

## **Guidelines for Applicants – 2014 - 2015**

**Leadership:** The Company may have non---students on the team, but the Team Leader should be a student or graduate researcher and should take the lead in driving participation. The venture’s designated “CEO” will be required to present the business plans at the FLoW 2.0 Finals: there are no exceptions! Non---student team members may only act as support to the team. Students may consult with non---student team members during the Q&A, but students must respond to all questions.

**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.

**Scope:** The competition’s scope ranges from “Transformational Ideas” with potentially disruptive future technologies and large impact to established “Ready to Commercialize” start---ups with customers. All are welcome to apply! However, the “Transformational Idea” teams who progress to the semi---finals will show evidence in their submission that they have worked together, as well as with their advisors, and defined a viable business opportunity. Mentoring support and other resources will be provided to qualifying “Transformational Idea” submissions to help define the business models and develop the required business plan and presentations.

**Ideas with Transformational Potential:** This group includes student teams or graduate researchers with promising technology 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.

**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:** FLoW applicants must submit a Mentor Request Form at the time of submission. All FLoW semi---finalists will be automatically assigned a “lead” mentor with “lean” business development experience to help your team make the most of the FLoW process and improve your chances of winning. Specialist mentors will be assigned as needed. Judges will look for evidence that your team has actively sought and worked with your mentors.

**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 by the final round of the Regional Judging on May 6, 2015 and prior to receiving DOE awards or prizes.

**Intellectual Property:** You do not need IP in order to enter the competition. However, it is vitally important that the origin, ownership and status of IP be clarified by 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. 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](mailto:stephanie.yanchinski@caltech.edu).

**Money invested:** Companies or teams cannot have raised more than \$200,000 in equity capital before entering the competition, in order to win the top prize. However, companies raising up to \$700,000 in equity capital are eligible for the FLoW Prototype Awards. Note that grant support for the project is not limited. A venture attracting more than \$1 million prior to the FLoW Finals, may still compete but the FLoW 2.0 top prize will be awarded to the team placing second. Companies that raise more than \$200,000 after the Regional Finals and before the DOE's National NCEBPC Competition in June may still compete.

**Competing in other competitions:**

Contestants are encouraged to participate in other business plan competitions to hone their skills and gain valuable knowledge and connections. However you are required to inform the FLoW Administration of these competitions on submission. Contestants for FLoW 2.0 are eligible to win only one DOE NCEBPC Regional Prizes. This includes the FLoW 2.0 top prize which is shared with the NCEBPC.

**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://www1.eere.energy.gov/office\\_eere/](http://www1.eere.energy.gov/office_eere/)) and having a demonstrable impact in these areas: **energy production** (the way that it is generated, distributed, converted or consumed; technologies). Systems that yield **energy efficiencies** are also given priority. The following lists the EERE Programs and Research Areas with a fuller descriptor:

Advanced Manufacturing Office:	<a href="http://www1.eere.energy.gov/manufacturing/">http://www1.eere.energy.gov/manufacturing/</a>
Biomass Program:	<a href="http://www1.eere.energy.gov/biomass/">http://www1.eere.energy.gov/biomass/</a>
Building Technologies Program:	<a href="http://www1.eere.energy.gov/buildings/">http://www1.eere.energy.gov/buildings/</a>
Federal Energy Management Program:	<a href="http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/">http://www1.eere.energy.gov/femp/</a>
FreedomCAR and Vehicle Technologies Program:	<a href="http://www1.eere.energy.gov/vehiclesand_fuels/">http://www1.eere.energy.gov/vehiclesand_fuels/</a>
Geothermal and Technologies Program:	<a href="http://www1.eere.energy.gov/geothermal/">http://www1.eere.energy.gov/geothermal/</a>
Hydrogen, Fuel Cells and Infrastructure Technologies Program:	<a href="http://www1.eere.energy.gov/hydrogenandfuelcells/">http://www1.eere.energy.gov/hydrogenandfuelcells/</a>
Solar Energy Technology Program	<a href="http://www1.eere.energy.gov/solar/">http://www1.eere.energy.gov/solar/</a>
Weatherization & Intergovernmental Program:	<a href="http://www1.eere.energy.gov/wip/">http://www1.eere.energy.gov/wip/</a>
Wind Program:	<a href="http://www1.eere.energy.gov/wind/">http://www1.eere.energy.gov/wind/</a>
Water Power Program:	<a href="http://www1.eere.energy.gov/qRWE/">http://www1.eere.energy.gov/qRWE/</a>

Multiple Programs: Technologies that cross different programs e.g. Net energy reductions; desalination; reducing environmental impacts of unconventional fossil fuels development; carbon sequestration; reduced energy in the industrial and manufacturing sector; supply chain and product delivery channels for lower production emissions; power plant emission reduction associated with renewable power production systems; materials and manufacturing technologies that result in a life---cycle reduction in energy use and/or emissions; lightweight materials for transportation and supply chain technologies and renewable fuel production transmission or distribution technology that enables higher penetration of renewables into electric grid; transportation infrastructure that results in the net reduction in fuel/energy usage; technologies that use hydrogen, biomass---derived gas, some technologies to recycle and recover chemical feedstocks and plastics

### **The Process and Expectations:**

The competition's mission is to encourage entrepreneurial leadership and innovation, so all ideas are welcome. However prize winners are expected to use the FLoW process to identify a promising market opportunity, and create a viable business model, with the potential for attracting investment and creating jobs over an 18 month period. 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, 2015. 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 iStart platform. Teams will be required to provide a ten slide presentation with a 500 word business summary that provides highlights of the business opportunity and your company. This round will be judged online with three experts reviewing each submission. (See judging process and criteria) 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 submissions up to the submission deadline. Your application is secure: only the website administrator and your assigned judges will see it. Videos are encouraged, particularly where a visual demonstration would help explain the technology. 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:**

After the close of submissions, applications will be divided into two groups: “Ready to Commercialize” and “Transformational Ideas”. The first group will be expected to show a solid team with the beginnings of a business where IP has been identified, and a lab prototype started or completed; 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 second group which includes advanced research projects, Round 1 judges will be looking for transformational potential in the proposed business idea and technology applications which will have a major impact on the energy industry and economy. Those in this “transformational” category will be offered mentoring, and legal advice to help the team identify the commercial potential for their innovation, build the business model and set a strategy for moving forward. There will be a special “Transformational Idea” award and the chance to exhibit at the FLoW 2.0 Awards Final, May 6, 2015 in Los Angeles.

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

The selected teams will begin work on their business plan and presentation. There will be two Semi-Final events in Los Angeles and at UC Berkeley on April 10, 2015. The format will be the following: ten minute presentations followed by ten minutes Q&A, five minute private judges’ deliberation and five minutes 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 including VCs, Angel investors, representatives of energy corporation venture fund, the utilities and university tech transfer offices. 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 on May 6, 2015. 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 National Competition, in Washington D.C. 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.