

Introduction to the SIFE Judging Criterion

SIFE Mission:

To bring together the top leaders of today and tomorrow to create a better, more sustainable world through the positive power of business.

SIFE Judging Criterion:

Considering the relevant economic, social and environmental factors, which SIFE team most effectively empowered people in need by applying business and economic concepts and an entrepreneurial approach to improve their quality of life and standard of living?

Organizations must continually evolve in order to maintain relevance and to develop deeper excitement towards their cause. Just as SIFE has continuously evolved in the past 35+ years, so has our competition judging criteria/criterion. The most recent change (implemented in 2010) provides teams a substantial opportunity to build upon their past successes while enhancing the relevance and impact to their future projects. The criterion offers a broad-based focus on approach, i.e., “applying business and economic concepts and an entrepreneurial approach” along with a great emphasis on outcome. i.e., “improve the quality of life and standard of living.”

The SIFE criterion is also very cause-oriented. It places strong emphasis on purpose, clearly defining a unique space for SIFE and accentuating our core belief that business can be used to make the world a better place. This provides a clear mandate for teams while actually enhancing our programmatic approach of providing them the creative freedom and flexibility to determine how best to achieve that mandate. It also brings clarity on which specific subjects to address under the umbrella of a common purpose

based on the interests of their students, the academic objectives of their university and the unique needs of their community. Furthermore, it encourages teams to continually focus on not just what issue/topic they're addressing but what outcome they're achieving – challenging them to continually increase the quality and impact of their projects.

The criterion also balances outcomes with the importance of method, i.e., “empowering people in need.” Again, building on the long-standing belief within SIFE that the best way to help people in the long run is to equip them with knowledge and skills to help themselves. Finally, another important idea reflected in the criterion is the recognition that for solutions to be truly sustainable they must make sense economically and socially as well as environmentally. Teams will need to consider all three elements and, whenever possible, take an integrated approach to addressing them through their projects.

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Judging Elements

The following ideas serve as a guide to help SIFE teams and judges better understand the framework and content of the criterion.

1. What are “relevant economic, social and environmental factors?”

- These three factors are in reference to the triple bottom line concept, (i.e. profits, people, planet) and are meant to illustrate that for a project or initiative to truly be effective and sustainable it must make sense economically as well as socially and environmentally
- Due consideration must be given to the three factors although one or more may have greater relevance in particular circumstances
- To the degree that any of the three factors are relevant to a situation, they should be addressed in an integrated manner as part of the project rather than as separate activities

2. How are people “effectively empowered?”

- By equipping them with the knowledge, skills and/or confidence to move from dependency to self-determination and independence
- By involving them in collaboration and focusing on long-term capacity building

3. Who are “people in need?”

- Broadly interpreted to represent any potential group so long as they are clearly lacking in the particular focus area of the team’s project, which is deemed to be significant and relevant to SIFE’s mission
- Audiences are not limited to simply the poor, disadvantaged, marginalized in society, underprivileged, and/or economically challenged
- A key evaluation is the team’s ability to illustrate the need(s) of the target group(s) they worked with and why they chose to address those needs

4. What is “applying business and economic concepts and an entrepreneurial approach?”

- ‘Business and economic concepts’ is an integrated point clarifying the broad range of activities that can be delivered as project solutions
- ‘Business and economic concepts’ should result in the creation of economic opportunities through the application of a business mindset to the project process, content and delivery
- ‘Entrepreneurial approach’ speaks to the manner in which projects are developed and delivered, not necessarily a call to create entrepreneurial ventures
- ‘Entrepreneurial approach’ should result in the demonstration of ‘creativity, innovation and an entrepreneurial culture’ through the SIFE team’s efforts

5. What is considered “quality of life and standard of living?”

- ‘Quality of Life’ - refers to non-material aspects: the social, cultural and emotional circumstances of an individual or target group
- ‘Standard of Living’ - refers to material aspects: the physical, financial and environmental circumstances of an individual or target group
- Improvement of status should be illustrated through the team’s achievement of outcomes (not just outputs, plans or aspirations) that resulted in benefit or betterment of the target group(s)