

## **Brief**

On July 14, 2021, the Smithsonian Institution announced that it would be receiving the largest philanthropic gift since its founding from Mr. Jeff Bezos. A portion of the gift supports exhibit construction within the National Air and Space Museum (NASM) building on the National Mall, and the bulk of the gift provides for the construction and operations of a “world class center for education based at NASM.” The new Bezos Learning Center (BLC) will be a pan-institutional resource that will be overseen by the NASM Director and NASM’s Associate Director for Education and Visitor Experience. A primary focus of the BLC’s programs is reaching traditionally underserved communities in Washington, DC and across the nation, both at the site of the new facility and virtually, as the BLC will employ the latest technological resources and developments available for student engagement.

Learning at NASM sparks curiosity and empowers learners to imagine the possibilities of our future.

The BLC is a critical link between learners and NASM’s unparalleled collections. The BLC will be the nexus whereby authentic creativity, problem solving, tinkering and innovation takes place, fostering the world’s next Bessie Coleman, John Glenn, or Jeff Bezos. The physical structure of the building gives us an incredible opportunity to illustrate these connections by incorporating artifacts and art as well as ‘treasure box’ style window cases that will display student work.

As a demonstration of NASM’s commitment to engaging in authentic learning at the BLC, it is launching a design challenge for architecture and design students and professionals with 5 years or less of professional experience.

Participants will design an architectural element for the exterior structure that visualize and communicate aviation, astronomy, and/or aerospace concepts in an impactful way, with the intention that the aspects and attributes of their design may be incorporated into the overall design and construction of BLC. Winners of the design challenge will be offered a paid position at NASM with an initial term of one year and will serve as members on the building project team.

Smithsonian, specifically NASM, thanks the designers and architects that will take on this challenge.

## **About NASM**

The National Air and Space Museum, designed by Gyo Obata of Helmuth, Kassabaum and Obata, is a series of alternating masses of polished natural stone and glass. Four sections are clad in Colonial Rose granite. The modern design of the museum reflects the modernity of the technology during the space race era in which it was built while still fitting in with the national grandeur of the Mall. Obata took care to align the structure with the existing Hirshhorn Museum and the National Gallery of Art’s west building. The recesses of the National Air and Space Museum “align with the projecting portion of the National Gallery’s south elevation as if the buildings might fit together like two pieces of a puzzle.”

The stone alternates between glass in three recessed exhibit bays; flooded with even, north-facing light, these glass areas feature heavy truss systems to support the airplanes suspended above. Window walls were placed at the end of each building to bring in large artifacts; the one at the west end is still active. The exhibition spaces display air and space craft suspended in air against the natural backdrop of the sky. Wing-shaped sculptural bollards provide an unobtrusive security element at the museum’s north entrance. In 1988, the original architects designed a restaurant pavilion at the east end with a glazed

space frame structure to complement the original building. The geometrically designed roof of the restaurant could be said to resemble a lunar landing vehicle.

### **Programming**

The BLC will be the home of two flagship programs – the Bezos Empowering Educators (BE2) program and the Bezos Science and Technology Innovation Challenges (BeST Challenges). BE2 aims to establish a national network of K-3 grade classroom educators who possess the skills and confidence to engage early elementary students in authentic learning that leverages their natural curiosity. BeST Challenges will engage middle and high school learners in real-world problem solving through design and coding. Participants will engage in BeST Challenges out of school and will work in teams, supported by museum educators, to respond to briefings from across SI. Between four and six BeST Challenges will take place annually, with up to 50 on-site participants per challenge, and at least two of these challenges will include virtual participation to ensure NASM is engaging learners both within and beyond the BLC's walls.

Additional programming that will take place within and surrounding the facility includes a 600 to 700-seat quick-service (fast casual) restaurant accessible from NASM's main level, an astronomy park on the east terrace and the permanent installation Phoebe Waterman Haas Observatory. Finally, the existing loading and adjacent basement spaces, including those supporting food service, will be re-configured to support the new missions and functions of the BLC.

### **Design Considerations**

- Design teams that are selected to participate in Phase 2 of the challenge will be asked to submit their design for the entrance and surround of the BLC. The entrance is more than a door, it's a gateway to inspiring learners to envision the possibilities of the future, and design teams should aspire to incorporate characteristics of NASM's mission.
- Designs must comply with external agency guidelines when designing their submission, current guidelines will be shared with teams participating in Phase 2 of the challenge.
- Teams should incorporate connections to NASM content and mission in the design.

### **Timeline & Entry**

All entries must take place via the phased process outlined below. The phases build upon each other; it is not possible to engage in later phases described below without having completed the previous ones.

**Pre-phase** – Eligibility - Interested individuals can participate in an eligibility questionnaire

<https://airandspace.si.edu/about-transformation/bezos-learning-center>

**Phase 1** – Application – After completing the eligibility questionnaire, teams can submit entries to the design challenge. This is a team challenge; all entries must be comprised of teams of two or three. Teams will be asked to provide a small sample work that illustrates insight into their design aesthetic as part of the application process. The application window will open on Tuesday 01/03/23 and will accept applications until 11:59PM ET on Tuesday 04/18/23. It is highly recommended to complete the application process in advance of the deadlines.

**Phase 2** – Designing the entrance and surround of the BLC - Finalist teams will be selected from among the Phase 1 applicants. Finalists will engage in a 60-day design sprint that may include sessions with youth, SI professionals, etc. In addition, this phase will include a mentoring component in the form of “Guides” - two accessible, knowledgeable individuals will provide finalist teams with an orientation to the challenge and ongoing support throughout via constructive feedback, objective encouragement, etc. These Guides do not have a decision-making role in the challenge outcome. Finalists will be notified by Tuesday 05/16/23 and the 60-day sprint will begin at 9am ET on Tuesday 05/16/23 and end at 11:59PM ET on Wednesday 08/09/23.

### **Selection of Winning Entries**

NASM will assemble a panel of jurors to select the winning team based on several criteria including:

- Concept – At a minimum, submitted designs must embody an exciting new mission for the BLC, honor the space race era, and respect the more classical facades of neighboring museums.
- Content – Tying museum content to the architecture – designs must depict or represent the Age of the Universe, Solar System, or similar concept.
- Welcome – The design must welcome learners into a space that is energizing and activating.
- Communicate – The design must communicate the space as a nexus where creativity and innovation take place.
- Community – The design must possess a sense of place within the Washington, DC community.

The review panel will be comprised of members of NASM leadership, the Smithsonian’s central construction unit, and professional staff from the architecture and design firm that will be awarded the BLC construction contract. Each member of the winning team will be offered a paid one-to-three-year position with NASM and will serve as members on the building project team, so their voices and ideas are reflected in the overall outcome. Positions with NASM will include an annual salary and standard Smithsonian benefits. Winners may request a one-time payment to assist with relocation expenses, which may be provided at the sole discretion of the Smithsonian. Individuals must be US citizens or authorized to work in the US by the beginning date of employment to be eligible for the paid position. All individuals for employment are subject to the Smithsonian Institution background check process. Individuals hired for the position are subject to all Smithsonian Institution trust employment policies.

NASM staff will also work with each individual of the winning team to identify what type of mentorship/guidance they may need and will seek out an individual to serve as an individual mentor over the course of their position with NASM. Ideally, the relationship will span well beyond the initial term and will help seed the development of a professional network for each winner (network for talent without a network).

### **FAQ**

Throughout the length of the challenge, until the Wednesday 08/09/23 submission deadline - participants can address any question to [NASM-BezosPrograms@si.edu](mailto:NASM-BezosPrograms@si.edu). NASM staff will publish routine updates in the FAQ section of the challenge webpage.

### **Rules**

#### **General Rules**

1.1 Participants must comply with calendar, registration and deadlines and rules.

- 1.2. Participants must respect all the instructions regarding the required materials.
- 1.3. Participants must join the competition in a team of two or three individuals. Participants may only join one team, and each team may only enter one submission.
- 1.4. Teams can be comprised of a mixture of design and/or architecture students, recent graduates, and professionals with experience of 5 years or less. Participants must be 18 years of age or older. It is not mandatory for participants to be members of architectural associations.
- 1.5. Teams can include members currently located in cities or at universities outside of Washington, DC, however, direct life experience in/with Washington, DC is preferred. Individuals must be US citizens or authorized to work in the US by the beginning date of employment to be eligible for the paid position. All individuals for employment are subject to the Smithsonian Institution background check process. Individuals hired for the position are subject to all Smithsonian Institution trust employment policies.
- 1.6. The jury's decision is final.
- 1.7. Participants may not contact jurors for matters related to the challenge.
- 1.8. Participants may not disclose the material regarding their projects before the winners are officially announced.
- 1.9. Any participant found violating the rules, will be disqualified from the challenge, as will the members of their team.
- 1.10. The authorship of each submission is equally attributed to each member of the submitting team,
- 1.11. By registering and participating in the challenge, participants fully accept all the rules, terms and conditions of the challenge.
- 1.12. The Smithsonian has the right to change dates or other details to improve or fix aspects of the challenge. In these instances, the participating teams will be notified within a reasonable time frame via email.
- 1.13. The Smithsonian is not responsible for incomplete or misdirected entries, technical or network malfunctions or failures, or causes beyond its control. Participants are solely responsible for their entries. Participants may not submit materials that introduce any software viruses, worms or other programs designed to damage software, hardware or telecommunications equipment or are off-topic, partisan- political, contain advertising, personal attacks or expletives, or is otherwise abusive, threatening, unlawful, harassing, discriminatory, libelous, obscene, false, pornographic, or that infringes on the rights of any third party. The Smithsonian reserves the right to disqualify any participants whose entry or conduct appears in any way to: inhibit the enjoyment of others; tamper with the competition; violate these rules; infringe on the rights of third parties; or act in an unsportsmanlike or disruptive manner. The Smithsonian reserves the right to cancel the challenge or modify these rules at any time for any reason at its discretion. In the event of a dispute regarding the winners, the Smithsonian reserves the right to award or not award the prizes in its sole discretion. By entering this challenge, participants agree to be bound by these rules and the decisions of the Smithsonian, which are final and binding in all respects. It is highly recommended to complete application and upload procedures in advance of given deadlines; participants are invited to notify NASM via email in event of technical problems;
- 1.14. All the material that is available for the challenge's purposes will be available via the challenge webpage <https://airandspace.si.edu/about-transformation/bezos-learning-center>
- 1.15. Participants are solely responsible for all costs and expenses associated with participation in this challenge.

## **2. Ineligibility**

- 2.1. Any participant can be excluded from the competition. Participants can be disqualified when:
- a. the submitted material is not written in English.
  - b. the materials show names or references to the participants. A team's name is considered a reference to the designers. Therefore, references to the designers or a team's name can only appear in the file name, which the jurors will not see.
  - c. the uploaded materials are incomplete or inconsistent to the criteria included in Section 3 below.
  - d. the materials are not submitted according to deadlines or to the procedures of the challenge.
  - f. team members try to contact a juror for matters relating to the challenge. In this case, the participant and their team will be automatically disqualified.
  - g. participants have work or family relationships with one or more members of the jury of the challenge.
  - h. participants that disclose their team's materials before the winner of the competition is announced will be disqualified together with their team,
  - i. participants are not the owner or authors of the submitted project or parts of such project; they will be excluded together with their team.

## **3. Ownership of materials**

- 3.1. By taking part in this challenge and accepting the rules, terms and conditions of the challenge participant grants to the Smithsonian the irrevocable, non-exclusive, fully-paid, royalty free, worldwide right to use the entry materials that participant submits on behalf of participant and participant's team and participant's name, image, and likeness for all standard museum purposes including, but not limited to: i) publishing the materials or part of the materials in any way or form and with any means of communication and/or support, including online platforms, social media channels and printed publications; and ii) distributing the materials or part of the materials in any way or form and with any means of communication and/or support, including online platforms, social media channels and printed publications.
- 3.2. By taking part in this challenge and accepting the rules, terms and conditions of the challenge, participant agrees that the Smithsonian shall be granted all intellectual property rights in the winning project and all related entry materials. The winning project and all related entry materials will belong to the Smithsonian and will be considered "works for hire." Participant agrees to sign any documents that Smithsonian deems necessary to confirm its ownership of the winning project and all related entry materials, and the participant agrees to cooperate with the Smithsonian to allow it to take advantage of its ownership of the winning project and all related entry materials. Notwithstanding the foregoing, following the announcement of the winners, participant may publish materials or part of the materials in any way or form and with any means of communication and/or support, including online platforms, social media channels and printed publications, with the prior written approval of NASM.
- 3.3. By taking part in this challenge and accepting the rules, the winning team agrees to provide, if needed, any further materials (e.g. 3D models) related to the project to help NASM better report the results of and publicize the challenge.
- 3.4. Entry materials must: be lawful, true, and accurate; contain only the participant's own original material or material for which participant has full authority and permission to grant the rights set forth in these rules; and not infringe on the rights of any third party. By entering, participant warrants that the

entry materials he or she submits comply with these rules. Works and/or materials that do not comply with these rules must not be submitted. Participant holds the Smithsonian, its regents, officers, employees, from and against all claims of any nature arising in connection with participant's participation in the challenge or acceptance the prize. The Smithsonian and its regents, officers, and employees, are not liable for any costs, damages, injuries, or other claims incurred as a result of participant's participation in the challenge.

#### **4. Privacy and treatment of personal data**

4.1. The processing of participants' personal information will be carried out by the Smithsonian for the sole purpose of the participation in the challenge.

4.2. Participants will be held accountable for the data - including personal data - they provide. The Smithsonian does not assume any responsibility for wrong data provided.

#### **5. Notes regarding Challenge Winners**

5.1. Winners may be required to execute an affidavit of eligibility, and publicity, and release.

5.2. NASM will notify participants of the winning team via the e-mail address provided at the time of entry. Participants are responsible for updating their contact information if it changes after the date of entry.