



Project InnerSpace and XPRIZE Announce Collaboration to Design Landmark Geothermal Surface Systems Prize

The prize aims to accelerate innovation in integrated geothermal surface systems while driving supply chain transformations needed to accelerate scaled deployment of geothermal

HOUSTON, TX (March 24, 2026) — Project InnerSpace, the leading independent research organization focused on accelerating geothermal energy, and XPRIZE, the world's leader in designing and operating large-scale incentive competitions to solve humanity's grand challenges, today announced a collaboration to design a major incentive prize targeting breakthroughs in integrated geothermal surface plant systems, including turbo-machinery and other surface system components. The prize design, funded by Project InnerSpace, aims to catalyze the innovation and supply chain transformation needed to accelerate deployment and unlock the next phase of geothermal growth at scale.

The collaboration comes as geothermal stands at a critical inflection point. While significant progress has been made in subsurface technologies and drilling, surface systems are emerging as a key constraint on deployment speed, cost, and replicability. As outlined in Project InnerSpace's March 2026 report, [*Spinning Up, Not Out: Scaling the Turbo-machinery Supply Chain for Rapid Geothermal Deployment*](#), turbo-machinery remains a central bottleneck, with limited manufacturing capacity, long lead times, and highly customized designs poised to slow the pace of project development as geothermal scales.

A Prize Designed to Unlock Scale

The planned XPRIZE is being developed to address these structural bottlenecks directly by encouraging more modular, integrated, and high-performance geothermal surface plant architectures that can operate efficiently across real-world geothermal conditions and be deployed more rapidly at scale. Rather than narrowly focusing on a single component, the evolving design is aimed at surfacing solutions that lower costs, cut lead times and improve flexibility, manufacturability, and ease of deployment.

This broader systems framing reflects what the design team has gathered through interviews with manufacturers, developers, and technical experts: many of today's geothermal surface systems are still highly customized, creating long lead times, slowing project delivery, and limiting opportunities for supply chain learning. In many cases, the current market does not reward the type of risk-taking needed to pursue more transformative designs. At the same time, turbo-machinery performance is deeply coupled with the broader surface plant. Heat exchangers, cooling systems, and other balance-of-plant components account for a substantial



share of cost and directly impact overall system efficiency and deployment timelines. Addressing turbo-machinery in isolation is unlikely to unlock the full step-change needed for rapid geothermal scale-up. The prize is intended to create a lower-pressure, high-visibility pathway for research, development, and demonstration that can accelerate innovations the market is not yet set up to deliver on its own.

Through the prize design process, the team is also exploring how to avoid over-constraining the solution space. Rather than prescribing a single technology pathway, the competition is expected to focus on performance-based outcomes that leave room for different approaches, including innovations in turbines, working fluids, heat exchange systems, and other integrated surface plant configurations. The goal is to identify designs that can deliver competitive system performance across a range of operating conditions, while enabling step-change improvements in standardization, manufacturability, transportability, and deployment speed.

Prize Design Discussions at CERAWeek 2026

Project InnerSpace and XPRIZE will convene key stakeholders this week at CERAWeek 2026 in Houston to advance the prize design process. Discussions will take place in two venues: in the [Innovation Agora](#), where the collaboration will be featured among the conference's most forward-looking energy technology showcases, and in [Geothermal House](#), where dedicated discussions will bring together geothermal developers, turbo-machinery manufacturers, and investors to help shape the prize's design, eligibility criteria, and judging framework.

These sessions will directly engage the ecosystem of actors whose coordination is essential to success: OEM manufacturers who can scale domestic production, project developers who need reliable and timely equipment supply, investors seeking standardized bankable hardware, and federal policymakers working to build resilient domestic clean energy supply chains.

“The subsurface solutions that will drive scaled development of next-generation geothermal energy are well on their way thanks to several years of disruptive innovation and frontier spirit in the field. We now need to match that momentum above ground,” said **Jamie Beard, Executive Director of Project InnerSpace**. “In short order, the turbo-machinery supply chain will be the bottleneck standing between next-generation geothermal and the gigawatt-scale deployment the world needs. XPRIZE’s model of ambitious, results-driven competition is exactly the kind of forcing function that can accelerate this transition.”

“XPRIZE was built on the idea that the right incentive, at the right moment, can unlock innovation that markets alone are too slow or too constrained to deliver,” said **David Babson, PhD, EVP of Energy, Climate, & Nature at XPRIZE**. “In geothermal, the opportunity is increasingly about creating more deployable, efficient, and scalable systems that can translate growing capital and demand into real projects on the ground. We are excited to work with Project InnerSpace to shape a prize that can help do exactly that.”



The Urgency Behind the Prize

Two recent Project InnerSpace publications provide the evidentiary foundation for this prize. [*Spinning Up, Not Out: Scaling the Turbo-machinery Supply Chain for Rapid Geothermal Deployment*](#) documents current turbo-machinery supply chain constraints in detail — the concentrated OEM landscape, the 12 to 18-month lead times, the logistics barriers created by oversized international shipments, and the coordination failures that prevent manufacturers from investing in new capacity. [*Minding the Gap: Geothermal Finance at Oil and Gas Scale*](#) illuminates the broader financing landscape, showing how surface plant cost and schedule risk directly constrains the capital structures available to geothermal developers. Together, these reports make the case that targeted, incentive-based intervention — rather than incremental market development alone — is needed to compress the timeline to geothermal scale.

The prize design process will be informed by input gathered at CERAWEEK and beyond, with a formal prize structure announcement expected later in 2026. Project InnerSpace and XPRIZE welcome engagement from turbo-machinery manufacturers, developers, investors, researchers, and policymakers who wish to contribute to the prize design process.

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About Project InnerSpace

Project InnerSpace is a nonprofit focused research organization dedicated to identifying and removing the major barriers standing in the way of exponential growth in geothermal energy. Visit www.projectinnerspace.org

About XPRIZE

XPRIZE is the recognized global leader in designing and executing large-scale competitions to solve humanity's greatest challenges. For over 30 years, our unique model has democratized crowd-sourced innovation and scientifically scalable solutions that accelerate a more equitable and abundant future. Donate, learn more, and co-architect a world of abundance with us at xprize.org

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