Prizes: FLoW DOE Cleantech UP prize: $50,000; FLoW Prizes: $125,000; Transformational Idea Award: $5,000.

Scope: The competition’s scope ranges from “Transformational Ideas” with potentially disruptive technologies to established “Ready to Commercialize” start-ups with customers.

Ideas with Transformational Potential: This group includes student teams or graduate researchers with promising technology and (preferably) validated lab prototypes, but at the start of developing a business model for commercialization. These can be your own ideas or grant-supported research projects that may have little or no established IP and are not incorporated as companies. Note that the “Transformational Idea” teams selected for the semi-finals should show evidence in their submission that they have worked with advisors to identify potential commercialization opportunities. Mentoring support will be provided to help qualifying “Transformational Idea” submissions define business models and strategies.

Ready to Commercialize: This group includes student teams or graduate researchers in the early seed or start-up phase, with some corporate development done, IP processing underway and where legal incorporation has been started or is strategically the next step, and needing mentoring support to rise to the next phase of development. In order to win the Regional FLoW prizes, you should use the FLoW resources to become as close to investor-ready as possible. Mentoring is regarded as essential and will be provided if needed.

Incorporation: Applicants do not need to have a company to enter the competition. However team ventures must be incorporated and have an Employer Identification Number (EIN) or be in process in order to receive any of the FLoW prizes.

Intellectual Property: You do not need IP in order to enter the competition. However, all teams intending to compete must sign and submit IP Declaration and IP Disclosure forms at the time of final entry, and e-mail them to the FLoW Office, C/O Stephanie C. Yanchinski, stephanie.yanchinski@caltech.edu. If you have applied for patents it is vitally important that the origin, ownership and status of IP be clarified at the time of submission. FLoW requires that you notify your faculty advisor, PI and technology transfer offices of your intention to apply if your technology is university-derived.

Mentoring: All teams must show they are working with mentors (check Mentoring Guidelines). FLoW applicants must submit a Mentor Request Form at the time of submission and indicate whether you need mentorship or already have a strong set of advisors.

IN-LA iCorps Webinar Series: All FLoW semi-finalists will be considered for the IN-LA iCorps Webinar Series. Please indicate interest by checking the IN-LA iCorps box in the YouNoodle application. All FLoW teams that successfully complete the educational program will qualify to apply for an additional $50,000 in NSF I-Corps Team grants. The IN-LA leadership will evaluate and sponsor selected teams.
**Money invested:** Companies or teams cannot have raised more than $200,000 in equity capital before entering the competition, in order to win the DOE prize and $750,000 in equity capital to be eligible for the FLoW prizes and Rocket Fund Awards. Note that grant support can be unlimited. A venture attracting more than $200,000 in financial support after submission and prior to the FLoW Finals, may still compete. But in the cases of investment greater than $1 million, the competition reserves the right to award the top prize to second place winners.

**Leadership:** The Company may have non-students on the team, but the Team Leader performing the role of “CEO” should be a student or graduate researcher and should drive participation and presenting at FLoW events.

**Team Formation:** Students from business schools and the science and engineering disciplines are strongly encouraged to form cross disciplinary teams. This partnership often brings synergistic ideas, knowledge and expertise that form strong contenders. The makeup and ability of the team to move an innovative idea from concept to a viable business will be a major factor in the final judging.

**Competing in other competitions:**
Contestants are encouraged to participate in other business plan competitions hosted by the DOE through the Cleantech UP network or on campus. This helps hone skills and gain valuable knowledge and connections. However you are required to inform the FLoW Administration of these competitions on submission. Contestants can win only one DOE Regional Cleantech UP Prize.

**Fulfilling the EERE’s Mission:** The FLoW 2.0 competition gives our applicants an opportunity to test their business vision against fulfilling the EERE mission [http://energy.gov/eere/office-energy-efficiency-renewable-energy](http://energy.gov/eere/office-energy-efficiency-renewable-energy) and having a demonstrable impact in these areas: Energy Efficiency, Renewables and Transportation. The following lists EERE Programs and Research Areas with a fuller descriptor:

- Bioenergy Program: [http://energy.gov/eere/transportation/bioenergy](http://energy.gov/eere/transportation/bioenergy)
- Homes: [http://energy.gov/eere/efficiency/homes](http://energy.gov/eere/efficiency/homes)
- SunShot Initiative [http://energy.gov/eere/sunshot/about](http://energy.gov/eere/sunshot/about)
- Vehicles: [http://energy.gov/eere/transportation](http://energy.gov/eere/transportation)
- Wind Program: [http://www1.eere.energy.gov/wind/](http://www1.eere.energy.gov/wind/)
The Process and Expectations:

Contestants will progress through three rounds of judging by experts whose feedback, along with mentoring, will help you define your business. Regional winners of the DOE Cleantech UP prize will compete with the other seven Cleantech UP Regional winners at a national competition in June, 2016. FLoW’s mission is to encourage entrepreneurial leadership and innovation, so all projects are welcome. However, prize winners will effectively use the FLoW process to identify a promising market opportunity, and create a viable business model, with the potential for attracting additional financing and creating jobs over the next five years. The bigger the impact and the closer you are to being investor-ready, the stronger the likelihood you will win either the Regional or National awards.

Pre-submission: the Statement of Intent:

Student Teams who are considering applying will be asked to sign a Statement of Intent by February 1, 2016. The Statement is not required prior to submission and you can change the topic and focus at any time up to the submission deadline. However, an SOI signals that your team is serious in fulfilling the requirements for submission and helps the competition’s organizers identify resources that might help you, including appropriate mentors. This will be particularly important for the Transformational Idea type of project that will depend on such support to reach the semifinal round.

Round 1: Screening submissions:

All applications must be made online on the YouNoodle platform. You can choose one of two tracks: either the Ready to Commercialize or the Transformational Idea Award track. (See descriptors below) For the Ready to Commercialize track: teams will be required to provide a ten slide presentation with a two minute video that provides highlights of the business opportunity and your company. The presentation should convey a clear understanding of the business opportunity and considered strategic thinking, based on research, and working with the other team members and your advisors. Judges will be looking for evidence of strong understanding of potential customers or commercialization partners, and some initial direct contacts.

Teams may create an account and submit and rework drafts of their entries up to the submission deadline. Your application is secure: only the website administrator and your assigned judges will see it. IP Declarations and IP Disclosure forms are due from both Ready to Commercialize and Transformational Idea Award applicants at the time of submission.
**Judging Tracks:**

The “Ready to Commercialize” group will be expected to show a solid team with the beginnings of a business where IP has been identified, and a validated lab prototype; the strategy for incorporation is apparent or has been implemented; and evidence of an understanding of the target market for the potential product and direct contact with prospective customers as part of your market investigation. In the “Transformational Idea Award” track which includes advanced research projects, Round 1 judges will be looking for proof of concept technologies with transformational potential, and proposed business ideas and technology applications which will have a major impact on the energy industry and economy. Applicants in both categories will be offered mentoring, and legal advice to help the team identify the commercial potential for their innovation, create an initial business model and set a strategy for moving forward.

**Round 2: The Regional Semi-Finals**

The selected teams will begin work on their business plan and presentation. There will be Semi-Final events in Southern and Northern California in April, 2016. The format will be the following: ten minute presentations followed by ten minutes Q&A, five minute judges’ feedback. FLoW teams will be assigned, based on their location and own preference. At the semi-finals, teams will present their ten slide deck before a panel of judges. The presentation should summarize the strategic and tactical thinking about how to create a business, based on the draft business plan and close work with their mentors. The top 15 Ready to Commercialize and top 10 Transformational Idea Award contenders, identified by these two events, will proceed to the Round 3 Finals in Los Angeles. By this round RTC teams should be well along in preparing their business plans and presentations should be well reasoned, energetic and professional. Rehearsals before friendly investors are strongly encouraged. All contestants From Round 2 will receive judging feedback to help you focus and refine your business thinking. Finalists from Round 2 are strongly encouraged to incorporate the judges’ feedback into their business plan and final presentation. Teams are expected to take the initiative in seeking out and working with their mentors (See Mentoring Guidelines) throughout the Round 2 process.

**Round 3: The Regional Finals**

Teams will be required to submit an 8-10 page business plan plus the final version of the ten-slide, presentation deck online in advance of the Regional Awards Judging Event in Los Angeles in May, 2016. The format will be a five minute presentation followed by ten minutes Q&A, five minute judges’ deliberation and five minute feedback. The FLoW 2.0 winner will go on to compete in the DOE’s Cleantech UP national competition in June, and will be expected to work closely with legal, technical and product development experts, and investors to solidify your business model. Particularly important will be working with individuals skilled in presentation delivery to practice the presentation to investor-ready standard.

**FLOW Office 08.17.15**