



Idea Factory Competition Guidelines

Spring 2026 Guidelines

Apply at: <https://my.reviewr.com/site/ideafactoryspring2026>

View Resources: salisbury.edu/idea-factory



Introduction

The Idea Factory is a college level poster competition for Salisbury University Students. Students will complete an online application and create a poster to enter the competition. Submissions will be judged by a panel of business and community leaders. The competition can be incorporated as a curricular or co-curricular activity for many economics, business, and engineering classes.

Eligibility Requirements

- All competitors must be college students (undergraduate or graduate) enrolled in Salisbury University classes.
- Students can compete individually or in a team of up to 3 total students.
- Winners are eligible to compete again, but must pitch a different idea. Non-winners are welcome to compete again, but are encouraged to improve their business idea or presentation.

Awards & Prizes

Cash awards will be provided to competition winners according to Table 1. Award announcements will be made in person at the event. Cash payments will be paid out as checks. Winners must complete the required paperwork within 60 days of the award announcement in order to receive their award. Non-claimed awards will be redistributed in a future round of the competition or to runners up in the existing competition at the discretion of the program administrators.

Table 1: Award Structure

Award	Prize
1 st place	\$5,000
2 nd place	\$2,500
3 rd place	\$1,000
Top STEM Idea	\$1,000
Runner-up STEM Idea	\$500
Merit Awards	\$500 (5 total)
Jenna Drewer Noll Collaboration Award	\$1,000
Mosaic Award	\$500
Military-affiliated/Veteran Award	\$250
TOTAL AWARDS	\$14,250

For a winning team submission, the cash prize can be divided equally (rounded to the nearest dollar) among the members. Each member will need to complete the required paperwork.

Business Sector Awards

In addition to overall competition prizes, select teams may be eligible for Business Sector Awards, which recognize ventures that align with specific themes, populations, or areas of impact. These awards highlight innovation, collaboration, and purpose-driven entrepreneurship.

- Jenna Drewer Noll Cross-Collaboration Award (Sponsored by William Burke) - \$1,000
Awarded to the top team representing two or more Salisbury University schools. This award honors the memory of former student worker and graduate assistant Jenna Drewer Noll, who was deeply passionate about entrepreneurship, collaboration, and innovation across disciplines.
- STEM Award (Sponsored by F3 Tech) - \$1,000 Top Prize | \$500 Runner-Up
A technology-focused business sector award designed to encourage applications featuring STEM-based, technical, or innovative solutions, including software, hardware, scientific, or engineering-driven ventures. First preference will be given to ideas related to biotechnology (F3Tech's industry sector).

- **Mosaic Award (Sponsored by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion) - \$250–\$500**
Recognizes entrepreneurs whose business models are created by or intentionally serve historically underserved or underrepresented communities. Awardees provide accessible products or services that foster inclusion, strengthen community connections, and put the “unity” into community.
- **Military-affiliated/Veteran Award (Sponsored by Salisbury University Veterans Affairs) - \$250**
Awarded to a team whose venture supports, serves, or is led by members of the veteran or military-affiliated community, or addresses challenges faced by military-connected populations.

Deadlines

Application Opens: February 2, 2026 at 12:01 AM

Final Deadline for Submissions: April 6, 2026 at 11:59 PM

Students can submit or update their materials at any point during this period. The system will be closed at 11:59 PM on the final deadline date. Students are encouraged to submit well before the final deadline to avoid internet connectivity or system problems. Late, mailed, or emailed submissions will not be accepted for any reason.

Evaluation Rubric

Question	Category	Areas to Consider	Point Value
1	Communication	The student tells a compelling story, uses effective verbal and non-verbal communication, and presents a high-quality poster to support their pitch.	20 pts max
2	Problem	Pitch clearly identifies a relevant problem and defines who specifically has the problem (market segmentation). Student can articulate the severity of pain points, root causes, and impacts using appropriate qualitative and quantitative references.	25 pts max
3	Solution	The solution is feasible, innovative or novel, and clearly described. Solutions should be viable from business, market, and technology perspectives. Solutions should solve root causes and address key pain points mentioned in the problem definition.	25 pts max
4	Market	Student demonstrates an awareness of relevant industry trends and can identify at least one major competitor as well as how their solution is differentiated or will effectively compete in the marketplace. Student articulates quantitative measures of market size, growth or other measures of market potential.	20 pts max
5	Money	Student presents a clear “Ask” and describes what those funds could be used for to mature their idea. Student is able to identify basic financial information such as pricing and major elements of startup costs.	10 pts max

Scoring

Applications and pitches will be evaluated by a panel of industry experts. A scoring rubric (see above) will be used to rank submissions. The top-ranking submissions will be evaluated further by the entrepreneurship team, and winners will be selected. All decisions made by the panel is final and scored rubrics will not be shared with competitors.

Submission Requirements

- **Online Application:** Students will complete an online application that includes a background profile, contact information, and key elements of their business idea.

- **Poster Submission requirements:**
 - Students will create a poster for their business addressing the problem, solution, market analysis, competitive advantage, marketing plan, general pricing and cost information, and a use of competition funds if you were to win. Students will upload their poster into their Idea Factory Competition Application.
A [template](#) is provided on the website to get them started on this poster. Note – If using the template provided, **PLEASE** personalize this to your business including but not limited to changing the information, colors, and images included on the template.
 - Posters need to be printed prior to competition day in order to participate. Complimentary poster printing is available through *Poster Printing*.
- **Poster Printing Instructions:**
 1. Reserve your poster printing appointment time by April 13th, by emailing posterprinting@salisbury.edu with the following information:
 - Name
 - Your request: to schedule a poster printing time for your Idea Factory Competition Poster.
 - Requested day/time (available printing hours, are usually in the afternoon or evenings)
 - Subject of your email: “Poster Printing request”.
 2. On your appointment date, bring your file to Poster Printing in Conway Hall (TETC) 352. Prints are limited to one copy and take approximately 20 minutes to print. It’s important to arrive on time for appointments. If you arrive late, you could lose your spot, get bumped to the waiting list, or risk not being able to print your poster.
 3. Purchase a tri-fold display board (48” x 36” in size) at Wal-Mart or Dollar General.
 4. Mount your poster onto a tri-fold board.

Questions? Contact Mike Camillo at - 410-677-0031

Resources

- **Competitor Readiness Training**
Prepare for success with our Competitor Readiness Training! This online program provides step-by-step guidance for developing your idea, refining your pitch, and understanding what judges are looking for. It’s designed to help students feel confident and fully equipped for the competition. Access the training here: [Join the Online Entrepreneurship Competition Workshop Here](#)
- **Startup Studio**
Startup Studio is a club that fosters entrepreneurship and small business development on the SU campus and within the Salisbury community. The club brings together innovative minds to share ideas, collaborate, and gain mentorship through networking, pitch practice, and business planning support. Members benefit from professional development, one-on-one guidance, and opportunities to participate in competitions and local entrepreneurial initiatives. Learn more and get involved: <https://www.salisbury.edu/academic-offices/business/entrepreneurship/ceo.aspx>
- **BEACON**
Our Competitions team is located in the BEACON office suite in **PH 100**. The team provides a variety of entrepreneurship resources, including mentorship on your business application, poster development, and pitch practice. We also offer workshops to guide you through every step of the competition process. Stop by to learn how we can help you bring your idea to life!

Event Information

The Idea Factory Poster Competition concludes with a live, in-person judging event. All competitors are expected to review the following details carefully and come prepared. Missing information sessions or workshops does not exempt students from meeting requirements or following these guidelines. The event is exhibition-style with judges circulating to visit student tables. Students will start with a brief elevator pitch, followed by Q&A. This is repeated throughout the morning as judges move from exhibit to exhibit. Generally, you will pitch your idea about 10 times.

Competition Date & Time

- Friday, May 1, 2026
- Check-In: 7:15 a.m. – 7:45 a.m.
- Judging Begins Promptly: 8:00 a.m.
 - Late arrivals may be disqualified or may not be guaranteed full judging time.
- Order of Events:
 - Competitor Check-In
 - Poster Competition Judging
 - Competitor Information Session
 - Poster Display Breakdown
 - Awards Ceremony & Photos

Location

- Perdue School of Business (Salisbury University)
- Check-In Location: First floor, in front of the Perdue Museum
- Competitors will be assigned a designated table upon arrival.

Presentation Format

- Competitors will present at an assigned 6-foot table.
- Each presentation includes:
 - 1-minute pitch
 - Q&A with each judge
- Judges will rotate; competitors must remain at their assigned station for the duration of judging.
- Please plan to arrive early enough to set up your display before judging begins.

What to Wear (Choose One)

You may select the option that best represents you and your business:

- Business Merchandise
(Branded T-shirt, logos, hats—encouraged for teams already selling or promoting a venture)
- Business Casual or Professional

Comfortable shoes are recommended.

What to Bring

Required Materials:

- Printed Poster, attached to a Tri-Fold (science fair style) display board
 - Recommended size: 48" x 36" or any size that fits within your assigned 6-foot table space.
- Method of Attachment
(Tape, adhesive, clips—ensure your poster can be securely displayed.)

Encouraged Materials (Optional but Helpful):

- Marketing or Promotional Materials: Flyers, business cards, brochures, etc.
- Prototype or Proof of Concept: Physical model, prototype, product sample, or design plan.

Event Expectations

- Competitors must remain at their assigned table during judging.
- Displays must be set up and ready by 8:00 a.m.
- All competitors are expected to participate in the Competitor Information Session following judging.
- Posters and materials must be removed at the conclusion of the event.

Website

All participants are encouraged to visit the Idea Factory Competition website, your go-to resource for everything you need to succeed. The site includes a full competition overview, eligibility requirements, important deadlines, downloadable templates and guides, workshop information, and details about awards and prizes.

Reviewing the website early will help you stay organized, prepare a strong submission, and take full advantage of the resources available to support your idea.

👉 Visit: <https://www.salisbury.edu/academic-offices/business/entrepreneurship/idea-factory.aspx>

For Professors

It is strongly recommended to incorporate this competition in the classroom as a learning activity in classes such as business, marketing, innovation, entrepreneurship, etc. Please contact Mike Jensen, Executive Director, mdjensen@salisbury.edu for resources or training materials. See our website for additional information: www.salisbury.edu/entrepreneurship.

Other Competition Rules

- **For-Profit and Nonprofit Ideas:** Not all problems students encounter have a for-profit solution. While most students pitch traditional business startups, students may submit a nonprofit business idea or a social enterprise in their pitch. However, nonprofit models must still be sustainable via grants, donations, or other funding sources.
- **Electronic:** All submissions must be made via the provided web-based information system. Submissions sent by email, mail, or other methods will not be reviewed.
- **Generative AI tools,** such as ChatGPT, may be used as part of a student's creative process. However, all submitted text and narrative must be the student's own self-generated content. Stealing of other people's ideas or pitches is prohibited. Plagiarism (i.e. using someone else's written material without proper citation) or any form of intellectual property theft is prohibited.

Violations of these rules will result in a rejection of the application and all involved competitors will be permanently barred from competing in all future competitions for which the student would otherwise be eligible. This will apply to all team members on a team found to be in noncompliance even if an individual student team member was not directly involved in the violation. The competition administrator has sole discretion in making a determination without a right by the student or other stakeholders to appeal. By submitting an application, all competitors and their supporters agree to abide by these terms and conditions.

Questions

Please contact Heather Brooks at hmbrooks@salisbury.edu or 410-546-4325.