

**WHAT IS THE BIG IDEAS CONTEST?**

**BIG Ideas is a student innovation contest focused on developing ideas.**

BIG Ideas is, by design, an entry-level program that encourages students who have limited or no competition experience to develop their ideas, transform their thinking and address problems through creativity and ingenuity. Advising, mentoring and assistance are integral parts of the program, along with funding and recognition. Beyond the contest itself, BIG Ideas will support every participant throughout the learning process, helping them to be better prepared for other idea competitions, undergraduate and graduate coursework, and future career opportunities,

**BIG IDEAS RULES**

* BIG Ideas projects must be student-initiated and student-led. The project may not be an extension of faculty-guided research or a non-student organization.
* BIG Ideas focuses on early-stage projects that are based on ideas that are new or have been formed within the past two years.
* BIG Ideas prize money is an award, not a grant.  This allows each project to remain under the ownership of the student teams and avoids any intellectual property issues with The University of North Alabama.
* Participating in the BIG Ideas Contest does not preclude student teams from entering submissions in other contests or programs.

**IDEA AREAS**

See below for the types of ideas that meet our criteria.

* Health and Wellness
* Education
* Arts and Culture
* Energy
* Transportation
* Technology
* Digital Inclusion
* Disability Services
* Veterans' Services
* Immigration and Refugee Support
* Environment and Sustainability
* Economic Development
* Housing and Homelessness
* Racial and Gender Issues
* Food Security
* Community Development
* Public Safety
* Youth Development
* Elder Care
* Civic Engagement and Advocacy

Here are some examples of how to think about your idea:

* **Education** – The challenge is to create an innovative solution to (a) enhance the quality of education or (b) address underlying barriers to education (access, cost, nutrition / food insecurity, funding / resources, quality, etc.).
* **Energy** – The challenge is to describe a novel solution that (a) encourages the adoption of clean energy that is sustainable, (b) introduces resource alternatives that have a broad environmental impact or (c) makes sustainable energy options more accessible.
* **Health and Wellness** – The challenge is to describe an intervention that would address health and wellness concerns. Proposals may center on innovations addressing (a) physical, mental or emotional health, (b) the health care system locally, regionally, nationally or globally, (c) health issues and interventions with vulnerable populations or (d) other health or wellness issues.
* **Technology** – The challenge is to propose a novel solution to a problem that has social impact using any form of technology (artificial intelligence, IoT, big data, cloud-based, mobile / smart phone / tablet, app-based, electronics, robotics, mechanical, propulsive, cyber, etc.

**INITIAL PITCH SUBMISSION CRITERIA:**

1. **What is your technology, product, or service?**  Briefly describe what you sell and the need it fulfills (i.e. what is the problem and what solution does your product/service provide?)
2. **What is your target market?**  Briefly state to whom you are selling this product/service. How large is the applicable market? Into what industry does your product or service best fit?
3. **Who is your competition?** Competition is positive as it confirms that a market exists for your product/service. All products and services have competition.
4. **What is your competitive advantage?**  What makes you unique? Why do you have an advantage over others? How will your company provide this product/service better than the competition?