



NDAIE 2026

National Innovation Pitch Challenge

Official Rulebook

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

This Rulebook governs the National Innovation Pitch Challenge at the National Drone and Aerospace Innovation Expo 2026 (NDAIE 2026).

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.

1. Status and Scope

This is the official guide for participants, judges and organisers. It sets out the rules, stages, requirements and evaluation process. If there is any conflict with promotional material, earlier information or the accompanying Guidelines, this Rulebook takes precedence.

2. Who May Enter

1. Entries must be submitted by teams of 2 to 5 students. Individual entries are not permitted.
2. Every team member must be 16 to 30 years old at the time of application and currently enrolled at a Nigerian secondary school, college, polytechnic or university.
3. The Team Lead is the official contact and must submit the full team roster, including each member's name, email address and date of birth.
4. Organisers, judges and members of the NASS Research and Innovation Committee may not compete.
5. Faculty members, supervisors and mentors may advise, but cannot be listed as entrants or present the entry.

3. Application and Submission Process

- One entry may be submitted by an individual team or team combination only; duplicate or materially similar entries may be rejected.
- The Team Lead must submit the official online form by 23:59 WAT on 26 September 2026.
- The form requires a project title, one primary category, a maximum 300-word Executive Project Summary and a PDF pitch deck of no more than 10 slides.
- The summary must explain the problem, proposed solution, technical approach and likely impact.
- Late, incomplete, duplicate or materially inaccurate applications may be rejected.
- After successful submission, the Team Lead receives a confirmation email and entry reference. Use that reference in future official communication.

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.

4. Selection, Qualification and Final

Qualification: All eligible submissions are initially screened and assessed against the published rubric. Teams selected at this point become qualified projects.

Quarter-finals: Forty per cent of qualified projects progress to the Quarter-finals and submit a video demonstration or prototype walk-through through the secure NASS link. NASS will provide the upload deadline and detailed instruction.

Semi-finals: Ten teams or projects progress to the Semi-finals for a virtual presentation before the judging panel.

Finals: The Top 5 teams or projects become finalists and present before judges at NDAIE 2026. At least one registered team member must attend and present; failure to appear without prior authorisation can result in forfeiture.

Exhibition: Finalists may be allocated exhibition space for prototypes, models, posters or digital demonstrations. Finalists are responsible for setting up and managing their own materials; NASS will communicate exhibition standards and space allocation in advance.

Awards: First, second and third places are determined by the judging panel. Special mentions may be awarded at the panel's discretion. Prize details will be announced before the final.

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.

5. Judging and Feedback

Judges are appointed by the NASS Research and Innovation Committee and score entries independently. Final rankings are based on panel averages. For live presentations, delivery, responses to questions and use of visual aids or demonstrations form part of the evaluation. Written feedback is not normally provided for entries that do not progress beyond first review; later-stage entrants may request brief feedback after the competition.

Code of Conduct and Integrity

Expected behaviour

Participants, team members, authors and supporters must conduct themselves professionally and respectfully in interactions with organisers, judges, other participants and Expo attendees.

Academic and technical integrity

- All submitted work must be original. Plagiarism, data fabrication and misrepresentation of results are strictly prohibited.
- Give proper credit to external sources, tools and contributors. Research papers must use IEEE citation and reference style.
- Disclose any significant use of generative AI in the submitted work.
- Declare any potential conflict of interest, such as a close personal or professional relationship with a judge or organiser, at application stage.

Disqualification

NASS may disqualify an entry at any stage for plagiarism or academic dishonesty, false application information, failure to meet eligibility requirements, unprofessional behaviour, failure to comply with the rules, or failure of a finalist to appear without prior approval. Disqualified entries forfeit awards and recognition. The organising team and judging panel decide disqualification matters.

Intellectual Property, Media and Confidentiality

Ownership: Participants retain ownership of their ideas, prototypes, research and intellectual property.

NASS licence: By entering, participants grant NASS a non-exclusive, royalty-free licence to use submitted abstracts, pitch decks, papers, videos, photos and presentation content as reasonably required to run, evaluate, report on and promote the competition, NDAIE and NASS activities.

Publicity: Finalists and winners may be featured in official NASS and Expo websites, social media, press releases and event reports. Participants may notify NASS in writing before the Expo if they do not want their image or name used publicly.

Confidentiality: Entries that do not progress beyond the first stage will not be made public by NASS. Qualified and finalist materials may be shared as part of the Expo programme and post-event reporting.

Third-party rights: Participants are responsible for ensuring their work does not infringe third-party intellectual-property rights. NASS accepts no liability for infringement by an entrant.

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

Official Communication and Final Notes

All questions about eligibility, rules or submissions must be sent in writing to nassnigeriaofficial@gmail.com. NASS aims to respond within five working days. Information from unofficial social-media messages or private chats is not binding.

The Innovation Pitch and Research Competition Planning Team, working with the NASS Research and Innovation Committee, administers the competitions. Decisions of the judging panel are final; score-based appeals are not accepted. Concerns about integrity, unfair treatment or rule violations should be reported in writing and will be handled confidentially.

Participants are responsible for reading the latest published version before submitting. This document may be updated where necessary; changes will be versioned and announced through official NASS channels.