



## **2015 - 2016 Fire Pit Competition**

### **Official Rules, Requirements, and Judging Criteria**

Welcome to the 2015 - 2016 NSBEpreneur Fire Pit Competition (“Fire Pit”). We appreciate your interest in participating in this event, hosted by the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) Business Diversity and Entrepreneurship Program. NSBE entrepreneurs are invited to form teams and compete for awards, prizes, and the opportunity to pitch their idea to seasoned entrepreneurs, investors, and potential business partners.

The competition focuses on new, independent ventures in the pre-seed, seed, start-up, or early growth stages. Licensing technologies from universities or research labs is encouraged, assuming they have yet to be commercialized.

Teams have the opportunity to meet and network with other NSBE entrepreneurs, industry leaders, and business experts who will serve as judges for the competition.



## **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

Each team must meet the following requirements in order to compete.

**Approved Participants:** The competition is exclusively for NSBE Members for the following membership categories:

- Collegiate Member
- Collegiate Affiliate Member
- Professional Member
- Professional Affiliate Member
- Lifetime Member\*

\* Lifetime Members that would have otherwise fallen into one of the other categories are eligible for this competition.

**Team Size:** The presenting team should include at least one member and not to exceed five members.

**Team Composition:** This competition is for NSBE members only, and a team consists of at least one member but no more than five members. There are no restrictions to the makeup of your team, but you will be placed in a cluster depending upon the overall team composition. Participants of the above categories will be placed into one of the following clusters:

### ***Collegiate Cluster***

The College Cluster encompasses teams comprised of members that are categorized as Collegiate Members, Collegiate Affiliate Members, or Lifetime Collegiate Members.

### ***Professional Cluster***

The Professional Cluster encompasses teams comprised of members that are categorized as Professional Members, Professional Affiliate Members, or Lifetime Professional Members. In the case where a team contains a mixture of Professional Members and Collegiate Members, the team will be placed in the Professional Cluster.

**Member Involvement:** The competition is for NSBE member created, managed, and owned ventures. Members must:

- (1) Have played a major role in conceiving the venture,
- (2) Have Key management roles in the venture, and
- (3) Own significant equity in the venture.



As a general rule, at least one competing member of the team should be Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Operating Officer, President, and/or Founder of the venture. Competing members of the team should also occupy at least 50% of the functional area management positions that report directly to the CEO, COO, or President. Members of the team should also own at least 50% of the equity allocated to the management team and key advisors, and/or less than 20% of the total equity of the venture will be suspect and require the competing members to show evidence that they were the major cause in the venture creation. **(The objective of this rule is to exclude ventures formed and managed by non-NSBE members who have given token equity to NSBE members for writing their business plan.)**

**University Sponsored:** The business plan can be prepared under, but not limited to, faculty supervision. For member teams in the Collegiate Cluster, it is likely that their business plan could be prepared for credit in a regularly-scheduled course or as an independent study. The business plan must represent the original work of members of the team. All teams that are “University-Sponsored” are strongly encouraged to notify their faculty or other University advisors of their intent to compete in the Fire Pit.

### **Future Eligibility**

Ventures may compete in the Fire Pit only once (Regional and Annual Convention counts as one competition). Teams that participate in this year’s competition will not be eligible to compete in follow-on competitions with the same venture. Teams that participate in this year’s competition can compete in follow-on competitions with a uniquely different venture.

**Required Forms:** If the venture has been incorporated, you will be required to provide proof of your business through a registered Employer Identification Number and/or Articles of Incorporation. Proof is required to qualify for placement for awards.

## ***General Information***

**How to Enter:** To enter the competition each team should submit a written Executive Summary, containing the name of at least one team member. It is NOT necessary to provide the exact name of the team and all of the team members when registering; however, all team information must be submitted by the specified deadline or else your team will be ineligible to compete in this year’s competition.

### **Deadline:**

- Submit Written Business Plan & Optional Website to [nebbusiness@nsbe.org](mailto:nebbusiness@nsbe.org)
- Regional Fire Pit Competition Held
  - Will be focused on the planning portions of the business creation (Elevator Pitch, Business Plan, Presentations)
- National Fire Pit
  - Will be focused on both the planning portions and the product portions of the business.
- Important Deadlines
  - Fall Regional Conference: N/A
  - National Convention:



- Register On-line by Monday February 8th at 11:59 PM EST
  - [FirePit Competition Registration](#)
- Submit Written Business Plan & Optional Website by Friday February 12th at 11:59 PM EST
- Withdrawal Penalty
  - If any confirmed team DROPS OUT AFTER **March 1st, 2016** , each member will be ineligible to compete in future FIRE PIT competitions for one year.
  - Last Minute cancellations are costly to the Competition, our sponsors, supporters, volunteers, and could prevent another team from competing. PLEASE PLAN ACCORDINGLY.
- National Convention
  - Due to immense cost required to do so, Fire Pit will **NOT** be responsible for providing travel arrangements nor registration for teams to attend National Convention.

### ***Executive Summary and Business Plan Submission***

The final executive summary from each team is due to the National Business Diversity Chair, as a PDF file, via email at [nebbusiness@nsbe.org](mailto:nebbusiness@nsbe.org). **ALL OTHER FORMATS ARE NOT ACCEPTED.** The deadline to submit the Executive Summary is **Friday, February 12th at 11:59 PM EST**. Any team that fails to submit their full written business plan by this date will be ineligible for the competition.

Each team's Executive Summary will be evaluated and reviewed by the Fire Pit Judges for thoroughness, completeness, and quality. Teams will be notified of changes or revisions that will need to be made at least one week prior to the competition.

A complete business plan will be due to the National Business Diversity Chair as a **PDF file**, via **February 12th at 11:59 PM EST** at [nebbusiness@nsbe.org](mailto:nebbusiness@nsbe.org) by **Friday, February 12th at 11:59 PM EST. ALL OTHER FORMATS ARE NOT ACCEPTED.**



## Guidelines

- Executive summaries
  - 5 pages of text and diagrams
  - Typed
  - Double-spaced
  - Font size 12
  - 1" margins on all sides
  - Should include
    - Company summary
    - Customer/market analysis (market size and potential market share)
    - Production or service description
    - Intellectual property status (i.e., patents, licenses, etc.)
    - Competitive differentiation
    - Management team and/or advisors, including relevant experience
    - Financial highlights
    - Status and offering of the company (how much investment you are seeking)
  - Key concerns to answer in your Executive Summary
    - The problem or need your company solves or addresses.
    - The size of the accessible market & evidence that customers will buy your product/service
    - Key competitors (if applicable)
    - How your idea/company differs from your competitors
    - The experience of your management team and/or advisory boards
    - The current state of development (i.e., beta, customer trails, etc.)
    - Timeframes to achieve significant revenue and/or cash flow positive
    - The amount of funding you are seeking
- Written Business Plan
  - 20 pages of text
    - Including the Executive Summary and Summary financial data.
    - Product or service description
      - Current Status of Development (Beta, Prototype, etc.)
    - Customer/Market Analysis
      - Market Size and Potential Market Share
    - Sales and Marketing Plan
      - How will you go-to-market
    - Intellectual Property Status
      - Patents, Licenses, Etc.
    - Competitor Analysis
      - Competitors and your competitive differentiation.
    - Management Team and/or Advisors, including Relevant Experience
    - Financial Highlights



- Cash flow, income statement, & balance sheet
  - Offering of the Company
    - How much investment you are seeking, uses of funding, possible exits.
  - Typed
  - Double-spaced
  - Font size 12
  - 1" margins on all sides
  - Detailed appendices should follow the text portion of the plan but will be limited to 10 pages. ( This is not apart of your 20 pages of text, and plans with fewer than 10 pages of appendices may not use the remaining pages to increase the size of their business plan beyond 20 pages. Total number of page is 30).
- Business Plan Financial Data
  - This should include a cash flow statement, income statement, and a balance sheet.
  - This data should be included, in a summarized fashion, within the main section of the business plan.
  - Include an explanation to the judges indicating how much money is required, how it will be used, and possible exit strategies.
  - Detailed financial data and tables should be included in the appendix
- Appendices
  - These should be included only when they support the findings, statements, and observations in the business plan.
  - Judges may not be able to read all of the material presented in the appendices due to the number of teams in the competition. Therefore, the text portfolio (Business Plan - 20 Pages) of the plan must contain all pertinent information in a clear and concise manner.
  - 10 Page Limit
- Equipment
  - Teams should bring a laptop and a copy of their presentation on a zip drive or CD.
  - If your presentation contains video, graphics, and/or sound, you should inform the National Business Diversity Chair in advance.
- Non-Confidentiality
  - All session of the competition, including but not limited to the oral presentations and question/answer sessions, are open to the public at large.
  - All of these sessions may be broadcasted, to interested persons, through media which may include: Radio, Television, and the Internet.
  - Any Data or information discussed or divulged in public sessions by entrants should be considered information that could possibly enter the public realm, and entrants should not assume any right of confidentiality in any data or information discussed, divulged, or presented in these sessions.
  - Due to the nature of the competition, we are not able to ask judges, reviewers, staff, or the audience to agree to or sign non-disclosure statements. However, the National Society of Black Engineers and the organizer of the Fire Pit Competition will make every effort to limit distribution of business plans only to judges of the competition.



- The Fire Pit competition committee cannot guarantee that other individuals will not obtain access to electronic or hard copies of the business plan.
- All presentations are open to the general public, and some presentations may be videotaped.
- Attendance by media personnel is expected.
- Copyrights & Permissions
  - If a team uses copyrighted materials and/or images from a third party in their presentation or business plan, they must obtain permission and authorization from the owners of this materials in advance.

### ***Competition Details***

#### **The Elevator Pitch**

The intent for this aspect of the competition is to be your business overview that you are able to powerfully and concisely deliver to any investor in the length of time it would take you to ride an elevator from one floor to the next. The first impression is critical in capturing the attention of a potential investor or customer. The elevator pitch should provide enough information to pique the interest of potential investors and strategic partners. It should provide a clear picture of the company and its solution. It should be delivered effectively and succinctly.

#### **The White Board Challenge**

The intent for this aspect of the competition is to provide a more in-depth business overview, hypothetically granted to you after winning the investor over through your elevator pitch. In this challenge, you are supplied with a white board and marker that you will use to explain your business idea in-depth. (This portion will have more allotted time than the Elevator Pitch).

#### **The Written Business Plan & Website Presentation**

This challenge is the core of your Executive Summary and should be presented in a logical, orderly fashion. The quality of the idea, the strength of the management team, and the clarity and persuasiveness of the written plan and oral presentation, all influence the judges' decisions. Ultimately, the winning team should be the team in which the judges would most likely invest their money.

### ***Competition Rules***

#### **Elevator Pitch**

- All teams will compete in the Elevator Pitch Competition.
- Each team will be given a maximum of **60 seconds** to present its elevator pitch to the panel of judges.
- Index cards or other notes will **NOT** be permitted.
- This presentation will be give by one team member.
- There will **NOT** be a Question and Answer period.



- Teams will be judged on their oral presentation alone.
- Remember this is a brief overview to pique an investor's interest in your company/idea.

### **Whiteboard Challenge**

- After the Elevator Pitch portion, the Top 8 teams will compete in the Whiteboard Challenge.
- Each team will be given a maximum of 5 minutes to present to the panel of judges.
- Index cards or other notes will **NOT** be permitted.
- This presentation will be given by one team member. The **5 -minute** Whiteboard Challenge will be uninterrupted.
- There will be a two (2) minute Questions and Answer Period following the each team presentation, used solely for clarification.
- Teams will be judged on their oral presentation and clarification.
- Remember this is a 5 minute in-depth overview of your company/idea.

### **Written Business Plan & Website Presentation**

- After the Whiteboard Challenge the Top 5 teams will compete in the Written Business Plan & Website Competition on .
- Each team will be given a maximum of 10 minutes to present a summary of its business plan and website.
- Presentation Slides are permitted and should be limited to no more than 10 slides.
- This presentation can be given by one or more members of the team. The 10 minute presentation can be interrupted for Questions from the judges panel.
- There will also be a final five (5) minute Question and Answer period following each team's presentation.

### ***Judges Evaluation Criteria***

- Judges will score each team on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 7 (excellent).
- The team with the best overall scores will be the winner
- Judges should evaluate each team based on how convincingly they present their business concept, such that the judge would want to learn more about the company as a potential investor.
- The best teams are those teams that an investor would want to schedule a follow-up meeting for further discussion because they believe this company represents a strong investment opportunity.

### **The best teams should communicate the following:**

- Clear explanation of their product/service and the problem it solves
- How their company is unique and differentiated
- Sizeable market opportunity and ability to penetrate the intended market
- Current development stage
- Viable business model
- Clear measures of success and potential exit opportunities



- Understanding of how much money is needed and how it will be used

### **Common Elevator Pitch Mistakes**

- No energy and passion in the presentation
- The use of excessive technical language; focusing on the technology rather than the customer need.
- Failure to explain what customer problem you are trying to solve.
- Excessive discussion about the idea and product and not enough explanation about the market, business opportunity, and revenue models.
- Listing too many names of clients or partners. Indicate how many clients and name a few big names to spark interest
- To help focus your Elevator Pitch, remember to highlight the following key topics
  - Remember you are only providing a “teaser” to the audience with puposing of wanting them to gain interest and ask “tell me more about your company”
  - Product and service offering (the problem and your solution)
    - Brief description of offering
    - What problem or need does it solve?
    - What are the benefits of your product?
  - Unique Differentiators
    - Why is this unique or different from competition?
    - Is this difference sustainable (patents, intellectual property, etc.)?
  - Market Opportunity & Target Customers
    - Who are the targeted customers?
    - What is the size of the market?
    - Is there evidence they will buy the product?
  - Current Development Stage
    - What is the current status of technology/venture?
    - What are key next steps?
    - Business Model - how will the company generate profitable revenue?
  - Milestones and Success Metrics
    - What are the success metrics?
    - What is the exit strategy?
  - Capital Needs
    - How much funding is needed to move forward?
    - How will the money be used?
    - Why is your business an attractive investment?

### **Scoring Criteria**

The winners of the competition will be determined by the judges’ ranking of the teams. The ranking will be based on the judging panel’s willingness to invest in the company as noted above. The ranking will be completed by the judges at the end of the day. Judges will rank the teams from 1 (team least likely to receive funding) to 7 (team most likely to receive funding).



To assist the judges in the decision making process and to provide additional feedback to the teams, the judges will fill-out 4 scorecards for each team. The 4 scorecards will cover:

1. Part I - Verbal Presentation (Elevator Pitch)
2. Part II - Verbal Presentation (White Board Challenge)
3. Part III - Written Business Plan & Website
4. Part IV - Business Viability

The individual scorecards are designed to provide guidance for judges in evaluating the individual components of each team in order to develop their overall rankings. Scorecards also designed to provide feedback to the competitors, and will be given to competitors at the end of each day.

### **Scoring Process**

To create a platform for fair competition, weighting will be applied to accommodate for the gap in skills and experience between the two defined clusters (Collegiate and Professional). Collegiate Cluster teams will be scaled at 120% of their total point value (Total Point Value \* 1.2); whereas, Professional Cluster Teams will be scaled at 100% of their total point value ( Total Point Value \* 1). Each Judge will assess the Oral presentations, written business plans, and business viability of the teams in their clusters.

**Please note: the scorecards will be used in the calculation of the winning team and to provide feedback to each participating team.**

There will be one competition held at each FRC with one of each of the following winners, will receive the following awards.:

- Grand Prize Winner –
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Winner –
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Winner –

At Annual Convention, there will be one competition held that will result in the following winners:

- Grand Prize Winner – 1<sup>st</sup> Place - \$800
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Winner - \$500
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Winner - \$250



**Company:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Part I: Verbal Presentation (Elevator Pitch)**

Please evaluate the elevator pitch based on the following aspects:

Content/Organization (Is the content presented in a clear, logical, sequential and informative manner? Clear, exciting and effective as a stand-alone overview of the plan)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

Context (Is the content relevant and persuasive in its key points? Does the presenter capture the attention of the judges as a stand-alone presenter?)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

Communication (Gestures, analogies, pitch tempo; were questions answered concisely and effectively)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---



Time Management (How well did the presenter manage the time allotted? Did the presenter appear to be confident, comfortable, and in control.)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

Overall Assessment of Verbal Presentation (Based on the 1 minute pitch, is the plan clear and compelling?)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---



Company: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Part II: Verbal Presentation (Whiteboard Challenge)**

Please evaluate the whiteboard challenge based on the following aspects:

Content/Organization (Is the content presented in a clear, logical, sequential and informative manner?) (Clear, exciting and effective as a stand - alone overview of the plan)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

Context (Is the content relevant and persuasive in its key points? Does the presenter capture the attention of the judges as a stand - alone presenter?)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

Communication (Gestures, analogies, pitch tempo; were questions answered concisely and effectively)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

Time Management (How well did the presenter manage the time allotted? Did the presenter appear to be confident, comfortable, and in control.)



7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

Overall Assessment of Verbal Presentation (Based on the 1 minute pitch, is the plan clear and compelling?)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---



Company: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Part III: Written Business Plan**

Please evaluate the Business Plan based on the following aspects:

Executive Summary

(Clear, exciting and effective as a stand - alone overview of the plan)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 =poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

Products or Services (Description, features and benefits, pricing, current stage of development, proprietary position)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 =poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

Market and Marketing Strategy (Description of market, competitive analysis, needs identification, unique capabilities, sales/promotion)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 =poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---



Management (Backgrounds of key individuals, ability to execute strategy, personnel needs, organizational structure)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

Summary Financials (Presented in summary form, easy to read and understand, consistent with plan and effective)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

Offering and Viability (Proposal/terms to investors—clarity of investment proposal; investment potential)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

Overall Assessment of Written Plan (Is the plan clear and compelling?)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---



Company: \_\_\_\_\_  
Part IV: Business Vitality

Market Opportunity

(There is a clear market need presented as well as a way to take advantage of that need.)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

Distinctive Competence

(The company provides something novel/unique/ special that gives it a competitive advantage in its market.)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

Management Capability

(This team can effectively develop this company and handle the risks associated with the venture.)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---



Financial Understanding

(This team has a solid understanding of the financial requirements of the business.)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

Investment Potential

(The business represents a real investment opportunity in which you would consider investing.)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

Presentation (Oral and Visual)

(The team presented their venture in a logical, persuasive manner, and answered questions well.)

7 = excellent, 6 = very good, 5 = good, 4 = adequate, 3 = fair, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

---

---

---

**Fire Pit Contact Information**

Jacarri Tollette  
Business Diversity Chairperson  
[nebbusiness@nsbe.org](mailto:nebbusiness@nsbe.org)  
214-620-9951