QUANTUM CALIFORNIA

QUANTUM FAST CHALLENGE

LEARNING LAB CALIFORNIA BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Quantum FAST Challenge

Frequently Asked Questions

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Eligibility

What fields are eligible for Quantum FAST?

The quantum workforce is highly multidisciplinary and draws on learners from a range of fields with varying levels of quantum expertise. Consequently, Learning Lab and GO-Biz are not limiting eligibility for Quantum FAST to specific fields, provided the project advances FAST's goals of strengthening the quantum talent pipeline or producing use-case demonstrations for quantum technology applications, and aligns with one of the four application tracks.

Applicants should note that projects applying under Tracks 1, 2, or 4 should address specific workforce needs, skills gaps, or talent pipeline challenges. Quantum FAST will not support projects that aim solely to increase quantum awareness and literacy among the general student population.

Will Quantum FAST support projects that aim to increase quantum literacy for the general student population?

No, projects seeking to increase quantum literacy or general awareness of quantum technologies for the general student population are not eligible for grants under Quantum FAST. To be eligible under Tracks 1, 2, or 4, projects must identify specific workforce needs or talent pipeline challenges that they seek to address and propose approaches for strengthening the quantum talent pipeline. Projects focused on broadening quantum literacy or awareness for the general student population are not sufficiently connected to developing the quantum workforce to be supported through Quantum FAST. Projects oriented toward non-STEM students may be eligible, if they are designed to provide those learners with knowledge and abilities they need to be early adopters of quantum technology applications in their respective field.

Will Quantum FAST support projects conducting fundamental research relating to quantum technologies?

No, projects conducting fundamental research into quantum technologies or quantum science are not eligible for funding under Quantum FAST. FAST aims to support projects that either 1) help to build and strengthen the quantum talent pipeline, or 2) apply quantum or quantum-enabled technologies toward real-world problems or challenges in use-case demonstrations. Projects applying under Track 3 must seek to develop and test applications of quantum technologies for real-world uses to be eligible for FAST funding. Learning Lab encourages project teams to use Quantum FAST Track 3 funding to experiment with applying findings from fundamental research toward real-world uses for quantum technologies, and to leverage use-case demonstrations toward obtaining additional federal or other funding for fundamental research.

What do Learning Lab and GO-Biz mean by "hands-on experiences" for Track 1? Does this mean that only projects where learners have physical access to equipment may apply?

Track 1 addresses the widely recognized need in the quantum talent pipeline for greater access to experiential learning with quantum hardware, software, and instrumentation. Whether meaningful experiences require physical access may depend on the specific skills and abilities the project aims to provide. For some projects, this will mean providing students with in-person laboratory experiences and the opportunity to work physically with relevant equipment. For other projects, remote access to quantum systems may be appropriate for the skills and experience being taught; for example, running code via a cloud-based quantum computing service may constitute a relevant "hands-on" experience for projects focused on quantum programming and software development.

Projects applying under Track 1 may include the use of simulators as part of their project design, provided the use of simulators aligns with and advances the broader goal of expanding access to meaningful experiential learning with quantum hardware and software and with quantum-relevant technologies.

I am applying under Track 3. How much does my project have to address student learning and quantum talent development?

Although Track 3 is primarily intended to support use-case demonstrations and innovation for quantum technologies applications, GO-Biz and Learning Lab expect projects to also help provide students with opportunities for hands-on learning and research experiences. In responding to the prompt questions in the RFP, Track 3 applicants should focus on their proposed use-case demonstration. Track 3 proposals should briefly discuss how they will include student participation in their project. Track 3 proposals are encouraged, but not required, to briefly respond to prompts related to learning and talent development as and where appropriate.

Is Quantum FAST limited to projects that advance the quantum workforce pipeline at the undergraduate level?

Quantum FAST will support projects that strengthen the quantum talent pipeline at the certificate, undergraduate, or graduate level. Tracks 1, 2, and 4 are primarily intended for students in career technical education/certificate or undergraduate programs, though master's students may also be a target population. Projects applying under Track 3 should provide opportunities for students at the undergraduate or master's level to participate as part of the research team and gain hands-on experience with quantum research and technologies.

Application Questions: Institutions and Partnerships

What do Learning Lab and GO-Biz mean by a project's "host institution," pertaining to projects that include interinstitutional collaboration?

The project's host institution is the college or university that will act as grantee and fiscal intermediary for purposes of grant administration. The host institution will enter into a grant agreement with the Foundation for California Community Colleges (the Government Operations Agency's designated administrator for Learning Lab) for receipt and management of grant funds, including distribution of funds to the partner institutions based on sub-award agreements. The designation of an institution as "host" is for grant administration purposes only. Learning Lab and GO-Biz expect awarded projects to have meaningful, well-balanced collaboration among partner institutions.

Please note, we expect that team members from partner institutions will be engaged as Co-PIs/key personnel. If you have individual people whose expertise you're interested in, you may consider bringing them on as a consultant as opposed to having their institution be a formal partner.

What is a "partner" institution?

Partner institutions are typically subcontractors of the host institution in the grant budget. Partner institutions are heavily involved across the entire project rather than merely being implementation sites, and should be represented by a PI or Co-PI. To count as an intersegmental partner for grants over $100,000 ($250,000 for projects applying under Track 3), please be sure your partner is a UC, CSU, or California Community College. You may have collaborating institutions that are not partner institutions.

Would two departments of the same campus be considered "intersegmental"?

No. Intersegmental refers to at least two of the three segments of public institutions of higher education; that is, UC, CSU, and CCC segments.

In our proposal, can we partner with private institutions?

Yes. Quantum FAST projects are encouraged to partner with private industry stakeholders, workforce organizations, and relevant nonprofits, including private nonprofit colleges and universities. Please note, however, that private institutions do not count toward the intersegmental requirement for grants over $100,000 ($250,000 for projects applying under Track 3).

Can a single institution submit multiple proposals?

Yes, an institution may submit multiple proposals. Please consider whether the proposals would be competing with one another and/or whether collaboration among project teams would be a reasonable expectation. Reviewers may consider other factors such as geographic representation in their evaluation.

If there is a change in participating institutions or number of collaborators after the Statement of Intent, do I notify Learning Lab ahead of time, or will noting the change in the proposal application suffice?

Typically noting the change in the proposal will suffice, unless the change potentially impacts your eligibility. Please review eligibility requirements when making such changes.

Application Questions: PIs, Co-PIs, and Project Teams

Who is eligible to serve as a PI or Co-PI? Must they be able to commit to the full life of the grant?

Principal Investigators (PIs) may be faculty and/or administrators from a California public higher education institution. (Projects can have more than one PI but the total number of PIs is capped at three.) Faculty from partner institutions can serve as PIs or Co-PIs. Keep in mind that your institutional IRB might have requirements for a PI to be involved in the research elements of your project.

While we hope that PIs may be able to lead the project throughout the entirety of the grant, Learning Lab and GO-Biz understand that institutional roles and positions can change. Projects may request changes to PIs, Co-PIs, or other project personnel throughout the grant duration.

Please note, a PI is leading a project, so it may make sense to have multiple PIs when you have collaborating institutions or a complex project needing different expertise. You can have collaborators or consultants from outside your institution, but PIs need to be public California college or university faculty or administrators (full-time staff working with faculty or college students). We see both PIs and Co-PIs as leadership roles, and both PIs and Co-PIs for funded projects are expected to participate in check-ins with Learning Lab and Go-Biz staff over the life of the project. We expect partner institutions to be represented at least at the Co-PI level to show authentic intersegmental collaboration.

What is the PI and Co-PI structure for multiple institutions? Does each institution have a PI and Co-PIs, or is there one PI for the whole grant?

A project can have one PI and multiple Co-PIs, or any combination. The most common configuration for Learning Lab projects is a single PI from the host institution and multiple Co-PIs, with one Co-PI per partner campus. We do have some projects with two PIs and additional Co-PIs, with the presence of multiple PIs reflecting truly co-equal project leadership and fully shared responsibility. Ultimately, the configuration is up to the project team, along with defining responsibility, decision making, and credit. Please note, however, that projects may not have more than three PIs.

What counts as an administrator for eligibility?

Administrators include deans, directors, and department chairs, for example; also included are full-time university/college staff who work with faculty/students.

Can a faculty outside of California be written into the grant as a collaborator or consultant? Are there restrictions on the percentage of grant money allocation?

The Quantum FAST Challenge is funded by the state of California to advance the state's quantum industry and support projects across the state's public higher education and innovation ecosystem. Given this, faculty outside of California may be included as external consultants on the project if this makes sense based on their specific qualifications, but they may not serve as a PI or Co-PI. The rationale for their inclusion would need to be made clear in the budget justification with sufficient detail. There is no uniform restriction on the percentage of grant money allocated to external consultants, but any consultant stipends for faculty outside of California must be reasonable, and should be justified in the same manner as all other expenses included in the applicant's proposed budget.

Can one person be involved in more than one proposal? How about as a PI or Co-PI?

You can be involved in more than one proposal as supporting staff if you're in a role where that makes sense, but you may not be a PI or Co-PI on multiple FAST proposals.

May applicants submit a Statement of Intent without confirmation of additional Co-PIs?

Yes, as long as these key contacts are identified prior to submitting proposals.

If I am already on a Learning Lab-funded project, may I apply or be part of a project team that applies for this Challenge?

Yes. In addition to meeting all the RFP requirements, existing Learning Lab grantees must demonstrate that they have time to participate in or lead a new project without compromising the existing grant project.

If after submission of the grant I accept a position at another institution, does the grant follow me as PI or does it stay with the host institution listed on the grant?

Since all awards under the Quantum FAST Challenge are institutional grants, it stays with the same institution given that our executed grant agreement is with the institution. For institutional grants, sometimes it is possible to stay on as a consultant or even a Co-PI, but we would not expect the grant activities to change location, and you would need to make sure there was also a PI at the host institution. If you think a job change with relocation is a possibility, please make sure you have another PI on the project who is not likely to move.

Application Questions: Proposal Process

How do I submit my Statement of Intent?

You must submit your Statement of Intent (SOI) through Submittable, which you can access through a link available at the Applicant Grant Portal on the Quantum FAST Challenge webpage. Please be aware that the Applicant Grant Portal for Quantum FAST is different from the Grantee Portal at the top of the Learning Lab webpage. The Grantee Portal is for current grantees, not applicants.

What is acceptable for the two letters of recommendation?

The first one needs to be from whomever the PI reports to at their UC, CSU, or community college, and the second one should be from an industry, nonprofit, or workforce partner or an institutional administrator (Dean, Department Chair, Provost, or Chancellor/President). Please note, for the second letter we suggest that you identify someone that can speak to strengths, such as your capacity in this role, the importance of the project, and/or feasibility of the approach. Keep in mind that everything submitted in a proposal will be used to rate the project, so we would expect letters of recommendation to provide information helpful to reviewers who are determining if the project should be funded. This might include indications of institutional support and enthusiasm that speak to the likelihood of successful implementation and sustainability of the project. It might also include assessments of the PI and other critical team members' qualifications to undertake the work they have proposed and to implement and manage the grant.

Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to obtain a second letter from an industry partner or regional economic development organization that speaks to the strength of the project's collaboration with industry and potential to address recognized talent needs, or its potential to produce a demonstrated use case for quantum technologies and encourage additional quantum application innovation and iteration.

What is the maximum number of letters of recommendations we can submit for Quantum FAST?

You must submit a minimum of two letters, but there is no rule at this time against submitting more. Please consider whether the letter is necessary versus whether support can be demonstrated in the proposal narrative.

Is there a page limit for the letters of recommendation?

There is no page limit for the letters of recommendation. The letters should include but are not limited to elaborating on the relationship between the recommender and applicant, attesting to the applicant's qualifications to lead the project described, and detailing other supports being offered to the applicant (if applicable).

Will we get an invite notification after the Statement of Intent?

Yes, you will receive a link to the Submittable gateway for proposal submission after your Statement of Intent has been reviewed for eligibility.

If components of our Statement of Intent (SOI) do not play out as anticipated, such as inability to complete processes for involved institutions (hence making the application ineligible), is submitting the SOI binding, or can we withdraw?

The SOI is non-binding! Just let Learning Lab know if you need to withdraw. There are also some elements of the project that can be changed between SOI and proposal (including Co-PIs and partnering institutions).

What if my information changes after submitting the Statement of Intent?

Learning Lab acknowledges that information may change after submitting the Statement of Intent. As such, there will be an opportunity to update your team information during each stage of the application process.

Could we build on work already done or does it need to be an entirely new proposal?

You can build off something existing or you can propose something new. There should be some innovations involved in your proposal even if you are building off something that already exists.

Budget

Do we have to use the Learning Lab budget template?

Yes. Using your own template is grounds for immediate disqualification.

Are projects required to obtain an industry match?

Projects are encouraged, but not required, to obtain an industry match that equals at least 25 percent of the requested funding amount. Quantum FAST aims to foster greater collaboration among faculty, institutions of higher education, and the quantum industry. The match is intended as a demonstration of meaningful collaboration with industry and of industry engagement with and support for the project. The presence of a match, together with the quality of industry engagement, is one of the factors considered in the evaluation rubric.

Projects receiving an in-kind match are required to demonstrate how they establish the value of the in-kind contribution they receive. Otherwise, strong projects that are unable to secure an industry match during the application process may still apply. If those projects are selected for an award, they may be required to form a closer industry partnership (with assistance from GO-Biz and Learning Lab staff) as a condition of the award agreement.

What can I include in my budget?

Projects may use Quantum FAST funds for personnel, materials and supplies (including software), equipment, consultants, travel, as well other direct costs. There is no restriction on what proportion of project funding may go to any expense category. Project budgets should also account for the costs of required program participation, including cohort convenings.

All expenditures require a strong justification (check the RFP and this FAQ for prohibited expenditures). Reviewers will scrutinize budgets as part of their review process and will determine if budgeted expenses are reasonable, necessary for the project, and aligned with Quantum FAST funding priorities. Learning Lab also reviews budgets and justifications for funded projects during the grant agreement negotiation period and may ask for revisions. You may not include anything Learning Lab would reasonably consider to be indirect costs (including GAEL, UCRP, and TIF) as part of your direct costs, regardless of your own institution's preferences.

Previous Learning Lab RFPs capped expenditures on materials, supplies, and equipment at 10 percent of the grant award. Does that restriction on expenditures apply to Quantum FAST?

No, Quantum FAST does not include restrictions on what proportion of project funding may go to any one expense category. As a result, expenditures on materials, supplies, and equipment may exceed 10 percent of the grant award. All expenditures must be necessary to achieve the project goals and, if intended to help build the quantum talent pipeline, should contribute to equipping students with quantum-relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities at greater scale. All expenditures for materials, supplies, and equipment must have itemized estimates with justifications.

Is there a salary cap applicable when applying for the Quantum FAST Challenge?

While there is no formal cap, reviewers will carefully review and judge the budget as part of their evaluation, including the reasonableness of stipends and the reasonableness of the overall budget. Please include thorough and detailed justifications for all budget expenses. Do not use the cell size in the budget template as a marker of how detailed your justification should be.

Why are the Indirect Costs (IDC) capped and how is this calculated?

For Quantum FAST, indirect costs for the project are capped at 10 percent and may be distributed across the partners, though together they may not exceed the 10 percent threshold.

The IDC rate for Quantum FAST is based on Learning Lab's standard IDC rate, which is lower than that contained in the California Model Agreement used by CSU and UC. Learning Lab and GO-Biz view the lower rate as appropriate for FAST grants, because these awards support curriculum and pedagogical development and increase quantum industry alignment involving courses that are normally and regularly offered as part of established departmental curricula. Projects applying under tracks 1,2 and 4 will typically not involve substantial facilities or equipment use beyond that associated with normal instruction. GO-Biz and Learning Lab also expect that use-case demonstrations under Track 3 will generally explore and test potential industry and real-world applications for existing faculty research projects. As a result, Learning Lab expects funded projects to pose a lower burden on facilities and administration than the research projects anticipated by the Model Agreement.

Learning Lab calculates the IDC rate based on project direct costs. Combined direct and indirect costs cannot exceed the award amount. Consequently, for a FAST project awarded a $250,000 grant, the total IDC cannot exceed $22,727 (i.e.,

10 percent of total direct costs of $227,273 with indirect and direct costs totaling $250,000). You do not need to include indirect costs if your college does not require them.

Is the host allowed to charge IDC on subaward costs?

The total IDC amount for the Quantum FAST grant cannot under any circumstances be more than 10 percent of the total direct cost budget for all participating institutions. Therefore, if the host is going to calculate some subaward direct costs into their IDC there will need to be equivalent reduction in the IDC percentage for the sub-awardees. This can only occur with permission from the sub-awardee institutions.

What kinds of expenses are covered in Other Direct Costs (ODC)?

Primary expenses captured in Other Direct Costs are student and faculty incentives and those associated with hosting events like convenings or workshops. All expenses should have itemized estimates. Any sponsored convenings by the host or partner institutions must be approved by Learning Lab.

My institution charges General, Automobile, and Employment Liability (GAEL), Technology Infrastructure Fee (TIF), and other fees separately. Can I put them in as ODC?

No. These must be absorbed in your IDC rate.

Is it possible to use the grant for a course/time release for faculty members?

Yes, you may include course/time release for California public higher education faculty, staff, or administrators to work on grant-related activities in the project budget. Please consult with your institution regarding the appropriate amount for this. Please include a detailed justification in your budget.

What do I do if I need more lines for personnel on the budget template?

Please contact Learning Lab for a custom budget.

Do software and hardware equipment have to be acquired from an approved vendor list?

We do not have an approved vendor list. We recommend applicants compare at least three tools/platforms/vendors (where possible) before selecting one.

Are there expectations about how the budget is allocated?

There is no restriction on what proportion of project funding may go to any expense category. Generally, applicants have flexibility to determine how to develop their budgets to best achieve project outcomes in alignment with RFP guidelines. Proposed budgets will be assessed for reasonable and appropriate usage of funds in support of the overall project design. Equitable distribution of project budget across host and partners is appreciated where possible. Applicants will be required to submit a detailed project budget in a designated Excel template as part of the Proposal, in addition to the discussion of the project budget embedded within the Proposal. Some guidance is below. You may contact Learning Lab if you have additional questions about allowable expenses.

What is the difference between Personnel and Consultant(s) as expense categories?

Personnel provide a percentage of effort and contribute to the project as a whole and are employees of the institution. For all those listed as personnel, it is required to provide the percentage of full-time equivalent, pay rate (whether salary or hourly), and fringe benefit rate (if applied). It is important that a fringe rate be provided for each individual and that attention is given to job classification. If appropriate for your project, you may support personnel with stipends, but compensation by stipend should not involve benefits.

Example: [Faculty]; 20% FTE; $150,000/yr.; 35% fringe, $40,500 total; [Staff/Admin]; 10% effort; $75,000/yr.; 30% fringe, $9,750 total. [Staff/Admin]; 20% effort over 40 weeks; $25.15/hr.; 30% fringe; $10,462.40 total.

Consultants are individuals or organizations that provide expert advisory or other services for brief or limited periods and are most often not employees of the institution. It is required to provide cost justification for each consultant, the anticipated number of hours of effort, and hourly or daily rates.

Example: [Consultant]; 30 hours; $100/hr.; $3,000 total.

What is the difference between paying faculty as personnel and paying faculty stipends?

Faculty serving a role that contributes to the overall effort or project implementation should be compensated as project personnel and included in the respective budget line item. Faculty who are engaging in a discrete or one-time activity, such as attending a workshop, may be paid a stipend. Faculty stipends typically go in the Other Direct Cost category (ODC).

Can funds be used for student stipends?

Yes, funds may be used for student stipends for related programmatic or specific research components (e.g., student ambassadors, tutors, research assistants).

Students receiving the stipend must be actively involved in project activities (not participating simply as a student). The exception to this is de minimus-type incentives (e.g., small bookstore vouchers) to participate in out-of-class surveys, or time for activities that cannot be made part of a classroom requirement. Student stipends should be included in the ODC category.

Quantum FAST funds may not be used to compensate students for learning activities, such as attending a summer program or an internship (though any financial match or in-kind contribution from an industry partner could be used to support internships). Funds may also not be used for tuition remission. Graduate or undergraduate students working as research assistants on a project must be paid with a stipend (that does not include tuition remission) or hourly compensation. Compensation for students working as research assistants may include percentage of benefits, consistent with percent time worked.

What are the general parameters for using Quantum FAST funding for travel-related expenses?

Quantum FAST funds can be used for reasonable travel that is directly related to furthering the purposes of or disseminating the practices and results of the project. All travel must be approved by Learning Lab with justification and reasonable rates and comply with local institutional policies. A few notes:

- Travel funds may not be used for general conference attendance.
- Any sponsored convenings must be approved by Learning Lab and accord with state rules and rates for food-related and other costs.
- Learning Lab and GO-Biz request that applicants reserve $3,000 per year in the project budget for travel to attend GO-Biz quantum-related convenings and Learning Lab-hosted intersegmental grantee convenings over the grant duration. The $3,000 annual amount is based upon two team member attendance, with an estimated individual travel cost of $1,500 per person.
- Quantum FAST funds are intended to be used in California. If the project necessitates the use of FAST funds outside of California, a brief justification and estimate of the funding will need to be provided in the full proposal. The amount of funds that can be spent outside the state will be subject to the final award agreement. Travel funds may not be used for international travel.

If the institution applies for a $100,000 grant over two years, does the budget have to be $50,000 each year?

No, the budget does not have to be divided in half each year. Budgets can be allocated, as needed, for the project.

How will money flow for awarded projects?

Project teams should anticipate submitting invoices, according to the specific terms of the grant agreement and the agreed-upon budget plan. Funds are distributed on a reimbursement basis every six months. For all grants, the awarded institution will enter into a grant agreement with and submit invoices to the Foundation for

California Community Colleges (the Government Operations Agency's designated entity to administer Learning Lab). For intersegmental awards, the host institution will act as the fiscal intermediary for purposes of grant administration and for receipt of grant funds, and will distribute grant funds to the partner institutions on the basis of sub-awards.

Will my submitted budget be approved if my project gets awarded?

Not necessarily. The project's final budget will be negotiated as part of the grant agreement finalization process, and may be revised during the grant period with Learning Lab's approval.

OER and IRB

What Open Educational Resources (OER) and intellectual property arrangements will appear in grant agreements?

Statute requires the Learning Lab to establish terms and conditions for courses, curricula, and learning materials developed or redesigned with Quantum FAST funds to be available as OER. Learning Lab considers "open educational resources" to be any educational resources released under one of the Creative Commons licenses (or its equivalent) other than CC-BY. Open educational resources include, but are not limited to, full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, faculty-created content, streaming videos, tests, software, and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support access to knowledge.

As part of the terms of grant agreements, awardees will agree to release all assets developed with Quantum FAST grant funds under one of the Creative Commons licenses (or its equivalent), unless otherwise exempted. Track 3 awardees should look for additional guidance related to non-pedagogical intellectual property. Learning Lab and GO-Biz do not require that resources necessarily be free to users in order to be considered "open educational resources," but instead encourage projects to make resources developed with FAST funds available to additional users either at no cost or at minimal, reasonable cost depending on the expense necessary to support its use.

For more help on OER, you can review Learning Lab's OER Guide for grantees.

Why are projects selected for award required to obtain IRB approval or exemption, if necessary? Does this requirement apply to projects pursuing use-case demonstrations under Track 3?

Institutional Review Board (IRB) evaluation is necessary whenever research is being conducted with human subjects, including any research where you are surveying, interviewing, or collecting identified data from students or faculty to test the

effectiveness of curricula, pedagogical approaches, or learning materials. Projects involving categories of human subjects research that are exempt from IRB review must still undergo IRB evaluation to confirm that exempt status. Consequently, IRB approval or exemption must be obtained before any data collection takes place.

Projects receiving funding under Tracks 1, 2, or 4 may require IRB review and should ensure that their project timeline allows adequate time for the IRB approval or exemption process. Projects receiving funding under Track 3 that do not involve any human subjects research will not be required to seek or receive IRB approval or exemption.

If an institution obtains IRB approval, does a partner also need to get IRB approval?

You can use a single IRB model and we encourage you to do so if this will streamline your process, but this typically requires written approval from all partnering institutions. Please make sure you have built in enough time for this before your proposed window for data collection. We highly encourage project teams to begin this process as soon as possible.