



Identifying Steps Forward in Use of Prizes to Spur Innovation

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Today OSTP released a [comprehensive report](#) detailing the use of prizes and competitions by agencies to spur innovation and solve grand challenges. Those efforts have expanded in recent months under the [America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010](#), which granted all Federal agencies authority to conduct prize competitions to spur innovation, solve tough problems, and advance their core missions.

The report details the remarkable benefits the Federal government has already reaped from more than 150 prize competitions implemented by 40 agencies since 2010 and early indicators of how the quantity and scope of public-sector prizes is likely to increase, helping agencies achieve their missions more efficiently and effectively.

Over the past three years, the Obama Administration has taken important steps to make prizes a standard tool in every agency's toolbox. In his September 2009 Strategy for American Innovation, President Obama called on all agencies to increase their use of prizes to address some of our Nation's most pressing challenges. In March 2010, the Office of Management and Budget issued a [policy framework](#) to guide agencies in using prizes to mobilize American ingenuity and advance their respective core missions. In September 2010, the Administration launched [Challenge.gov](#), a one-stop shop where entrepreneurs and citizen solvers can find public-sector prize competitions. To date, that site has featured more than 150 prize offerings from 40 agencies.

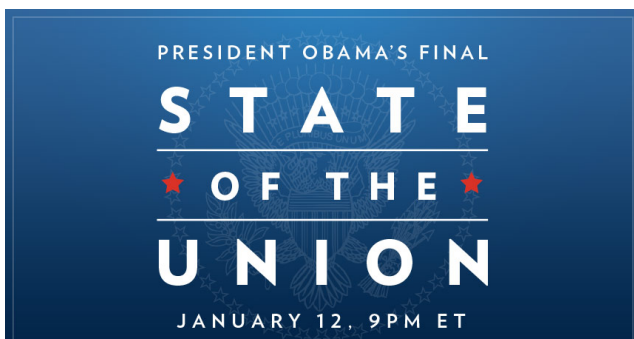
The prize authority in COMPETES is a key piece of this effort. By giving agencies a clear legal path and expanded authority for the use of competitions and challenges, the legislation makes it dramatically easier for agencies to enlist this powerful approach to problem-solving and to pursue more ambitious prizes with robust incentives.

To help agencies take full advantage of this authority, OSTP and the Office of Management and Budget jointly issued a [Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions](#) memorandum in August 2011. Agencies, including the [Department of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS), are establishing strategies and policies to expand their use of the new prize authority. The General Service Administration launched a new contract vehicle to dramatically decrease the amount of time required for agencies to tap the private-sector expertise that is so critical to early success. And a new government-wide [Center of Excellence for Collaborative Innovation](#), led by NASA, is providing guidance to agencies on the full lifecycle of prizes, from design through implementation to post-prize evaluation.

All indications from the first eight months of implementation are that COMPETES will help agencies across the Federal government continue to reap the benefits of high-impact prizes.

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