

National STEM Festival

presented by EXPLR

Submission Rules & Guidelines 2025

Welcome to the 2025 National STEM Festival, presented by EXPLR! We're looking for innovative STEM projects addressing real-world challenges. Below are the rules and guidelines for submitting your project.

HOW TO SUBMIT

- **Select a Theme:** Choose one or two of the 2025 Festival themes.
- **Use a Method:** Follow the scientific method or engineering design process.
- **Submit Your Project:** Complete the online application and upload a 3-page PDF presentation with text and images.
- **Deadline:** Sunday, October 20, 2024, at 11:59 PM ET.

ELIGIBILITY

- Open to U.S. students enrolled in public, private, or home schools, including Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools.
- Immediate family members and household members of EXPLR or Goodwall employees, and those involved with the Festival, are not eligible.
- If you presented at the 2024 Festival, **you are eligible**, but must submit a **NEW, original project**.

REQUIRED SUBMISSION MATERIALS

- Project Title
- Research Question or Hypothesis
- Project Objective or Purpose
- PDF Presentation (Max 3 page)
- Abstract
- *Optional* References and citations

IMPORTANT DATES

- **Submissions Open:** August 21, 2024
- **Finalists Announced:** November 15, 2024
- **Deadline: Sunday, October 20, 2024, at 11:59 PM ET.**
- **Champions Announced:** December 18, 2024
- **Festival in D.C.:** March 18-22, 2025

2026 FESTIVAL THEMES

- Aerospace Innovation
- Environmental Stewardship
- Future Food
- Health & Medicine
- Power the Planet
- Tech for Good

RULES

- All submissions must be in English.
- Submissions must exclude any identifiable information (names, contact details, etc.).
- Only one entry per student.
- Content must not include inappropriate, hateful, or harmful material, or infringe on the rights of others.
- Team submissions are not allowed.
- No defamatory content regarding EXPLR, Goodwall, or any individual or entity is allowed.
- No AI-generated work can be submitted as your own.
- Submissions should avoid sensitive topics, such as religious or political messages.
- Do not include external links, files, or videos (e.g., YouTube or Canva).
- No content involving personal information of individuals under 13 unless parental consent is obtained.
- Submissions must include only original content or content you have rights to use.

Failure to comply with these rules may lead to disqualification. EXPLR and Goodwall reserve the right to assess the appropriateness of all submissions. By submitting, you agree to hold EXPLR, Goodwall, and their affiliates harmless if it is later found that you did not fully comply with these rules.

OWNERSHIP

Student video entries, project titles, abstracts, and images may be displayed on EXPLR and Goodwall websites. PDF submissions containing original research, patent information, or intellectual property will not be displayed without permission.

REVIEW PROCESS AND SCORING

Round One: Projects are judged based on their potential impact, creativity, and clarity. Up to 12 Finalists will be selected from each region.

Judging Criteria:

- 50 points: Positive impact potential
- 25 points: Innovation and creativity
- 25 points: Clarity of presentation
- 5 bonus points: Attendance at Title I eligible schools determined using the most current
- Title I Eligibility will be based on data from State Educational Agencies (SEAs).
- Round Two: Finalists submit a 90-second video. At least two National Champions will be selected per region based on a second round of judging, which follows similar criteria.

PRIZES

- **Finalist Prize:** Up to 12 Finalists per region will receive a 1-year subscription to EXPLR Home (ARV: \$49).
- **National STEM Champion Prize:** Up to 130 Champions will receive a trip to the National STEM Festival in Washington, D.C., in March 2025. The prize includes transportation for one student and a guardian, and five nights of hotel accommodations (ARV: up to \$2,500).

The actual value of the prize may vary depending on the winner's location and other factors. Any difference between the estimated and actual value will not be awarded. EXPLR reserves the right to modify or adjust certain prize components as necessary.

Winners are responsible for taxes and any additional expenses not explicitly included in the prize description. Any winner whose prize exceeds \$600 will be required to submit an IRS Form W-9 or equivalent, and the prize will be subject to eligibility verification.

SPECIAL AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

In addition to the above prizes, special award prizes will be given in following categories:

- **EXPLR Catalyst Award:** Recognizes an outstanding project that demonstrates ingenuity and a commitment to solving real-world problems through innovative STEM solutions. Prize includes a 5-night/6-day trip to the 2025 National STEM Festival (ARV: \$2,500).
- **Alumni Award:** Presented by the 2024 National STEM Festival cohort, this award honors an individual who inspires others through their STEM project, leadership, and commitment to positive societal change (ARV: \$2,500).

- **AISES Indigenous Ingenuity Award:** Honors Indigenous students from North American tribes or the Pacific Islands who have developed research projects addressing real-world challenges within their communities. Eligible students must have participated in the 2023 or 2024 National American Indian Science and Engineering Fair (NAISEF). Prize includes a trip to the 2025 National STEM Festival (ARV: \$2,500).
- **Autodesk Design & Make Award:** This award recognizes exceptional creativity and innovation in the design and make process. Winners receive a 30-minute mentor session with Autodesk in a field of interest and Autodesk swag.
- **Congressional Innovation Award:** Awarded to students who have created outstanding mobile and web applications in previous Congressional App Challenges (2020-2023). Winners will receive a trip to the 2025 National STEM Festival (ARV: \$2,500). *note: this award is independent of any Congressional App Challenge awards.
- **PocketLab Insight & Inspiration Award:** This award celebrates insightful data collection and analysis. The winner will receive PocketLab sensors and other materials (ARV: TBD).

All Special Awards are determined at the sole discretion of EXPLR and/or the sponsoring organization. Decisions are final and cannot be appealed.

FINALIST NOTIFICATION

Parents or guardians of potential Finalists will be notified via the email provided in the application. Winners may be required to submit additional documentation, such as a Liability Release, Media Release, or Waiver for both the student and parent/guardian. If any prize notification is undeliverable or unresponsive after three attempts via email, phone, or SMS, the winner may be disqualified and an alternate chosen.

LEGAL AND OTHER CONDITIONS

- By submitting your project, you confirm that all work complies with these Submission Rules.
- All submissions undergo a privacy review before judging. EXPLR and Goodwall reserve the right to request modifications or disqualify entries at their discretion.
- Entries will be categorized into 53 regions (see Appendix A), and scoring criteria will be used to select Finalists and Champions.
- In case of a tie, the "Positive Impact" score will break the tie, followed by the "Persuasiveness" score if necessary.

EXPLR reserves the right to:

- disqualify submissions that could harm their or partners/sponsors reputation;
- offer the prize of a disqualified Applicant, to an alternate Applicant, even if the disqualified individual has already been notified or publicly announced;

- reduce the number of Finalists and/or National STEM Champions;
- increase the number of Finalists or National STEM Champions;
- grant additional or special awards,
- if a region does not receive enough eligible entries, or if no entries meet the minimum score requirement, to either leave the region without a National STEM Champion or redistribute the prize(s) to the next highest-scoring entries from other regions, and/or
- withhold or revoke any prize, disqualifying an Applicant or entry at any point (and requiring the return of any prize, if applicable) if the Applicant or entry is found, or suspected, to be ineligible, incomplete, non-compliant, or if awarding the prize could harm the reputation of EXPLR, the Administrator, or their Parties by causing public disrepute or scandal.

All decisions made by EXPLR and Goodwall regarding the Festival and submissions are final. By participating in the Festival, you agree to comply with these rules.

By entering the Festival, participants waive their right to a jury trial for any disputes arising from the Festival or its rules. Any disputes or claims between participants and EXPLR or Goodwall will be resolved through binding arbitration with a neutral arbitrator, mutually agreed upon by both parties. The arbitration will take place in or near Kings County, New York. The arbitrator may not award indirect, incidental, consequential, or punitive damages, and participants waive any right to seek multiplied or enhanced damages.

Each party is responsible for their own legal fees, expenses, and costs. The arbitrator's decision may be enforced in any court with proper jurisdiction.

These Official Rules are governed by and will be interpreted in accordance with New York State law, without regard to its conflict of law principles.

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APPENDIX A - Regions

1. Alabama (AL)
2. Alaska (AK)
3. Arizona (AZ)
4. Arkansas (AR)
5. California (CA)
6. Colorado (CO)
7. Connecticut (CT)
8. Delaware (DE)
9. Florida (FL)
10. Georgia (GA)
11. Guam (GU), American Samoa (AS),
Northern Mariana Islands (MP)
12. Hawaii (HI),
13. Idaho (ID)
14. Illinois (IL)
15. Indiana (IN)
16. Iowa (IA)
17. Kansas (KS)
18. Kentucky (KY)
19. Louisiana (LA)
20. Maine (ME)
21. Maryland (MD)
22. Massachusetts (MA) 23. Michigan (MI)
24. Minnesota (MN)
25. Mississippi (MS)
26. Missouri (MO)
27. Montana (MT)
28. Nebraska (NE)
29. Nevada (NV)
30. New Hampshire (NH) 31. New Jersey (NJ)
32. New Mexico (NM) 33. New York (NY)
34. North Carolina (NC) 35. North Dakota (ND)
36. Ohio (OH)
37. Oklahoma (OK)
38. Oregon (OR)
39. Pennsylvania (PA)
40. Rhode Island (RI)
41. South Carolina (SC)
42. South Dakota (SD)
43. Tennessee (TN)
44. Texas (TX)
45. Utah (UT)
46. Vermont (VT)
47. Virginia (VA)
48. Washington (WA)
49. West Virginia (WV)
50. Wisconsin (WI)
51. Wyoming (WY)
52. District of Columbia (DC) and Armed
Forces (AA, AP, AE)
53. Puerto Rico (PR) and Virgin Islands (VI)