



Creating a Better Future Awards Program

2017 Call for Applications





2017 Awards timeline:

Call for applications: April 3, 2017

Application deadline: May 26, 2017

Application fee:

\$75 SSTI members

\$95 non-members

Awards will be presented at SSTI's Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 14, 2017.

www.sstiawards.org

Overview



SSTI is pleased to announce the call for applications for the 2017 SSTI *Creating a Better Future Awards* program. The new title of the program is intended to better reflect the ever-changing field of tech-based economic development and celebrate exceptional initiatives that create a better future through science, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship. The intent of the program also is to offer practitioners and policymakers examples of successful approaches that are being employed across the country. The 2017 *Creating a Better Future Awards* program will recognize four broad categories of initiatives:

- **Creating a Better Future by Supporting & Converting Research**
- **Creating a Better Future through Entrepreneurship & Capital**
- **Creating a Better Future through Competitive Industries**
- **Creating a Better Future through Economic Opportunity**

While the *Creating a Better Future Awards* program is designed to celebrate long-standing achievement with winners serving as models for other states and regions to replicate, SSTI also recognizes the value in showcasing innovative and promising initiatives that will become the future models through the Most Promising Initiative award.

Award categories

The award categories are intended to reflect the types of outstanding approaches from across the country that comprise the ever-evolving field of tech-based economic development. Because these approaches can take many forms (e.g., programs, incentives designed to spur action, partnerships between organizations), we refer to them as initiatives rather than programs. In this year's call for applications, we are soliciting entries in the following categories:

Most Promising Initiative

This category recognizes initiatives launched in the last three years that are using new and exciting methods, creative program design, or are showing promise by taking an innovative approach to apply proven strategies that will create a better future through science, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship for their community. The initiatives also should address a specific need in a community or region identified as an obstacle to economic growth with an emphasis on innovative or creative design or implementation.

Applicants should address one specific tech-based economic development initiative (such as an effort to increase access to risk capital, build entrepreneurial capacity, commercialize research, etc.) rather than a comprehensive effort.

Creating a Better Future by Supporting & Converting Research

This category recognizes initiatives that create a better future by supporting the science and technology research capacity of an institution and/or converting research into technologies and products with high commercial potential. Initiatives appropriate for this award category may include, but are not limited to: commercialization programs; centers of excellence programs; industry-driven research partnerships; initiatives to expand research facilities; eminent scholar recruitment efforts; or, technology transfer activities.

Creating a Better Future through Entrepreneurship & Capital

This category recognizes initiatives that encourage and support entrepreneurship and/or enhance the ability of companies to access startup capital that will cultivate a community of entrepreneurs and help transform their ideas into a high-growth business. Initiatives recognized under this award can include, but are not limited to: enriching the skills and abilities of entrepreneurs; providing capital during the critical stages of capital formation; increasing the capacity of entrepreneurs to successfully start and grow companies; or, improving the environment for entrepreneurial development.

Creating a Better Future through Competitive Industries

This category recognizes initiatives that improve the competitiveness of a region's industries. Approaches may include, but are not limited to: expanding the innovation capacity of existing companies or industries; helping industries develop new leading-edge products or services; infusing innovation into business operations; or, cultivating an innovation ecosystem of interconnected businesses, suppliers, and associated institutions.

Creating a Better Future through Economic Opportunity

This category recognizes initiatives that create a better future by providing services and other support to help unleash the economic potential of people and places or that build a 21st-century workforce to meet the needs of local companies. This category recognizes initiatives that include, but are not limited to: supporting the inclusion of underrepresented groups in the innovation economy; preparing a STEM-educated workforce; or, connecting workers with the training and/or education necessary to address the needs of key regional industries.

Application process

In celebrating exceptional achievement of innovation economy initiatives, the awards program:

- Requires applicants to provide a clear explanation of the need for the initiative, a logical approach to addressing the need, and demonstrable results;
- Is highly selective with applications reviewed by a committee of distinguished current and former practitioners; and,
- Is rigorous, but fair, in its evaluation.

Awards will be presented only for exceptional achievement; therefore, SSTI reserves the right to withhold an award in a particular category if no applications are deemed as meeting the standards of the award.

Entry guidelines

Each entry must include a completed registration form, cover page, narrative, and payment of entry fee. The narrative document must be typed on a maximum of five 8.5" by 11" pages using a minimum font size of 11 points.

New in 2017: Applications are required to use the official awards cover page, downloadable versions are available at www.sstiawards.org. Applications without the official cover page will not be considered for judging.

Many initiatives can cross into multiple categories. Nominations can be submitted for more than one category; however, each entry is considered a separate nomination and requires a separate registration form, narrative, and application fee. It is up to the applicant to determine the proper category for their initiative; entries with no award category marked or multiple categories marked, will not be considered. Applicants can win in only one category.

How to apply

Visit www.sstiawards.org for complete instructions. Entries must be uploaded as a PDF or Word document.

Deadline for applications and payment is May 26, 2017, by 5 p.m. EDT.

Eligibility

Any economic development organization or practitioner is eligible to apply. This includes, but is not limited to: nonprofit organizations; local and state governments; institutions of higher education (including community colleges); federal agencies and labs; industry associations; economic development councils; and other organizations that promote innovation and technology-based economic development.

While SSTI encourages its members to apply, you do not need to be a member of SSTI to enter or receive an award, and your membership status will not affect the judges' evaluation of your application.

Selection committee & process

Each application will be reviewed by a committee of distinguished current and former practitioners with knowledge and experience within a given award category. Selection committee members are chosen each year by SSTI based on their experience, knowledge of the field, and accomplishments.

The selection committee will evaluate applications based on a set of weighted criteria. Evaluation criteria may be modified from year to year; however, the criteria will not be altered after the call for entries is announced.

If no application in an award category achieves the level of excellence contemplated for the award, the committee may decide not to make an award in that category. The selection committee will determine winners, and decisions of that committee will be final. All applicants will be notified of their status when winners are selected.

Evaluation criteria

Applications will be evaluated according to a scoring system with a set of weighted criteria based on the applicant's ability to clearly demonstrate: impact, transferability, partnerships, context, ability to achieve its vision, and innovativeness.

Judges will provide an overall score and a breakout score for the six criteria listed below. For all categories except the Most Promising Initiative, impact and transferability account for the highest percentage.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate each application.

Impact = 25%

- Does this effort have quantifiable metrics/measures? Are the measures and the methodology for determining the impact appropriate?
- Does the organization communicate its results in a meaningful and effective manner?

Transferability of lessons learned = 20%

- What aspects of this effort qualify it for a "best practice?"
- Is this effort structured in such a way that others can learn lessons and apply them to their region?

Criteria: Partnerships = 15%

- Has the project shown it has support of key leadership within its topic area?
- Does the initiative promote long-term or broad-reaching partnerships and collaboration?
- Does the initiative effectively leverage the resources and expertise of various organizations? Does it connect the dots in such a way as to maximize its goals and outcomes?

Evaluation Criteria *continued*

Criteria: Context = 15%

- Has the application demonstrated how it fits into the overall economic development efforts of its region?
 - Is the size and scope of the project meaningful to the geography in which it operates?
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Criteria: Innovativeness = 10%

- Does the effort significantly improve the quality standard for this area of tech-based economic development?
 - Did the applicant demonstrate a fresh, creative or new approach in developing or implementing the initiative?
 - What makes this effort stand out among others in its field?
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Criteria: Ability to achieve its vision = 15%

- Does the proposal articulate a long-term vision or strategy for the initiative?
 - Does it identify key resources and/or issues that could impact successful implementation? Overall, does the program demonstrate that it has the elements in place to be able to accomplish its goals over the life of the program?
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Evaluation criteria for Most Promising Initiative

Applications submitted for consideration in this category will be evaluated according to the same criteria used for the other categories; however, percentages assigned will be weighted differently. Scoring is heavily weighted on innovativeness and transferability.

- Innovativeness = 50%
- Transferability of lessons learned = 20%
- Ability to achieve its vision = 10%
- Partnerships = 10%
- Context = 10%

Applicants should address one specific innovation economy initiative (such as an effort to increase access to risk capital, build entrepreneurial capacity, commercialize research, etc.) rather than a comprehensive organizational effort.

Application narrative

The narrative template outlines specific information we are seeking for each entry.

While other information may be included, please answer the following questions. Unless otherwise noted, the length of answers may vary, but the total submission should not exceed five pages. Please refer to the application guidelines for additional suggestions.

Cover page

Provide a cover page using the official form (available at sstiawards.org) with the following information:

- Name of organization;
 - Name of nominated initiative;
 - Contact name and title; and,
 - Website address.
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Project overview

Provide a brief abstract of the initiative including its purpose, description of what it does, and its impact. (Please limit to 250 words; for winning entries, this abstract may be used in press materials.)

- Provide background on the context in which the initiative operates and why it was created. This should include information about the region the initiative serves (rural, mid-size metro, etc.), the region's overall innovation economy activities, and other factors that give the committee a better understanding of the conditions under which the initiative operates.
- Describe how the initiative has been tailored to suit this context and how it has addressed market failures within the region. The specific activities of the initiative must be clearly defined.

***Judges' tips:** Tell us what you did! Provide the definition of the problem, a description of your initiative, and evidence that it achieved its goal.*

Provide details about the initiatives' partners: Why are these partners crucial to the initiative? How do you engage with them? What do they bring to the effort?

Best practice implications

In this section of the narrative, applicants should address how lessons learned from this initiative can be applied to others.

- What lessons have been learned in the implementation of this initiative?
- How has this initiative helped to advance or been integrated with other economic development efforts (including traditional economic development efforts)?

***Judges' tips:** Think about how this program can be applied to another area! What would someone need to know to model their effort after yours? Highlighting examples of other regions adopting your model is always a plus.*

Impact

In this section of the narrative, each applicant should provide details about the impact of the initiative.

- What metrics are used to measure the outcomes of, or return on investment for the initiative? What has been the impact to date, and how is that impact determined?
- How are the results of the initiative communicated to key stakeholders, supporters and the public?

Judges' tips: The use of a chart or graph is a great idea! It also is a good idea to tell a success story (or two), if you have the space. Don't forget, make sure to carve out the results of the specific initiative!

Metrics! Metrics! Metrics! Provide specific goals and objectives of your program: what are your measures, what data do you use to help support the goals and metrics?

Innovation & effectiveness

In this section of the narrative, each applicant should address the following questions:

- What innovative approaches were used in developing and implementing the initiative?
- How does the initiative promote effective partnerships among relevant actors?
- How will the initiative successfully complete its objectives?
- What resources or key issues are needed for successful implementation?

Judges tips: We want to know you will be around for a while – provide information about how you are planning for future sustainability.

Every initiative is innovative, take time to think about a creative answer to an obstacle you faced!

Why you are the best

This is your final push! In no more than one paragraph, describe how your innovation economy initiative should be considered a leader in the field and why it should be selected.

Judges' tips: Tell us why you should be recognized by addressing these two questions: What distinguishes your program from others? How well has your initiative succeeded?

If you have any other questions, please visit sstiawards.org and download the awards' FAQ or contact Robert Ksiazkiewicz at: robk@ssti.org.

Congratulations to the 2016 SSTI award winners!



- The Most Promising TBED Initiative: Digital Health Accelerator: University City Science Center
- Creating Prosperity Through Entrepreneurship & Capital: Georgia Research Alliance – GRA Venture Fund, LLC
- Enhancing Prosperity Through Competitive Industries: Knowledge Based Economic Development, LLC – Knowledge Based Economic Development
- Increasing Prosperity Through Economic Opportunity: Idaho National Laboratory – Idaho Rural Partnership

To learn more about the 2016 award winners as well as past award winners visit: sstiawards.org.



2016 SSTI Award winners, left to right:
Lee Herron representing Georgia Research Alliance; Stephanie Cook representing Idaho National Laboratory; Dan Berglund, president & CEO of SSTI; Chris Laing representing University City Science Center; Rebecca Robinson representing Knowledge Based Economic Development, LLC.