



2026 Tuscaloosa Innovates Business Plan Challenge

Competition Overview and Guidelines

Overview

The business plan challenge provides local entrepreneurs with the opportunity to present a 10-minute PowerPoint business plan. This year the competition is on February 19, kicking off at 8:30 am. We expect the competition to run until about 5 pm, and we will announce the winners that evening.

There are three sets of prizes:

Grand Prize \$10,000 sponsored by AEI

Local Growth Company Prizes, first, second and third prizes sponsored by ASBDC

- First Prize \$5,000
- Second Prize \$3,000
- Third Prize \$2,000

New Idea Prizes sponsored by Culverhouse College of Business
\$5,000 (may be distributed as one prize or more than one prize)

Winners also have additional in-kind funding from numerous local businesses, including co-working space at The EDGE.

Eligibility

- This competition is open to West Alabama residents including students from colleges other than UA.
 - Not intended for UA students, faculty, and staff as we have two competitions for those audiences: 1) ALDAG Competition and 2) Faculty & Staff Competition
- Previous grand prize winners are unable to compete for the same idea again.
- Anyone competing with an idea that was presented in the past must show progress on that idea since the last competition.
- Additionally, the following conditions must be met:
 - At least one member on the team in a substantial role such as an executive, or co-founder resides in West Alabama or the surrounding area.
 - The business/idea is primarily the work of the entrepreneur
- The AEI team will decide who can compete, and not all entries will be accepted.

Format and Process to Compete

Participants will submit a registration / intent to compete form. After being accepted to compete, the individual will then finalize a PowerPoint presentation that he/she will present.

THE EDGE

The presentation is a maximum of 10 minutes, and then there will be 15 minutes for the panel of judges to ask questions. Resources to help you get ready are available from the AEI team

The AEI Team, at the EDGE, will be coordinating information sessions, a workshop, one-on-one mentoring, and office hours.

Schedule of Events

Key dates for the competition are listed below.

- January 27 Registration / Intent to Compete Portal Opens
- February 19 Registration Closes
- February 19 PowerPoint DRAFT* Due
 - (The AEI team will provide and send feedback on the draft PowerPoint, so individuals / teams have time to change and edit.)
- February 23 FINAL PowerPoint due
- February 26 Competition Date

*Submit draft and final power point presentations on the registration forms.

Getting Help

- Reach out to the AEI staff at (205) 348-3343 or edge@ua.edu to schedule an appointment.