated with platforms that are used throughout this document.

Intake and Evaluation Platform: a web-based tool and suite of administrative and management services that help program managers accept applications from innovators, process evaluations from reviewers, and obtain data on operations of his or her program. Platforms can be out-of-the-box (i.e., pre-made), configurable, or bespoke (i.e., made to order), hosted internally or built and maintained by an outside provider.

In-House Platform: a bespoke application intake and evaluation platform that is built, maintained, and hosted internally by the program sponsor.

Awards Management Platform: a web-based tool and suite of administrative and management services that help program managers monitor the activities of awardees, accept Performance Management Plans (PMPs), chart milestones against a calendar, enable communication between the awards manager and awardees, post public-facing communications, and distribute funding and acceleration services based on milestones.

Third Party Solution Provider: an external provider of an application-intake and evaluation platform, as well as a host of other value-added services that can be added via packages or an a la carte basis, such as access to a pool of solvers, competition design expertise, outreach support and communications and social media integration, crowd-sourcing and collaborative activities, judging, awards management, and intellectual property frameworks

In some situations, a program manager might opt to take the platform used for application acceptance and evaluation and roll it into an awards management platform. Alternatively, a program manager may use a separate platform for awards management, or manage awardee data manually. This document primarily addresses platforms for application acceptance and evaluation processes but potential synergies with awards management platform features are noted throughout the discussion.

CRITICAL CONSIDERATION

Some application acceptance and evaluation platform arrangements can offer awards management services once winners have been selected and awards are ready to be made. In this case, successful applicants are transitioned to awardee status and the platform can be used to upload award agreements, project management reports, chart milestones, and perform M&E activities. Having both awards and management services entails either buying the platform (and all the associated costs and duties that come with maintaining it in perpetuity) or the expense of an ongoing managed service contract. Advance planning and development are needed if the platform is to be transitioned to awards management.

Critical considerations include:

- Regional hosting
- Security of awardee data
- Number of unique log-ins and levels of access for users
- The content of forms to be completed by awardees and how the information will be captured
- Calendar functions and alerts for awardees
- Sharing guidelines and updates with awardees
- Enabling two-way communication between the awardees and awards manager (and potentially other stakeholders like mentors and acceleration partners)
- Data-sharing and publishing
- Reports and analysis
- Community and collaborative forums

Dedicated award management platform providers also exist, but regardless of the provider, when committing to a platform for the duration of your program, it is important to feel comfortable with the platform and the services from the provider.

WHAT IS A PLATFORM PROVIDER?

A platform provider is a company that hosts, builds (or has built), maintains, and moderates an application and evaluation platform. A thorough discussion of the kinds of platform providers and how to select one can be found in the Choosing a Platform Provider section below. In brief, platform providers offer a range of services from "out-of-the-box" or pre-made to "completely bespoke" or made-to-order platforms. While some providers may offer features such as collaborative tools for public discussion and idea sharing, such tools are generally not designed for active recruiting or other activities specific to an innovation program. Depending on the program team needs, budget, and procurement process, services can be purchased a la carte or as part of a bundle.

Services are likely to include:

- Platform hosting
- Platform design advice and consulting services
- Data collection and reporting

- Moderation services
- Simple communication tools (most often email blasts)
- Crowdsourcing and collaborative forums (as well as accompanying moderation)

Pros: In engaging a platform provider, the team retains control of communications and outreach strategy and pays only for platform hosting services. The provider has a proven track record of building platforms, expediting the development of a platform for the team. A managed service provides the team with complete control of your platform's design.

Cons: A platform provider provides limited services (i.e., hosting and designing the platform). In other words, a platform provider will not provide some of the value-added services of a third party solution provider, such as reaching a built-in or specialized audience or outsourcing some of the management effort associated with running a prize (see below).

Some well-known platform providers include Chaordix, Skild, Lybba, Good Done Great, WizHive, and Department of Better Technology. A more extensive list is available in the Resources and References section of this document.

WHAT IS A THIRD PARTY SOLUTION PROVIDER?

A third party solution provider offers an array of services for competitions in addition to the platform. Depending on needs, budget, and procurement process, services can be purchased a la carte or as part of a bundle.

- Services are likely to include:
- Problem-framing and design (e.g., advising on content, weighting, incentives, timelines)
- Crowdsourcing and collaborative forums (as well as accompanying moderation)
- Access to a pool of internal solvers who have registered with the third party solution provider and are avidly interested in being applicants in grant and prize competitions
- Communications and outreach services to recruit solvers
- Advice or a framework to manage intellectual property
- Awards management

Pros: Third party solution providers can be particularly useful when trying to reach a built-in or specialized audience or if trying to defray some of the management effort associated with running a competition or prize.

Cons: Third party solution providers' services are most often associated with prize competitions. Their platform and open innovation services can be relatively one-size-fits all.

- Their lists of potential solvers and internal solver community tend to be specific to a technical area or skill set and from the Global North.
- Although they offer communications and outreach services, these should be considered supplemental to the overarching communications strategy that the program team develops independently.
- Although they have some internal communications experts, because they are hosting numerous competitions, your team's competition will not receive the same priority treatment it will get from a dedicated communications team.
- They lack a business model that allows for awards management.

Some well-known third party solution providers include InnoCentive, NineSigma, Student Competitions/Sqore, VERB, OpenIDEO, TopCoder, Ashoka Changemakers, and Innovation Exchange. A more extensive list is available in the Resources and References section.

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

A third party solution provider offers an array of services for competitions in addition to the platform. Depending on needs, budget, and procurement process, services can be purchased a la carte or as part of a bundle. An extensive list of third party solution providers is included in the Resources and References section.

Establishing the Need for a Platform

Though having a sophisticated online system to assist with accepting and evaluating applications for **your program may be an appealing idea, your program's scale should justify the effort required to design and manage a platform.**

When there is a multi-stage judging process (multiple stages in the competition where applicants are asked to submit new material), applicants are able to submit more than one application, and the anticipated number of applications is over 50 or the number of reviewers is over 20, the program will likely benefit from using a platform with an online system. Such a platform helps to organize the applications, coordinates the judging assignment and scoring process, and assists in collecting data about your program.

For programs with fewer anticipated applications, the time and expense associated with contracting and coordinating with a platform provider may not be warranted. In this case, consider encouraging applicants to submit documents to a dedicated e-mail address or use simple form-based online surveying services such as Google Forms or SurveyMonkey

USER ROLES ON A PLATFORM

When designing an application acceptance platform, it is important to understand who may be using the platform and what functionality will be relevant to them. The team should **start by giving careful thought to the target user profile and how the target user will interact with the platform;** each user role may need a different degree of access, information, or functionality on the platform.

CRITICAL CONSIDERATION

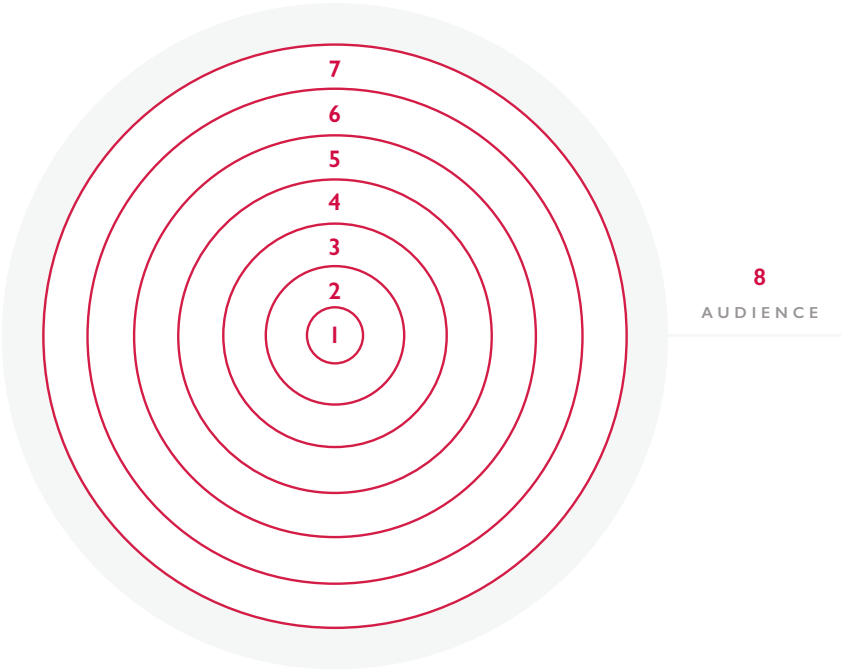
Having external reviewers may require the USAID program team to think about varying levels of access to information and potential procurement sensitivities that need to be planned for during platform design and/or in advance of the application evaluation period.

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

A worksheet on User Roles is provided in the Resources section. This worksheet will help teams identify users to engage via the platform and functionalities and levels of access to offer during each phase of the competition.

Figure 1: User Roles on a Platform shows each of the user groups (designated by circles). Moving toward the center for the circle, the user group obtains a higher degree of access to information on the platform.

FIGURE 1: USER ROLES ON A PLATFORM



1. Super users/overseers: View all platform traffic, manages review process and assignments via the platform. Granted private access.

2. Moderators: View and intercede platform traffic as needed. Notify platform manager / super user / tech support team of user misunderstandings, questions, or platform glitches. Granted private access.

3. Geographic reviewers: Evaluate application merits and feasibility. Program Manager may give their evaluation weight or treat them concerns. Likely to include Mission reviewers. May sponsor an innovation. Granted private access.

4. Technical reviewers: Evaluate and score merits of applications. Granted private access.

5. Eligibility reviewers: Identify whether an applicant is qualified to proceed to evaluation. Granted private access.

6. Applicants: Have one through the registration process and have private access. Can apply for a grant prize.

7. Registrants: Can see or interact with platform. May view questions on a platform but not apply. May participate in community dialogue, voting, comments if sufficient information is submitted.

8. Audence: Sees the public exterior of platform before they consider applying.

ROLES IN AN AWARD MANAGEMENT PHASE

Following the application acceptance and evaluation phase, a program manager **may opt to roll the platform into an awards management platform, use a new platform for awards management, or manage awardee data manually.** In the event that your team is considering awards management features in the platform, additional roles to plan for include:

Awardee: A successful applicant who shares project milestones, budgets, personnel changes, communication updates, etc. with the program manager. They are granted full or private access.

Awards Officer: Oversees a group of awardees from among the entire awardee portfolio. The awards officer may use either the previous application acceptance and evaluation platform or an entirely new platform to enforce project milestones, budgets, personnel changes, communication updates, etc. from awardees. They are granted private access and should have high access privileges.

Program Manager: Implements and evaluates the overall program, across the whole awardee portfolio, conducting M&E for the program and tracking against overall program objectives. In addition to individual awardee data, the program manager sees the overall platform and uses reporting tools to analyze and aggregate program data. They are granted private access and have Super User privileges.

Mentors and Acceleration Partners: Supports and advises awardees. Mentors and acceleration partners are given limited access to their designated awardees' data (e.g., data regarding personnel or project management updates may be restricted). Mentors and Acceleration partners need to be able to review and make suggestions regarding awardee actions, as well as communicate with the awardees, awards managers, and program manager. They are given private access with some restrictions.

Determining Platform Behaviors

When identifying and selecting a platform provider, it is important to determine the behaviors the team wishes to promote with users. Different platform providers (particularly if they are third party solution providers) may offer access to specific potential solvers and collaborators, a particular look and feel, and varied capabilities in terms of engaging key participants, including the general public, entrants, and judges. Platforms are designed to create environments that induce different behaviors and kinds of engagement with other competitors, the public, or judges. There are three key functionality decisions to make regarding how the design of the online environment impacts user behaviors: open or closed, narrow or broad audience, and competitive or collaborative.

OPEN OR CLOSED

Competition platforms make different amounts of information available to users depending on their goals. **Some platforms are closed because their community has come to value anonymity and full protection of intellectual property.** As a result, their processes are run almost in a black box where, once a proposal enters the system there is little communication between applicants and the program manager until awards are announced. These kinds of platforms are especially good at soliciting and protecting the content of highly technical proposals.

Other platforms are much more open, even to the point of allowing the general public to review basic proposal data and to participate in an open voting process. **Open platforms are especially good at building communities around a program and its subject.**

CRITICAL CONSIDERATION

Most of the USAID innovation programs have overwhelmingly preferred keeping the application process closed; most applicants are anonymous until a public announcement of semi-finalist, finalists, or winners. A notable exception is the Powering Agriculture Grand Challenge for Development (GCD), which hosted an online collaborative community forum in hopes that innovators would share ideas with each other at their discretion. These sorts of forums require quite a bit of moderation support, active communication with users, and incentives or a program design that induces applicants to engage with each other. For the amount of effort and expense entailed in hosting the community and communicating with applicants (albeit without strong incentives to publically collaborate), the program manager considered the community forum underutilized and questioned its utility.

NARROW OR BROAD AUDIENCE

Some third party solution providers are highly valued for their deep reach into narrowly focused, expert-led communities. Others specialize in reaching a small but diverse subset of the total audience. When considering a third party solution provider (as well as other communications and outreach strategies to create visibility and momentum), **a program manager should consider whether the provider's network of solvers is relevant to the competition.** In other words, the team cannot assume that its provider will provide a rich network that is right for the goals of the program.

The depth and relevance of a provider's network can help a program manager achieve a competitive pool of highly qualified submissions for consideration. A third party solution provider with a large audience will likely generate more applications from a broader spectrum of solvers. It is not uncommon for high volume, creative cross-disciplinary proposals to produce a dearth of high quality solutions. A third party solution provider with a narrow audience may attract fewer, less creative solutions, but they will likely be of higher quality. Prize competitions almost always attract some "junk" proposals but it is helpful to take whatever steps possible to generate the highest quality proposals possible.

Among third party solution providers, Ashoka Changemakers and OpenIDEO have a reputation for a broader audience, while NineSigma and TopCoder have reputations for a narrower, more technical audience.

It should be noted that, to date, program teams have not selected platform providers on the basis of potential audiences. Instead, programs have built outreach efforts into their own communications strategies in order to reach their target audiences.

COMPETITIVE OR COLLABORATIVE

Certain program design choices will place different levels of emphasis on constructive, iterative processes that can help entrants understand whether the competition is a good fit for their ideas and to improve their competitiveness. There are different types of value and costs associated with competitive and collaborative platforms that should be considered against the program goals.

Collaborative processes and platforms can provide a forum for feedback by allowing users to contact each other, participate in a moderated community forum, or dialogue with the moderators and program manager. Depending on design choices, entrants may have the opportunity to:

- Share insights on the problem and provide feedback on the program design
- Connect with other entrants to combine efforts
- Receive direct mentoring assistance from professionals in the field
- Receive up-front financing (typically in the form of small awards) to advance their ideas or prototypes

Competitive processes and platforms offer little in the way of incentives to collaborate, choosing instead to focus on:

- More rapid decision-cycles
- Creating a safe space to protect participant information and ideas
- Greater stability in team compositions and claims to ideas
- Maintaining cost-savings by not hosting a forum or having to pay staff to encourage and moderate lively and ongoing discussions and enforce community standards of behavior.

Relationship-building associated with collaboration in the open innovation community can be an invaluable benefit to an open innovation program. However, the program team should be aware that **maintaining a collaborative community is difficult and time-consuming.** Quality moderation requires constant vigilance; and cultivating productive, engaging discussions is difficult—particularly among solvers who may harbor fears about their ideas being stolen. Furthermore, some groups of potential solvers are better suited to collaborative processes than others.

The team should consider the potential applicant when making decisions about collaboration incentives and needs. If collaborative processes require a significant change in behavior, sharing information some might consider proprietary, or is an unfamiliar concept to the target audience, collaboration is likely to alienate your innovators.

Most programs have had mixed results with collaborative features in their platforms. The Counter Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) prize hosted an eight-week pre-prize collaboration. The objective of the program was two-fold: build communications momentum and focus the design of the call. Ultimately, the CTIP collaboration goal was more successful at building communications momentum and less successful at refining the call's design because there was insufficient talent and time to turn the conversation into design decisions. Nonetheless, the process was well managed; it used one expert chat per week for 6 weeks as a lead up to the prize launch.

The Desal Prize online Request for Information (RFI) community forum invited and encouraged a community of chemistry, water, desalination, innovation, development, and agriculture experts to participate in a successful 25-day online community discussion. The program manager posted 23 discussion threads and invited comments. The feedback the discussion generated was valuable for USAID and the entrants, but this process required full-time online community management from the program manager as well as a robust communications strategy to recruit and encourage experts to participate in this space.

In other cases, collaborative features were less successful. Examples of less successful features include community discussions (Powering Agriculture) and peer-to-peer messaging (Securing Water for Food). For the level of effort program managers invested in cultivating these features, the functionalities were considered underutilized and offered very little return on investment.

Choosing a Platform Provider

Once the team has decided upon the desired behaviors that the platform should encourage, the team should consider program design, team capacity and the overall program priorities in order to arrive at decisions about a platform provider model and services that meet the team's needs (see *Step 4 Design and Implement Program*). There are three major types of platforms:

- Off-the-shelf/turnkey service
- Configurable service
- Managed service

Discussion about the three types of platforms follows, but first examine *Figure 2: Platform Provider Decision Tree* to identify what platform services might serve your team's program best.

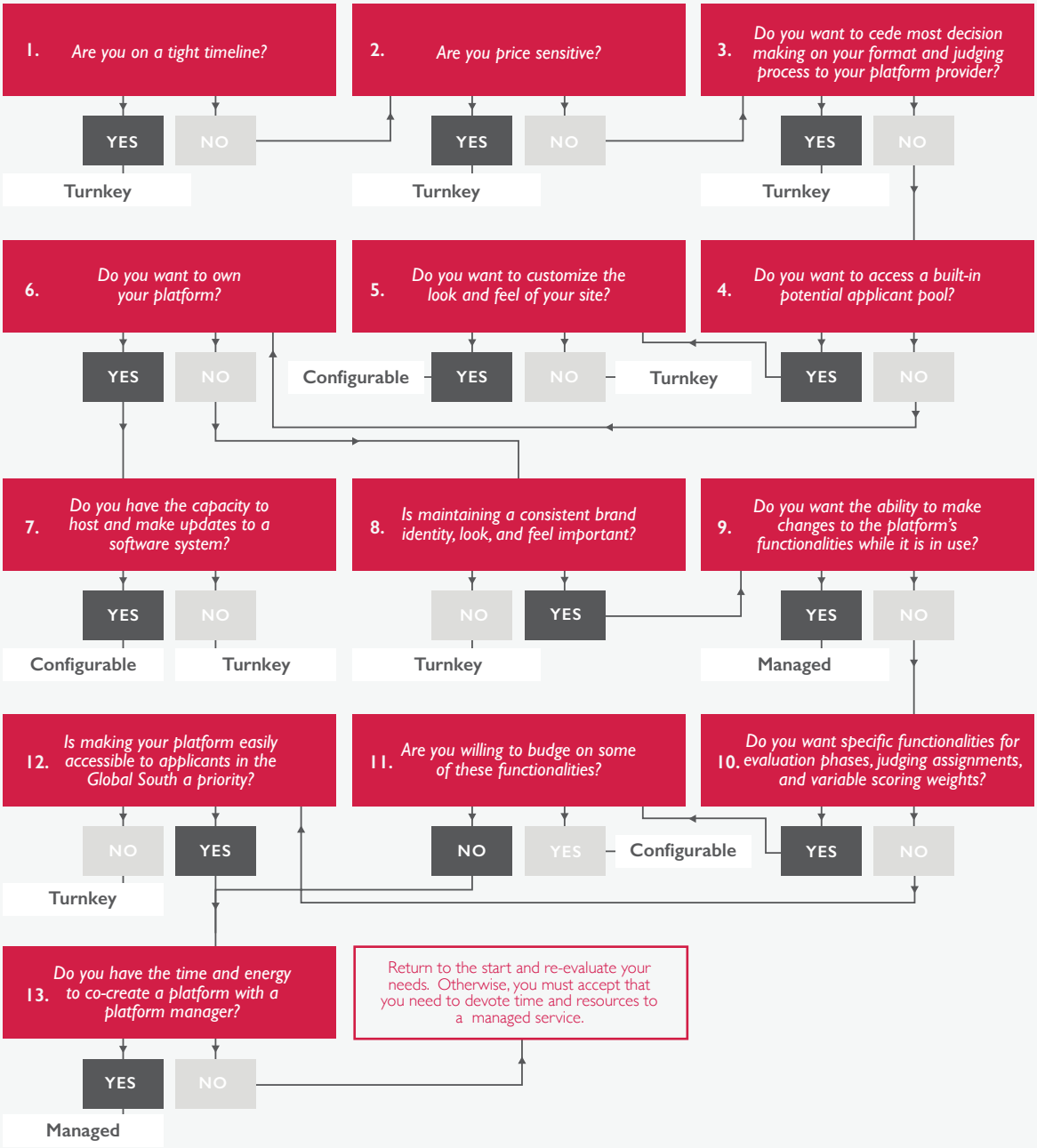
TIP

The three types of platforms offer different degrees of empowerment for the team. In managed service, for example, the team co-designs and creates a unique platform but also takes on responsibility of management. The appointed USAID lead on a managed service platform, the Platform Manager, must actively manage the platform and work closely with the provider to change features of the platform.

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

The Platform Provider Decision Tree is available in the Resources Section. This diagram will guide teams through the decision making process about what type of platform provider is best for their needs.

FIGURE 2: PLATFORM PROVIDER DECISION TREE



OFF-THE-SHELF/TURNKEY SERVICE

Off-the-shelf or turnkey service offers the benefit of a robust, standardized, pre-designed platform. The platform developer can offer a range of the most commonly used functionalities at a lower price-point because they are delivering a generic product with limited technical support. **An off-the-shelf or turnkey platform service, by design, constrains some aspects of program design. While it may be counterintuitive, constraints built into the design can benefit the team by focusing on the most critical aspects of the platform—application acceptance and the judging system.**

For an added fee, third party platform providers can couple a pre-designed and off-the-shelf platform with their in-house program design, communications, and outreach staff, as well as their internal network of solvers.

In light of these factors, **an off-the-shelf service is recommended for prizes in which price is a decisive factor.** In these instances, the program manager is willing to cede the format of the platform's design to the platform provider and plans for gaps in functionality by setting aside resources to meet needs that are outside the agreed upon functionalities.

CONFIGURABLE

With a configurable platform, the team has the ability to customize and mix-and-match a variety of built-in functionalities upfront. **The benefit of a configurable platform service is that it enables a program a greater range of functionalities to select from, builds on economies of scale, and offers the benefit of a robust, standardized platform.** The platform developer offers a range of the most commonly used functionalities at a higher price-point because the product is configurable. Most opportunities to customize must be determined upfront and can only occur within the platform's specific architecture. Customization/configuration can be offered by third party solution providers and (for an added fee) combined with access to their in-house program design, communications, outreach staff, and their internal network of solvers.

CRITICAL CONSIDERATION

Comparing Platform Decisions: All Children Reading Round 2 vs. Saving Lives at Birth Round 4

All Children Reading's (ACR) GCD second round call was designed around two separate funding streams (seed and transition) but the judging process was relatively straightforward. The ACR partners were very price sensitive and did not particularly care about a uniformly branded environment. After comparing Chaordix's managed service and InnoCentive's turnkey service, the team opted to use InnoCentive. The InnoCentive platform has met their needs vis-a-vis price and a streamlined evaluation process.

For their fourth round, Saving Lives at Birth (SL@B) GCD considered whether to continue to contract Chaordix's Managed Service. After deciding that they wanted to vary scoring weights, to operate multiple, simultaneous phases with specific technical reviewers evaluating specific segments of applications, and to have a platform manager take the lead on changing phases and preparing reports, SL@B opted to renew its work with Chaordix in their fourth round. The process has been bumpy. Customizing the platform to meet their needs required a degree of specificity and foresight that the SL@B team was not able to provide at the outset and Chaordix was not always attentive to the program's custom needs. As a result, the design changes needed to reconcile the platform with the SL@B team's vision occurred retroactively. Despite these difficulties, the decision that SL@B made was the right one because a configurable platform could not have provided the degree of customization requested by the SL@B team.

MANAGED SERVICE

Managed service is a process of actively co-creating an application acceptance and evaluation platform where the look and feel, content, method of acceptance, level of access, review assignment, scoring, weighting, and reporting is custom designed. The service provides a set of baseline platform features and functionalities, combined with the ability to do significant customization upfront and mix-and-match of a variety of built-in functionalities. With advance notice and additional fees, it may be possible to negotiate for some unique features.

In the best case scenario, a program manager has ample time to work with a platform manager to discuss and test each component of the platform, the functionalities desired, and the implications and assumptions entailed in each choice. In this ideal situation, the platform manager can advise the program manager on how certain decisions impact the user experience. Together, they draft and agree on a program requirements document and content, which is a detailed description of the content, functionalities, and user roles for the platform spanning the duration of the program.

In practice, the picture is generally more complicated. Because the platform is customized and some features are being created and implemented for the first time, **building the functionalities can take time, and, once built, may not initially work as planned; ample testing is required.**

Even when working with a seasoned platform designer, it is not uncommon for the team to find that communicating the concept of their platform design to the designer challenging. Furthermore, because the platform is built from scratch, the platform manager generally will not "see"/experience the features and functionalities of the platform until right before the platform is scheduled for launch. In these cases, the program manager and the platform provider will need to move quickly to reach a common vision and implement fixes in advance of a deadline. Often exacerbating this stress are the last minute changes to the platform that were not explicit in the initial program requirements document; these can be expensive and delay the launch of a program. **More features can be designed and implemented after launch of a program, but they come at cost.**

Program partners may chafe under the high price tag, high degree of co-creation, and the fact that they do not "own" the platform, but partners may ultimately conclude that they want the creative control and the outsourced technical support that comes with managed service.

CRITICAL CONSIDERATION

Regardless of careful advance preparation, the final design will look different. It is not unusual for a crucial element to be absent from the initial design. Complicating matters, an internal office within USAID may stall on making a necessary clearance. Accepting these hurdles, taking a deep breath, and building some time into your launch schedule and extra money for your platform budget is the only way to productively handle this process.

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

An excerpt from the first round of the "Securing Water for Food Program Requirements document: Concept Note Intake Phase" is provided in the Resources section.

Table 1: Platform Selection Chart provides a comparative analysis of the three types of platforms. Program teams should use this table to guide their decision making process about what type of platform provider best suits their needs.

TABLE 1: PLATFORM SELECTION CHART

	TURNKEY	CONFIGURABLE	MANAGED SERVICE
Cost	$10,000 — $70,000	$40,000 — $80,000	$75,000 — upwards
Time to implement	2-6 weeks	3-10 weeks	10-16 weeks
Level of Effort in Design	Low	Medium	Extremely high
Level of Effort in Implementation	Medium	Medium	High
Server Location & Tech Support	Global North	Global North	Situational
Access to in-house solver network	Yes *(if using a third party solution provider)*	Yes *(if using a third party solution provider)*	No
Add-on management services *(e.g., communications and outreach, eligibility screens)*	Yes	Yes	Yes
Potential for platform ownership	Yes	Yes	No
Customization for branding, look, and feel	No	Some	Yes
Ability to make iterative changes during the program	No	No	Yes *(But Costly)*
Tech support	Limited	Limited	Extensive
Customization of features*	Extremely limited	Some	Extensive
Risk of inability to deliver critical services of design	Low, provided you can work within your constraints	Low, provided you can work within your constraints	High, as there is high degree of flexibility to design
Potential psychic pain	Minimal, provided you can work within your constraints	Moderate, as hitting limits can be frustrating	Large, as the process of active co-creation demands time, patience, an eye for detail, and forgiveness for the inevitably imperfect
Home analogy	A fully-furnished executive apartment.	A suburban subdivision with a strict homeowners association, where you can select the number of rooms, paint color, and whether it is a ranch, Cape Cod, split-level, or Colonial design—so you have some limits on your structure as well as opportunities for creative license and flourish.	A custom house that you built, designed, and decorated in close collaboration with an architect and interior designer—but you only rent the home, you may forget to install the plumbing and have to retroactively add it, and whole edifice may be torn down after you move out.

**Configurable features typically include score weighting, custom reports, complex judging assignments, and application streams (for seed or transition awards) that split and merge across application evaluation phases.*

PURCHASING A STAND-ALONE PLATFORM

After taking into consideration the kinds of customization available in designing a platform, some program managers or teams may consider purchasing a standalone platform for their competition or for a series of related competitions. Some off-the-shelf/turnkey platform providers may be willing to "sell" their platform. While this puts the ownership of the platform in question, such a sell **shifts the burdens of maintenance, hosting, security, technical support, moderation, technical updates, and revisions to the platform owner (here, the program manager).** A stand-alone platform costs $40,000 to $160,000. This price point includes initial design, hosting, and security but not the staff time necessary to moderate and maintain the platform. The benefit of a platform for an entire business unit is that it can capitalize on economies of scale, reduce some of the burdens associated with timing, cost, and program design, and standardize methods and reporting across programs.

CRITICAL CONSIDERATION

Though USAID program teams have considered purchasing a custom, standalone, platform for common use among the open innovation programs, USAID teams have historically decided against the option for two major reasons. First, the variations in program design and application evaluation methods were deemed too many and second, a standard platform was deemed too restrictive. Should the idea of a standard, general platform be revisited, the authors of this Toolkit recommend that a dedicated, in-house staff member, be assigned to host moderation support and oversee the platform. This individual would need to have the technical ability to customize and make updates to the platform. An in-house, configurable platform may range from $250,000-$1,400,000, but the benefit is that it could be used over and over across programs.

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

Under the Powering Agriculture Support Task Order (PASTO) , the USAID GCD team asked implementing partner, Tetra Tech, to issue a solicitation for the development of an Online Platform for the GCD. An excerpt of the solicitation is provided in the Resources section.

Designing the Platform

Once the team decides to implement an application acceptance and evaluation platform and the platform provider has been selected, **the next step for the team is to provide information to the platform developer that will guide the developer in constructing or customizing the platform.** This section will discuss the platform design and implementation process, including:behaviors: open or closed, narrow or broad audience, and competitive or collaborative.

- Platform Design Decisions
- Program Requirements Document
- User Acceptance Testing
- Common Platform Phases

PLATFORM DESIGN DECISIONS

Streamlining the processes for designing a platform, launching application acceptance, and mapping platform activities requires gathering certain information prior to building the platform. Most of the information required for the platform design arises out of choices made in the program design phase (see *Step 4 Design and Implement Program*).

Table 2: Platform Design Considerations below presents the major design considerations the team must take into account in order to select features and activities to include in a platform.

TABLE 2: PLATFORM DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
Interactivity	A decision on the degree of interactivity and collaboration that you would like to incorporate in the platform
Communications	The degree to which you anticipate using the platform to communicate with and send messages to users
Look and feel	Approved branding, fonts, and imagery
Partnerships	Approved logos, logo size, logo placement, websites, and names of partners
User protections	**Privacy policy:** A privacy policy must be included in the platform. It reassures users of the ways that, and limits to, USAID use of their personal information. Approval for this comes from OAA and General Counsel. **Terms and Conditions:** This policy provides guidance on how the website will interact with users and how users will interact with each other. This is a must for websites using collaborative features. Approval for this comes from OAA and General Counsel. **Security Level and Requirements:** This policy states how the information, platform and server is secured against viruses, hacking, etc.
Demographic Data to Collect	The information needed, not only for vetting, selection, and program reporting requirements, but also in the design and implementation of an effective communications strategy.
Acceptance method	How will the information be collected? Dropdowns and form-fields (and the amount of text/characters that you will allow in that form field) are recommended, but uploading documents—which are harder to incorporate into reporting—is also an option.
Evaluation questions to ask	What information does an applicant need to provide? What criteria are the judges using for their evaluations?
Application and evaluation structure (funding/ judging streams)	Are applications being branched or "tracked" in any way that would subject them to different evaluation criteria? Are there different review stages that require different user groups, criteria, weighting or access to applicant data? Are judges being grouped in any way where certain kinds of judges ask different questions, need more access, communication tools, or their scores carry more weight? Are judges being assigned applications randomly (round robin) or by particular design? How will judges contact the program manager to identify a conflict of interest and have the application reassigned? What weight will Mission review have in your judging process?
User guidance documents	The Broad Agency Announcement, Request for Applications, or frequently asked questions explaining the motivations of and requirements of the Problem Statement Additional guidelines (lists of low and middle income countries, Office of Foreign Assets Control countries, technical specifications) Forms or templates required for the applicant (budget templates, team agreements) Guidance for users on how to fill out an application (document, webinar, video) Guidance for judges on how to evaluate applications (can be a document, a webinar, a video)

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
Evaluation weights	How are certain evaluation criteria from particular judges being weighed against other criteria?
Reporting	Based on the information collected by your platform, what kinds of analysis will the team undertake? What kinds of reports will be produced? Beyond demographics, what responses, trends, or application data (such as number of partnerships) will help the team to better understand the space in which the program is operating and how to access that space? How do you want to sort and analyze the information from your platform? Who should be able to run reports?
Problem Resolution	How will you resolve technical problems that may be faced by users? If you find discrepancies in data, what systems will be in place for resolutions? What is the process to change 'simple' things (e.g., user access or text edits) or more complicated issues (e.g., design)?

A platform manager can help you think through the above issues and understand how they relate to the functionalities of the platform. Addressing these issues can be time-consuming and will frequently require consultation with the Office of Acquisition and Assistance (OAA), General Counsel (GC), Chief Information Officers (CIOs), or technical experts.

TIP

Engage with OAA, CIO, and technical experts early in your program design and platform formulation process. Invite OAA and GC to participate in the first program design and testing (i.e., User Acceptance Testing (UAT)) meetings. Since these offices will decide on the legality of your application process and will ultimately make some of the first decisions about applicant eligibility, these stakeholders will have strong opinions on both process and usability. Including these offices early in the process and addressing their concerns can create crucial buy-in to your program and prevent delays to the timing and delivery of your platform.

Once design considerations are made, the decisions will be consolidated into a program requirements document. The program requirements document includes the text of evaluation questions and details about what each user can do and see during the application and evaluation processes. The platform developers will use this document as a blueprint to build the platform.

TIP

During both the program requirements and platform building phases, it is strongly recommend that teams use as many shared screens, wireframes, mock-ups, and other forms of visual communications as possible to ensure that the program manager and the platform developers experience the platform in the same way and thus, share a common view of the platform.

Following the platform-building phase, the platform developer and program manager will conduct a User Acceptance Testing (UAT). The UAT tests the look, feel, and functionalities of the website. UAT experiences can vary. For example, with a turnkey platform, the team is constrained by the limits of the pre-design (e.g., content of questions, limited question formatting and judging stream options) to test and make changes. With a managed service platform, testing every unique feature and extensive changes are possible, but can be costly and delay delivery.

CRITICAL CONSIDERATION

Regardless of platform type, UAT is the often the first moment when a program manager is fully interacting with the platform and it can be a jarring experience. Program managers are often surprised to see how their expectations are interpreted by the developers. The best way to minimize surprise and to help implement the program manager's desired changes between UAT and the platform's launch is to utilize the program requirements document; track and log changes to the document throughout the design and development process.

During UAT, the program and platform managers should note fixes to the site and share these changes with the platform development team. The platform manager must communicate these changes to the platform development team so that the team can ensure that the changes are "in scope," meaning they are understood to be part of fulfilling the platform requirements. The team may decide that changes are "out of scope" or not part of the agreed-upon document. "Out of scope" changes may take additional time and expense to implement. While changes can be iterative, most often there is only time for one UAT process prior to a platform's launch. After changes are made to the platform, a Go/No-Go meeting is convened to confirm that the platform is ready to accept applications.

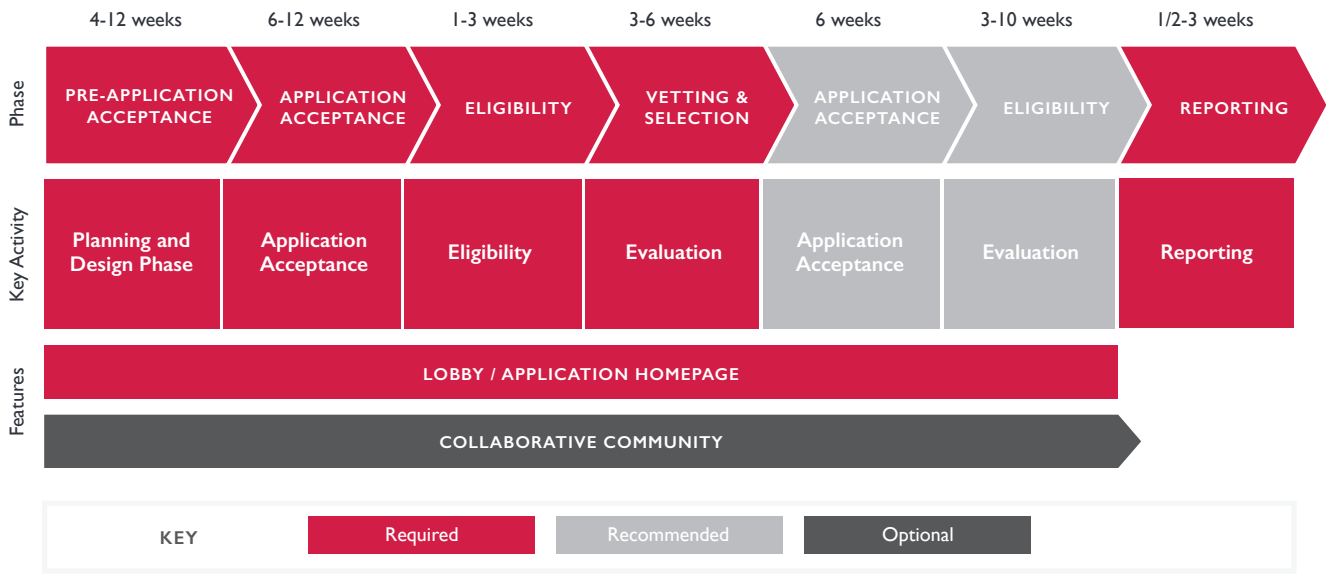
RESOURCES & REFERENCES

An example of a program requirements document and an example of how changes should be logged and tracked are available in the Resources section.

COMMON PLATFORM PHASES

It is the program manager's responsibility to plot the program design against the phases of the platform build, detailing the expected roles of users and the program timeline with milestones. These elements should be captured in the program requirements document. *Figure 3: Common Platform Phases* presents a hypothetical timeline of common platform phases. Every platform timeline will vary based on the resources available and program design decisions.

FIGURE 3: COMMON PLATFORM PHASES



Pre-Application Acceptance Phase

Planning and design phase

This is a 4-12 week iterative process in which the team translates program design goals and evaluation criteria into an online platform requirements document and design plan. The process begins with the first meeting with your platform provider and lasts until the launch date.

- **Key Activities:** Collect, draft, and secure approvals from OAA and General Counsel as they relate to questions vis-a-vis procurement mechanisms, judging, who is eligible to apply, privacy and terms and conditions policies, budgets, and teaming agreements.
- **Integrative Actions:** Design and execute call for solutions and develop a communications strategy with campaign timelines and activities.
- **Illustrative Considerations:** If you are hosting a collaborative community, this is the time to research the discussion questions, recruit members, and design participation incentives.
- **User Groups Engaged:** Super users, high access reviewers.
- **Output:** Platform requirements document and platform design decisions.

Lobby/Application Homepage

A static website that signs users up for relevant communications subscriptions, communicates the Challenge Statement, the topic of the Call for Innovations, how to apply, and when to apply. This is optional and could be provided via a program's website.

- **Key Activities:** Sign users up for relevant communications subscriptions.
- **Integrative Actions:** communications strategy.

- **Illustrative Considerations:** website can offer same functions. This page may change over the course of your program (e.g., from "now accepting applications" to noting that the application acceptance window has closed).

- **User Groups Engaged:** Audience and registrants.

- **Output:** Static website for user sign-up, communicates how to apply and when to apply.

Collaborative Community

A collaborative community is an interactive community that can discuss issues related to the problem and the competition. Cultivating a collaborative community among stakeholders also provides the team with a target for outreach campaigns.

- **Key Activities:** Sign users up for relevant communications subscriptions, engage potential experts and solvers, refine the call and/or potential ideas for solutions, manage expectations about the application content and process.

- **Integrative Actions:** Design and execute Call for Innovations, communications strategy, campaign timelines and activities.

- **Illustrative Considerations:** This is an optional design feature.

- **User Groups Engaged:** Audience, registrants, and moderators.

- **Output:** Interactive community, topical discussions, communicate how to apply, when to apply.

Application Acceptance Phase

Most programs receive the bulk of applications in the last 48 hours. Attentive moderators, platform managers, and program managers should be on hand to manage the spike in activity during that time.

- **Key Activities:** Applicants upload their proposals into the platform.

- **Integrative Actions:** Execute Call for Innovations, implement communications strategy.

- **Illustrative Considerations:** The team should deliver tutorials advising applicants on the platform and program goals (either via guidance documents or a webinar) and ensure that the tutorials/ instruction have been understood.

- **User Groups Engaged:** Registrants, applicants, moderators, super users.

- **Output:** Platform accepts, uploads, and saves applicant information.

Eligibility Phase

In the "first cut," the program team or others will determine which applicants are eligible to proceed to evaluation. At this point, applicants deemed ineligible will be notified. OAA is usually involved in making these determinations, but the team interns or the platform provider's staff can do this as well.

- **Key Activities:** Review the applications and identify those that meet the requirements (e.g., all necessary documentation, in English, from an OFAC country).

- **Integrative Actions:** Execute Call for Innovations.

- **Illustrative Considerations:** Tutorials/instructions advising reviewers on how to evaluate eligibility based on the platform and program goals (e.g., guidance documents or a webinar) have been delivered and are understood.

- **User Groups Engaged**: Eligibility reviewers, moderators, super user.

- **Output:** Eligible applications advance to the next phase of the competition.

Vetting and Selection Phase

Those evaluating the applications can include technical specialists, innovation and development specialists, commercialization representatives, legal representatives, mission representatives, or partner representatives. By the nature of their individual interests, evaluators may weigh the applications differently. At the same time, it is not unheard of for evaluators from different sectors to weight applications equally. Either way, once ineligible applications are identified, those applicants are notified. Successful applicants are also notified and advance to the next phase.

- **Key Activities:** Judges view assigned applications, flag conflicts of interest, and evaluate applications. The platform manager assigns and re-assigns judges and identifies qualifying applications.

- **Integrative Actions:** Execute Calls for Innovation, communications.

- **Illustrative Considerations:** As mentioned above, not all reviewers may have the same weighting on their scores. The team should deliver clear tutorials for judges on how to use the platform (webinars, documents) and ensure that instructions have been well-received. Some evaluation may take place offline via conference calls and in-person meetings, and may need to be manually uploaded to the platform.

- **User Groups Engaged:** Technical reviewers, moderators, super users.

- **Output:** The platform reflects judging assignments, saves judges scores, and incorporates those scores into the scoring formula.

If the program uses a concept note followed by a full application process, another round of steps plus additional steps apply:

Application Acceptance Phase

Qualified applicants upload additional application materials in support of their proposal.

- **Key Activities:** Qualifying applicants input additional application materials to support their proposal.

- **Integrative Actions:** Design and execute the Call or Innovations, communications.

- **Illustrative Considerations:** The platform should retain information that the applicant previously submitted

in the concept note phase, and allow applicants to revise information if needed. The team should deliver tutorials advising applicants on the platform and program goals (either via guidance documents or a webinar) as early as possible to ensure that changes can be made in a timely way.

- **User Groups Engaged:** Applicants, moderators, super users.
- **Output:** The platform accepts, uploads, and saves applicant information.

Evaluation Phase

Judges/evaluators can include technical specialists, innovation and development specialists, commercialization representatives, legal representatives, mission representatives, or partner representatives. Applicants deemed unqualified are notified. Successful applicants are notified also.

- **Key Activities:** Judges view assigned applications, flag conflicts of interest, and evaluate applications. The platform manager assigns and re-assigns judges and identifies qualifying applications.
- **Integrative Actions:** Design and execute calls for solutions, manage awards and accelerate innovations, communications.
- **Illustrative Considerations:** Due to program design goals, and the interests of the judges, not all reviewers may see the same application information or have the same weighting on their scores. The team should deliver tutorials for judges on how to use the platform (webinars, documents) and ensure that judges understand the information. In addition, some evaluation may take place offline via conference calls or in-person meetings. Off-line evaluations may need to be manually uploaded.
- **User Groups Engaged:** Technical reviewers, Mission reviewers, moderators, super users.
- **Output:** The platform reflects judging assignments, saves judges scores, and incorporates those scores into the scoring formula.

Reporting Phase

Following the conclusion of a phase and at the conclusion of the evaluation, the program manager may want to run reports/analysis to assess trends within the program (e.g., judging and applications).

- **Key Activities:** The super user and platform provider work together to define and run the reports necessary for a program's stakeholders, communications strategy, and to provide feedback to applicants.
- **Integrative Actions:** Communications, manage awards and acceleration innovations, evaluate program.
- **Illustrative Considerations:** Upfront planning with the platform manager will help your program capture the necessary data. Also, some assessment of whether you would like raw data or some early filters and assessments is worth considering.
- **User Groups Engaged:** Super users and occasionally high access reviewers (OAA) if they providing applicants with feedback.
- **Output:** Reports on the applicants, evaluations, demographics, and other program trends from the platform.

Communications and Platforms

A platform is a useful complement to the communications strategy. To ensure that your team fully benefits from the opportunities that the platform offers in connecting the team to its target audience(s), work closely with the communications team members in each of the following areas.

LOOK, FEEL, & BRANDING

It is critical that you apply the same branding and style throughout the platform that you are using for your campaign-driven communication strategy. Branding and style elements include the color palette, fonts, iconography or graphics, and logos used in program materials. Consistent branding will ensure that the platform matches other branding and communications collateral. Note that custom branding/style may not be possible with turnkey service and as a result the platform may not look consistent with program branding.

LOBBY/APPLICATION HOMEPAGE

This page features a clear call to action, information about the program goals, and opportunities to remain engaged with the program. It should be updated to include new details as they emerge, such as when the application process will close or when finalists are announced. Information for the platform's e-newsletter subscription sign-up, social media widgets, etc. should also be consistent with other communications language and collateral.

GUIDANCE ON HOW TO USE THE PLATFORM

A webinar or video describing how to use the platform offers another opportunity to inform solvers of how program staff wants users to interact with the platform and that the team is attentive to their concerns and invested in their success. Promoting the webinar is a major social media opportunity, though it requires careful planning, allocated labor, and resources.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH PLATFORM USERS

The platform will have messaging abilities that enable the program manager and communications teams to send general updates. For example, the team may send updates that encourage applicants to complete their applications, send reminders to applicants and/or community members about upcoming deadlines, or push relevant program messages.

A platform can communicate with users and applicants based on their user role or other data types collected by the platform. A platform can facilitate targeted communication and custom messaging based on whether a user is registered as an applicant, selected as a semi-finalist, finalist, or winner; or based on technical focus area or program phase.

If the platform has community environments, a platform can be setup to notify users when someone has posted in a subject area or to a discussion thread that interests them. If your team has allocated program resources, such as a communications staff member, then it is also possible to sort users by activity and use the platform's internal e-mail system (or export contact information to a communications service such as Constant Contact, MailChimp, or Salesforce) to encourage less active community members to participate or praise active participants for their contributions.

A SOURCE OF COMMUNICATIONS OPPORTUNITIES

Details about platform users, such as the number of applicants, demographic details like the percent of applicants who are women or are from developing countries, the topics being addressed by applicants, or the number of interactions among applicants should be analyzable through collection of the platform data. The platform offers a rich data source to mine, in assessing the success of the program, including the results of communications efforts through user segmentation, identifying potential gaps in the targeted audience, making course corrections on campaign activities (e.g., focus on global South applicants, academic participants) and communicating with audiences outside the platform users. For example, the platform can offer general profiles and trends about applicants, track progress of applicants, and characterize the nature of platform interactions (if this is part of your design). If agreed upon by General Counsel and the applicant, the team may also be able to share positive judging feedback and proposal debriefs publicly through the platform.

If you are using a collaborative community approach, such as the Desal Prize's online Request for Information, there are opportunities to highlight high-value participants, insightful discussions, "hot topics," areas of consensus, or surprising findings. Promoting public voting or collaboration opportunities on applications are also possibilities if you have opted to include those functionalities.

TIP

Connect the Platform to the Communication Strategy

The SWFF, SL@B, ACR, and Desal platforms have included questions asking applicants how they learned about the competition. Data from these questions helps the communications team better pinpoint what tactics have been most successful in driving high-quality innovators to apply.

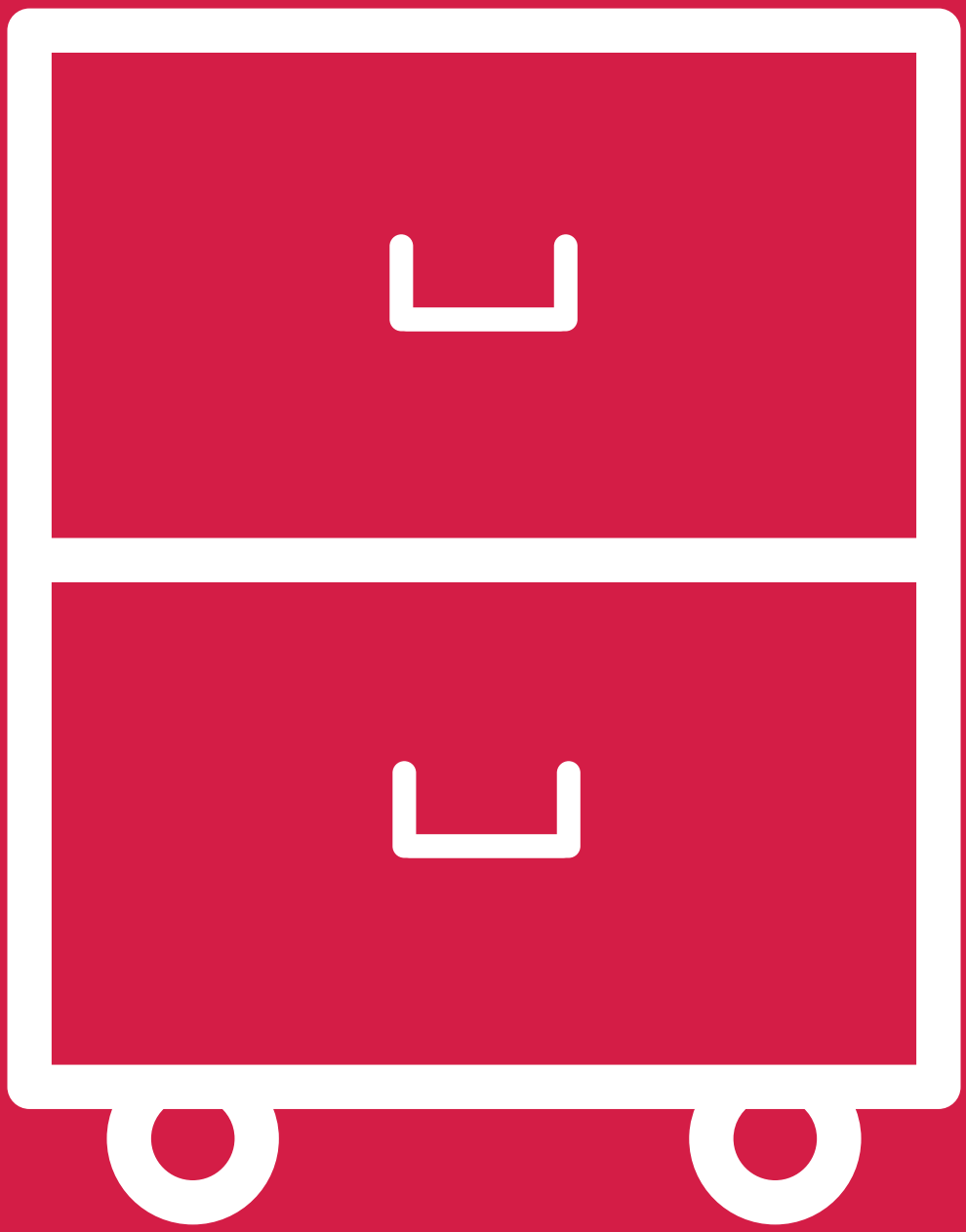
While access to most of these services is consistent across platform service types, only third party solution providers offer additional communications and outreach that extend beyond the platform.

Third party solution providers can use their own communications apparatus to feature competitions to their solver pool (via email or newsletters), as well as directly contacting potential solver communities, such as universities, incubators, businesses, research scientists, and professional societies. The services of third party solution providers may also include assistance in branding, developing fact sheets, press releases, social media outreach (including developing pages, handles, and content for pages), fliers, and placing articles in blogs.

Although these kinds of communications assistance activities may lift some burden from a team's outreach staff, there is no substitute for an overarching communications strategy. The goals of the team are different from those of any provider. The provider's goal is to position themselves as an open innovation thought leader and to position your program as the means to innovation. This stands in contrast to the program team's goal of incentivizing solutions to solve a critical challenge. Only the program team can create a communications strategy to promote the program's goals.

TIP

While a third party solution provider can assist in reaching out to solvers and media it is not a substitute for a communications strategy! The prize or grant competition will never have the third party solution providers' complete attention—nor will it be featured in a consistent, prominent way in their communications efforts.



Resources & References

Resources

- Third Party Platform Providers
- Securing Water for Food Program Requirements document: Concept Note Intake Phase
- User Roles on a Platform
- Platform Provider Decision Tree
- Powering Agriculture Support Task Order (PASTO) solicitation for the development of an Online Platform for the GCD
- Platform Changes Log

References

- Program Requirements Documents for Securing Water for Food Platform, Securing Water for Food Desal Prize Platform, Saving Lives at Birth Platform

Third Party Platform Providers

PROVIDER	TYPE OF SERVICE
Chaordix	Platform provider, crowd sourcing
Context Partners	Platform advisor
Skild	Platform provider, competitions
NineSigma	Platform advisor, open innovation, competitions
Innocentive	Platform provider, competitions
iStrategy Lab	Platform provider and advisor
IdeaScale	Platform provider
Synteractive - Social Ral	Platform provider and advisor
Yet2.com	Platform provider
XenoPSI	Platform provider

CONTENT-SPECIFIC PROVIDERS	TYPE OF SERVICE
X Prize	Prize platform
Verb	Prize and open innovation platform
WhizHive	Open innovation platform
Department of Better Technology	Open innovation platform
Architecture for Humanity	Open innovation platform
Health 2.0 Developer Challenge	Software for government, competitions
Inveneo	Platform advisor, design
Challenge.gov	Health challenge platform
ClimateCoLab	Computing and broadband provider
Good	Government competition platform
IdeaBounty	Environmental competition platform
IdeaConnection	Social good platform
Innovation Exchange	Platform for creative ideas
NetSquared	Platform for companies
Quirky	Platform for business innovation

CONTENT-SPECIFIC PROVIDERS	TYPE OF SERVICE
StudentCompetitions/Sqore	Platform for students/job-seekers, competitions
Top Coder	Development, design, and data science platform
TechMATCH	Platform for innovation evaluation
NationBuilder	Platform provider, integrated website and social media services
Fluxx & NetSuite	Grants Management Platform
FoundationConnect (Exponent Partners)	Grants Management Platform
Altum	Grants Management Platform
Good Done Great	Grants Management Platform
SmartSimple Grants	Grants Management Platform
Blackbaud	Grants Management Platform
MicroEdge Gifts Online	Grants Management Platform
Intelliware	Grants Management Platform
T4G	Grants Management Platform
Bonfire	Grants Management Platform

Securing Water for Food Program Requirements Document: Concept Note Intake Phase

CONCEPT NOTE INTAKE

Phase Overview

This phase is designed for the prospective applicants to create their user profile, fill out the necessary demographic information and complete their initial concept note submission.

Design Note

The names of the phases that will be displayed in the platform are as follows:

- Concept Note Intake
- Eligibility Screen I
- Eligibility Screen II
- Concept Note Application Review
- Full Application Intake **by invitation only*
- Full Application Review
- In-Person Interviews **by invitation only*

Workshop Session Notes

Applicant

- The platform will provide an area for a clear and concise description of the task at hand to the applicant, as well as supporting verbiage around what the next steps are and how to find acquire support.
- Applicants will have the ability to preview their application prior to submission.
- The applicant's dashboard will outline the details of the phase
- The amount of time left to complete submission before phase close
- The percentage of pages left to complete their submission.
- List of applications, in both a draft and submitted status
- The applicant will have the ability to view other profiles from users that have registered in the community
- The applicant will have the ability to opt -in/-out to being listed on this page.
- The name of the organization and their technical focus area will be visible.
- The leader board will be designed to allow all applicants to view who else has started an application in the platform; enabling them to facilitate in-platform communication, with each other, to strengthen their application for consideration. This implies:

    that the list will need to be in a paginated view;
    the applicants will be listed in alphabetical order by the name of the organization (default sorting order);

- The applicants will be able to be sorted by:

  Organization Name
  Technical Focus Area
  Country of Implementation.

This will allow the users to communicate with each other, through the platform.

Disclaimer to be listed on the site: *"All direct messages made on the Securing Water for Food site will be private, and will not be accessible by other applicants unless expressly directed to them. Applicants are responsible for the information shared through direct messaging; USAID and partners are not liable for any information shared voluntarily and are not responsible for the product and / or outcomes of these conversations."*

This phase will not require the applicant to upload any supporting documentation.

High Access Reviewer
The dashboard will outline the number of drafts saved vs. applications submitted

Super User

- Will have the ability to move a saved draft into submitted status.
- The dashboard will outline the number of drafts saved vs. applications submitted
- Will have the ability to create emails to send messages to users in the platform; this allows for them to create drafts, schedule them in advance and modify previously created email drafts
- Will have the ability to edit the end date of a phase.
- Will be able to see the number of active sessions (users online), to be facilitated via access to Google Analytics.

Technical Requirements

- The platform will provide a warning to the active user that they are approaching the specified window of session inactivity

  In clicking on the associated window / dialogue box, this will renew the user's active session.
  Set the session timeout window to 2 hours.
  In the event the user reaches the inactivity session timeout, the platform will automatically save the draft of the application.

Customized Side bar per group role:
Applicant

- Contact information for support and questions
- Links to supplementary material
- RFA (.pdf format)

- Barrier Analyses
- SWFF FAQs
- All marked applicant form fields are to be required;
- Error checking is required to prevent application submissions without all fields completed.
- Even after submission, applicants can go back and edit their submissions at any time prior to the end of the phase.
- All questions that ask the applicant to reply in a text field (free form) will require a minimum of 50 characters in length, in order to determine if the field has sufficient data to be considered complete.

User Registration Requirements

As a user registers they will be required to accept the following disclaimer: "I have read the following disclaimer and would like to proceed with submitting an application for funding. I understand that the Securing Water for Food Online Application platform is maintained by Chaordix who is a subcontractor of Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI), a contractor of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)."

Basic Platform Requirements

- Ensure that the platform is mobile responsive (i.e., Tappable for tablets, etc.). This will exclude the backend administrative tools.
- Ensure that there is a proper amalgamation of user roles (i.e., SuperUser + Reviewer + Mentor, etc.). Additional review is required below this point.

Application Form

Profile Information (for the profile of the registered user)

Name of applicant organization. (80 characters). Pease note that individuals are not eligible to apply to this program.

- List the name of the organization applying for funding.

Full address and contact info of applicant organization

- Address 1 (80 characters)
- Address 2 (80 characters)
- Address 3 (80 characters)
- City (80 characters)
- State/Province/Region (80 characters)
- Country - Please note that organizations located in Cuba, Iran, North Korea and Syria are not eligible to apply to this program. (dropdown menu for Appendix B for the listing of countries.)
- Organization main phone number
- Type of organization

Select which one applies (dropdown)

- [ ] For-profit
- [ ] Non-profit
- [ ] Research Institution

- [ ] Bilateral Partnership
- [ ] Consortium (three or more organizations)
- [ ] Other: Please specify (text field)

Size of organization (for partnerships and consortiums, list the combined total)
Select which one applies (dropdown)

- [ ] 0 – 10 people
- [ ] 11 – 50 people
- [ ] 51 – 200 people
- [ ] Over 200 people

Point of Contact
This person is responsible for the submission of the application. This contact can be different from the Project Manager.

- First Name (80 characters)
- Last Name (80 characters)
- Email address (80 characters)
- Phone number (20 characters)
- Fax number (20 characters)

Technical focus area
Check all that apply.

- [ ] Improving Water Efficiency and Reusing Wastewater.
- [ ] Innovative Water Capture and Storage Systems.
- [ ] Salinity.

Country of implementation
Any programs are to be implemented in Cuba, Iran, North Korea and Syria are not eligible to apply to this program.
Select all that apply (See Appendix A for the country listing)

JOIN THE COMMUNITY

The Securing Water for Food Program is sharing your information to promote collaboration between applicants. By checking this box you are agreeing to share the Name of your Organization, Technical Focus Area and Country of Implementation. Please note that joining this community is optional.
Select one.

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

APPLICATION OVERVIEW INFORMATION

1. Project Manager

List the Project Manager for the project, as they will be the main point of contact for this application moving forward. Note that where joint partnerships include innovators from low- and middle-income countries, we encourage the partnership to designate the low- and middle-income country partner as the Project Manager.

- Same as Main point of contact [ ]
- First Name (80 characters)
- Last Name (80 characters)
- Email address (80 characters)
- Phone number (20 characters)
- Fax number (20 characters)

Technical focus area

Check all that apply.

- [ ] Improving Water Efficiency and Reusing Wastewater
- [ ] Innovative Water Capture and Storage Systems
- [ ] Salinity

2. Stage applying to

Check one or dropdown, whichever easier

- [ ] Stage 1 – Validation
- [ ] Stage 2 – Commercial Growth

3. Type of innovation

Check one or dropdown, whichever easier

- [ ] Business
- [ ] Technical
- [ ] Both

4. Percentage of the team working on this innovation is women?

Team is defined as the organization/consortium's key operational executives (not including Board members). Select one from dropdown.

- 0-10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 41-50%
- 51-60%
- 61-70%
- 71-80%
- 81-90%
- 91-100%

5. Have you applied for funding from USAID in the past?
Check one or dropdown, whichever easier: Yes/No

6. Have you applied for funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency in the past?
Check one or dropdown, whichever easier: Yes/No

7. Have you applied for funding from the Foreign Ministry of the Netherlands in the past?
Check one or dropdown, whichever easier: Yes/No

8. Do you currently have an application pending with one of the Founding Partners for this innovation?
Select which one applies:

- [ ] No
- [ ] Yes

If yes, whom? Be as specific as possible.

9. Have you received funding from any donors in the last 5 years for this innovation?
This does not include private investment. If you answer, "Yes" to this question, please answer question 10 and 11.
Check one or dropdown, whichever easier: Yes/No

10. From whom? (only if they check yes) This question only applies to people who said "Yes" to question 9.

- Governmental
- Inter-government
- Non governmental
- Foundation
- Private Sector
- Text box to name the specific organization(s). Be as specific as possible

11. How much funding have you received for this innovation? This does not include private investment. This question only applies to people who said "Yes" to question 9.

- 0-$10,000
- $10,001 - $100,000
- $100,001-$1,000,000
- Over $1,000,000

12. Where did you get information about SWFF: (with a dropdown of the following and text box that pops up with other).

- World Water Week
- Other Conference
- News Article or Television Interview

- USAID Website
- SIDA Website
- Netherlands Website
- Personal Phone Call or Email
- Twitter
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Web Browser Search
- Advertisement

13. Why did you apply for SWFF: (select all that apply):

- Funding
- Networks
- Technical Assistance
- Profile
- Other (text box)

14. Did you participate in a webinar?
Select which one applies

- [ ] No
- [ ] Yes

15. Do you think the webinar helped you improve your application?
Select which one applies

- [ ] No
- [ ] Yes

APPLICATION TECHNICAL INFORMATION

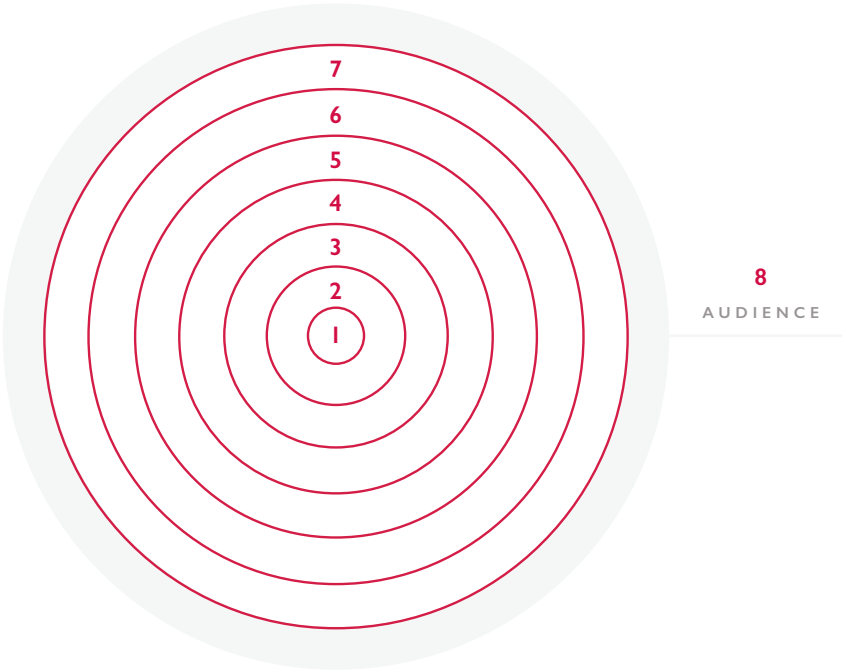
- 9-12 questions of free entry text to be finalized end Oct.
- These questions will be free form (text box) with character limitations between 500 – 2000 characters, which will be defined when the questions themselves are finalized.

SUMMARY

- Preview Application
- Save Draft
- Submit Application

USER ROLES ON A PLATFORM

This worksheet will help you to think through what users you will be engaging via your platform when they are active on the platform, and functionalities and levels of access you might want to offer them during each phase of your challenge. The figure below shows each of the user groups (designated by circles). As you move toward the center for the circle, the user group obtains a higher degree of access to information on the platform.



1. Super users/overseers: View all platform traffic, manages review process and assignments via the platform. Granted private access.

2. Moderators: View and intercede platform traffic as needed. Notify platform manager / super user / tech support team of user misunderstandings, questions, or platform glitches. Granted private access.

3. Geographic reviewers: Evaluate application merits and feasibility. Program Manager may give their evaluation weight or treat them concerns. Likely to include Mission reviewers. May sponsor an innovation. Granted private access.

4. Technical reviewers: Evaluate and score merits of applications. Granted private access.

5. Eligibility reviewers: Identify whether an applicant is qualified to proceed to evaluation. Granted private access.

6. Applicants: Have one through the registration process and have private access. Can apply for a grant prize.

7. Registrants: Can see or interact with platform. May view questions on a platform but not apply. May participate in community dialogue, voting, comments if sufficient information is submitted.

8. Audence: Sees the public exterior of platform before they consider applying.

When designing an application acceptance platform, it is important to understand who may be using the platform and what functionality will be relevant to them. Start by thinking through the target users and how they will interact with the platform; each user role may need a different degree of access, information, or functionality on the platform.

NAME	ACCESS	ACTIVE PHASE	DESCRIPTION	FUNCTIONALITIES
Audience	Public	All phases	Sees the public exterior of your platform—perhaps only your communications materials and description of the competition—before they consider applying. They are passive observers.	• Views content • Registers for a news letter
Registrants	Private	Application acceptance, responding to judges' comments	Register to see and interact with some of the features of the platform. They may register to see the required questions on a platform, but may not submit an application. If hosting a community exercise, then they have submitted enough information to participate in community dialogue, up/down voting comments, etc.	• Register for newsletter • Input personal information • See Guidance documents on guidelines for applying, • Access to tech and moderation support, • Upload, input, or select answers to application questions, • Save, change, and submit those answers, • View timelines notifying them of where they are in the process of submitting information, and where they are in the evaluation process, • Receive communications from the program manager (and, if part of the competition design, other applicants and/or the judges).
Applicants	Private	Application acceptance	Submit the information necessary to apply for an award or prize. They have gone through the registration process.	• See Guidance documents on guidelines for applying, • Access tech and moderation support, • Upload, input, or select answers to application questions, • Save, change, and submit those answers, • View timelines notifying them of where they are in the process of submitting information, and where they are in the evaluation process, • Receive communications from the program manager (and, if part of the competition design, other applicants and/or the judges).
Eligibility Reviewers	Private	Eligibility	Identify whether an applicant is qualified to proceed to evaluation.	• View documents with guidelines for eligibility and the program goals, access to tech and moderation support, • View assigned applications, • Input, or select answers to eligibility scores, • Flag a conflict of interests, • Comment on applications • See a timeline of where they are in the process of submitting information for a single review, • See aa timeline of where they are in the entire evaluation process, • Communicate with the program manager (and, if part of the program design, other eligibility reviewers).

NAME	ACCESS	ACTIVE PHASE	DESCRIPTION	FUNCTIONALITIES
Technical Reviewers	Private	Technical reviewer	Evaluate the merits of applications and score them accordingly.	• See documents with guidelines for evaluation and the program goals, access to tech and moderation support, • View assigned applications (either in aggregate or individually), • Flag a conflict of interests, • Input or select answers to evaluation criteria, • Save those answers, change those answers, • Submit those answers, pose custom questions to applicants, • Comment on applicants • See a timeline notifying them of where they are in the process of submitting information, • See a timeline notifying them about where they are in the evaluation process, • Communicate with the program manager (and, if part of the program design, other technical reviewers).
Mission Reviewers	Private	Mission Review	Evaluate the merits of applications and determine if the proposed innovation might be feasible in the context in which the applicant intends to stage the project. A program manager may decide to give the decisions of mission reviewers weight on whether applications advance, or may simply register their concerns. Sometimes Mission reviewers signal a willingness to sponsor an innovation themselves.	• See documents with guidelines for evaluation and the program goals, access to tech and moderation support, • View assigned applications (either in aggregate or individually), • Input or select answers to evaluation criteria, flag a conflict of interests, • Comment on applications • Save those answers, change those answers, • Use a more limited set of evaluation options where they simply note whether this idea is worth advancing or would be feasible in the local context, • A timeline notifying them of where they are in the process of submitting information vis-a-vis a single application, • A timeline notifying them about where they are in the evaluation process, • The ability to communicate with the program manager (and, if part of the program design, other Mission reviewers).
Moderators	Private	All Phases	View and intercede as needed in the traffic of the platform. In a community discussion context, the moderator will stimulate conversations, encourage positive interactions, and correct or shut down negative interactions. To do so, the moderator should see what users are doing on the platform, and have the ability to communicate with them publicly and privately. In an application acceptance or evaluation process, the moderator assists applicants and judges to perform their functions by performing initial tech support. The moderator also flags to the platform manager/super user/tech support team frequent misunderstandings, questions, or glitches.	• Initiate messages to users • Respond to users' questions publicly and privately • Send messages to users • Flag, censor, or delete content • Elevate or descend content • Real-time view of platform and user activities • Award privileges • View user profiles • View user applications or evaluation forms • Interface with platform manager and tech development team

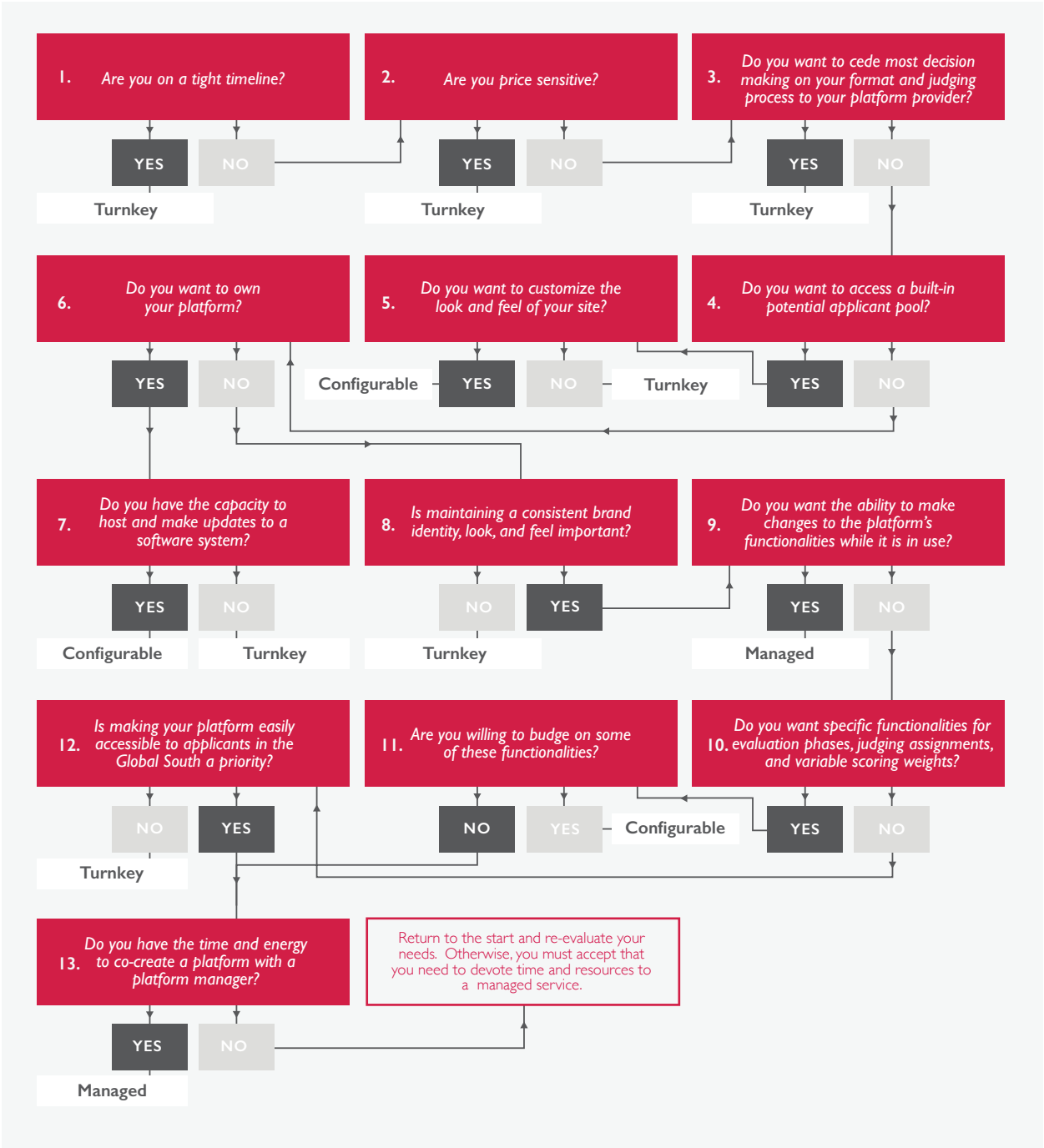
NAME	ACCESS	ACTIVE PHASE	DESCRIPTION	FUNCTIONALITIES
Super Users / Overseers	Private	All Phases	View all traffic occurring on the platform and manages the review process and assignments via the platform	• View all traffic on platform in real time • Perform reviews • Assign reviews • View and resolve conflicts of interest • Run reports • See a timeline of how much time remains in the phase, • See a timeline with the level of completion of individual applications • See a timeline with the level of completion of reviews • Start, close, and change program phases • Sort applications by organization, project title, application ID, or theme • Send messages to individuals and groups • Block or deny access to reviewers

Following the application acceptance and evaluation process, a program manager might opt to roll the platform into an awards management platform, use a new platform for awards management, or manage awardee data manually. In the event that you are considering awards management features, here are some additional roles:

NAME	ACCESS	ACTIVE PHASE	DESCRIPTION	FUNCTIONALITIES
Awardees	Private	Awards phase	Share project milestones, budgets, personnel changes, communication updates, etc. with the program manager.	• If using the application acceptance platform, rely on previously inputted contact information, budgets, personnel information, timelines, M&E updates, etc. • If using a new platform, upload this information, • View documents with guidelines for budgets, procurement, program milestones, tranched funding, calendars, and other USAID expectations for awardees, • See a timeline notifying where they are in the process of submitting deliverables, • Upload or input deliverables privately or publicly, • Upload or input communications and updates privately or publicly, • Save responses or draft reports of deliverables, • Communicate with other awardees and the awards officer,
Awards managers	Private	Awards phase	Oversee awardees. The awards officer may use either the previous application acceptance and evaluation platform (in which case they should have High Access privileges).	• If using the application acceptance platform, port previously inputted contact information, budgets, personnel information, timelines, etc. • If using a new platform, upload this information, • Upload documents with guidelines for budgets, procurement, program milestones, tranches funding, calendars, and other USAID expectations for awardees, • See a timeline notifying them of where awardees are in the process of submitting deliverables, • Receive alerts of awardees who are delinquent in submitting deliverables, • Receive alerts when deliverables are incomplete, • Share awardee deliverables and communications in a public-facing format, • Save responses or draft reports of deliverables, • Communicate with awardees and evaluators

In some cases there are hybrids of these roles. For example, a high access reviewer might be able to see traffic on the platform and send message, but cannot advance a phase or change someone else's evaluation. A member of the audience can become a registrant, then an applicant, and, if selected, an awardee.

Platform Provider Decision Tree



Powering Agriculture Support Task Order (PASTO) Solicitation for the Development of an Online Platform

Under the Powering Agriculture Support Task Order (PASTO), the USAID GCD team asked implementing partner, Tetra Tech, to issue a solicitation for the development of an Online Platform for the GCD.

Attachment A:
Technical Specification

Tetra Tech is seeking a firm to provide an online platform to support a grant application and review process for the USAID Powering Agriculture: An Energy Grand Challenge (PAEGC) for Development. See www.poweringag.com for more information.

PAEGC is one of five Grand Challenges for Development (GCD) to which USAID and a cadre of government/non-government/private-sector partners support through financial and in-kind contributions. Through the GCD initiative, USAID and its Partners focus on defining problems, identifying constraints, and providing evidence-based analysis for a variety of development issues. The individual GCDs are aligned with specific development sectors and associated development problems. PAEGC is specifically targeted at funding the competition component of this GCD, designed to address barriers to increasing access to clean energy services within the agriculture sectors of developing countries.

The GCD model is designed to focus global attention on specific, narrowly defined international development problems, and to facilitate solving them.[1] Grand Challenges encourage solutions that build on physical and social science research and technological advancements, and engage new actors that might otherwise not receive support through traditional international development programs. Importantly, the model supports solutions with the potential to achieve scale in low resource settings by, among other things, leveraging commercial investment and financing.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Government of Sweden, the Government of Germany, Duke Energy Corporation, and the United States Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) have joined together to launch and fund this multiyear Call for Proposals (CFP) for Powering Agriculture: An Energy Grand Challenge for Development. The objective of PAEGC is to support new and sustainable approaches to accelerate the development and deployment of clean energy solutions for increasing agricultural production and value. Such approaches are designed to integrate clean energy technologies and innovative business models to: (i) increase agricultural yields; (ii) decrease post-harvest losses, (iii) enhance farmer and agribusiness income generating activities and revenues; (iv) increase energy efficiency within farms and agribusinesses, and (v) stimulate low carbon local and regional economic growth within the agriculture sector of developing countries. These can involve technology and/or business/market innovations. The first PAEGC solicitation was done last year through a system developed by another vendor. This 2nd solicitation will be based on last year's solicitation as well as another GCD. A new product/ system is required to support this 2nd solicitation and will replace the prior system used. The product/system should be able to handle multiple solicitations as 1 solicitation per year is expected until 2018.

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[1] PAEGC is the third in a series of 5 Grand Challenges for Development that USAID initiated with international partners. The previous two Grand Challenges respectively focus on maternal and newborn health and early-age literacy: (i) "Saving Lives at Birth," and (ii) "All Children Reading." The final two Grand Challenges focus on citizen engagement & government responsiveness and the water-food value chain respectively: (iii) "Making All Voices Count" and "Securing Water for Food". Further information about these initiatives can be found online at: www.savinglivesatbirth.net , www.allchildrenreading.org, http://www.makingallvoicescount.org/, and http://www.securingwaterforfood.org/.

The GCD grant competition will involve receiving applications from an anticipated 500 - 600 applicants. The first round will involve applicant registration during which basic applicant details will be collected and they will need to be screened and sorted by various eligibility and other criteria. For example, only applications from developing countries, excluding advanced developing countries and prohibited sources such as North Korea, Cuba, Syria, and Iran, will be allowed (*See* Automated Directive System (ADS) 310.3.1.1 referencing also ADS 310maa, List of Developing Countries). These applicants will be categorized by various categories, for example by type of renewable energy technology, type of agriculture value chain application, country, region, type of applicant institution, application status during the application process, etc.

Please refer to Attachment B for a detailed overview of the process along with associated functionality.

The above grant challenge application process will include the following (but not limited to):

- Registration on the site and creation of entity profile with full contact information
- Completion of screening questions for submitting basic information and determining eligibility for competition
- Confirmation of eligibility by reviewers and notification to the entities of basic eligibility
- Submission of a concept note in the form of responses to questions and upload of various documents
- Review and scoring of concept notes by review panels and notification of acceptance/rejection to the entities
- Submission of detailed proposal with background information
- Review and scoring of detailed proposal by review panels
- Selection of finalists
- Scheduling of interviews

The platform has to be fully functional and live by September 30, 2014. Prior to that it will need to be tested as a beta application, during which the vendor will work with users to help test the beta product. Please provide an implementation timeline and project delivery schedule.

The platform should, at a minimum, have the following features:

- Must support at least 600 applicants using the platform at the same time with various internet access speeds
- Submissions must be in English and the site should be standard for English
- Must be browser independent
- Must be capable of providing a unique, alpha numeric identifier for each application
- Must be security aware to FISMA and NIST standards, documented compliance a plus
- Must support a multi-question multi-stage application process with conditionalities for the questions and branching based on responses
- Allow for input of text and uploads of various types of documents, to include Excel/Word/PowerPoint presentations
- Allow for searching of inputted text and uploaded document s in Word
- Allow for numeric scoring and ranking with different weighting by stage of applications review
- Allow for multiple reviews and reviewers using the platform at the same time with varying degrees of access
- Allow for different levels of administrative and review access with predefined roles and permissions
- Allow for alerts, email notifications and internal messaging
- Allow for a dashboards with detailed reports and analytics including
    - sorting by each application question
    - time spent at each stage of the application

    - number of visitors to the site and each stage of the application
- Allow for registration of reviewers including a profile and completion of a non-disclosure agreement with an e-signature
- Allow for automated e-mails/notifications/messaging to applicants and or reviewers and various subsets of both

It is considered a plus if the platform also has an option for management of the grants after awards, but is not currently required.

The Bidder may also be required to:

- Prepare user guides
- Participate in webinars to train applicants on using the platform and answer any questions they may have until the closing date for online application submittal
- Provide end user support
- Sign a non-disclosure agreement for any support staff engaged once the challenge has begun.

Technical proposals should be no more than 20 pages. This page limitation does not include the information requested in the "Bidder's Qualifications" section above. Technical proposals should:

1. Describe the platform and how it meets the minimum requirements above.
2. Describe the standard options of the platforms and the customization options
3. Describe the different steps in the development process and associated timeframe
4. Describe the type of customer and end-user support provided and what is standard versus additional
5. Provide a detailed PowerPoint demo or login and password to an example site
6. Describe FISMA and NIST standards status, site backup and failover capabilities and any other online security features
7. Describe the process for changes to the platform and what changes are considered standard and what changes would be considered extraordinary to be costed separately
8. Describe experience with preparation of user guides and participation in webinars for end-users (applicants or reviewers).
9. Describe the options for extension of the platform to management of the grants after award, if any

All products must follow USAID's Powering Agriculture: an Energy Grand Challenge for Development branding standards.

Prior experience with US government and/or USAID procurement procedures is preferred, but not required.

Attachment B:
Tentative Innovation Call Process (subject to change)

(Each round is envisioned to last an average of 35 working days, with some rounds expected to take longer)
(Final system to include, but not limited to, all of the rounds, stages, & levels incorporated here)

Round 1/Stage 1: Intake & Eligibility Assessment (~Total 500-600 applications expected to be received)

Level 1

- Intake of ~500-600 grant applications/applicants, including basic information for each applicant and submission of a project concept note (likely to be a template; ~ 2 pages) by cutoff date of approximately 90 days from inception.
- Assign unique alpha-numeric identifier to each applicant along with appropriate access & permissions (applicants, evaluators, USAID/PASTO staff will all have different access levels & permissions)
- Eligibility assessment (only allowed countries; prohibited countries currently include Cuba, Iran, Syria, & North Korea)

Level 2

- Sorting by different criteria (i.e. Ttype of renewable energy, type of agriculture application, country, size, type of applicant, etc.)

Level 3

- Assignment of each application to *Window 1*: Clean Energy Solution Design or *Window 2*: Clean Energy Solutions Scale-up/Commercialization

Round 2/Stage 1: Initial Screening Project Concept Notes (PCNs)

Level 1

- Questions are asked of each applicant that need to be filled in through online platform

Level 2

- Evaluation of project concept notes (evaluators will only be allowed to see their own evaluations) according to multiple evaluation criteria and questions for each window from Level

Level 3

- Get scoring & feedback from reviewer/evaluator in each one of 3 types of evaluation panels (technical, business/financial viability, & sustainable development)
- Scoring will be done on a weighted & cumulative basis and then final total scores for each project will be compared to set threshold value to determine whether the applicant will move to the next stage of the innovation call or not

Level 4

- Feedback loop to notify applicants of status of application as well as to inform applicants who will be proceeded to the next stage that they need to submit a detailed & comprehensive proposal for the next round
- It is expected that an estimated total of 250 applications will be advancing to Stage 2 Round 2
- Option to provide details on rejection if applicant asks for it within specified time limit

Round 2/Stage 2: Submission & Evaluation of Full Detailed Proposals (~250 applications)

Level 1
- Submission of full proposal (limited on number of pages)
- Submission of excel spreadsheet for financial model or customized adaption of spreadsheet template provided on online platform by applicant

Level 2
- Respond to detailed questions through online platform (need to set a time frame for submitting answers)

Level 3
- Receipt of responses

Level 4
- Get scoring & feedback from reviewer/evaluator in each one of 3 types of evaluation panels (technical, business/financial viability, & sustainable development)
- Scoring will be done on a weighted and cumulative basis and then final total scores for each project will be compared to set threshold value to determine whether the applicant will move to the next stage of the innovation call or not

Level 5
- Feedback loop to notify applicants of status of application (down to 100 applications)
- Invite finalists to video conference or in person interview
- Send further queries from evaluators/tech panels regarding projects to applicants

Round 3/Stage 1: Selection of Finalists

Level 1
- Receipt of responses to queries from project applicants to further evaluate them

Level 2
- Get scoring & feedback from reviewer/evaluator in each one of 3 types of evaluation panels (technical, business/financial viability, & sustainable development)
- Scoring will be done on a weighted and cumulative basis and then final total scores for each project will be compared to set threshold value to determine whether the applicant will move to the next stage of the innovation call or not

Level 3
- Feedback loop to notify applicants of status of application (down to ~20 applications)

Round 3 /Stage 2: Interviews (In person and/or video conference)

Level 1
- Evaluators input scoring from applicant interviews through online platform into evaluation criteria that are weighted
- Evaluators input comments from interviews with applicants into online platform

Level 2
- Rank winners by total cumulative score and list winners

- Enter amount of grant award decided for each winner by PAEGC into online platform

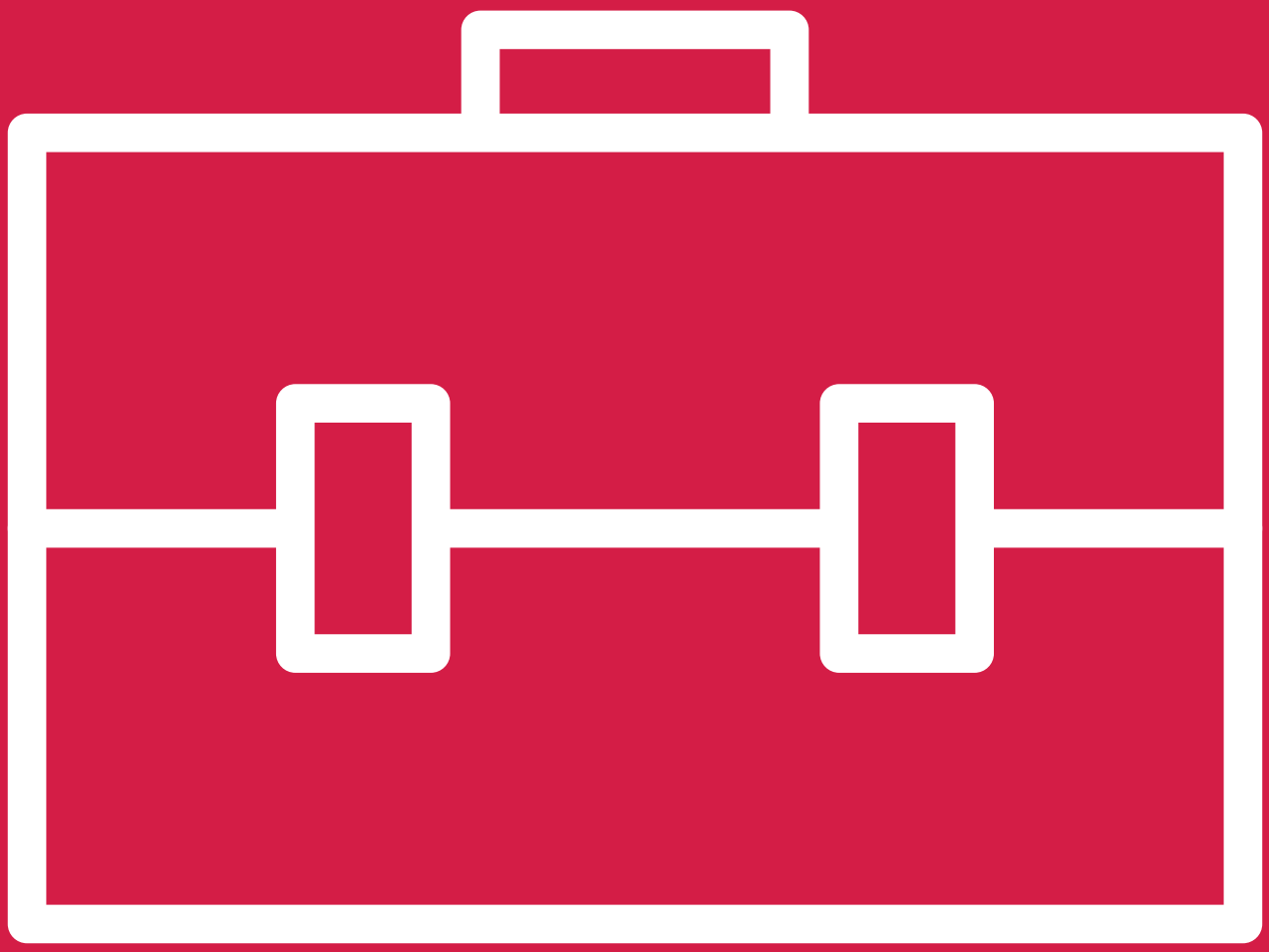
Round 3/Stage 4: Announce Winners/Finalize Award Contracts

Level 1

- Announce ~13 winners at an event (Development Exchange or industry conference)

Level 2

- Negotiate and finalize awards contracts to winners between USAID contracts staff & project applicants
- Upload finalized award contracts to winners' folder

Platform Challenges Log

Issues	Date Raised	Notes	Status	Date Resolved
CR 8 - zip file	04/02/2014	by May 12	answered	05/12/2014
reports - CR 15	04/02/2014	by April 24	complete	04/24/2014
feedback letters through platform - personalized	05/06/2014	Personalized by email, but not app title - so maybe not through application platform but through google platform - needed asap.	complete	05/12/2014
add organization to back end	05/07/2014		complete	05/12/2014
application alias to organization name - front end	05/07/2014	switch to organization, but still not visible to reviewers until after seed innovation screen is over	complete	05/12/2014
search feature front end	05/07/2014	Platform Manager to follow up; put in new feature	complete	
timeline showing for applicants	05/07/2014	removed	complete	05/09/2014
score report change - add average scores	05/09/2014	to be implemented	complete	05/12/2014
judge problem with reviewing app #757, #110	05/13/2014	757 reviewed then disappeared, 110 appeared; review info input into 757 appears to be for 110, info sent by Tran for 757 does not match platform - user education needed! - Platform fixed on back end	complete	05/15/2014
not all info showing up in TEC 1	05/15/2014	Noted 5/15 - permission issue. Fixed already.	complete	05/15/2014
Full application intake for transition	05/21/2014	Program Team drafted language about how to submit full revised application and budget. Add to platform URL and say to log in with previous credentials.	pending	06/27/2014