



PILOT PROJECT

2024-2025 Guidelines



Introduction

The First Wave Pitch Competition is a high school business pitch competition for the Delmarva Peninsula. Students will complete an online application and record a 3-minute pitch video to enter the competition. Submissions will be judged by a panel of business and community leaders. Designed by teachers for teachers, the competition can be incorporated as a curricular or co-curricular activity to meet state requirements for many economics, business, and engineering classes.

This is a pilot test of the initial competition model. As such, the initial run has certain restrictions and limitations that we hope to remove over time as the program scales. In addition, execution might be bumpy as we roll out our operations. Future rounds are contingent upon the success of the pilot, participant feedback, and the availability of follow-on funding from grants or private donors.

Eligibility Requirements

- All competitors must be high school students (grades 9-12) enrolled in a public high school in Wicomico or Somerset County.¹
- Students can compete individually or in a team of up to 3 total students.
- Students winning the top prize cannot compete again in the competition. Other winners may compete again, but must pitch a different idea. Top prize winners are encouraged to compete in various other regional and national pitch competitions to advance.

Awards & Prizes

Cash awards will be provided to competition winners according to Table 1. Award announcements will be made by email to the points of contact identified in the student's application. Cash payments will be paid out as checks. Winners or a parent or guardian must complete the required paperwork within 60 days of the award announcement in order to receive their award. Non-claimed awards will be redistributed in a future round of the competition or to runners up in the existing competition at the discretion of the program administrators.

Table 1: Award Structure

| Award | Cash | Other |
|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 st Place | \$3,000 | \$1,000 Scholarship, Invite to SEC |
| 2 nd Place | \$1,500 | Invite to SEC |
| 3 rd Place | \$750 | Invite to SEC |
| Honorable Mention | \$750 (\$250 x 3) | |
| Teacher/School | \$1,000 | Banner, Press Event |
| TOTAL | \$7,000 | |

As indicated in Table 1, the first-place winner's school will also receive \$1,000 and a display banner (if available). This funding is intended to be given to the sponsoring teacher(s) listed in the winning team's application for use in purchasing educational supplies and equipment, attending professional development courses related to entrepreneurial education, or covering costs associated with attending the SEC event with their student(s). As possible, an in-person photo/press event will be held at the first-place winner's school with appropriate representatives from the competition program, school, and student team participating. More information will be provided directly to the winner's school.

For a winning team submission, the cash prize or scholarship will be divided equally among the members. For example, a third-place winner consisting of a team of three students would result in each team member receiving \$250 in cash.

¹ Additional counties will be added as the program expands to eventually include the entire Delmarva Peninsula as well as any student in these counties, including private schools and homeschool students. This initial pilot is restricted to limit the number of variables while testing the first version of the competition model.

Top winners (and their sponsoring teachers) are invited to attend the Student Entrepreneurship Competition (SEC) event at Salisbury University to learn more about entrepreneurial education and see the collegiate competitors in action. This is an optional activity. An RSVP is required, participants will be assisted by a guide during their visit, and attendees must make their own arrangements for transportation to/from the event. More information will be provided directly to winners.

Deadlines

Application Opens: October 25, 2024

Final Deadline for Submissions: March 12, 2025

Students can submit or update their materials at any point during this period. The system will be closed at midnight on the final deadline date. Students are encouraged to submit well before the final deadline to avoid internet connectivity or system problems. Late, mailed, or emailed submissions will not be accepted for any reason.

Submission Requirements

- **Online Application:** Students will complete an online application that includes a background profile, contact information, and some key elements of their business idea.
- **Video Pitch:** Students will record and upload a 3-minute pitch of their business idea.
- **For-Profit and Nonprofit Ideas:** Not all problems students encounter have a for-profit solution. While the focus is on traditional business startups, students may submit a nonprofit business idea or a social enterprise in their pitch. However, nonprofit models must still be sustainable via grants, donations, or other funding sources.
- **Electronic:** All submissions must be made via the provided web-based information system. Submissions sent by email, mail, or other methods will not be reviewed.

Scoring

Applications and pitches will be evaluated by a panel of industry experts. A scoring rubric will be used to rank submissions. The top-ranking submissions will be evaluated further by the judging panel in a second round of evaluation and the winners selected. Some consideration may be made by the panel to ensure winners reflect a diversity of ideas, competitors, and geographies. All decisions made by the panel is final and scored rubrics will not be shared with competitors.

For Teachers

It is strongly recommended to incorporate this competition in the classroom as a curricular or co-curricular activity. The competition is designed to fit within a high school business, marketing, entrepreneurship, or engineering course. Table 2 displays Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) created for this activity. These SLOs align with a variety of state standards and example curriculum gathered from Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia. Teachers may use these SLOs to match the activity to already-existing course requirements.

Table 2. Student Learning Objectives

| Area | Student Learning Objectives |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Economics | Define how business and entrepreneurship play a role in society. |
| Written and Verbal Communication | Communicate a clear, concise, and persuasive business pitch that effectively conveys key ideas, addresses potential concerns, and engages the intended audience. |
| Curiosity and Perseverance | Design a business model by asking questions, making sense of problems by interpreting and analyzing data, and constructing and critiquing explanations. |
| Critical Thinking and Problem Solving | Design a solution to a complex real-world problem by developing and using models, managing resources, and evaluating the impact of decisions through computational thinking. |
| Information Literacy and Research | Complete appropriate research to apply to their understanding of a business model. |
| Effective Reading Comprehension | Analyze and comprehend informational texts to apply to their business model. |

To assist you with meeting these SLO's, it is encouraged to implement **JA Be Entrepreneurial** provided by Junior Achievement of the Eastern Shore. This learning experience is designed to help students gain foundational skills and knowledge needed to launch a business, from recognizing a need and creatively solving a problem to developing an actionable business plan. Please see the attachment titled "**JA Be Entrepreneurial - Learning Experience Overview**" for a full overview of the learning objectives, activities, and implementation requirements.

It is recommended to either 1. Implement the learning experience prior to students working on their pitches. Or, 2. Implement the learning experience congruently, as students work on their pitches.

All educator and student materials for this learning experience are provided digitally via D2L, a learning platform. Educators and students must be enrolled through JA in order to access them. Please contact Chelsea Selby at chelsea.selby@ja.org or 410-742-8112 to access the learning materials or if you have questions.

Other Competition Rules

- Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, may be used as part of a student's creative process. However, all submitted text and narrative must be the student's own self-generated content. Stealing of other people's ideas or pitches is prohibited. Plagiarism (i.e. using someone else's written material without proper citation) or any form of intellectual property theft is prohibited.
- Parents and teachers can provide instruction, assistance, and aid for competitors. This should not include generating startup business ideas, writing content for text submissions, using video software to edit content, or other activities which are critical tasks to be completed by student competitors. The ideas and expression must be created by the students themselves.

Violations of these rules will result in a rejection of the application and all involved competitors will be permanently barred from competing in all future competitions for which the student would otherwise be eligible. This will apply to all team members on a team found to be in noncompliance even if an individual student team member was not directly involved in the violation. In some instances, teachers or parents may also be barred from participating in the competition for a period of time or permanently if the violation is particularly egregious or a pattern of repeated violations is found. The competition administrator has sole discretion in making a determination without a right by the student or other stakeholders to appeal. By submitting an application, all competitors and their supporters agree to abide by these terms and conditions.

ATTACHMENT A: JA Be Entrepreneurial - Learning Experience Overview

In this modular learning experience, students will develop an entrepreneurial mindset and skills they can use in everyday life that will also make them assets to future employers as intrapreneurs. They will gain foundational skills and knowledge needed to launch a business, from recognizing a need and creatively solving a problem to developing an actionable business plan.

JA Be Entrepreneurial offers three modules ([Overview of all linked here](#))

1. JA Creative Problem Solving
2. JA Think Like an Entrepreneur
3. JA Rapid Business Planning

Each module contains multiple classroom sessions that, when combined, provide a cohesive experience; a student who participates in all three will receive cumulative benefits through the exploration of creative problem solving, the entrepreneurial mindset, and business planning. *However, each module is also intended to be used as a stand-alone experience or as an add-on to other programs.*

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| JA Creative Problem Solving | Participants learn and apply Design Thinking, an innovative process for problem solving used by entrepreneurs (and intrapreneurs) to brainstorm customer-centric ideas. This process focuses on the user needs and experience through the creation of empathy maps, problem statements, high-level solutions, prototypes, and testing plans to validate a design solution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 5 sessions (45 mins each) → Teacher-led → Content found on D2L learning platform |
| JA Think Like an Entrepreneur | Students explore the traits of an entrepreneurial mindset needed by both entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs when solving problems and evaluating opportunities. An entrepreneurial self-assessment supports students in identifying their strengths and setting personal and professional goals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 3 sessions (45 mins each) → Teacher-led → Content found on D2L learning platform |
| JA Rapid Business Planning | Students learn how to put their product or service idea into action by creating a concise yet effective one-page business plan. This iterative approach to business planning enables students to develop, test, and validate their plan with customers while filling an unmet market need. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 6 sessions (45 mins each) → Teacher-led → Content found on D2L learning platform |

Please contact Chelsea Selby at chelsea.selby@ja.org for questions.