The NSF 2026 Idea Machine @WMU!

The NSF 2026 Idea Machine is a competition to help set the U.S. agenda for fundamental research in science and engineering. Participants can earn prizes and receive public recognition by suggesting the pressing research questions that need to be answered in the coming decade, the next set of “Big Ideas” for future investment by the National Science Foundation (NSF). It's an opportunity for researchers, the public and other interested stakeholders to contribute to NSF’s mission to support basic research and enable new discoveries that drive the U.S. economy, enhance national security and advance knowledge to sustain the country's global leadership in science and engineering.


Since Broncos have a lot of great big ideas, we would like to challenge our community to participate in this unique opportunity.

The NSF Idea Machine is open to anyone over 14 years of age. WMU would like to sponsor a competition to get the biggest boldest Bronco ideas into the Idea Machine. The competition is very simple.

1. **ELIGIBILITY:** A current Bronco student, staff or faculty member or teams. A potential future WMU student ages 14 and up in the state of Michigan (defined as enrolled in an accredited high school or community college).
2. The applicant gets their idea ready and submits to NSF via the official process by 11:59 p.m. EST on October 26, 2018.
3. The same entry to WMU must consist of a PDF file emailed to ovpr-marketing@wmich.edu no later than noon October 30, 2018 with the following:
   a. The email from NSF showing "Congratulations! Your proposal has been received and submitted for the NSF 2026 Idea Machine."
   b. Your submission which is obtained by using the download entry button after you have hit submit on the NSF Idea Machine web site.
   c. A list of all team members by name and the email address, affiliation and phone number of the team leader.
4. The initial review process will be the NSF Idea Machine competition.
5. At the completion of the NSF review, a Blue-Ribbon panel of science and engineering experts from WMU faculty, alums and local companies will judge the entries.
6. All team winners will split the prizes from WMU as described below at the discretion of the identified Team Leader.
7. Staff winners who receive a research grant must work under a WMU faculty member unless they already have Principle Investigator status at WMU or are eligible for this status at WMU.

Prizes will be given out as follows:

**STEP 1: NSF competition:**

**NSF STAGE 1:** Any idea submitted to NSF AND WMU which is selected to be one of the approximately 30 representative entries selected by NSF entries and invited to submit video pitches, will receive support from OVPR to prepare their entry. These entries will automatically be one of the winners of the WMU internal competition.

**NSF STAGE 2:** Any idea, which makes it to the round of 12 ideas for a virtual interview, will receive support from OVPR to prepare their entry. They will also receive a prize of $1,000 in the form of a scholarship for a high

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school student or undergraduate, a research stipend support for a WMU graduate student or research funding for faculty or staff to match the NSF award.

NSF STAGE 3: Any idea selected as a winning entry (2-4 expected from NSF) will receive an additional prize of $26,000 (scholarship for a high school student or undergraduate, research stipend support for a WMU graduate student or a research grant for faculty or staff) to match the NSF award.

Should any idea submitted to WMU be placed by recommendation of NSF into a formal collaboration among the authors of multiple original, essentially identical entries, the WMU contest participants will receive a prize equal to their contribution to the collaboration among the authors/team leaders of the multiple original entries as defined by NSF.

**STEP 2: WMU internal competition:**

WMU will award up to four WMU internal competition prizes chosen by the WMU Blue-Ribbon panel. This is inclusive of any winners in the STEP1 NSF competition.

For exceptional ideas submitted to the NSF Idea Machine: **For high school or community college students:** the winner will receive a $1000 scholarship for their first year in attendance at WMU. **For WMU undergraduate or graduate students:** the winner will receive a $1000 fellowship to do a paid research fellowship at WMU with the advisor of their choice by mutual agreement. **For WMU faculty or staff:** the winner will receive a grant of $1,000 for their research. In addition, if more than four applicants are NSF winners, all will receive the $1000 prize, and the top four ideas will receive the research award. Should the winner choose to work on their idea at WMU, an additional $5000 research award will be provided. These funds can pay for a stipend for a student winner (high school, undergraduate, community college or graduate student) to work with a WMU faculty advisor of their choice by mutual agreement, or provide a faculty or staff winner with $5000 to pay a student (undergraduate or graduate student) to work with them on their idea.

**Eligibility:**

All current faculty, staff and students (undergraduates or graduate students) at WMU must be at the University in their role at the time of award for either step of the competition. The WMU internal competition undergraduate research award can be used for the summer after graduation.

Should an undergraduate student graduate prior to completion of the award, the award can be used towards graduate school if the student is accepted into a WMU program.

Future Broncos applying (age 14 and up and enrolled in an accredited high school or community college at time of submission) must reside in the State of Michigan at the time of submission to the WMU internal competition and must be enrolled in an accredited high school or community college.

All NSF eligibility requirements must be met: see the NSF web site for details ([https://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/nsf2026ideamachine/eligibilityandrules.jsp](https://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/nsf2026ideamachine/eligibilityandrules.jsp)) but key rules are copied below from the NSF web site:

- All contestants (including individual entrants and all team members) must be at least 14 years of age on September 1, 2018.
- U.S. citizens or permanent residents, or residing legally in the U.S. on September 1, 2018.
- Only one entry per individual or team is permitted.
• A contestant may submit an entry as an individual or as a member of a team, but not both.
• A contestant may only be on at most one team.
• Entries may be submitted by individuals or by teams comprised of up to five individuals, one of whom must be designated as the team leader. For team submissions, the team leader will be responsible for determining the division of any prize money.
• The judges' decisions cannot be appealed.

DISCLAIMERS: WMU may modify or cancel the review process should an insufficient number of entries be received. Should more than four entries to WMU be selected in the NSF competition (Step 1), no additional prizes will be awarded in the Step 2 WMU competition.