

STEM NEXT

2026 AI Innovation Challenge Submission Form PREVIEW

Challenge Entry Overview

AI Innovation Challenge Project Submission

STEM Next invites structured out-of-school-time (OST) programs across the United States to help **high school youth** investigate real-world issues and develop innovative solutions using artificial intelligence (AI) as a research and development partner through the AI Innovation Challenge, created in partnership with Panasonic.

Projects must be submitted by the adult educator, program leader, or staff member who facilitated or supported the youth team's work by **Thursday, November 19, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. ET.**

Submitting your program site's project(s)—and completing the submission form, which includes a brief educator survey—officially enters your program into the AI Innovation Challenge.

Project Submission Instructions

Out-of-school-time (OST) program leaders or educators are invited to submit project(s) on behalf of their participating program site and youth team(s). Each program site may submit **up to five project entries**. Each project entry will be evaluated independently; however, **only one project per program site is eligible to receive a prize award.**

Your submission must include:

- Information about your program
- Information about each youth project
- A completed AI Research & Development Snapshot for each project (5 projects maximum)
- A URL to the pitch video for each project
- A completed submission form, which includes an educator survey

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Measuring Your Impact

This form is designed to be short, but comprehensive. Please plan for **7-15 minutes** to complete the entire form and the external educator survey, which has been linked on page 5.

 The final page of this form includes a link to an external educator survey. You **must** click on the link to be directed to the PEAR CIS educator perception survey in order for your submission to be considered complete.

How we use this data:

The information you share through this survey helps the STEM Next team understand how OST sites experience this learning journey opportunity, including technology access, instructional adaptations, and impacts on STEM learning. We use this data to improve curriculum design, strengthen educator support, and advocate for resources that meet the needs of OST programs like yours. All responses will be reviewed in aggregate and will not be used to evaluate individual educators or sites.

We're excited to support your program in bringing high-quality, free STEM and technology learning experiences to young people. Thank you for being part of this challenge!

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Information About Your Organization/ Program

Out-of-School Time Leader/ Educator Information

- 1.
2. Leader/ Educator First Name
3. Leader/ Educator Last Name
4. Leader/ Educator Email Address
5. Leader/ Educator Phone

Out-of-School Time Program Information & Mailing Address

6. Organization/Program Name
7. Organization/Program Street Address
8. Organization/Program City
9. Organization/Program State

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Project Reach

Important Note on Eligible Participants: This challenge is strictly for high school-aged youth. When completing the questions below, **only count high school-aged youth and the adult educators/facilitators** who participated in the project work. Do not include elementary, middle school, or other youth age groups in your counts or sociodemographic percentages.

The questions below ask for total counts of all high school youth and educators who engaged in AI Innovation Challenge work across project teams.

These responses are not scored and do not affect your standing in the challenge.

10. How many **OST educators/ facilitators** participated in this project?

11. How many High School **OST youth** participated in this project?

Participating Youth Sociodemographics

Approximately what **percentage (%)** of the youth who participated in this challenge would be identified as...

12. % Male

13. % Female

14. % Other/Non-binary

_____ Total (Should equal 100%)

Approximately what **percentage (%)** of the youth who participated in this challenge would be identified as...

15. % Youth from rural/frontier communities

16. % Youth from low-income households

17. % English Learner youth

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AI Innovation Youth and Educator Outcomes

The questions on this page help STEM Next understand the landscape of AI in OST settings.

These responses are not scored and do not affect your standing in the challenge.

18. By the end of this project, approximately how many of your participating youth could name at least one job or career that uses AI?

- None
- A few (1-25%)
- Some (26-50%)
- Most (51-75%)
- Nearly all (76-100%)
- Not sure

19.If any, what kinds of AI-connected jobs or careers came up with your youth?

20.Which of the following did your youth do with AI tools during this project?

(select all that apply)

- Brainstormed or generated ideas
- Researched or gathered information
- Drafted written content
- Analyzed or interpreted data
- Created images, video, or audio
- Wrote or debugged code
- Got feedback on their work and revised it
- Checked AI output for accuracy, bias, or missing perspectives
- Discussed when AI was not the right tool for a task
- Youth did not use AI tools directly

21. Which of the following **youth outcomes** did you observe as a result of this challenge? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Greater confidence participating in STEM learning
- ☐ Increased awareness of real-world applications of artificial intelligence (AI)
- ☐ Increased awareness of real-world applications of STEM
- ☐ Increased collaboration or teamwork among youth
- ☐ Increased interest in AI-related topics
- ☐ No noticeable changes observed

22. Which of the following **OST educator outcomes** did you experience or observe as a result of this learning journey? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Greater comfort using technology or digital tools in programming
- ☐ Stronger understanding of how to integrate real-world topics into STEM learning
- ☐ Increased interest in offering additional STEM learning opportunities
- ☐ Increased confidence facilitating STEM activities with youth
- ☐ Increased confidence facilitating AI-related activities with youth
- ☐ Increased interest in offering additional AI-related learning opportunities
- ☐ No noticeable changes observed

23. How likely are you to facilitate another AI-integrated activity with youth in

the next six months?

- ☐ Very likely
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Very unlikely

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Project Scoring and Submission

Submission Scoring

Each program site may submit **up to five project entries**. Each project entry will be evaluated independently; however, **only one project per program site is eligible to receive a prize award**.

The awards will be offered as follows:

- Two (2) first-place prizes at \$5,000 each
- Three (3) second-place prizes at \$3,000 each
- Five (5) third-place prizes at \$1,000 each

Criteria Scoring

Item	Points
Innovation & Impact	30
AI Collaboration & Strategy	30
Career-Connected Learning Alignment	20
Pitch Video	20
Total	100 points



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24. How many project teams participated in this challenge at your program site?

- ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

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Project 1

About AI Innovation Project 1

Project 1 Title

Youth Team 1 Name

Issue Area:

- Transportation Technology
- Mental Health/Wellbeing
- Local History
- Life/Health Sciences
- Environment/Energy/Resource Management
- Education
- Community Safety
- Art/Culture/Music
- Accessibility
- Other

In 50 words or fewer, briefly describe your youth team's project.

CCL Strategy	How the AI Innovation Challenge Aligns
Broad Skill Development	Youth practice durable skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, project planning, responsible AI use, problem-solving, positive decision-making, risk analysis, and growth mindset. The AI Prompts & Reflections Log reinforces critical thinking by

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	requiring youth to question, verify, revise, and improve AI outputs.
Career-Connected STEM	Youth engage in STEM practices connected to computer science, computational thinking, data analysis, and innovation in technology-driven fields. They use AI as an R&D partner to research problems, compare solutions, create a mini-SWOT, develop a roadmap, gather feedback, identify risks, refine their solution, and prepare a pitch
Family and Community Engagement	Youth choose a local or global issue that matters to them and their community. The Community Context section asks youth to ground their work in community needs, observations, lived experience, or local relevance before using AI to support research and planning.
Connected Pathways and Partnerships	The challenge creates opportunities to connect OST programs with state afterschool networks, STEM professionals, AI professionals, Panasonic volunteers, and other partners who can support recruitment, judging, career exposure, and broader STEM pathway awareness.

Using the table above, which of the following areas did your project align with through [Career Connected Learning Framework](#)? (select all that apply)

- Broad skill development
- Career-Connected STEM
- Family and Community Engagement
- Connected Pathways and Partnerships

AI Research & Development Snapshot

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Upload the completed AI Research & Development Snapshot for this project.

Upload your **AI Research & Development Snapshot** here:

Pitch Video or Recorded Presentation

Share a direct link to your youth team's pitch video or recorded presentation.

Please ensure your video link:

- Opens without requesting permission
- Does not require an organizational login
- Does not require a password
- Will remain active throughout the judging period

Acceptable platforms include Google Drive, YouTube, Vimeo, Microsoft

OneDrive, Canva, or another platform that provides a direct, shareable URL.

Include a direct, shareable link to your pitch video here.

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Project 2

About AI Innovation Project 2

Project 2 Title

Youth Team 2 Name

Issue Area:

- Transportation Technology
- Mental Health/Wellbeing
- Local History
- Life/Health Sciences
- Environment/Energy/Resource Management
- Education
- Community Safety
- Art/Culture/Music
- Accessibility
- Other

In 50 words or fewer, briefly describe your youth team's project.

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Using the table above, which of the following areas did your project align with through [Career Connected Learning Framework](#)? (select all that apply)

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- Career-Connected STEM
- Family and Community Engagement
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AI Research & Development Snapshot

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Project 3

About AI Innovation Project 3

Project 3 Title

Youth Team 3 Name

Issue Area:

- Transportation Technology
- Mental Health/Wellbeing
- Local History
- Life/Health Sciences
- Environment/Energy/Resource Management
- Education
- Community Safety
- Art/Culture/Music
- Accessibility
- Other

In 50 words or fewer, briefly describe your youth team's project.

Category	Points	Description
Innovation & Impact	30	The project addresses a meaningful local or global issue and proposes a solution that is creative, relevant, and potentially scalable. Strong submissions clearly connect the proposed solution to the community context, research, evidence, and any feedback or testing the team completed.
AI Collaboration & Strategy	30	The team uses AI tools thoughtfully and responsibly as a research and development partner. Strong submissions show how AI supported research, solution development, planning, risk review, feedback analysis, iteration, or pitch preparation. The strongest submissions show how youth questioned, verified, revised, and improved AI outputs.

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Category	Points	Description
CCL Alignment	20	The project demonstrates alignment with CCL Framework by showing how youth practiced durable skills, engaged in career-connected STEM, connected their work to a real community or global issue, and explored how AI and STEM skills are used in real-world roles. Strong submissions show youth applying critical thinking, collaboration, communication, project planning, responsible AI use, and problem-solving while developing their AI R&D Snapshot and pitch.
Presentation	20	The pitch video is clear, engaging, organized, and easy to understand. Strong submissions highlight youth voice, teamwork, the proposed solution, AI process, career-connected skill development, iteration, and potential impact.
Total	100	

Using the table above, which of the following areas did your project align with through [Career Connected Learning Framework](#)? (select all that apply)

- Broad skill development
- Career-Connected STEM
- Family and Community Engagement
- Connected Pathways and Partnerships

AI Research & Development Snapshot

Upload the completed AI Research & Development Snapshot for this project.

Upload your **AI Research & Development Snapshot** here:

Pitch Video or Recorded Presentation

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Project 4

About AI Innovation Project 4

Project 4 Title

Youth Team 4 Name

Issue Area:

- Transportation Technology
- Mental Health/Wellbeing
- Local History
- Life/Health Sciences
- Environment/Energy/Resource Management
- Education
- Community Safety
- Art/Culture/Music
- Accessibility
- Other

In 50 words or fewer, briefly describe your youth team's project.

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AI Research & Development Snapshot

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Project 5

About AI Innovation Project 5

Project 5 Title

Youth Team 5 Name

Issue Area:

- Transportation Technology
- Mental Health/Wellbeing
- Local History
- Life/Health Sciences
- Environment/Energy/Resource Management
- Education
- Community Safety
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AI Research & Development Snapshot

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MUST COMPLETE: CIS-Educator Survey

Clicking on the link below directs you to a 10 minute survey that asks about your experiences as a STEM educator, about the program where you lead STEM and about the young people who would have engaged in the **AI Innovation Challenge**. When you answer the questions, please focus your responses on your recent implementation of AI Innovation Challenge project work you implemented with high school youth.

[□ Proceed to the AI Innovation Challenge Educator Survey](#)

 You must click on the link above to be directed to the required educator survey. You must complete the external PEAR CIS-E survey before submitting this form.

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Checking Your Application Is Complete

Before submitting your application, please confirm the following:

- ☐ To the best of my knowledge all data and project details are accurate and reflect programming conducted as part of the 2026 AI Innovation Challenge.
- ☐ I confirm that I have completed all required sections of this submission form (including the link to the external CIS-Educator Survey on page 12).
- ☐ I confirm that I have uploaded an AI Research & Development Snapshot for each project included in this submission.
- ☐ I confirm that I have provided a direct, shareable link to a pitch video for each project and have tested each link to ensure it is accessible without requesting permission, requiring an organizational login, or using a password.
- ☐ I confirm that I have reviewed this submission and verified that all required project materials have been included.
- ☐ I confirm that I have reviewed my contact information and that it is accurate.
- ☐ I confirm that my program has obtained any parental/guardian permissions, media releases, or other consents required by applicable law and our program's policies for the participating youth and materials included in this submission.
- ☐ I confirm that I have received and reviewed the [Official Rules](#) for the AI Innovation Challenge
- ☐ I confirm I have reviewed STEM Next's [privacy policy](#)

Important Submission Notice

Please review your submission carefully before clicking Submit.

Once your application has been submitted, you will not be able to return to edit or update it.

If multiple submissions are received from the same program site, only the first complete submission received will be reviewed and considered for judging. Additional submissions or revisions will not replace the original submission.



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Click Submit to officially enter your program into the AI Innovation Challenge.

You will receive a PDF copy of your submission via email shortly, confirming that your program has successfully entered the AI Innovation Challenge.

[SUBMIT]