

## TTU Accelerator Competition & Social Innovation Challenge Rules & Guidelines

Thank you for your interest in applying for the TTU Accelerator Program. The program is divided into two tracks: innovative enterprises and social innovative ventures. Teams looking to launch innovative enterprises, aka companies that seek a profit from their product or service, can apply to the program through the Texas Tech Accelerator Competition.

Likewise, teams interested in launching ventures that create change and make a social impact can apply to the program through the Social Innovation Challenge.

The criteria for both applications are the same; however, we provide templates, resources, and workshops that are tailored to each track to give you a competitive edge. All resources can be found on either the TTU Accelerator Competition or Social Innovation Challenge webpages.

### Applications Requirements:

Eligible teams will be required to submit

- ✓ a complete business plan with executive summary,
- ✓ a pitch presentation deck,
- ✓ the resume of primary applicant,
- ✓ one letter of recommendation, and
- ✓ a demonstration of your product or service.

Submissions go through a 4-round evaluation process: application review and scoring, Virtual Pitch Day (30% of final score) and demo (20%), startup team interviews (40%), and final pitches (10%). The details of each round are discussed in the **Judging Criteria and Evaluation Process** section later in this guide.

A public event will be held where guests are invited to watch the final presentations. Attendance at this event will include: potential investors, TTU contributors, local and state politicians, media, the Innovation Hub mentors, and TTU staff. All the selected startup teams will have ten minutes to pitch their venture.

### General Requirements

#### Complete Business Plans

Upload all submission requirements by the deadline ([listed on Innovation Hub website](#)). All required content outlined on the Social Innovation Challenge and TTU Accelerator Competition webpages **MUST** be created for a seed, startup, or early-stage venture addressing the entire business concept, including financial projections.

#### Disclosure

Companies must disclose the amount(s) and resources of secured arrangements for capital from all sources, including: loans, grants, or outside investments. Resource investments must not have exceeded \$200K prior to submission. Revenue generated by the proposed venture must not exceed \$250K prior to submission.

## Mentoring Sessions

Each selected startup team is **REQUIRED** participate in Pitch Scrubs (mentoring session) prior to the final round with a mentor. Pitch Scrubs is a mentoring session with the Innovation Hub mentors to preview pitch decks and provide advice for presenting.

## Prior Submissions Made to TTU Accelerator Program

Ventures and business plans that were previously submitted are eligible to compete if they were not accepted into the TTU Accelerator Program.

## Types of Ventures

Ideally, the competition is for new, independent ventures in the seed-stage, startup, or early growth stages. Nonprofit organizations may also apply. Generally **EXCLUDED** are: tax shelters, real estate syndications, franchises, and spinouts from existing companies.

## Venture Team Eligibility Requirements

Each participant within the startup team must meet the following requirements to compete in either competition.

- Applicants do **NOT** need to have formed an official company. If a company has already been formed, the corporate headquarters must be in the state of Texas.

Team Composition:

- Each participant of the team must be at least 18 years old.
- Each participant must provide proof of US residency or Visa. Each company may be made up of students, TTU alumni, and entrepreneurs in the West Texas community.
- Each registering team may **NOT** exceed a total of five members.
- **Faculty and TTUS Employee Participation:** Faculty members (defined as full-time or adjunct), full-time employees, and contractors of TTUS, must disclose participation to their immediate supervisor.
- **Student Participation:** All TTUS students in good academic standing are eligible to participate.
- **Community Entrepreneurs:** Entrepreneurs in the business community without affiliation with TTU are encouraged to participate as well as ventures launched by licensing university technology.

## Final Decision

The Innovation Hub staff makes the final decision on which companies are invited to compete in the TTU Accelerator Competition & Social Innovation Challenge as a finalist, we reserve the right to include or exclude any startup teams for any reason.

## Starting Your Application

### Step #1

An important first step is to establish one company member as a dependable “captain” to manage all communications and logistics for the company and correspondence with Hub staff.

## Step #2

Create a profile on the competition platform Accelerator App. You will be asked to complete application questions and then submit all required documentation listed below.

- Business Plan with Executive Summary
- Pitch presentation deck
- Resume of primary applicant
- One letter of recommendation
- Demonstration (This can be a video, wireframes, diagram, or storyboard that answers "how will the technology/product/service work?")

**Examples of Demos:** Devices/Product (physical prototype demonstration), Phone App (wireframe/storyboard), Process/Service (illustration/layout the process)

## Step #3

Mark your calendars for the important dates listed on the TTU Accelerator Selection Process Timeline. The 2024-2025 Accelerator Cohort will be announced during an awards ceremony mentioned on the TTU Accelerator Program Timeline.

## Step #4

**Don't miss the submission deadline!!!** Download the competition schedule on the Hub website. Schedule time on your calendar to be mentored and prepare to be a finalist as well as all the competition activities. The entire team is **REQUIRED** to attend if you are finalist.

## Submitting Your Application

### Step #1: The File Name

- **All submissions must be made in PDF format.** These documents will be uploaded to the competition's platform Accelerator App.
- All entries must clearly identify team/company name, contact information, academic semester, and year of submission.
- Each company **MUST** follow the file naming method below and submit before the expiration of the deadline to be considered eligible to compete.

*Example File Naming Method:*

- Company Name: John Doe Services
- Event Showcase identifier: YEA, BPC, the Hub
- Semester & Year: Spring 2022
- Type of file submission business plan (BP), Pitch Deck (PD), executive summary (E)
- Recommended File Name: **johndoeservices\_(Competition Name)\_spring2022\_PV.pdf**

## Step #2: Format

Submissions that do not follow the specified format guidelines listed below will **NOT** be pre-screened. If the submission deadline has passed, then the company forfeits the right to compete. If the deadline has not passed, then the company can resubmit up until the designated submission deadline.

- The submission's file name **MUST** follow the example shown in **Step #1**.
- **RUN SPELLCHECK!!!** Revise and edit your content to ensure there are no grammatical or spelling errors. There will be a **5-point deduction from each judge** for typographical errors.
- Pitch deck submission must be either a PDF or PowerPoint document.
- Business plan (a separate PDF upload) **MUST** contain financials.
- Business plan submissions **CANNOT** exceed a 25-page maximum, including cover page, executive summary, and table of contents.
- Plans **MUST** be written in English using 12-point font, double-spaced with 1" margins, including cover page, text, charts, and graphics.

## Step #3: Content

The following content is a general, recommended business plan outline. Please use spell check prior to submission of the final document. **EACH** judge will score **5 POINTS OFF** for typographical errors.

Rubrics and templates can be found online on either competition webpage. The submission should be completed through the competition platform Accelerator App linked on both competition webpages.

## Business Plan Outline

### Formatting

The business plan should include a table of contents, page headings, and page numbers. Use an accepted style guide (Chicago Manual of Style, APA, and MLA) for the entire business plan. **IMPORTANT:** Use one styles throughout the paper (the style should **NOT** change). If you add a footnote, link the Arabic numeral in the text to the footnote.

### Cover Page

Cover page should list the name of the participants, the name of the business plan, and company name and/or logo and date of entry. (1 page)

### Executive Summary

Executive Summary identifying the problem, the size of the accessible market, evidence customers will buy your product, differentiation versus competition, the type of business and industry, financial highlights, the amount of funding, IP status, an overview of management company. Briefly state the funding needs and timelines/milestones. (1-2 pages)

### Products & Services

What is the offering? Describe it in detail that explains or follows along with the prepared demonstration. What is the company culture?

### **The Market & Business Concept**

This section should describe the business model and answer the following:

- How will you are make money?
- What is the market opportunity and what problem is the product/service solving?
- Define the target market and market potential.
- How is the success of the company determined? Is there a growth potential, what is it?

### **Industry & Competitive Market Analysis**

List and describe in detail the industry analysis, research the market, driving forces within market, what is the opportunity in the market, the company's role, explain regulatory issues.

### **Marketing Plan**

Explain your startup team's marketing and sales strategy, barriers to entry, and how the product or service is differentiated. Explain your customer value proposition by defining your target market segment and why those customers are the best fit for your venture.

### **Operations Plan**

Include the following items in your plan of operations. Describe the

- production process
- manufacturing plans
- strategic partnerships, if any,
- estimation of capital expenditures requirement for three years
- list real estate and equipment needs
- define the cost to produce product/service
- describe distribution channel (how do you get your product from Point A to Point B?)

**IMPORTANT:** List any difficulties to get your product/service to market and plans to overcome these obstacles. If applicable, list the steps to commercialization.

### **Management Company**

Summarize the founders' professional history and the venture's philosophy. In this section, answer, "What is the organizational structure? Who is in charge of what aspects of the venture? Are there vacant positions that need to be filled? If so, what are they, and what are the plans to support these roles? Is there an Advisory Board? Who is on the Advisory Board?" List current and potential strategic alliances and why they are significant to the venture's success.

### **Financial Plan BE Analysis**

Summarize (and attach in **Appendix B**):

- Cash Flow Statements for Year 1 (monthly), Year 2 (quarterly), and Year 3 (quarterly).
- Income Statements for Year 1 (monthly), Year 2 (quarterly), and Year 3 (quarterly).
- Balance Sheets for Year 1-3 (annually).

### **Needs/Use of Funds**

Include a complete breakdown of funding needs or requirements to commercialize, include use of funds and assumptions.

### **Milestones/Critical Success Factors/Risk Management**

List of important dates and achievements. Include a contingency plan if the business does **NOT** meet the milestones. Go more in-depth than stating "we'll revise our timeline", and define each step in the contingency plan.

## Appendices

**Appendix A** should include resumes of all company members, supplemental information (proof of age, Visa-status, etc.), and their bios.

**Appendix B** should include financial statements listed in **Financial Plan BE Analysis**.

## Bibliography

Cite multiple sources of information (footnote or endnotes linked to the text) that support the claims made throughout the business plan. Each claim should have **MULTIPLE** sources backing it up.

## Judging Criteria and Evaluation Process

The competition is intended to reflect and simulate the real-world process of entrepreneurs seeking funding. Judges will consider market opportunity, distinctive core competence, management capability, financial understanding, risk analysis and investment potential.

A scorecard will be used to judge all submitted business plans. The scorecard is consistent with what most venture capital or early stage/angel investors need to understand to decide to invest on a particular venture. The scorecard tool has three functions: scoring preliminary round, a tie breaker in the final round, and used to provide feedback to the companies in the judge feedback session.

### Round One: iTTU Mentors Read and Score Applications

Industry-expert mentors will read, evaluate, and discuss concerns for each application and score them according to the competition's scorecard. An example scorecard can be found below or on each competition's webpage. The top 10 finalists in the TTU Accelerator Competition and top 3 finalists in the Social Innovation Challenge will move forward to **Round #2**.

### Round Two: Virtual Pitch Day (50% of final score)

The startup team will present their pitch deck to iTTU Mentors and Innovation Hub staff. The presentation will be no longer than 10-minutes for each finalist. Mentors will evaluate startup teams on their professionalism, coachability, and criteria outlined on the scorecard. **IMPORTANT:** The pitch will consist of **30%** of the startup team's final score.

Each team will have the opportunity to demonstrate their product or service. Examples of demonstrations can be found listed on each competition webpage. **IMPORTANT:** The demonstration segment will consist of **20%** of the startup team's final score.

### Round Three: Interviews (40% of final score)

Each team will be interviewed to determine coachability, team dynamics, and answer:

- Do you understand your business model?
- Do you understand the expectations of the TTU Accelerator Program?
- How do you think you'd spend the \$25,000 grant funding?
- What are your plans and goals for your venture over the next 5 years?

A rubric will be provided to mentors and staff conducting the interviews to determine the final interview score. The rubric will contain mandatory questions and follow-up questions to maintain a fair, equal standing between the finalists.

### Round Four: Final Presentation (10% of final score)

Each team must have a completed presentation by Tech Check Day. The presentation **MUST NOT** exceed a 10 minute presentation and a 2 minute grace period for switching presentations/teams. Teams are **REQUIRED** to follow the rules listed below.

1. Arrive 30-minutes prior to scheduled time slot on competition day.
2. All registered team members **MUST** be present at the entire event.
3. Presentation duration **SHOULD NOT** exceed 10 minutes.
4. **IMPORTANT:** Team members/presenters should arrive to the competition and present in professional business attire.

Industry leaders and experienced investors will be the final round judges. The final round judging rubric will be based on how clear and passionate the pitch is and the “willingness of the judges to invest in the venture”. Judges will ask themselves, and evaluate the startup team, “Is there a commercialization potential and complete business model here?”

### Scorecard & Judging Criteria

<b>TTU Accelerator Scorecard</b>					
	<i>Low</i>				<i>High</i>
Management	1	2	3	4	5
Market Opportunity	1	2	3	4	5
Product/Service	1	2	3	4	5
Technology	1	2	3	4	5
Strength vs. Competition	1	2	3	4	5
Financials	1	2	3	4	5
Operational Planning	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to Handle Risks	1	2	3	4	5
Demonstration of Prototype, Proof of Concept, or MVP	1	2	3	4	5
Exit Strategy	1	2	3	4	5

<b>Social Innovation Challenge Scorecard</b>					
	<i>Low</i>				<i>High</i>
Management	1	2	3	4	5
Market (Population the Innovation Serves)	1	2	3	4	5
Product/Service	1	2	3	4	5
Innovation	1	2	3	4	5
Strength vs. Competition	1	2	3	4	5
Financials	1	2	3	4	5
Operational Planning	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to Handle Risk	1	2	3	4	5
Demonstration of product, service, or program concept	1	2	3	4	5
Financial Sustainability	1	2	3	4	5

### **TTU Accelerator Event (Spring)**

The final competition will take place in the spring annually and may be combined with other activities related to TTU innovation and entrepreneurship. The specific event date, time, and location is posted on the website.

Finalists are required to attend all activities to be eligible for the award. The TTU Accelerator Event has the following components:

- Welcoming Remarks to Sponsors, Competitors, & Guests
- TTU Accelerator Competition Presentations
- Social Innovation Challenge Presentations
- Closing Remarks
- Awards Announcement & Social

Guests are welcome to attend the competition and awards social. For more information, contact the Hub staff team at [researchpark@ttu.edu](mailto:researchpark@ttu.edu).