



Kids.gov “How Do I Become President?” Challenge Lessons Learned

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The Challenge

Kids.gov is frequently asked, “How can I become the President when I grow up?” The Kids.gov team invited to the public to answer this question by creating an infographic or a poster to explain the process. The team ran the contest on the Challenge.gov platform at <http://challenge.gov/GSA/44-kids-gov-how-do-i-become-president-challenge>

Submissions were accepted from people age 18 and over and also ages 13-17 with a parental consent form. Submissions from kids under the age of 13 were accepted if a parent signed up for an account, submitted the entry, and returned the consent form.

The Kids.gov team recruited a panel of five expert judges to pick the overall winner. Three categories of prizes were awarded:

- Best Overall Infographic (\$2,500) – The panel of judges chose the best overall solution created by a person age 18 or older. It was featured on Kids.gov, its creator received \$2,500, and will be printed as posters for distribution to schools and libraries across the country.
- Best Infographic by a Kid (\$2,500) – The Kids.gov Team chose the best solution created by a person under the age of 18. It was featured on Kids.gov and its creator received \$2,500.
- People’s Choice – The top five solutions as voted by the public were featured on Kids.gov.

The submission period was open from September 7, 2010 through November 8, 2010. The panel of judges reviewed the 18+ submissions and rated them from November 9, 2010 through November 22, 2010. Public voting was also open during this same time period.

In total, 29 people submitted entries in the challenge. Ten entries were from people 18 or older and the remaining 19 were from people age 17 and younger. The winners were featured on Kids.gov and the Best Overall Infographic will be printed as posters and distributed to schools and libraries across the country.

Lessons Learned

Allow ample time to plan

The Kids.gov challenge was one of the first to launch with the Challenge.gov platform. Due to the timeline, the challenge had to be constructed and cleared with legal in a short period of time. There were also Children's Online Protection Act (COPPA) issues that had to be addressed in order to accept submissions from people under the age of 18. The short timeline meant that the team had little time to work on regular duties.

Engage legal early

Even though there was a short planning period, the challenge launched on-time. This is because the challenge team involved general counsel early in the planning process. The lawyers guided the team with respect to procurement related issues, reviewed the rules, and helped us figure out the best way to comply with COPPA.

Engage the judges from the beginning

Due to the short timeline, the challenge was planned and then judges were recruited. Four judges from outside of GSA volunteered their time and expertise to the challenge. In the future, the team wants to engage the judges earlier in the planning process. It would be helpful to work more closely with the judges (or other relevant partners) to design the challenge, the rules, the judging criteria, identify the right solver community, and find the best ways to engage the solver community.

Write clear judging criteria and rules

We put a lot of time into writing clear and thoughtful judging criteria and rules. This meant we received very few questions about how to submit an entry and the few questions we did receive could be answered by quoting the rules. We did not have to disqualify any entries and received a number of high quality of submissions. This is a testament to the time spent crafting the language.

Look at judging options carefully

We included public voting to engage the participants and it had limited success. Make sure to use more than one method of choosing a winner(s). If you need a quality product, do not rely on public voting alone.

Engage media outlets early in the planning process

This challenge had very little media coverage. The team recommends identifying and engaging media outlets earlier in the planning process. Partnering more closely with the judges could also provide useful connections to media outlets and other influencers.

Don't limit challenge participants to obvious groups

We had many more minors enter the challenge than was anticipated. This is because a few teachers used the challenge in a lesson plan, including an art teacher. The challenge team never considered reaching out to art teachers during the planning process. Think outside of the box when considering

who might want to participate in the challenge. It was a challenge to clear the legal hurdles in order to involve minors, but it was worth it. It will be easier to involve minors in the future because we now know how to satisfy COPPA.

Offer multiple ways to enter the challenge

Using only one platform and entry method simplified the process for the challenge team. It may also have meant that we inadvertently excluded participants who did not have consistent access to technology. One teacher told us that she did not have access to a scanner and neither did her students. It may have been beneficial to allow submissions of physical entries in certain circumstances. Consider your audience carefully when choosing methods of entry. Also consider your own ability to receive and process submissions.

Ensure continuous communication with challenge participants

Be sure to pick a challenge platform that provides a method for messaging all participants. There was a technical glitch that occurred during our challenge and we needed to let participants know about it. Only then did we realize that we could not message participants directly. Also, be sure to check if there are ways to follow up after the challenge that are outside of the challenge platform.

Ensure continuous communication with platform hosts

This is especially important when hosting a challenge on an externally controlled platform. Platform hosts may roll out system wide changes in the middle of a challenge. Be sure to check in periodically with challenge hosts to ensure consistency.