



24th Annual Innovative Idea Competition Submission Guidelines and Tips

Submission deadline: October 20th
Pitch Event: November 18th at 4:00pm

Below are the six primary sections you must include in your submission and pitch. The reviewers and final judges will look to see how well you addressed the sub-questions in each section, if appropriate. We've also included some tips for you to think about when formulating your idea, submission and pitch.

I. Elevator Pitch (5 points)

[Refer to the Elevator Pitch Template PDF for helpful guidelines](#)

This is a brief statement that describes your idea or venture, explains who it is for, how it benefits your target audience, and why those particular people will participate in or choose your offering. How your idea or venture is different from what is already out there is a crucial component!

First Impressions are Important - Your reviewers will read this first! This statement helps them understand your idea – so make it exciting to really grab their attention! Unless you have a preferred elevator pitch format, we suggest: For (target customer), who has (customer need), (Idea Name) is a (market category – product, service, process innovation, policy change, etc.) that provides (one or two key benefits). Unlike (status quo/competition), our solution will be preferred because (one or two unique differentiators).

'Elegance' is Very Powerful - Innovation and simplicity add greatly to the strength of an idea. We frequently start to overcomplicate things by adding millions of options and features. Keep your ideas simple and easy to understand, and you are more likely to be rated highly, attract funding, and drive adoption of your innovative idea.

II. Opportunity / Problem (25 points)

Who is the target audience for your idea? What problem or need does your idea solve or address? How pressing or big is the opportunity, problem, or need? What makes you think people are looking for a solution or are willing to do something differently?

Look for an Opportunity that is Right-Sized - You should not try to compete with established organizations unless your idea is different from what they are doing. It is difficult to make a better sneaker than Nike or do a better job of educating inner-city youth than leading schools. Frequently, the most innovative ideas that we see come from before or after service is provided or providing resources to take advantage of existing offerings. For example, if you can make it easier to access a particular service, that can be innovative. You have to be realistic about what the leading organizations (for profit or not for profit) in the selected area are doing and what they are good at (as well as what they overlook or ignore).

III. Competitors / Status Quo (25 points)

How is the problem currently being tackled or solved? Who are your direct competitors and what are the alternatives/substitutes/indirect competitors? How successful are their efforts to resolve this problem? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these competitors? Please note that competitors can be for-profit, not-for-profit, government, or individual philanthropic efforts.

Novelty Takes Time and Lots of Research - This competition is looking for new ideas or innovative ways to enhance the ways things are currently being done, so substantial thought, time, and research is needed. It is very easy to fall in love with an idea only to find out that someone else has already done the same thing. We find that a large proportion of the ideas that are submitted for this competition are already being done by others and can be very easily found via a quick Google search (and these submissions get very low scores on this section). For example, if you recommend an urban farm in NE Philadelphia, and they already exist (and they do), you must describe how you are different and better than those existing organizations.

IV. Your Solution (25 points)

Describe your solution. State exactly what it does, how it does this, and how it addresses the opportunity/problem identified. What are your unique advantages over alternatives, competitors, and status quo? What are the strengths and weaknesses of your idea or venture?

FOR EXAMPLE: If you are proposing a new technology, does it already exist? Has the technology been proven in another application? How will you determine that the technology can be used in your application? If there is any doubt that your idea is feasible, you should research this (and provide evidence of the idea's feasibility in your write-up).

IV. Your Solution (25 points), ctd.

Beware of Flying Cars and Time Machines

We all know that it would be great to have a flying car or a time machine, however, these are not innovative ideas—they are opportunities that currently don't have viable solutions (although companies are getting close to flying cars). An innovative idea is a solution to a meaningful, previously unsolved problem/opportunity. We realize that you may not have all the technical questions resolved at this early stage in the ideation process, however, the more questions you have answered the better your proposed solution will be (and your score will reflect this). If there is any doubt that your idea is technically feasible you should research this (and provide evidence of the idea's feasibility in your write up). If you are still not sure your idea is feasible, it may not be the best idea to submit for this (and may not be an idea you should waste time thinking about unless you have, or want to develop, the technical skills to fully explore and test it).

V. Customer / User / Stakeholder Impact (10 points)

Who will use your solution? What impact will your innovation have on users as well as other groups of people (stakeholders) affected by your solution? Who will finance/pay for it (may be different than the user)?

Pick a Niche Market - No one creates something that everyone wants – you should always target a specific group. If you think that everyone will need/want your offering, you are probably making a large number of incorrect assumptions about what you are envisioning. Get more specific. Figure out who will ABSOLUTELY have to have and can access your service or product, or want to be part of the audience you serve.

VI. Plans for Addressing Unknowns / Challenges (10 Points)

What are your plans for addressing potential obstacles or challenges that prevent you from getting this idea or venture launched (access to funding, regulatory policies, team capabilities, etc.) How will you deal with these unknowns that need to be explored? What assumptions need to be tested and how do you plan on testing them?

“Better” Requires Innovation (Not Just Willpower) - You cannot just say “I will do a better job feeding the hungry than other programs” or, “I will sell my product for less than the competitors”—how? What is your unique innovation that lets you do this? And what are the beliefs (assumptions/hypotheses) that, if not valid, would undermine the effectiveness or feasibility of your idea?

Picture(s), Figure(s), or Diagram(s): These are optional items to include in your submission, but often helpful to the reviewers and judges if your idea or solution is difficult to describe in words.

Video Pitch: Again, this is completely optional and only necessary if it helps to clarify something that would be difficult to understand without a video. Telling an effective story through your submission is critical - if a SHORT video helps, include it.