



Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the purpose of the competition?

- The SBA is looking for innovative products and services that help impact and empower the lives of women and families.
- We know that our workforce looks very different from 50 years ago. Women now make up nearly half of the labor force and play a critical role in our nation's economic prosperity. Most children live in households where all parents work. And as our population ages, families are increasingly caring for aging parents while balancing the needs of work and home.
- As the demands on women and families grow, the need for products and services that address these unique challenges increases. This challenge will provide that platform.

2. What are the competition criteria?

- The SBA is looking for entrepreneurs to create a product or service that has a measurable impact on the lives of women and families (30%); has the potential for commercialization (40%); and fills a need in the marketplace (30%).

3. What are examples of a products or services for women?

- Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - An online web service that lists approved sitters in the local area
 - Fresh ingredients mailed to your door with a recipe for an easily cooked dinner
 - A Bluetooth device that looks like a designer bracelet

4. If an idea for a product or service is submitted, is there an expectation of follow-through on behalf of the business or individual to actually start selling the product or service? Or can this be truly idea-based only?

- The potential for commercialization is one of three criteria that judges will use to evaluate submissions, and it carries the greatest weight at 40%. Additionally, the product or service must have a measurable impact on the lives of women and families (30%) and must fill a need in the marketplace (30%).

5. How does the competition work?

- The initial round of the Challenge will take the form of local competitions that will be run across the country during the month of March 2015 by host organizations such as universities, accelerators, clusters, scale-up communities, SBA Resource Partners, universities and colleges.
- Local competitions must be run in a manner consistent with the Competition Rules

- Following the completion of the local competitions, each host organization will identify one winner that will advance to the semi-final round of the Challenge. The host organizations will then submit a nomination package containing a business plan from each semi-finalist to SBA by April 1, 2015. See Question 11 for more details on the nomination package.
- In the semi-final round of the Challenge, an executive committee composed of SBA personnel will review the semi-finalist nomination packages submitted by the local competition host organizations and select no more than 10 finalists.
- Each finalist will be offered the opportunity to come to D.C. during National Small Business Week, May 4 – 8, 2015, to make a live marketing pitch to a panel of expert judges drawn from the private sector and compete for up to \$30,000 in cash prizes.
- The panel of judges will select a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winner whose pitches best satisfy the competition criteria and present the greatest potential for success and rank them in descending order.
- By participating in this Challenge, each contestant gives its full and unconditional agreement to the Competition Rules. A contestant's eligibility for a prize award is contingent upon their fulfilling all requirements identified in the Competition Rules.

6. Where can I find a complete list of the Competition Rules?

- The Competition Rules are posted at sba.gov/innovateHER.

7. Who is eligible to participate in the competition?

- This Challenge is open only to: (1) citizens or permanent residents of the United States who are at least eighteen (18) years of age at the time of their submission of an entry (or teams of such individuals); and (2) private entities, such as corporations or other organizations, that are incorporated in and maintain a primary place of business in the United States.
- Individuals submitting on behalf of corporations, nonprofits, or groups of individuals (such as an academic class or other team) must meet the eligibility requirements for individual contestants. An individual may belong to more than one team submitting an entry in this Challenge.
- SBA employees are not eligible, nor are Federal entities or Federal employees acting within the scope of their employment.
- Individuals or organizations that are currently suspended or disbarred by the federal government are not eligible for this competition.

8. How can I find a list of host organizations for the competition?

- SBA will post the names of all local hosts on a rolling basis at sba.gov/innovateHER as their participation is confirmed.

9. If I'm interested in hosting a local competition, what do I need to do to confirm with the SBA?

- No later than February 27, 2015, please send the name of your organization, location, address, email address, POC for the competition, and website (if applicable) to womenbusiness@sba.gov (link sends e-mail).
- SBA will evaluate each request and will follow up with each organization to confirm their selection as a host. SBA will post the names of all local hosts on a rolling basis at sba.gov/innovateHER as their participation is confirmed.
- **Please be advised that organizations that do not receive written confirmation from SBA will not be authorized to host a competition in connection with this Challenge.**

10. What is the deadline for an organization to confirm that they would like to host a local competition under this Challenge?

- February 27th, 2015 is the cutoff to confirm if you plan to host a competition in connection with this Challenge.

11. How will the local competitions select a winner?

- Each host organization will determine the type of local competition, conducted in a manner that is consistent with the Competition Rules, that best identifies the most innovative and entrepreneurial business ideas, including the type of application that individuals need to prepare in order to compete.
- At a minimum, however, each application for a local competition must contain a business plan covering the contestant's proposed product or service and must satisfy the Competition criteria identified by SBA in the Competition Rules.
- The local competitions will be judged by individuals selected by each host in their sole discretion. No individual acting as a judge at any stage of this Challenge may have personal or financial interests in, or be an employee, officer, director, or agent of any contestant or have a familial or financial relationship with a contestant.
- Following the completion of the local competitions, but no later than April 1st, each host organization will identify one winner that will advance to the semi-final round of the Challenge. The host organizations will then submit a nomination package to SBA at womenbusiness@sba.gov([link sends e-mail](#)) no later than April 1, 2015.
- No prize money will be awarded at the local competition level.

12. Is there a required length for the business plan that participants must submit?

- There is no requirement from the SBA on the length of a business plan. Please reach out to your local host organization to confirm any requirements they may have as part of the local competition, as this may vary across different hosts.

13. What must be included in the semi-finalist nomination package that local hosts submit to SBA?

- Following the completion of the local competitions, but no later than April 1st, each host organization will identify one winner that will advance to the semi-final round of the Challenge. The host organizations will then submit a nomination package to womenbusiness@sba.gov([link sends e-mail](#)) not later than April 1, 2015 that contains the following:
 - A single cover page detailing -
 - The name of the winning individual or team, best contact information including home or business addresses with telephone, website (if applicable), and e-mail address;
 - The host organization's name, place of business, business address and telephone number and e-mail address
 - A concise, one-paragraph description of the product, service or technology
 - A Business Plan
 - A Statement of Support that explains why the winner of the local competition best satisfied the competition criteria and presented the greatest potential for success (maximum length: 2 pages).

14. Can an organization submit a nomination package directly to SBA without holding a business competition?

- No. The selection of a local winner from the first round of the Challenge must result from a business competition. Please see Questions #5 and 11 for more details.
- Additionally, contestants cannot submit entries directly to SBA.

15. How do I enter the competition?

- The application process for the local competition will vary depending on your local host organization. For more information regarding these local competitions, please visit sba.gov/innovateHER.
- Contestants cannot submit entries directly to SBA.

16. Is there an entry fee for the competition?

- There is no entry fee.

17. Will any expenses incurred for the competition (i.e., expenses spent to build product/service/technology, travel costs to location of competition, etc.) be reimbursed?

- No expenses will be reimbursed by SBA for this competition. Competition finalists will be responsible for covering their own travel costs to DC for the national competition.

18. Is the competition only open to women?

- The competition is open to both men and women who meet the eligibility criteria and other requirements outlined in the Competition Rules.

19. Can I enter the competition as a group or a team?

- Yes. Individuals submitting on behalf of corporations, nonprofits, or groups of individuals (such as an academic class or other team) must meet the eligibility requirements for individual contestants outlined above. An individual may belong to more than one team submitting an entry in this Challenge.

20. What do winners of the local competitions receive?

- Each winner from the local competitions will have the opportunity to advance to the semi-final round of the competition. In the semi-final round, an executive committee from SBA will review the semi-finalist nomination packages submitted by the local competition host organizations and select no more than 10 finalists.
- Finalists will make a live pitch to a panel of expert judges during National Small Business Week, May 4 - 8, 2015, in Washington D.C., where they will compete for top three awards and prize money totaling \$30,000.

21. How will the semi-finalists be announced?

- The semi-finalists will be announced in April at sba.gov/innovateHER.

22. When/where will the final competition be held?

- May 8, 2015 in Washington, D.C. Venue details to be announced.

23. Who will be judging the final competition?

- A panel of expert judges drawn from the private sector.

24. How will intellectual property be treated under this competition?

- All entries submitted in response to this Challenge will remain the sole intellectual property of the individuals or organizations that developed them.
- By registering and entering a submission, each contestant represents and warrants that it is the sole author and copyright owner of the submission, and that the submission is an original work of the contestant, or if the submission is a work based on an existing application, that the contestant has acquired sufficient rights to use and to authorize others to use the submission, and that the submission does not infringe upon any copyright or upon any other third party rights of which the contestant is aware

25. Will my expenses be paid for if I am a finalist invited to Washington, D.C?

- Finalists will be responsible for covering their own travel costs to DC for the national competition. No expenses will be reimbursed by SBA for this competition.

26. Will prize money be awarded as part of the final round of the competition?

- SBA anticipates that cash prizes totaling \$30,000 will be awarded to the three highest-rated contestants in the final round of the competition in the following amounts:
 - 1st Place - \$15,000
 - 2nd Place - \$10,000
 - 3rd Place - \$5,000

For winning entries submitted by teams of competitors, prize money will be awarded to the self-identified project leader for distribution to the rest of the team at their discretion and independently from SBA.

27. Will participants be compensated or provided with other consideration as part of publicity for the event?

- No. By registering and entering a submission, each contestant consents to SBA's and its agents' use, in perpetuity, of its name, likeness, photograph, voice, opinions, and/or hometown and state information for promotional or informational purposes through any form of media, worldwide, without further payment or consideration.

28. Will SBA retain nomination packages?

- All nomination packages and related materials provided to SBA in the semi-final and final rounds of the Challenge automatically become SBA records and cannot be returned. Contestants should identify any confidential commercial information contained in their entries at the time of their submission to the local host Organization. SBA will notify contestants of any Freedom of Information Act requests the Agency receives related to their submissions in accordance with 13 C.F.R. Part 102.

29. How can I learn more about the Challenge?

- Visit sba.gov/innovateHER for more information. You can also email womenbusiness@sba.gov (link sends e-mail) or call Jessica Wager at SBA at 202-205-7430 with additional questions or concerns.