

**VILLAGE
VENTURES™
BUSINESS PITCH
COMPETITION****INFORMATIONAL PACKET**

What is Village Ventures™?

The goal of ETV's 4th Annual Village Ventures Pitch Competition is to empower VEN Business Owners to grow their companies more successfully by:

- Creating visibility for and awareness around their products and services
- Encouraging them to refine their marketing plans and strategies
- Providing them with free access to 1-on-1 strategic business counseling and pitch coaching funded by ETV, and
- Awarding monetary prizes to the finalists.

Top 5 finalists will present their pitch live on February 7, 2026

All Finalists will receive an invitation to the North Star Celebration on February 21 at the Park Avenue Club where the top 3 winners will be announced!

Competition Overview

The Village Ventures Pitch Competition has two phases. In the first phase, all participants will be evaluated to select five finalists to pitch live for cash prizes in the second phase.

What do you need to submit?

- Executive Summary (maximum 3 pages/slides)
 - Background information on you/your business (including average annual revenue over the past 3 years)
 - Business/Marketing Plan
 - Specific plans for how you intend to use the cash award to grow, sustain, or enhance your business if awarded

Official Rules and Terms will be provided upon payment of competition fees.

- 60-90 second video introducing yourself and your business, including how you intend to use the cash award for your business
- Your photo (and product or location photos if applicable)
- Completion of a VEN Business Counseling Session

Complete application due at 11:59 PM on January 5, 2026

Eligibility Requirements



Applicants must be eligible to enroll in ETV's Village Empowerment Network™ (VEN) at empowerthevillage.org and be enrolled at the time of application



Work in business full-time with a history of at least \$10,000 in sales/revenue OR investment with a plan to transition to full-time to demonstrate viability



Submit application materials by 1/5/26 to admin@empowerthevillage.org



Pay the \$65 non-refundable application fee until 12/21/25 (\$85 as of 12/22/25).

*Fees will be refunded by ETV if an insufficient number of applications are received to proceed with the competition.

Phase 1: Preliminary Round

Judges will evaluate all participant submissions and select 5 finalists to compete in Phase 2.

Finalists will be announced by February 2nd. All participants must "Save the Date" of February 7th in case they are selected to pitch live.

Phase 2: Final Round

Candidates with the top 5 scores during the Preliminary Round of judging will be asked to present their **business pitch in-person**.

- Up to 3-5 minute pitch followed by Q&A
- No slides, but props are allowed
- Cash prizes to the Top 3 finalists, the top prize will be \$5,000! The first-place winner will also receive 5 hours of brand and marketing consulting

Winners will be announced at the North Star Celebration on February 21!

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COMPETITION****INFORMATIONAL PACKET****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – BUSINESS/MARKETING PLAN****Company Overview (10 Points)**

Brief introduction of your company. Should include business name, location, start date or years in business, owner name(s), structure/entity, etc. Can also include history, mission, vision, and values.

Value Proposition (10 Points)

What is your unique value proposition? A good product satisfies a customer need, want, or desire. What are the key needs, wants, and/or desires that your product(s) or service(s) satisfy for customers? Educate us/inspire us by telling a story explaining why your company adds value and for whom.

Product/Service Description (10 Points)

Briefly describe the products and/or services you offer explaining how they meet consumer's needs/desires in the marketplace.

Target Market (10 Points)

Describe the people you plan to actively market to. They should be the most likely people to purchase your products or services. Estimate the appropriate target market size to ensure you have the time, money, and resources to market to them effectively. A smaller, narrow niche is generally better.

Competitive Advantage (10 Points)

Why should people buy from you vs. a competitor? Who are key competitors? How do you produce goods or deliver services better than your competitors?

Customer Engagement (10 Points)

What are the primary tools and strategies you use to reach your customers? How will you get them to know, like, and trust you?

Investment (10 Points)

If you win the Competition, how will your cash award be invested to take your business to the next level?

Please submit your answers by emailing a PDF file to admin@empowerthevillage.org or by filling in the form on ETV's website by January 5, 2026

OFFICIAL RULES & TERMS

The 2026 ETV Empowerment Summit Village Ventures™ Pitch Competition (the "Competition") deadline for application submissions is January 5, 2026 at 11:59 PM Eastern Time (ET) and ends with the announcement of winners on February 21, 2026. The Competition is a program run by Empower The Village (ETV), a data-driven, nonprofit 501(c)3 organization.

The Competition is open to only legal residents of the fifty (50) United States and the District of Columbia who at the time of entry are independent owners/operators of an eligible for-profit small business (revenue >\$1M) that is domiciled in the fifty (50) United States or District of Columbia which has been in continuous operation selling a product or service, with revenue of at least \$5,000 annually. In order to be considered an eligible "small business" for purposes of this Competition, the business must meet all of the following criteria:

- a) Entrant/owner must be at least eighteen (18) years of age at the time of Entry Submission;
- b) The business must be currently active with total revenue to date totaling at least \$5,000 annually;
- c) Applicants must be eligible to enroll in ETV's Village Empowerment Network™ (VEN) at empowerthevillage.org and be enrolled at the time of application;
- d) The business must be in good standing as of the date of Submission and must remain so through the end of the Contest;

ETV shall determine, in its sole discretion, whether an entry meets the eligibility criteria to participate in the Competition. ETV's decisions regarding eligibility and all other aspects of the Competition are final and binding. This competition is subject to all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and is void in all geographic locations where prohibited by law.

To enter the Competition, entrants ("Entrants") are required to visit the Empower The Village website located at www.empowerthevillage.org (the "Competition Site"), register for the Village Empowerment Network (VEN) program, and pay the entry fee acknowledging the acceptance of these Official Rules & Terms by 11:59PM on January 5, 2026 (the "Entry Deadline"). Any extensions are in the sole discretion of ETV and will be announced if applicable. Entrants will be required to review the official rules, submit their Executive Summary, video, and photos as provided in the informational packet and/or on the ETV website.

Except where prohibited, entry in the Competition constitutes each Entrant's consent to the publication of their name, business name, website, images, social media profiles, as well as photos and videos captured or submitted as part of participation in the Competition. It also provides consent for revenue and other business data submissions to be aggregated and reported on for research and statistical purposes.

By entering the Competition and providing an email address and telephone number, each Entrant grants ETV express permission to send Entrant emails or texts related to the Competition, including, but not limited to, notification of Finalists, Winners and a follow-up email in order to gather feedback regarding the Competition to be used in the planning and design of future Competitions.

OFFICIAL RULES & TERMS

ETV considers all submitted financial information and growth plan strategies confidential and treats them accordingly. However, the information may be aggregated, analyzed, and communicated independent of any reference to a particular company or companies for research, marketing, and educational purposes.

Limit: one (1) Entry per business.

Awards are non-transferable. All details of any prize not specified herein shall be determined solely by ETV. By accepting an Award, each Winner acknowledges compliance with these Official Rules. All federal, state, local or other tax liabilities arising from this Contest are the sole responsibility of each Winner, respectively. All other expenses relating to acceptance of an award, including but not limited to taxes and any other expenses not specified herein are the sole responsibility of each Winner. Award conditions may be added or modified by ETV, in its sole discretion. Acceptance of an Award constitutes permission for the ETV and its designees to use each Winner's name, photographs, entry material, other likenesses and biographical information for advertising, promotional or trade purposes, including but not limited to online announcements, in commerce and in all media worldwide without limitation or additional compensation, except where prohibited by law.

A Winner may waive its right to receive the Award. The Award is non-assignable and non-transferable. No substitutions may be made by the Winner. Prior to receiving the Award, Winners must execute a W-9 tax form verifying their tax identification number. Winners may be required, as instructed by ETV, to complete and sign a liability and publicity release (except where prohibited by law). Failure to sign and return any of these documents or to comply with any term or condition of these Official Rules may result in an Winner's disqualification, the forfeiture of its interest in the Award, and, at ETV's discretion, the presentation of the Award to a substitute recipient. An Award not won and/or claimed by a Winner and not awarded to a substitute recipient by ETV in accordance with these Official Rules will remain the property of ETV. Payment of federal, state and local taxes and fees due, if any, are the sole responsibility of the Winner.

ETV reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to disqualify any Entrant at any time that it finds to be acting in violation of these Official Rules; or to be acting in an inappropriate or disruptive manner, or with intent to annoy, abuse, threaten or harass any other person.

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Entries submitted into the Competition (“Submitted Entries”) must be consistent with the Empower The Village Mission, Strategy and Values and ETV reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to reject and/or disqualify any entries at any time that ETV deems to be hateful, slanderous, libelous, violent, obscene, defamatory, discriminatory (based on age, race, gender, religion, natural origin, physical disability, sexual orientation or political affiliation), profane, offensive, lewd, sexually explicit, pornographic, false, misleading, deceptive, self-mutilating (e.g. relating to murder, the sales of weapons, cruelty, abuse, etc.), illegal (computer hacking, underage drinking, etc.), threatening, harassing, or otherwise inconsistent with its editorial standards, audience expectations, or reputational interests or that contain images, words or symbols widely considered offensive to individuals of a certain race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or socioeconomic group, or that ETV believes may violate any applicable law or regulation or the rights of any third party or may subject the Competition, ETV, or ETV's advertisers, clients, or customers to controversy, negative publicity, scorn, or ridicule. For purposes of this paragraph, Submitted Entries include content on the Entrant's website and social media sites.

Should ETV determine, in its sole discretion, that any announced Winner has violated any of the prohibitions contained in these Official Rules or should be disqualified for any other reason, ETV shall have no obligation to award a Grant to such Entrant.

As a condition of entry, ETV reserves the right to in its sole discretion disqualify any entrant if ETV determines that awarding the prize to such Entrant might reflect negatively on the ETV's image and/or reputation.

By participating in the Competition, each Entrant releases and holds ETV, its business partners, other sponsors and each of their directors, officers, employees, representatives, and agents harmless from and against any claims, costs, injuries, losses or damages of any kind arising out of or in connection with the Competition or with the acceptance, possession, use of or defect in any Award (including, without limitation, claims, costs, injuries, losses or damages related to personal injuries, death, damage to, loss or destruction of property, rights of publicity or privacy, defamation or portrayal in a false light). ETV is not responsible for any incorrect or inaccurate information, whether caused by technical or human error or otherwise which may occur in the processing of entries or voting in this Competition or in the running of this Competition. ETV will not be responsible for typographical, printing or other errors in these Official Rules or in other materials relating to the Competition.

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If for any reason, the Competition is not capable of running as planned, including but not limited to by reason of fraud, computer virus, worms, bugs, tampering, unauthorized intervention, technical limitations or failures, human error, mistake or any other cause that in the sole opinion of Sponsor could compromise, undermine, corrupt or otherwise affect the security, integrity, fairness, administration, or proper conduct of this Competition, ETV reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to cancel, terminate, modify or suspend the Competition at any time and without notice.

Notwithstanding anything set forth above, to the extent that the preceding release is determined by a tribunal of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, unenforceable or void for any reason, each Entrant agrees that, to the fullest extent permitted by law (i) any and all disputes, claims, and causes of action arising out of or in connection with the Competition, or any awards awarded shall be resolved individually without resort to any form of class action; (ii) any claims, judgments and awards shall be limited to actual out-of-pocket costs incurred by such Entrant, but in no event attorney's fees and no greater than \$1,000; and (iii) under no circumstances will any Entrant be permitted to obtain any award for, and Entrant hereby waives all rights to claim, incidental, punitive or consequential damages.

The construction, validity, interpretation and enforceability of these Official Rules, and all issues and questions relating thereto, along with the rights and obligations of all Entrants and of ETV, shall be governed by, and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of New Jersey, without giving effect to any choice of law or conflict of law rules or provisions. In the event that any provision is determined to be invalid or otherwise unenforceable, such determination shall not affect the validity or enforceability of any other provision, and these Official Rules shall be construed in accordance with their terms as if the invalid or unenforceable provision was not contained therein.

Any specific waiver of any obligation hereunder by ETV does not constitute a general waiver of that obligation nor of any other obligation of Entrant.

Any dispute concerning this Contest shall be submitted to binding arbitration in Morris County, New Jersey within one (1) year from the date that the cause of action arose (or, if multiple cause of actions are involved, from the date that the first cause of action arose), with such arbitration conducted pursuant to the then prevailing rules of the American Arbitration Association. To the fullest extent permitted by law, no arbitration brought pursuant to these Official Rules shall be joined to any other arbitration initiated pursuant to these Official Rules. The cost of arbitration shall be borne equally by both parties.

OFFICIAL RULES & TERMS

By entering this Contest, Entrant grants to ETV, its business partners an exclusive, assignable, royalty-free and irrevocable right and license to edit or otherwise use all materials submitted by Entrant in connection with the Contest, in whole or in part, for any purpose and in any manner or media (including, without limitation, the Internet) now known or hereafter devised, throughout the world in perpetuity, and to license others to do so, without notice and without compensation, royalty, accounting, liability or obligation of any kind to any Entrant. Each Entrant further agrees that it will use its best efforts to have its employees, consultants, volunteers, officers and directors sign any additional licenses or releases that ETV may require.

BY SUBMITTING SUBMISSION MATERIALS, ENTRANTS EACH ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE SUBMISSION MATERIALS, AND ANY OTHER MATERIALS SUBMITTED IN CONNECTION WITH THIS PROGRAM, MAY BE POSTED ON THE ETV'S WEBSITE(S), IN ETV'S SOLE DISCRETION.

ETV reserves the right to edit the Submission Materials and other materials prior to posting them to the website in its sole discretion.

Program Facilitator: Empower The Village; 178 E Hanover Ave, #312, Cedar Knolls, NJ 07927

Attention: Village Ventures Coordinator