



THE DEMAND FOR CIVIC INNOVATION

Natural disasters and crises like the COVID-19 pandemic have demonstrated the value of sustained resiliency in our cities and communities across the United States. Federal, state, and local first responders and government officials need safe, reliable, and secure tools that will allow them to understand and adapt to changing environments in real-time to facilitate situational awareness. This identified need presents the opportunity for the partnerships in the annual [CIVIC Innovation Challenge](#).

CIVIC INNOVATION CHALLENGE 2021

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) is partnering with the National Science Foundation (NSF) and U.S. Department of Energy to co-sponsor the Civic Innovation Challenge (CIVIC), a nation-wide research and action competition that aims to fund ready-to-implement, research-based pilot projects that have the potential to be scalable and sustainable, and have transferable impact on community-identified priorities. Teams across government, academia, industry, and more are encouraged to consider how the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as other experiences in their communities, uncover new challenges, present new questions, and highlight the need for new perspectives and greater innovation.

The Civic Innovation Challenge (CIC) project goal is to provide federal funding for areas identified as “high need” for research due to the potential for positive societal

impact. The initiative is structured to foster innovation in a collaborative environment that results in products that are useful and widely available.

NSF, the project contractor, has a proven history of leveraging collaborative research networks for topics of national interest. NSF again leverages those resources for the sake of research for increasing disaster resiliency.

IDEA COMPETITION

In 2021, the CIC team held an idea competition comprised of community actors working together with researchers. This competition generated ideas that challenge the status-quo in order to drive innovation in the field of disaster resiliency. Applicants from 24 states, 34 governments, 58 universities, and 27 non-profit partners participated in the 2021 challenge, yielding a significant response of 110 submissions. NSF has since identified and selected the top teams and awarded federal grants totaling approximately \$1,000,000.

IMPACT

- The annual Challenge aims to flip the community-university dynamic, inviting civic leaders to identify priorities that would benefit most from innovation and then partner with universities to develop community-driven solutions.
- This effort will introduce new ideas and methodologies from our communities in a grass-roots format to solve local issues and ideally support national solutions as well.

UPCOMING MILESTONES

- Final Reporting (FY 24, Q3).

PROJECT PERFORMERS/PARTNERS

- National Science Foundation (NSF), Alexandria, VA