

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – Mobilizing and Empowering the Nation and Technology to Address Loneliness & social isolation (MENTAL) Health Innovation Challenge (MENTAL Health Challenge)

Version 2 – July 31, 2020

This document will be updated with responses to any additional questions ACL receives. For more information about this Challenge please visit the [Challenge.gov](https://www.challenge.gov) website. Additional feedback or questions about this challenge can be sent via e-mail to MENTALHealthChallenge@acl.hhs.gov

1. **Question:** What is a Challenge?

Response: A challenge (also referred to as "prize challenge," "competition," "prize competition," "incentive prize" or any combination thereof) allows the public to solve problems presented by federal agencies and receive awards for the best solutions.

2. **Question:** Where and how can I access additional information and instructions regarding the Mobilizing and Empowering the Nation and Technology to Address Loneliness & social isolation (MENTAL) Health Innovation Challenge?

Response: To find the instructions and additional details, [click here](#) to get to the announcement page on Challenge.gov.

3. **Question:** What is the total prize amounts?

Response: The total prize award available is \$750,000. This MENTAL Health challenge entails two (2) phases with cash prize awards and a bonus cash award. Phase 1: Total prize funds \$150,000; up to 3 finalist each winning \$50,000. Please note - In the event we choose fewer than 3 Finalists, the \$150,000 will be split evenly among those teams selected (for example, if 2 teams are selected as Finalists each will receive \$75,000). Phase 2: Total prize funds \$550,000: winner awarded \$450,000; runner up \$100,000. Finalists and the winner are eligible for a bonus prize if they submit a written assessment detailing their continued work to implement, scale and sustain the solution. The bonus prize award is \$50,000. The bonus prize submissions will be due September 30, 2021 and details will be provided at a later date.

4. **Question:** Are there any non-monetary awards?

Response: Yes, The top two contenders will present their solution at the CES 2021 in Las Vegas, NV (January 6-9, 2021). In addition the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health is planning the Healthy Aging Summit conference for 2021 and the winner will be asked to present the solution at this conference.

5. **Question:** Who is eligible for the MENTAL Health Challenge?

Response: To be eligible to win a prize under this challenge, an individual or entity may participate as part of one or more teams. Team formation is strongly encouraged, and teams are not limited in the number of members. Each team must designate a captain who must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident who is responsible for all correspondence regarding this Challenge. An individual or entity:

- Shall have registered to participate in the competition under the rules promulgated by the Administration for Community Living;
- Shall have complied with all the requirements under this section;
- In the case of a private entity, shall be incorporated in and maintain a primary place of business in the United States, and in the case of an individual, whether participating singly or in a group, shall be a citizen or permanent resident of the United States;
- May not be a Federal entity or Federal employee acting within the scope of their employment (all non-HHS, non-Federal Communications Commission (FCC) or non-Veterans Affairs (VA) federal employees must consult with their agency Ethics Official to determine whether the federal ethics rules will limit or prohibit the acceptance of a Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science (COMPETES) Act prize);
- Shall not be an HHS, FCC, or VA employee;
- Federal grantees may not use Federal funds to develop submissions unless consistent with the purpose of their grant award; and
- Federal contractors may not use Federal funds from a contract to develop COMPETES Act challenge submissions or to fund efforts in support of a COMPETES Act challenge submission.

The Federal government will not select, as a winner, an individual or entity that is on the Exclude Parties List.

6. **Question:** Is local law enforcement eligible for this challenge? Many of the members of service are veterans and/or minorities.

Response: Local law enforcement may be eligible for this challenge provided they meet the eligibility requirements listed in the MENTAL Health Prize Challenge.

7. **Question:** Can an individual or entity participate on more than one team?

Response: Yes, an individual and/or entity can participate on more than one team. Multiple entries are permitted. Each solution must be sufficiently novel and unique and not be a minor modification of a prior submission.

8. **Question:** My organization has a system that we have implemented successfully and which can be adapted to achieve the goals of the MENTAL Health Challenge project. Can an adaptation of an existing system be submitted?

Response: Yes, as long as it is not a minor modification of a prior submission.

9. **Question:** How do I register for the MENTAL Health Challenge?

Response: Beginning June 23, 2020 at 7:15 AM EDT, the identified Official Representative (individual, team, or legal entity) may register for this Challenge by sending an email to MENTALHealthChallenge@acl.hhs.gov with the subject line stating 'MENTAL Health Challenge Registration'. In this email you must identify only one Official Representative for each Challenge registration. The Official Representative must provide a name and email address and, by sending in the registration, affirms on behalf of the Solver (individual, team, or legal

entity), that he or she has read and consents to be governed by the Challenge Rules. It is helpful to receive registrations for this challenge by July 15, 2020 in order to project the quantity of submissions and plan the application receipt and judging process. Registration for this Challenge are due on September 8, 2020 by 11:59 pm EDT with the organization or individual's Phase 1 submission.

10. **Question:** Can an individual or entity apply for the MENTAL Health Challenge after September 8, 2020?

Response: No, submissions for the MENTAL Health Challenge are due September 8, 2020.

11. **Question:** Where do I send questions about the MENTAL Health Challenge?

Response: Questions concerning this Challenge should be sent by email to MENTALHealthChallenge@acl.hhs.gov.

12. **Question:** The Challenge indicates that preference will be given to teams that coordinate with or are informed by a state ADRC/No Wrong Door (NWD) System. How can I get connected to my state ADRC/NWD System? What are some examples of how teams can "coordinate with or are informed by a state ADRC/NWD System"

Response: Contenders and teams have three options to connect with their state or territory ADRC/NWD systems.

- 1st option, is to email MENTALHealthChallenge@acl.hhs.gov with an interest to connect to your local ADRC/NWD system; or
- 2nd option is to visit the NWD website to reach out to the respective state NWD leads.
- 3rd option is to visit the <https://acl.gov/MENTAL> website and click on the "No Wrong Door System State/Territory Leads" under the Resources section on the website.

Response: Some examples of how contenders and teams can include their state or territory ADRC/NWD include:

- Letter of support from ADRC/NWD representative as part of submission;
- ADRC/NWD representative could be part of the formal team submitting a concept;
- Contender and/or team reaches out to ADRC/NWD to pilot, seek input and/or provide feedback on Challenge concepts and ideas;
- Contender and/or team utilizes ADRC/NWD as part of the deployment strategy of concept and ideas; and/or
- Contender and/or team shares a portion of the prize money with their local ADRC/NWD partner.

13. **Question:** Could you provide an update on the dates, the timeline.

Response: The registration for the prize challenge and submission for Phase 1 is due September 8, 2020. The submission for Phase 2 is due December 4, 2020. The top two contenders, present their solutions at the CES 2021 January 6 -9, 2021. The winner will be announced at CES 2021.

The bonus prize submission is due September 30, 2021. Eligibility for the bonus prize is limited to the Challenge finalists and winner.

14. **Question:** Will the slides be provided after today's session?

Response: Yes. Slides and other supporting material and documents will be posted to ACL's Challenge website at [ACL.gov\MENTAL](https://acl.gov/MENTAL) and the Challenge.gov website at <https://www.challenge.gov/challenge/MENTAL-health-social-isolation-challenge/>

15. **Question:** Are all of the resource organizations also eligible to apply?

Response: Yes, resource organizations are eligible to apply, under conditions they meet the eligibility requirements and choose to apply.

16. **Question:** Could you clarify as to whether we are to use existing videos, or produce them ourselves? Is there a good place to find such videos for given programs and services? I assume that a minority of programs would have such helpful videos?

Response: The State Assistive Technology (AT) programs have videos on certain technologies and may be a source. To find your state AT program visit:

<https://www.at3center.net/stateprogram> Technology companies that produce technology some times have training videos available for end users to understand how to use the technology. But we do know, for example, whether it is Apple products or other sort of more mainstream smart technologies, that there are YouTube videos available that are - I think having transparency around where some of these training materials already reside could be helpful to the solvers, the challenge participants.

Our hope would be to use existing training videos to add to a clearinghouse, given the time frame.

17. **Question:** Can states participate?

Response: Eligible applicants include state agencies that are compliant with the terms and conditions of the Challenge and with the rules regarding the use of grant funds.

18. **Question:** Could you clarify this criteria, quoted "Degree to which the proposed solution enables real-time query and response with an electronic clearinghouse". Does that just mean, the matching of a user's assessment to a given resource happens quickly? Or are you implying a search functionality?

Response: It could be perhaps a combination of searching based on the data that is available from the assessment process. The goal or outcome is to use the data from the screening and assessment process to connect the individual to the social engagement programming and/or technologies that meet the individual's needs, interests and abilities. . It could be a combination of search functionality and algorithms that would be able to get you to a spectrum of options. We would really rely on the responders, along, with their team that comes together to figure out how that could best be achieved. We would, ideally, like to have a real-time process, so that there would not be a delay, and that the user would be able to receive the list of social engagement programming and/or technologies that meet their needs, interest and abilities and be able to enroll or acquire the selected program(s) and/or technologies. The goal is for the individual's experience, to be real time, smooth, and seamless.

19. **Question:** Seems like the turnaround is pretty quick to get a wide range of content. Are you looking more for the design concept versus a complete clearinghouse of what's available?

Response: Yes, it is really about design. Additional content can be added to the clearinghouse as you continue the design process. We plan to make available the information on where - in terms of social programs, programs for social connectedness exist. And, some of the organizations that we have been working with on a larger, sort of public - private effort to address social isolation. Could be potential sources, the members of these organizations could be sources of that content. But we will do our best within the time frames to provide and make transparent, the content that we are aware of. Because of the very, you know, ambitious timeframe here, because we all operating under the notion that we want something relevant during the pandemic to be operational and serving people. You know, this phase 1 is going to happen very quickly. So, you may not have all known, you know, sources of the clearinghouse available and populated during phase 1. But I think we are looking for this to be an iterative process over the next six months. So that we can get to a more complete universe of options over time. But, we can talk more about this and encourage folks to ask more questions, so, everyone has an understanding of the expectations.

20. **Question:** Is the initial focus of the challenge to create a solution at the national level? Or will a winning solution be scaled to national level after challenge is over?

Response: Our hope would be that we would have something available that could be accessed nationally. It may not be fully built out, but it would be helpful if the clearinghouse included some of the nationally available social engagement programming, and that we would work to build it out more specifically in local areas across the country as it became more mature. Our goal is to try to get to scale as rapidly as possible. But recognize that six months is not a lot of time to get to a fully scalable solution. The bonus award is intended to support the continued development and scaling of the winner and finalist solutions. Going from, as far as a winner can go in the next six months, and then, being able to take it to the next level, learning from the experience of the pilot, and really trying to scale and figure out how to sustain, a dynamic, clearinghouse that would be updated in real time. Another thing we recognize as an important opportunity is to really be able to build in feedback components into the clearinghouse so that we can get data on what social engagement programming and technology solutions are working well. And over time, we can evaluate what solutions are impactful. We'd also like to look at the status of an individual, pre-intervention and post intervention. But the main point here is that, we would expect it to be fully scaled after the challenge is over.

21. **Question:** Is the Official Representative designated in the registration email meant to be the same person as the captain "captain who must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident who is responsible for all correspondence regarding this Challenge"

Response: The captain of the team and the official representative should be the same person and should meet the criteria defined in the mental health prize challenge rules. However, there will be flexibility to update the Captain when someone is registering when their team might grow and the whole team hasn't yet decided on who would be the official captain. An organization might register, and then decide they are teaming with another organization. They would be able update the registration accordingly.

22. **Question:** For the submission are there prior examples of a governance model and concept paper?
Response: No. I would say the answer to that question at this time is no. I think, we will be giving more of an update on a plan that we are pursuing to ensure sustainability and scalability after January. Which will involve a governance model. We will be sharing more information at the July 30, 2020 webinar regarding how the clearinghouse could be governed over time and how the clearinghouse would be maintained. It is not something that has to be solved for completely in the design process. It is going to be an essential role for the success of the solution that is, the final winner.

23. **Question:** Can you speak to post-challenge partnerships that will be available with ACL? Is there a possibility that the ACL or other entities would contract and pay for an ongoing subscription to the winning platform?

Response: Beyond the \$50,000 bonus prize, any other federal and non-federal financing of the platform has not been determined. ACL is securing an Implementation Partner that will facilitate the formation of a multi-stakeholder governing body. The Implementation Partner will work together with the multi-stakeholder governing body to identify strategies to scale and sustain the clearinghouse.

24. **Question:** Can you provide a sense of how refined/completed the "prototype" must be for phase 1?

Response: An operational build of the user interface and clearinghouse with the ability to screen for social isolation, assess needs, and match to social engagement programming and/or technologies needs to be built. A clearinghouse that is fully populated is not expected. The clearing house needs to be sufficiently built to demonstrate the required functionality and to effectively test the prototype during the pilot phase with end users.

25. **Question:** What is the team expectation for an entity - would a single entity generally be expected to partner with one or more other entities? Or is a team within a single entity acceptable, if it comprises the necessary expertise? Are we expected to partner with one or more other entities? Or is a team within a single entity acceptable, if it comprises the necessary expertise?

Response: It's expected that a team would comprise a diverse set of experience, User Centered design, Artificial Intelligence development experience, database development, development of algorithms, knowledge of user needs, knowledge of community based programs, knowledge of accessibility requirements, knowledge of accessible technologies. While it's possible the knowledge could be contained in a team within an entity, we anticipate that the successful submission will be developed by a diverse group of people employed by multiple entities.

26. **Question:** For Phase 2 – Does the solution need to be implemented?

Response: For Phase 2 a fully functional prototype needs to be operational and tested by end users per the details in the MENTAL Health Innovation Challenge. Participant teams will pilot the prototype in collaboration with at least one Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) and convene in person to demonstrate the user experience with the tool and summarize results achieved during the pilot. Finalists will be asked to demonstrate the Social Engagement Clearinghouse with User Interface and submit the results of their pilot and testing of the Social Engagement Clearinghouse Prototype to MENTALHealthChallenge@acl.hhs.gov by December 4, 2020 at 11:59 pm EST. The submission will include:

- A written description of how the Social Engagement Clearinghouse with user interface prototype was modified to address the suggestions from the Phase 1 judges.
- A live demonstration of the Social Engagement Clearinghouse with User Interface prototype. The Phase II awardees (up to 2 Solvers) will be invited to demonstrate their Social Engagement Clearinghouse with User Interface with actual users (older adults, people with

disabilities, racial and minority populations and Veterans) in a virtual user testing session the week of December 7, 2020 (exact dates TBD). Solvers selected to participate in phase 2 must participate in the user testing in order to be evaluated.

- The wireframe of the Social Engagement Clearinghouse and User Interface prototype that was piloted. A written description of the wireframe with sufficient information to understand the functionality of the Social Engagement Clearinghouse.
- A three-page max written description of the results of the pilot test of the Social Engagement Clearinghouse Prototype. The written description shall include the numbers of people that used the Social Engagement Clearinghouse, the number of people that were successfully matched to social engagement programming, technology, software and apps. The number of people that enrolled in social programming and/or acquired technology, software and apps through the Social Engagement Clearinghouse, the number of people that participated in the social engagement programming and/or used the technology, software and/or apps, user feedback regarding the usability and functionality of the Social Engagement Clearinghouse, and the functionality of the Social Engagement Clearinghouse and the testing results for each function.
- All of the user testing feedback, data and evaluation information collected during the pilot phase.
- A list of lessons learned through the pilot test and suggested action steps to further develop the Social Engagement Clearinghouse.
- A proposal to scale the Social Engagement Clearinghouse and User Interface over the next 6 months with clear benchmarks.
- ACL will provide additional criteria throughout the various phases to further define requirement expectations.

27. **Question:** Can you speak to post-challenge partnerships that will be available with ACL? Is there a possibility that the ACL or other entities would contract and pay for an ongoing subscription to the winning platform?

Response: ACL envisions the clearinghouse to be part of a national campaign to address social isolation. Phase 1 finalists are asked to submit a sustainability strategy with their Phase 2 submission. ACL and partners will work closely with the winner and finalist during the Bonus Phase to explore sustainability strategies and pursue a scalability strategy.

28. **Question:** Who will be operating the clearing house and training in the long term after it is developed? How will it be funded long term?

Response: The clearinghouse will be part of a national campaign to address social isolation. It is envisioned that the clearinghouse will reside on or be linked to a .gov website dedicated to the national campaign to address social isolation. Phase 1 finalists are asked to submit a sustainability strategy with their Phase 2 submission. ACL and partners will work closely with the winner and finalist during the Bonus Phase to explore sustainability strategies and pursue a scalability strategy.

29. **Question:** Is the winner/finalist expected to manage the long-term sustainability/updates of the clearinghouse, or only propose the solution, and after scale/development is managed by ACL/partner agencies?

Response: The winner/finalist is expected to propose, scale and develop the solution. In addition, Phase 1 finalists are asked to submit a sustainability strategy with their Phase 2 submission. ACL and partners will work closely with the winner and finalist during the Bonus Phase to explore sustainability strategies and pursue a scalability strategy. ACL envisions that a governing body will provide guidance and oversight of the clearinghouse. The governing body would be responsible to develop and oversee the operational aspects of the clearinghouse.

30. **Question:** I presume that a comprehensive clearinghouse would include a variety of commercial resources with various price-points, claims, etc. that may not be accessible to all and have varying effects--any guidance regarding this aspect of inclusivity/rigor?

Response: For this challenge, solvers are asked to demonstrate the functionality of the clearinghouse for older adults, people with disabilities, Veterans, and racial and minority populations. These are aspects important to these populations. Solutions will be judged using the criteria described in the challenge. While the clearinghouse may not be completely built out and comprehensive in the prototype phase, solutions that can demonstrate the ability to match social engagement programs and technologies with individual's needs, interests and abilities will receive higher points than those that do not demonstrate this functionality.

31. **Question:** Just curious about the criteria we need to be putting in place for what resources are included the clearinghouse?

Response: Resources included in the clearinghouse should include social engagement programming and technologies that are available in the registrant's proposed geographical testing area and have been used to address social isolation experienced by older adults, people with disabilities, Veterans and/or racial and minority populations. ACL is working with their contractor to make a list of know social engagement programming and technologies available for solvers. Solvers may use this information to populate their prototype. Solvers may include additional social engagement programming and technologies that they identify by engaging with ADRC/NWD Systems, VDC providers, national organizations addressing social isolation and others.