

## Startup Pitch Competition Rules and Guidelines

Do you have a winning startup business? If your business is less than three years old or is in the planning stages, enter Miami Herald Startup Pitch Competition, co-sponsored by Florida International University's Eugenio Pino & Family Global Entrepreneurship Center.

This year, we offer three tracks: A Community Track open to anyone in South Florida; FIU Track open to students, alumni and faculty of FIU; and a High School Track for grades 8-12.

Panels of expert judges will select the two best pitch plans in each track based on both the quality of the idea and the submitted plan.

We will also name an overall 2021 Challenge Champion, which can come from any of the three tracks.

### GENERAL RULES FOR ALL TRACKS

You must live in South Florida (Miami-Dade, Broward, Monroe and Palm Beach counties). If you are entering an existing business, it must be based in South Florida. See additional rules for FIU and student tracks under Specific Rules section.

An entry consists of a pitch-deck of 12-20 slides that explains your product, growth strategy, marketing, and financials.

- Your product can be a proposed business or one that is already in development or operation; it does NOT have to fall into one of the Community Track sectors. However, if your business launched operations prior to Jan. 1, 2018, it is not eligible.
- You cannot enter both the community track and the FIU track with the same idea.
- Finalists will be required to present their pitch to the judges. Judges will consider the pitch in their final ranking. If a finalist is unable to attend the judging session, the next highest-ranked plan will be deemed a finalist and be awarded the opportunity to compete in the pitch competition.
- A winner and a runner-up will be profiled in the Miami Herald's Business Monday Startup Pitch Competition issue this spring and will be honored at a community-wide event.

If you entered the Challenge before and were not one of the top three winners in the track, you may enter your plan again as long as you meet the other criteria. Multiple entries from one person are allowed if they are different business ideas.

**Entry deadline for Community, FIU and High School Tracks: Emailed by 11:59 p.m. Tuesday, March 2.**

Email your entry to:

challenge@MiamiHerald.com — for Community Track

fiuchallenge@MiamiHerald.com — for FIU Track

highschoolchallenge@MiamiHerald.com — for High School Track

Please put the name of your venture or your name in the subject line of the email. Include contact information — phone number and email.

You should receive an automated response after sending. For questions, problems or further confirmation: Email [jwooldridge@miamiherald.com](mailto:jwooldridge@miamiherald.com).

**Awards:** The Challenge Champion, the top two competitors in the Community, FIU and High school Tracks will be profiled in a Business Monday cover story and special section. Winners will be invited to a luncheon in their honor, where they will meet with the Miami Herald's business staff and judges. Winners will also receive other in-kind prizes. Other educational, mentorship and networking opportunities will be rolled out during the entry period.

**FIU Track:** You must be a Student or Alumnus or Faculty of FIU to enter. If a team is entering, at least one member of the team must be an FIU student or alumnus. Please write "FIU Entry" at the top of your submission. You cannot enter both the Community Track and the FIU Track with the same idea.

**High School Track:** The contest is open to students in grades 8-12 in Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and Monroe counties (we encourage 8th graders to join the contest also). Please put "High School Entry" at the top.

## TIPS ON PREPARING YOUR ENTRY

To enter, competitors must submit a pitch deck containing 12-20 slides (for Community and FIU tracks) and 8-15 slides (for the Teen Track.) The deck should explain the following:

- What problem is business solving?
- What is the solution?
- Who is the customer?
- What stage of development is it currently in?
- Who are the members of your team and what expertise does each bring?
- What, if any, technology is required?
- How will the business make money? (i.e., define the business model and revenue streams)
- What is your marketing plan? (Details are required; “social media” is not enough)
- What are your costs and basic final projections? When do you project to break even?

**Include contact information:** A phone number and email address, please.

**Questions?** Email [jwooldridge@miamiherald.com](mailto:jwooldridge@miamiherald.com); Twitter @JaneWooldridge