

FAQs

PhD Innovation Challenges

The following is a list of frequently asked questions. Our Partner, HeroX, also maintains a more comprehensive Knowledge Base and Help Center that provides instruction related to project submission, team building and important processes and rules.

Who is HeroX?

HeroX is a leading crowdsourced innovation platform that has led and managed numerous innovation challenges for some of the world's leading organizations. Versatile PhD has a formal partnership with HeroX to bring specific challenges to our PhD community. More information on HeroX can be found at www.herox.com

What are "challenges"?

Challenges are **innovation competitions** and **micro-projects**. They are designed to tackle complex problems--societal, economic, scientific, organization and any other issue of interest. Each challenge has a sponsor (or multiple sponsors) who seeks to solve a specific problem and designs a process that will award the most innovative ideas to help solve it. Details on the current **NHLBI/NIH/NASA challenge** can be found in the Experiences section of the VPhD website.

How are challenges managed?

In terms of process, challenges are managed on the HeroX platform which is designed to facilitate collaboration and project submission. You will be able to ask questions and receive information along the way. Of course, the actual work involved is largely the focus of teams and project management will depend on your team's efforts and organization.

How can I find help or ask questions during the challenge?

Both Versatile PhD and HeroX will be available during the challenge to facilitate any questions with the sponsors. HeroX will provide more details during the registration process. In general, you can always contact Versatile PhD at social@versatilephd.com with any questions.

How do I sign up?

On our "Experiences" page (www.versatilephd.com/experiences) there is a link provided which will take you directly to the HeroX registration page, which includes more information on the challenge. Follow the directions on the HeroX site.

How much time do challenges require? Won't they conflict with my own work at university?

The time required will generally differ by specific sponsor the scope of the challenge but usually will run several months to a year from start to submission. The specific *NHLBI/NIH/NASA challenge* is divided into two stages.

- Stage 1 (Ideation) is from June 22, 2021 to September 22, 2021
- Stage 2 (Execution) is from *** to September 2022

Ideally, your current PhD or post-doctoral experience and domain knowledge can be applied to a specific challenge. Whether this conflicts with ongoing academic work will depend on your own situation. However, if you are working as part of a team to submit an entry, this can lighten the workload significantly.

What if I need to quit before the challenge is decided?

You can withdraw from the challenge at any time. Please notify Versatile PhD or HeroX so we can formally withdraw your (or your teams') status and communicate this to our sponsors.

What is my university's role in these challenges?

Your university has no formal role in this process. However, we would encourage you to speak with your graduate school administrators or advisors if you have questions or concerns. Of course, universities are encouraged to take a more active role in supporting the challenge and fielding its own participants.

How many teams can win a challenge?

A single challenge usually allows multiple teams to win, each at various levels (such as ideation and execution). Please refer to the challenge document for more details. In the *NHLBI/NIH/NASA challenge* there are a total of 10 prize winners.

Am I still eligible to participate if I have an existing IP or related contract with my university?

Each individual case is different. If you believe that a conflict may exist with your university or department advisors, please consult the appropriate university representatives.

Will I be able to interact with organizations and their staff?

Not initially. Prior to submission of your challenge solution, there will be communication and guidance from HeroX.

Can I participate in HeroX open innovation challenges if my school is not a VPhD subscriber?

Yes, participation is open to our entire Versatile PhD community. Basic accounts are free, sign up at www.versatilephd.com to access more information and other updates.

Can I participate as an international student?

In general, yes. For the *NHLBI/NIH/NASA challenge*, international students can participate as part of a team with US citizens or permanent residents but there are restrictions on winning prize

money. Please refer to the Hero challenge page for more information. Note that future projects may not have this limitation.

Who will own the IP?

Rules will differ by specific challenge. For the *NHLBI/NIH/NASA challenge*, IP will be owned by the participants. However, the sponsors have the right to promote or circulate your submission, even if such projects do not win the challenge. Please refer to the challenge document for more details. With respect to any potential university IP issues in relation to your work, please contact the appropriate university advisors for specific information.

Can I participate as part of a team to submit an entry?

Yes, and this is encouraged given the complexity of each challenge.

How can I find a team to work with to submit an entry?

VPhD's partner, HeroX, provides a "teaming platform" that can be accessed once you are registered for the challenge. In general, you are free to create teams of any size and quality. If you want to be part of a team, we will support you. HeroX provides more details in on how to build a team and submit an entry below:

- <https://www.herox.com/help/144-how-to-form-a-team-screencast>
- <https://www.herox.com/help/152-team-matching-feature>
- <https://www.herox.com/help/153-team-forming-and-submitting-an-entry>

Is there a size limit for teams?

No.

Does my PhD have to be in the same field as the challenge?

No.

I'm non-STEM. Can I participate in a STEM challenge?

Yes, you are free to participate in any challenge. It is important to note that challenges will often require a wide set of skills, both STEM and non-STEM.

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Can non-PhD participants be part of my team?

Yes. In fact, graduate students at all levels are encouraged to participate.

Is my participation considered "work"?

Your participation is not considered employment or part-time work. However, you will gain "work experience" from the challenge as many considerations for finding a solution will lie outside of the academic environment.

Is the prize considered “income”?

Generally, the Internal Revenue Service of the US considers money received from awards as ordinary income (and taxable). For more specific information, please consult with an accounting professional or the IRS website.

Are there faculty advisors for challenges?

Faculty is not formally as part of the challenge process. However, you are free to consult (or work) with any faculty advisors as part of your participation.

Are the challenges endorsed by my university?

We have not sought any endorsements for this challenge but would encourage you to speak with your graduate administrator or advisor if you have any questions. HeroX has long track record in managing such challenges and we, Versatile PhD, are confident in its potential usefulness for our community of graduate students and post-docs.

Can I make a reference to my participation on my CV/Resume even if I don't win?

Yes. This is one of the career benefits from participating in the challenge at any level. We will be providing some specific recommendations and tips on this as the challenge progresses, including how to include such on your CV.

How will I learn whether I won or not?

It is important that single or multi-stage challenges are highly organized in terms of submissions and feedback. Throughout the process, participants will be part of ongoing communications from HeroX and the sponsors in terms of project input and timing.

Will there be press coverage of the winners?

Generally, yes. The *NHLBI/NIH/NASA challenge* is part of a US government innovation effort with the intention of using ideas to solve the home oxygen problem and maximizing potential commercialization. The plan is to provide wide coverage of not only winners but other ideas which may be of interest to the health sector.

Will the organizations holding these challenges recruit me?

It is certainly possible. You and/or your team's work will be closely read by sponsor judges and its demonstrative value recognized by organizational leaders, who may have future hiring initiatives.

Why should I participate in a challenge?

Challenges are designed to provide you with non-academic project experience and to be able to demonstrate your ideas and value in the marketplace. We believe that this is key advantage for students and post-docs looking for non-academic careers. Of course, potential prize money and press recognition for high level challenges such as [***] are positives as well.

Who is funding the challenges?

Challenges are funded privately or publicly. The current **NHLBI/NIH/NASA challenge** is funded by the US government.

Are webinars/forums provided in support of the challenges?

Versatile PhD and HeroX will be providing informational webinars for each challenge. There are also instructional "how-to" videos available on the HeroX site that discuss process and organizational issues. Finally, the Versatile PhD Forum will be open for discussions, questions and potential networking opportunities.

Who comes up with the challenges?

Challenges are either initiated by sponsors or a result of collaboration/ideation between VPhD/HeroX and the sponsors.

For more detailed information and registration guidelines, go to <https://www.herox.com/help>. Still have questions? Contact us at social@versatilephd.com

PHD-SCALE INNOVATION CHALLENGES

NATIONAL HEART, LUNG, AND BLOOD INSTITUTE (NHLBI),
a part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH)

“AIR YOU WEAR CHALLENGE”

Help outpatients on supplemental oxygen lead fuller lives and win money to develop your solution to improve their oxygen delivery options

Two Phases

Challenge launch: June 22, 2021

Phase One Submissions Due: September 21, 2021

Phase Two launch: November 30, 2021

\$500,000 in Prizes

Phase 1 (\$50,000 each, 8 awards)

Phase 2 (\$100,000 combined for 1-3 place winners)

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Social Impact - Save Lives

Real World Validation

Career Advancement and Development

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