



# RICE BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION

**JUDGE INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES**



**APRIL 7-9, 2022**  
**[RBPC.RICE.EDU](https://rbpc.rice.edu)**  
**#RBPC22**



# WELCOME TO THE RICE BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION

#RBPC22

# The 2022 RBPC

## **Thank you for serving as a judge at the 2022 Rice Business Plan Competition!**

You are joining a 22-year tradition of choosing the nation's and the world's best student startups to compete and win

We hope you have fun, are inspired, learn about new technology startups, network with other investors and individuals, and have an outstanding experience.

We want you to meet student startups, provide constructive feedback and advice, offer to connections to your network, and be a positive role model for other judges, students and volunteers .



# ABOUT THE RBPC



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# About the RBPC

- Largest and richest graduate student startup competition in the world!
- First RBPC was in 2001—we are 22 years old!
- 42 startups are invited to compete for over \$1 million in prizes annually
- Over 250 judges across 3 days of competition
- Over 100 volunteers across 3 days of competition
- RBPC's 730 alumni companies have gone on to raise \$3.57 billion



# Judging at the RBPC

The RBPC showcases the best university startups from around the U.S. and the world in a fast-paced, authentic environment.

Student entrepreneurs have the unparalleled experience of pitching their ventures to investors and learning what it takes to build and launch a successful business.

Judges act as early-stage investors, evaluating startups that have the most potential of launching their business and raising capital.

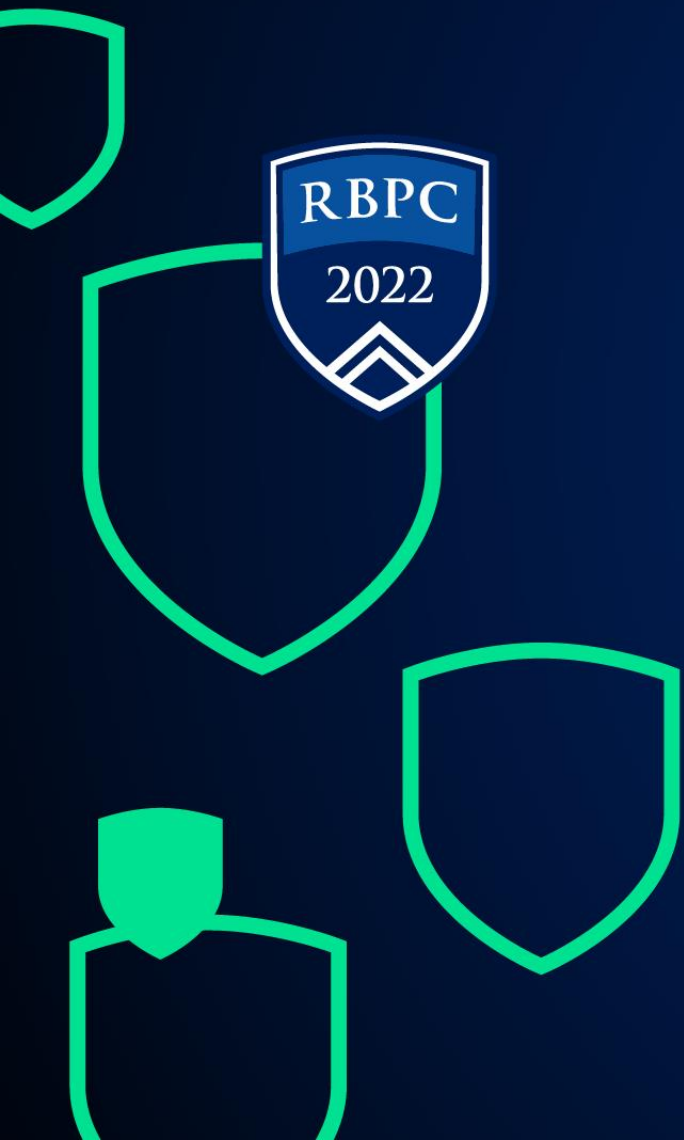


# Judging at the RBPC

While at the RBPC, judges will:

- See more than 40 of the country's and world's top student startups pitch their ventures
- Evaluate the investment opportunity of startups across the energy, life science, hard tech, consumer products and digital enterprise sectors
- Choose which startups receive \$1+ million in prizes and investments
- Get early access to startups with real investment potential
- Meet and mentor student ventures
- Network with the RBPC community of judges, experts, sponsors and supporters





# COMPETITION FORMAT

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# Competition Format

The RBPC lasts 3 days, and there are numerous opportunities to judge and mentor startups:

Thurs, April 7	Practice Pitch sessions Elevator Pitch Competition
Fri, April 8	Round 1
Sat, April 9	Semi-Final Round & Wildcard Round Final Round



# Competition Format



The RBPC lasts 3 days! There are pitch sessions each day:

Thu, April 7                      Practice Pitch Sessions

All 42 startups give a practice pitch in sector-specific flights. There are 6 startups in each flight.

After the pitch, judges offer feedback and suggestions on how to do well at the RBPC.

Pitches are 15 minutes; feedback with judges is 15 minutes.

# Competition Format



The RBPC lasts 3 days! There are pitch sessions each day:

Thu, April 7                      Elevator Pitch Competition

Watch at 42 startups give their 60-second elevator pitch. Follow along and rate each startup on their performance (1 = excellent to 5 = poor).

The startups with the best scores will win the Elevator Pitch Prizes on Saturday at the Awards Banquet

# Competition Format



Fri, April 8

Round 1

All 42 startups pitch in sector-specific flights. There are 6 startups in each flight.

Pitches are 15 minutes; Q&A with judges is 15 minutes.

At the end of the flight, judges rank the startups they see from 1 (excellent, best investment potential) to 6 (poor, least investment potential)

After the last pitch, each startup returns for a feedback session with judges.

# Competition Format



Sat, April 9                      Semi-Final Round & Wildcard Round

The top 15 startups from Round 1 advance to the Semi-Final Round. There are 3 flights.

The remaining 27 startups from Round 1 advance to the Wildcard Round. There are 6 flights.

Pitches are 15 minutes; Q&A with judges is 10 minutes.

At the end of the flight, judges rank the startups they see from 1 (excellent, best investment potential) to 4 or 5 (poor, least investment potential)

# Competition Format

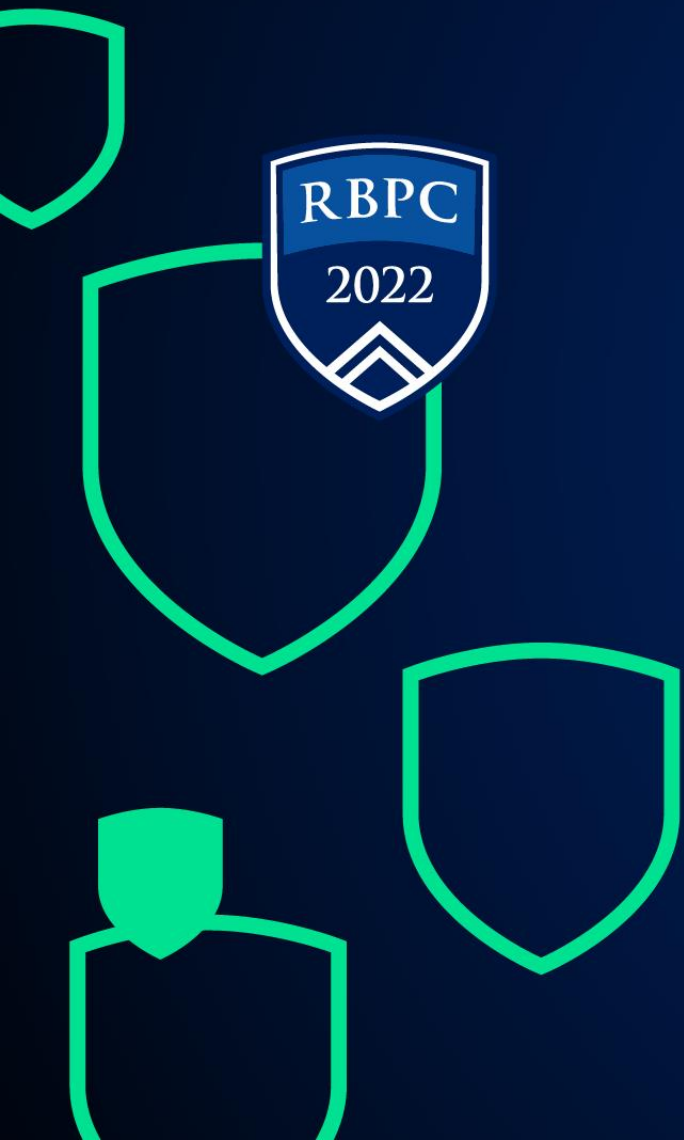


Sat, April 9                      Final Round

The top 6 startups from the Semi-Final Round and the best-scoring startup from the Wildcard Round advance to the Final Round.

Pitches are 15 minutes; Q&A with judges is 10 minutes.

At the end of the flight, judges rank the startups they see from 1 (excellent, best investment potential) to 7 (poor, least investment potential)



# JUDGING INSTRUCTIONS

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# Judging Instructions

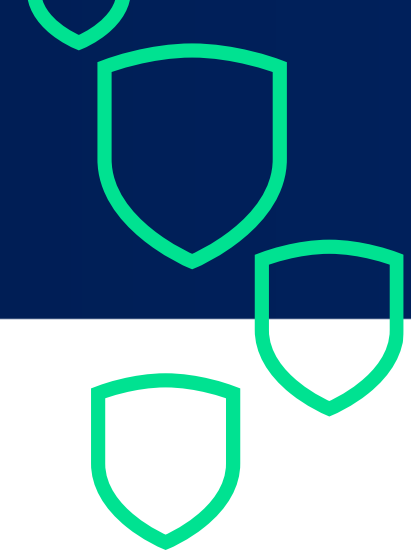
In each round of the RBPC, judges will **rank** the startups they see from 1 (excellent) to 6 (poor).

- To judge and rank a flight, you must hear all presentations in that flight
- Please arrive on time in the mornings and after lunch
- Only enter rooms in between presentations
- Volunteers will prevent people entering room during a presentation
- If you do not see all the presentations in your flight, your score will not be valid





# Judging Instructions



There are Q&A sessions after each pitch

- Only judges can ask questions
- Ask questions; don't make statements or provide feedback
- Be concise and constructive in your questions
- Don't dominate the Q&A period; ask your question & move on
- Don't debate other judges or answer other judges' questions

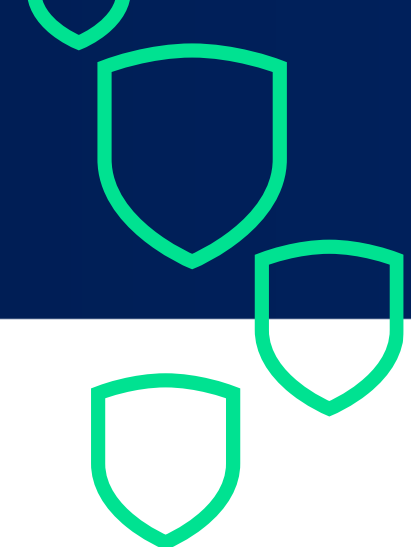
# Judging Instructions

In the Practice Round and Round 1, judges will offer written feedback:

- Please provide written, qualitative feedback via the feedback form provided for each startup
- Please note the strengths and areas for improvement of the plan and presentation
- Be constructive and tactful
- Provide advice, not criticism
- Students will receive the feedback forms at the end of each day



# Judging Instructions



The feedback form will list the following criteria to consider:

## **Presentation Quality**

Materials were presented in a clear, logical fashion. All relevant topic areas were covered.

## **Market Opportunity**

There is a clear, sizable, market need, and customers would be willing to pay for the proposed product/service.

## **Technology / Intellectual Property**

The technology and/or IP appears to have economic value, has evidence it works, and has IP protection, if needed.

## **Competitive Environment / Differentiation**

The team provides something unique that gives it a sustainable, significant, competitive advantage over other solutions.

## **Management Team Capability / Advisors**

This team has the skills and/or understands the gaps needed to successfully launch this venture.

# HOW TO JUDGE AT THE RBPC



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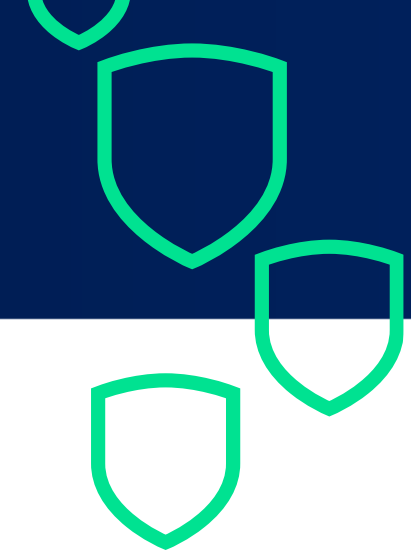
# Judging at the RBPC

While judging at the RBPC, ask yourself these questions of each startup:

- Is there a real need? What problem is being solved?
- Is the market big?
- Is there evidence customers will pay for this?
- Is there evidence the technology works?
- Is there sustainable, significant differentiation? IP?



# Judging at the RBPC



While judging at the RBPC, ask yourself these questions of each startup:

- Is the problem big enough to build a company around?
- Does the management team understand its strengths and any gaps in the current team? Are they coachable?
- How long will it take to generate revenue? How much investment will the startup need in order to reach breakeven cash flow?
- Does the startup understand key milestones that need to be reached?

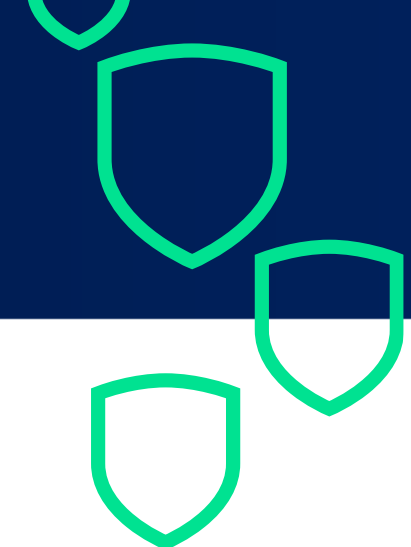
# Judging at the RBPC



While judging at the RBPC, ask yourself these questions of each startup:

- Does the startup have a fund-raising strategy tied to those milestones and value inflection points?
- Is there a credible exit available within reasonable timeframe?
- What is the competition and does the startup have a significant, sustainable competitive differentiation?
- Should I invest in this business?

# About Deal Terms



Startups may talk about potential deal terms:

- Some teams will present their pre-money valuation and % of company being offered.
- Others may choose NOT to offer this.
- Some will disclose during Q&A. Others not.
- Some VCs suggest the founder's view of pre-money valuation is not critical at this stage.
- As an investor, you must assess whether you could reach agreement on a deal



# About Financials

Startups may talk about their financials:

- These early-stage deals may not have detailed financial projections
- Most of these companies are pre-revenue and pre-funding
- Not the same as a later stage, revenue producing, positive cash flow company



# Conflict of Interest

If a judge finds the have a conflict of interest with a startup at the RBPC, let the Rice Alliance know ASAP and we will address the conflict by assigning you to a different flight...or you can recuse yourself from voting.

A conflict of interest would include:

- You are a mentor or advisor to company
- You are an investor in company
- You are an advisory board member of company
- You are a board member of company



# Competition Rules



All teams need to be seeking outside investment capital

There are funding limits that a startup cannot have reached in a certain period

Presenters must be current or recently-graduated students (2 to 4 current students)

Teams, faculty advisors and mentors cannot watch other teams in their flight, until they have presented

Teams, faculty advisors and mentors can watch teams in other flights

Only judges can ask questions

# Competition Rules



All startups have been vetted before coming to the RBPC. If, during a pitch or presentation, a judge learns of or believes they see a competition rule violation, please inform the Room Moderator with a written note and they will contact Catherine Santamaria, RBPC Director

Please continue to score and evaluate the team as usual

Do not disrupt the round by focusing on the issue during the team's presentation or Q&A

We will investigate the issue, get recommendation from our accounting firm PKF Texas, and make a decision

# Awards Banquet

## **Winner! Winner! Come to the Awards Dinner!**

All winners will be announced at the Awards Banquet on Saturday evening, 6:00 – 9:30 PM.

Join us at the Marriott Marquis in downtown Houston to celebrate the 2022 RBPC startups!

All active judges are invited to the banquet; please note your availability and selections in your Judge Registration.



# Thank you

**Thank you for judging at the RBPC!**

**Please direct any questions to the RBPC Director at  
[csantamaria@rice.edu](mailto:csantamaria@rice.edu)**

**We will see you April 7-9, 2022!**

