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\$15,000 PRIZE POOL ANNOUNCED FOR ENTREFEST 2026 PITCH COMPETITION, PRESENTED BY HY-VEE

Midwest entrepreneurs invited to compete for funding and visibility at Iowa City's premier two-day innovation conference.

CEDAR RAPIDS, IA — NewBoCo is excited to announce the return of the [ENTREFest Pitch Competition, presented by Hy-Vee](#), offering attendees the chance to compete for a share of \$15,000 in prize money. Now in its second year of partnership with Hy-Vee, the competition is designed to be an accessible platform for Midwest startups at any stage of development.

“Last year, more than 60 businesses entered the competition, and this year we expect to attract around 80 entrepreneurs and innovators,” said Jan Finlayson, Events Coordinator at NewBoCo. “The application process, requiring only a short submission and a brief video pitch, is intentionally approachable for startups and small businesses alike.”

How the Competition Works

A panel of expert judges will review all submissions to select five finalists, who will be announced on Friday morning during the ENTREFest keynote presentation.

- **The Pitch:** Finalists will take the stage on Friday afternoon for the conference's closing event.
- **The Format:** Each founder has three minutes to pitch, followed by two minutes of Q&A with the judges.
- **The Prizes:** Cash prizes will be awarded for first, second, and third place, along with a "People's Choice" award.

“At Hy-Vee, we believe entrepreneurship and innovation can come from anywhere,” said Brett Spiker, Assistant Vice President of Procurement at Hy-Vee. “We’re proud to support Iowans who are developing bold ideas, technologies, and services that have the potential to make a lasting impact on our communities.”

Eligibility and Applications

To qualify, the company must be Midwest-based and less than five years old. Last year’s winner, Mari Hunt Wassink of Black Earth Gardens, noted that the win provided her business with “valuable exposure, connections, and momentum.”

Interested participants can apply online at www.entrefest.com. All applicants must be registered attendees of the conference.

About ENTREFest

ENTREFest is a two-day conference (June 11-12, 2026) dedicated to celebrating entrepreneurship in Iowa and the Midwest. Held this year in downtown Iowa City, the event will typically bring over 350 entrepreneurs and professionals together to discuss topics ranging from AI integration to venture capital.

About NewBoCo

The New Bohemian Innovation Collaborative, Inc. (NewBoCo) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. NewBoCo’s programming includes accelerators, tech education, and community events designed to foster innovation and entrepreneurship throughout the state. To support NewBoCo’s mission, visit newbo.co/donate/ or contact donate@newbo.co.