



2023 GROWTH ACCELERATOR FUND COMPETITION

December 2022

Growth Accelerator Fund Competition

Prize Competition Rules

December 2022

Contents

Subject of Competition.....	3
Definition of Terms.....	4
Stage One: Catalyze.....	6
Stage Two: Accelerate.....	7
Multiplier Bonus Prizes.....	8
Prize Amounts.....	9
Important Dates.....	9
Competition Criteria.....	9
What to Submit for Stage One: Catalyze.....	11
What to Submit for Stage Two: Accelerate.....	16
Eligibility Rules for Participating in the Competition.....	22
Registration/Submission Requirements.....	22
Judging.....	23
Selection of Winners.....	24
Verification of Winners.....	24
Applicable Law.....	24
Conflicts of Interest.....	24
Intellectual Property Rights.....	25
Publicity Rights.....	25
Liability and Insurance Requirements.....	25
Record Retention and Disclosure.....	25
Disclaimers.....	26
General Conditions.....	26



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

Subject of Competition

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) is offering \$50,000 to \$200,000 in prize awards for impactful and inclusive approaches to foster a thriving, collaborative national innovation support ecosystem to advance research and development (R&D) from ideas to impact.

By fostering connections between entrepreneurs, advisors, mentors, partners, philanthropies, corporations, investors, and other shared resources, the 2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition (GAFC) will catalyze strategic ecosystem partnerships to build community and organizational capacity for the successful launch, growth, and scale of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)-based entrepreneurs and startups.

Competition Goals:

- Increase the pipeline and success of STEM/R&D-focused entrepreneurs and small businesses;
- Increase the success of STEM/R&D-focused entrepreneurs in accessing capital and resources to advance their businesses;
- Incentivize innovation ecosystem stakeholders to provide equitable access to resources for underserved communities and industries;
- Catalyze partnerships and relationships between stakeholder groups to strengthen the national innovation ecosystem; and
- Connect both new and established participants in the national innovation ecosystem

Prizes awarded in Two Stages:

- **Stage One:** \$50,000 cash prizes will be awarded to organizations (Catalysts) to catalyze relationships between aligned stakeholders (Ecosystem Partners) that lead to the development of Growth Accelerator Partnerships. Catalysts work collaboratively with Ecosystem Partners to bring additional resources, deepen network connections, and develop strategies that amplify the impact and success of the Growth Accelerator Partnership and the STEM/R&D-focused entrepreneurs and small businesses it serves. **SBA encourages creative models for ecosystem building. SBA welcomes Stage One submissions from a broad range of organizations with a collaborative vision to nurture a national ecosystem for equitable access to entrepreneurship.**

Stage Two: \$50,000 to \$150,000 cash prizes will be awarded to Growth Accelerator Partnerships to provide assistance to entrepreneurs that transition R&D into the marketplace. The Growth Accelerator Partnership will provide startups and small businesses with additional support and resources. **SBA will accept Stage Two submissions from Growth Accelerator Partnerships; submissions will be prepared jointly by Stage One Catalysts and Ecosystem Partners and will present their proposal to successfully accelerate the launch, growth, and scale of diverse STEM/R&D-focused small businesses.**



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition

Prize Competition Rules

Definition of Terms

Catalyst – A Catalyst is an Ecosystem Partner. A Catalyst:

- Facilitates collaborative partnerships with new and/or existing Ecosystem Partners to establish a Growth Accelerator Partnership
- Encourages outreach to, engagement of, and participation by stakeholders to advance a collective and inclusive innovation ecosystem
- Demonstrates a track record of leadership, including a commitment to a thriving, inclusive innovation ecosystem
- Models integrity and trust within the stakeholder community
- Creates additional opportunities, resources, and support for stakeholders and Ecosystem Partners
- Types of organizations that may be Catalysts include but are not limited to:
 - Entrepreneur support organization (including accelerators, incubators, etc.)
 - Membership and/or community organizations (including economic development)
 - Institutions of higher education
 - Clusters or consortia that leverage multiple networks
 - Non-profit or mission-focused organizations seeking to harness and support innovative small businesses to achieve their mission

Ecosystem Partner – An Ecosystem Partner:

- Collaborates and partners with a Catalyst (and other Ecosystem Partners) to establish a Growth Accelerator Partnership
- Provides relevant services, expertise, and other resources to enable the development of the Growth Accelerator Partnership and the success of startups and small businesses supported by the Growth Accelerator Partnership
- Demonstrates a track record of leadership, including a commitment to a thriving, inclusive innovation ecosystem
- Models integrity and trust within the stakeholder community
- Types of organizations that may be Ecosystem Partners include but are not limited to:
 - Entrepreneur support organization (including accelerators, incubators, etc.)
 - Membership and/or community organizations (including economic development)
 - Institutions of higher education
 - Clusters or consortia that leverage multiple networks
 - Non-profit or mission-focused organizations seeking to harness and support innovative small businesses to achieve their mission
 - Private sector organizations, companies, or partnerships seeking to support the innovation ecosystem and the marketplace for innovative small businesses



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

Growth Accelerator Partnership – A Growth Accelerator Partnership is the collaborative partnership established by and between a Catalyst and Ecosystem Partner(s). A Growth Accelerator Partnership:

- Works collaboratively to develop, design, and deliver an initiative, program, or collection of programs that provide on-the-ground, direct support to entrepreneurs and small businesses advancing STEM/R&D-based solutions
- Accelerates the launch, growth, and scale of diverse STEM/R&D-focused small businesses
- Leverages resources, training, expertise, and access across each Ecosystem Partner organization, including the Catalyst
- Engages with additional partners to address and fill gaps in the innovation ecosystem as needed
- Includes organizations with different levels of experience and expertise that together as a network provide broader and better resources to the STEM/R&D entrepreneur
- Serves entrepreneurs from communities that have been historically underserved
- Expands access to expertise and mentorship in areas required for early-stage technology development (including scientific, business, legal, regulatory, and project management)
- Develops commercialization pathways for STEM/R&D companies
- Builds programs for training and equipping SBIR/STTR applicants to submit competitive proposals

Theme Area – Theme Areas provide Catalysts and Ecosystem Partners with an opportunity to focus and coordinate their Growth Accelerator Partnership. Theme Areas establish priorities to advance collective impact and amplify outcomes. Theme Areas for this year's prize competition are:

- **Underserved Communities**, including but not limited to:
 - Underserved Geography (e.g. rural, specific region)
 - Specific Historically Underserved Community (e.g. community based on gender, race, individuals with disabilities, sexual orientation, veteran status)
- **National Security and Global Competitiveness**, including but not limited to:
 - National Security and Defense
 - International Trade
 - Public Health
 - Other critical and emerging technologies, such as those [indicated by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy](#)



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

- **Domestic Manufacturing and Production**, including but not limited to:
 - AgTech, Food Security, and Nutrition
 - Supply Chain Resiliency
 - Critical and Resilient Infrastructure
- **Climate and Renewable Energy**, including but not limited to:
 - Climate and Environment
 - Energy and Sustainability
- **Other** (to be specified by Contestant)

Stage One Catalyze

- \$50,000 to catalyze Growth Accelerator Partnerships
- Submissions due **February**
- Catalyst organizations submit plan to develop inclusive innovation ecosystem through partnership

Stage Two Accelerate

- \$50,000 - \$150,000 to implement Growth Accelerator Partnerships
- Submissions due **July**
- Growth Accelerator Partnership submits shared vision and plan

Stage One: Catalyze

Stage One will award \$50,000 cash prizes to catalyze Growth Accelerator Partnerships.

Stage One Submissions will describe:

- How the Catalyst will collaborate with Ecosystem Partners to cultivate an ecosystem of support and resources to expand opportunities for startups and small businesses in the selected Theme Area(s)
- Opportunities to expand access to the innovation economy for underserved communities, including entrepreneurs of color, women entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurs in rural communities
- Existing partnerships and relationships that can support a more robust and collaborative ecosystem
- Interest in forging new partnerships, and the characteristics sought in potential new partners
- Value proposition as an ecosystem builder (e.g., resources, knowledge, expertise, and experiences)
- How the Catalyst would use Stage One prize funds to catalyze a Growth Accelerator Partnership



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

Use of Stage One Prize Funds

SBA expects Catalyst winners to use Stage One funds for ecosystem building activities, including but not limited to:

- Recruitment of new, community-connected Ecosystem Partners
- Co-design with Ecosystem Partners
- Establishment of novel partnerships
- Strengthening existing alliances among stakeholders (including public, private, non-profit, and academic partners)
- Developing resources to support Growth Accelerator Partnership impact during Stage Two
- Creating a new ecosystem-focused accelerator model

The award funding from SBA is to be used to fund the operating budget for Catalysts and cannot be used for direct investing in small businesses or startups. Funding may be reserved for proposed Growth Accelerator Partnership activities at Stage Two.

Stage Two: Accelerate

Stage Two will award \$50,000 to \$150,000 cash prizes Growth Accelerator Partnerships to provide focused assistance to entrepreneurs that transition R&D into the marketplace. Stage Two prizes will advance the collaboration between Catalysts and Ecosystem Partners to enhance small business success.

SBA expects Stage One winning Catalysts and Ecosystem Partners to submit a joint proposal for Stage Two describing the Growth Accelerator Partnership, and their shared vision and plan for use of the prize funding.

Stage Two Submissions will describe:

- Shared vision for an inclusive ecosystem around the Theme Area(s)
- Summary of ecosystem building activities and learnings from Stage One
- Descriptions of each Ecosystem Partner organization – their role, mission, models of operation, and strengths/assets they are sharing with the network
- How the Growth Accelerator Partnership will engage and support underserved entrepreneurs, and how they are uniquely qualified to work with this group

Model of Operation Elements

Contestant model of operations must include most, if not all, of the following elements that will be shared across organizations in the Growth Accelerator Partnership funded by Stage Two:

- Training and mentorship for STEM/R&D startups.
- Introductions to customers, suppliers, advisors, and other key players.



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

- Opportunities to pitch ideas and startups to investors and/or other capital formation avenues to startups, such as commercialization assistance.
- Regular networking opportunities offered to startups.
- Selective process to choose participating startups.
- Programs focused on building a strong startup community.

The award funding from SBA is to be used to fund the operating budget for Growth Accelerator Partnerships and cannot be used for direct investing in small businesses or startups.

Multiplier Bonus Prizes

The Growth Accelerator Fund Competition serves as a scalable and replicable framework for efficiently deploying resources to the entrepreneur support organizations that serve innovation-focused entrepreneurs and small businesses. At any time, SBA Federal partners, including other SBA Program Offices or other Federal agencies may leverage this framework by sponsoring one or more Multiplier Bonus Prizes.

Multiplier Bonus Prizes are as follows:

- **Stage One Bonus Prize:**
 - A Federal agency partner may elect to provide a Bonus Prize to one or more Stage One contestants for focusing on a priority area of the agency partner's choice. Bonus Prize winners are awarded from the pool of Stage One contestants. Bonus Prize winners are considered Stage One and become eligible to participate in Stage Two
- **Stage Two Bonus Prize:**
 - A Federal agency partner may elect to provide a Bonus Prize to one or more Stage Two Growth Accelerator Partnerships for focusing on a priority area of the agency partner's choice. Bonus Prize winners are awarded from the pool of Stage Two contestants.

Multiplier Bonus Prizes may be added at any point. Updates will be posted at www.AmericasSeedFund.us.



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition

Prize Competition Rules

1) Prizes

The Competition will award \$3,000,000 in total cash prizes provided through SBA's FY2022 appropriations.

- a) **Stage One:** \$50,000 prizes. SBA expects to award up to \$1,000,000 in cash prizes for Stage One. SBA intends to announce winners for Stage One by April 2023.
- b) **Stage Two:** \$50,000 - \$150,000 prizes. Stage One winners are eligible to submit a Stage Two submission on behalf of the Growth Accelerator Partnership. For winning submissions, the Growth Accelerator Partnership will receive a cash prize. SBA intends to announce winners for Stage Two by September 2023.

2) Important Dates

Stage One

Submission Period: Thirty (30) days after Competition is published to Challenge.gov

Screening, Judging, and Vetting Period: February - April 2023.

Winners Announced: April 2023.

Stage Two

Submission Period: June to July 2023.

Screening, Judging, and Vetting Period: July - September 2023.

Winners Announced: September 2023.

3) Competition Criteria and What to Submit

Winners will be determined through a combination of the online submission package with a possible interview session.

Reviewers will evaluate submissions by indicating agreement with assigned statements on a 1-7 scale, as shown below. The statements are the criteria.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Judging Criteria includes:

a) Quality and Clarity of Submission

Judges will be instructed to evaluate the criterion based on the entirety of the submission package, including the slide deck and video. The focus should be on the **content** in the materials, rather than its production value or attractiveness. For



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

instance, some materials may have typographical or grammatical errors. Judges are encouraged to focus less on these matters and more so on whether the submission clearly conveys the intended message and responds to prompts requested for this stage. A submission, for example, that provides vague descriptions, partial responses, or content that is difficult to understand may score less than one that conveys a well-articulated story and addresses all requirements clearly and completely.

Reviewers will provide a 1 – 7 score for the following statements on the overall submission package:

1. “The slide deck submitted is well-articulated, giving a clear picture and providing clear responses to the requirements outlined in the competition guidelines.”
2. “The video submitted describes how the applicant is qualified to catalyze an inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem around its selected theme.”

b) Alignment with Competition Goals

Judges will be instructed to evaluate the criterion based on whether the submission aligns with the specific prize competition goals described above, and how well the plan:

- Leverages assets, resources, and expertise across the Growth Accelerator Partnership to create efficiencies, share best practices, and include support for newer Ecosystem Partners within the network;
- Addresses current gaps in access to the innovation economy for underserved communities, including entrepreneurs of color, women entrepreneurs; and
- Prioritize new entrepreneurs in rural communities as described in Appropriations Committee Conference Report to Div. E., Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022 ([CREC-2022-03-09-bk3.pdf \(govinfo.gov\)](https://www.govinfo.gov/records/CREC-2022-03-09-bk3.pdf)).

For Stage Two, the Growth Accelerator Partnership must include most, if not all, model of operation elements specified on page 7.

Preference will be given to Contestants who include new Ecosystem Partners and Growth Accelerator Partnerships.

Statements that reviewers will consider are provided below alongside proposed content to include in the submission.

c) Plan Feasibility and Implementation



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

Judges will be instructed to evaluate the criterion based on how well the submission describes:

- Opportunities to improve assistance in the start and growth of STEM/R&D companies, especially those from underrepresented entrepreneurs.
- Whether the Contestant describes their unique structural advantages and outlines reasonable phases for their plan's implementation.
- Whether the Contestant's vision of success is attainable with relevant metrics that support the use of the prize money to achieve the stated vision of success.

A matching component is not required; however, it may be used as a differentiator between otherwise similarly scoring proposals.

Statements that reviewers will consider are provided below alongside proposed content to include in the submission.

There are separate submission requirements for the two stages (Stage One prizes and Stage Two prizes). The Competition judges will score the submissions based on the content provided.

STAGE ONE: CATALYZE

A complete submission package for **Stage One** should include the following:

- 1) **Contestant Information:** Basic details collected in the application form accessed via the links at www.AmericasSeedFund.us.
- 2) **Submission Slide Deck:** A presentation/slide deck of no more than thirteen (13) slides must address all items, in the order listed. The presentation/deck must be submitted as a PDF. The deck will not be made public by the SBA.
- 3) **One-slide Summary (public):** A single presentation slide that summarizes information about your organization and the ecosystem you are working to build that may be used to attract new Ecosystem Partners. If selected, the one-slide summary will be made public.
- 4) **Video Narrative (public):** A video of not more than ninety (90) seconds that describes how the applicant is uniquely qualified to catalyze the entrepreneurship ecosystem around its selected theme. The video must be posted to a public site (such as YouTube or Vimeo). The URL link to the video must be included in the application form and must be accessible to Competition judges. If selected, the video will be made public.



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition

Prize Competition Rules

Submission Slide Deck

Slide 1: Summary Information

- Name of Primary Contestant (entity)
- City and State/Territory
- Website of Contestant
- Contact Person (First & Last Names)
- Contact Email and Phone
- Other Key Team Members (Names)
- Theme Area
- Link to Video Narrative

Slides 2-3: Ecosystem Vision

Content to Address

- Your organization's mission
- Your vision of a thriving ecosystem in the selected Theme Area(s)
- Your organization's experience and activities in the selected Theme Area(s)
- How you will augment the ecosystem of support to enable new opportunities and address challenges in the selected Theme Area(s)

Reviewers will provide a 1-7 score taking the following statements into consideration:

The submission describes an ecosystem vision that aligns with the goal of the prize competition to nurture an equitable entrepreneurship ecosystem through collaborations that enhance small business success.

The submission clearly describes the Theme(s) selected AND how the Contestant is well-positioned to address challenges to entrepreneurship in the Theme Area(s).

Slides 4-5: Broadening Participation in the Innovation Economy

Content to Address

- How your organization currently supports inclusive innovation, and how you will support and expand access to the innovation economy in your Theme

Reviewers will provide a 1-7 score taking the following statements into consideration:

The submission aligns with the stated goals of the prize competition to support



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

<p>Area(s) for entrepreneurs from underserved communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How your organization defines and measures success• How you will use Stage One prize funds to encourage new entrants (including Ecosystem Partners with roots in underserved communities) to engage with the innovation ecosystem and participate in the Growth Accelerator Partnership	<p>R&D innovation ecosystems, particularly those that include underserved communities.</p> <p>The submission identifies how the communities supported are underserved AND how the Contestant's efforts will benefit those communities.</p> <p>The Contestant addresses why their past/current work is relevant to how they will expand access to a well-described underserved community.</p>
Slides 6-8: Overall Plan for the Award	
<p>Content to Address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your current plan for Stage One and how this plan will contribute to forging a successful Growth Accelerator Partnership for submission in Stage Two• How you will deploy new and/or existing resources (including Stage One prize funds) to catalyze collaborative partnerships in innovation ecosystems• Your value proposition to stakeholders (including Ecosystem Partners, entrepreneurs, etc.) as an ecosystem builder (e.g., resources, knowledge, expertise, and experiences)• How you will build capacity and scale a network of resources to support and sustain a successful Growth Accelerator Partnership at Stage Two	<p>Reviewers will provide a 1-7 score taking the following statements into consideration:</p> <p>The submission outlines Contestant's relevant experience working as an ecosystem builder to support STEM/R&D entrepreneurs.</p> <p>The Contestant's plan clearly describes an ambitious yet feasible approach to developing impactful support for STEM/R&D entrepreneurs and includes justification for the type of activities planned.</p>
Slides 9-10: Implementation and Learning Agenda	



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

Content to Address <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What you will pilot in Stage One to catalyze new collaborations with Ecosystem Partners, and how that will assist in the development of a Stage Two Growth Accelerator Partnership• What risk factors you anticipate, how you will mitigate/overcome these risks, and what success looks like at the end of Stage One• What organizational and staff resources you will deploy to implement your Stage One plan	Reviewers will provide a 1-7 score taking the following statements into consideration: <p>The submission clearly defines what the Contestant plans to test in Stage One, the metrics for success, identifies potential risk factors, and how they may be mitigated or overcome to implement the plan.</p> <p>The submission provides an achievable plan for implementation as well as an explanation as to why the Contestant's staff is qualified to implement the stated plan.</p>
Slide 11-12: Ecosystem Building Partnerships	
Content to Address <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Former, current, or future partnerships/working relationships with federal, state, regional, and/or local entities you would like to highlight• Specific details on the effectiveness of past collaboration efforts• How your organization will leverage other available resources to support a Growth Accelerator Partnership• Your interest in and ability to support new Ecosystem Partners• Characteristics, skills, or assets you value in potential Ecosystem Partners• The role you envision for potential Ecosystem Partners to achieve the vision of a thriving ecosystem in the selected Theme Area(s)	Reviewers will provide a 1-7 score taking the following statements into consideration: <p>The submission provides evidence of prior productive partnerships and effective collaborations.</p> <p>The submission clearly and realistically defines how potential partner entities would complement the Contestant in the ecosystem.</p> <p>The submission describes a reasonable plan to leverage additional resources to support the development of the ecosystem.</p>
Slide 13: Additional Information at Contestant's Discretion	



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

- Contestant may use this slide to provide any additional information that would be useful for the submission.

Summary Slide (will be made public if selected)

- Make your own public-facing, one-slide submission summary that can be used to explain to potential Ecosystem Partners who you are and your vision for a Growth Accelerator Partnership.
- There is no template, so feel free to present the information as you see fit. Please make any text readable in a standard printout and conference room projection.

Video Narrative (will be made public if selected)

A video of not more than 90 seconds that can be used to explain to potential Growth Accelerator partners who you are and your ecosystem vision.

Describe:

- How your organization is uniquely qualified to catalyze an inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem around your selected Theme and implement your proposed plan
- The value you bring to the ecosystem
- What you look for in Ecosystem Partners
- What you plan to do with Stage One prize funding that will lead to the Growth Accelerator Partnership proposal for Stage Two

The video serves as a first introduction of your organization and vision to reviewers and potential Ecosystem Partners.

Post your publicly accessible video online (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo).

Be creative and produce a video that conveys the required information in exciting and interesting ways but remember that time-consuming activities that only improve production values (i.e., technical elements such as décor, lighting, and cinematic techniques) are not necessary.



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

STAGE TWO: ACCELERATE

A complete submission package for **Stage Two** should include the following:

- 1) **Contestant Information:** Basic details for each Ecosystem Partner collected in the application form accessed via the links at www.AmericasSeedFund.us.
- 2) **Submission Slide Deck:** A presentation/slide deck no more than twenty (20) slides must address all items, in the order listed. The presentation/deck must be submitted as a PDF. The deck will not be made public by the SBA.
- 3) **One-slide Summary (public):** A single presentation slide that summarizes information about your Growth Accelerator Partnership, and the ecosystem you are building together. If selected, the one-slide summary will be made public.
- 4) **Team Interview (virtual):** Finalist Growth Accelerator Partnerships may be requested to participate in a virtual team interview.

Stage Two winners will be asked to respond to a metrics survey and submit a written assessment approximately 6 and 12 months after receiving prize funds. Assessment questions may include: What worked? What did not? What would the Catalyst and/or Ecosystem Partners do differently?

Submission Slide Deck

Summary Information (1 slide)

- Name of Primary Contestant (entity)
- City and State/Territory
- Website of Contestant
- Contact Person (First & Last Names)
- Contact Email and Phone
- Theme
- Name of Each Partner Entity
- Website of Each Partner Entity
- Contact Person for Each Partner Entity (First & Last Names)
- Contact Email and Phone for Each Partner Entity

Partnership Objectives (Maximum 10 slides, including Ecosystem Partners)



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

<p>Content to Address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your shared vision of an inclusive ecosystem for the selected Theme(s)• How ecosystem building activities and learnings during Stage One have been incorporated into and informed the design of the proposed Growth Accelerator Partnership.• How the Partnership will leverage and deploy assets, resources, expertise, and access across Ecosystem Partner organizations (and with other mission-aligned entities) to benefit the ecosystem (e.g. creating efficiencies, sharing best practices, and supporting newer Ecosystem Partners within the network)• Describe any additional entities (other than Ecosystem Partners) who will engage with and/or contribute resources to support the success of the Growth Accelerator Partnership, including their role in the Partnership (if any), mission, and strengths/assets you intend to share with the network.	<p>Reviewers will provide a 1-7 score taking the following statements into consideration:</p> <p>The submission aligns with the stated goals of the prize competition to support R&D innovation ecosystems, particularly those that include underserved communities.</p> <p>The submission clearly describes a shared vision and the role of each partner entity in nurturing an equitable ecosystem.</p> <p>The submission clearly describes how the partnership will leverage assets, resources, and expertise across the partner organizations to enhance impactful support for STEM/R&D entrepreneurs.</p>
<p>Ecosystem Partners</p> <p>Each Ecosystem Partner should include up to 2 slides describing:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your value proposition as a partner to benefit entrepreneurs (e.g., resources, knowledge, expertise, and experiences)• Your role in the Growth Accelerator Partnership, your mission, model of operations, and strengths/assets you intend to share with the network• What you hope to gain from the Partnership; what outcomes and impacts you aim to achieve	



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How the Growth Accelerator Partnership supports your mission	
Working to Build an Inclusive R&D Ecosystem (2 slides)	
<p>Content to Address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How the Partnership will engage and support underserved STEM/R&D entrepreneurs• What the Partnership considers as potential challenges and opportunities it faces in fostering an inclusive R&D ecosystem• How the Partnership will bridge gaps, collapse barriers, and expand access for underserved communities in the innovation ecosystem	<p>Reviewers will provide a 1-7 score taking the following statements into consideration:</p> <p>The submission clearly describes how the collaborative partnership will expand the participation of individuals from underrepresented groups in STEM/R&D entrepreneurship.</p> <p>The submission explains how the partnership is uniquely qualified to work with underrepresented STEM/R&D entrepreneurs, and how the partnership's organizational leadership prioritizes the stated group (or groups).</p>
Working in STEM and with America's Seed Fund (1 slide)	
<p>Content to Address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experience the Partnership (or its constituent Ecosystem Partners) has in working with STEM/R&D entrepreneurs• What experience the Partnership (or its constituent partners) has in working with America's Seed Fund, the SBIR/STTR programs• Any relevant data that documents your success supporting entrepreneurs in your selected Theme Area(s) to include within the SBIR/STTR programs• Network opportunities the	<p>Reviewers will provide a 1-7 score taking the following statements into consideration:</p> <p>The submission describes the Partnership's (or its constituent Partners') successful experiences working directly or indirectly with STEM/R&D entrepreneurs and with the SBIR/STTR programs.</p>



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

<p>Partnership can provide to STEM/R&D entrepreneurs (i.e., stakeholders that can support entrepreneurs in preparing competitive SBIR/STTR proposals, access to venture or angel capital, etc.)</p>	
Overall Plan for the Award (2 slides)	
<p>Content to Address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How the Partnership plans to deploy and utilize Stage Two funds if awarded a prize• A description of the Growth Accelerator Partnership's unique value proposition and structural advantages related to the overall vision for an inclusive innovation ecosystem• Per the model of operation elements listed on page 7, a discussion of the Growth Accelerator Partnership's approach and how the network collectively addresses these elements• A description of the type of assistance to be provided to small businesses; examples could include, but are not limited to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to capital, including understanding and applying to the SBIR/STTR programs as well as angel funding and venture capital• Mentors to provide business advice and counseling• Networking opportunities• Commercialization training• Pitch days or demo events	<p>Reviewers will provide a 1-7 score taking the following statements into consideration:</p> <p>The submission details challenges to building an inclusive R&D ecosystem with ways in which such challenges can be overcome.</p> <p>The submission lays out actionable and achievable plans for the prize funds.</p> <p>The submission describes the structural advantages and value proposition related to the overall plan.</p> <p>The submission aligns with the stated goals of the prize competition to highlight focused assistance to STEM/R&D entrepreneurs by including most, if not all, of the model of operation elements (refer to page 7):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training and mentorship for STEM/R&D startups.• Introductions to customers, suppliers, advisors, and other key players.• Opportunities to pitch ideas and startups to investors and/or other capital formation avenues to startups, such as commercialization assistance.



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

<ul style="list-style-type: none">How the Partnership plans to recruit participants, and manage cohorts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Regular networking opportunities offered to startups.Selective process to choose participating startups.Programs focused on building a strong startup community.
Implementation and Metrics (2 slides)	
<p>Content to Address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">How the Growth Accelerator Partnership will improve the operational sustainability of your organizations, including developing new or enhancing existing financial or in-kind supportInformation on implementation (i.e., tasks and timeline)How the Partnership defines success, including metrics and/or baseline data (if available); examples include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">New, formal connections between ESOsEstimated increase in underserved entrepreneur engagement with SBIR/STTR, or percent of small businesses supported from underserved communitiesEstimated number of clients/entrepreneurs the Growth Accelerator partnership anticipates assisting with SBIR/STTR proposals or team developmentMetrics that describe breadth of resources available to small businesses - access to investors, lenders, mentorship, technical	<p>Reviewers will provide a 1-7 score taking the following statements into consideration:</p> <p>The submission discusses viable ways to improve the operational sustainability of its partner organizations and lays out detailed and realistic phases for implementation including tasks and a timeline.</p> <p>The submission lays out the partnership's image of success with relevant metrics and/or baseline data.</p> <p>The submission identifies primary risk factors and how they would be mitigated or overcome to implement the plan.</p>



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

<ul style="list-style-type: none">assistance, potential customers (including government)○ Depth/quality of resources available to small businesses – value for small businesses in the network○ Number of Phase I and II SBIR/STTR proposals to be submitted○ Additional key metrics the Growth Accelerator Partnership will use to self-evaluate/measure the success of the proposed plan and the estimated results	
Match Component (1 slide)	
<p>Content to Address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any matching funds promised or secured, including source and conditions• Any pending or future collaborations with organizations that could provide additional funding and/or other support and resources to the Growth Accelerator Partnership or individual entrepreneurs affiliated with your network. Include specific detail, if any, on the effectiveness of past collaboration efforts with these organizations• The extent to which there are external stakeholders who are aligned and supportive of the of the Growth Accelerator Partnership and the outcomes it aims to produce	<p>A match is not required and can be federal or non-federal funds or in-kind support. A matching component may be used to differentiate between otherwise similarly scoring proposals.</p>
Additional Information at Contestant's Discretion (1 slide)	



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

- Contestant may use this slide to provide any additional information that would be useful for the submission.

Summary Slide (will be made public if selected)

- Make your own public-facing, one-slide submission summary that summarizes information about your partnership, the shared vision of the ecosystem you are building, and the Growth Accelerator Partnership plan.
- There is no template, so feel free to present the information as you see fit. Please make any text readable in a standard printout and conference room projection.

4) Eligibility Rules for Participating in the Competition

This Competition is open only to:

- a) citizens or permanent residents of the United States who are at least eighteen (18) years of age at the time of their submission of an entry (or teams of such individuals);
- b) private entities, such as corporations or other organizations, both for profit and nonprofit, that are incorporated or organized in and maintain a primary place of business in the United States, and that are not owned or controlled by a foreign government or foreign government sponsored entity. Individuals submitting on behalf of corporations, nonprofits, or other organizations or groups of individuals (such as an academic class or other team) must meet the eligibility requirements for individual Contestants.

SBA employees and contractors are not eligible, nor are Federal entities or Federal employees acting within the scope of their employment. Individuals or organizations that are currently suspended or debarred by the federal government are not eligible for this Competition.

5) Registration/Submission Requirements

Interested persons or entities should review these Competition Rules before entering the Competition. All Contestants must enter the Competition through the Competition website at www.AmericasSeedFund.us.



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

Necessary steps and considerations include the following for Stage One:

- a) Access the submission link at www.AmericasSeedFund.us. The Submission period will begin no later than thirty (30) days after the Competition is published on Challenge.gov.
- b) Complete Contestant information on the submission page.
- c) Upload submission in the designated field. At a minimum, submissions must include:
 1. A submission slide deck addressing all listed elements, the link to a public video, and a single slide summary.
 2. Maximum length of submission slide deck is 13 pages for Stage One. Maximum length of the video is 90 seconds.
 3. A standard, 11-point minimum font size applies. Tables, images, and illustrations may use a reduced font size not less than 8-point and may be landscape.
 4. Only Portable Document Format File (.pdf) will be accepted. The slide deck attachment must not exceed 10 MB in size. Submission attachments that exceed the file size above will not be accepted and will not be evaluated.
 5. All pages must be appropriately numbered and identified by the complete Contestant name and date in the header and/or footer.
 6. Page count will not be based upon the numbers of pages printed but rather dictated by the number of pages in a print layout view of the application. Counting pages in the order they appear for viewing will make up the page count. The page limits are applicable to graphs, tables, drawings, and any other attachments submitted with the proposals and not specifically excluded by the submission. Any index, table of contents, or glossary will not be included in the maximum page limitation.
- d) Submissions must not include business or personal information not specifically requested by these Competition Rules. For example, social security numbers should not be included with a submission.
- e) Registration is Free of Charge.
- f) No SBA logo – The application must not use SBA's logo or official seal in the Submission and must not claim SBA endorsement. The award of a prize in this Competition does not constitute an endorsement of a specific entity, service, or product by SBA or the Federal government.

6) Judging

Ultimately, a Judging Panel will rate the submissions based on the criteria and requirements specified in these Competition Rules. The decision of the Judges will be announced on the Competition website (www.AmericasSeedFund.us).

The members of the Judging Panel will be selected by SBA, at its sole discretion, and will be comprised of SBA personnel, and potentially include other federal agency representatives, and



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

private sector experts. Each judge will serve on a volunteer basis. Each judge will be screened by SBA to ensure he/she does not: (1) have personal or financial interest in, or serve as an employee, officer, director, or agent of, any Contestant; or (2) have a familial relationship with a Contestant.

7) Selection of Winners

- a. **Screening and Vetting** - Once the submissions period closes, SBA will review the submissions for completeness and Contestant eligibility. SBA may, at its sole discretion, request clarifying or explanatory information. Eligible Contestants selected for awards will be vetted by SBA for, among other things, conflicts of interest with the Agency.
- b. **Winners Selection** - The Judging Panel will choose as winners those submissions that, in the Judging Panel's sole judgment, best satisfy the Competition criteria and present the greatest potential for success. If an applicant does not meet the eligibility criteria and does not provide the basic contact details and the information outlined for the Submission slide deck (See Section 3), the application will be deemed ineligible. In addition to reviewing the applications for the individual merit of their proposals, judges may also take into account the geographic location and dispersal of Contestants, the extension of services to underserved populations, industry diversity, the risk posed by the Contestant's organization, and other similar considerations when selecting winners.

8) Verification of Winners

The winners must continue to comply with all terms and conditions of these Competition Rules, and winning is contingent upon fulfilling all applicable rules, policies and requirements, including the requirements contained herein.

9) Applicable Law

This Competition is being conducted by SBA pursuant to the America Competes Act (15 U.S.C. § 3719) and is subject to all applicable federal laws and regulations. By participating in this Competition, each Contestant gives its full and unconditional agreement to the Competition Rules, which are final and binding in all matters related to the Competition. A Contestant's eligibility for a prize award is contingent upon their fulfilling all requirements identified in these Competition Rules. Publication of these Competition Rules is not an obligation of funds on the part of SBA. SBA reserves the right to modify or cancel this Competition, in whole or in part, at any time prior to the award of prizes.

10) Conflicts of Interest

No individual acting as a judge at any stage of this Competition may have personal or financial interests in, or be an employee, officer, director, or agent of any Contestant or have a familial or financial relationship with a Contestant.



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

11) Intellectual Property Rights

All entries submitted in response to this Competition will remain the sole intellectual property of the individuals or organizations that developed them. By registering and entering a submission, each Contestant represents and warrants that it is the sole author and copyright owner of the submission, and that the submission is an original work of the contestant, or that the Contestant has acquired sufficient rights to use and to authorize others to use the submission, and that the submission does not infringe upon any copyright or upon any other third party rights of which the Contestant is aware.

By registering and entering a submission, however, the Contestant agrees that SBA reserves an irrevocable, nonexclusive, royalty-free license to use, copy, distribute to the public, create derivative works from, and publicly display and perform a submission.

12) Publicity Rights

By registering and entering a submission, each Contestant consents to SBA's and its agents' use, in perpetuity, of its name, likeness, photograph, voice, opinions, and/or hometown and state information for promotional or informational purposes through any form of media, worldwide, without further payment or consideration.

13) Liability and Insurance Requirements

By registering and entering a submission, each Contestant agrees to assume any and all risks and waive any and all claims against the U.S. Government and its related entities, except in the case of willful misconduct, for any injury, death, damage, or loss of property, revenue, or profits, whether direct, indirect, or consequential, arising from their participation in this Competition, whether the injury, death, damage, or loss arises through negligence or otherwise. By registering and entering a submission, each Contestant further represents and warrants that it possesses sufficient liability insurance or financial resources to cover claims by a third party for death, bodily injury, or property damage or loss resulting from any activity it carries out in connection with its participation in this Competition or claims by the U.S. Government for damage or loss to Government property resulting from such an activity. Contest winners should be prepared to demonstrate proof of insurance or financial responsibility in the event the SBA deems it necessary.

14) Record Retention and Disclosure

All submissions and related materials provided or made available to SBA in connection with this Competition automatically become SBA records and cannot be returned. Contestants should identify any confidential commercial information contained in their entries at the time of their submission to SBA. SBA will notify Contestants of any Freedom of Information Act requests the Agency receives during the Competition related to their submissions in accordance with 13 C.F.R. § 102.



2023 Growth Accelerator Fund Competition Prize Competition Rules

15) Disclaimers

SBA and its agents are not responsible for:

- a. Any incorrect or inaccurate information, whether caused by Contestants, printing errors, or by any of the equipment or programming associated with or utilized in the Competition;
- b. Technical failure of any kind, including, but not limited to malfunctions, interruptions or disconnections in phone lines, network hardware or software, or in connection with the Competition website;
- c. Unauthorized human intervention in any part of the entry process or the Competition;
- d. Technical or human error which may occur in the administration of the Competition or the processing of entries; or
- e. Any injury or damage to persons or property which may be caused, directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, from Contestant's participation in the Competition or receipt, use or misuse of any prize.

If for any reason a Contestant's entry is confirmed to have been erroneously deleted, lost, or otherwise destroyed or corrupted, Contestant's sole remedy is to submit another entry in the Competition, provided it is submitted before the initial screening of entries is completed.

16) General Conditions

SBA reserves the right at any time, for any reason, to cancel, suspend, and/or modify the Competition, or any part of it.

Participation constitutes each Contestant's full and unconditional agreement to these Official Rules and administrative decisions which are final and binding in all matters related to the Competition. The publishing of the Competition Rules is not an obligation of funds; the final award of prizes is contingent upon the availability of appropriations.