

2026 Rice Business Plan Competition

Nov. 11 Info Session





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About the RBPC

Goals of the competition

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Basic Eligibility

You are initially eligible if your startup:

- is student-driven, student-created and/or student-managed
- has at least **two** current or very-recently graduated student founders or management team members, and **at least one of those students is a current graduate degree-seeking student (Masters, PhD, MBA, JD, MD, etc.)**
 - "Current" means enrolled in school now
 - "Very-recently graduated" means graduated after August 1, 2025
 - Startup must have a graduate-level student on the team
 - Same goes for competing—at least two students; at least one grad student

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Basic Eligibility (con't)

You are initially eligible if your startup:

- has not raised more than \$250,000 in equity capital prior to July 1, 2025
- has not generated revenue of more than \$100,000 in any 12-month period prior to July 1, 2025
- is seeking funding or capital (or will be in the next 12 months)
- is a potentially viable investment opportunity
 - We are looking for early-stage companies, businesses, startups
 - We are not looking for projects, ideas, concepts

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What we look for in an application

1. All questions answered fully

RBPC website -> Compete -> FAQs -> What's in the application

2. An executive summary that:

- gives a full view/complete picture of your startup
- addresses all the main points of your business

RBPC website -> Compete -> Eligibility -> page 7 of Eligibility and How to Apply doc

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What we look for in the executive summary

- a. **Company summary** - in 1 paragraph describe the problem the startup company is addressing, the technology solution, product, or offering, and who are the potential customers
- b. **Customer analysis** - explain who the potential customers & what problem you are solving
- c. **Customer/market validation** - what evidence do you have that customers will pay for this product
- d. **Market analysis** - describe the market size, targeted segments and potential market share
- e. **Product or service** - Describe current state of development of the product or service and any technology validation to-date (i.e., what evidence do you have that the technology works)
- f. **Intellectual property** - provide a status of patents, licenses, or other IP (if applicable)
- g. **Competitive differentiation** - explain the competition and show what makes this startup better than competitive alternatives
- h. **Company founders**, management team and/or advisor- include brief bios of the startup founder to show how this team has the expertise to successfully launch this startup (including relevant experience)
- i. **Financials**: show 3-5 year projection of revenue, profit and cash flow
- j. **Amount of investment** you are seeking and use of funds

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Screening process

- RBPC director reviews each application for eligibility
- Each application is viewed 3 times by (human) screeners
- Screeners rate each app on 5-6 criteria; we take the average
- Screening criteria is similar to what's in the exec sum (see p. 7-8 of Eligibility and How to Apply doc)
- Apps reviewed again, looking at ratings, to identify those that would make good competitors
- Selections are made across 5 sectors (usually 12-12-6-6-6)
- Applicants cannot get screening results

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Common gaps / low screening scores

Low ratings may result when the applicant:

- Does not give enough info; your 100-word company description is vague and does not pique interest
- Does not show they are a viable business venture
- Does not show they are more than a project or class assignment; does not indicate they are serious about moving forward
- Does not have an online presence (LinkedIn, website, social media, etc.)
- Does not have an academic advisor; or advisor does not know about them (and I will ask them)
- Is not affiliated with a department, institute or resource on campus (if there are such offerings available)
- Does not list any funding or revenue, or note past experiences (like participating in a demo day, pitch competition, accelerator, incubator, etc.)

But you can address these issues with a little time and effort

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Q&A

Any questions about the application process?

Any questions about the application itself?

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Q&A

My top tip: Get on the application site *now*, create a profile, and start your application:

- Answer as much as you can and click Save Draft.
- If you click Submit, that's it! You can't edit your app again

If you wait until the deadline of Jan. 31, you could run into problems, and I may not be available to help in time

If you get any error messages when you are in the application, and you can't address them, email me at rbpc@rice.edu

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Prizes!

There are lots of prizes you can win at the 2026 RBPC! Check the Prizes page under the Benefits menu; what you see for 2025 is expected for 2026:

- Space Technology and Commercial Aerospace Prize
- Pediatric Device Prize
- Sustainable Energy Investment Prize
- And more!

Each competing startup wins a minimum prize for their placement at the RBPC:

- Final Round
- Semi-Final Round
- Wildcard Round

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More optional info sessions

For academic advisors:

November 20 at 4:00 PM

Tell your advisors about it!

For student founders, entrepreneurs, startups:

December 11 at 4:00 PM CST

Content will be the same as this one

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Resources and Reminders

- Most questions can be answered by checking the RBPC website: www.rbpc.rice.edu
- Read the website Compete section -> Eligibility and How to Apply document
- Read the FAQ section: Application questions and Exec Summ template
- If you can't find the answer, contact me at rbpc@rice.edu
- Applications are due **January 31, 2026 at 11:59 PM**
- The RBPC is April 9-11, 2026 in Houston, Texas

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Applications are
due **January 31!**

rbpc.rice.edu

Thank you very much!

