

NYBPC Rulebook



The official document
outlining rules,
requirements, and judging
criteria for the New York
Business Plan
Competition.

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Since 2010, more than 7,500 students from colleges and universities across New York have pitched their ideas and ventures at the New York Business Plan Competition.

About the Competition

The 2025-2026 New York Business Plan Competition will feature regional competitions in New York's ten Regional Economic Development Council zones – Capital Region, Central New York, North Country, Mohawk Valley, Finger Lakes, Western New York, Southern Tier, Mid-Hudson, New York City, and Long Island - followed by a final, statewide competition. The regional semifinals are hosted by local partner colleges and universities in March and early April. The top teams from each of the ten regions advance to the statewide competition. The winners will be selected by esteemed judges, including venture capitalists, angel investors, investment bankers, experienced entrepreneurs, and leaders from the business community.

Philosophy

- Entrepreneurship is vital to support a thriving economy.
- Entrepreneurial skills are invaluable - including problem-solving, communication, economics, creativity, resilience, and accountability, regardless of students' career paths.
- The intercollegiate competition platform is an important experiential anchor for students from all backgrounds and for ventures of all types.

Mission

The NYBPC's mission has three parts: to develop entrepreneurial mindsets and skills through experiential learning, to facilitate building personal networks between participants and the broader business community, and to launch new ventures.

Annual Calendar

Specific dates are available at NYBPC.org.

November:

- Student and judge applications open

March:

- Final track definitions and special prizes announced
- Student applications close
- Student submissions are due (dates based by region)

Late March - Early April:

- Regional competitions take place

Beginning of April:

- Regional winners shared with state finals organizers
- Final prizes and prize money awards announced

Mid April:

- Round One for NYBPC Finals held online. Refer to NYBPC.org for specific submission deadlines

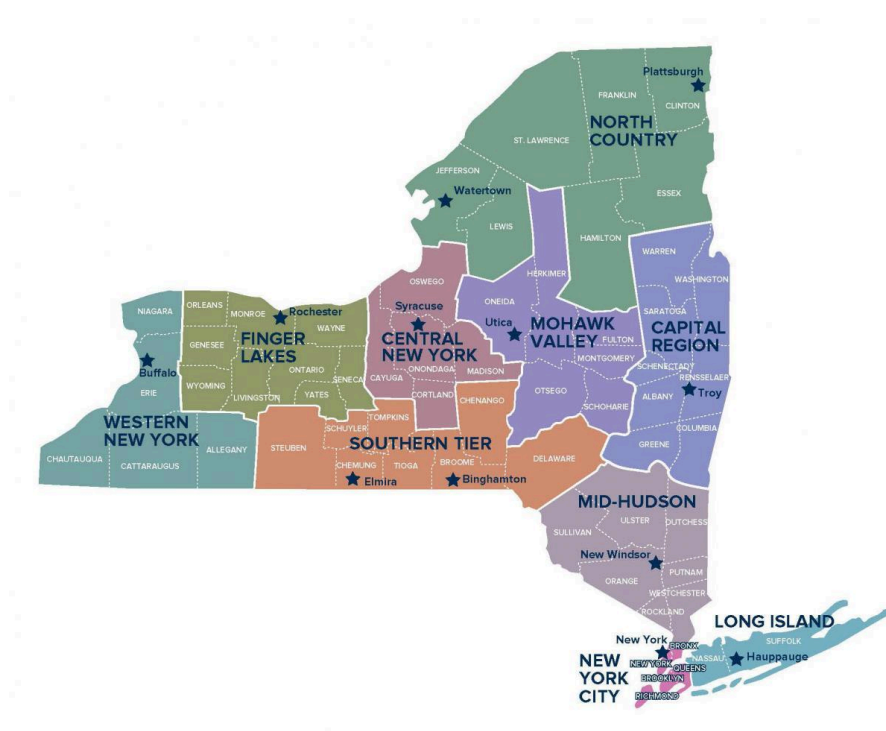
Late April:

- Round two and Grand Prize Finals held in-person
- Grand prize awarded to top track winner

Competition Structure

The NYBPC consists of two levels of competition: regionals and finals. Regional competitions are generally held in March/April in all ten regions across New York. The winners of these competitions move on to the statewide finals. All regional competitions follow this rulebook and scoring rubric, but the format and timing of the regional competitions vary.

Student teams are assigned to one regional competition based on the location of their school. If the team has members in different regions, the first student listed is considered primary and the team will compete in the associated region.



Each student team fills out the NYBPC central application to begin, and state and regional organizers verify eligibility. The application opens in November and can be found through the website, NYBPC.org. Check the website for the deadlines specific to each regional competition.

The teams finishing First and Second within each track at regional competitions are invited to compete in the statewide final competition, provided the regional judges deem the teams prepared for statewide competition. Each region is invited to send two teams per track. No alternate teams are invited to compete. Regional coordinators must email a list of winners and team contact information to info@nybpc.org within 48 hours of the completion of their competition and no later than April 3, 2026 at 11:59PM.

Once those lists are received, eligible teams will receive instructions for submitting their final presentations.

The NYBPC State Final Competition has three parts: First Round, Second Round and Grand Prize Finals.

Finalists submit their pitch videos and slide decks prior to the first round of the finals competition. The first round of finals is held online in mid-April. Up to twenty teams in each of six tracks are judged asynchronously online over the course of several days, by business and industry professionals. The top teams advance to the next round.

For the second round, the top teams in each track are invited to pitch live and in-person to a panel of judges, with live Q&A on **April 24, 2025**. The track winners are announced on the same day. First place track winners compete for the NYBPC Grand Prize on the same day. Timing and location details will be published on NYBPC.org. All student competitors are invited to attend the finals to build their networks and knowledge of entrepreneurship.

Team/Student Eligibility

In order to be eligible to apply for and participate in the NYBPC, all teams must meet the following criteria:

- “Students” are any graduate, undergraduate, and/or community college students enrolled part- or full-time in a micro-credential, certificate, or degree program in accredited New York colleges and universities during the current academic year (defined as August - July). Students who graduate during the Fall semester are eligible to compete in the competition during the Spring semester. All students are eligible, including exchange students.
- Presenters must be eligible students in all stages of the competition.
- Teams may compete in only one region per year.
- Students may participate on only one team per year.
- Grand prize winning teams from previous NYBPC competitions are not eligible to compete again. (They are encouraged to participate as speakers, mentors, volunteers, and judges!) Individual members of winning teams may return with new teams in subsequent years.
- Cumulative public and private capital raised may not exceed \$100,000. This does not include research funding that may have supported the development of the technology in an academic laboratory.
- Ownership: For incorporated business ventures, the majority must be student-owned (more than 50%). For teams that are unincorporated, the majority of contributions need to come from students, such that should an organization become incorporated, the organization would be majority student-owned.

Teams do not need to have incorporated legal entities to compete. The NYBPC reserves the right to withhold prizes from winning teams who do not comply with the eligibility requirements.

Tracks & Tags

The competition is divided into categories, called tracks, at all levels of competition. Students are assigned tracks by the NYBPC organizers based on their self-identification for their venture and their team. Self-identification is done by selecting multiple tags, or words that accurately relate to the nature of the venture and/or the team. Tracks are determined and defined by clusters of tags that are related.

To keep pace with our rapidly changing world and to provide a balanced competition, track definitions are finalized after reviewing incoming applications in early March. Students do not select tracks on their applications but do select one or more category tags. These tags may also align with special prizes. They could relate to the type of business, attributes of the team, the type of product or service, or target markets or customers. Tracks are defined by industry, innovation and technology themes that emerge based on category tags.

The list of tags will not be finalized until the student application opens in January. Here is a sampling of tags that have been included historically: agtech, athletics, clothing, college students, education, entertainment, environmental impact, fintech, food, government, medtech, mental health, military, under-resourced, software, travel, utility, veteran-owned and social impact.

The NYBPC organizers assign tracks to teams. Student teams will be informed of their track assignments prior to the regional competitions. Teams in each of the tracks may represent for-profit or non-profit ventures. All tracks are judged according to the same criteria and rubric.

Presentation Guidelines

The presentation format for the regional semifinal and statewide final competitions may vary. Please reach out to the organizers of your regional competition to ensure that you understand the requirements.

Presentation Format & Submission Requirements

For Round One of the statewide final competition, each team will be given the opportunity to submit a pitch video, a slide deck and brief written remarks to be shared with the judges. Final submissions must be submitted by the deadline posted on the website. No new presentations or updated versions will be accepted after that date and time.

Video pitches should be no more than eight (8) minutes long. Judges are asked to ignore anything past the eight (8) minute mark. Videos that do not match submitted slide decks will risk disqualification. To best align with judge expectations and the judging rubric, students should focus on creating a simple and clear presentation.

Slide decks must be in PPTX format or as Google Slides. No specific software is guaranteed, so students should plan accordingly, focusing on simplicity and content to guarantee universal accessibility.

Additional remarks are limited to 200 words and will be shared with the judges along with the pitch video and slides.

For round two and the Grand Prize Finals, student teams will pitch live for eight (8) minutes and have six (6) minutes of Q&A with a panel of judges. Students will have the opportunity to update their pitch decks based on feedback from Round One judges, but no new slide decks will be accepted after the deadline date. Please check the website for the submission deadline.

Presentation Content

The NYBPC Presentation Suggestions [Slide Deck Template](#) is available for reference. It is recommended that you seek to address the following questions in your presentation.

Business Model and Team

1. **General Description:** What problem are you solving? What is your business model? Describe how your venture makes money and how it will assure long-term sustainability.
2. **Financials:** What are the unit economics of your product or service? How much does it cost to get started? What are the projections for sales and ongoing expenses?
3. **Value Proposition:** What is your key value proposition (e.g. lowest cost, highest reliability, best performance, etc.)?
4. **Structure:** What is the structure of your organization? Do you have the team members that you need to start and grow? How will the structure change with growth?

Products/Services

1. **Product/Service:** What is your product/service offering? How does your product/service work?
2. **Customers:** Who are the specific customers that you are pursuing or will pursue? Do you have any validation of interest such as letters of interest or early sales? What kind of customer discovery have you conducted to find out about people who want what you are offering?
3. **Benefits:** Define and quantify key benefits (e.g. cost, performance, etc.)
4. **Development Stage:** Where is the product/service in its evolution (e.g. idea/conception, proof of concept, fully tested prototype, etc.)?

Competitive Position

1. **Competitors:** Who is your competition? What makes your solution better?
2. **Right to Win:** Is your competitive position sustainable? How will you protect proprietary information such as intellectual property?

Markets

1. **Target Market:** What markets and market segments are you targeting? How big are these markets and how can you sustainably capture them?
2. **Barriers to Entry:** What are the key market barriers and how will they lend to your success?

Example Presentations

- [RHM Innovations](#): Courtney Burris (University at Buffalo) + Brandon Davis Burris (University of Rochester), (2023 Grand Prize Winner, pitching at the NYBPC Finals)
- [Photonect](#): Juniya Nauriyal and Sushant Kumar, University of Rochester (2022 Grand Prize)
- [Step2,3 LLC](#): Shannon Sincere Dawson, SUNY at Purchase College (2022 GRYT Health Award)

Judging Criteria

Judges use the NYBPC rubric to evaluate each team. Judges are asked to evaluate companies according to the following criteria:

- **Market Opportunity:** Clear market need and a plan to take advantage of the need.
- **Competitive Advantage:** The product or service is something unique that has a protectable competitive advantage in the proposed market.
- **Management Capability:** The team has the skills and experience to develop this venture and address the associated risks.
- **Financial Understanding:** The team has a solid understanding of the financial requirements of the venture.
- **Roadmap/Growth Strategy:** The team has engaged in short- and long-term planning and has considered strategies for growth.
- **Sustainable Business Model:** The team understands and can communicate their core business model. They are likely to develop a sustainable venture.
- **NYS Impact & Viability:** The venture demonstrates strong potential to succeed within New York State. The team has identified understanding of the regional market, ecosystem, and resources.

Judges focus their deliberations on the long-term viability and sustainable competitive advantage of each venture.

Prize Information

Prizes, recognitions and cash awards will be announced by the end of March. First, second, and third place prizes will be awarded for each of the six tracks. A Grand Prize winner will be selected from among the first place teams from each track. Winners will be selected by judging panels.

Special prizes may be awarded singularly or across the tracks. Examples of past years special prizes included concept stage, minority founders, female founders, and other special prize awards. Criteria and amounts will be announced by the end of March. Winners may be selected by their respective prize sponsors in conjunction with NYBPC judges. **Teams should select as many tags as possible in filling out the NYBPC application to be considered for various special prizes.**

Evidence of incorporation is required for the dispersal of prizes over \$2,500, and incorporation may be done using prize money funds. Incorporation may take any form related to a business entity including a local DBA or state-level corporate structure such as an LLC, C-corporation, etc. Reach out to us at thomas@upstatecapital.org if you need help navigating this process. W9 forms are required for all cash prizes.

All winning teams will meet with a mentor to establish milestones prior to receiving prize money. Prizes of \$5,000 and higher will be dispersed in multiple milestone-based phases. The first payment will be made based on milestones established in a post-event mentorship meeting. Additional payment(s) will be made based on achieving agreed-upon milestones or at the discretion of the NYBPC organizers based on mentor feedback.

Prize money awards are viewed as investments for student-led ventures to move forward, although they are not expected to be repaid as debt, nor are they equity investments. The maximum cash award for teams who are not planning to move forward with an entrepreneurial venture in the near-term is \$500, regardless of their placing.

All state prizes must be claimed within six (6) months of the date of the competition or they will be forfeited. Check with the regional organizers for regional prize deadlines. Cash prizes are taxable according to state and federal tax law.

Judges

Judging panels are composed of a mix of investors and industry experts, including venture capitalists, angel investors, investment bankers, experienced entrepreneurs and leaders from the business community. At the statewide finals, proctors will be assigned to each track to facilitate the judging process.

- Judges who have mentored or otherwise engaged with any competing teams are not eligible to participate in any level of the competition.
- Judges will fill out one application for both regionals and state finals, which will be available by early January.
- Judges may serve as either regional judges OR finals judges, but not both.
- Judges should avoid interaction with all competitors until the event is completed.

If you are interested in participating as a judge for the NYBPC, or know someone who would be a good fit, please contact us at thomas@upstatecapital.org.

Ethics Questions & Rule Enforcement

An ethics committee consisting of a cross-section of participants from across the state handles rule infractions, challenges and questions at all stages of the competition. Their rulings on these and any unforeseen scenarios will be final.

Thank you for your contributions to New York's entrepreneurial ecosystem and the NYBPC!