Introduction to Challenge & Prize Competitions in Government

December 15, 2011

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President's Strategy for American Innovation

March 8, 2010 OMB Memo calls on all Agencies to increase their use of challenges

"The Federal government should … use high-risk, high-reward policy tools such as prizes and challenges to solve tough problems."

-President Barack Obama August 5, 2009

America Competes Act Further strengthens

What Is a Challenge ?

- "Seeker" challenges "solver" to identify a solution to a problem. Contestants rewarded for accomplishing a particular goal.

- Incentive prizes are often included. Can be monetary or non-monetary.

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Why Use Challenges?

- **Citizen Engagement**
  - Expand talent pool
  - Reach out to "unusual suspects"

- **Leverage Prize Money**
  - Pay only if a successful entry/solution
  - Private sector willing to invest more than value of prize

- **Aim High**
  - Shoot for big breakthroughs
  - Social & scientific innovations

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Among Distinguishing Characteristics

1. Establish an important goal without having to choose the approach or the team that is most likely to succeed.
2. Pay only for results .
3. Highlight excellence in a particular domain of human endeavor to motivate, inspire, and guide others.
4. Increase the number and diversity of the individuals, organizations, and teams that are addressing a particular problem or challenge of national or international significance.
5. Further a Federal agency's mission by attracting more interest and attention to a defined program, activity, or issue of concern.

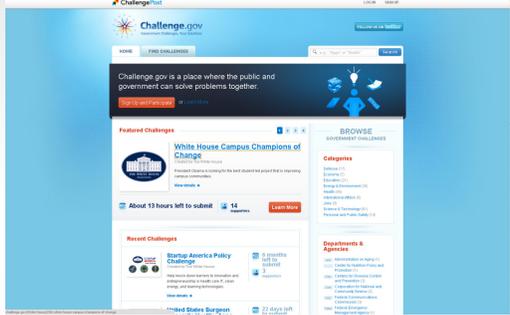GSA Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies
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Live Poll

- Has your agency run a Challenge?
A. Thinking about it.
B. About to launch one.
C. Yes, planning to do more.
D. Yes, but no future plans for more.
E. No

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Challenge.gov

- 137 challenges

- 37 different agencies

- Launched 9/7/10 with 35 challenges from 15 different agencies

- Built as a result of 3/8/10 memo from OMB's Jeffrey Zients

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On Challenge.gov

Agencies can host challenges for:
- Scientific & technical solutions
- Web & mobile applications
- Designs
- Concept papers or algorithms
- Business plans
- Photos, videos, posters
- Games & interactive elements

The public can:
- Submit solutions
- Participate in discussions
- Find and "follow" challenges
- Share challenges via Twitter, Facebook and email
- Win recognition or prizes

Use the platform to cross-promote and list challenges hosted on other websites.

Challenge.gov is free to federal agencies.

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America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010

Expands authority to conduct challenges. Allows agencies to:

- Use agency funds for challenges and prize purses

- Issue prizes up to $50 million

- Partner with other agencies, private sector, non-profits

- Use private funding

- Use outside experts as judges

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How GSA can help

- Best practices on HowTo.gov
http://www.howto.gov/social-media/challenges

- Challenges Community of Practice LISTSERV with 550+ members. Contact Karen.Trebon@gsa.gov to join.

- Challenge.gov is a great archive

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America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010

Requirements for Challenges. Agencies must:

- "Consult widely " when selecting topics for Challenges
- "Widely advertise" Challenges, publish notice in Federal Register
- Develop guidelines to ensure fairness of judges
- Ensure that prize money properly appropriated or committed in writing by private source.

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Should I launch a challenge? 7 things to consider

A **checklist** that will help determine if a challenge is right for your agency: http://bit.ly/ChallengeChecklist

Challenge Success Stories: http://go.usa.gov/5hV

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Q&A

Partnerships & Support through the General Schedule

541 4G

Challenges and competitions Services Service is to market and advertise for responses from the public to a challenge by a customer.

Currently 10 companies listed.

Details: http://go.usa.gov/5hl

Live Poll

- With what you've learned so far, have we given you:
A. Ideas to run a challenge
B. Answered your questions
C. Prompted more questions

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Future training

Case Studies: Tentative date 1/19, 2-3:30

America COMPETES Act & Other Challenge Legal Authorities: Tentative date 2/1, 2-3:30

Partnerships: Tentative date 2/16, 2-3:30

General Schedule 541-4G for Challenge and Competition Services
    Part 1: Contractors can help with improvements & contacts.
    Part 2: "Meet and Greet" with vendors. How to use the schedule.

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Asks:

- Feedback please!

- Want to be a speaker?

- Additional topics?

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Main Takeaway

Help is available!

- Start small and learn; then grow.
- Document your process.
- Measure impact.
- Have fun!

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Types of Prizes

1. **Point Solution prizes** aim to reward and spur development of solutions for a particular, well-defined problem
2. **Exposition prizes** help identify and promote a broad range of promising ideas and practices that may not otherwise attract attention, facilitating further development of the idea or practice by third parties .
3. **Network prizes** build networks and strengthen communities by organizing winners into new problem-solving communities that can deliver more impact than individual efforts .
4. **Participation prizes** create value during and after the competition – not through conferral of the prize award itself but through their role in encouraging contestants to change their behavior or develop new skills that may have beneficial effects during and beyond the competition.
5. **Market Stimulation prizes** try to establish the viability of a market to address a potential market failure, mobilize additional human talent and financial capital to jumpstart the development of a new industry, or change public perceptions about what is possible.

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