

2026-27 Competition Details

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Purpose

Thrown to the Wolves is an innovation competition for area high schools that is inspired by the “Shark Tank” television program. Students will demonstrate critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills by:

1. Developing an innovative project as an entrepreneur
2. Preparing a pitch and business/marketing campaign for that innovation.

Eligibility

High school sophomores, juniors, or seniors from Arkansas are eligible. The sponsor for the student/student group must be a current school employee. Home school students are also eligible to compete.

How the Competition Will Work

The competition takes place in 2 rounds at A-State's Centennial Hall on February 24, 2027.

Starting Round

Teams will present a ninety-second elevator pitch to starting round judges. Judges will then ask questions about the product/business idea. The judges will use rubrics to score each team based on their elevator pitch and the business/marketing plan they submitted. The top-scoring teams will advance to the final round.

Final Round

Students will present a three-minute pitch, prototype, and marketing plan to the judges ("Alphas"). Judges will ask in-depth questions about the product and business/marketing plan. Awards will be presented for 1st, 2nd, 3rd place, and Pack Pick, an award chosen through voting on the day of the competition.

Pack Pick – Show Table

Teams will prepare materials for a showcase table for their business/product idea. One table will be provided to each team and is to be set up the morning of the competition. Event attendees will cast votes for show tables during lunch break. No electricity will be provided for show tables.

Tables are to be set up by event start time.

How the University Will Assist All Participants

We will provide all schools with the tools to help create your business plan along with an electronic copy of the “Think Tank to Shark Tank” curriculum developed by the University of Akron:

<https://uakron.edu/education/think-tank/>.

A-State faculty and Arkansas Small Business Technology Development Center (ASBTDC) representatives will provide video instruction about developing a pitch, developing a business plan, and other helpful topics.

A-State Innovate (“The Garage”) will host weekend and weekday open houses where the buildings are open to participants who would like to use any equipment to develop their prototypes.

The Delta Center for Economic Development will assign each student team a mentor. All mentors are qualified to assist in coaching a team through their business experience or knowledge as professionals.

Program Rules

- Participants may work individually or in groups (maximum of three students per group).
- Participants must prepare a 3-minute elevator pitch, product visual or prototype, and a one- page business plan.
- Participants must send all digital materials and one-page business plan by the deadline of February 5.

Late submissions will result in a point deduction on competition day.

- All group members must contribute, participate, and speak during the presentation.
- All teams must provide at least 2 slides on PowerPoint to be shown during the presentation with no audio.
- All individuals/group members should dress in appropriate attire for the competition.
- Each product or business should have a name.
- All scholarship winners must use their funds within eighteen months post-graduation date (if graduation date changes, contact dced@astate.edu).

Program Timeline

September 1st - October 30th	Registration Open
November 1st - 13th	Pair up teams/students with faculty mentors
November 16th - February 23rd	Mentor assistance to participants
February 5th	Submission of business plans

Prizes

First Prize:

- Marketing package – Development of a business logo and promotional video.
- Mentoring session with a local celebrity innovator or venture capitalist.
- \$1000 cash for the team and \$1000 for the school sponsor's classroom.
- \$500 A-State Scholarship for each team member.
- Free workspace and membership to A-State Innovate for 1 year.
- Free patent help, prototyping development, and manufacturing advice.

Second Prize

- \$500 cash for the team and \$500 for the school sponsor's classroom.
- \$500 A-State Scholarship for each team member.
- Free workspace and membership to A-State Innovate for 1 year.
- Free patent help, prototyping development, & manufacturing advice.

Third Prize

- \$150 cash for the team and \$150 for the school sponsor's classroom.
- \$500 A-State Scholarship for each team member.
- Free workspace and membership to A-State Innovate for 1 year.

Intent to Participate

Registration can be found online [here](#).

You will need the following information to complete the registration:

- School
- Name of Teacher
- Email of Teacher
- Phone Number of Teacher
- Names of all Student Participants
- Emails of all Student Participants
- Grade Level of all Student Participants
- Expected Graduation Date of all Student Participants

1. Describe your Business Idea (product, service provided, and/or unique features).
2. What problem does your business solve, and what value does it provide to its customers?

The teacher and principal are required to sign.



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