

STEM Solutions in Public Policy Award Competition

Frequently Asked Questions

1) Who is eligible to apply?

Any University of California masters or doctoral student in a science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) field is eligible to apply.

2) Must proposals be directly related to my graduate work?

Applicants are encouraged to draw on their graduate work and experience in developing bill proposals. However all STEM-related proposals are welcome. This includes bills that draw on scientific evidence in identifying a problem, solving a problem, or that would support STEM research and innovation in the State.

3) May groups collaborate on a proposal?

Groups of two or more are welcome to work together on a proposal. However, if a group's proposal wins, the research stipend and travel support will be issued only to a single designated (lead) participant.

4) May I submit more than one proposal?

Yes, you are welcome to submit more than one strong proposal for new STEM-related legislation.

5) What topics have previous proposal addressed?

Previous proposals have address mental health, water quality, product safety, climate change, utilities and energy, privacy, research funding, education, and more.

6) What makes a strong proposal?

A strong bill idea is clearly presented, feasible, and original. Successful proposals will identify a problem, solution, and explain in detail how the proposed policy solution would address the problem. As part of laying out the solution (Question #2 of the application), applicants are encouraged, but not required, to include draft bill language. Proposals may be modest or may be bold and ambitious, but all strong proposals will show awareness of the current policy and political landscape. Remember, if a legislator carries a bill based on the idea, they will need to work with opposition, build a coalition of supporters, address stakeholder concerns, and take into account the needs of their district and the districts of other legislators.

7) Where can I find information on similar legislation in California or other states?

There are many ways to find related legislation. These include news stories, the legislative summaries on the state assembly and senate policy committee websites, and in the database of California's legislation dating back to 1999 at leginfo.legislature.ca.gov. The National Council of State Legislatures' website provides similar resources for all 50 states.

8) Where can I find information on other governmental actions that have been taken to address the problem my proposal addresses?

As with the task of finding similar legislation, there are many ways to proceed. A good place to start is on the webpages of the state and federal departments or agencies that cover the issue area addressed by the proposal. For example, there may not have been recent legislation on a particular public health issue, but the California Department of Public Health may have promulgated relevant regulations or initiated a working group under existing statutory authority. Strong proposals will demonstrate an awareness of important activity related to the policy issue at hand within state agencies, departments, and commissions or at the local level.

9) How does the selection process work?

Participating UC faculty, UCCS staff, and legislative staff will identify the strongest proposals. Members of the committee will further investigate and develop these proposals, working with legislative offices to determine whether an elected official will introduce the legislation.

10) When can I expect to hear back?

You should expect to hear back concerning our decision in March 2021.

11) Might multiple bills be introduced based on multiple, unique STEM Solutions proposals? Might no legislation result from STEM Solutions proposals?

Multiple bills, or no bills, may be introduced based on STEM Solutions proposals. All Finalists will be honored as described above. Whether or not their proposal is advanced as a bill, finalists may also have the opportunity to discuss their proposal with legislator(s) and/or legislative staff in Sacramento.

12) What happens if a legislator decides to author a bill based on my proposal?

In this case, the bill will go through the legislative process. This means that it may be amended, may fail to pass out of a policy committee or during the floor vote, or it may make it all the way to the governor's desk only to be vetoed. Or, it could be signed! The old maxim holds true - never marry your bill, or you could get your heart broken. You will likely have the opportunity to meet with the legislative aide staffing the bill and possibly with the elected official authoring the bill. Often, when

constituents propose bill ideas they are included as witnesses in committee hearings, so some offices may choose to invite you to testify. However, each office has its own processes and may provide different levels of engagement to proposal authors.

13) Have proposal from past years resulted in legislation?

Yes! Assemblymember Quirk introduced AB 1178 based on the proposal that won last year's inaugural 2018 STEM Solution Competition. So far, Eric Lee, who submitted the idea, has contributed to a press release on the bill, drafted background materials, and participated in amendment negotiations. The bill is currently moving through the legislative process. He will likely testify in support of the bill when it is heard in committee. As written above, each office has its own processes and may provide different levels of engagement to proposal authors.