

Awards Programs: Lessons Learned and Best Practices

LEIA Work Stream One

Submitted 31 January 2018; revised 28 March 2018



Contents

Section	Slide Number
Report Purpose and Structure	3
Common Types of Awards Programmes	4-8
Awards Programme Profiles	9-17
Global LEAP Awards: Overview, Lessons Learned, Best Practices	18-23
Overall Recommendations	24-25
Additional Resources	26-27

Report Purpose and Structure

This report:

- Provides a summary of information about the design and implementation of **awards programmes**, a term used here to describe programmes that utilize competitions and/or prizes to assess the relative quality of technologies (or business models, etc.).
- Discusses a variety of different programmatic models, and includes content based on CLASP's experience administering the Global LEAP Awards.
- Begins by laying out a typology of different awards programme models, followed by profiles of individual programmes that exemplify specific programmatic types. It then provides an overview and summary of lessons learned from the Global LEAP Awards, before concluding with a general set of awards programme best practices.



Common Types of Awards Programmes

Common Types of Awards Programmes

There are two main approaches to designing awards programmes:

- 1. Recognition:** Awards programmes that highlight best-in-class technology, or best practice in some other aspect of a given sector that already exists and promotes it broadly.
- 2. Inducement:** Awards programmes that require participants to meet a specific goal or achieve a desired outcome.

The typology that follows will describe common ways of utilizing these two approaches. Some awards programmes incorporate aspects of both approaches, as shown in the programme profiles to follow.

Awards programme participants have a variety of motivations, **including financial reward, peer recognition, personal satisfaction, and aspirational achievement.** Most awards programmes offer some combination of these incentives.

Common Types of Awards Programmes (cont.)

Programme Type	Description	Change Levers	Examples
Recognition, based on a standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarded for technology already in the market • Can also highlight a range of best practices, ideas, or opportunities within a field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying excellence • Influencing perception • Mobilising financing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Leap Awards • EC Food Scanner Prize • Global Security Challenge • D Prize
Recognition, based on community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate and strengthen a particular community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying excellence • Strengthening community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EuRoC • Global Leap Awards • Shell Springboard

Common Types of Awards Programmes (cont.)

Programme Type	Description	Change Levers	Examples
Inducement, based on market stimulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emulate market incentives, driving costs down through competition and exposing latent demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying excellence Mobilising talent, capital Focusing a community Influencing perception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ansari XPRIZE Saltire Prize DARPA Grand Challenge DFID Ideas to Impact
Inducement, based on point solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solve a challenging, well defined problem requiring innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focusing a community Mobilising talent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> L Prize Prize4Life Cleveland Clinic EC Spectrum Prize

Common Types of Awards Programmes (cont.)

Programme Type	Description	Change Levers	Examples
Inducement, based on stage gates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multi stage prizes• Filter the best ideas and work intensively with a more refined group• Support progress, maintain momentum and keep people motivated• Learn about how the prize is working and make changes• Celebrate incremental advances en route to a longer term goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying excellence• Strengthening community• Mobilising capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DARPA Grand Challenge• DFID Ideas to Impact



Awards Programme Profiles

Awards Program Profile – EU Sustainable Energy Awards



- **Type:** Recognition, based on community.
- **Overview:** To recognise outstanding innovation in energy efficiency and renewables among projects funded by the European Commission. The Awards are made as part of the EU Sustainable Energy Week Policy Conference. Winners are selected through a combination of expert assessment and online voting by the general public.
- **Incentives:** Peer recognition only.
- **Strength:** Provides a platform to highlight the best among all EC-funded projects; PR opportunity for both the project and the EU via the online voting process in addition to the announcement itself.
- **Weakness:** Somewhat insular, limited pool of potential participants.
- **Lesson Learned:** Providing substantial exposure to the general public can expand perceived benefits of a programme rooted in peer recognition.

Awards Program Profile – Shell Springboard



- **Type:** Recognition, based on community.
- **Overview:** Low-carbon innovation awards for UK entrepreneurs with commercially-viable business ideas that will reduce carbon emissions. Participants must be able to demonstrate an innovative element of the idea.
- **Incentives:** Cash prize purse of £350,000, shared across six winning companies.
- **Strength:** Early-stage funding for entrepreneurs and the opportunity to get detailed feedback from judges.
- **Weakness:** Real world impacts have been minimal, as a majority of past winners have not continued with the business idea due to technological and/or business management challenges.
- **Lesson Learned:** Awards programmes that span multiple rounds can modify evaluation criteria to improve impacts, but sustainability is a common challenge.

Awards Program Profile – Virgin Earth Challenge



- **Type:** Inducement, based on market stimulation.
- **Overview:** Prize offered for demonstration of a commercially viable technology that can permanently remove greenhouse gases from the Earth's atmosphere. The programme had a high-profile launch in 2007. To date, there have been 2600 applications and 11 finalists named.
- **Incentives:** Cash prize purse of \$25 million, to be awarded for a single winner.
- **Strength:** Inspired a significant amount of technology R&D and entrepreneurial activity across a wide variety of sectors.
- **Weakness:** Still no clear winner in sight and some of the finalists have moved on to other business priorities.
- **Lesson learned:** A fixed timeline – and evaluation criteria that inspire realistic achievements within the timeline – enable participants to better focus their efforts while ensuring a satisfactory outcome.

- **Type:** Inducement, based on point solution.
- **Overview:** An annual programme focused on a specific technical issue. The current year’s challenge is on “Improving Short Circuit Power of Battery Energy Storage Systems.” Participants submit research- and evidence-based concept notes, with IP of submissions transferred to ENEL.
- **Incentives:** Cash prize purse of \$10,000, awarded to a single winner.
- **Strength:** Provides an effective mechanism for focusing effort to solve specific technical challenges.
- **Weakness:** Brief submission window (30 days) and highly targeted focus results in a low number of submissions.
- **Lesson Learned:** Design submission processes (e.g., timelines, eligibility criteria) with the goal of ensuring as large a pool of potential participants as possible.

- **Type:** Recognition, based on community.
- **Overview:** High-profile annual sustainable energy awards programme that launched in 2001. Open to businesses, NGOs, social enterprises, and public sector entities. Solutions must be commercially proven/viable, have delivered clearly demonstrated benefits, and been in operation for at least a year.
- **Incentives:** Cash prize purse of £10,000 per award; peer recognition through a global platform with strong brand recognition and visibility in the investment/finance space; marketing support to produce broadcast-quality films.
- **Strength:** Focus on solutions that have already demonstrated outcomes ensures a high degree of quality and sustainability.
- **Weakness:** Stringent eligibility criteria potentially excludes some earlier stage ideas with high impact potential.
- **Lesson Learned:** High profile exposure and focus on storytelling hugely beneficial for participants and the broader community/sector.

Awards Program Profile – New Plastics Economy Innovation Prize



- **Type:** Inducement, based on stage gates.
- **Overview:** A programme focused on tackling a variety of challenges related to plastics. The program is split into two tracks, each of which has specific categories: Circular Design Challenge (3 categories) and Circular Material Challenge (2 categories).
- **Incentives:** Each track has a \$1 million cash prize purse, and awards are made in three tiers: up to 10 Early Ideas winners (\$10k each), up to 3 Early to Mid-Stage Accelerator Ready Ideas (\$100k each), up to 3 Advanced Accelerator Ready Ideas (\$200k each); winners also get placed in a 12-month accelerator program that provides access to industry experts, labs, and business support with intention to increase scalability. The programme also publically promotes honourable mention submission.
- **Strength:** Categories are well defined and cover a wide range of sector-specific issues (eg 'Redesigning sachets', 'Re-inventing coffee on-the-go').
- **Weakness:** Numerous prizes for early-stage ideas increases the likelihood that some will not be successful.
- **Lesson Learned:** Broad range of submission categories can be useful for multi-faceted challenges.

Awards Program Profile – DFID Solar Power Irrigation Pump Competition



Department
for International
Development

- **Type:** Inducement, based on point solution.
- **Overview:** Organized by Innovative UK and supported by DFID to catalyze development of a solar-powered irrigation pump prototype that demonstrated significant improvements in cost, energy requirements and volume of water delivered compared to existing solutions. DFID ran this competition through SBRI (the Small Business Research Initiative).
- **Incentives:** Cash prize purse up to £800,000, potentially shared across multiple projects.
- **Strength:** Substantial prize purse drew attention to the need for innovative solutions. The target requirements (e.g. weight, lift, volume, production cost) were a good example of a point solution approach.
- **Weakness:** Short registration window (around 2 months) and strict eligibility criteria.
- **Lesson Learned:** Duration of submission period should enable a broadly-focused outreach campaign.

General Awards Programme Lessons Learned

- **Enabling Environment** – Award programmes or prizes are most successful when linked to additional activities in the target sector or parallel sectors that help motivate participants and address common participant challenges.
- **Design Consistency** – An awards programme’s timeline and terms and conditions should be fixed at the start and should only be changed in communication if absolutely necessary. Any changes should be communicated to participants, with a clear explanation of the reasoning for the changes.
- **Level Playing Field** – Provide the same information and access to support, on an equal basis, to all potential participants. This will ensure that participants view the programme as fair and equitable.
- **Gender or Age Bias** – Design an awards programme with a goal of mitigating gender and age range bias. This should include tailoring programme incentives accordingly.

Global LEAP Awards: Overview, Lessons Learned, and Best Practices



Global LEAP Awards Overview



CLASP serves as the operating agent of the Global LEAP Awards, an initiative of the Clean Energy Ministerial's Global Lighting and Energy Access Partnership.

Purpose and objectives

- The Global LEAP Awards is an international competition that identifies the world's best, most energy-efficient off-grid appliances. The Global LEAP Awards provide clear and actionable signals about the quality and energy performance of off-grid appliances.
- The primary objectives are to:
 - Provide off-grid solar market stakeholders clear and actionable signals about the quality and energy performance of off-grid appliances.
 - Enable companies, investors, and policymakers to make faster, better-informed decisions.

History

- The inaugural Global LEAP Awards took place in 2014 and included competitions for off-grid televisions and LED room lighting appliances that received a total of 33 product nominations.
- The second round took place in 2015-16, with competitions for off-grid televisions and fans that received a total of 53 product nominations.
- The third round took place in 2016-17, with competitions for off-grid televisions, fans, and refrigerators that received a total of 128 product nominations.

Global LEAP Awards Overview (cont.)

Evaluation Process

- All products nominated for the Global LEAP Awards undergo rigorous performance verification testing by accredited laboratories for their energy performance, quality, and reliability. Nominated products are also evaluated by a panel of off-grid market experts.
- Off-grid appropriate laboratory test methods are critical to successful implementation of the Global LEAP Awards. CLASP collaborates with networks of off-grid energy industry stakeholders, appliance manufacturers, policymakers, and laboratory test facilities to develop test methods for every product category included in a Global LEAP Awards competition.



Incentives

- The Global LEAP Awards was initially developed as a **recognition** programme. Inclusion in a global marketing and promotional campaign, along with use of the Global LEAP brand as a marketing tool for Winning and Finalist products, remains a core benefit for participants.
- The suite of benefits available to participants expanded over time. The 2016-17 Global LEAP Awards included an **inducement** cash prize for innovation in one of the competitions, as well as business-to-business and investor **networking opportunities**.
- Global LEAP Awards Winners and Finalists are eligible to participate in the affiliated Global LEAP Off-Grid Appliance Procurement Incentives program, which was developed explicitly to provide these best-in-class products more timely paths to market.

Global LEAP Awards Lessons Learned



Programme Area	Lessons Learned
Technical Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initiate test method development process as early as possible.• Solicit input on test methods from a wide range of stakeholders.• Dedicate time and effort to onboarding test laboratory partners.• Coordinate closely with test laboratory partners throughout the evaluation process.
Participant Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure benefits address a wide variety of common business needs.• Tailor submissions outreach with individual companies to the aspect of the program that aligns with their needs.
Competition Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data management is a major component of competition administration, so create a clear and thorough information architecture at the outset of implementation.• Develop all tools and templates with a focus on 1) ease of use, and 2) future re-use (this includes email templates for participant correspondence).• Anticipate logistical challenges related to the evaluation process.

Best Practices for Awards Programme Administration

The following bullets present best practices for awards programme implementation based on CLASP's experience administering the Global LEAP Awards:

- **Invest in the development and execution of a comprehensive submissions outreach and communications plan:** Don't rely solely on the incentive package to attract participants. Effective – and extensive – outreach during the submission period is crucial to ensuring participation.
- **Offer a diverse suite of incentives to motivate participation and build program credibility:** Many awards programmes offer a simple cash prize purse, awarded to a single participant or a select few participants. A multi-faceted suite of incentives that addresses numerous challenges faced by participants in a given technology sector or market, at least some of which are available to a broad cross-section of participants, can address common concerns about awards programme sustainability while also encouraging submissions from participants with diverse needs and interests.
- **Leverage partnerships to expand incentive offerings:** Awards programmes have a finite amount of resources to allocate for participant incentives, most often made available as a cash prize purse. This makes it difficult to provide “soft” incentives, such as capacity building and other forms of technical assistance, which may have important long-term benefits. Identify partners that have a vested interest in supporting leaders in a given technology or market segment, and propose mutually-beneficial options for them to provide that support to awards programme participants (this also builds credibility for the programme).

Best Practices for Awards Programme Administration (cont.)

- **Anchor programme design and evaluation criteria in a deep understanding of technology and market landscape:** While awards programmes often aim to achieve high-level changes, specific and achievable objectives should also be considered as design principles. These objectives should reflect the needs of a given technology or market segment. Evaluation criteria should also reflect the current state of play in the technology or market segment, with enough specificity to guide participants while avoiding overly prescriptive or narrowly targeted outcomes.
- **Design the evaluation process to generate foundational market intelligence:** Awards programmes can produce valuable data on the nature and performance of innovative, early stage technology. The evaluation process – including quantitative and qualitative components – generates this data. It should therefore go beyond a narrow set of technical criteria and reflect a broader understanding of current market intelligence gaps and stakeholder needs. In addition, make a plan to package the results for public consumption and disseminate them broadly.
- **Utilize awards programmes to identify additional market barriers and potential interventions in a given sector:** Awards programmes generate unique insights about the state of a given technology or market. Use those insights to build partnerships and plan related interventions that can address barriers to innovation and market growth surfaced by the awards programme.



Recommendations

Overall Awards Programme Design and Implementation

- For product-focused awards programmes, establish suitable/well-defined eligibility criteria and a long enough entry window to attract a large number of entrants.
- Innovation is highly important in both the near-to-market and horizon/enabling technology categories that LEIA will focus on. Ensure that development of early-stage ideas and catalysing innovation make up a sufficient share of the incentives for awards programmes run under LEIA.
- Look for multiple products with similar performance, as opposed to a single winner, in order to engage as many participants as possible.
- Maintain a thorough evaluation process, transparency in the administration of that process, and accuracy re. data collection and measurement to ensure trust and credibility among participants and other stakeholders.
- Look beyond a narrowly defined set of technical criteria to consider other aspects of product performance, including:
 - Social impacts
 - Technological sustainability (recyclability/modularity/interoperability/circularity)
 - E-waste avoidance
 - Sustainability of the business or initiative behind a given product.
- Identify partners that can help LEIA-supported awards programmes offer “soft” benefits such as capacity building, mentoring, networking opportunities, etc.

Utilization of Global LEAP Awards Brand Recognition and Reputation

“We have been interested in the off-grid household and small business market for a long time, and the Global LEAP Awards presented a great opportunity to connect with major players in that market.”

– David Bergeron, Founder founder and CEO of SunDanzer in [an interview with Scaling Off-Grid Energy: A Grand Challenge for Development](#)

- The Global LEAP Awards is an existing and well-known platform with a strong reputation in the off-grid solar sector. The Awards provide the off-grid market clear and actionable signals about the quality and energy performance of off-grid appliances.
- An independent evaluation conducted by NESTA of the 2016-17 Global LEAP Awards Off-Grid Refrigerator Competition (*public version forthcoming*) found that Global LEAP Awards brand recognition was the most important driver of participation among nominees.
- Year-over-year increases in nominations across all rounds of the Global LEAP Awards are a clear signal of the increasing importance of the off-grid appliance market and the value of participation in the programme. Additional attributes of the Global LEAP Awards include:
 - The de facto position of the Global LEAP Awards as the only source of objective, third-party technical market intelligence about off-grid appliance products;
 - Familiarity and name recognition of the Global LEAP Awards brand among off-grid market leaders, including industry players and donors/partners;
 - Strong value-for money related to 1) existing partner commitments for co-funding associated with the Global LEAP Awards (e.g., new website, administrative funds) and 2) strong interest among partners regarding continued collaboration in ways that will expand the benefits available to participants.
- The Global LEAP Awards therefore present an asset for LEIA to utilize when designing and administering awards programmes.



Additional Resources

Additional Resources

- **Global LEAP Awards:** www.GlobalLEAP.org/awards
- **DFID Solar Power Irrigation Pump Competition:**
 - Overview: https://sbri.innovateuk.org/competition-display-page/-/asset_publisher/E809e7RZ5ZTz/content/solar-powered-irrigation-pump/1524978
 - Competition Results: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550479/Solar Powered Irrigation Pump SBRI Phase 1 - Competition Results.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550479/Solar_Powered_Irrigation_Pump_SBRI_Phase_1_-_Competition_Results.pdf)
- **EU Sustainable Energy Awards:** <https://eusew.eu/about-awards-competition>
- **Shell Springboard:** <http://www.shellspringboard.org/>
- **Virgin Earth Challenge:** <http://www.virginearth.com/>
- **Enel Challenge:** <https://openinnovability.enel.com>
- **Ashden Awards:** <https://www.ashden.org/>



**EFFICIENCY
FOR
ACCESS**