

Submission Guidelines

Competition Timeline:

September 1st – October 1st **Preliminary Submissions Open**

- Applicants submit a **3–5 minute unlisted YouTube pitch video** and a **300-word project description** outlining their idea, why it matters, and how they plan to execute it.

October 1st – October 8th **Preliminary Judging Period**

- Judges review all submissions using the **competition's scoring rubric**, evaluating impact potential, feasibility, creativity, leadership, and presentation quality.

October 8th – October 11th **Finalists Notified**

- Top applicants are informed via email and provided with scheduling options for their online interviews/pitches.

October 12th– October 25th **Finalist Interviews & Pitches**

- Finalists present live to the judging panel, delivering a **10-minute pitch** followed by a **5-minute interview session**. Optional slides, prototypes, or demos are allowed.

October 25th– October 31st **Winners Announced**

- Winners are publicly announced, grant funds are distributed, and official award letters are issued for college applications and portfolios.

Eligibility

Applicant Eligibility

To participate in the Student Impact Grant Competition, applicants must meet **all** of the following criteria at the time of application submission:

1. Grade Level

- Must be a current high school student in **grades 9–12**.
Students graduating in the current school year are eligible as long as they submit before graduation.

2. Residency & Enrollment

- Must be enrolled in a **public, private, charter, or homeschool program** located within the **United States** (or within the competition's defined geographic region, if applicable).
- Exchange students may apply if their primary school enrollment during the competition period is within the United States.

3. Age Limit

- Must be between **13 and 19 years old** on the application deadline.

4. Team Applications

- Applications may be submitted individually or as part of a team of **no more than 4 members**.
- Teams must select **one primary contact person** who will receive all official competition communications.

5. Originality & Leadership

- The applicant (or team) must be the **originator and primary leader** of the proposed project idea.
- Adults may provide mentorship or support but cannot manage the project or submit on behalf of the student(s).

6. Consent Requirements

- Applicants under 18 years old must provide **written consent from a parent or legal guardian** to participate in the competition and, if selected, to receive grant funds.

7. Capacity to Participate

- Applicants must be available for all required competition phases, including the live finalist interviews/pitches.

Rules

1. Project Requirements

- **Student-Led:** The project must be conceived of, led, and primarily executed by the applicant(s). Adult mentors may provide guidance, but they cannot manage or carry out the project.
- **Purpose:** The project must aim to create a **positive, measurable impact** within the community.
- **Stage:** Projects may be new ideas or early-stage initiatives, but they may not be fully completed before the application date.
- **Cause Areas:** All cause areas are eligible (e.g., environment, education, mental health, social justice, technology for good), provided the project complies with all competition guidelines.

2. Submission Rules

- All application materials must be submitted by the published deadline. Late submissions will not be accepted.
- **Phase 1:** Applicants must submit:
 1. A 3–5 minute pitch video uploaded to YouTube as “Unlisted.”
 2. A written project description of 300 words or fewer.
- **Phase 2 (Finalists):** Must participate in a live online interview/pitch session and submit a more detailed plan and budget if requested.
- Submissions must be original. Plagiarism, falsified information, or misrepresentation will result in immediate disqualification.

3. Funding Rules

- **Direct Project Use Requirement**
 - All grant funds must be used **exclusively for expenses directly related to the execution of the approved project**. This includes materials, equipment, services, and other resources essential to carrying out the project plan.
- **Allowed Uses** (examples)
 - Materials, supplies, and equipment directly tied to the project's activities
 - Event or program costs such as venue rental, printing, advertising, or transportation directly related to the project
 - Software, subscriptions, or technology essential to project implementation
- **Prohibited Uses**
 - Personal stipends, wages, or unrelated personal expenses
 - Political campaigning or lobbying
 - Religious proselytizing (faith-based projects must have a clear secular community benefit)
 - Any activity that violates local, state, or federal law, or school rules
- **Accountability & Tracking Requirements**
 - **Expense Tracker:** All winners must maintain a project expense tracker using the template provided by RISE.
 - **Progress Reports:**
 - **Midpoint Update** – a brief written and/or video update including current status, expenses to date, and proof of purchases.
 - **Final Impact Report** – a written summary of outcomes, full expense tracker, all receipts, and visual proof (photos, screenshots, or video) of the completed project.

- **Misuse of Funds**

Any misuse or incompetence of grant funds — including unapproved expenses, failure to provide required documentation, or falsification of reports — may result in:

- Repayment of the grant in full
- Disqualification from future competitions
- Public withdrawal of the award

4. Conduct & Integrity

- Applicants and winners must act in good faith and uphold the competition's mission and values.
- Harassment, discrimination, or unethical conduct toward judges, organizers, or other participants will result in disqualification.
- Any behavior from participants, whether during the competition or outside of it, that violates school policies, community standards, or basic codes of conduct may be subject to review.
- Proven violations may result in consequences up to and including disqualification, revocation of award funds, and ineligibility for future competitions.

5. Disqualification Grounds

Applications or projects will be disqualified if they:

- Are incomplete or submitted after the deadline
- Fail to meet eligibility or project requirements
- Contain plagiarized or falsified content
- Involve prohibited use of funds
- Violate school rules or local, state, or federal laws
- Fail to participate in required phases without prior approval

Rubric & Grading Process

All submitted videos will be reviewed by **multiple independent judges**. Each judge will score your project using the **official competition rubric**. Your final score will be calculated as the average of all judges' scores and may be statistically adjusted (curved) to account for differences in individual scoring styles. This process ensures that evaluations are fair, consistent, and equitable for all applicants.

Preliminary Round

- Applicants submit a **3–5 minute unlisted YouTube pitch video** and a **300-word written project description** through the official application form.
 - Judges may consist of **seasoned professionals, subject-matter experts, and experienced community leaders** who bring diverse perspectives to the evaluation process.
 - Based on scores, applicants will be notified and advance to the Finalist round.
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Finalist Round

- Finalists will participate in a **live 10-minute online pitch** followed by a Q&A session with the judging panel.
 - Qualifying finalists will receive emails containing more information about the logistics of Finalist Round.
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Judging Rubric – 100 Points total

Impact and Mission – 30 points total

- **Impact Definition** (10 points) – Clearly defines a community need and identifies who is affected. Can be either a problem or an opportunity.
- **Relevance** (15 points) – Explains why the project matters and how it benefits the target community or helps solve the problem.
- **Vision for Change** (5 points) – Demonstrates realistic potential for meaningful, long-term positive impact and shows proper vision.

Feasibility – 20 points total

- **Project Plan** (10 points) – Provides a realistic, step-by-step plan that aligns with goals and timeline. Criteria is judged on thoughtfulness and consideration. Do proper research.
- **Budget** (5 points) – Presents a reasonable explanation to what areas of the project needs funding.
- **Resources & Capacity** (5 points) – Identifies required resources, tools, and skills, showing they are attainable and sustainable.

Creativity & Innovation – 15 points total

- **Originality** (5 points) – Offers a fresh or unique approach compared to existing solutions.
- **Innovation** (5 points) – Improves upon or adapts known strategies in a novel, more effective way.
- **Creative Execution** (5 points) – Demonstrates creative thinking in implementation, presentation, or design.

Leadership & Passion — 20 points total

- **Commitment** (5 points) – Shows strong motivation and dedication to project success.
- **Teamwork & Roles** (5 points) – Clearly defines roles and demonstrates effective collaboration.
- **Problem-Solving Skills** (10 points) – Shows capacity to adapt and overcome challenges.

Presentation Quality — 15 points total

- **Clarity** (5 points) – Communicates ideas and points in a clear, logical, and understandable manner.
- **Engagement** (5 points) – Captures and maintains interest.
- **Professionalism** (5 points) – Adheres to time limits, uses visuals effectively, and demonstrates preparedness.