



**new venture
competition**

A Guide for International Applicants: Food Innovation Track

GW

Office of Innovation
& Entrepreneurship

What is OIE?

The Office of Innovation & Entrepreneurship (OIE) at The George Washington University (GW) supports entrepreneurial education and venture development for students, faculty, researchers, and alumni. Through cross-disciplinary programs, mentorship, and real-world learning opportunities, OIE empowers innovators at every stage of the entrepreneurial journey and helps drive GW's broader innovation strategy across campus and beyond.

Overview of NVC

The GW New Venture Competition (NVC) is one of the largest collegiate entrepreneurship competitions in the United States. NVC offers a hands-on platform for aspiring innovators to craft their business models and launch their ideas through three rigorous rounds of competition. Participants receive mentorship, training, and access to funding, competing for over \$400,000 in cash and in-kind prizes across six specialized tracks.

#1

Largest University
Venture Competition

18

Year History

4,000+

Student Entrepreneurs
Served

\$2M+

Awarded in Cash Prizes

150+

Judges & Mentors



OIE x GFI Collaboration

To expand innovation in food systems, OIE has partnered with the Global Food Institute (GFI) a university-wide initiative founded by GW and chef José Andrés. GFI brings together expertise across policy, innovation, and humanity to transform food systems and improve people's lives and the health of our planet. This collaboration created the Food Innovation Track in NVC to encourage ventures to reimagine the future of food through sustainable, scalable solutions.

Food Innovation Track

Food Innovation – New for 2026!

The Food Innovation track supports ventures that seek to transform how things we eat and drink are cultivated, processed, produced, stored, distributed, consumed or up-cycled/disposed. This track prioritizes mission-driven solutions that improve food security, nutritional quality, food safety, sustainability, and/or affordable healthy food access through innovative products, services, technologies, or business models.

Examples:

- *New methods for reprocessing food production waste products*
- *Improved agricultural or supply chain logistics for smallholder farmers in developing countries*
- *Ingredient innovations that improve health and/or sustainability*
- *Enhanced food distribution methods that reduce cost, waste, or spoilage*
- *New business models that improve access to healthy foods in underserved communities*

For the first time ever, this track welcomes teams from other local and international universities partnered with GW. Read more about the track in this recent [GW Today article](#).

International Team Nomination Process and Participation

Team Nominations:

- Each partner university may nominate **multiple teams**, but only **up to two teams per university** will be selected by GW's international coordinators to officially compete.
- Each team may have **up to five members**.
- Selected teams must apply using the **Food Innovation Track** application link included in this document.

Participation Requirements & Accommodations:

- International teams are expected to follow the **same application process, deadlines, and judging requirements** as all NVC participants.
- **Round 1** requires a written application. Teams are encouraged to work closely with their **own mentors, professors, or advisors** to help develop their ideas and complete the application.
- If an international team advances beyond Round 1, OIE will make **case-by-case accommodations** to account for time zones, travel issues, or remote participation requirements.

Support Provided by GW:

- **International Coordinator:** Each partner university will have a **dedicated GW international coordinator** to help answer questions and provide personalized support throughout the process.
- **Information Sessions:** Prior to each round, an information session for all NVC applicants will be held via Zoom. A recording will be shared with all registrants and posted online for those who are unable to attend.
 - [Sign up for the Round 1 session here](#) (January 20 @ 5:30pm - 6:30 pm EST)
- **Training via GW Innovator's Academy:** All international teams are invited to attend the **GW Innovator's Academy** - a series of workshops and lectures to help prepare for each NVC round.
 - [Sign up for upcoming events here](#)
- **Mentorship in Round 2:** If selected to advance to **Round 2**, each team will be matched with a **GW Mentor-in-Residence**. Mentors will help you prepare by meeting regularly and guiding you through key milestones and deliverables.

Round Overviews

(VIRTUAL) Round 1 - Online Application

Application Opens: December 8

Results Announced: February 11

Info Session ([Must Register Here](#)): January 20 at 5:30-6:30pm EST

Advancements: Top 10 teams will advance to Round 2.

Application Deadline: February 1 at 11:59pm EST

Application Requirements: 50-word business thesis + Responses to 5 questions (250 words each)

Note: Judges will leave written comments/feedback that will be anonymously shared with the team after the round ends.

Judging Criteria:

- **(10%) Business Thesis:** What are you building?
- **(20%) Problem:** What is the opportunity or problem your company addresses?
- **(20%) Customer:** Describe your target customer. What are the key characteristics of your target customer segment, such as demographics, interests, and behaviors?
- **(20%) Solution:** How is your solution different and better than the existing alternatives?
- **(15%) Business Model/Financials:** How will you/do you generate revenue?
- **(15%) Team:** Who are the members of your team? Why are you the right people to solve this problem?

[Read more about Round 1 submission details and judging criteria here.](#) (Please note that international teams should disregard any references specific to GW-affiliated applicants.)

[!\[\]\(758ebdf4629c903da74c2e079717ae32_img.jpg\) **APPLY TO ROUND 1 HERE**](#)

(VIRTUAL) Round 2 - Live Virtual Pitch

Application Opens: February 11

Info Session: February 17 @ 5:30 - 6:30pm EST

Application Deadline: March 15 at 11:59pm EST

Virtual Pitch via Zoom: March 18 (within assigned pitch session)

Results Announced: March 20

Advancements: Top 5 teams advance to Round 3.

Application Requirements: 1-page executive summary (.pdf) + 8-slide deck (.ppt)

Virtual Pitch: Your team will be assigned a 15-minute pitch session with the following breakdown...

- **7-minute pitch with the 8-slide deck**
- **8-minute Q&A session**
 - Judges will ask clarifying questions and provide verbal feedback

Note: Judges will leave written comments/feedback that will be anonymously shared with the team after the round ends.

Judging Criteria:

- (10%) Executive Summary
- (60%) Deck
 - (15%) Customer & Evidence of Customer Discovery
 - (10%) Problem, Current Alternative & Opportunity
 - (10%) Job Process Mapping & Identifying the Problem/Need
 - (15%) Solution & Value Proposition
 - (5%) Business Model & Basic Financials
 - (5%) Team Capability
- (30%) Virtual Pitch

[Read more about Round 2 submission details and judging criteria here.](#) (Please note that international teams should disregard any references specific to GW-affiliated applicants.)

 [APPLY TO ROUND 2 HERE](#)

(IN-PERSON) Round 3 - Live Pitch

Application Opens: March 20

Info Session: March 24 @ 5:30 - 6:30pm EST

Application Deadline: April 12 at 11:59pm EST

In-Person Live Pitches: April 22 (within assigned pitch session) on DC Campus

Results Announced: April 23 (Award Ceremony) 6-8pm EST

Advancements: Top 3 in the Food Innovation Track will be awarded prize money; all finalists are eligible for category prizes.

Application Requirements: Updated 1-page executive summary (.pdf) + Updated, PowerPoint Deck (.pptx, no slide limit)

In-Person Pitch: Your team will be assigned a 25-minute pitch session with the following breakdown...

- **10-minute pitch with a PowerPoint deck**
- **15-minute Q&A session**
 - Judges will ask clarifying questions and provide verbal feedback

Note: Judges will leave written comments/feedback that will be anonymously shared with the team after the round ends.

Judging Criteria:

- (5%) Updated Executive Summary
- (60%) Updated Deck
 - (10%) Customer Definition, Discovery & Established Need
 - (5%) Current Alternatives, Problem & Job Process Mapping
 - (5%) Opportunity & Market Validation
 - (10%) Solution & Value Proposition
 - (10%) Business Model Economics & Financial Viability
 - (10%) Go-to-Market Plan/Roadmap
 - (5%) Team & Management Capability
 - (5%) Progress, Risk Assessment & Next Steps
- (35%) In-Person Pitch

[Read more about Round 3 submission details and judging criteria here.](#) (Please note that international teams should disregard any references specific to GW-affiliated applicants.)

 [APPLY TO ROUND 3 HERE](#)

Relevant Resources

[Prizes and Sponsors:](#) List of prizes given out to NVC Winners.

[Events:](#) Information and registration links to each event in our Innovator's Academy.

