

2025 Women in Innovation Summit Pitch Competition - Application Guide

Getting Started/Welcome Message

Welcome to the application guide for the 2025 Women in Innovation Summit Pitch Competition. This guide is designed to provide you with a clear understanding of the application process, outlining key expectations for your submission. It serves as an essential resource to help you create a comprehensive, competitive application that effectively showcases your startup's vision and potential.

Important Dates

- Applications Open: December 2, 2024
- Applications Close: January 19, 2025, at 11:59pm EST
- Top 10 and Top 25 Finalists Notified: Week of February 3rd
- Summit Date: March 6, 2025

Application Process

1. Online Application

- Fill out the online form, providing concise yet comprehensive information about your startup. Ensure that all the relevant details about your startup are clearly articulated.

2. Pitch Deck Submission

- **Creating Your Pitch Deck**: Design a pitch deck that is both informative and visually appealing.
 - **Essential Elements**: Include critical aspects of your business such as Problem and Solution, Market Analysis, Product/Service Overview, Business Model, Team, Financial Projections, Growth Strategy, Current Traction, Funding Needs, etc.
 - **Content Tips**: Ensure that your pitch deck is not overcrowded with information. Use clear, concise language and visuals to effectively communicate your message. Highlight your startup's unique value proposition and how it addresses a gap or need in the market.

3. Video Pitch Submission

- **Recording Your Pitch**: Prepare and record a 3-minute pitch video.
 - **Recommended Tools**: We suggest using Zoom* or [Loom](#)*. These platforms allow you to simultaneously record yourself and your pitch deck, creating a more dynamic and engaging presentation.

- Downloading and Sharing the link: After recording your pitch, download the video file and upload it to a Google Drive/Dropbox/OneDrive folder. Adjust the permissions to be accessible with the link and copy the link of your video in the application form.
- Alternative Tools: While Zoom and Loom are recommended for their user-friendly interface and no-cost access, you are welcome to use any other video recording tool that meets your needs.
- Video Quality and Requirements:
 - Clarity and Quality: Ensure that the video is high-quality, with a clear view of your face and your pitch deck. Your voice should be clearly audible without any background noise.
 - Time Limit: Strictly adhere to the 3-minute limit. Videos exceeding this duration will not be eligible.

** While primarily a video conferencing tool, Zoom can be used to record pitch videos. You can record your presentation live, even if you are the only one in the meeting, and it provides a good quality video file as output.*

**Loom is a popular choice for recording videos. It allows you to capture both screen and camera, making it ideal for pitches where you might want to showcase your face and your presentation at the same time. It's user-friendly and offers basic editing features.*

Please remember

- Eligibility: Women tech founders leading startups with a functional MVP, which innovatively addresses critical challenges in the market.
- Selection Criteria: Companies participating will be evaluated based on the following areas, with each aspect contributing 20% of the overall assessment:
 - Product Stage: Assessing the current development phase of your product/service, focusing on its readiness and refinement.
 - Pathway to Scalability: Evaluating your strategy for growth and scalability, including plans for market expansion and adapting to increasing demand.
 - Founder-Market Fit: Analyzing the alignment between the founders' expertise, experience, and the market they are targeting. This includes how well the team understands and can navigate the market landscape.
 - Market Opportunity: Examining the potential size, demand, and dynamics of the market you're entering, and how your product fits into this context.
 - Technological Innovation: Gauging the degree of innovation in your technology, including its uniqueness, potential for disruption, and technical sophistication.

FAQs for Pitch and Pitch Deck

- What should an effective pitch include?
 - Tell a succinct story outlining your business plan, focusing on the problem, your solution, and the unique value proposition.
 - An effective model to help you organize your thoughts is by utilizing a [lean canvas](#).
- How can I ensure my pitch deck stands out?
 - Use clear, compelling storytelling, back up your points with data, and keep the design clean and professional.
- What are common pitfalls to avoid in a pitch deck?
 - Avoid overcrowding slides with information, using too much technical jargon, or vague financial projections.
- How detailed should my financials be in the pitch deck?
 - For a 3-minute pitch, not a whole lot! Aim to provide clear, well-researched financial projections but keep them concise. Focus on key metrics like revenue, costs, and break-even analysis.
- Can I get feedback on my pitch if I am not selected?
 - Yes, we provide feedback via email, including general comments from our review of your application.
- What makes a pitch video effective?
 - Clarity of speech, good video quality, and a well-structured presentation that fits within the 3-minute limit but we also want to hear your passion for the problem you're solving and the business you're building to shine through.
- Are there any specific requirements for the video format?
 - Your video should be in MP4 format, and not exceed 3 minutes in length.
- Can I include a demo of my product in the pitch video?
 - Yes, a brief, effective demo can be a powerful way to showcase your product's capabilities.
- How can I show the scalability of my business on the pitch?
 - Discuss your long-term vision, potential markets, and how you plan to grow and scale.
- What should I focus on if my startup is still in the early stages?

- Focus on the potential impact, your vision, and any initial traction or market validation you've achieved.

Tips for Pitch and Pitch Deck

- Pitch Deck Guidance:
 - Compelling Storytelling: Craft a narrative that takes the viewer on a journey, explaining why your startup matters.
 - Data and Visuals: Support your story with relevant data. Use high-quality visuals to enhance understanding and retention.
 - Clarity Over Jargon: Use simple, clear language. Avoid industry-specific jargon that might confuse or alienate your audience.
- Pitch Tips:
 - Engage Immediately: Begin with a captivating hook to immediately grab attention.
 - Problem & Solution: Clearly articulate the problem you're addressing and your innovative solution.
 - Authenticity: Be genuine and let your passion for what you're building shine through.

Awards

Top 10 Finalists:

- Pitch Opportunity: The top 10 finalists will be invited to pitch live for the chance to win a \$100K cash investment from The Firehood Angels.

All Top 25 Finalists:

- Pitch Advisory Sessions: Each of the top 25 finalists will receive 2 Pitch Advisory Sessions to refine their pitch and tell a better narrative on their business.
- Exclusive Networking Event: These finalists are also invited to DMZ's HQ for the Women of the Year Breakfast, which includes daytime roundtable discussions and networking opportunities. This event allows them to connect with fellow women entrepreneurs, partners, investors, and mentors, fostering valuable relationships and collaborations.

All Applicants:

- Summit Participation: All applicants will be invited to attend the \$100K Pitch Competition as guests. This includes access to the networking portions of the Summit, providing a platform to engage with the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem, key stakeholders (government, investment, corporate etc.) and industry leaders.

Appendix: Application Questions

Please provide detailed answers to the following questions when submitting your application.

1. Questions about you and your business:
 - First Name.
 - Last Name.
 - Email Address.
 - Are you a woman-identifying tech founder?
 - Which city are you located in?
 - If chosen, are you willing to pitch in person at the Women Innovation Summit in Toronto on March 6, 2025?
 - What is your legal company name?
 - Are you incorporated in Canada?
 - Please provide a link to your website.
 - Tell us more about your company. What is the pain point or problem you are trying to solve?
 - What is your unique value proposition? How are you solving this problem in a unique and innovative way with the product you are building?
 - What is the underlying technology being used that would qualify as innovative?
 - Please provide the names and titles of your company's founders.
 - Please confirm the number of employees that are a part of your company.
 - Please describe the validation that you have achieved to date. (customer interviews, pilots, betas, sales, etc.)
 - What is your monthly recurring revenue?
 - What are your top 3 asks from angel investors?
2. Please upload your pitch deck. (We recommend no more than 10 slides in a PDF format, given your pitch will be limited to 3 minutes.)
3. Please share a link to the video of your 3-minute pitch. (Review the applicant guide for more tips on how to best record and share your pitch.)