



2026 PITCH COMPETITION INFORMATION PACKET





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We are thrilled to welcome you to Grow Ada's 2026 Pitch Competition! Since 2018, Grow Ada has awarded more than \$10,000 in seed funding to local entrepreneurs, made possible through the continued support of community partners who believe in the entrepreneurial spirit and ecosystem that has long existed in Ada.

Over the years, the Pitch Competition has become more than a chance to win prize money. It has created a platform for entrepreneurs to test their ideas, build confidence, receive feedback, and connect with members of the local business community. Many of the businesses and entrepreneurs who have participated in the competition have continued to grow and operate in Ada, demonstrating the lasting impact that entrepreneurship can have on our community.

This information packet provides a step-by-step guide to the application process, an overview of the competition, and important details to help you prepare for your pitch. Whether you are developing an idea, building a new venture, or growing an existing business, we want to hear your pitch!



WELCOME

EVENT DETAILS

LOCATION:	MidFirst Bank, 221 W 12 ST.
NETWORKING & CHECK IN:	5:45PM
PITCH COMPETITION:	6:10PM
JUDGE DELIBERATION & COMMUNITY VOTING:	7:30PM
AWARDS CEREMONY AND PICTURES:	7:45PM

APPLICATION PROCESS

PITCH COMPETITION OVERVIEW

Grow Ada's Pitch Competition provides a platform for local entrepreneurs to share their business ideas with a panel of judges and a community audience. Contestants will compete for \$5,000 in total prize money across multiple divisions. The categories are as follows:

- **Revenue-Generating Category (Adult):** For businesses currently earning revenue.
- **Idea-Stage Category (Adult):** For adult entrepreneurs with early-stage or pre-revenue ideas.
- **Student Innovation Award:** For high school students pitching either an idea-stage concept or a revenue-generating business.
- **People's Choice Award:** All finalists are eligible, voted on by the audience the night of the event.

Top applicants in each division will be selected to pitch live on **Thursday, October 29, 2026**. Finalists will have five minutes to present their business idea, followed by a Q&A session with the judges. In addition, the audience will get the chance to vote for their favorite pitch of the night!

RULES

- Each individual or team may submit one application.
- Eligibility: Applicants must be Oklahoma residents, living in Pontotoc County **ONLY**.
- The business must be in either the idea, prototype, or early operational phase.
- High school students must currently be enrolled in high school and may compete only in the High School Division.
- Adults (18+) must compete in the Adult Division.
- The business must either be:
 - Less than two years old, or
 - An established business pitching a new product or service.
- Finalists must submit a digital pitch deck by **Monday, October 26, 2026**.
- Pitch presentations are limited to 6 minutes, followed by Q&A.
- Intellectual Property Notice: Participants are responsible for protecting proprietary or confidential information. Conduit Startup Showcase and Ada Jobs Foundation are not liable for disclosure of intellectual property.
- By submitting an application, participants affirm that all materials are original and do not violate third-party rights.

STEP-BY-STEP APPLICATION GUIDE

1. Complete the application and email presentation slide deck to:
Daniel Castaneda, dcastaneda@growada.com
2. Finalists will be announced on **October 15th, 2026**.
3. Submit revised and final presentation by **Monday 26, 2025**.
4. The live competition will be hosted on **October, 29, 2026**.

JUDGING CRITERIA



A panel of judges made up of community leaders, entrepreneurs, and professionals will evaluate the presentations using a standard scorecard. Judging will focus on:

- Business potential and viability
- Creativity and innovation
- Presentation and delivery

All judging decisions are final.

PRESENTATION TIPS

THE PITCH

Your pitch is a brief and compelling presentation of your business idea. You'll have 5 minutes to make your case, followed by a Q&A session with the judges. Use your time wisely and aim to clearly communicate the value of your idea.

Your pitch should answer:

1. Who are you and what is your business?
2. What customer problem are you solving?
3. What's your solution?
4. Who is your target market?
5. How will you make money? (Business model)
6. Are your financial projections realistic?
7. Who's on your team?
8. Who are your competitors and how are you different?
9. What's your ask or next step?

Tips to strengthen your pitch:

- Start with a hook- a surprising fact, a short story, or a bold question to grab attention.
- End with a strong ask- what do you want from the audience or investors?
- Speak with confidence, be passionate, and show why your idea matters.
- Keep it simple, clear, and engaging-avoid jargon and focus on your message.

SLIDE DECK GUIDELINES

Each finalist will be selected based on the strength of their application and slide deck. Consider using the following outline for your presentation slides:

- **Slide 1: Introduction / Elevator Pitch**
 - Brief overview of your business
 - What you do, how, and why
- **Slide 2: The Problem**
 - What problem are you solving?
 - Who has this problem and why does it matter?
- **Slide 3: Your Solution**
 - How does your product or service solve the problem?
 - What makes it unique or better than alternatives?
 - (Optional: include a demo, mock-up, or prototype)

- **Slide 4: Business Model**
 - How will your business make money?
 - Any financial projections or early sales?
- **Slide 5: Market Size**
 - Who is your target customer?
 - How big is the market opportunity?
- **Slide 6: Marketing Plan**
 - How will you reach and retain customers?
 - Who are your competitors?
- **Slide 7: Team**
 - Who is on your team and what are their strengths?
- **Slide 8: Milestones & Impact**
 - What are your goals for the next 6–12 months?
 - How will winning this competition help you grow?

SLIDE DESIGN TIPS

- Think of each slide as a billboard — simple, visual, and easy to read at a glance
- Focus on one idea per slide — break up large chunks of text
- Tell a story — walk your audience through your business journey
- Highlight the problem and your unique solution
- Avoid clutter — make spreadsheets, charts, and tables readable
- Use visuals when possible — logos, product shots, graphics
- Remember: You are the creative entrepreneur — this is your moment! Don't be afraid to think outside the box and have fun with your presentation.

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HANDLING Q&A

- Stay calm — the judges are here to support your growth
- Listen carefully to the full question before answering
- Be honest — if you don't know, it's okay to say so
- Keep answers short, focused, and clear
- Be confident in your idea and your work
- Most importantly, enjoy the process! This is a celebration of innovation and entrepreneurship in our community.