

# Future Funding Opportunity: NSF Launches K-12 Innovative Learning Technologies Prize Challenge

*Lewis-Burke Associates – January 17, 2023*

On January 12, The National Science Foundation (NSF) launched a new Visionary Interdisciplinary Teams Advancing Learning (VITAL) prize challenge through a partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Schmidt Futures, and the Walton Family Foundation. The challenge aims to fuse discoveries in STEM with education and training processes to positively transform the U.S. educational system and increase workforce development. Accepted teams will win funds to develop “innovative and translational K-12 learning technologies” that have the potential to be scaled nationwide. Proposals for this challenge should be for learning technologies in the initial feasibility phase of development. Fundamental research and technologies that are already validated with financial backing will not be funded as a part of the VITAL challenge.

Teams wishing to apply to the prize challenge should submit concept papers to one of the prize challenge’s three tracks: Rapid and Continuous Learning Assessment; Mathematical Literacy to Promote STEM Workforce; or Other Innovations in Translational Learning Technologies. Funded teams will have the opportunity to win over \$70,000 in development and commercialization support and up to \$250,000 in prizes.

Teams interested in participating in the VITAL prize challenge can submit concept papers to The VITAL Prize Challenge portal. NSF has outlined the application process and subsequent challenge structure as follows:

1. **“Concept Paper:** A concept paper is submitted by any interested team.
2. **Discovery Round:** An invitational opportunity for approximately 100 teams, chosen from those submitting Concept Papers, to participate in customer discovery activities.
3. **Semi-Final Round:** Approximately 55 teams are partnered with an educational mentor (e.g., K-12 teacher) for prototype design, feasibility testing, and initial development activities.
4. **Final Round:** Approximately 35 teams will conduct prototype development and validation, culminating with a Pitch Session.”

**Eligibility:** Teams must be interdisciplinary and include both the private sector and universities and other members of the research and innovation ecosystem. Teams that include traditionally underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply.

**Dates of Significance:** The VITAL Prize Challenge portal will open and start accepting concept papers in Winter 2023 and the full prize challenge will run through January 2024. Details are forthcoming on the exact date the challenge will open.

## **Sources and Additional Information:**

- The VITAL prize challenge webpage can be viewed here: <https://beta.nsf.gov/tip/vital-prize-challenge> .

- The VITAL Dear Colleague Letter is available at <https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2023/nsf23042/nsf23042.pdf>.
- The prize challenge announcement can be found at <https://beta.nsf.gov/news/nsf-launches-prize-challenge-develop-innovative> .
- Those who wish to receive email notification on concept paper submission information can sign up for the NSF VITAL newsletter here: <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USNSF/signup/35140> .