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# EVALUATING THE RESULTS OF INNOVATION PRIZES FOR DEVELOPMENT: REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PRACTICE

FINAL PAPER



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## Disclaimer

The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors. They do not necessarily represent those of Itad, IMC Worldwide or of any of the individuals and organisations referred to.

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## Acronyms

CBO	Community-based organisation
CCA	Climate change adaptation
DFID	Department for International Development
I2I	Ideas to Impact programme
LPG	Liquid Petroleum Gas
LWM	Liquid waste management
MMDA	Metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PEQ	Programme evaluation question
VFM	Value for money
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

## Glossary of terms

**Challenge fund:** a financing mechanism to allocate donor funds for specific purposes, using competition among applicants to identify the best solution(s) to a pre-defined development problem. Grants are awarded to those projects that best meet the objectives of the fund and fulfil the pre-established criteria.

**Comparator project:** the projects with similar aims to the Ideas to Impact prizes selected as points of comparison to establish the prizes' comparative value for money.

**Evaluation:** study to understand if and how a prize achieved results (both intended and unintended).

**Final submissions:** the reports submitted for judging by Ideas to Impact prize participants.

**Innovation:** defined by Ideas to Impact as the application of new or improved products, processes, technologies or services that are either new to the world (novel), new to a region or business (imitative) or new to the field of endeavour, that is, repurposed (adaptive).

**Innovation inducement prize:** sometimes referred to as simply an 'innovation prize', an innovation inducement prize offers a reward to one or more solvers who first or most effectively solve a pre-defined challenge. The reward is often financial but can also include additional support, such as technical assistance. This type of prize incentivises innovation rather than rewarding past achievement.

**Judges:** local and international experts that judged Ideas to Impact prize participants' performance against a set of pre-agreed criteria to make the final award decisions.

**Judging criteria:** the set of main criteria against which prize participants' final reports were judged.

**Monitoring:** tracking ongoing progress throughout prize implementation (performance and outcomes)

**Prize:** used in this paper to refer to three different things – the prize schemes run under the Ideas to Impact programme, the individual prize stages within these, and the monetary or non-monetary (honorary) awards made under the prizes based on prize participant performance.

**Prize launch:** the opening of a prize process, whether at an event or online.

**Prize participant:** an individual or organisation that participates and competes in a prize.

**Prize sponsor:** the organisation that the prize is being run for (and is putting up the money for the prize) and that sets the overall direction of what the prize is trying to achieve. This may or may not be the same as those designing and implementing the prize.

**Prize stage:** the individual components of multi-stage prizes.

**Prize teams:** the teams responsible for designing and implementing the Ideas to Impact prizes.

**Recognition prize:** a prize that is awarded for specific or general achievements made in advance of nominations for the prize being requested.

**Results-based financing:** contractual funding that incentivises the achievement by suppliers of desired outcomes, with payment based on results.

**Solver support:** the support provided to Ideas to Impact prize participants during the prize process.

**Theory of change:** in the context of innovation prizes, this is a detailed description of how and why the prize is expected to lead to the desired change in a given context.

**Unintended consequences:** things that happen as a result of a prize that were not planned. These can be positive or negative.

**Value for money:** optimal returns on investments achieving set objectives. Value for money is high when there is an optimal balance between costs (resources in), productivity (processes leading to delivery of outputs) and the equitable achievement of outcomes.

**Verification:** exercise to confirm that the results self-reported by prize participants were achieved in reality.

**Verification agent:** the independent team that visited prize participants to verify their results.

## Highlights from this paper

Innovation inducement prizes provide an attractive alternative funding modality for stimulating a wide range of actors to contribute to addressing development challenges, through inducing innovation (Brown et al., 2020). The incidence of using prizes to achieve social and development goals is increasing (Evanoff, 2018). And yet there is a dearth of information available publicly on how to evaluate prizes for development (Roberts et al., 2019), and thus a lack of evidence that prizes represent an effective and appropriate funding alternative for achieving development outcomes.

The literature that does exist suggests that prize evaluations typically focus on prize award as the end of the story. This paper argues that the success of prizes for development can and should be explored through three different, tiered perspectives: **whether the prize was awarded as anticipated; whether the prize drove innovation and produced the expected advantages that may come from applying a prize modality; and, most importantly, whether the prize contributed to development outcomes.** Based on what is known, this marks a departure from current prize evaluation approaches.

Adopting this approach not only provides a more rounded judgement of a prize's success; it can also lead to lessons about when prizes are appropriate for use in development, which we argue should be an important focus of all future evaluations of prizes for development, given the current dearth of literature. Understanding the possible unintended consequences of using a prize modality should also feature in all prize evaluations.

The paper presents lessons and recommendations for appropriate and effective approaches to evaluating prizes for development – aimed at those funding, commissioning, supporting and undertaking evaluations of prizes. It is based on five years of hands-on experience evaluating 13 separate but related prizes,<sup>1</sup> under a programme that sought to provide insight into the value and use of prizes to solving development problems and achieving positive development outcomes. Our practical experience aligns with the limited literature available on evaluating prizes, and adds specificity and depth to this.

Through our work evaluating prizes, we have found that evaluation of prizes in many ways is not different to evaluation of other development initiatives but that prizes have certain attributes that need to be taken into account. There are some attributes that are specific to innovation prizes, which make assessing their results different to evaluating a typical development project or programme. These features, along with attributes specific to the prize to be evaluated, affect the evaluability of prizes. While evaluations of prizes can involve many of the evaluation approaches, methods and tools used in assessments of more standard development interventions, their application will need adjusting in response to both generic and specific prize attributes – as is the case with all good quality evaluations.

Lessons presented in this paper include the importance of investing in monitoring and evaluation at project (or prize participant) level and undertaking post-prize assessments for truly understanding prizes' contribution to development outcomes. Further, while identifying, measuring and understanding change targeted by prizes for development is not an easy undertaking, it is important to assess prizes against standards already established for development interventions that are funded by more traditional means.

Recommendations provided include the use of a theory of change as central to both the design and evaluation of prizes, to help situate the prize award within a broader pathway to social or environmental change and thereby define how outcomes and impact will be achieved beyond prize award. Given that the opportunities for data collection from participants during and after prize processes are limited, the paper specifically highlights the importance of prize managers considering data needs at all points in the prize process to facilitate any subsequent evaluation of a prize, in other words building monitoring and evaluation into prize design from the very start.

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<sup>1</sup> These 13 prizes were run as separate stages for seven different prize schemes.

## What this paper is about

The incidence of using prizes (of any kind) to achieve social and development goals is increasing (Evanoff, 2018). And yet there is a dearth of information on how to evaluate prizes for development and thus a lack of evidence that prizes represent an effective and appropriate funding alternative for achieving development outcomes, as a driver of innovation and behaviour change.

There are few examples in the public domain of how prize funders, managers and evaluators have approached this and with what results (Roberts et al., 2019). There is a gap in the literature in terms of prize evaluation reports – either these evaluations are not happening, or they are not being made public. Where evaluations and internal reports on prizes are available, these often lack detail on how the evaluation was carried out and they take award of prize money as the end of the story.

This paper aims to fill this gap by sharing our experiences of evaluating a set of prizes over the last five years. With the purpose of guiding and informing future evaluations of prizes for development, it draws out implications, lessons and recommendations for those funding, commissioning, managing and undertaking evaluations of prizes. The paper may also be of interest to the broader evaluation community, for example to inform the evaluation of initiatives with similar features to prizes, such as challenge funds and results-based financing.

This paper is based on our collective experience of designing and conducting evaluations and follow-up reviews of seven prize schemes,<sup>2</sup> together comprising a total of 13 separate prizes. From 2014 to 2019, the Ideas to Impact (I2I) action-research programme has been designing, implementing and testing a series of innovation prizes, to induce innovative solutions to development challenges within the thematic areas of climate change adaptation (CCA), energy access, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). The programme was funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and implemented by a consortium led by IMC Worldwide. *See Annex 1 for a summary of the I2I prizes and Annex 2 for a list of the evaluations conducted.*

As the evaluation and learning partner for the prize programme, Itad has been supporting the I2I programme team and funder throughout to understand if these innovation prizes worked as intended, by providing an impartial view of the results obtained.<sup>3</sup> Together, the set of evaluations aimed to identify broader lessons on when and where prizes could be useful as a funding mechanism for international development, compared to other forms of funding, such as grants.

We first outline our approach to evaluating the I2I prizes and reflect on our evaluation experiences. On this basis, we consider what makes evaluating prizes different, and what prize evaluations can and cannot say about change. We then suggest broader implications and provide lessons and recommendations for evaluating future prizes for development.

This is one of a series of learning papers that draws across the I2I prize evaluations to provide insight into the value and use of innovation prizes to development. The two companion reports are signposted throughout.

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<sup>2</sup> The I2I portfolio comprised two CCA prizes, two WASH prizes and three energy access prizes, each of which were run as distinct prize processes, with a differing number of prize stages.

<sup>3</sup> The evaluation and learning team also fed into prize design in the early stages of the programme, through provision of initial evaluation findings and facilitation of theory of change processes.



**Box 1: Companion evaluation reports in this series**

If you want to know more about our approach to assessing the value for money of the I2I prizes, and the associated results, see the **'Evaluating the value for money of Ideas to Impact's innovation inducement prizes' report**.

If you want to know more about the results achieved by the I2I prizes, our **'Rising to the challenge: how to get the best value from using prizes to drive innovation for development' report** provides a synthesis of the various evaluations undertaken.

All I2I evaluation and learning reports linked to in this paper are available on the I2I website: [www.ideastoimpact.net/research](http://www.ideastoimpact.net/research).

# Characteristics of a prize

## What is an innovation inducement prize?

An innovation inducement prize, sometimes referred to as simply an ‘innovation prize’, is a financial incentive that induces change through competition (Ward and Dixon, 2015). This type of prize defines award criteria in advance in order to spur innovation towards a pre-defined goal (Everett et al., 2011).

Innovation inducement prizes reward one or more solvers who first or most effectively meet a pre-defined challenge. The reward is often financial but can also include additional support, such as technical assistance. They reward their participants for actions that otherwise would not have been undertaken. This is in contrast to recognition prizes, which reward past achievement, a well-known example being the Nobel Peace Prize.

## What initiatives have similar features to prizes?

Innovation inducement prizes have some similarities to other funding mechanisms, such as challenge funds and results-based financing (also known as payment by results). However, there are also important distinctions between these, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Similarities and differences between challenge funds, results-based financing and prizes

Other types of initiatives	Similarities to prizes	Differences to prizes
<b>Challenge funds</b>	Challenge funds and prizes can both be used to stimulate, support and test innovation and/or creative solutions to a pre-defined development problem, particularly among new groups of people (Junge and Schreiner, 2018 and Sida, undated). <sup>4</sup> While applicants to both usually have to adhere to certain criteria, they are given freedom in designing their solutions.	In challenge funds, grants are awarded to those projects that best meet the objectives of the fund and fulfil the pre-established criteria (Sida, undated). These are usually paid against milestones of delivery. In prizes, the decision about awardees is made and the money distributed after results have been delivered. There is usually no expectation that the funds will be used in relation to the prize.
<b>Results-based financing</b>	Results-based financing, like prizes, incentivises the achievement of desired outcomes by suppliers (Eldridge and TeKolste, 2016, cited in Roberts et al., 2019) <sup>5</sup>	Payment is disbursed based on the (pre-agreed) results achieved by suppliers (Clist, 2018). In prizes, the financial reward provided to the winner(s) is not directly related to the expected cost of participation and implementation (Roberts et al., 2019)

<sup>4</sup> Sida, undated. *Guidelines: Challenge funds*. Sweden ([https://www.sida.se/contentassets/3aa2456211934e8dac038ea55fcddccd/guidelines---challenge-funds\\_3466.pdf](https://www.sida.se/contentassets/3aa2456211934e8dac038ea55fcddccd/guidelines---challenge-funds_3466.pdf))

<sup>5</sup> Eldridge, M. and TeKolste, R., 2016. *Results-Based Financing Approaches: Observations for Pay for Success from International Experiences*. Urban Institute. United States

## How typical were the I2I prizes?

The I2I prizes collectively incentivised their participants to compete and contribute to solving development challenges, and awarded £3.5 million in prize money to 79 winning participants, with individual prize amounts ranging from £643 to £400,000.<sup>6</sup>

The programme was ambitious in deliberately selecting intractable problems<sup>7</sup> and used prizes as a trigger to induce innovative approaches and incentivise behaviour change that would lead to development outcomes. In other words, though the I2I prizes focused little on post-prize activity, their effect was expected to go beyond merely making prize awards. The I2I prizes differed from each other in the types of development change they ultimately aimed to effect, from increasing the financing available for non-revenue water reduction to stimulating the market for off-grid solar-powered refrigerators. Box 2 provides the underlying theory about how the prize process was expected to work. It describes the basic mechanism of a prize in a simplified way, summarising at a high level the logic behind the individual prize theories of change that were developed for each of the I2I prizes.<sup>8</sup>

### **Box 2: The underlying (simplified) theory for the I2I prizes**

Prizes are complex mechanisms. There is no one-size fits-all approach and an individual prize's design is the product of a range of design decisions.<sup>9</sup> Simply put, however, the I2I prizes theorised that: if the prize provides sufficient incentive for stakeholders to engage and participate (e.g. through the provision of a financial award, technical assistance, and/or recognition), then prize participants are induced to focus on a particular development issue, develop new ideas or concepts to solve a development 'problem', and/or implement new ideas or solutions. As a result, innovation is induced and one or more prize-specific advantages are realised (e.g. awareness of the issue is raised, partnerships are facilitated, and communities take action towards the solution). Through participants fulfilling certain judging criteria (e.g. focusing their solutions and actions on benefiting the poor), the prize is awarded, and development outcomes are achieved.

The portfolio of I2I prizes was intentionally diverse. Due to the action-research nature of the programme, the prizes varied in their focus, geography, target participants, implementing teams, prize type and model, time frame and level of support to participants, with different elements prioritised for different prizes (see Box 3).

Based on our literature review of other prizes for development (see Roberts et al., 2019), the I2I prizes were unusual in relying on people and organisations to implement something new (if only new to them), while providing little or no technical or monetary assistance to prize participants.<sup>10</sup> Instead the prizes were run as standalone initiatives within 'enabling' contexts, for example those with high levels of existing government and/or development donor activity and support infrastructure.

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<sup>6</sup> The smallest individual prize awarded was 1,000 USD as part of the LPG Cylinder Prize (GBP equivalent uses the exchange rate at the time of prize award as cited in Brown, 2017). The largest individual prize awarded was £400,000 to a Sanitation Challenge for Ghana prize participant.

<sup>7</sup> Source: the DFID-commissioned mid-term review of the Ideas to Impact programme ([http://www.ideastoimpact.net/sites/default/files/doc\\_research/Final%20I2I%20MTR%20report.pdf](http://www.ideastoimpact.net/sites/default/files/doc_research/Final%20I2I%20MTR%20report.pdf)).

<sup>8</sup> This narrative is for illustrative purposes only, to show how the prizes were expected to work in general (not in detail). It does not relate to or represent a specific prize's theory of change, nor does it include causal linkages and assumptions.

<sup>9</sup> Design decisions include: the number of stages, prize type and duration, judging criteria, communications approach, financial and non-financial incentives, level of support provided.

<sup>10</sup> Where support was provided, this was in the form of workshops and visits that were intended to help all participants equally.

### Box 3: Key details of the I2I prizes and variation across the portfolio

**Focus:** each prize aimed to help solve a specific 'problem' within its theme, for example one of the CCA prizes aimed to increase the use of climate information by farmers.

**Geography:** the I2I prizes varied from being implemented in one specific country (Ghana, Kenya, Nepal), to specifying a region or a range of potential focus countries, to being 'global' in scope.

**Target participants:** some prizes were only open to specific stakeholder groups, while others, though they pre-identified expected stakeholder types, were open to all. Together the prizes targeted government, the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs).

**Implementing teams:** the I2I prizes varied in the size, make-up and location of their prize teams, from being run by development agencies, to national government and innovation prize specialists. Many of the team members were new to implementing prizes.

**Prize type:** the majority were innovation inducement prizes, though recognition prizes were also used. Some prizes explicitly sought new ideas, or 'point solutions' to very specific problems.

**Time frame:** each of the prize schemes had a different number of stages, with stages varying from two months to more than two and a half years (from prize launch to final submissions by participants for judging).

Other key features of the I2I prizes, which do not necessarily make them distinct from other prizes for development, were their broad definition of what constitutes 'innovation' and their stimulation of both the development and deployment of solutions.

- In I2I, innovation included the application of new or improved products, processes, technologies or services that are either new to the world (novel), new to a region or business (imitative) or new to the field of endeavour, that is, repurposed (adaptive) (Ward and Dixon, 2015). Innovation seen under the prizes often related to processes and services, rather than technologies and products.
- Most of the I2I prizes included an ideation component or stage (participants were invited to submit an idea, concept note or business plan), followed by one or more implementation components (e.g. to incentivise the scaling up of a climate change adaptation project), though some were run as single-stage, standalone prizes. This multi-stage design was intended to reduce risk for both participants and the overall programme.

Stern et al. (2012) highlight the importance of taking the characteristics of development programmes into account when deciding on evaluation questions and methods. They argue that tailored evaluation strategies are needed to respond to these attributes. In this paper we seek to focus on the specific attributes of innovation inducement prizes, rather than those that were merely features of the I2I prizes.

# Tested approaches to evaluating prizes

## How have others approached evaluating prizes?

We found very little literature or evidence publicly available on the methodologies or results of previous evaluations of prizes that are similar to I2I's prizes – both five years ago to inform our evaluation approach and at the time of drafting this paper. A key implication of this is that there is limited information available about the value or appropriateness of taking a prize approach to achieving development outcomes. Discussions on how to measure the success of prizes for development remain largely theoretical.

A review of the limited literature available suggests some broad categories of indicators to consider the effectiveness and success of prizes. These include: process indicators on the design and implementation of the prize (e.g. reach of prize promotion activity, number of registered participants, number of solutions submitted); output indicators on the content and quality of solutions obtained; and efficacy indicators (i.e. the extent to which intended results have been achieved). In the context of evaluating 'ideation' and 'point solution' prizes, performance has tended to be judged on the quality of solutions obtained and whether an award has been made, rather than based on any related social change (Roberts et al., 2019).

There is some acknowledgement of the difficulty and cost of evaluating prizes, particularly when collecting data beyond the point of prize award and in relation to measuring impact (Gök, 2013). Additionality of prizes is relatively more difficult to assess compared to other initiatives (Gök, 2013), for example in understanding whether the solutions to the problem(s) targeted have emerged as a result of the prize, or if they would have been developed anyway without the prize, over a similar time period (Conrad et al., 2017).

Further, understanding whether intended results have been achieved depends on clearly identifying the goal (and ideally the pathway) but often prize goals and/or pathways are unclear (Burstein and Murray, 2016). Where a desired outcome has been specified, more conventional approaches to evaluation can be used to assess a prize's effectiveness (Roberts et al., 2019).

## How did we approach evaluating the I2I prizes?

### The purpose and remit of the I2I evaluations

In the context of I2I's overall purpose to generate new knowledge about the value and use of prizes as a funding modality to achieve development outcomes, evaluation and learning have been integral to the programme throughout its lifetime. The lack of prize evaluations publicly available suggests that, by allocating 7 per cent of the overall programme budget, I2I focused more resource and attention on **evaluation** than is likely typical in other prizes for development.

Driven by a learning, rather than a direct accountability remit,<sup>11</sup> our evaluations of the I2I prizes sought to understand the 'success' of each individual prize in meeting their intended outcomes within this broader line of enquiry, with a strong commitment to publishing the results. We were not commissioned to undertake impact evaluations, nor were we responsible for prize **monitoring** or **verification** of participants' results, though we did advise prize teams on the former.<sup>12</sup>

While our reporting of results achieved by the prizes was to remain independent and impartial, our work was also expected to provide insight to support ongoing improvements to the prizes and overall

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<sup>11</sup> Evaluation and learning outputs were to feed into the overall programme results framework but not specifically developed to report against this.

<sup>12</sup> A separate, independent mid-term review was commissioned by the funder DFID, and undertaken by the Law & Development Partnership (LDP).

programme and to improve the chances of success where possible.<sup>13</sup> In this respect, we were essentially ‘quasi-independent’ – part of the overall I2I programme and yet not internal to any one prize team, striving to be as objective and rigorous as possible to ensure the credibility of the evidence base.

### The overall evaluation approach taken

Our approach to evaluating the I2I prizes **evolved over several years** as we learned more about the prizes themselves and what worked best in understanding their results. While many of the evaluation approaches that we used were based on our previous experiences of evaluating predominantly grant-funded development programmes, we **adapted and blended** these to fit both the prizes for development and the broader I2I programme contexts.

To provide a basis for the evaluations, we took a **theory-based approach**. This involved working with the prize teams upfront to understand and identify the anticipated outputs, outcomes and longer-term impacts of each prize, and the causal linkages between these, uncovering any assumptions being made and questioning the likelihood of them holding true.<sup>14</sup>

We also considered the range of **prize ‘effects’** that the I2I programme theorised prizes may add value in delivering (Ward and Dixon, 2015).<sup>15</sup> These were included in prize theories of change as mechanisms that would facilitate outcome-level change as well as, for some prizes, outcomes in and of themselves.

Each prize evaluation was framed by that prize’s theory of change and its main intended prize effect,<sup>16</sup> as well as **five headline evaluation questions that each prize evaluation would answer** through tailored sub-evaluation questions (see Table 2). With many of the I2I prizes inducing prize participants to implement the ideas, strategies and business plans they had developed under the initial prizes in developing country contexts, the evaluations focused on change and results seen at the outcome-level.<sup>17</sup>

Table 2: Headline evaluation questions for the I2I prizes

Programme evaluation questions (PEQs)	Rationale and application
<b>Overarching question:</b> Did the prize achieve what it set out to achieve?	This question was answered using predominantly secondary data against the prize theory of change
<b>PEQ1:</b> How <b>effective</b> has the prize been at catalysing innovation on the focus problem?	We explored the <b>level of innovation</b> achieved by prize participants. We used an <b>adapted version of contribution analysis</b> to understand each prize’s contribution to its <b>main intended prize effect</b> . Based on secondary data only, we also reported against the other I2I prize effects

<sup>13</sup> Evidence-based learning was to be applied both within a single prize process – for example by generating learning from one stage to inform the design of the next – and across the portfolio of prizes.

<sup>14</sup> While the initial prize designs were developed based on research into the specific development problem they intended to help solve, they did not include a clear theory of how the prize would contribute to solving the problem. We supported prize teams upfront to think through the change process envisaged.

<sup>15</sup> In advance of launching its first prize, I2I published a set of nine outcomes or effects that prizes can achieve, often in combination. These were adapted from McKinsey’s ‘And the winner is...’ (2009). The nine prize effects are: raise awareness; promote best practice; facilitate and strengthen partnerships and networks; maximise participation towards the sponsor’s aims; community action; point solution; open innovation; market stimulation; and altering the policy environment.

<sup>16</sup> Each prize team identified one main intended ‘prize effect’ for their prize.

<sup>17</sup> Conversely, the initial round of evaluations conducted at the end of multi-stage prizes’ first stage generated process- and output-related learning. These were an internal learning piece to understand progress of the prizes to date and to inform the design of any subsequent stage(s) of each prize where possible. As such, they were not externally published.

Programme evaluation questions (PEQs)	Rationale and application
<b>PEQ2:</b> To what extent has the effect of the prize been <b>sustained</b> beyond the point of award?	Depending on the timing of each evaluation within the broader programme timeframe, we considered the <b>likelihood of sustainability</b> for some prizes, and <b>evidence of sustained effects</b> for others where time allowed, through follow-up <b>sustainability assessments</b>
<b>PEQ3:</b> Does the prize offer <b>value for money (VFM)</b> when compared to alternative funding modalities?	We undertook an ' <b>internal</b> ' <b>assessment against each prize's original expectations</b> and, where feasible, an ' <b>external</b> ' <b>assessment to compare prize results with those seen under a non-prize funded comparator project</b>
<b>PEQ4:</b> Were there any <b>unintended consequences</b> of the prize and did they outweigh the benefits? <sup>18</sup>	We <b>identified evidence of any unintended consequences</b> seen by each prize, <b>both positive and negative</b> , and <b>explored whether these were outweighed by benefits seen</b> , for both prize participants and end beneficiaries
<b>PEQ5:</b> Is <b>solver support</b> necessary for prizes to be successful? <sup>19</sup>	We <b>considered the barriers faced by prize participants</b> to participating in and achieving results under each prize, and <b>the role played (or not) of support activities in reducing these barriers</b>

These questions provided a useful framework for using the I2I prize experiences to understand the value and use of prizes to development more broadly and how to get the most value when applying a prize modality, in line with the overall I2I programme goal. While the questions themselves may not be appropriate in the evaluation of other prizes, some of the question areas are likely to be important to consider in future evaluations of prizes – including effectiveness, sustainability, value for money and unintended consequences.

### Reflections on the approaches, methods and tools used

In our evaluations, we responded to each prize's sub-evaluation questions by collecting and analysing a set of primary and secondary data. We analysed these two types of data together to gain a comprehensive understanding of each prize's outcomes and effects. Here we summarise our reflections on the suitability of the various approaches used. For more detail, see Table 6 in Annex 3, which summarises the approaches, methods and tools used across the I2I evaluations.

**Appropriateness of primary data collection tools:** Semi-structured key informant interviews and focus group discussions were appropriate for gaining an understanding of what was happening on the ground from multiple stakeholder perspectives. However, their use would have been even more effective if extended to include beneficiaries of the prize projects themselves (not included due to resource constraints) to understand what had changed (for better and worse) from their perspective.

**Limitations of small sample frames:** The small population from which to draw evaluation participants was one of the main limitations of the I2I prize evaluations. We found it was important to consult as wide a cross-section of stakeholders as possible, including both those who were directly and heavily involved in

<sup>18</sup> Exploration of unintended consequences was prioritised by the programme as its prizes moved from ideation to implementation on the ground, in low-income contexts.

<sup>19</sup> Understanding the importance of support to prize participants was an area of focus for the programme.

the prize process, and those that were more removed. However, the level of insight provided tended to reduce the more removed from the prize the respondent was.

**Timing of data collection:** There were benefits to data collection taking place almost immediately after prize award (several months after participants' final submissions). For example, the level of stakeholder engagement and recall was generally very high shortly after prize activities had ceased. However, there was less scope for seeing outcome-level change within this time frame.

**Use of adapted contribution analysis:** Contribution analysis was an appropriate method to use and, in line with the evaluation literature, it worked well to focus this on one outcome only (Delahais and Toulemonde, 2012). The adapted approach used worked well. However, while this provides a strong indication of the contribution of each prize to its intended effect, the evidence would have been more definitive had a 'pure' approach to contribution analysis been taken.

**Benefits of data collection up to one year after prize award:**<sup>20</sup> Undertaking follow-up sustainability studies worked well for answering the question 'what happened next for prize participants?' and for understanding what happened once the prize mechanism was removed. This additional data collection *ex post* provided a sounder basis for identifying the likelihood of sustainability of results in the longer term.

**Value of consulting a wide range of prize documentation, including verification and judging reports:** It was useful to triangulate between prize participants' self-reported data, the view of independent verification agents of the same and judges' assessments of participants' level of achievement against the judging criteria to understand the types of change seen. However, this could have been much strengthened by supplementing with field-level data collection by the evaluations themselves (not done due to resource constraints).

**Importance of applying VFM analysis:** Use of VFM assessment was an appropriate route to further understand the additionality of each prize. However, the methodology, including the sub-criteria and indicators were developed at the point of evaluation. Had these frameworks been developed earlier in the prize process, this would have greatly facilitated completion of the assessments. Consideration of the equity of prize outcomes was important to include in our assessment. However, the strength of the evidence available was often limited by the lack of field-level data.

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<sup>20</sup> Our evaluations of The Dreampipe Challenge II and The Climate Information Prize included primary data collection nine months after prize award (and 12 months after participants' final submissions). Our follow-up review of the Global LEAP prize took place a year after prize award.



# What makes evaluating prizes different

## What did we learn from applying the I2I evaluation approach?

### What worked well in the I2I evaluations

**Framing the prize evaluations using theories of change enabled us to consider not only 'success' against each prize's judging criteria, but also how each prize might have contributed to development outcomes.**

Based on the broader ambition of the programme, we chose to focus the prize theories of change and their intended results on development change rather than prize award. Development of these theories of change worked well as a tool to push prize teams to consider and further define the development change their prizes aimed to effect, and to surface and challenge any assumptions being made.

The use of theory of change also helped us situate each prize's award within a broader pathway to change. Our experience aligns with the prize evaluation literature, which suggests the importance of a prize's goal or pathway for understanding whether its intended results have been achieved (Burstein and Murray, 2016). The intended development results and pathways were easier to define for those prizes that included an implementation stage and where the prize participants, the nature of their 'solutions' and the location were already pre-defined. For example, the Sanitation Challenge for Ghana prize, which targeted local government authorities in Ghana and induced them to develop and implement liquid waste management strategies for the benefit of the urban poor.

**Focusing on the main prize effect, intended development outcomes and key considerations such as sustainability and unintended consequences provided a broad evidence base to understand prize results in a holistic way.**

The focus of the prize evaluations was driven by their underlying purpose to better understand the value and use of innovation prizes for development. We found that considering the combination of the main intended prize benefit and development outcomes, along with the likelihood of these being sustained once the prize had been awarded and closed, worked well for understanding success beyond prize award.

In addition, we found that exploring both positive and negative unintended consequences for participants themselves and also for end beneficiaries enabled us to provide a more balanced view of prizes' success. This was particularly important given the unpredictability of the solutions that would be submitted (and, in some cases, implemented) under each prize, and the unintended results that might come of incentivising behaviour change among certain groups of people – many of whom were not traditionally development actors. In general though, the level of evidence for unintended consequences was limited, in particular for beneficiaries.

**Considering the VFM of each prize from an internal perspective and, where possible, in relation to an external comparator programme, provided an additional lens to further understand each prize's results.**

Our VFM assessments effectively provided a mini-evaluation within each evaluation, allowing us to explore prize results from multiple angles. We not only looked at prize performance compared with original expectations, but also in relation to those standards that could be reasonably expected of development programmes (for example, equitable distribution of benefits). Where possible, we also compared to results seen under more traditional, non-prize programmes targeting similar outcomes.<sup>21</sup>

While the internal and external VFM assessments on their own provided a relatively crude view of the VFM of the prizes, when taken together, and within the context of the broader evaluation findings, they

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<sup>21</sup> For some of the I2I prizes – for example The Dreampipe Challenge II – we were not able to identify an appropriate comparator programme.

provided an insight into the prizes' VFM and added value more generally. Using a standardised approach across the prizes enabled us to draw lessons on establishing the VFM of the I2I prizes collectively. *For a summary of the results of our VFM assessments, see our companion paper on the VFM of the I2I prizes (Stott and Gould, 2020).*

## **Learning from the I2I evaluations and the limitations encountered**

### **In-depth prize evaluations shone a different light on prize results**

An associated challenge of the evaluations drawing on a broad evidence base was that perceptions of prize results and the 'story of the prize' told in real time sometimes differed from the subsequent evaluation findings.<sup>22</sup> This disconnect was in part due to the higher bar set by the evaluations in their emphasis on the development results achieved; they also had the benefit of hindsight and could provide a more nuanced view. In addition, it was due to real-time reporting being based on direct reports of prize participant achievements, rather than an interrogation of these. We took the approach of highlighting prizes' success, but also providing a narrative on what worked less well and drawing out the broader lessons and implications for prizes for development.

### **It was a challenge to identify the additionality of some of the prizes and exactly what they induced**

In line with the literature on evaluating prizes (Gök, 2013 and Conrad et al., 2017), we found that additionality was difficult to assess for some of the I2I prizes. Specifically, it was challenging to determine whether prize participants would have done what they did under the prize anyway, without a prize to incentivise these actions. It was particularly hard to identify what the prize induced for those participants who were undertaking similar initiatives before the prize was launched. We consulted these participants directly to understand their individual situations further, who were often very open that they were planning to do something similar anyway. Our evaluations concluded that, for those participants who may well have designed and/or implemented similar solutions had the prize not existed, they likely would not have done this within the same (often short) time frame or in the same way, for example with the prizes inducing new ways of working and more detailed levels of documentation of the projects implemented.<sup>23</sup>

### **It was difficult for the evaluations to definitively say how effective the prizes were in reaching the poor**

For those I2I prizes that involved an 'implementation' stage, one of the main limitations across the evaluations was a lack of data to fully understand the quality of prize participants' interventions on the ground and the impact these had on the lives of poor people.

In effect, each prize was a programme of separate projects, with each project implemented by a different actor (or prize participant). In many cases, prize participants were not routinely involved in delivering development projects, and so not accustomed to the development standards and types of reporting expected of recipients of more traditional grants for example. For this reason, and also because participants were competing on a speculative basis and in many cases with limited resources, with no guarantee of winning prize funds, the I2I prizes could not place further **reporting** demands on participants without risking reducing the level of participation in the prizes.

In addition, the standards we were evaluating the prizes against were not necessarily explicitly expected of prize participants – for example, Do No Harm and the equitable distribution of benefits of prize solutions. Depending on the prize design, prize participants were not always accountable for the development results of their solutions. Where individual prize processes did require their participants to report on, for example, beneficiary numbers, or their focus on the poor, these data were self-reported by

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<sup>22</sup> This was despite a certain amount of failure being anticipated – as an action-research programme, not all of the I2I prizes were expected to work as planned. Of the five original prizes, the DFID business case (2013) assumed that: two of the prizes would fail or not result in any significant addition to the marketplace and therefore opportunities for poor consumers; two would result in some innovation, but not 'take-off'; and one would result in a transformational change with significant impacts for poor consumers.

<sup>23</sup> The latter was often seen by prize participants as a positive benefit of the prize process. The prize process typically required more detailed documentation than would have been routine, in order to be able to report on and demonstrate results achieved.

participants and the quality of reporting was variable. Meanwhile, direct **monitoring** of participant activities on the ground by prize teams was kept intentionally light, in the context of the I2I prizes providing limited support to participants and not wanting to influence prize results.

Many of the prizes involved a field-based independent **verification** process to assess the reliability of the information provided by participants.<sup>24</sup> However, this was more of a fact-checking exercise, for example to see whether the participant had done or achieved what they said they had. It went beyond the verification agents' remit to assess the quality of participants' activities or to collect data from beneficiaries. In other words, the verification exercise was to support prize award, by indicating the accuracy of participant reporting to those judging their performance against pre-agreed criteria, rather than to assess results on the ground in development terms. Effectively prize participants' efforts were judged based on their activities and outputs and not results at outcome and impact levels.

We addressed the issue of project-level reporting and monitoring data not reflecting all the data we would need for evaluating development outcomes by consulting prize participant reports directly and triangulating these with verification reports and judging scores and comments. We also asked (through interview) stakeholders with on-the-ground insight for their perspectives. However, it went beyond the resources of each individual evaluation to consult beneficiaries directly for a more complete view.

## What is different about evaluating prizes?

### Prize attributes and implications for evaluation

Through our work evaluating the I2I prizes over the last five years, we have identified attributes that are specific to innovation prizes more generally, which make assessing their results different to evaluating a typical development project or programme.<sup>25</sup> These features affect the evaluability of prizes and, in line with Stern et al. (2012), tailored evaluation strategies are needed to respond to them. They include that:

- **Award occurs once results have been achieved:** Prizes differ from typical development interventions funded through other modalities in that the winners and the results they have achieved are not known until the end of the prize process. This limits the opportunity for gathering evidence on *how* the results were achieved. It also reduces the scope for course-correction through ongoing monitoring (though this can, in part, be mitigated through "staging" a prize).
- **Monitoring and evaluation are not built into the prize process:** Prize processes typically do not include specific monitoring and evaluation requirements for participants. This means there is a high reliance by subsequent evaluation on self-reported data by participants, as well as what is requested through the prize application form.
- **Prize processes focus on the winner(s) and on the award:** Typically, success is measured by the prize being awarded, and attention is focused on the winning participant(s) and what they achieved. This means it is difficult to gather evidence on other, non-winning participants and that there is less incentive to track what happens beyond award, i.e. post-award sustainability.<sup>26</sup>
- **Results tend to focus on qualitative changes:** This means that it is hard to generate statistically generalisable evidence in prize evaluations.

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<sup>24</sup> In the Global LEAP prize, there was no need for verification of third-party data submitted by participants because the prize team themselves collected both qualitative and quantitative data about the entries (in laboratory and field settings).

<sup>25</sup> We also encountered features that were specific to the I2I prizes – for example, they were adaptively managed which meant the prizes evolved as the understanding of use of prizes in development grew (requiring adaptive evaluation approaches), and many were multi-stage, meaning there was more opportunity to track results between the prizes. We have focused on those features that are more generalisable to other prizes.

<sup>26</sup> The I2I prizes differed here in that sustainability was explicitly included in the judging criteria of some prizes. It was also a key consideration in the post-prize evaluations, with an associated evaluation question.

- **The number of stakeholders involved is small:** Typically, only a small number of people are sufficiently involved in and informed about a prize. This means there tends to be a limited pool of stakeholders between whom to triangulate findings.
- **There is a lack of counterfactual with which to compare:** Prizes do not lend themselves to randomisation (it is not possible to randomly assign prizes), nor a control (a without-the-prize scenario with which to compare). This means it is hard to know what would have happened without the prize and to specifically attribute changes to a prize. Evaluations need to be based on plausibly understanding the contribution of the prize to development outcomes.<sup>27</sup>
- **VFM is difficult to apply:** Prizes do not readily lend themselves to monetarised or comparable effects, such those typically assessed using cost-benefit analysis or cost-effectiveness analysis.

It is worth acknowledging that all good quality evaluations of development interventions, whatever their funding and delivery model, should consider the specific attributes of the intervention. So, in this respect, evaluation of prizes does not differ from standard good practice.

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<sup>27</sup> While not a counterfactual, some of the I2I prizes included collection of the 'baseline' situation through initial reports from participants, providing a basis with which to compare. This was combined with recall from interviewees.

# What prize evaluations can say about change

This section draws from our companion paper *Rising to the challenge: how to get the best value from using prizes to drive innovation for development* (Brown et al., 2020).

## What counts as success in prizes?

The literature on prizes (as summarised in Roberts et al., 2019) suggests that, whether a prize has worked or not, its success can be interpreted in different ways. Through our experience of evaluating the I2I prizes, we found that success can be expressed through three perspectives, each of which has implications for evaluation:

- Was the prize awarded as anticipated?
- Did the prize drive innovation and produce the expected advantages?
- Did the prize contribute to development outcomes?

*To understand what each of the I2I prizes achieved in relation to these three perspectives, directly consult each prize's evaluation report (list available in Annex 2) or see Brown et al. (2020) for a synthesis.*

### **Perspective 1: Was the prize awarded as anticipated?**

Prize performance can be measured in terms of the participants and solutions obtained (Conrad et al., 2017). If the prize is launched, with specific and relevant judging criteria and if these are met, the prize is awarded and, therefore, the prize can be said to have worked. In a situation where the solution is intended to be taken up by the organisation sponsoring the prize (as is it is in commercial settings), this is a reasonable assumption. However, we argue that it is not enough for prizes for development.

Indicators about the effectiveness of the prize process – for example the number of registrations, solutions submitted, those shortlisted and awarded and, where data are available, the type of participants – are useful to examine in the early stages of a multi-stage prize, or where one is learning about how to deliver prizes. For this reason, the effectiveness of the prize process was a focus for the interim evaluations that Itad carried out largely for internal learning purposes and to inform design of subsequent stages. However, prize process was less relevant for the subsequent implementation inducement stages.

An advantage of evaluating prize process is that the prize team may already be collecting the data needed to report on these indicators – though we found that it was important to be involved upfront to ensure evaluation data needs were considered when designing participant registration forms and participant terms and conditions.

### **Perspective 2: Did the prize drive innovation and produce the expected advantages?**

Given that the primary purpose of a prize is to induce innovation, it is important to specifically explore how effective the prize was at catalysing innovation. If the purpose of using a prize (instead of another form of funding) is also to obtain certain advantages for the prize sponsor, such as reaching new solvers to find the solution to a particular problem (otherwise known as 'point solution'), it is reasonable to judge a prize's success in terms of the extent to which those advantages occurred.

As previously noted, one of the primary lines of enquiry for I2I's evaluations was the extent to which the prize had achieved its priority intended effect – the core benefit to the prize sponsor that using a prize was anticipated to deliver. In I2I, the set of potential advantages of using a prize for development was referred to as the 'prize effects' and these are summarised in Box 3.

Box 3: Nine prize effects targeted by I2I prizes (Source: Adapted from Ward and Dixon, 2015)



The anticipated advantages varied depending on the prize type, the focus of the prize and other aspects of each individual prize's design. Within each prize evaluation we also reviewed the evidence available, to understand whether and to what extent any of the prize effects that were not specifically anticipated for that prize had occurred. In all cases, to capture learning about the value and use of prizes more broadly, we were interested to glean in what ways the prizes contributed to any of the benefits achieved.

Evaluators are likely to be familiar already with methods for assessing whether these kinds of changes happened; for example, whether awareness was raised among a key set of stakeholders regarding a particular issue promoted by a prize. However, it has been I2I's experience that these advantages or effects can be a means to an end and still not tell the whole story.

The prize's ultimate contribution to development may be dependent on external factors. For example, it is possible to make an award for an idea or innovation (thus achieving the 'point solution' effect), but this may not then go on to have the intended social or environmental benefit due to factors beyond the prize sponsor's control. This is why, although it means holding prizes to a higher standard than is currently common, the I2I evaluations included a third perspective on change.

### Perspective 3: Did the prize contribute to development outcomes?

This higher level of scrutiny requires effective monitoring throughout the prize, as well as comprehensive evaluation post-prize that looks beyond prize participants and prize process. To fully answer this question, an evaluator will need to look at the impacts on the ground as a result of the prize, including engaging with reported beneficiaries to understand how prize innovations have affected them, both positively and negatively. As with other funding modalities that make payments based on results reported to the funder, and given the competition setting, information submitted by prize participants on development outcomes will need to be verified in some way. Given that a prize can be expected to produce a portfolio of projects (and may be designed specifically to encourage a high number of projects), this necessitates a greater investment in monitoring and evaluation.

Another aspect of this view of change is to consider any unintended consequences of running the prize, both positive and negative. While prizes, as competitions with pre-defined criteria, risk incentivising participants to adopt undesirable behaviours in pursuit of those criteria, the very nature of prizes opens the door to the unexpected, which can be welcome outcomes. In practice, the evidence base for the I2I prizes was very limited for unintended positive and negative consequences on the ground and so the

prize evaluations were only able to provide indications of these, rather than definitively outlining their scale and impacts. There was more evidence available on those unintended consequences that applied to participants – rather than the end beneficiaries – of the prizes, but, overall, negative effects were found to be outweighed by the positives (Brown et al., 2020).

One challenge to adopting this approach to evaluation is that of optimal timing. Unusually for innovation prizes, the I2I evaluator Itad was able to carry out a round of data collection up to a year after the final awards were made for three of the prizes. These follow-up reviews considered whether any changes that these prizes had incentivised had a lasting effect, and whether the next steps in the prizes' theories of change had happened as anticipated.<sup>28</sup> Our evaluations found that prizes can be effective at making change happen but their ability to reach their long-term potential is heavily reliant on the actions of both prize participants and external stakeholders post-award.

Given the long-term nature of the problems being tackled by the I2I prizes, even a year is likely to be too soon to draw conclusions on a prize's development impact.<sup>29</sup> However, as with other types of development interventions, using evidence available against the theory of change, it is possible to assess progress along the pathway(s) to impact and pass comment on the likely trajectory of change.

### Combining the three perspectives

While our evaluations collected and analysed evidence on all three perspectives, the I2I programme's ultimate focus was on the question of its prizes' contribution to development, and whether a prize was the right modality for solving the focus problem of each prize. That said, we found it is important to consider all three perspectives to make a more rounded judgement of a prize's success, and adopting this approach can lead to lessons about when prizes are appropriate for use in development.

However, even this relatively comprehensive view can provide an incomplete picture if a prize's contribution to change happens later than the evaluation – in the context that prizes' ability to reach their long-term potential is heavily reliant on the actions of external stakeholders after awards are made.

### What are the benefits of considering multiple perspectives of success?

Viewing prize performance through the multiple lenses of prize award/process, prize benefits and development outcomes enabled us to understand each prize's tiered success. This was particularly important for the I2I evaluations given these were together to explore the 'value and use' of prizes to achieve development outcomes. If a prize fell short in its contribution to development, we could unpick the reasons for this, for example based on which benefits had and had not been realised, and whether the prize had induced innovation and awarded as intended.

We found that the strength of evidence tended to reduce with each perspective. By considering all three perspectives, I2I's prize evaluations could draw conclusions about which prizes stimulated the desired change, and also gain insights into why. For example, the prizes that most clearly met expectations in terms of contribution to development were those which operated within a single country, rather than those run on behalf of one or more countries by an external party. They were also those prizes that were aligned and embedded within an enabling environment, those that targeted a known and accessible group of participants and those that attracted the right partners and implementing team. [See our flagship research report for more details of our collective evaluation findings: \*Rising to the challenge: how to get the best value from using prizes to drive innovation for development\* \(Brown et al., 2020\).](#)

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<sup>28</sup> See the dedicated report for what happened next following the Climate Information Prize (Stott and Brown, 2020), as well as the Dreampipe II evaluation report (Gould & Brown, 2019) and Global LEAP follow-up review (Brown, 2020) for the results of these sustainability assessments.

<sup>29</sup> This includes not only development outcomes but also longer-term effects on the behaviour of prize participants themselves, for example in becoming more active development actors.

# Implications, lessons and recommendations for future evaluations

## Implications for future prize evaluations

There are two key overarching implications for future evaluations of prizes from our experience of evaluating a set of prizes for development:

- A. **Ascertaining the value and appropriateness of taking a prize approach to achieving development outcomes should be a key priority for all future evaluations of prizes, as well as understanding possible unintended effects.**<sup>30</sup>
- B. **Evaluation of prizes in many ways is not different to evaluation of other types of development initiatives, but there are certain prize-specific attributes that need to be taken into account.**

## Lessons and recommendations for future prize evaluations

To conclude this paper, we highlight in Table 3 some of the practical implications for future prize evaluations in the form of lessons and recommendations for those funding, commissioning, managing and undertaking evaluations of prizes in future.

Table 3: Lessons and recommendations for those funding, commissioning, managing and undertaking future prize evaluations

Main audience	Lesson	Lesson explained	Related recommendations
Funders and commissioners of prize evaluations	1) <b>Understanding development outcomes on the ground requires investment in monitoring and evaluation at project level</b>	Evaluating the performance of prizes beyond whether they were awarded, the quality of solutions obtained and the effectiveness of the prize process – that is, considering their broader benefits and contribution to development outcomes – requires data collection from prize participants as well as the beneficiaries of prize participants’ activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>Invest in monitoring and evaluation</b> to at least a similar level as other typical development interventions funded through non-prize modalities, such as grants. Ideally the level of investment should be greater to facilitate a full understanding of a prize’s effectiveness.</li> <li>b) <b>Pre-identify priorities for evaluation</b> (including the level and nature of results expected) at the start of the prize process and ensure that data are</li> </ul>

<sup>30</sup> Taking a realist evaluation approach (i.e. what works for whom, under what circumstances) could be useful in order to explore factors underlying whether a prize approach might be appropriate or not, with questions such as: To what extent can prizes be expected to act as an incentive and, if so, in what ways? Under what circumstances might incentives be able to contribute to meaningful development change?



Main audience	Lesson	Lesson explained	Related recommendations
		<p>Provision for field-level interactions will need to be built into resourcing plans and the prize process more broadly.</p> <p>This can make high-quality evaluation of a prize's results more costly than for grant-based initiatives.</p>	<p>routinely collected and monitored to support final evaluation of results.</p> <p>c) <b>Support prize participants to provide high quality reporting</b> – for example, through training or written guidelines on how to consider the sustainability of their interventions and report on outcome-level change.</p>
Funders and commissioners of prize evaluations	<b>2) Post-prize assessments are essential for understanding and learning about whether a prize will lead to development outcomes</b>	<p>Determining the timing of a prize evaluation will likely be a trade-off between what is practical and feasible and what will provide the most useful insight – which in turn depends on the purpose of the evaluation. An evaluation undertaken immediately or soon after prize award may only be able to assess contribution to development outcomes based on the potential for change happening, rather than real change seen on the ground. In addition, a prize award for a successful innovation does not guarantee that the innovation will continue to have a positive effect beyond the prize.</p>	<p>a) <b>Consider the optimal timing for the evaluation</b> and what it is realistic to expect to measure and understand at given intervals following prize award.</p> <p>b) If understanding a prize's contribution to getting innovations to scale and/or achieving development outcomes is a priority, <b>build in provision for an ex post assessment</b> – at least one year following prize award. If this is not possible, consider alternative, light-touch approaches to gaining evaluation data via the prize participants if they are likely to continue working on their solutions beyond the prize time frame.</p>
Funders and commissioners of prize evaluations	<b>3) To continue to refine the sector's understanding of prizes for development and how to best evaluate these, it is important to make the findings of prize evaluations available publicly</b>	<p>Given the dearth of literature on the results of prizes for development, and how to meaningfully and effectively evaluate these, commissioners of prize evaluations should include those interested in these aspects as an additional stakeholder or audience for the evaluation, and give permission for external sharing of the results.</p>	<p>a) <b>Make the methodologies and findings of prize evaluations, as well as any management responses to these, available</b> to the prize and evaluation community online.</p> <p>b) Consider establishing/funding a '<b>prizes for development' practitioner network</b>. This is likely to be a small group, but it would serve as a dedicated space for discussion and exchange of</p>

Main audience	Lesson	Lesson explained	Related recommendations
			learning, guidance and advice on the value and use of prizes to target development outcomes.
Prize managers	4) <b>Theory of change is a useful tool for clarifying what change a prize is ultimately trying to effect and how – and define success beyond prize award</b>	<p>A theory of change can help situate the prize award within a broader pathway to social or environmental change, which in turn will help inform what needs to be in place at the point of prize award for the longer-term success of the prize. It also helps prize managers to go beyond judging success against merely the judging criteria (which are developed to facilitate prize award) – and indeed can help in defining what these criteria should be to encourage progress towards desired results.</p> <p>Given that the intended results pathway may be uncertain at the point of prize design, it is important to periodically revisit and refine the prize theory of change as understanding of prize participants and their actions under the prize evolves.</p>	<p>a) <b>Develop a theory of change at prize design stage and continue to review and refine this</b> at key reflection points during the prize’s lifetime, ideally based on research/evidence.<sup>31</sup></p> <p>b) <b>Prize theories of change should look beyond immediate outcomes</b> to how prize teams expect longer-term impacts to be achieved post-award (even if the prize’s direct contribution to these impacts will likely only go as far as outputs and outcomes).</p>
Prize managers	5) <b>Prize managers have an important role to play in defining data collection during the prize process that will later facilitate evaluation of the prize</b>	<p>The opportunities for data collection from participants during prize processes are limited; however, there are ways that prize managers can facilitate this both before and after a prize closes. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prize managers can include ‘contribution to evaluation data collection’ in participant</li> </ul>	<p>a) <b>Consider monitoring and evaluation data collection needs at all points in the prize process</b> – from the design of prize registration and reporting/application processes and requirements, to the strategic use of judging criteria in aligning to the theory of change and evaluation data needs, and the terms of reference of independent verification processes. Link</p>

<sup>31</sup> This review may only be appropriate at the beginning and end of the prize if the time frame is short.

Main audience	Lesson	Lesson explained	Related recommendations
		<p>terms and conditions upfront. Also, at the start of the prize process, they can require the provision of contact and select profile details from those registering an interest in participating in the prize.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If the scope of the prize’s evaluation is sufficiently defined upfront, prize managers can also include judging criteria that drive the collection of data about, for example, development standards or outcomes at project level as part of participants’ ongoing reporting and final applications for the prize.</li> <li>▪ Prize managers can work to ensure that any independent verification of participant results is designed to not only inform and facilitate prize award decisions but also to meet the needs of any subsequent evaluation.</li> </ul>	<p>project-level monitoring and evaluation data collection to key moments or milestones in the prize, for example if/when prize participants receive financial or non-financial support.</p> <p>b) <b>Take into account the needs of evaluators in collating information from prize participants</b> in an accessible format, as well as in documenting key decisions made during the prize process.</p>
Prize evaluators	6) <b>Identifying, measuring and understanding change targeted by prizes for development is difficult. However, it is important to assess prizes against similar standards as other development projects, such as those funded by grants</b>	A focus on progress towards development outcomes should ideally be central to any evaluation of a prize for development. The timing of the evaluation in relation to prize award/close will have implications on the level of results it can focus on. Realistically, the evaluation will explore the prize’s contribution to change; it is unlikely that it will be able to attribute specific changes to the prize alone. However, the evaluation should seek to	<p>a) <b>Insist that the evaluation of prizes for development goes beyond prize award</b> to include exploring the scale and nature of innovation and developmental change realised, including unintended consequences, explicitly looking at the prize’s contribution to these changes.</p> <p>b) <b>Advise prize managers and sponsors on the type and level of change that will likely be observable</b> within the evaluation timeframe (more likely to be</p>

Main audience	Lesson	Lesson explained	Related recommendations
		<p>understand who has benefited from actions under the prize, and how, as well as explore any negative unintended consequences.</p> <p>Depending on the nature of the prize (for example, whether it includes an implementation element), development standards such as Do No Harm and ensuring the equitable distribution of benefits should be included in any assessment. Evaluators, if brought in early enough in the prize process, can play a role in introducing these standards to prize teams.</p>	<p>immediate outcomes within the scope of the prize and signals towards the trajectory of change).</p>
Prize evaluators	<p>7) <b>Theories of change can provide a sound basis for evaluating prizes; evaluations of prizes should take a theory-based approach</b></p>	<p>Theory of change provides a useful framework for prize evaluations – whether this was established and in place during the prize process itself or needs to be developed retrospectively at the start of the evaluation. In either case, evaluators should work with the prize manager to capture their latest understanding of the intended pathway(s) to change both before and after prize award – and if and how this has changed since the launch of the prize.</p> <p>As in more typical evaluations of development interventions (for example, those funded by grants), progress towards each of the results levels should be explored, along with causal pathways, including whether related assumptions held true.</p>	<p>a) <b>Facilitate a review of the prize theory of change</b> with the prize manager (and where relevant the prize sponsor) to develop an agreed basis for the evaluation. If the prize manager and/or sponsor are new to theories of change, facilitate a deeper understanding of the value and use of this approach to framing and understanding results.</p> <p>b) <b>Develop the evaluation approach to fully explore and understand if and how change happened</b> in relation to the theory of change, and the prize’s contribution to this change.</p>

Main audience	Lesson	Lesson explained	Related recommendations
Prize evaluators	8) <b>Selection of evaluation methods should be based on a sound understanding of those attributes specific to prizes for development, as well as those features specific to the prize being evaluated</b>	<p>Evaluations of prizes for development can involve many of the evaluation approaches, tools and methods used in assessments of more standard development projects and programmes. However, their application will need adjusting in response to both generic and specific prize attributes, and may require a more fluid and iterative way of working.</p> <p>It is important for evaluators to establish the amount and nature of the data available early on – at both overall prize and participant/project levels – to determine which stakeholders and data sources they will have access to, and any related limitations. Ideally evaluators will be involved early in the prize process to represent and advise the prize manager on evaluation data needs.</p>	<p>a) <b>Work with the prize manager to fully understand the attributes specific to the prize to be evaluated, and consult the prize evaluation literature</b> to better grasp the attributes of prizes for development more broadly. <b>Draw out the implications</b> to evaluating the prize in question in order to decide what evaluation approach and methods are appropriate and feasible.</p> <p>b) <b>Reflect on the experience of evaluating prizes for development</b> and share these with the broader prize and development community.</p>

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## Annex 1 – Summary of the I2I prizes

The following table provides a summary of six of the seven I2I prize schemes. One of the energy access prizes (the Off-Grid Cold Chain Challenge) is not included here.

Table 4: Summary of the I2I prizes

Prize name	Adaptation at Scale	Climate Information Prize	Dreampipe II	Sanitation Challenge for Ghana	LPG Cylinder Prize	Global LEAP Off-grid Refrigerator Competition
<b>Problem being addressed</b>	Scaling up and out of climate adaptation activities	Increasing use of climate information by farmers	Reduction of non-revenue water	Improved liquid waste management	Increasing value of Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders recalled by government	Stimulating market for solar-powered refrigerators
<b>Objective of the prize (What success would look like)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. To reward and promote adaptation innovations that link communities with wider networks to bring local adaptation to scale.</li> <li>ii. To contribute to building or strengthening innovation capabilities among participants.</li> <li>iii. To ensure that local communities benefit from adaptation innovations delivered by participants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. To drive the development of innovative Climate Information Services that can be accessed and used by poor and vulnerable individuals and households.</li> <li>ii. To raise awareness of the importance of climate information for coping with, and adapting to, climate variability and change.</li> </ul>	To stimulate workable and replicable ideas that would mobilise finance from non-traditional sources for water utilities to implement non-revenue water reduction activities, by 'de-risking' this prospect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. To incentivise metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies (MMDAs) to prioritise the delivery of improved urban sanitation services, through designing and implementing liquid waste management (LWM) strategies.</li> <li>ii. To stimulate participating MMDAs to make progress in implementing their LWM strategies through innovative approaches and improve liquid waste management in urban settings, particularly for the poor.</li> </ul>	To generate ideas that could be implemented by the Government of Ghana, from a global pool of solvers, on how to maximise the value of gas cylinders recovered as part of a cylinder exchange policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. To recognise the most energy efficient and highest quality off-grid refrigerators (in lab and field settings).</li> <li>ii. To catalyse further innovation in the off-grid refrigerator sector.</li> </ul>



Prize name	Adaptation at Scale	Climate Information Prize	Dreampipe II	Sanitation Challenge for Ghana	LPG Cylinder Prize	Global LEAP Off-grid Refrigerator Competition
<b>Focal country</b>	Nepal	Kenya	28 DFID focal countries in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa	Ghana	Ghana (although unspecified to prize participants)	Sub-Saharan Africa (field-tested in Uganda)
<b>Target participants</b>	Local, national and international NGOs, CBOs	Private sector entrepreneurs, NGOs, CBOs	Water utility experts & companies, lenders, financial experts and innovators	Local government authorities	Open to all, worldwide	Manufacturers and distributor of off-grid refrigerators
<b>Prize team</b>	Designed by Ideas to Impact, implemented by IDS-Nepal	Designed by Ideas to Impact and implemented by Cardno International	Ideas to Impact	Sponsored by Government of Ghana, supported by Ideas to Impact, IRC Ghana and Maple Consult	Ideas to Impact, using InnoCentive prize platform	Led by CLASP, supported by Ideas to Impact
<b>Model</b>	<i>2-stage prize</i>	<i>2-stage prize</i>	<i>3-stage prize<sup>32</sup></i>	<i>2-stage prize</i>	<i>1-stage prize</i>	<i>1-stage prize</i>

<sup>32</sup> Dreampipe was initially designed as a two-stage prize, but after the stage 1 ideation prize, the prize was redesigned and relaunched as a standalone three-stage prize, Dreampipe II, which closed early at the end of stage 2.

## Annex 2 – I2I prize evaluations

The table below provides a summary of the I2I prizes and their associated evaluations. All evaluations marked as available online can be found on the I2I website: [www.ideastoimpact.net](http://www.ideastoimpact.net).

Table 5: Evaluations carried out of the I2I prizes

Sector	I2I prize	Type of prize*	Evaluation	Available online
CCA	Climate Information Prize Stage 1 (Wazo Prize)	Ideation prize	Interim internal evaluation	No
CCA	Climate Information Prize Stage 2 (Tekeleza Prize Prize) <sup>33</sup>	Implementation prize	Final published evaluation Sustainability assessment	Yes Yes
CCA	Adaptation at Scale Stage 1 (Protsahan Prize)	Hybrid recognition and ideation prize	Interim internal evaluation	No
CCA	Adaptation at Scale Stage 2 (Karyanwayein Prize)	Implementation prize	Final published evaluation	Yes
WASH	The Dreampipe Challenge I	Ideation prize	Interim internal evaluation	No
WASH	The Dreampipe Challenge II (Business Plan and Demonstration Project)	Ideation and implementation prize	Final published evaluation	Yes
WASH	Sanitation Challenge for Ghana Stage 1	Ideation prize	Interim internal evaluation	No
WASH	Sanitation Challenge for Ghana Stage 2	Hybrid implementation and recognition prize	Final published evaluation	Yes
Energy Access	LPG Cylinder Prize	Ideation prize	Final published evaluation	Yes

<sup>33</sup> Between Tekeleza's launch and the start of the implementation period, I2I used a third prize, Tambua ('recognise'), to maintain the interest and motivation of prize participants. This prize was not directly evaluated.

Sector	I2I prize	Type of prize*	Evaluation	Available online
Energy Access	Global LEAP Off-Grid Refrigerator Competition (Round 1)	Recognition prize	Follow-up review to independent evaluation	Yes
Energy Access	Off-Grid Cold Chain Challenge Stage 1 Off-Grid Cold Chain Challenge Stage 2	Hybrid recognition and ideation prize Implementation prize	Follow-up review of both stages	Yes

**\*Types of prizes applied in I2I:**

- **Ideation prize:** An innovation inducement prize that stimulates innovative ideas or concepts in response to a pre-defined challenge.
- **Implementation prize:** An innovation inducement prize that stimulates participants to implement a new idea, concept or project, with performance assessed through pre-defined judging criteria.
- **Recognition prize:** an innovation prize that is awarded for specific or general achievements made in advance of nominations for the prize being requested.

## Annex 3 – Approaches, methods and tools used in the I2I evaluations

The following table summarises the approaches, methods and tools used in the I2I evaluations and our reflections on their suitability. *See each individual prize evaluation report for the specific methodology followed to answer that prize’s sub-evaluation questions.*<sup>34</sup>

Table 6: Approaches, methods and tools used in the I2I evaluations

Approaches, methods and tools	Rationale and application	Reflection on suitability of the approach
Primary data collection included <b>semi-structured key informant interviews and focus group discussions</b>	Speaking to prize stakeholders first-hand and triangulating between different stakeholders was important to understand the results of each prize. Questions were tailored to individual stakeholder types. <i>See the prize evaluation reports for examples of question schedules used.</i>	These tools were appropriate for gaining an understanding of what was happening on the ground from multiple stakeholder perspectives. However, their use would have been even more effective if extended to include beneficiaries of the prize projects themselves (not included due to resource constraints) to understand what had changed (for better and worse) from their perspective.
<b>Sample frames were relatively small</b> , due to the small number of stakeholders directly involved in each prize	We targeted those stakeholder groups that could offer the most valuable insight and evidence on each prize’s contribution to change. Typically, we consulted winners, non-winners and those participants that left during the prize process, <sup>35</sup> as well as each prize’s judges, verification agent, partners and prize team, along with other stakeholders indirectly involved in the prize (e.g. national government).	The small population from which to draw evaluation participants was one of the main limitations of the I2I prize evaluations. We found it was important to consult as wide a cross-section of stakeholders as possible, including both those who were directly and heavily involved in the prize process, and those that were more removed. However, the level of insight provided tended to reduce the more removed from the prize the respondent was.
<b>Data collection tended to take place almost immediately after prize award</b> (several months after participants’ final submissions)	This timing was largely dictated by the final prize evaluations happening towards the end of overall I2I programme and their findings needing to be available by late 2019 to enable learning across the set of prizes before the programme’s close.	There were benefits to this approach – for example the level of stakeholder engagement and recall was generally very high shortly after prize activities had ceased. However, there was less scope for seeing outcome-level change within this time frame.

<sup>34</sup> The I2I prize evaluations are available on the I2I website: <http://www.ideastoimpact.net/research>. Publication citations are included in the references section.

<sup>35</sup> For the majority of the evaluations, due to the I2I prizes using their own prize platform, we had the contact details of potential participants who had registered an interest in the prize but in the end did not take part, and of those participants who competed but either did not win or left before final submission. However, this was not the case for all prizes.

Approaches, methods and tools	Rationale and application	Reflection on suitability of the approach
	It was also when prize stakeholder engagement was at its highest, to encourage high response rates.	
For three of the prizes, <sup>36</sup> we consulted stakeholders <b>up to a year after the prize award</b> , as part of their <b>sustainability assessment</b>	For those prizes that closed early enough within the overall programme, we conducted a follow-up sustainability assessment to look for evidence of prize effects being sustained post-award. Again, the timing of data collection nine to twelve months after prize award was largely dictated by our need to complete all evaluations by late 2019.	Undertaking follow-up sustainability studies worked well for answering the question ‘what happened next for prize participants?’ and for understanding what happened once the prize mechanism was removed. This additional data collection <i>ex post</i> provided a sounder basis for identifying the likelihood of sustainability of results in the longer term.
Secondary data consulted included <b>documents generated by prize participants, prize judges, independent verification agents and prize teams</b>	We consulted a wide range of prize documentation by different stakeholders. Typically, this included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ prize participants’ final reports on their activities and achievements.</li> <li>▪ verification agents’ report(s) on the level of reliability of each participant’s submission<sup>37</sup>.</li> <li>▪ judges’ comments and scoring of each prize participant’s submission against the pre-agreed judging criteria.</li> <li>▪ internal reports of launch events, participant support activities and final award ceremonies.</li> </ul>	It was useful to triangulate between prize participants’ self-reported data, the view of independent verification agents of the same and judges’ assessments of the level of achievement for each participant against the judging criteria to understand the types of change seen. However, this could have been much strengthened by supplementing with field-level data collection by the evaluations themselves (not done due to resource constraints).
We applied an <b>adapted contribution analysis</b> to understand the contribution of each prize to change	Our contribution analysis focused on identifying evidence against each prize’s <b>primary explanation</b> , i.e. the causal mechanism triggered by the prize’s activities that was expected to lead to the main identified prize effect.	Contribution analysis was an appropriate method to use and, in line with the evaluation literature, it worked well to focus this on one outcome only (Delahais and Toulemonde, 2012). The adapted approach used worked well. However, while this provides a strong indication

<sup>36</sup> Our evaluations of The Dreampipe Challenge II and The Climate Information Prize included primary data collection nine months after prize award (and 12 months after participants’ final submissions). Our follow-up review of the Global LEAP prize took place a year after prize award.

<sup>37</sup> Typically, those prize participants through to judging were visited by a verification agent to see their project and progress on the ground.

Approaches, methods and tools	Rationale and application	Reflection on suitability of the approach
	<p>We then explored any evidence for <b>refuting mechanisms</b>, i.e. anything else that may have contributed significantly to, or could explain, that effect or outcome.</p> <p>We also took into account any <b>refuting factors</b>, i.e. primary or secondary data that directly challenged the contribution of the prize to the prize effect.</p>	<p>of the contribution of each prize to its intended effect, the evidence would have been more definitive had a 'pure' approach to contribution analysis been taken.</p>
<p>To understand the additionality of the prize modality, we also undertook a <b>VFM assessment</b></p>	<p>We developed a methodology for assessing each prize's VFM, specifically considering performance in relation to the <b>4Es</b>: economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity.</p> <p>In the <b>internal assessment</b>, we assessed whether the prizes ran to time and cost what prize teams expected them to, whether prize inputs were converted into the expected outputs, and prize outputs converted to the expected outcomes, as well as whether prize outcomes were equitable for those intended.</p> <p>In the <b>external assessment</b>, we directly compared each prize's results with a programme targeting similar outcomes and operating in a similar context, funded through a non-prize modality. We <b>assessed comparative VFM</b> in terms of the 4Es, cost-effectiveness and selected funder considerations<sup>38</sup>.</p>	<p>Use of VFM assessment was an appropriate route to further understand the additionality of each prize. However, the methodology, including the sub-criteria and indicators were developed at the point of evaluation. Had these frameworks been developed earlier in the prize process, this would have greatly facilitated completion of the assessments.</p> <p>Consideration of the equity of prize outcomes was important to include in our assessment. However, the strength of the evidence available was often limited by the lack of field-level data.</p> <p><i>For a fuller discussion of our approach to assessing the VFM of prizes, see the dedicated companion paper: <a href="#">Evaluating the value for money of Ideas to Impact's innovation inducement prizes (Stott and Gould, 2020)</a>.</i></p>

<sup>38</sup> Examples of funder considerations assessed include, potential for: innovation; long-term sustainability; and replication/scale-up.



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