2027 Rice Business Plan Competition

Pitch Your Startup.
Scale Your Vision.
Compete for $1M+ in Prizes.

April 8–10, 2027 | Houston, Texas

WHY COMPETE AT RBPC 2027?

- World's Richest Intercollegiate Competition: Access $1M+ in cash prizes, investment deals, and mentor networks
- High-Impact Ecosystem: RBPC alumni have raised over $6.9 Billion in capital and achieved 66+ successful exits.
- Global Stage: Pitch live to 100+ premier venture capital investors, angel networks, corporate partners and more
- Key Deadline: Applications open Nov 9, 2026 and close Jan 29, 2027 (11:59 PM CT).

1. Application & Competition Timeline

Date & Time	Action Item
November 9, 2026 (8:00 AM CT)	Online Applications open at rbpc.rice.edu
January 29, 2027 (11:59 PM CT)	Application Deadline (Form submission + Executive Summary)
February 16, 2027 (1:00 CT)	Invited Teams Announced (up to 42 may be selected to compete)
February 22, 2027 (5:00 PM CT)	Team Commitment Confirmation / Final

date to confirm participation

2. Eligibility Checklist

- **Student Team Composition:** Your founding team must include at least two current college/university students (undergraduate or graduate: MBA, PhD, MD, JD, Master's).
- **Enrollment Window:** Must be enrolled full- or part-time in the 2026–2027 academic year. Recent graduates (after August 1, 2026) are eligible to join, but teams cannot consist solely of recent graduates.
- **Student Equity & Ownership:** Students must lead from the front—holding primary executive leadership roles (CEO, COO, President), occupying ≥50% of direct-report management positions, and controlling significant equity (≥20% of total venture equity OR ≥50% of management team equity).
- **Equity Capital Limit:** Startups must **not** have raised/closed >$500,000 in equity capital prior to July 1, 2026. (Grants, competition prize money, traditional loans, and friends & family funding do NOT count toward this limit. Any funding raised AFTER July 1, 2026 is unrestricted).
- **Revenue Cap:** Startups must not have generated >$300,000 in revenue in any 12-month period prior to July 1, 2026.
- **Venture Readiness:** Designed for investor-ready, for-profit ventures actively seeking seed capital and scaling. Early project-level concepts without a functional prototype or business plan are encouraged to apply in future cycles.

3. Eligible Sectors & Focus Areas

Applicants select one primary and one secondary sector from six core industry categories:

- **Energy & Power:** Alternative Fuels, Batteries & Storage, Carbon Management, Critical Minerals, Geothermal, Grid Modernization & Power Delivery, Hydrogen, Nuclear & SMR, Power Generation, Water.
- **Space, Defense, Dual Use & Advanced Industry:** Autonomous Systems, Building Technologies, Chemicals, Industrial AI, Industrial Systems, Manufacturing, Materials, National Security, Quantum, Semiconductors & Electronics, Space Systems & Applications.
- **MedTech, Life Sciences & Advanced Health:** Biotechnology, Care Delivery, Clinical Solutions, Diagnostics & Imaging, Digital Health, Human Performance Tech, Med Devices, Neurotechnology, Therapeutics.

- **Enterprise AI & Digital Infrastructure:** Agentic AI & Automation, Cybersecurity, Data & AI Infrastructure, DevTools, Digital Twins & Simulation, Enterprise Technology, FinTech, Vertical AI.
- **Mobility, Logistics & Construction:** Autonomy & Defense Applications, Construction Technology, Infrastructure, Logistics & Movement, Sensing, Space Systems, Supply Chain, Transportation.
- **Consumer:** AI Consumer Apps, Connected Devices, Functional Wellness, Next-Gen CPG, Platform Commerce, Smart Hardware.

4. How to Apply & Executive Summary Checklist

- **Application Portal:** Complete the online entry at rbpc.rice.edu by Friday, January 29, 2027 at 11:59 PM CT.
- **Application questions:** Answer questions fully and watch for word limits. Most questions are required.
- **Document Formatting:** Upload a maximum 5-page Executive Summary in PDF format (excluding cover page and appendices). Startup name must appear on the first page.
- **Content Checklist:** Ensure your summary clearly details: Vision/Company Description, Problem & Solution, Customer Validation, Market Opportunity, Product Readiness, IP Strategy, Founder & Advisory Team Bios, 3–5 Year Financial Projections, and Capital Sought / Use of Funds. Check the template Executive Summary for more details.

5. Investor Screening Criteria

Over 400 global applications are evaluated by our screeners across 6 core criteria:

- **Real Pain Point:** Is the startup addressing a large, compelling customer need with clear validation?
- **Market Scale:** Is there a sizeable total addressable market with high customer willingness to pay?
- **Defensible Advantage:** Does the venture possess a strong competitive moat, unique IP, or proprietary technology?
- **Financial Viability:** Are revenue and profit projections ambitious yet credible with high growth potential?
- **Founder Execution:** Does the student-led team demonstrate the drive, experience, and coachability to launch successfully?
- **Investment Appeal:** Would an early-stage investor invest in this team and business model today?

6. Key Rules, IP & Logistics

- **Academic Endorsement:** Applicants are required to list their academic advisor; someone from the university that knows you exist. You must include their university email.
- **Intellectual Property (IP):** Startups retain 100% IP rights. IP licensing from university is allowed but full license prior to competition is not required. Avoid public disclosure of patentable secrets.
- **On-Site Experience:** At least 2 (up to 4) student team members must attend all three days in Houston (April 8–10, 2027). Meals and local transportation are provided by RBPC.
- **Ineligible Ventures:** Buy-outs, corporate spin-outs, franchises, real estate syndications, and geographical licensing deals. Startups that have previously competed in the RBPC cannot reapply,
- **Attendance & Travel:** Invited teams (2–4 student members) must attend all days in Houston (April 8–10, 2027). Meals & local event travel provided; teams cover airfare and hotel.