



AACC'S

\$100,000

BUSINESS PITCH

COMPETITION

Anne Arundel Community College Business Pitch Competition

2026 Official Rules, Requirements, and Judging Criteria

MORE THAN \$100,000 IN CASH, SCHOLARSHIPS AND IN-KIND PRIZES!

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SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LAW

2026 Anne Arundel Community College Business Pitch Competition

Welcome to Anne Arundel Community College's Business Pitch Competition (BPC). We appreciate your interest in participating in this year's event, hosted by AACC's Entrepreneurial Studies Department and the School of Business and Law. This event is intended to help student entrepreneurs launch or grow their early-stage businesses.

GENERAL INFORMATION

How to Enter

1. To enter, the designated student or student team leader should request the link to opt-into the Business Pitch Competition Canvas Course. E-mail esi@aacc.edu for the link to self-enroll at no cost.
2. Once in the Canvas Course, review the Getting Started Module. Review the course overview and the guidelines, rules, and judging criteria.
3. Next, review each module to help with business plan writing, marketing, financial projections, and résumé preparation for entrepreneurs.
4. Once you have reviewed the resources, prepare your documents to upload to the assignment submission areas.
5. You will upload your business plan, résumé(s), and financial projections as separate documents. You may submit one additional file. This can be a menu, photos, marketing materials, etc. that would help the judges get to know your business.
6. You may upload and resubmit your work until the deadline of noon April 1, 2026.
7. Submissions must be received no later than noon Wednesday, April 1, 2026.

Important Dates & Deadlines

- **Required Business Plan Coaching:** Meet in person or virtually with a business plan coach for a 30-minute coaching session by March 31. This is **required** for you to be approved to compete in this competition. This is an opportunity to have your business plan reviewed to gain valuable feedback and guidance. Use the sign-up link to request a business plan coach: <https://bit.ly/BusPitchCoaching2026>
- **THE FINAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE** is noon Wednesday, April 1, 2026. You may upload documents incrementally; however, you must officially submit online by the deadline.
- **Notification of Finalists:** Applicants will receive an email notification of the finalists at noon on April 16, 2026.
- **Required Business Pitch Coaching for finalists:** Finalists must meet virtually with a BPC Pitch Coach April 18-27, 2026 to be eligible to compete. Finalists may e-mail esi@aacc.edu to request a coach.
- **Dress Rehearsal:** Finalists must attend one of the BPC pitch dress rehearsals. Details for these rehearsals will be provided via email to the finalists.
- **Live Pitch Date:** The Business Pitch Competition Live Pitch and Awards Ceremony will be held Tuesday, April 28, 2026, from 4 - 6:30 p.m. in HLSB 100. Finalists must arrive for the event by 3:30 p.m.

Eligibility Requirements & Expectations

Participants must meet the following requirements to compete in the 2026 BPC:

- **Student Enrollment:** The competition is for students enrolled full-time or part-time this academic year (July 1, 2025 – April 1, 2026). This includes credit or non-credit students who have taken at least one credit or non-credit class since July 1, 2025, or who are currently enrolled in a course.
- **Team Composition:** 50% or more of the team must meet the enrollment criteria above.
- **Only AACC students who have taken at least one credit or non-credit class since July 1, 2025 may present in the pitch and participate in the question & answer portion of the competition.** Although the team may have several students, the presenting (competing) team may only have two students participate in the oral

presentation (the pitch portion) of the competition. Others involved in the venture are welcome to attend, but they are prohibited from participating in presentations or Q&A sessions.

- Each student must be a member of the venture's startup management team and must be part of the team. Non-students may be members of the venture's founding/management team and may participate in planning the venture. However, **only students may compete** (present the plan and answer questions from the competition judges as defined above.)
- Individuals may compete: You are not required to be part of a team. Individuals must meet the enrollment criteria above.
- Students are expected to:
 - be the driving force behind the new venture,
 - have played the primary role in developing the business plan,
 - have key management roles in the venture, and
 - own significant equity in the venture.
- In general, a member of the student team should be CEO, COO, or President of the venture.
- Nature of ventures: The competition is for new, independent ventures in the seed, start-up, or early growth stages less than 3 years in business. Generally excluded are the following: buy-outs, expansions of existing companies, real estate syndications, tax shelters, franchises, licensing agreements for distribution in a different geographical area, and spin-offs from existing businesses.
- The amount of funding a student can win: Students can win a maximum of \$25,000 in seed funds from the AACC \$100,000 Business Pitch Competition. This means a student who wins \$25,000 is not eligible to compete in future Business Pitch Competitions.
- There is a limit on the number of times a student can compete: Students can be a finalist pitching in the Live Pitch stage of the competition a maximum number of two times.
- Attendance: To be considered for any award, all competing (presenting) team members must participate in person on April 28, 2026 from 4-6:30 p.m. Pitch Competition details will be emailed to the finalists.
- Required Forms: Each team will be required to provide appropriate documentation to receive award payments, which include a completed FAFSA on file with AACC's Financial Aid office. No prizes will be awarded without the required forms submitted. All prizes will be processed by the AACC Business Office. Any outstanding debt to the college will be paid prior to disbursement of award checks.
- Tax forms will need to be completed as cash prizes may be considered taxable by the IRS. Compliance with all federal, state, and local tax laws is the sole responsibility of the award winners.

Disclosures & Fees

- AACC's Entrepreneurial Studies Institute (ESI) reserves the right to use any material prepared for the BPC in publicizing and promoting the event. AACC may use these materials in any Anne Arundel Community College Business Pitch Competition promotion.
- Entry Fees: The BPC does not have an entry fee.
- Changes to Competition Rules: While not anticipated, these rules and prizes are subject to change at the discretion of AACC's Entrepreneurial Studies at any time. The AACC Entrepreneurial Studies staff has the right to interpret these rules according to their own judgment.
- Decisions regarding the Competition and the winners: All decisions regarding the competition rules, procedures, and processes are at the sole discretion of AACC's Entrepreneurial Studies Institute. Changes and/or interpretations of these rules may be made by AACC's Entrepreneurial Studies Institute at any time, even though they may be (or may appear to be) in conflict with some previously published information. The determination of

which finalists are eligible to compete, and the selection of the winners are at the sole discretion of the judges and AACC's Entrepreneurial Studies Institute. AACC staff will make their best effort to make decisions in accordance with this Official Rules document.

- AACC Entrepreneurial Studies has the final decision on which teams are invited to compete in the AACC Business Pitch Competition Live Pitch.
- Non-confidentiality: All sessions of the competition, including but not limited to oral presentations and question/answer sessions, are open to the public. Any of these sessions may be broadcast to interested people through media, which may include radio, television, YouTube, and social media.
- Any data or information discussed or divulged in public sessions by entrants should be considered information that could possibly enter the public realm, and entrants should not assume any right of confidentiality in any data or information discussed, divulged, or presented in these sessions.
- Due to the nature of the competition, we cannot ask judges, reviewers, staff, or the audience to agree to or to sign non-disclosure statements. However, AACC Entrepreneurial Studies, the organizer of the BPC, will limit the distribution of business plans.
- AACC Entrepreneurial Studies cannot guarantee that other individuals will not obtain access to electronic or hard copies of the business plan. All presentations are open to the public and will be recorded. Attendance by media personnel is expected.
- Copyrights & Permissions: If a team uses copyrighted materials/images from a third-party in their submissions or presentations, they must obtain permission and authorization in advance from the owners to use this material.
- The information presented by the students competing is the sole responsibility of the individual team members. Anne Arundel Community College, including AACC's Entrepreneurial Studies and any of its affiliates (collectively, "AACC"), has not taken, and does not intend to take, any steps to verify the adequacy, accuracy or completeness of any information, materials or statements presented. The competitors, and not AACC, are responsible for ensuring compliance with all applicable federal, state and other securities laws, and it is solely the competitor's responsibility to comply with any of such laws that are applicable. AACC does not give investment advice, endorsement, analysis, or recommendations with respect to any securities and is not a broker, venture fund, or an investment advisor.

SUBMISSION DETAILS

After self-enrolling in the Business Pitch Competition Canvas Course, you will have access to competition resources and the submission "assignment." You will complete an application survey, which asks you to provide contact information for all team members including your AACC student identification number. You will then be asked to answer a series of questions and to upload documents. It is best to save your documents and spreadsheets to a PDF file format (though Word and Excel are also accepted) prior to uploading to the competition assignment.

Below are the questions and documents you will be required to submit.

Questions

1. How much are you requesting from this competition? Seed Funds: \$ _____ specify the amount (Maximum request \$25,000). How will you use these funds? (Funds are not to be used for salaries/staff.)
2. What is your company name?
3. How would you describe your company and its product or service? (Provide an overview.)
4. How did you determine the feasibility of this business concept?
5. What is your value proposition?
6. Who are your competitors?

7. What is your competitive advantage?
8. What is your business model? How will you make money?
9. Who is your target market and how will you reach them?
10. What are your start-up costs?
11. Upload the following (please submit all files in Word, Excel, or PDF formats).
 - Business Plan (**Limit to ten pages**)
 - Financials (Three-year projections)
 - Résumé for each team member
 - Optional: Other supporting materials such as marketing materials, a menu, a portfolio, etc. saved as one document
12. How did you hear about us?

PITCH COMPETITION GUIDELINES

Presentation Rules

- Finalists will compete in the Pitch Competition in person on Tuesday, April 28, 2026.
- Each team will be given a maximum of two minutes to present its elevator pitch to the panel of judges, as well as to the general audience.
- PowerPoints or Pitch Decks CAN be used.
- Exhibits, prototypes, and product samples are permitted and encouraged.
- Presentations will be followed by a five-minute question and answer period. Questions may only be asked by the judges.
- Presentations and participation in the Q&A are limited to one or two team members.
- Only AACC students may pitch and participate in the Q&A portion of the competition.
- The two-minute pitch will be uninterrupted. If you speak for longer than two minutes, you will be stopped.

Judges' Evaluation Criteria:

Judges will evaluate each team based on how convincingly they present their business concept, such that the judge would want to learn more about the company as a potential investor. The best teams are those teams that an investor would want to schedule a follow-up meeting for further discussion because they believe this company represents a strong investment opportunity.

General Evaluation Criteria:

The competition is intended to simulate the real-world process of entrepreneurs soliciting start-up funds from early-stage investors and venture capital firms. The judges serve as early-stage venture capital investors deciding on which business they would most likely fund. The quality of the idea, the size of the market, the competitive advantage, the strength of the management team, and the clarity and persuasiveness of the written plan and oral presentation all influence the judges' decisions. Award winners are teams in which the judges would most likely invest their money.

Business Pitch Competition Evaluation

The judges will review the online submission, scoring each element with a total of 100 points possible. The following outlines how the points are distributed:

1. Business ideas are feasible and appropriate concept testing was conducted (10 points)
2. Value proposition is clear and convincing (10 points)
3. Competitive analysis is complete, and the competitive advantage is evident (10 points)
4. The Business model and plans for generating income/profit are clearly articulated (10 points)
5. The target market is clearly defined (10 points)
6. The marketing plan is complete and includes marketing and sales approaches for acquiring and retaining customers (10 points)
7. Cost of Goods Sold (COGS) is understood. Start-up costs are detailed; they are based on credible sources, and assumptions appear to be realistic (10 points)
8. Résumé is well written and provides evidence that the team member has the necessary skills and experience to implement the plan (10 points)
9. The financial plan is reasonable (10 points)
10. The business plan is well-written and compelling (10 points)