

APPLICANT RESOURCE DOCUMENT

STUDENT PITCH COMPETITION

The Student Pitch Competition highlights emerging student-led startups from across Washington State during the Flywheel Investment Conference.

What is the Student Pitch Competition?

The Flywheel Student Pitch Competition provides a platform for student founders actively building and testing ventures with clear commercialization intent.

Unlike the Flywheel Early-Stage Investment (Top Six) Competition—which features more advanced startups seeking capital investment—the Student Pitch Competition focuses on earlier-stage ventures where the strength of the idea, early validation, and founder commitment are most important.

We are looking for student-led startups that demonstrate:

- A clearly defined problem and opportunity
- Evidence the team is actively building and testing a solution
- Early validation such as customer interviews, prototypes, or pilot programs
- The potential for the venture to grow and evolve

What happens at the event?

The competition takes place May 20, 2026 during the Flywheel Investment Conference at Pybus Public Market Event Center in Wenatchee, Washington.

Selected teams will deliver a 5-minute live pitch presentation, followed by moderated Q&A with judges.

A judging panel will award a \$2,500 Judges' Choice prize, while conference attendees will vote live for the \$500 Audience Choice Award. All other teams will receive a \$250 Student Innovator Honorarium.

What Participating Students Gain

Participating students receive:

- Visibility through Flywheel marketing and conference programming
- Exposure to active angel investors and startup founders
- Structured feedback on their business model and pitch
- Opportunities to connect with mentors and ecosystem partners
- Real-world experience pitching their venture in a professional setting

Value for Educational Partners

The Student Competition provides a statewide platform for colleges, universities, and schools to highlight student entrepreneurship and innovation programs.

Institutions benefit from:

- Public recognition during a 350+ attendee statewide innovation conference
- Authentic investor-facing experience for students
- Increased visibility for student ventures and innovation programs

Contact Information for Support

For questions or nomination coordination:

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About Flywheel

Flywheel is Washington's meeting place for entrepreneurs and investors, hosted each spring in Wenatchee. Founded in North Central Washington, Flywheel brings together founders, investors, educators, students, and industry leaders to connect people, capital, and ideas that move innovation forward.

In 2026, Flywheel will host its inaugural Student Pitch Competition, designed to elevate emerging student-led startups and connect them to Washington's broader entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Student Competition At-A-Glance

Event:

Flywheel Investment Conference (May 19-21)

Student Competition Date:

May 20, 2026 | 9:00am - 1:30pm

Location:

Pybus Public Market Event Center in Wenatchee, WA

Competition Format:

5-minute business plan pitch, followed by 3-minute moderated Q&A

Number of Competing Startups:

6-8 student-led startups from across WA

Awards:

Judges' Choice (\$2,500), Audience Choice (\$500), and Student Innovator Honorarium (\$250, all other teams)

We are looking for student-led startups that are actively being pursued beyond the classroom, not simply ideas developed as a class assignment.

Important Dates

March 5 – Applications open

March 26 – Applications close

April 15 – Teams notified

April 21 – Team information session (Zoom)

May 9 - May 13 – Pitch Mentorship, if applicable

May 20 – Live competition at Flywheel

Apply today!

www.flywheelconference.com/studentpitch

Who Should Apply to Compete?

The Student Pitch Competition is designed for students who are:

- Actively building and testing a startup idea or business model
- Exploring how the venture could grow beyond the classroom
- Ready to clearly explain the problem, solution, and path to revenue

Startups do not need to be fully formed companies, but teams should be actively developing the venture beyond the classroom.

Examples of compatible student-led startups:

- A student building a climate-tech prototype
- A software tool tested with early users
- A marketplace solving a campus problem

Eligibility Requirements

At least one team member must:

- Be currently enrolled at a Washington State high school, trade school, community college, or university

- OR -

- Have graduated from a Washington State institution within the past 12 months

Additional criteria:

- Teams may consist of 1–5 members
- At least one student must be a founding contributor to the venture
- Faculty advisors and mentors are welcome but may not pitch on stage

Startups must demonstrate:

- A clearly defined problem
- A specific target customer or market segment
- A defined revenue model or path to revenue
- Intent to pursue commercialization beyond academic credit

Preference will be given to teams with early validation, such as:

- Customer interviews
- Prototype testing
- Pilot programs
- Letters of intent
- Early revenue or user adoption

Nominations from Educational Partners

Educational partners are invited to nominate student founders and teams to participate in the competition. Each institution may nominate **up to three student-led startups for priority review**.

Nominations highlight student innovation and strengthen connections between academic entrepreneurship programs and Washington's broader startup ecosystem.

Nomination does not guarantee selection. Students are required to complete the application, and final participants are chosen based on overall application quality and competition capacity.

Application Requirements

Each team (even if nominated) must complete the official application, which includes:

- One-line pitch
- Written responses outlining problem, solution, market, revenue model, and traction
- 2-minute recorded pitch video
- Pitch deck (maximum 10 slides)
- Optional prototype/demo link

Teams must confirm availability to travel to Wenatchee on May 20 if selected.

Selection Process

Applications are evaluated using a structured scoring framework that considers:

- Problem and market clarity
- Strength of the proposed solution
- Business model and path to revenue
- Evidence of validation or traction
- Founder readiness and commitment
- Overall fit for the competition

Only 6–8 student-led startups will be selected statewide to pitch live at Flywheel. Teams will be notified by April 15, 2026 of their status. Selected teams will receive documented preparation guidance and access to limited pitch mentorship.

Learn more and apply at:

www.flywheelconference.com/studentpitch