



LAUNCH
WISCONSIN

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Contact: Julie Johnson or Maggie Brickerman at 608-442-7557

To learn more, visit: launchwisconsin.biz

Launch Wisconsin business plan contest open for statewide entries through June 15, 2026

MADISON, Wis. – **Launch Wisconsin**, formerly the Wisconsin Governor’s Business Plan Contest, is accepting entries online for the 2026 competition until **11:59 p.m. Monday, June 15, 2026**.

The **Wisconsin Technology Council** produces the contest to encourage entrepreneurs statewide in the startup stages of tech-based businesses. It links up-and-coming entrepreneurs with a statewide network of community resources, expert advice and mentoring, management talent and possible sources of capital.

Over time, the contest has led to valuable exposure for each year’s top business plans while spurring company and job growth in Wisconsin. In 2025, finalists shared about \$180,000 in cash and service prizes. The contest’s major sponsors include the **Wisconsin Economic Development Corp.**

For their initial entries, contestants will submit an executive summary online at **launchwisconsin.biz**. Contestants will also find business plan templates, startup information, networking contacts and technical resources from a mix of state and national resources on the website.

Contestants who advance to subsequent contest rounds will expand their plan in stages. Judges will score the entries and provide feedback on submissions.

To get started, contestants must create a simple account at **launchwisconsin.biz**. **All entries are submitted through the website.** Contestants use their account to gain access to mentors throughout the process, as well as review the judges’ comments and feedback.

“WEDC has been the primary supporter of the contest since its inception and continues to underwrite the contest because of its success in nurturing Wisconsin's earliest stage companies,” said **Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation**, Shayna Hetzel, Vice President –

Entrepreneurship & Innovation. “This year's updated categories reflect exciting areas of opportunity for Wisconsin, and we look forward to meeting the innovators building our state's next great companies.”

Since its inception in 2004, almost 5,000 entries have been received and about \$3 million in cash and services (such as legal, accounting, office space and marketing) have been awarded. Contest categories are consumer tech, deep tech, health tech and enterprise tech.

Wisconsin residents 18 years old and older are eligible, as are teams from Wisconsin-based businesses, schools and organizations. (At least one member of a school team must be 18.) Businesses or teams from outside the state are also eligible to compete if they demonstrate intent to base or expand their business in Wisconsin. Entrepreneurs may also enter multiple ideas, though each idea must be separate and distinct.

Companies or individuals that have not received angel or venture capital for their business plan in its current form are eligible to enter. Contestants that have yet to receive more than \$100,000 in private equity funding through June 15, 2026, are eligible to enter. **There is no fee to enter.** As with past contests, the 2026 competition will take place in stages:

- In Phase 1, which is open until **11:59 p.m. Monday, June 15, 2026**, the contest will accept executive summaries on the website. Entries should be roughly 1,500 words and will be graded by the pool of judges. The top 50 executive summaries will advance to Phase 2.
- In Phase 2, which runs from **Friday, July 17, 2026 through 11:59 p.m. on August 14, 2026**, the top executive summaries will submit a 5-minute pitch deck. A virtual mentored “boot camp” for contestants will be held during this phase. Judges will review the pitches and pick three finalists from each of the four categories to advance to the final live presentation round. Mentored practice sessions will be offered to the finalists in September.
- The top 12, or “**Diligent Dozen**,” will square off with live presentations during the Tech Council conference in October 2026.

Past finalists have launched companies that have raised more than \$320 million in angel, venture, grants, and venture debt over time – all while creating jobs and economic value for Wisconsin.

The 2025 grand prize winner was Phoenix Aid, an Oshkosh based company that has developed a patented nano-composite dressing for chronic wounds. Category winners in 2025 were **Galasys** (Advanced Manufacturing), **Equability** (Business Services), **Strudel** (Information Technology) and **Phoenix Aid** (Life Sciences).

To enter, become a judge or learn about sponsorship opportunities, visit launchwisconsin.biz

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