

2026 President's Engagement and Innovation Prizes: Joint Information Session





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curf



Questions?

PEP: pennpep@upenn.edu

PIP: pennpip@upenn.edu

President's Engagement Prize: Brief History

Launched in
fall 2014; first
awarded in
spring 2015



Pictured: Katlyn Grasso, 2015 PEP cohort (for GenHERation)

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“Penn grads win chance
to change the world”

Pictured: Katlyn Grasso, 2015 PEP cohort (for GenHERation)

President's Innovation Prize: Brief History

Launched in
fall 2015; first
awarded in
spring 2016



Pictured: Alfredo Muniz and Sade Oba, 2016 PIP cohort (for XEED)

Eligibility requirements for 2025-26 Prize cycle

- Must be a Penn senior graduating in December 2025 or May/August 2026
- Underclassmen, alumni, graduate students and/or non-affiliates may assist with projects but are considered consultants for purpose of Prize competition



Pictured: Jack Roney and Ejun Hong, LensBright Initiative, 2025 PEP recipient

How many students can be on a PEP/PIP team?



Pictured: Inaya Zaman, Rashmi Acharya, and Imani Nkrumah Ardayfio, Nourish to Flourish, 2025 PEP recipient

- PEP: Max three per team; individual submissions are fine
- PIP: Max five per team; individual submissions are fine
- No preference by Selection Committee for individual or team submissions

What are the basic project requirements?

- PEP: Project should be designed as a nonprofit venture with the capacity to produce a positive impact locally (in Philadelphia), nationally (across the U.S.) or globally
- PIP: Project should be designed as a for-profit venture with a positive social mission



Pictured: Melanie Herbert and Alexandra Popescu, Sync Labs, 2025 PIP recipient

President's Sustainability Prize



Eli Moraru (left), inaugural President's Sustainability Prize recipient (2022), The Community Grocer

What does the meat of the application consist of?



Pictured: Piotr Lazarek, Nirby, 2025 President's Sustainability Prize (PIP track) recipient

- PEP: Project proposal (approximately 1,500 words total) plus a detailed budget planning form and written budget justification
- PIP: Four-page business plan, including a budget pro forma; optional elevator pitch video
- Full details are available on CURF's website

Are there any additional application requirements?

- 
- Penn project mentor commitment form
 - Additional letter of recommendation for each team member
 - Resume and unofficial transcript for each team member
 - Optional, but highly recommended: signed letters of preliminary interest/commitment from partners

Pictured: Saif Khawaja, 2022 President's Sustainability Prize (PIP track) recipient, Shinkei Systems

How do I go pick a mentor and identify partners?



- The ideal mentor knows you and has expertise in your project area
- Pick partner organizations that are both established and collaborative
- Select an appropriate number of partner organizations

What do Prize winners receive?

- PEP: Up to \$100K, plus a \$50K living stipend per team member
- PIP: \$100K, a \$50K living stipend per team member, space at the Pennovation Center and ongoing mentorship from the Penn Center for Innovation



Pictured: Will Danon and Luka Yancopoulos, 2022 PIP recipients (for Grapevine)

Who picks the Prize winner(s)?



Pictured: Chicago Furniture Bank, 2018 PEP recipient

- President Jameson makes the final selection; he is advised by a Selection Committee for each Prize
- Both Selection Committees contain one faculty representative from each undergraduate School, along with a former Prize recipient

Questions to keep in mind as you think through an idea

- How will you measure impact?
- How will you ensure sustainability?
- What makes your project unique?
- If selected as a winner, what might a typical “day in the life” look like for you?
- Why are you the right person (and/or team) to execute this project?



*Pictured: Manoj Simha and Rowana Miller,
Cosmic Writers (2022 PEP recipient)*

The deadline for ALL application materials is 11:59 p.m. Wednesday, January 21, 2026. No exceptions!



Pictured: Impact First Ventures, 2022 PEP recipient

**The deadline for ALL application materials is 11:59 p.m.
Wednesday, January 21, 2026. No exceptions!**

A photograph of four young men standing outdoors in front of a stone wall and trees. They are all wearing suits. From left to right: a white man in a blue suit, a white man in a dark blue suit with his arms crossed, an Asian man in a dark suit with his arms crossed and wearing glasses, and a Black man in a blue suit with his hands in his pockets. A white banner with black text is diagonally placed across the image, reading: "Be sure to fill out your pre-application from well in advance!"

Be sure to fill out your pre-application from well in advance!

Pictured: Impact First Ventures, 2022 PEP recipient

Tax and/or legal questions? Seek out an independent accounting and/or legal resource.

How do I get started?

Identify a problem

Develop a practical solution

Choose between PEP and PIP
(no double applications!)

Identify a team (if applicable)

Work through how best to
operationalize your solution

Where can I get support?

In addition to CURF, consider seeking out:

Penn Center for Innovation (PIP; co-administer of Prize)

Netter Center (PEP)

Civic House (PEP)

Fox Leadership (PEP)

Venture Lab (PEP and PIP)

Weiss Tech House (PIP)

Your Professors

Past Prize Recipients

What should I be doing as the year progresses?



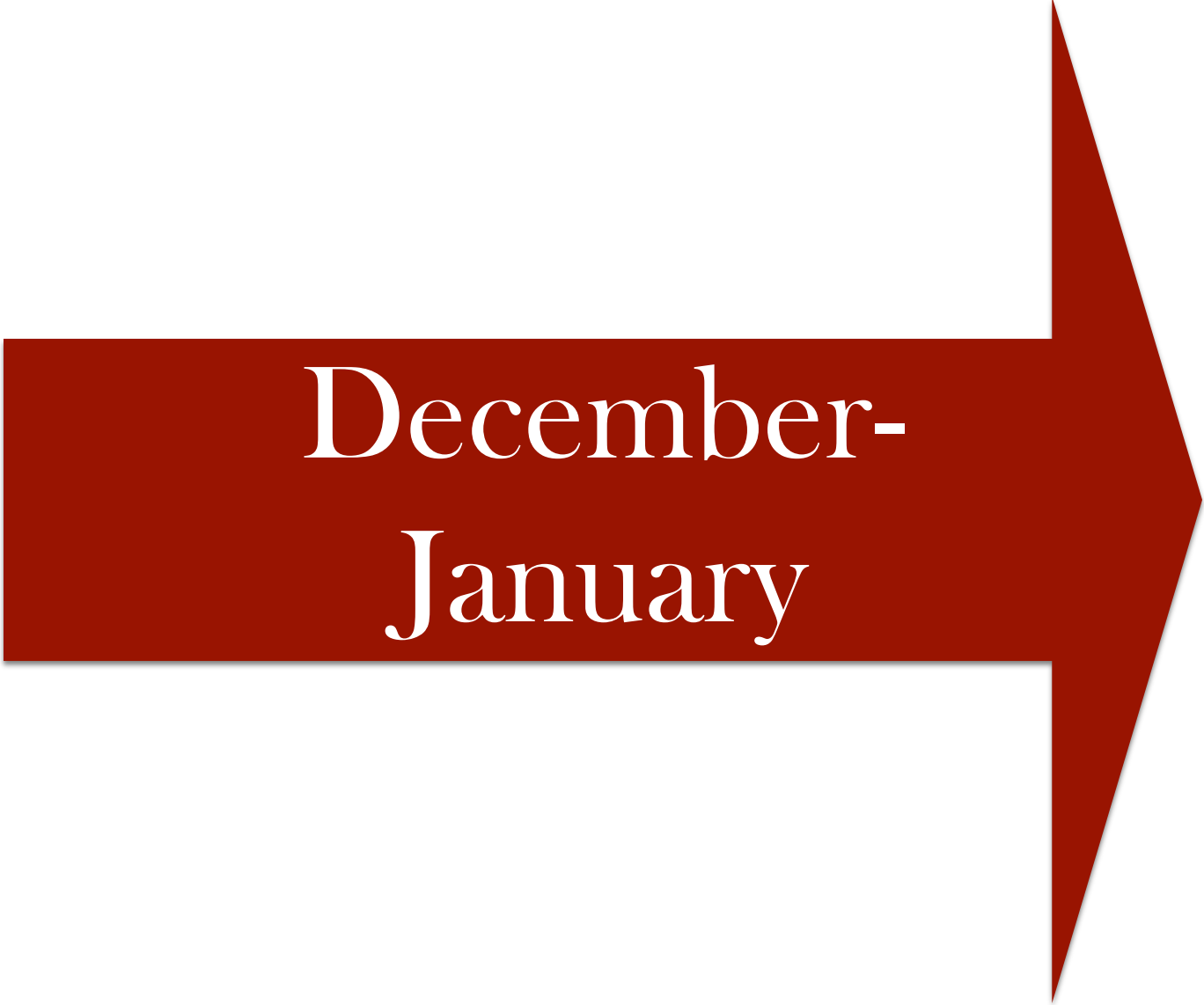
October

- Develop and refine your idea
- Form your team (if applicable)
- Decide between PEP and PIP



November-
December

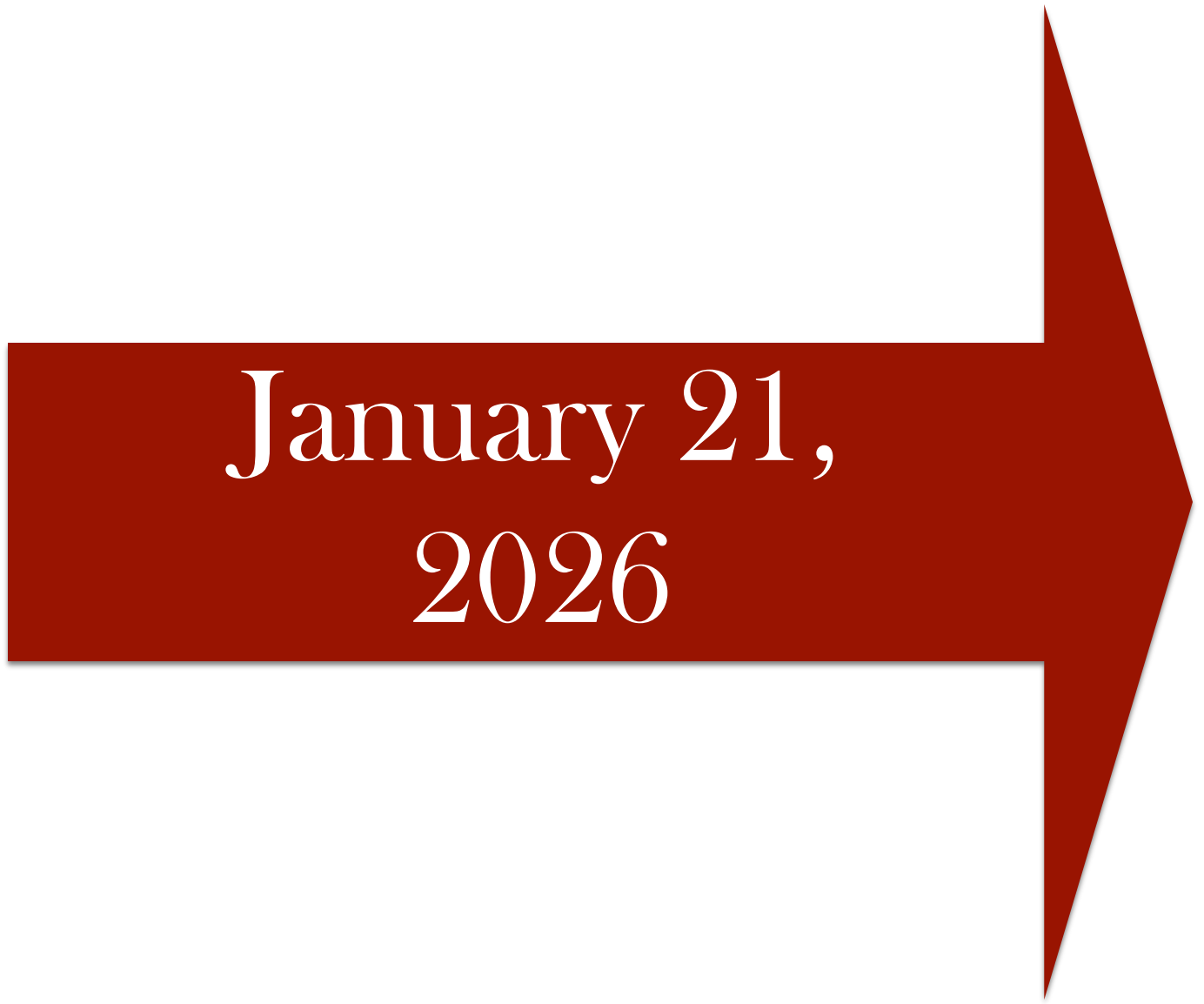
- Secure a mentor
- Secure partners, as/if needed
- Attend a session with a past recipient



December-
January

- Plan out budget
- Secure recommenders
- Work through and submit your application

When will I find out if I'm a winner?



January 21,
2026

- Application deadline



By end of
February

- Semifinalists notified; interviews/business pitches will follow in weeks ahead



By first week
of April

- President selects and informs recipients

How many students apply each year?

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Approximately 30-40 applications for PEP;
approximately 15-20 applications for PIP.

Is there a location-based preference
(i.e. local, national, global)?

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No.

Is there an inherent preference for
established ventures over new ideas?

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established ventures over new ideas?

No, but preparation and planning are key.

Additional questions?
They're probably already answered.

Read CURF's website thoroughly: curf.upenn.edu/prizes

Visit PEP and PIP websites for recipient profiles and contact info:
pennpep.upenn.edu and pennpip.upenn.edu

Attend another Prize-specific information session with a past recipient

Attend PCI office hours

Attend a session with the Penn Tax Office



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