34th WERC ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN CONTEST
NM STATE
COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING
NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY

INNOVATING FOR A GREENER PLANET

2024 CONTEST APRIL 7-10
IN LAS CRUCES, NM

Justin Bartels Photography

View from the Organ Mountains toward the Dona Ana Mountains, Las Cruces, NM.

2024 Flash Talk Guide

Items updated since Team Manual Publication:

- Information about Flash Talk logistics (rooms, staging, timing, A/V equipment, etc.)

- Judge descriptions, including the addition of Angel Investors and a separate judging team for the Final Round.

- Teams will omit reference to their university during the competition.

- Additional time was added between presentations (30 seconds) to give judges sufficient time for scoring

- Slide content was updated and simplified. There is no longer a slide deck template or specific slide requrements

- Teams can sign up to test the slide deck during team registration hours (sign-up sheet at registration booth)

- Due date for slides was extended by one day, to Friday, April 5, 11:59 PM

Flash Talk Competition Guidelines

The Flash Talk competition promotes entrepreneurship as teams pitch a business plan to potential investors and professionals who have experience with start-up companies. It is judged separately from the main contest.

The Flash Talk competition:

- Mandatory 3.5-minute product pitch using a slide deck.
- Prepares students for entrepreneurship as teams pitch their design-contest solution to "investors."
- Scored independently from the other stages of the contest.
- Helps satisfy ABET Student Outcome #3: an ability to communicate effectively with a range of audiences.
- Awards cash prizes. No start-up funding will be issued.
- Engages 9 judges to score the competition (3 in Ventanas 1, 3 in Ventanas 3, and 3 in the Final Round).
- Cash Awards: First $1000, Second $750, Third $500, Honorable Mention $250.

Audience

This is a business pitch. Your goal is to present a business plan to your primary audience, potential investors (the Flash Talk judges). Also in attendance will be other Design Contest teams and advisors, main contest judges, and other invited guests, including members of local environmental groups. See Resources below for help preparing your business plan and pitch.

Team Identification

Select a name for your team that is independent of your WERC-assigned team name. Since many judges have regional interests, to maintain a level playing field during judging, teams will omit all reference to their university during the competition. Therefore, university names, colors, logos, slogans, etc. should not be included in any slides or clothing. School colors should not be worn during the presentation. WERC badges should be removed.

Flash Talk Judges

The Flash Talks are scored by a team of judges who are independent from the main Design Contest. Some are actual Angel Investors, and others are professionals with business acumen who will judge the viability for your plans to market your process/product. The judges' first exposure to your team's project will be during the Flash Talk presentations. They will not read your team's technical report prior to the Flash Talk Competition. Angel investors may wish to further explore your business plans with your team after the contest.

During the First Round, teams will be separated into two separate and comparable rooms to present their talk to a set of 3-4 judges per room. The judges will recommend the top two entries from their room to compete in the Final Round. The Final Round will be conducted in front of all teams in the main banquet hall. It will be judged by a fresh set of judges, with a total of 3-5 judges scoring the Final Round.

Judges may include:
- Angel investors
- Staff of Arrowhead Center an NMSU Community for Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- Business faculty, engineering faculty, and college administrators
- New Mexico environmental proponents (may include business owners, students, etc.)

Flash Talks

Logistics
- Round 1: Teams will be assigned to either Ventanas 1 or Ventanas 3.
- The presenting team will set up their slide deck while the next team gets "on deck."
- Timing for both Rounds:
  - 3.5-minute presentation
  - 2 minutes Q & A
  - 2 minutes for scoring (while the next team gets on deck).
- After all teams have presented, there will be a break for dinner. During dinner, the teams invited to compete in the Final Round will be handed a Golden Envelope and will draw to determine presentation order.
- The Final Round will be presented on the center stage of the Ventanas Ballrooms.
- The winners of the competition will be announced on Wednesday, 10 April, 2024. At that time, the teams' universities will be acknowledged.

Slide Content

The Cover Slide is the only required slide. To be competitive, address each topic listed below with the goal of convincing a philanthropist to invest in your technology. The bulk of the information will be taken from your TEA. You may add additional topics, if desired.

Cover Slide. Include title, presenter(s), names of all team members, and a team name that omits reference to your university.

Slide Topics (no more than 7 slides; slides may be organized in any order)

- What is your product and why is it important? (Show an image/video of product)

- What is your business strategy and how will you market your product? (Subscription? One-time fee? Royalties? Build the company then sell it off? Charge consulting fees?)

- How much is this industry worth and what percentage will you compete for?

- How much $$ to get started? How long to profitability?

- Why you? What is your competitive advantage?

Flash Talk Slide Presentation Specifications

- *Slide Format:* PDF format (to preserve formatting during the presentation). Other formats will be considered if the team has special needs. Contact werc@nmsu.edu to arrange.

- *Slide Submission: Due 11:59 PM Friday, April 5.* Upload Flash Talk slides to wercteams.nmsu.edu or send to werc@nmsu.edu via WeTransfer.

- *Slide Deck Check:* Your slide deck will be pre-loaded onto a WERC computer before you arrive on Sunday. At the registration desk, you may sign up (Sunday 1 – 4 pm) to preview your slides prior to the Flash Talks.

- *Slide Deck:* Only the Cover Slide is required. Teams may use up to 7 slides for the Slide Topics (see above).

- *Slideshow operation:* You may provide a teammate to advance the slides or request a WERC moderator. The presenter will say, "Next" to have the slide advanced.

- *Slide Format:*
  - Type: Minimum of 24-point type for the body, 36-40 for headings. Viewable from 60' away.
  - Aspect ratio: 16:9
  - Use high-contrast colors to ensure readability from long distances.
  - Team Info: At the same location on every slide, place team name and brief project title to help judges keep track of your team. Omit university references. Point size for this may be smaller than 24 points.
  - Slides may contain simple animations and may contain original video created by the team. If used, a video should not be longer than 1 minute. All animations and video must be easy to enable by the slide operator. If in doubt, contact WERC in advance and double-check on Sunday afternoon.

Other Presentation Guidelines

- *Dress:*
  - Dress in a professional manner.
  - Do not include reference to your university in your clothing, including school colors or other decorations.
  - Remove your WERC badge for your presentation. It may get in your way, be distracting for the audience if it gets knocked out of place, and would reveal your team's university.
  - Presenters may wish to bring a change of clothes for Sunday: One set for travel and bench-scale setup and the second set of professional dress to change into for the Flash Talks.

- *Presenter(s):* We recommend that no more than two people present the Flash Talk. More are allowed, but be wise and keep it to a minimum.

- *Presentation setup:*
  - Round 1: Teams will stand on the floor in front of/beside the screen.
  - Final Round: Teams will stand on a stage in front of/beside the screen
  - Laser Pointers: You may bring your own laser pointer. Please see images on next page to determine need. Note that the screen will be higher in Round 1, relative to the person presenting, than it will be in the Final Round. All teams will experience a similar room-adjustment for the Final Round.
  - Stage space: There will be no podium available for either round. This will allow the presenter(s) to move freely and engage with the audience.
  - Microphones: Round One: One lapel mic and two hand-held mics will be available for your use.
    Final Round: Two lapel mics and two hand-held mics will be available for your use.

- *Non-presenting Team members:* Those who are not presenting will support their team from the audience. They may be acknowledged during the presentation, if desired.

- *Timing:* A large digital count-down timer will be placed to help you keep track of time. The clock begins to run as soon as the presenter begins speaking. The clock will signal the end of the 3.5-minute period, indicating that the presentation has ended. There is a point deduction for going over time.

## Resources for helping you prepare a successful business pitch:

1. *Video: Tips to preparing a successful 3-minute pitch:* "Startup guide: A Winning 3-Minute Startup Pitch" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6bewrSolcY

2. *Business Plan Builder: Tory Burch Foundation.* *They provide templates for helping you create a business plan, which is the backbone of the information you will need in your presentation. In the MS Word version, the most helpful information starts on p. 12:* https://www.toryburchfoundation.org/business-plan-builder/#classic-business-plan

Presentation venue:

Ventanas Ballrooms 1, 2, and 3, open. This is the view of the open ballrooms. Presenters stand on the elevated center stage (Ventanas 2) for the Final round. Note stair access to center stage (center projection screen). Partitions will be closed to separate Ventanas Ballrooms 1, 2, and 3 for Round 1. Partitions will be open for the Final Round.
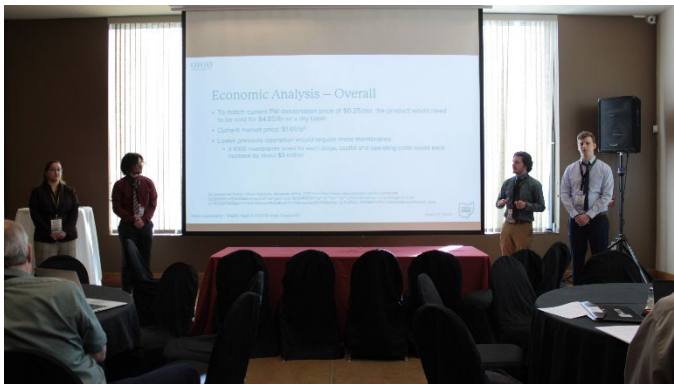
Setup for Round 1, Ventanas 1. Presenters stand on floor. Note the standing height relative to the screen. The judges table (red table cloth) will either not be in the room or will be set further from the presenters.

Setup for Round 1, Ventanas 3. Presenters stand on floor. Note the standing height relative to the screen. The judges table (red table cloth) will either not be in the room or will be set further from the presenters.

Setup for Final Round: Students on the center stage in Ventanas ballrooms. Note that the partitions are open for the Final Round, allowing presenters to address all contest participants in this very wide room. Presenters stand on the stage. The podium will be removed. Note the standing height relative to the screen.

Hints for Preparing for the Flash Talks
Copied (with minor deletions) from 2024 Team Manual

The Flash Talks are scored independently from the other stages of the contest, making it possible for a team to win first place in the Flash Talk Competition and not place in the main four-stage Design Contest.

1. Convince a company to invest in your technology. Although you are "selling" your design, remember that it is not enough to give a good sales pitch–make sure that you have engineering, cost, and scale-up data to back up your claims.

2. Consider your audience. Judges include investors, engineers, and community environmentalists.
    a. The event emphasis is on entrepreneurship, so the judges and rubric will be strongly stacked in that direction.
    b. A primary goal of the Flash Talks is for you to demonstrate that you can speak to a wide range of audiences.
    c. Define it! If a 6th grader would not be familiar with it, you need to clarify it. Define it, explain it, and repeat the explanations if they are key to your topic. ***Define acronyms before using them***!

3. Engage the audience.
    a. Make eye contact with audience members (or at least look at their eye level, and not above heads).
    b. Be interesting. Vary your vocal tone and inflections. Brighten your eyes. Be excited about your solution.

4. Present a motivating introduction: What is this about? Why this is important? Attract people's attention and make your audience care about your solution–Show how it makes an impact.

5. Answer the primary judging questions: 1) Why should I care? 2) Why should I hire your team?

6. Build anticipation of your solution.

7. Structure your presentation to tell a story: ensure it has a strong beginning, middle, and end. Include stories that will engage the audience, if it doesn't take you too far off track of your primary objectives.

8. Emphasize only one or two main points (do not try to throw all of the details at your audience).

9. Fit the talk to your own personality and style. Be who YOU are. Bring in humor, if it comes naturally.

10. Use graphics to tell your story: photos, tables, graphs ("A picture speaks a thousand words").

11. Use props (parts of your Bench-scale apparatus) if you wish and it isn't cumbersome or distracting.

12. Avoid distracting PowerPoint special effects. Use special effects only if they help explain your subject.

13. Use short blocks of text; Use bullet points, do not write in complete sentences; make bullet points grammatically parallel. (It is easier for the audience to "digest" passages that are written in parallel with each other).

14. Time your presentation carefully. Practice over, and over again to ensure that you do not go over time.

15. Practice the introduction and the ending over and over until they flow naturally from you. That will get you off to a smooth start and ensure a strong finish.

16. Write a well-crafted closing statement: give a call to action, a strong summary of benefits, refer back to the original problem statement and describe how the problem can be solved using your technology, etc. Do not close with a weak, "that's all I've got." Or "I'm out of time."

17. Be ready to close at any point near the end of the talk, in case you are close to going over time. Have your final statement in your mind and practice jumping to it from different points near the end of the presentation. Trust us– sometimes the speaker will have an uncontrollable desire to add a "quick" unplanned thought that can shift the presentation off-schedule.

18. We recommend that the closing remarks be timed and that a team member should cue the presenter when the closing remarks must begin, in order to finish within the allotted time.

19. Any comments made after the bell will result in a point penalty.