



GLOBAL
INNOVATION
CHALLENGE
2026

GUIDELINES

**TERMS &
CONDITIONS**

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1. ELIGIBILITY

1.1. Age Requirements

The Global Innovation Challenge is exclusively open to individuals who:

- Are between 18 and 30 years old on or before the submission deadline
- Can provide official government-issued identification to verify age
- Represent the primary driving force behind their project's development

1.2. Leadership by Young People

Entrants must be able to demonstrate that young people hold a majority stake (51% or more) in the group or startup behind the project, and that clear decision-making authority is held by individuals in the eligible age range. Projects that are part of a larger, established business or nonprofit organisation can not apply.

1.3. Geographic Accessibility

Entrants and projects can be located anywhere in the world.

Country Restrictions

Submissions will NOT be accepted from the following countries, which are subject to UK government financial sanctions:

- Russia
- Syria
- Iran
- Belarus
- North Korea
- Cuba
- Venezuela

1.4. Impact and Mission Requirements

Social Impact Mandate

- Submissions must demonstrate a clear, direct, and positive social or environmental impact
- Must align with at least one United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

Organizational Structure

Submissions are welcome from:

- For-profit ventures
- Nonprofit organizations
- Unregistered initiatives

Registration Status

- The groups or startups submitting the project can be legally registered or unregistered
- If registered, the organization must have been incorporated no earlier than five years before the submission deadline.

1.5. Eligibility Principles

Submissions will be evaluated based on:

- Genuine youth leadership
- Measurable social or environmental impact
- Innovative approach to addressing global challenges
- Potential for meaningful, scalable change

1.6. Disqualification Conditions

Submissions will be immediately disqualified if they:

- Fail to meet age requirements
- Lack clear social impact focus
- Operate in restricted countries
- Are not primarily youth-controlled
- Provide false or misleading information

1.7. Verification Process

- All submissions undergo a comprehensive eligibility check (including age requirements)
- Entrants may be required to provide additional documentation
- Social Shifters reserves the right to verify all submitted information

2. ENTRANTS AND COLLABORATORS

2.1. Entrant Registration

- Each submission must be registered by an individual Entrant
- The Entrant must be the founder, co-founder, or primary leader of the group or startup submitting the project
- In cases of multiple founders, the Entrant must demonstrate clear executive or decision-making authority

2.2. Collaborators

The competition welcomes “collaborators” - individuals who provide the capabilities, perspectives, and accountability required to ensure the best possible project submission.

- Entrants may include unlimited collaborators to the submission
- The submission enables two types of collaborators - “team members” and “advisors”.
- “Team members” must be between the ages of 18 and 30 and be part of the primary driving force behind their project's development - these team members are eligible to participate in the program and enjoy its benefits.
- “Advisors” or mentors can be outside the eligible age range and support the project, but cannot be listed as team members or receive support from Social Shifters.
- Only designated “team members” will be able to collaborate on and edit the submission.

2.3. Entrant Responsibilities

- Providing accurate and complete information about the project
- Ensuring all collaborators understand the competition rules
- Serving as the primary point of contact for competition communications
- Coordinating contributions from collaborators

2.4. Collaborator Diversity

Social Shifters encourages project collaborators that reflect:

- Diverse geographical backgrounds
- Interdisciplinary skills
- Varied perspectives on social impact

Submissions are evaluated on the strength of collective expertise and vision behind the project.

2.5. Primary Contact

The Entrant will be the primary point of contact for:

- Competition communications
- Potential follow-up opportunities
- Grant award processes

3. PARTICIPATION COSTS AND SUPPORT

3.1. Entry Fees

Social Shifters does NOT charge fees for participation.

3.2. Digital Accessibility

The Social Shifters Global Innovation Challenge is conducted entirely online, with no need to travel.

- Entrants must be able to access all competition materials, participate in video calls, and pitch events online.
- Minimum technology requirements include:
 - A laptop or desktop computer with internet access, and a camera and microphone to participate in online calls and events.
 - A stable internet connection to ensure access to all materials and uninterrupted participation in online calls and pitch sessions.

3.3. Submission Assistance

Submission support will be made available to all registered entrants (and their team members), including:

- Guidance documents
- FAQ section
- Support webinars
- Technical assistance

3.4. Access to Non-Financial Support

By submitting an entry, all entrants and named team members will be considered for access to related or follow-up support opportunities that might become available for a period of 24 months following the deadline for submissions. These may include but are not limited to free access to:

- Mentorship
- Skills workshops
- Peer support
- Online learning
- Leadership programs
- Partner product discounts

Access is not automatic but based on competition performance, individual project needs, and the resources to be made available from competition partners.

3.5. Additional Support to Finalists

Shortlisted finalists receive enhanced support, including:

- One-to-one pitch coaching sessions
- Opportunities for additional visibility and publicity
- Access to alumni community resources and support

4. PROJECT SUBMISSION

4.1. Submission Portal

- All submissions must be made through our Global Innovation Challenge portal.
- No alternative submission methods will be accepted

4.2. Completeness of Submission

- Submissions must be 100% complete
- Partial or incomplete submissions will be automatically disqualified
- All required sections must be fully addressed

4.3. Language Requirements

All submission materials (written entries, pitch decks, videos) must be provided in English. Social Shifters cannot accept submissions or provide support in other languages.

4.4. English Proficiency

Entrants must demonstrate sufficient English language skills to effectively communicate their Project's purpose, strategy, and impact throughout the competition. This includes the ability to deliver written and verbal presentations, respond to judges' questions, and engage with mentors or peers.

4.5. Deadline Enforcement

- Only submissions that are complete and have been submitted by the deadline (see website for details) can be considered.
- Entrants assume all risk of damaged, lost, late, incomplete, invalid, incorrect or misdirected submissions.
- No extensions will be granted and submissions received after the deadline will be automatically rejected.

4.6. Multiple Submissions

The competition is based on a single project submission process:

- Each entrant is permitted only one submission.
- Multiple submissions from the same entrant will be automatically disqualified and removed from competition consideration.

Through a single project submission entrants will be eligible to be considered for multiple grant award opportunities. The amount an entrant receives in the competition will not exceed \$15,000 USD.

4.7. Entrant Obligations

Entrants assume full responsibility for:

- Submission accuracy
- Completeness of information
- Timely submission
- Technical challenges during submission

4.8. Intellectual Property

Entrants retain full intellectual property rights, and Social Shifters guarantees:

- Confidential handling of submissions
- Access limited to appointed judges
- No unauthorized distribution of materials

4.9. Usage Rights

By submitting, entrants grant Social Shifters:

- Non-exclusive right to promote in the competition
- Permission to showcase project for educational purposes
- Ability to use anonymized project insights

4.10. Eligibility Checks

All submissions undergo rigorous pre-evaluation verification process that includes:

- Age confirmation
- Project eligibility assessment
- Completeness review
- Authenticity validation

4.11. Grounds for Disqualification

Submissions may be disqualified for:

- Providing false information
- Failing eligibility criteria
- Incomplete or unclear documentation
- Plagiarism or unoriginal content
- Violation of competition guidelines

5. USE OF GENERATIVE AI IN SUBMISSIONS

5.1. Guiding Principles

- Generative AI is viewed as a tool, not a replacement for human creativity
- The core of the submission must represent the entrant's original thinking
- AI should augment, not generate, the primary content
- Greater value placed on entrant experience, insights and entrepreneurial vision

5.2. Permitted AI Usage

Generative AI may be used to:

- Refine language and grammar
- Provide structural suggestions
- Help brainstorm ideas
- Assist in research and background information gathering
- Support technical writing and formatting

5.3. Prohibited AI Practices

Submissions will be disqualified if:

- AI generates the majority of content
- Substantial portions of text are directly copied from AI outputs
- The submission lacks clear human originality and insight
- Critical thinking and personal perspective are absent

5.4. Disclosure Requirements

Entrants must fully disclose AI tool usage in their submission:

- Confirming full disclosure of AI usage
- Affirming submission's original content

- Accepting competition AI guidelines
- Understanding potential consequences of misrepresentation

Submissions will be routinely reviewed at the pre-evaluation stage using software detection tools to identify both AI-generated and AI-refined content in text.

5.5. Evaluation of AI-Assisted Submissions

Submissions using AI will be evaluated on:

- Authenticity of submission
- Consistency of voice and perspective
- Originality of core concept
- Depth of personal insight and understanding
- Quality of critical thinking
- Demonstration of personal expertise

6. COMPETITION PROCESS AND EVALUATION

6.1. Key Dates and Milestones

Please check our website (www.socialshifters.co) for the full timeline with key dates and milestones.

6.2. First-Phase Scoring

- Submissions are reviewed and scored by a global panel of over 3,000 volunteer judges from leading companies
- Each submission is evaluated by a minimum of 5 independent judges
- Objective scoring is based on predefined criteria
- Judges from different backgrounds ensure comprehensive assessment

6.3. Scoring Criteria

1. Impact

- Potential to solve demonstrable social or environmental challenges
- Alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Measurable positive outcomes
- Depth and breadth of proposed impact

2. Feasibility

- Realistic implementation strategy
- Resource requirements and availability
- Technical and operational viability
- Clear path to execution

3. Innovation

- Originality of approach
- Breakthrough solution to identified problem
- Creative thinking and novel methodologies
- Potential to disrupt existing approaches

4. Scalability

- Potential for expansion and broader implementation
- Adaptability to different contexts
- Long-term sustainability
- Ability to create systemic change

6.4. Shortlisting Process

- A minimum of 5 projects will be shortlisted per grant award
- Selection is based on judge scores and alignment with sponsor interests

6.5. Finalist Pitching

- Finalists will pitch to an expert judging panel
- Pitch format: Video call presentation
- Judges will evaluate:
 - Presentation quality
 - Depth of project understanding
 - Communication skills
 - Response to challenging questions

6.6. Winner Selection

- Final selection is made by an expert judging panel
- Considerations include:
 - Pitch performance
 - Original submission scores
 - Sponsor preferences
 - Potential for meaningful impact
- Judges' decisions are final and binding

6.7. Post-Evaluation Feedback

- Constructive feedback will be provided to finalists on request
- Focus of feedback will be on developmental insights
- Guidance will be offered for future improvement

7. PUBLICITY

7.1. Finalist Public Recognition

Finalists will be publicly acknowledged and required to agree to:

- Use of their names
- Sharing of photographs
- Disclosure of country of residence
- Basic project information release

7.2. Media and Promotional Cooperation

Finalists are expected to:

- Cooperate with competition promotional activities
- Provide assets for marketing materials
- Participate in potential media interactions
- Support competition storytelling efforts

7.3. Public Exposure

By participating, entrants consent to:

- Potential public showcasing of their project
- Use of project details for promotional purposes
- Media coverage and public recognition

7.4. Privacy Considerations

Personal data collected during submission will be:

- Used solely for competition purposes
- Handled in compliance with data protection regulations
- Not sold or shared with unauthorized third parties

Participants have rights to request information about their stored data, request data removal, and understand how their information is used.

7.5. Official Communication Channels

Social Shifters controls official communication relating to the competition and entrants should:

- Refer media inquiries
- Maintain consistency in project messaging
- Represent the competition professionally

7.6. Social Media and Public Statements

Finalists and awardees are encouraged to:

- Share information about the competition journey responsibly
- Use designated competition hashtags
- Respect confidentiality agreements
- Avoid premature disclosure of sensitive information

7.7. Impact Storytelling

Winning projects may be featured in:

- Competition highlight reels
- Impact reports
- Social media channels
- Partner organization communications
- Fundraising and awareness efforts

7.8. Publicity Consent and Opt-Outs

- Entrants should read the publicity terms before submission
- Some basic publicity is mandatory for all finalists
- Detailed opt-out processes will be communicated
- Participants can discuss specific concerns with organizers

8. GRANT AWARDS

8.1. Award Range

- Multiple grant awards are available
- Individual grant amounts vary from \$1,000 to \$15,000 USD
- Different sponsors may offer category/themed awards or targeted grants
- The total number and specific values vary by sponsor
- Awards will be continually added and updated throughout the competition

8.2. Eligibility for Awards

Only projects completing the full competition process are eligible:

- Must submit a fully eligible application
- Must be selected for final pitching
- Must be chosen by the expert judging panel

8.3. Approved Use of Funds

Grant funding should be used to advance your project as outlined in your submission and final Grant Agreement.

You can use the funds for:

- Project development and implementation
- Equipment or materials
- Technical resources
- Marketing and communications
- Team capacity building
- Other project-related costs

Important restrictions:

- Maximum 10% can be used for travel expenses
- Funds must align with your proposed budget
- Money should directly support project goals
- Personal expenses are not permitted

8.4. Financial Responsibilities

Awardees are responsible for:

- Applicable taxes
- Additional project-related expenses not covered by the grant
- Providing comprehensive financial reporting
- Demonstrating proper use of funds
- Maintaining detailed financial records
- Submitting progress updates for 12 months following award

8.5. Grounds for Withdrawal of Awards

Social Shifters may withdraw awards if an awardee:

- Uses false information, fraud or corruption to obtain the award
- Was ineligible at the time of submission
- Fails to meet competition obligations
- Violates competition terms and conditions
- Does not claim the award within 12 months

8.6. Payment Process

- Payment made within one month of completing grant awards process
- Processed via bank transfer in an agreed currency
- Typically paid in a single installment
- Contingent on timely submission of required documentation

8.7. Post-Award Reporting

Awardees are expected to:

- Provide project progress updates for a period of 12 months
- Participate in follow-up activities
- Maintain communication with Social Shifters
- Contribute to competition's impact reporting

8.8. Follow-on Support

Beyond financial support, awardees may be eligible to receive:

- Mentorship opportunities
- Peer support
- Continued access to competition resources
- Potential future funding opportunities

9. DISCLAIMERS AND LIABILITY

9.1. General Disclaimer

Competition Limitations

Social Shifters provides the Global Innovation Challenge "as is" with no explicit or implied guarantees are made about:

- Competition outcomes
- Potential success of submitted projects
- Future opportunities for participants

Participant Understanding

Participants acknowledge that:

- Participation does not guarantee funding
- Competition support is provided voluntarily
- Results depend on individual project merits

9.2. Liability Limitations

Scope of Responsibility

Social Shifters shall not be liable for:

- Direct or indirect damages arising from competition participation
- Any losses incurred during the competition process
- Technical failures or interruptions
- Incomplete or unsuccessful submissions

Participant Risk

- Participants enter the competition at their own risk
- Personal and project-related decisions remain the sole responsibility of the participants
- Social Shifters provides a platform, not a guaranteed outcome

9.3. Indemnification

Participant Agreements

By participating, entrants agree to:

- Indemnify Social Shifters against any claims
- Protect the organization from potential legal actions
- Take full responsibility for their submissions and actions

Specific Indemnification Clauses

Participants shall indemnify Social Shifters from claims related to:

- Intellectual property disputes
- Inaccurate or misleading information
- Violations of competition guidelines
- Third-party rights infringements

9.4. Competition Modification and Cancellation

Organizational Rights

Social Shifters reserves the right to:

- Modify competition rules at any time
- Suspend or cancel the competition
- Alter timelines or evaluation processes
- Adjust award structures

Reasons for Modification

Potential grounds for changes include:

- Insufficient quality of submissions
- Technical difficulties
- Funding constraints
- Unforeseen circumstances
- Regulatory requirements

Force Majeure

Social Shifters is not responsible for competition disruptions caused by:

- Natural disasters
- Pandemics
- Government actions
- Technological failures
- Other extraordinary circumstances

9.5. Withdrawal and Disqualification

Participant Withdrawal

Participants may withdraw by:

- Submitting official withdrawal notification
- Providing clear reasons for withdrawal
- Ensuring no pending obligations

Disqualification Grounds

Social Shifters may disqualify participants for:

- Violation of competition guidelines
- Providing false or misleading information
- Unethical behavior
- Compromising competition integrity
- Failure to meet eligibility criteria

9.6. Legal Jurisdiction

Governing Law

- The competition is governed by the laws of Scotland
- Any disputes will be resolved in Scottish Courts
- International participants agree to these terms

Dispute Resolution

- Informal resolution of disputes is encouraged
- Mediation should be the primary dispute resolution method
- Formal legal action should be considered a last resort

APPENDIX: DEFINITIONS

“Entrant”

An individual who registers to participate in the Global Innovation Challenge. To be an Entrant, you must:

- Be between 18 and 30 years old at the time of submission
- Be the founder, primary leader, or co-founder of the group or startup that is making the submission
- Have clear decision-making authority within the group or startup

“Team Member”

An individual who is part of the group or startup submitting a project. Team Members:

- Must be between 18 and 30 years old
- Must be part of the primary driving force (group) behind their project's development
- Are recognized as part of the official team but are not considered primary Entrants
- Are eligible to participate in the program and enjoy its benefits

“Advisor”

An individual expert who collaborates on the submission. Advisors or mentors:

- Can be of any age
- Contribute essential skills, perspectives, and support to the project's development
- Will not be recognised as part of the project team or eligible for support

“Collaborator”

Any individual formally linked to the submitted Project. Collaborators:

- Contribute to the success of the submission
- Will be named on the submission
- Can be team members or advisors
- May be eligible or ineligible for wider support through the program

“Project”

Social impact or startup activities that are the focus of the Entrant's submission. A Project must:

- Be submitted by an eligible Entrant
- Have a clearly defined scope and activities
- Be developed and delivered by youth-led group or startup
- Have a clear and demonstrable social or environmental impact

“Youth-Led”

A designation that reflects the level of youth ownership, control and decision-making in a project. For the competition, "Youth-Led" means:

- Young people (18-30 years old) hold a majority stake (51% or more) in the group or startup behind the submission
- Youth have clear decision-making authority in leadership, operations, and finances
- Projects that are subdivisions of larger organizations are only eligible if the youth team has complete autonomy over strategy, operations, and budget

“Startup”

A new or emerging venture focused on creating social and/or environmental impact. Characteristics include:

- Registered for less than five years
- May be for-profit or nonprofit
- Led, owned, and controlled by young people
- Focused on innovative solutions to societal or environmental challenges

“Impact”

The positive social or environmental change a Project aims to create. Impact must:

- Be demonstrable and measurable
- Clearly explain the potential for meaningful change
- Align with one or more UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Show a direct and substantive approach to addressing a specific challenge

“Submission”

All materials and information provided to officially enter the competition, including:

- Completed submission form
- Supporting videos or documentation
- Pitch deck

“Finalist”

An Entrant (and their Project) that has successfully passed initial evaluation stages. Finalists:

- Receive additional coaching and support
- Are invited to pitch for grant awards
- Represent the top-tier projects in the competition

“Awardee”

An Entrant (and their Project) selected as a winner and recipient of a grant award. Awardees:

- Are chosen from among the Finalists
- Receive financial support for their project
- Commit to specific reporting and follow-up responsibilities
- Must use funds in alignment with their original project proposal



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