



# 2026 Pitch Night Competition Handbook

Produced By



## **OVERVIEW**

Pitch Night is a small business and startup pitch competition hosted, planned, and presented by the Umpqua Economic Development Partnership (UEDP). This competition presents residents of Douglas County, Oregon with a great opportunity to pitch their businesses or business idea to a panel of judges. Pitch Night is available to entrepreneurs from every walk of life, background, lifestyle, and demographic. Part of the beauty of launching a new business, exploring an idea, or stepping into an opportunity is literally anyone can do it – with the right set of skills and proper motivation.

The Pitch Night process is meant to open doors to success in your future entrepreneurial endeavors and give you a chance to win funds and supportive services to kick-start your business idea.

Each participant will be given five minutes total to describe their business or business idea including how the funds will be used, followed by a five-minute Q&A period from our panel of judges.

## **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

- Applicants must be residents of Douglas County, Oregon.
- The business must be headquartered within Douglas County, Oregon.
- At the time of application, the pitch must be for a business registered with the state of Oregon AND in existence for at least one full year BUT less than three full years. The business must have generated an average of at least \$1,000 per year in revenue AND have no plans to sell the business during the Pitch Night process.
- Participants must be 18 or older.
- Businesses must be structured as for-profit and be able to show that they have a sustainable future.
- Applicants must attend the Pitch Night Accelerator Training, and Pitch Night if selected.

## **FORMAT AND SCHEDULE**

- The 2026 Pitch Night schedule features three events:

April 30, 2026

July 23, 2026

October 22, 2026

*\*Schedule is subject to change.*

- A panel of judges will use a similar scoring/evaluation system and criteria at all three events to determine 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winners.
- The audience choice winner will be determined via online vote using a QR code generated for each event to be revealed after all presenters have finished their pitches.
- Prize funds will be distributed to 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winners and an audience favorite.
- Participants who pitch must wait until the next calendar year to pitch again.
- Participants will be given table space to present and promote their products at each event, prior to the program.

## **APPLICATION GUIDELINES**

- Applications will be accepted through the portal at [umpquagrowthtalks.com](http://umpquagrowthtalks.com).
- Applications received after 5:00 PM on the deadline date will not be considered.
- Applications will be vetted, and five participants will be selected by a UEDP committee.
- Participants will be notified within one week following the application deadline.
- Applicants who are not selected are eligible to re-submit their application for future events.
- The person submitting the application should be the owner of the business/business idea and should be the same person who will be pitching live during the competition.
- Participants must attend the Pitch Night Accelerator Training provided by UCC's Small Business Development Center in preparation for Pitch Night. This will be offered at no cost to participants selected to pitch.
- The Partnership may replace a participant who is unable to fully attend the Pitch Night Accelerator Training.
- Participants will be paired with a qualified coach who will provide direction and input on applicants' presentations.
- Participants may seek coaching from other sources throughout the process.

## **PITCH GUIDELINES**

- The purpose of a pitch is to quickly get the judges' attention, let them know what your product or service is, and what you need the funds for.
- At the event, distributing material, samples and/or prototypes to judges prior to or during your pitch is permitted and encouraged.
- The presenter will be allowed a strict five minutes to pitch followed by five minutes of questions from a panel of judges. There will be a time clock and remaining time warnings.
- Make sure you come prepared to answer questions similar to the following:
  - Describe your business, what is your main product or service?
  - What makes your product or service unique?
  - What are your main Key Performance Indicators?
  - Describe your target market, who is your ideal customer?
  - What would you do with any money you win?

## **JUDGES & SCORING**

- Judges will use a similar scoring/evaluation system and criteria across all three events. Scores will be tallied to determine the highest-ranking pitches. Individual scores will not be given to Applicants.
- A panel of 3 or more judges will include entrepreneurs, consultants, investors, and or other business professionals selected and approved by UEDP.
- Judges will remain anonymous prior to each event.

## **SCHEDULE & AWARDS**

- Participants will be organized in a randomly selected order and will be required to present at their designated time during the Pitch Night event.

- The winner will be announced at the conclusion of the Pitch Night event.
- No cash will exchange hands at the event. The Umpqua Economic Development Partnership will work with the winner to provide the award funds or services.
- Awards may also include services, products, and/or information designed to assist with the development of your business or business idea.

## **OTHER NOTES**

- This document is intended as a handbook and set of guidelines for participants as they prepare to apply and participate in the Pitch Night events. The information given here is subject to change. If you have any questions, feel free to contact [officemanager@uedpartnership.org](mailto:officemanager@uedpartnership.org).
- Pitch Night presentations maybe be recorded (photography and videography) for future promotional use of the organization. By applying, you agree for your image, likeness, and name to be used in any publications or purposes of the Umpqua Economic Development Partnership.
- The Partnership reserves the right to revoke eligibility of any participant for misconduct, misrepresentation, or any other reason at any time in the process as determined by the Partnership. In the case when a participant's eligibility is revoked, the Partnership may choose to replace that participant with another applicant.

Pitch Night was created in 2019 when the Umpqua Economic Development Partnership took over GrowthTalks (formerly Umpqua Pub Talks and Y.E.S). The Partnership values entrepreneurial development in Douglas County because it is an important avenue for economic vitality in our community. We help by getting entrepreneurs motivated while competing for prize funds and services. The Partnership hopes to inspire people to think outside of the box and provide a resource to those who aren't sure what the next step is in their business endeavors.

Our ultimate goal is to foster an entrepreneurial culture in Douglas County. We extend our gratitude to the Partnership Board of Directors and its contributors for establishing the pre-seed fund. Since its inception, other incredible organizations have joined in to support this effort.

## **PARTNERSHIP**

If you would like to contribute to the raffle prizes and prize funds and/or partner with GrowthTalks in supporting local entrepreneurs, please contact UEDP or more information on our sponsorship packages.