EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20502

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

FROM: DR. KELVIN K. DROEGEMEIER
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SUBJECT: EMPOWERING INNOVATORS TO DEVELOP SOLUTIONS TO COVID-19
             THROUGH PRIZES AND CHALLENGES

Dear Colleagues,

As the global leader in science and technology (S&T) research and innovation, the United States has demonstrated the value of a whole-of-Nation response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have called on the best and brightest to develop solutions through open innovation and harnessing the power of prizes and challenges. As you know, challenges and prize competitions – which President Trump strongly supports – represent a powerful mechanism by which your agency engages and motivates the collective ingenuity of American researchers to solve the most pressing issues facing our Nation. Therefore, I am writing to both update you on some of the exciting innovations now coming out of agency-led prize and challenge competitions, and to ask that you double down on your efforts to deploy them in meeting the challenges of COVID-19.

Below is a snapshot of agency-led open innovation activities, including prizes and challenges, that seek to solve a variety of critical issues presented by COVID-19. I know you will find these as exciting as I do!

Agency	Challenge Name	Brief Description
DOD	xTechSearch COVID-19 Ventilator Challenge[2]	The Joint Acquisition Task Force (JATF) opened the Commercial Solutions Opening (CSO) to solicit concepts from industry in support of domestic industrial capacity for the JATF and HHS COVID-19 response priorities.
DOD	Unite & Fight Industry Portal[3]	DOD has created this industry portal as a one-stop shop for defense industry, commercial companies and academia to share creative ideas with Federal agencies to combat COVID-19.
FDA	VHA Innovation Ecosystem and PrecisionFDA COVID-19 Risk Factor Modeling Challenge[4]	VHA Innovation Ecosystem and Veteran nonprofit, Challenge America partnered with Federal agencies, private industry, leading research universities, and nonprofits to develop innovative solutions to the challenges encountered by essential workers on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic.
FEMA	FEMA Crowdsourcing Unit COVID-19 Activation Toolkit[5]	FEMA launched this toolkit intended for Emergency Managers and their partners at the State, Local, Tribal and Territorial level to quickly pick up and implement crowdsourcing as part of their pandemic response operations.
HHS	Pandemic Response Hackathon[6]	The Office of the National Coordination for Health Information Technology launched a virtual hackathon aimed at mitigating the spread of COVID-19 and future pandemics in which 230+ teams proposed solutions related to public health, epidemiology, societal impacts and keeping our health workers safe.

Agency	Challenge	Description
HHS	Mental Health Innovation Challenge[7]	The Administration for Community Living (ACL) and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health launched the MENTAL Health Challenge to combat the social isolation and loneliness that older adults, people with disabilities and veterans often experience especially during COVID-19.
NASA	NASA@Work Coronavirus Response Challenge[8]	NASA launched an agency-wide call for ideas on its internal crowdsourcing platform NASA @ WORK for an internal website that fosters collaboration and provides NASA employees with an inventive way to share knowledge and solve challenges effectively.
NASA	Space Apps COVID-19 Challenge[9]	NASA launched this international grand challenge with over 15,000 participants in 150 countries who solved challenges using NASA, ESA, JAXA, CSA, and CNES space agency data and used Earth observation data to develop solutions to issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
VA	MIT Beat the Pandemic COVID-19 Challenge[10]	This 48-hour virtual hackathon was launched to address the most pressing issues arising from the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, including expanding and improving access to COVID-19 education and training resources.

In response to the requirements of the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010 and the Crowdsourcing and Citizen Science Act, in June 2019. OSTP released a report on the *Implementation of Federal Prize and Citizen Science Authority: Fiscal Years 2017-18.*[11] In order to continue cataloging and communicating these collective successes, to funding agencies and scientists alike, OSTP expects to complete the FY2019-20 report by early 2021. In the interim, **OSTP is convening open innovation working groups to receive updates from agency partners on how they are using their authority to run prizes and challenges to inform and educate. OSTP continues to coordinate with agency prize leads and practitioners across government and plans to host a series of webinars to support GSA's Challenge.gov team to assist Federal agencies in the development and execution of successful competitions to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

I deeply appreciate your leadership and encourage you to continue delivering on the promise made at the White House Roundtable Discussion on Fostering Innovation with Prizes and Challenges[12]. By engaging all four sectors of the American research enterprise – industry, academia, government, and non-profits – we can continue to harness the power of innovative approaches and galvanize transformational breakthroughs during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. As we underscore the power of prizes and challenges to spur private sector engagement, and advance scientific research and discovery, we must remember, perhaps most critically during this time, to inspire the next generation of makers and innovators.

Thank you very much for your attention to this important matter, and OSTP stands ready to assist you however we can.

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3 https://www.afwerx.af.mil/coronavirus.html
4 https://precision.fda.gov/challenges/1
5 https://www.crowdsourceem.org/integrating-crowdsourcing
6 https://datavant.com/pandemic-response-hackathon
7 https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2020/06/23/hhs-announces-mental-health-innovation-challenge.html
8 https://www.nasa.gov/directorates/spacetech/nasa-taps-workforce-for-innovative-ideas-for-coronavirus-response-efforts
9 https://covid19.spaceappschallenge.org/
10 https://covid19challenge.mit.edu/
11 https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Federal-Prize-and-Citizen-Science-Implementation-FY17-18-Report-June-2019.pdf
12 https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/trump-administration-supports-fostering-innovation-leveraging-prizes-challenges/