ATS Hub Ideas Challenge Participant Rules

Official Rules and Terms of Participation
By submitting an entry to the ATS Hub Ideas Challenge (the "Challenge"), you agree to these Official Rules and Terms of Participation (the "Rules"). Please read them carefully before participating. The Challenge is administered by Digital Promise Global ("Digital Promise") in partnership with SRI and funded by the Institute of Education Sciences ("IES"), U.S. Department of Education.

No purchase or payment is necessary to enter or win. Participation is void where prohibited by law.

Authority
The purpose and activities related to the Accelerate, Transform, Scale Hub Ideas Challenge are authorized by section 112(1) of the Education Sciences Reform Act, 20 U.S.C 9512. Under this section, the Institute is authorized to conduct and support scientifically valid research activities, including basic research and applied research, statistics activities, scientifically valid education evaluation, development, and wide dissemination. The Accelerate, Transform, Scale Hub Ideas Challenge will result in a public-facing set of ideas about how education settings can develop durable, future ready skills in P-12 and postsecondary settings and that are ready to be developed into practices, programs, or policies that could be rigorously tested via scientifically valid research activities.

Challenge Overview
The ATS Hub Ideas Challenge invites the public to submit breakthrough, highly scalable ideas, including models, policies, systems, or tools, that could foster learner agency, durable skills, and/or executive functioning skills while building academic content knowledge.

The Challenge will take place in three competitive phases across three life-stage tracks:

- Early Childhood and K-5
- 6-12
- Postsecondary + Adulthood

The three phases are:

- **Open Phase:** Initial concept submissions from June 24, 2026 through July 28, 2026 at 11:59 PM ET **[EXTENDED DEADLINE]**.

- **Discovery Phase:** The top 27 teams, 9 per track, refine their concepts from September 14, 2026 through October 26, 2026. Following panel review, 15 selected submissions will advance to community voting and be displayed online for public review and voting.
- **Prize Phase:** The top 9 teams, 3 per track, develop proof-of-concept materials beginning January 4, 2027. Proof of Concept reports and 2-minute videos are due on or before March 5, 2027.

Each team that advances to the Prize Phase will receive $10,000. Three final winners, one per track, will each receive an additional $50,000 prize.

Additional phase instructions, submission guidance, and participant resources may be provided on the Challenge website or through the Challenge platform. In the event of a conflict between these Rules and other Challenge materials, these Rules govern unless Digital Promise posts an official amendment to the Rules.

Eligibility

To be eligible to participate, each participant must:

1. Be based in the United States. All individual participants and participating organizations must be U.S.-based.
2. Be at least 18 years old. Minors are not eligible to participate in the Challenge.
3. Submit a proposal that is relevant to education in the United States, addresses factors under the control of U.S. education systems, and is designed to foster learner agency, durable skills, and/or executive functioning skills while building academic content knowledge.
4. Not be an employee, officer, director, contractor, judge, reviewer, or immediate family or household member of, or have a financial relationship with, Digital Promise, SRI, IES, the U.S. Department of Education, or any entity directly involved in administering or judging the Challenge.
5. Not be a member of the ATS Hub Technical Working Group or an immediate team member of a Technical Working Group member.
6. Agree to comply with these Official Rules and Terms of Participation.
7. All participants must adhere to the competition schedule as outlined by the organizers.

Employees participating within the scope of their employment are responsible for confirming that participation is consistent with their employer's policies.

Registration and Submission Limits

Each individual may register and submit from only one account on the Challenge platform. Participating through multiple accounts is grounds for disqualification.

Each individual may participate in only one submission to the Challenge, either individually or as part of a team. Individuals may not participate in multiple submissions, including submissions across different tracks. Organizations may sponsor multiple submissions as long as no individual appears on more than one entry.

Participants may submit as an individual or as part of a team. Each team must designate one project lead as the primary point of contact. If a team receives a prize, prize funds will be paid to the project lead unless otherwise determined by Digital Promise. The project lead is responsible for providing any required payment, tax, and team allocation information.

All submissions must be in English.

Submission Requirements
All entries must be submitted through the designated online Challenge portal in the format specified by Digital Promise. Late, incomplete, or improperly formatted submissions will not be considered.

By submitting an entry, each participant represents and warrants that the submission:

1. Is the participant's or team's own original work, or is used with permission and appropriate credit.
2. Does not infringe the intellectual property, privacy, publicity, or other rights of any third party.
3. Is not the subject of any actual or threatened litigation or claim.
4. Does not contain confidential information or trade secrets that the participant does not wish to disclose publicly.
5. Is not the subject of a pending or registered patent application that the participant intends to keep confidential.
6. Does not contain unlawful, defamatory, harassing, discriminatory, or otherwise inappropriate content.
7. Complies with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.
8. Is supported by credible evidence, which may include research citations, pilot data, practitioner observations, practice-based evidence, or documented examples from the field.

Participants may use technology tools, including generative AI tools, to support preparation of their submissions. Participants remain responsible for the accuracy, originality, citations, permissions, and meaningful human authorship of all submitted materials.

Submissions that cannot be supported with credible evidence, citations, or other appropriate documentation may be disqualified at the sole discretion of the administrators.

Open Phase Submission Requirements

Open Phase submissions must include the required materials specified in the Challenge portal, including:

1. Project title.
2. Selected challenge track.
3. Problem statement of no more than 75 words.
4. Proposed solution description of no more than 150 words.
5. Originality statement of no more than 50 words.
6. Innovation statement of no more than 50 words.
7. Impact statement of no more than 50 words.
8. One to two sources of evidence, with relevant outcomes or findings.
9. Project lead contact information.
10. Team information.

Open Phase submissions are due by July 28, 2026 at 11:59 PM ET.

Open Phase Review and Advancement

After the Open Phase submission deadline, Digital Promise will review submissions for basic eligibility and completeness. This review may include confirming that all required sections are complete, a primary team lead has been identified, and the participant or team satisfies the minimum requirements for participation.

Approved submissions will be assigned to a judging panel for review. Panel review will begin August 3, 2026 and conclude on or before August 28, 2026. Each approved submission will be assigned to 3 reviewers.

Open Phase submissions will be reviewed using the following criteria:

1. Innovation & Originality: The novelty and creativity of the proposed solution and how unique it is compared to existing approaches.
2. Impact and Outcomes: The potential magnitude of positive impact and whether the outcomes are meaningful for education leaders, policymakers, educators, parents, and/or learners.
3. Use of Evidence: The use of evidence to frame how the solution addresses the identified problem within the selected track.

After reviews are complete, reviewer scores will be averaged and concepts will be ranked. The top 27 concepts, 9 from each track, will advance to the Discovery Phase. Advancing submissions announced by mid-September 2026.

Discovery Phase Submission Requirements

Discovery Phase teams will be required to submit refined materials through the Challenge portal by October 26, 2026 by 5:00 PM ET.

Discovery Phase submissions must include:

1. Problem statement of no more than 100 words.
2. Proposed solution description of no more than 250 words.
3. Theory of Change of no more than 500 words.
    a. Theory of Change Upload: Completed Theory of Change model.
4. Evidence and Assumptions Log of no more than 300 words.
    a. Evidence and Assumptions Log Upload: Completed Evidence and Assumptions Log documenting evidence, sources, and key assumptions.
5. Project Team Expertise statement of no more than 50 words.
6. Video pitch of no more than 2 minutes, submitted as a YouTube or Vimeo link.

Use of AI-generated or synthetic videos, including AI avatars or text-to-video tools, is strongly discouraged.

The Theory of Change must address:

1. Inputs: the resources needed.
2. Activities: the actions or steps needed to implement the solution.
3. Outputs: the direct, tangible results of the activities.
4. Short-term outcomes: the immediate changes or benefits resulting from the outputs.
5. Long-term impact: the broader goal and lasting change the idea is designed to achieve in alignment with the Challenge's overall goal.

Discovery Phase Review, Community Voting, and Advancement

After the Discovery Phase submission deadline, Digital Promise will review submissions for basic completeness. Approved submissions will be assigned to a judging panel for review.

Discovery Phase panel review will begin November 2, 2026 and conclude on or before November 13, 2026. Each submission will be assigned to 3 reviewers.

Discovery Phase submissions will be reviewed using the following criteria:

1. Solution Refinement & Differentiation: The clarity and strength of the refined solution, including how well it addresses the identified problem and how meaningfully it differs from existing approaches.
2. Theory of Change & Causal Logic: The clarity and credibility of the pathway connecting inputs, activities, outputs, short-term outcomes, and long-term impact.
3. Evidence & Assumptions: The strength and relevance of the evidence supporting the proposed solution and Theory of Change, including how clearly key assumptions are identified and addressed.
4. Feasibility & Implementation: The practicality of implementing the proposed solution, considering required resources, team expertise, technical or operational requirements, potential barriers, and realistic timelines.
5. Potential for Impact: The potential for the proposed solution to produce meaningful outcomes for learners, educators, families, education leaders, and/or education systems.

Community voting for the Discovery Phase will take place November 23, 2026 through December 11, 2026. During this period, selected submissions will be displayed on the ATS Hub website or Challenge platform, organized by track and title, for community members to review and vote.

To vote, community members must create an account and verify their email address. Each verified account may cast up to three votes total during the Discovery Phase voting period. Votes may be submitted only once per verified account, and the platform will limit each account to three votes across all submissions.

Advancement to the Prize Phase will be determined by a weighted composite score consisting of:

- 70% panel review score.
- 30% community voting score.

Both components will be normalized to a 0 to 100 scale before weighting. Panel score normalization will be based on the average of reviewer scores across the five Discovery Phase criteria. Community score normalization will be based on each submission's share of the total community votes cast within its track, converted to a 0 to 100 scale.

To be eligible for advancement to the Prize Phase, a submission must rank in at least the top 50% of panel scores within its track, meaning the top 5 of 9 submissions in that track, regardless of community vote totals.

After panel review and community voting are complete, composite scores will be calculated and submissions will be ranked. The top 9 submissions, 3 from each track,

will advance to the Prize Phase and receive $10,000 each. Advancing teams will be announced in late December 2026.

Prize Phase Submission Requirements
Prize Phase teams will be required to conduct evidence-gathering activities and submit proof-of-concept materials through the Challenge portal.

Prize Phase deliverables include:

1. Proof of Concept report.
2. Video of no more than 2 minutes.
3. Participation in a live virtual pitch competition.

The Proof of Concept report must address the following areas:

1. Problem and Solution Validation, no more than 400 words.
2. Theory of Change and Evidence, no more than 500 words.
3. Impact and Scaling Potential, no more than 400 words.
4. Implementation and Feasibility, no more than 500 words.
5. User Base and Context, no more than 200 words.

The Proof of Concept report and 2-minute video must be submitted through the Challenge portal on or before March 5, 2027.

During the live virtual pitch competition, each finalist will have 5 minutes to present their concept, theory of change, and evidence gathered during the Challenge, followed by 5 minutes of Q&A. Q&A may include questions from the judging panel and crowdsourced questions from community participants.

Prize Phase Judging, Community Voting, and Winner Selection
Prize Phase judging will consist of panel scoring and community voting.
During the live virtual pitch competition, judges will score each pitch using the following criteria:

1. Novelty and potential for impact.

2. Grounding in research, evidence, and documented practice.

3. Feasibility and scalability.

Prize Phase community voting will take place during the live virtual pitch competition and remain open for 24 hours following the conclusion of the final presentation.

Community members must authenticate using their email address. Each verified voter may cast one vote total during the Prize Phase community voting period.

Final winner selection will be determined by a weighted composite score consisting of:

- 75% panel review score.
- 25% community voting score.

Both components will be normalized to a 0 to 100 scale before weighting. Panel score normalization will be based on the average of criterion scores. Community score normalization will be based on the percentage of total track votes received.

To be eligible to win a final prize, a submission must rank in at least the top 50% of panel scores within its track, meaning the top 2 of 3 finalists in that track, regardless of community vote totals.

One final winner will be selected per track, for a total of three final winners. Each final winner will receive an additional $50,000 prize.

Judges' and Administrators' Decisions
All decisions of the judges and administrators are final and binding. In the event of a tie, the administrators reserve the right to use an additional tie-breaking review, additional judge deliberation, higher panel score, or another reasonable tie-breaking method determined by the administrators.

Administrators may decline to award a prize in any track if no eligible submission meets the minimum quality threshold.

Prizes and Payment Conditions
The following prizes are available:

1. Prize Phase award: $10,000 per team, awarded to each of the 9 teams that advances to the Prize Phase.
2. Final winner prize: An additional $50,000 per winning team, awarded to 3 teams total, one per track.

Prize amounts are in U.S. dollars and will be paid by Digital Promise by check or electronic transfer. Allow up to 30 days after final verification for payment.

To receive a prize, recipients must:

1. Verify eligibility.

2. Complete any required tax forms, including IRS Form W-9 for U.S. recipients. A Form 1099 will be issued where required by law.
3. Sign and return any required publicity release, participation agreement, payment documentation, compliance documentation, or other award documentation required by Digital Promise.
4. Submit all required phase deliverables by the applicable deadlines.

Winners are solely responsible for any taxes, fees, or other costs associated with receipt of a prize. Prizes are non-transferable and may not be substituted. If a winner cannot be verified, does not respond within 15 days, declines the prize, or fails to complete required documentation, the administrators may select an alternate winner.

Intellectual Property and Publicity
Participants retain ownership of their ideas and submissions. Submitting an entry does not transfer ownership of intellectual property to Digital Promise, SRI, IES, or the U.S. Department of Education.

By submitting an entry, participants grant Digital Promise, SRI, IES, and the U.S. Department of Education a non-exclusive, royalty-free, worldwide license to use, reproduce, display, publish, distribute, and share each submission and associated materials, including names, likenesses, team affiliations, project titles, submission content, videos, pitch materials, and other submitted materials, for purposes related to administering the Challenge, reporting on its outcomes, promoting the Challenge, and disseminating lessons learned. This may include use on the ATS Hub website, in public reports, presentations, social media, and other communications.

Participants are encouraged, but not required, to make their ideas openly available to the field. IES supports broad public access to reports and research and development outputs that it funds, consistent with applicable law and policy.

Evidence, Ethics, and Public Benefit
Submissions must be grounded in credible evidence drawn from research, practice, or both. Citations or other evidence support are required where specified in the Challenge portal.

Participants who advance to the Discovery and Prize Phases are expected to engage in good faith with mentors, reviewers, judges, other participants, and Challenge staff. Participants are expected to contribute to a constructive, collaborative community. Harassment, discrimination, threats, manipulation, or unprofessional conduct are grounds for removal from the Challenge.

The Challenge is intended to generate ideas that can inform future federal and field-level investments in education research and development. Participants agree that anonymized or aggregated information about submissions may be used to inform public reports about the Challenge and the broader ATS Initiative.

Data and Privacy

Personal information collected through the Challenge, including contact information and team member details, will be used to administer the Challenge, communicate with participants, verify eligibility, administer prizes, conduct community voting, and report on Challenge outcomes. Information will be handled in accordance with Digital Promise's privacy policy, applicable SRI and IES requirements, and applicable law.

Community voting requires email-based authentication to prevent duplicate voting and administer the voting process.

Submission content, including project title, team or lead name, refined concept materials, theories of change, videos, and pitch materials, may be displayed publicly during voting periods and in Challenge-related communications, unless otherwise specified by Digital Promise.

Disqualification, Modification, and Termination

The administrators reserve the right to disqualify any participant or team that:

1. Violates these Rules or the spirit of the Challenge.
2. Submits false, misleading, plagiarized, infringing, or improperly credited content.
3. Attempts to manipulate the submission, review, scoring, judging, or voting processes, including by creating multiple accounts or coordinating fraudulent voting activity.
4. Engages in harassment, discrimination, threats, or unprofessional conduct toward other participants, judges, mentors, reviewers, community members, or staff.
5. Fails to provide credible evidence, citations, or support for claims where required.
6. Fails to submit required deliverables by the applicable phase deadline.
7. Violates applicable law or regulation.

The Department reserves the right to modify, suspend, or terminate the Challenge, including the Official Rules and Terms of Participation, if circumstances require. The administrators may adjust deadlines, phase schedules, voting procedures, judging procedures, reviewer assignments, or scoring calculations, as needed to administer the Challenge. Material changes will be posted on the Challenge website. Participants are responsible for reviewing posted updates.

Release and Limitation of Liability
By participating, participants release Digital Promise, SRI, IES, the U.S. Department of Education, and their respective officers, employees, contractors, agents, representatives, successors, assigns, judges, mentors, reviewers, platform providers, and partners from any and all liability, claims, or damages arising out of participation in the Challenge or receipt, use, or misuse of any prize, to the fullest extent permitted by law.

Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the Department, Digital Promise, SRI, and IES are not responsible for incomplete, illegible, misdirected, misprinted, late, lost, postage-due, damaged, or stolen entries or prize notifications; or for lost, interrupted, inaccessible, or unavailable networks, servers, satellites, Internet Service Providers, websites, or other connections; or for miscommunications, failed, jumbled, scrambled, delayed, or misdirected computer, telephone, cable transmissions or other communications; or for any technical malfunctions, failures, difficulties, or other errors of any kind or nature; or for the incorrect or inaccurate capture of information, or the failure to capture any information. These Official Rules and Terms of Participation cannot be modified except by the Department in its sole and absolute discretion. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of these Official Rules and Terms of Participation shall not affect the validity or enforceability of any other provision. In the event that any provision is determined to be invalid or otherwise unenforceable or illegal, these Official Rules and Terms of Participation shall otherwise remain in effect and shall be construed in accordance with their terms as if the invalid or illegal provision were not contained herein.

No Waiver
The failure of the Department to exercise or enforce any right or provision of these Official Rules and Terms of Participation shall not constitute a waiver of such right or provision.

Governing Law
All issues and questions concerning the construction, validity, interpretation, and enforceability of these Official Rules and Terms of Participation shall be governed by and construed in accordance with U.S. Federal law as applied in the Federal courts of the District of Columbia if a complaint is filed by any party against the Department.

Compliance with Federal Law
The Department is committed to a policy of non-discrimination and equal opportunity, complying with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education

Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and all other applicable federal laws.

Questions and Contact
Questions about these Rules or the Challenge may be directed to ats-hub-ideas@digitalpromise.org**.**

Accessible Format
This document and all registration materials will be made available in an accessible format. Individuals with questions regarding accessibility or requests for accessible formats may contact ats-hub-ideas@digitalpromise.org.