



**MINNESOTA STATE  
UNIVERSITY, MANKATO**

---

**CENTER FOR  
INNOVATION &  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP**



**BIG IDEAS  
CHALLENGE**

The College of Business at Minnesota State University – Mankato and the Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship hosts a student new venture competition called the Big Ideas Challenge. The mission of the Challenge is to provide a platform to support, celebrate and promote new, innovative ideas from our students.

What is a “Big Idea”?

A Big Idea brings new or significant value to some group of people, a unique value proposition. It can be a new organization, product, process or service. It could be a large change for an existing organization, product, or service. It can result in a for-profit or non-profit venture. Past big ideas have come from engineering, nursing, computer science and many other fields.

Questions

Contact us if you have any questions about the Big Ideas Challenge.

Dr. Shane Bowyer

Director, Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Ashley Niss

Marketing & Events Coordinator

[cie@mnsu.edu](mailto:cie@mnsu.edu)

507-389-1018

## 2023 Timeline

Monday, August 23, 2023	First Round Applications Open
Monday, October 2, 2023 • 5:00 p.m.	First Round Applications DUE
Friday, October 13, 2023	Finalists Notified
Mid October	Finalist/Mentor Meeting
Monday, November 6, 2023	Business Plans DUE
Friday, November 10, 2023	Individual Rehearsals with CIE Team
Monday, November 13, 2023	Slide Decks DUE
Wednesday, November 15, 2023	Rehearsal with CIE Team in Ostrander
Thursday, November 16, 2023	Live Pitch Event

## Eligibility

- Participants must be current full or part-time MNSU undergraduate or graduate students or recent alumni within two years of graduating. Open to any major.
- Teams may include 1 to 5 people and may include non-MNSU students as long as the team consists of at least 2/3 current students or recent alumni.
- Teams are no longer eligible to compete in the Big Ideas Challenge once they have won a cash prize. Teams may re-apply as many times as desired if they have not won a cash prize.
- Participants must follow rules and abide by all deadlines to remain eligible. At least one member of each team must attend both rehearsals.
- Participants agree that if they win first place, they will continue as a semifinalist in the Minnesota Cup.

## Application

Create a profile & apply via Slingshot:

<https://slingshot.io/minnesota-state-university-mankato>

Use registration code: "bigideas-msum"

Once your business idea is complete, email your personal website link to:

[shane.bowyer@mnsu](mailto:shane.bowyer@mnsu) and [ashley.niss.2@mnsu.edu](mailto:ashley.niss.2@mnsu.edu)

by the deadline: Monday, October 2, 2023 @ 5:00 p.m.

Applicants will receive Big Ideas Challenge updates throughout the competition via email. Be sure to provide an email address that you check daily.

All participants have the option to receive individual consulting from the Small Business Development Center, faculty and other mentors to assist with developing their idea, plan and pitch.

## Round 1 - Application

The first round consists of the business idea you put together and share using the [Slingshot webapp](#). This round is blind judged online by multiple judges.



For a demo on how to use Slingshot, watch the following video: [SlingshotDemo.mp4](#)

The CIE Team will not have access to your idea until your final website link is shared with us. You are welcome to create/build multiple ideas until your final idea is submitted. Once your business idea is complete, email your personal website link to: [shane.bowyer@mnsu](mailto:shane.bowyer@mnsu) and [ashley.niss.2@mnsu.edu](mailto:ashley.niss.2@mnsu.edu) by the deadline.

If you are experiencing issues with email verification when creating your account, please follow these steps:

1. Follow this link and login to your outlook email: [Safe Senders settings](#)
2. This will bring you to your junk email preferences. At this point, click the "+Add" button and enter the following email: [noreply@slyngshot.io](mailto:noreply@slyngshot.io)
3. Try having the verification code sent to your email again. If this doesn't work, please contact Ashley using the information below.

If you have a question or are experiencing an issue related to Slingshot, please contact Ashley Niss: [ashley.niss.2@mnsu.edu](mailto:ashley.niss.2@mnsu.edu) or 507-389-1018.

## **Round 2 – Business Plan**

The six teams with the highest judging scores will become finalists and advance onto round 2 & 3 of the Big Ideas Challenge.

Finalists will submit a business plan to Ashley Niss and Shane Bowyer to be shared with our judging panel by the deadline.

Help available for finalists:

- Individual mentors assigned to each team to help with plan and pitch
- Free LivePlan business plan software (upon request)
- Free coaching sessions with Small Business Development Center for plans
- Get detailed feedback on your presentation
- Prototyping tools, coaching and support at the CIE

## **Round 3 – Pitch Presentation**

For the event Day, November 16, teams will pitch their ideas in front of the judges and live audience, the audience will vote for the People’s Choice award and the winners will be announced.

## **Expectations**

The CIE Team holds the right to disqualify a team at a given time due to unprofessionalism. To comply with our guidelines, we expect the following:

- Teams must meet with their mentor(s) at least twice.
- Late applications, business plans, slide decks, etc. will not be accepted.
- Unless given timely notice, Teams are expected to be at all Big Ideas Challenge meetings and rehearsals.
- Other acts of unprofessionalism will be judged on a case-by-case bases.

## **Awards**

Winners will be selected based on business plan and pitch scores (50% each).

### Awards

- 1<sup>st</sup> Place & Minnesota Cup automatic semi-finalist
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place
- People's Choice (live audience voting during live pitch event)

Winners pledge, if they are students, to remain in college until graduation or for one year after receipt of the prize funds. All winners agree to participate in the Big Ideas judging or live pitch event the following year.

## **Minnesota Cup**

All participants are encouraged to apply for the Minnesota Cup competition in addition to Big Ideas. <https://carlsonschool.umn.edu/mn-cup/>

The winner of the general student competition of the Big Ideas Challenge will automatically move to the student semifinals in the Minnesota Cup (held the following October).

There are thousands of applications to the Minnesota Cup each year, so becoming an automatic semi-finalist is a tremendous boost toward that \$50,000 Student Division prize. By submitting your application to Big Ideas, you agree to participate in the Minnesota Cup, if you are selected as the first place competition winner.