NATIONAL AEROSPACE STUDENT SOCIETY
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NDAIE 2026

National Innovation Pitch Challenge

Participant and Judge Guidelines

National Drone & Aerospace Innovation Expo 2026 | Lagos, Nigeria | 27-28 November 2026

This Guide explains how to prepare, assess and progress an Innovation Pitch entry for NDAIE 2026. It complements the binding Innovation Pitch Rulebook.

Key date: Application deadline: 26 September 2026, 23:59 West Africa Time (WAT).

Version: This document applies to the 2026 competition cycle. NASS will announce any approved update clearly through official channels.

About the Innovation Pitch Challenge

The Innovation Pitch Challenge is for teams presenting novel concepts, prototypes, software or hardware solutions that solve real technical or operational problems in aerospace, aviation, drones, robotics, propulsion, avionics, artificial intelligence, sustainability or related emerging technologies. The emphasis is on problem clarity, technical feasibility, innovation, impact and pitch quality.

Eligibility and Team Structure

- Entries are team-based: every team must have 2 to 5 students. Individual entries are not permitted.
- Every member must be 16 to 30 years old at the time of application and enrolled at a Nigerian secondary school, college, polytechnic or university.
- One Team Lead submits the entry and is the official contact. The application must include every member's full name, email address and date of birth.
- Faculty members, supervisors and mentors may advise but cannot be listed as team members or present the entry.

Submission Snapshot

Stage	Who progresses	Required material or activity
Application	All valid entries	Online form, selected category, Executive Project Summary (maximum 300 words) and PDF pitch deck (maximum 10 slides).
Qualification	Qualified projects	Eligible entries are reviewed against the published criteria.
Quarter-finals	40% of qualification	Video submission: a shareable demonstration or prototype walk-through. NASS provides the upload link and detailed instruction.
Semi-finals	10 teams / projects	Virtual presentation before the judging panel.
Finals	Top 5 teams / projects	Final presentation before judges at the Expo. At least one registered team member must attend and represent the entry.

The top three teams in the Finals will be declared winners and recognised at the Expo.

Competition Categories

Every submission must be registered under one primary category. Choose the category that best reflects the core contribution of the work. NASS may reassign an entry where the selected category is clearly unsuitable; category choice does not affect eligibility.

Materials Advancement & Innovative Manufacturing

Physical airframe structures, advanced composites, high-temperature alloys and smart production processes.

Innovation Pitch focus: 3D printing equipment for aircraft components, composite recycling systems, automated inspection tools and lightweight bio-composites.

Autonomous Systems & Smart Avionics

Software algorithms, sensor integration, control systems and electronics for intelligent unmanned and autonomous flight.

Innovation Pitch focus: Inspection or cargo-drone systems, plug-and-play avionics, pilot-assistance software, collision-avoidance radar and anti-jamming hardware.

Infrastructure, Safety & Operational Efficiency

Ground-support systems, airport facilities, safety equipment, maintenance platforms and operational protocols.

Innovation Pitch focus: Autonomous ground-handling vehicles, smart airport logistics, real-time MRO diagnostic platforms and wildlife or bird-strike mitigation systems.

Flight Planning & Air Traffic Management

Route optimisation, airspace scheduling, atmospheric adaptation and integration of emerging aircraft into shared airspace.

Innovation Pitch focus: Real-time flight-path optimisation platforms, fleet-management portals, ATC decision-support systems and micro-weather APIs for low-altitude flight.

Innovative Propulsion Systems & Energy

Energy-conversion systems, power plants, alternative fuels and thermodynamics for speed, range and decarbonisation.

Innovation Pitch focus: Electric or hybrid powertrain kits, modular hydrogen-storage cells, high-voltage aviation power distribution and noise-reduction propulsion accessories.

Building a Strong Entry

- Define a specific, real problem in aerospace or aviation systems; avoid vague claims.
- Show that the team understands existing approaches and why they fall short.
- Explain how the solution works and be honest about development stage, limits, risks and next steps.
- Keep the deck clear: one idea per slide, readable text and useful diagrams, photos or evidence.
- Prepare for direct questions on feasibility, safety, cost, limitations and likely impact.

Evaluation Rubric

Judges score each criterion independently on a 10-point scale. The stated weighting is used to calculate the final weighted score. Rankings are based on the panel average; close ties are resolved by panel discussion.

Criterion	Weight	What judges look for
Clarity of Problem & Solution	25%	A clear, real aerospace or flight challenge and a solution that directly addresses it.
Technical Feasibility & Innovation	25%	Originality, engineering soundness, a realistic technical approach and a credible development stage.
Potential Impact	20%	Likely technical, operational, environmental, social or commercial value if developed further.
Quality of Presentation / Pitch Deck	15%	Slide clarity, delivery, time discipline and the quality of answers during Q&A.
Overall Readiness & Execution	15%	Quality of concept or prototype work, evidence of practical thinking and a realistic roadmap.

Notes for Judges

- Score each criterion independently before forming an overall view.
- Apply the published weights consistently to every entry in the same track.
- Judge the quality of the work presented, not the institution or background of the participant(s).
- For early-stage pitch entries, prioritise clarity of thinking and realism over a finished prototype.
- Record brief private notes to support score consistency and any later feedback.
- Use of generative AI must be disclosed. Consider declared AI use fairly when assessing originality and contribution.

Provisional Competition Timeline

All dates are in West Africa Time (WAT). This is a working timeline for the 2026 cycle and may be adjusted by NASS where operationally necessary. Any approved change will be announced through official NASS channels and sent to the lead applicant or author.

Stage / Activity	What happens	Target date
Applications close	Teams submit their application, 300-word executive summary and pitch deck.	26 September 2026, 23:59 WAT
Qualification	Valid entries are reviewed and qualifying teams are notified.	By 8 October 2026
Quarter-finals	Shortlisted teams submit a two-minute video demonstration or prototype walk-through.	14 October 2026
Semi-finals	Ten shortlisted teams make a virtual presentation.	28 October 2026
Live finals	Five finalist teams present at NDAIE 2026.	27 November 2026
Awards	The top three teams are announced and recognised at the Expo.	28 November 2026

Closing Note

These Guidelines support good preparation and fair evaluation. The Innovation Pitch Rulebook contains the binding eligibility, submission, conduct and legal rules. Where there is a conflict, the Rulebook takes precedence.