



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MEMPHIS®

**Crews Center
for Entrepreneurship**

TIGER TANK PITCH COMPETITION

University of Memphis

Official Guidebook

Updated: Academic Year 2026–2027

I. General Competition Information

The Tiger Tank Pitch Competition is a multi-round business plan and pitch competition hosted by the University of Memphis Crews Center for Entrepreneurship and open to all active undergraduate and graduate UofM students. Applicants will receive expert advice throughout the competition cycle:

- Round 1 Feedback (Executive Summary, Application, Pitch Deck)
- Mentorship
- Pitch Coaching
- Final Presentation Feedback

Important Dates

	Date
Tiger Tank Pitch Competition Opens for Applications	October 1, 2026
Full Submission Deadline • Executive Summary • Proof of Student Status Submission Deadline • Pitch Deck Submission	October 18, 2026, 11:59 pm CST
Announcement of Finalists	October 23, 2026
Mentor Assigned to Each Finalist Team	October 23, 2026
Pitch Coaching and Presentation Refinement Sessions	October 26, 2026- November 5, 2026
Finalist Pitch Deck Due Date	November 3, 2026. 11:59PM
Tiger Tank Live Final Pitch Competition and Awards Ceremony	November 6, 2026

Tracks

The competition promotes University of Memphis student entrepreneurship by showcasing student-created, managed, and owned ventures across three distinct tracks:

1. Track A: High Growth Business Track: Ventures designed for high scalability, large addressable markets, and venture capital or angel investment potential.
2. Track B: Main Street / Local Business Track: Brick-and-mortar businesses, service enterprises, local community concepts, and small businesses designed for sustainable cash flow and regional impact.
3. Track C: SBIR / IP Businesses Track: Technology-driven, research-backed, or proprietary IP ventures seeking or utilizing Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR/STTR) funding, university technology transfer, or patent-backed innovations.

Student entrepreneurs are provided expert feedback, direct coaching, and a prize package of cash and crucial in-kind business support services to launch and scale their ventures. The competition is open to undergraduate and graduate students.

Confidentiality and Intellectual Property

All submitted materials remain the intellectual property of the participating teams. All judges, mentors, and staff are active professionals, investors, and community leaders who routinely evaluate new ventures and understand the need for confidentiality. However, judges and reviewers do not sign non-disclosure agreements (NDAs).

Teams are strongly advised not to disclose sensitive, proprietary trade secrets or technical patent details that could compromise IP rights. Judging will not penalize teams for protecting proprietary technical details.

II. Competition Rules, Rubric, and Prize

Track Descriptions

Applicants must select one of the following tracks at the time of initial application submission:

- Track A: High Growth Business
 - Technology, digital platforms, scalable consumer products, or business models with high growth trajectories and high capital requirements.
- Track B: Main Street / Local Business
 - Lifestyle businesses, retail, local services, hospitality, physical storefronts, and community-centered enterprises.
- Track C: SBIR / IP Businesses
 - Deep tech, life sciences, engineering innovations, university-licensed technology, or ventures seeking SBIR/STTR funding and patent protection.

Note: This track requires additional documents.

Tiger Tank Prizes

Track	Winner/1stPlace	2 nd Place
Track A: High Growth	\$2,500	\$1,000
Track B: Main Street/Local	\$2,500	\$1,000
Track C: SBIR/IP	\$2,500	\$1,000

Official Competition Scoring Rubric (Rounds 1 and 2)

Both Round 1 (written/deck evaluation) and Round 2 (Live Pitch Finals) are scored using the exact same official weighted scoring rubric, placing maximum emphasis on innovation and market feasibility.

Rubric Category	Weight	Detailed Evaluation Focus
Quality and Originality of the Idea	20%	Degree of innovation, uniqueness of the solution, compelling value proposition, and competitive differentiation.

Viability and Business Model Feasibility	20%	Operational clarity, unit economics, revenue structure, go-to-market execution, and long-term sustainability.
Market Attractiveness and Industry Fit	20%	Addressable market size (TAM/SAM/SOM), target customer definition, industry growth trends, and clear market demand.
Clarity of Presentation and Deck Quality	10%	Visual polish of the deck, logical narrative flow, timing, professional delivery, and effective communication of key metrics.
Investor / Market Feasibility Potential	30%	Overall investment thesis, scalability, risk mitigation, ROI potential, and likelihood of successful commercial execution

Track Specific Evaluation Criteria Considerations

Rubric Category	High Growth Business Track	Main Street / Local Business Track	SBIR / IP Businesses Track
Quality & Originality (20%)	Unique business model or technological disruption in a large market.	Differentiation against existing local or regional competitors.	Proprietary innovation, patent depth, or novel scientific advancement.
Viability & Business Model (20%)	Scalable revenue architecture with strong unit economics.	Clear path to immediate cash flow and local operational efficiency.	Commercialization timeline, milestone delivery, and regulatory clearance.
Market Attractiveness (20%)	Large Total Addressable Market (TAM) with national/global scope.	Defined regional customer demographics and sustained local demand.	High-value enterprise, healthcare, or defense market applications.
Presentation Quality (10%)	Slick growth narrative and clear traction metrics.	Clear operational plan and authentic founder-community connection.	Technical clarity translated into non-technical commercial benefits.

Investor/Market Potential (30%)	High upside for venture capital or angel equity investment.	Strong debt-service ability, self-sustainability, and local economic value.	High potential for non- dilutive grant funding (SBIR) or IP licensing.
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IV. Rules

Team Rules

All participating student teams must meet the following eligibility requirements:

1. Teams must consist of 1 – 4 members who are currently enrolled students (undergraduate or graduate). At least one team member must be a currently enrolled full-time student at the time of submission.
2. Teams must designate one Team Leader as the primary point of contact. The application and submitted files will be registered with their last name.
3. Teams must submit official proof of student upon request. Non-students may assist the business externally but cannot be part of the official competition team, present, or answer judge questions.
4. Participating team members must hold C-Level leadership roles (e.g., Founder, CEO, CTO). The team must collectively hold a minimum of 25% aggregate equity ownership in the fully diluted capitalization table of the business at the time of submission.
5. Finalists are not required to have established a legal entity (LLC, C-Corp, etc.) prior to the submission deadline, however it is encouraged. Sole proprietorships and single-member LLCs are eligible. Prizes are submitted to the business or to the active student's university account. Tax implications apply.
6. Students may only participate on one team per competition cycle.
7. Selected finalist teams must confirm attendance at least 2 weeks prior to the live finals on the University of Memphis campus.
8. All team members presenting must be present for the full competition duration.
9. Interdisciplinary teams are recommended. Teams may include any number of graduate or undergraduate students. Non-students may be members of the management team and may participate in planning the venture, but only students meeting enrollment requirements may present and answer questions from the judges.

Business Rules

All participating ventures must adhere to the following:

1. Must be a for-profit, early-stage venture. Excluded business types: Buy-outs, real estate acquisition ventures, investment funds, franchises, consultant firms, non-profits, or recapitalizations/subsidiaries of existing parent companies.

2. Total cumulative funding/capitalization (including SAFE notes, equity, convertible notes, and debt) must not exceed **\$250,000** prior to November 1, 2026. Grants, non-dilutive research funds, SBIR grants, and non-dilutive pitch prize money are excluded from this \$250,000 limit.
3. If the technology or product was developed within a university research lab or utilizes university IP, the team must provide proof of rights to license or execute IP control in one of the following forms:
 - a. Signed license agreement
 - b. Signed option agreement
 - c. Official confirmatory letter from the university Tech Transfer office granting rights to commercialize
 - d. Formal faculty assignment of IP
4. Teams must submit a W-9, W-8BEN-E, or relevant tax documentation for their corporate entity, as needed. Winners are provided prize through the University of Memphis and must be a current, active student.

III. Competition Structure and Rounds

The competition consists of two initial online submission rounds followed by an in-person Final Pitch Round at the University of Memphis campus on **November 6, 2026.**

Round 1 Executive Summary and Pitch Deck (Online)

Executive Summary

Document Specifications

- Filename: **TigerTank_LastNameTeamLead_CompanyName_Exec.pdf**
- Length: Maximum 1-2page (PDF format). Title/Cover page not required.
- Formatting: Minimum 10pt font, at least 0.75” margins on all sides.

Required Executive Summary Content

1. One-Sentence Pitch / Tagline
2. Business Overview and Track Selection
3. Problem and Solution / Value Proposition
4. Target Market and Customer Profile
5. Business Model and Revenue Strategy
6. Competitive Advantage / IP Status
7. Go-To-Market / Marketing Plan
8. Management Team and Key Roles
9. Capital Required and Use of Funds
10. Primary Team Contact Information (Permanent Email and Phone)

Pitch Deck

Document Specifications

- Filename: **TigerTank_TrackLetter_CompanyName_PitchDeck.pdf**
- Length: Maximum 12 slides (PDF or Slide format).
- No videos are permitted in the pitch deck.

Required Slide Topics:

- Title Slide (Company Name, Track, Team Members)
- Problem and Value Proposition
- Solution / Product Overview
- Market Opportunity and Target Audience
- Business and Revenue Model
- Traction, Milestones, or IP Status
- Marketing and Go-To-Market Strategy
- Competitive Analysis

- Financial Highlights / Projections
- Management Team and Roles
 - Funding Request and Use of Funds
 - Summary / Contact Slide

Final Round: Live Pitch Competition (November 6, 2026)

Format and Timing

- Pitch Presentation: 5-7 minutes
- Judge Q&A: 10 minutes

Presentation Guidelines

- Pitch Decks are permitted, and must be submitted 3 days before the pitch day, November 3, 2026.
- Videos are not permitted in the pitch deck.
- Presenter(s) must meet with Crews Center Mentors prior to pitch week.
- Presenter(s) must meet with Writing and Communications Services for public speaking practice at least one time prior to The Final Live Pitch Date.
- Judges cannot be provided with samples or passed out items.

V. Governance and Spirit of Competition

1. The University of Memphis Tiger Tank Rules Committee reserves the right to review team eligibility, disqualify entries violating guidelines, and resolve disputes.
2. Teams assigned competition mentors may utilize advice for guidance, but all pitch decks and presentation content must be authored solely by the student team.
3. Submissions must represent original student work. Plagiarism or misrepresentation of financials, traction, or student status will result in immediate disqualification.
4. The Director of the Crews Center for Entrepreneurship reserves all rights and will have final say in determining which teams are eligible to compete in the Tiger Tank Pitch Competition and reserves the right to exclude any team for any reason.
5. The judge panel will consist of a minimum of three judges. Judges will be independent and not employed by the University of Memphis or the Crews Center for Entrepreneurship. Judging criteria for the pitch competition will be provided to all teams submitting valid applications for the competition.
6. Rules and awards are subject to change at the discretion of the Director of the Crews Center for Entrepreneurship at any time. Changes and/or interpretations of these rules may be made, even though they may appear to be in conflict with previously published information. The Director has the right to interpret these rules according to his/her judgement.
7. By submitting an application, teams acknowledge they own any intellectual property rights that exist or may be developed from their idea. The idea and concepts must be the original work of the individual or teams making the pitch.
8. All students at the University of Memphis have full access to the Crews Center for Entrepreneurship. The Crews Center provides resources, space, training, and advising/mentoring services to assist entrepreneurs with business model development, ideation, business model validation, and more.

Questions

For questions or additional information about the Crews Center Pitch Competition or the Crews Center for Entrepreneurship, please contact crewscenter@memphis.edu.