

# THE PITCHFORK PROGRAM GUIDE



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2 | Introduction: Background and Purpose
- 6 | What Goals Do You Want to Accomplish?
- 7 | PitchFork Event: Planning and Preparation
- 11 | PitchFork Event: Logistics, Staging, and Content
- 16 | PitchFork Challenge: Planning and Preparation
- 21 | PitchFork Challenge: Logistics, Staging, and Content
- 28 | Appendices

# INTRODUCTION

PitchFork is an application-based program for rural communities to help their entrepreneurs:

1. Learn how to confidently pitch their business, in a public setting.
2. Clearly and concisely present their business opportunity to local investors, service providers, potential customers, and the community.
3. PitchFork shines a spotlight on the economic and business activity and the entrepreneurial spirit of your community, raising awareness levels and involvement in small business formation and growth.

## THE HANNAH GRIMES CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND PITCHFORK

Located in Keene, New Hampshire, the Hannah Grimes Marketplace (<https://www.hannahgrimesmarketplace.com>) opened in 1997 and the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship (<https://www.hannahgrimes.com>) opened in 2006. Since then, Hannah Grimes (a 501(c)3 non-profit) has successfully developed a diverse, grass-roots model to support entrepreneurs as a means to a thriving local economy and vibrant community.

Keene is a small city of approximately 23,000. It serves a region comprised of rural areas of southwestern New Hampshire, southeastern Vermont, and north-central Massachusetts.

Hannah Grimes has become an entrepreneurial hub for businesses to learn basic and advanced business skills

and connect with valuable networks and resources.

Every year, our programs serve over 1,600 individuals from across the region. In 2018 the Hannah Grimes Center was recognized by the Small Business Administration as the New Hampshire Small Business Champion.

Our programs are not academic, but a result of the real needs that we, our businesses and our nonprofits experience. We offer an innovative, relevant and diverse range of programs that provide the space, tools and connections that entrepreneurs need to build strong businesses, thriving local economies and vibrant communities, including:

- The Hannah Grimes Marketplace.
- The Business Incubator business development program.
- Free and low-cost workshops.
- Pro bono coaching from area working professionals and experts.
- Startup Lab, (recently renamed *Essentials!*) a hands-on interactive 7-week course for growing businesses.
- PitchFork, to improve pitch skills and strengthen the connections that encourage greater investment into local economic growth.
- The Hive, a creative co-working space.
- Radically Rural Summit, an annual summit, launched in 2018, to help shape and share ideas to help rural communities thrive. (<https://radicallyrural.org>)

Through this PitchFork Guide, we share a distinctly rural entrepreneurship model for our community and for other rural entrepreneur support organizations throughout the country.

Simply put, we've discovered PitchFork is a model that works in rural areas! Since 2016, we've coached 43 businesses to pitch at PitchFork various events.

Thanks very much to the many people that helped shape and evolve PitchFork. Thanks to the funders who believed in the vision and understood its potential impact. And especially, thanks to the many businesses who took the chance, got onboard, and worked hard to improve their businesses.

## **WELCOME TO PITCHFORK!**

Access to capital has long been recognized as a major challenge for startups and growing small businesses. In rural America, a lack of capital has been identified as one of the main reasons for the decline in startup rates over the past several years.

Numerous pitch programs exist, but nearly all are urban-based, technology-focused, and concentrate on startups expected to generate big ROIs by going public or selling to another company with deep-pockets. Many also have a win-lose, "Shark Tank" mindset, with little support, guidance, or coaching for pitch participants.

The Hannah Grimes Center launched PitchFork in 2016. The program has evolved into two offerings:

**The PitchFork Event™** strengthens pitch skills in entrepreneurs and uses a friendly pitch event to build connections with various "investors" in the community — banks, venture angels, regional economic development corporations, private lenders, potential customers, community influencers and champions, mentors, and other resources in the community.

**The PitchFork Challenge™** seeks to do much the same, but is structured as a "competition" with multiple rounds and judges who award a cash prize to the winning business pitch at a high energy pitch finale.

PitchFork is intentionally encouraging and supportive. With access to capital and access to pitch guidance, practice, and coaching for participants, everyone who participates in a PitchFork should feel that they have gained invaluable insights about their business, learned how to talk about their business publicly, and understand what they need to do to make their business a success.

PitchFork provides important opportunities for exposure, visibility, and networking — opportunities often lacking in rural areas. Over the years, we have come to recognize that the program's social element is one of the aspects of PitchFork valued most by our entrepreneurs.

Critically, PitchFork is intended to be fun, energizing, and festive! It's a way to bring the community together to support, encourage, and applaud our small town businesses — not just bankers or economic development professionals, but friends, family, and neighbors.

## THE PURPOSE OF PITCHFORK

PitchFork works to encourage and spotlight local business starts and local business growth — businesses that employ people locally and whose owners want to build a life and build their community as well as manage a profitable business.

PitchFork facilitates local investment — equity, loans, and grants — and local economic growth. Local investment offers your community greater control to shape your local economy.

Local investing decisions can target the start and growth of businesses that reflect the values and the culture of the individuals and institutions in your region. Relationships between entrepreneurs and investors strengthen the fabric of your local economy by connecting leaders in your community with entrepreneurs in a meaningful way to build valuable networks, provide vital support, and increase the chances that local ventures will survive and thrive.

To be truly successful, Hannah Grimes has learned that two important “dots” need to be addressed and connected to PitchFork.

1. Providing guidance and coaching to participating entrepreneurs is essential. While the genesis of PitchFork centered on access to capital, we learned quickly that entrepreneurs were typically unprepared to “pitch” their business and tell their story in an effective and compelling way.
2. In seeking to provide access to capital — connecting businesses to money — Hannah Grimes discovered

that many businesses were not structurally ready to take on the funds. For example, financial documents, accounting processes, and business plans commonly expected and required by angel investors, banks, loan funds, credit unions, private lenders, and other sources of equity were lacking — or did not exist at all. In addition, Hannah Grimes saw that potential investors often assumed that Hannah Grimes was doing this due diligence and that the business was ready to take on debt or equity — an unspoken “seal of approval.”

To address this, Hannah Grimes has partnered with local and regional economic development corporations, banks, and credit unions to help prospective PitchFork presenters build their capacity and readiness to take on external funding.

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

A lot of has been learned since Hannah Grimes launched PitchFork in 2016, from the application process and pitch presentation coaching to event logistics and judging criteria. Our approach to PitchFork is certainly not perfect. Every time we run it, we learn something new! However, we think we have a winning “recipe” with a proven track record, and that it is worth sharing with others.

This program guide is intended to help you create your own PitchFork Event or PitchFork Challenge without having to reinvent the wheel. Everything you need to design and run PitchFork in your community is included.

If it helps you, please feel free to use the PitchFork name and logo. Our only

requirements are, 1) that the event be a community-oriented, “not-for-profit” event. We don’t want PitchFork to be monetized in any way; and 2) that you seek our written permission in advance, as we would like to track its use and build a learning community.

Importantly, the guide is exactly that, a guide — not a rigid formula. Any element of our strategies, processes, steps, and staging can (and should!) be adapted for the unique economic, social, and cultural characteristics in your community. And, you’ll find that circumstances change over time, so your PitchFork should evolve as well.

Finally, there is a lot of detail in this guide. Important nuances that we have learned over time. With that in mind, we suggest that you resist the urge to dive in immediately and begin implementation — read the guide through, cover to cover, to get a general sense of everything first. Then go back and work through details and specifics.

While much of the preparation, guidance, coaching, and event logistics are the same for the PitchFork Event and the PitchFork Challenge, we think it’s helpful to address each PitchFork option separately, step-by-step.

Let’s begin!



# WHAT GOALS DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH?

Before you decide to run a PitchFork Event or a PitchFork Challenge, what is your “why?” Consider this essential strategic question first.

Do you wish to stimulate startup activity? Help grow existing businesses? Create more jobs in your area? Create an opportunity to present new ideas? Foster a particular industry?

Do you want to showcase business in a “competition,” or bring local investors and local entrepreneurs together? Is your “area” your town? County? Region?

Your answers will help you build a PitchFork that is aligned with your big-picture goals — from the application questions and the audience you invite to the judging criteria.

**Starting with the end in mind is a great way to plan the entire PitchFork Event or PitchFork Challenge.**

For example, at Hannah Grimes, we decided that we wanted to encourage startup ecosystems and networking in a broader rural region. States in New England are small, so we opened the application process to rural areas in southwestern New Hampshire, southeast Vermont, and north-central Massachusetts, around where the state lines come together.

We also wanted to support new business ideas and have learned that mixing new idea presentations with presentations of existing businesses at a PitchFork — even recently started businesses — does not work well. So, in our PitchFork

Challenge, we created two prize tracks — one exclusively for new business ideas and the other for operating startup businesses looking for capital to fund growth.

**Community Benefit is an important goal of PitchFork**

When we started PitchFork, community benefit was not an explicit benchmark. However, we soon discovered that people wanted to better understand PitchFork’s “bigger picture” — especially our judges. We saw that there needed to be a broader lens: something more than profit projections, market penetration, and job growth. After further consideration, “Community Benefit” was added to our judging criteria — what assets would the business bring to the community? How would their strengths make the community stronger? How would they engage in, and be part of, their community?

We now appreciate that community benefit is a vitally important criteria that helps distinguish PitchFork from other pitch programs.

With these strategic questions answered and your goals clarified, you are now ready to plan and implement your PitchFork Event or PitchFork Challenge.

# PITCHFORK EVENT: PLANNING & PREPARATION

Imagine creating a way for local entrepreneurs, investors, and community-minded advocates and boosters to meet and learn more about each other — and help each other — in an environment designed to be engaging, connecting, thought-provoking, and fun. No complicated red-tape, soul-crushing competition, barriers to participating, or Wall Street types.

## Welcome to PitchFork!

Our high-energy, yet welcoming and supportive PitchFork Event is designed to connect entrepreneurs with potential investors — equity, debt, and other resources.

Three businesses are selected to pitch. Each business makes a 7-minute presentation, followed by 5 minutes of Q&A from the audience. Everything is timed carefully — no rambling allowed! The presentations are bracketed by networking and socializing before and after the event.

Hannah Grimes initially ran PitchFork quarterly, but found it was simply too much for our region. We now host a PitchFork event one or two times a year.

## THE BASICS: WHO, WHAT, WHERE

**The PitchFork Event is designed to bring together local businesses ready to grow and local resources to help them succeed.**

Small businesses who are ready to grow, and need between \$10,000 and \$100,000 to do so, present their business opportunity to invited guests and the public. The audience includes people who are seeking to invest in local businesses, such as equity capital and debt (loans), and those with an interest in supporting local economic growth and whose resources extend beyond just financial to include, for example, valuable networks, experience, skills, and other resources — from available work space and needed equipment, to mentoring.

A PitchFork event features three business pitches during a one hour event, with plenty of local food, networking, and socializing before and after the pitches.

## For Entrepreneurs:

Entrepreneurs accepted into PitchFork learn how to better tell their story — to talk about their business in a self-confident, compelling, and concise way, and effectively connect with potential investors, customers, and community champions.

PitchFork participants receive coaching to help them increase their confidence and business pitching acumen. The ability of entrepreneurs to talk about their business, their financial needs, and their vision and plans for growth in a clear and convincing way is a critical skill — and it takes practice!

PitchFork also coaches entrepreneurs and works with them to help develop their readiness to take on outside capital from potential lenders and investors. To that end, Hannah Grimes hosts PitchFork in partnership with a regional economic development corporation. The partnering economic development organization provides essential technical assistance to

help each entrepreneur be ready to take on capital — even creating standard loan doc templates to make it as easy as possible for a private lender and a participating entrepreneur to work with each other.

PitchFork entrepreneurs effectively reach a room filled with a wide range of local investors, bankers, revolving loan funds, and individuals. It is designed to facilitate relationships — with potential investors, lenders, and others connecting with businesses following the event to discuss funding, investment, and assistance.

### **For Investors, Lenders, and Community Champions:**

PitchFork is a terrific way for investors, lenders, and community champions to hear from vibrant, emerging local entrepreneurs and business owners who are ready to grow, and to be part of their growth story as a local lender or investor.

PitchFork coaches entrepreneurs and works with them to help develop their readiness to take on outside capital from potential lenders and investors. So businesses will have prepared, and be ready to discuss investments and loan terms with interested parties after the event.

### **Important: By Law, No Direct Asks for Funding or Investment are Allowed at PitchFork!**

While PitchFork allows investors to learn about local businesses that are growing, and what their opportunities are, the event itself does not allow a direct ask of investors.

SEC laws and regulations prevent deals from being specifically discussed with a

“non-accredited investor group.” This is very important! Businesses may contact potential investors and lenders who have expressed an interest to talk and learn more, and may follow-up only after the event.

The good news is that this means there’s no pressure! Everyone is free to enjoy the pitches, ask follow-up questions about business plans and goals, enjoy the wonderful local food and drink (more about that later), and connect with other like-minded local economy boosters.

## **PITCHFORK EVENT SUMMARY TIMELINE**

From start to finish, activities are laid out over approximately a three and a half month period. Of course, much of the goals-based strategic thinking will have been percolating during the prior weeks and leading into Week 1.

**Pre-Work.** Identify your PitchFork Event Manager — it is absolutely vital that someone be assigned to take the lead for organizing and implementing a successful PitchFork Event.

**Pre-Work.** Establish your timeline and communicate all the dates with applicants, participants, coaches, and others involved. It’s important for everyone to understand and be able to commit to every step of PitchFork.

**Week 1.** Create the PitchFork application: questions and format.

**Week 3.** Go public and launch the PitchFork application. Begin to promote PitchFork!

**Week 5.** Hold an information session for prospective participants. Provide an organizational overview and discuss

PitchFork program goals, the application process, presentation preparation (coaching, the pitch, and the pitch deck), and required schedules and deadlines.

**Week 7.** Hold another information session for interested prospective participants.

**Week 8.** Application deadline. Review and select three businesses to be PitchFork participants.

**Week 8.** Send a decision notice to all applicants (and all required future dates to those selected).

**Week 10.** Hold a required initial Pitch Practice for all participants. This is a closed event — staff, coaches, and participants only. Coaches ask questions and offer feedback and guidance. 1:1 coaching follows between Week 10 and the public PitchFork event.

**Week 14.** PitchFork! An open, public event. Networking before and after the event. Seven minute pitches with five minutes for audience Q&A. Celebrate!!!

## **SIGNING UP PITCHFORK PARTICIPANTS**

Every PitchFork participant must apply and be selected to make their pitch (see *Appendix 1 for a sample*). It's also vital that the criteria for the application be crystal clear to business owners applying.

## **EVERYTHING BEGINS WITH THE PITCH CRITERIA**

Like building a solid home, everything starts with the foundation (and your PitchFork Event Manager is your all-important “general contractor”). Guidelines and criteria are the foundation of PitchFork.

**Who is eligible to apply?** Business size? Longevity? Geography? Industry? For example, in 2020 at Hannah Grimes, we wished to help propel the pivot and growth of businesses during the pandemic, so we waived a previous eligibility requirement that the business be no more than three years old. Another eligibility criteria we maintain is that the business must be legally organized as a for-profit.

**What do you need to know?** Decide what information is essential to assess the suitability of an applying business. For example, what financial statements do you need to review? Must they submit a business plan? How would they use an infusion of equity or debt?

**How much funding is being sought?** Does the investment they are seeking fall into the range that you have chosen to consider? Are they asking for too much (or too little)?

**Can they commit?** This takes time and effort. Certain aspects of PitchFork are required — and not only attendance at the initial Pitch Practice and final event. For example, are they willing to follow-up with pitch coaching and due diligence with your economic development corporation partner?

**Lay out your calendar at the start.** Hannah Grimes includes a schedule in the application. If dates are listed, it's easier for participants to understand and commit to the schedule with no surprises.

## **THE APPLICATION**

(See *Appendix 1*). The application includes essential questions needed to understand and assess the business,

eligibility requirements, and important dates to which they must commit.

Hannah Grimes uses one method of collecting applications — Google Forms. We do not accept paper applications, faxes, emails, PDFs, singing telegrams, or any other methods of applying.

We have found Google Forms to be an easy, equitable way to collect the application information and share it for review with the selection committee. It makes everyone's life easier! Whatever approach you choose, we recommend selecting one way of submitting an application, period.

### **SELECTION COMMITTEE**

While you are promoting PitchFork and recruiting applicants, you also need to organize your selection committee. This group will review the applications and determine who will present at PitchFork.

The Selection Committee can be as simple as a few people from the organization running PitchFork — the executive director, program director, a board member — and/or a select group of people who will be offering their expertise as volunteer coaches.

### **IDENTIFY YOUR PITCH EVENT MANAGER**

The fundamentals of good management practice remind us that someone really needs to “own” this! So identify your Pitch Event Manager right away.

The Pitch Event Manager will create and manage the forms and timelines, orchestrate communication, direct coaches and volunteers, work with event participants, and organize the PitchFork Event — right down to making sure someone is assigned to operate the timer

and taking photos. They will drive the process and ultimately be accountable for its success.

### **RECRUIT AN EMCEE**

PitchFork is intended to be a fun, high energy public event. We recommend asking an informed, articulate friend of the organization with a bit of stage presence to serve as emcee — someone who can shepherd PitchFork to keep things running smoothly, orchestrate introductions and transitions, and make the event exciting and spirited.



# PITCHFORK EVENT: LOGISTICS, STAGING, AND CONTENT

Let's get ready to pitch! What follows is a step-by-step description to help you implement your PitchFork Event.

## FROM APPLICANT TO PARTICIPANT

Once you have reviewed your applications and selected three businesses to participate, inform everyone of your decision via email (see *Appendix 2*). Have all participants and the judges review and sign a Statement of Confidentiality (see *Appendix 11*) and a Media Waiver (see *Appendix 12 for sample PitchFork Challenge waiver*).

## PITCH PRACTICE (REQUIRED)

- 7 minute presentation
- 12 slides (maximum)
- 20 minutes after each pitch for practice, Q&A, and feedback from volunteer coaches and staff
- 30 minutes for pitch “clinic” reviewing best practices.

Bring everyone together to meet and offer their best initial pitch! This is a closed event and not open to the public — staff, coaches, and participants only.

Importantly, before practice presentations, Q&A, and feedback begins, we emphasize to the entrepreneurs that the comments they are about to hear are coming from different perspectives. It's perfectly natural that, at times, the coaches may contradict each other. It's up to the entrepreneur to take what makes sense to them and leave what doesn't.

This is their business. A statement like this at the beginning is vital as it allows the coaches to express their particular point of view without appearing to be in conflict with each other. And it makes it clear to the entrepreneurs that they must ultimately take ownership of what is important feedback and what is not.

We recommend you hold a pitch “clinic” during this meeting. Most of your entrepreneurs will have never pitched their business before, and may feel anxious about doing a public presentation. We offer what we have seen as “best” and “not so great” practices for pitch slide decks and pitch presentations. We also review PitchFork Event logistics, and present a “how to” best practices for both pitch content and pitch presentation style.

By way of example, the slide deck developed by Hannah Grimes to present a Pitch Clinic for the PitchFork Challenge (and adapted from Guy Kawasaki's pitch template) can be found in *Appendix 13*.

As we mentioned, attendance at the Pitch Practice is required. It's a great opportunity to answer questions, see where people are in their pitch development, and get everyone thinking about how to put their best foot forward and best organize their slides. It's also a wonderful chance for the entrepreneurs to meet each other.

Hannah Grimes also uses the Pitch Practice to highlight the vital importance of practicing their pitch and to encourage taking advantage of coaching available — knowledgeable staff and volunteer coaches must be available throughout the process and leading up to the PitchFork Event.

## Structure and Atmosphere

- All participants are required to stay through the entire Pitch Practice, and watch each pitch. An important part of the learning process for presenters is to observe different styles of pitching and to see for themselves what is effective, as well as what are common mistakes. They'll also hear a wider range of questions and feedback.

- All participants submit their pitch decks to the PitchFork Event Manager 24-36 hours prior to the Pitch Practice. That way, they can be loaded on one computer and queued up for presentation. To avoid confusion, Hannah Grimes allows PowerPoint and Google Slides only.

Inspired in many respects by TED Talks:

- Everything is closely timed — presentations, Q&A, and transitions between presenters.

- Pitch presenters stand “on stage” and face forward — their support slides are projected behind them. They may not use notes. Pitchers are urged to practice (a lot), know their material, and speak to the audience, never looking back at their slides.

- A count-down timer (Hannah Grimes uses an iPad) and a laptop with the slides are clearly visible to the presenter as they present (this is often referred to as a “comfort monitor”) is set up, so there's no need to turn back to look at their slide, and there's no wondering how much time is left.

- If possible, use the same space for both the Pitch Practice and the PitchFork Event. That way, presenters will be more comfortable with their space, set-up of

slides, timers, etc. will be consistent, and tech issues will be minimized.

## To-Do Lists and Supplies

For a handy checklist of things to do and stuff you'll need, see *Appendix 4* for the Pitch Practice to-do and check list.

## COACHING AND BUSINESS PREP

The availability of coaching for entrepreneurs is a critical benefit of participating in PitchFork — typically, this is something Hannah Grimes requires to participate.

Potential investors also expect the pitching businesses to be prepared to seriously consider and take on an offer — after all, that's why they are pitching. In fact, the audience will typically assume that your organization has vetted the businesses that are pitching — that they are structurally ready to take on debt or equity offers.

Hannah Grimes has found it useful to create Google Drive folders for each participating business: a digital location for pitch decks, owner bios, financial documents, the business plan, marketing plans, non-disclosure forms, etc. In this way, we may easily share information about participating businesses with potential investors as needed.

The sponsoring organization and the partnering economic development organization's network of staff, volunteers and experts help each business prepare their pitch (content and presentation style), work on the rough spots in their business plan — financial, marketing, logistics, sales, organizational, etc. — and help them be prepared for an infusion of equity or debt from interested investors. (See *Appendix*

3 for a sample *Presentation Coaching Assessment form*).

Participating businesses have four weeks between the Pitch Practice and the PitchFork Event to be coached and prepare their final pitches (practice, practice, practice!).

## **DAY-OF: REHEARSAL AND TECH-CHECK**

It is vital for presenters to land their time and be confident that their updated pitches will look and sound great. Each presenter is scheduled to go through their pitch twice — Hannah Grimes typically reserves the room for the event for the entire day, so there's plenty of time to practice, and to work out any technology issues — from room lighting and projector clickers to wireless microphone handoffs.

## **DAY-OF: THE PITCHFORK EVENT!**

Here we are! Everything you've done has been in preparation for this evening (we recommend you schedule PitchFork in the early evening, shortly after work. It's easier for more people to attend and it makes the event more networking-friendly, and fun).

- Socializing and networking before presentations begin
- 3 business pitches
- 7 minute presentations
- 12 slides (maximum) per presentation
- 5 minutes for Q&A from the audience
- Socializing and networking after the business pitches

### **Structure and Atmosphere**

- You want PitchFork to be a well-publicized and well-attended free public event.

- Make snacks, hors d'oeuvres, and beverages available. Food brings in people. In the past, Hannah Grimes has worked with a local catering and events business to create a signature cocktail, just for PitchFork!

- Create a printed program agenda for attendees and have one waiting on each seat. (*see Appendix 5 for a sample outline*).

- All participating entrepreneurs should actively engage in networking before and after the presentations.

- In addition, Hannah Grimes has found that creating a detailed agenda and script for the emcee and presenters is very helpful (*see Appendix 19 for a sample used in PitchFork Challenge*).

- All participants will have submitted their final pitch decks two days before the PitchFork Event. Any 11th hour edits must be submitted to the PitchFork Event Manager 12-24 hours prior to the event.

As with the Rehearsal:

- Everything continues to be closely timed and a count-down timer and a laptop/comfort monitor with the slides are clearly visible to the presenter as they present.

- Pitch presenters stand “on stage” and face forward. They may not use notes.

### **To-Do Lists and Supplies**

For a handy checklist of things to do and stuff you'll need for the PitchFork Event, see *Appendix 6*.

## Everyone is a winner!

Celebrate! You've done it. And you've helped your local entrepreneurs, local business investment community, and local economy in a very big way.

And remember, while PitchFork allows investors to learn about local businesses that are growing, and what their opportunities are, **SEC laws and regulations prevent direct asks, and deals from being specifically discussed at PitchFork.** Potential investors and entrepreneurs are free to follow-up with each other about investment opportunities only after the event. Hannah Grimes does not facilitate follow-up.

So have an after-party! Enjoy the moment, the company, and the local food and drink.

## FINAL THOUGHTS: COMMUNICATION, COACHING, AND MARKETING

Here are four more thoughts worth emphasizing to help you make your PitchFork Event a success.

### Communication

From day one until you send thank you notes to your coaches, communicate regularly, consistently, and clearly to all the different parties involved in PitchFork — applicants, presenters, coaches, the emcee, and colleagues.

You want to ensure that everyone understands the process and the next steps, and has enough time to plan and prepare.

### Coaching

We want to emphasize this: deeply embed teaching, support, guidance, and coaching into your PitchFork experience.

The essential, overriding goal of PitchFork is to help local businesses and the local economy grow. Every entrepreneur who is a part of Pitchfork should believe that their business has evolved and that their skills have improved as a result. It may sound cliché, but everyone should feel like their business “won,” regardless of whether a particular pitch later attracted investment.

Hannah Grimes' staff and select pro bono coaches make themselves available to support, encourage and guide business pitchers. This coaching ranges from business knowledge, such as clarifying financials or better defining target markets, to presentation style and pitch deck organization.

### Marketing and Promotion

Promote PitchFork as much as possible and as early as possible. Not only do you want to attract as many applicants as you can, you want to attract sponsors, and have an enthusiastic full house for the event!

Consider all the channels available in your geography: local newspapers and radio stations, flyers posted on coffee shop community bulletin boards, online listings, and shared social media.

Also leverage area business chambers of commerce, civic clubs, partner organizations and businesses, board



members, and the networks of the coaches, participants, and the emcee.

Whether people attend or not, this promotion communicates to your community that businesses are starting and growing, and that's a positive, exciting thing!

### **Debrief!**

Hannah Grimes has come to appreciate the value of debriefing — we now bake this step into literally every program we offer and every event we produce.

Use a survey to gather feedback from all participants. Schedule a time within two weeks of the Event to bring together staff, coaches, and other volunteers to share feedback, comments, ideas, and ways that PitchFork can be improved for your next event!



# PITCHFORK CHALLENGE: PLANNING & PREPARATION

**Unlike the PitchFork Event, the PitchFork Challenge is designed as a multi-round competition with a cash prize awarded.**

Picture it, PitchFork Challenge day has arrived! The room is packed. Business pitches have been fine tuned, practiced, and are ready to go.

Three finalists in the Business Idea track make 2 minute presentations, followed by 2 minutes of questions from the five judges. Then, four finalists in the Rural Startup Business track make 5 minute presentations, followed by 6 minutes of questions from the judges.

The judges confer, and winners are announced. \$1,000 for the Business Idea track winner and \$10,000 for the Rural Startup Business track winner!

The Challenge has been a huge success. Numerous entrepreneurs have applied and participated. The community has been engaged and supportive. There's been lots of great networking and awareness building. So many lessons have been learned by all the participants that everyone thinks of themselves as a winner for having gone through the process. They have also gained great visibility and made new connections.

Let's break things down and explore how we got here.

## THE BASICS: WHO, WHAT, WHERE

PitchFork Challenge is a competition, occurring over three rounds, with a cash prize awarded at the finale.

Hannah Grimes has created two PitchFork Challenge tracks — an “Idea Track” to foster new business concepts and plans, and a “Rural Startup Business Track” to encourage businesses that have been operating for three years or less and help them fund growth (remember, ultimately, this criteria is up to you!).

Entrepreneurs apply to participate and, if selected, become part of a group of entrepreneurs who enter into two rounds of elimination, resulting in three Idea track finalists and four Rural Startup Business finalists. The finalists make a final presentation at a festive public event. An emcee presides over the final, public Challenge event.

A panel of five judges is recruited and trained. They ask questions, rate the pitches, confer, and decide who wins the cash prizes. The cash prizes are used by the winners to move their business forward and are substantial enough to make a meaningful difference in the development of their business.

## PITCHFORK CHALLENGE SUMMARY TIMELINE

From start to finish, activities are laid out over approximately a six-month period. Of course, much of the goals-based strategic thinking will have been percolating during the prior months and leading into week 1.

**Pre-Work.** Identify your PitchFork Challenge Manager — it is absolutely vital that someone be assigned to take

the lead for organizing and implementing a successful PitchFork Challenge.

**Pre-Work.** Establish your timeline upfront and communicate all the dates with participants, judges, volunteers, and others involved. It's important for everyone to understand and be able to commit to PitchFork every step of the way.

**Week 1.** Create the pitch participant application — questions and format.

**Week 5.** Go public and launch the pitch participant application. Promote the Challenge!

**Week 5.** Identify the Selection Committee and recruit 5 judges.

**Week 8.** Hold an information session for interested prospective participants (at your, and other, organization locations).

**Week 10.** Hold an information session for interested prospective participants.

**Week 12.** Hold an information session for interested prospective participants.

**Week 15.** Hold an information session for interested prospective participants.

**Week 16.** Application deadline. Review and select pitch participants — up to 10 Rural Startup Business track participants and 8 Idea track participants.

**Week 16.** Send a decision notice to all applicants (and a reminder of all required future dates to those selected).

**Week 16.** Hold a phone call or Zoom meeting for the judges and emcee to get to know one another and to walk through their roles, the judging rubric, and the Challenge scripts and logistics.

**Week 17.** Hold a required Pitch Clinic for all participants. Review pitch guidelines, logistics, and a “how to” best practices for both pitch content and pitch presentation style.

**Week 19.** PitchFork Challenge, Round One. Up to 10 Rural Startup Business track and 8 Idea track pitches. This is a closed event — judges and participants only. Judges ask questions and offer guidance. Select up to 8 Rural Startup Business semi-finalists and 6 Idea track semi-finalists to move on — announced the day after Round One.

**Week 21.** PitchFork Challenge, Semi-Final. 8 Rural Startup Business track and 6 Idea track pitches. This is an open and public event — judges, friends, family, interested community members. No judge Q&A — presentations flow from one to the next. Judges select 4 Rural Startup Business finalists and 3 Idea track finalists.

**Week 21.** Send a decision notice to all participants (and a reminder of all required future dates to those selected for the final).

**Week 22.** Hold a separate, private, 1:1 20-minute Q&A for each Rural Startup Business finalist and the judges.

**Week 25.** Dress rehearsal and tech check two days before the Challenge final.

**Week 25.** The PitchFork Challenge Final! An open, public event. Judges ask questions, confer, and announce the winner of each track. Celebrate!!!

## SIGNING UP PITCHFORK CHALLENGE PARTICIPANTS

Every PitchFork Challenge participant must apply and be selected to enter Round One pitches. Obviously, there needs to be an application form (see *Appendix 7 for a sample*).

It's also vital that the criteria for the application be crystal clear to business owners applying AND to those determining the merits of the application and deciding who will present in the PitchFork Challenge and who will not.

## EVERYTHING BEGINS WITH THE PITCH CRITERIA

Like building a solid home, everything starts with the foundation (and your PitchFork Challenge Manager is your all-important “general contractor”). Guidelines and criteria are the foundation of a PitchFork Challenge.

**Who is eligible to apply?** Business size? Longevity? Geography? Industry? For example, at Hannah Grimes, we wished to help propel the growth of newer, existing businesses, so an eligibility requirement for the Rural Startup Business Track is that they must be no more than three years old (but they must be actively “in business”) and have earned less than \$250,000 in revenue during the past year. Another eligibility criteria for both tracks is that the business must be organized as a for-profit. Target the industry sectors and business stages you think your community needs.

**What do you need to know?** Decide what information is essential to assess the suitability of an applying business. For example, Idea Track applicants are

asked to briefly describe their competitors — people with new business ideas often think they have no competition. Everyone was asked how they would invest the Challenge award prize money.

### How will businesses be judged?

Everyone needs a clear sense of how the game is scored! Hannah Grimes has developed a 6-criteria judge's rubric (see *Appendix 8*) that includes Market (the overall market and indicators of potential growth); Product and Service Viability (does the product work? Does the expertise exist to deliver the service?); Team (what experience and expertise do founders, employees, and advisors have to successfully build the business?); Traction (validation that current customers or potential customers make the business viable); Community Benefit (what are the assets, strengths, and values the business will bring to the community?); and Pitch Performance (how articulate and energized is the pitch? Do they demonstrate that they “know their stuff?”). Hannah Grimes does not weight the rubric criteria.

**Can they commit?** This takes time and effort. Certain aspects of PitchFork are required — and not only mandatory attendance at every training, coaching session, and event. For example, winners must agree to report on the use of the prize money and share (confidentially) business financials for the next three years. This reporting helps Hannah Grimes assess the effectiveness of the program and secure funding.

### Lay out your calendar at the start.

Hannah Grimes includes a schedule of events and requirements in the application. If dates are listed, it's easier

for participants to understand and commit to the schedule.

## THE APPLICATION

(See *Appendix 7*). The application includes essential questions needed to understand and assess the business: eligibility requirements (general as well as eligibility for each track); everything the chosen businesses will win; what the winners are required to do in return; and important dates they must commit to.

Hannah Grimes uses one method of collecting applications — Google Forms. We do not accept paper applications, faxes, emails, PDFs, singing telegrams, or any other methods of applying.

We have found Google Forms to be an easy, equitable way to collect the application information, print it out for review with the selection committee, and to provide the completed applications to the judges for their review prior to meeting the presenters. It makes everyone's life easier! Whatever approach you choose, we recommend selecting one way of submitting an application, period.



## SELECTION COMMITTEE AND JUDGES

While you are promoting PitchFork Challenge and recruiting applicants, you also need to organize your selection committee and judges.

**Selection Committee.** This group will review the applications and determine who moves into the pitch competition (10 applicants from the Rural Startup Business Track and 8 applicants from the Idea Track). The Selection Committee can be as simple as a few people from

the organization running the PitchFork Challenge — e.g., the executive director, program director, a board member.

We recommend that you not ask judges to serve as Selection Committee members as well. Not only might they develop favorites prematurely, your judges will be intelligent, articulate, successful area business people, investors, and economic development professionals — and those folks are busy! Don't ask them to do too much.

**Identifying your Judges.** Through trial and error, Hannah Grimes has learned that an odd number of judges is best and that five is the ideal number — three is simply not enough, and seven or more gets cumbersome and makes recruiting difficult.

Seek a group of judges with a diverse mix of expertise and a track record of success. In the past, Hannah Grimes has invited the president of a 4th generation family-owned business, the executive director of an economic development corporation, an angel investor, an SBDC advisor from another region, the founder of a successful local startup, a business coach, a small business owner, and more.

As important as their business expertise is, it is critical that the judges understand that their job is not only to question and assess, but also enthusiastically provide guidance, advice, and suggestions. PitchFork Challenge teaches and nurtures as much as it evaluates. The judges should help everyone up their game in a respectful and supportive way.

If you develop PitchFork Challenge as an ongoing event, allow for one or two

judges to “overlap,” but select different judges for each Challenge. The overlap helps new judges learn about the PitchFork approach and acclimate more quickly.

See *Appendix 9* for a sample of Hannah Grimes’ invitation to be a judge. Note that the full schedule of events was planned and laid out so we were able to let them know immediately what the time commitment and expectations were for being a judge. It is critical that a judge commit to all the meetings and events. If they cannot, find someone else.

We also met prior to the beginning of the pitch rounds to review the judging rubric and answer their questions (see *Appendix 8*).

## **IDENTIFY YOUR PITCHFORK CHALLENGE MANAGER**

The fundamentals of good management practice remind us that someone really needs to “own” this! So identify your Pitch Event Manager right away.

The Pitch Event Manager will create and manage the forms and timelines, orchestrate communication, direct coaches and volunteers, work with event participants, and organize the PitchFork Event — right down to making sure someone is assigned to operate the timer and taking photos. They will drive the process and ultimately be accountable for its success.

## **RECRUIT ONE MORE PERSON: AN EMCEE**

For the public PitchFork Finale, we recommend asking an informed, articulate friend of the organization to serve as emcee — someone who can shepherd the Challenge to keep things

running smoothly, orchestrate introductions and transitions, and make the finale fun and spirited.

In the Semi-Final PitchFork Challenge round, Hannah Grimes program staff emceed, so having someone new for the Finale adds a special element to the event for the participants and for the attendees.



# PITCHFORK CHALLENGE: LOGISTICS, STAGING, AND CONTENT

On with the show! Here's a step-by-step description to help you move your PitchFork Challenge from start to finish.

## FROM APPLICANT TO PARTICIPANT

Once you have reviewed your applications and selected up to 10 Rural Startup Business and 8 Idea participants, inform everyone of your decision via email (see *Appendix 10*). You may occasionally get some who decide to drop out, so beginning with 10 and 8 provides some wiggle room for the 4 Rural Startup Business and 3 Idea finalists you want on Challenge Finals Day.

Either now, digitally, or at the time you first meet, have all participants and the judges review and sign a Statement of Confidentiality (see *Appendix 11*) and a Media Waiver (see *Appendix 12*).

Provide each judge with a copy of the participant applications so they can review them prior to Round One. Hannah Grimes has found Google Drive to be an effective tool.

**Pitch Clinic.** Next, hold a Pitch Clinic for all participants. Most of your participants will have never “pitched” their business before and may feel anxious about doing a public presentation. We offer what we have seen as “best” and “not so great” practices for pitch slide decks and pitch presentations.

Review the PitchFork Challenge guidelines and logistics, and present a

“how to” best practices for both pitch content and pitch presentation style.

Attendance at the Pitch Clinic is required. It's a great opportunity to clarify, answer questions, get everyone thinking about what the judges are going to want to know, how to put their best foot forward, and how to organize their slides. It's also a very nice early opportunity for the entrepreneurs to meet each other.

Hannah Grimes also uses the Pitch Clinic to emphasize the importance of practicing the pitch and to encourage taking advantage of coaching available — knowledgeable staff and volunteer coaches need to be available throughout the process, before and after presentation rounds.

This expertise can be developed in your community! If you do not feel that you have it now, don't let it stop you. Get started, and know that this is a capacity to develop and grow over time.

The slide deck developed by Hannah Grimes to present Pitch Clinic can be found in *Appendix 13*.

## PITCHFORK CHALLENGE, ROUND ONE

### Idea Track

- 2 minute presentation
- 1 summary slide
- 2 minutes after pitch for judge Q&A

### Rural Startup Business Track

- 5 minute presentation
- 12 slides (maximum)
- 6 minutes after pitch for judge Q&A

## Structure and Atmosphere

- Round One pitches are closed events, not open to the public — staff, judges, and participants only. This is an elimination round where most, but not all, will move on to the Semi-Final Round
- All participants are required to stay through the entire round, and watch each pitch. An important part of the learning process for presenters is to observe different styles of pitching and to see what is effective, as well as what are common mistakes. They'll also hear a wider range of judge questioning. This is not just about “winning,” it's about making every business stronger.
- All participants submit their pitch decks to the PitchFork Challenge Manager 24-36 hours prior to Round One. That way, they can all be loaded on one computer and queued up for presentation. To avoid confusion, Hannah Grimes allows PowerPoint and Google Slides only.

Inspired in many respects by TED Talks:

- Everything is closely timed — presentations, Q&A, and transitions between presenters.
- Pitch presenters stand “on stage” and face forward — their support slides are projected behind them. They may not use notes. Pitchers are urged to practice (a lot), know their material, and speak to the audience, never looking back at the slides projected behind them.
- A count-down timer (Hannah Grimes uses an iPad) and a laptop with the slides are clearly visible to the presenter as they present (this is often referred to as a “comfort monitor”) is set up, so they

can forward their slides and know where they are in their presentation.

- If possible, use the same space for every round. That way, presenters will get more comfortable with their space; the set-up of slides, timers, etc. will be consistent; and tech issues will be minimized.

## To-Do Lists and Supplies

For a handy checklist of things to do and stuff you'll need, see *Appendix 14* for the Round 1 list.

## Elimination and Next Steps

After all the presentations are made, the judges deliberate and 8 businesses from the Rural Startup Business Track and 6 Idea Track participants move forward to the Semi-Final round. An email communication is sent to everyone the next day. Those who progress to the Semi-Final round are reminded of important upcoming dates and logistics (see *Appendix 15* for sample emails).

Offer and be available for anyone who wants to discuss their presentation or business, including those who did not move on. When we see potential and interest, we encourage people to apply to a future PitchFork Challenge.

## PITCHFORK CHALLENGE SEMI-FINAL

### Day-Of Dress Rehearsal

The Semi-Final Round is a fun, high-energy event open to the public. It's also an elimination round — 4 businesses from the Rural Startup Business Track and 3 businesses from the Idea Track will go on the Finale.

Semi-Finalists have had two weeks from the elimination round to revise and sharpen their pitches. It is critical for presenters to land their time and be confident that their updated pitches will look and sound great.

So on the day of the Semi-Final, there is a required rehearsal. Each presenter is scheduled to go through their pitch twice — in the room the Semi-Final will be hosted in later. Hannah Grimes typically schedules the Semi-Final in early evening, as it is easier for the public to attend. Hannah Grimes reserves the room for the entire day. In that way, presenters who are able may stay to practice on their own.

### **Idea Track | 6 Presenters**

- 2 minute presentation
- 1 summary slide
- There is no Q&A

### **Rural Startup Business Track | 8 Presenters**

- 5 minute presentation
- 12 slides (maximum)
- There is no Q&A

### **Structure and Atmosphere**

- The Semi-Final is a free public event. As such, it needs to be promoted and advertised. Family and friends of the businesses pitching enjoy attending as do local business and civic leaders interested in entrepreneurship. We have had success using an online registration tool.
- To the extent possible, make snacks, hors d'oeuvres, and beverages available. In addition, we created a printed program agenda for attendees and had one

waiting on each seat (see *Appendix 16 for a sample outline*).

- Like Round One, all participants are required to stay through the entire Semi-Final — not only to watch each pitch, but to engage in networking before and after the presentations.

- All participants submit their pitch decks to the PitchFork Challenge Manager 24-36 hours prior to the dress rehearsal.

As with Round One:

- Everything continues to be closely timed and a count-down timer and a laptop/comfort monitor with the slides are clearly visible to the presenter as they present.
- Pitch presenters stand “on stage” and face forward. They may not use notes.

### **To-Do Lists and Supplies**

For a handy checklist of things to do and stuff you’ll need, see *Appendix 17* for the Semi-Final list.

### **Next Steps**

After all the presentations are made (and after the post-presentation networking), the judges deliberate and the four highest scored presentations in the Rural Startup Track and the three highest scored presentations in the Idea Track move on to the Finale!

Additionally, we have found it useful to identify a “standby” business — just in case one of the Finalists unexpectedly drops out before the PitchFork Challenge Final.

This deliberation makes for a long evening for the judges and the PitchFork

Challenge Manager. However, it is an important opportunity to carefully discuss every presenter and fully consider all the angles. It is also necessary for the judges to have an in-depth understanding of the businesses because the structure of the PitchFork Challenge Final is fast-paced and requires a relatively quick decision.

An email communication is sent to everyone the next day. During deliberation, the PitchFork Challenge Manager should take notes for feedback for the presenters and send them out with the email (see Appendix 18 for sample emails).

Again, offer and be available for anyone who wants to discuss their presentation or business, including those who did not move on.

Four Rural Startup Businesses and two Idea participants are now officially finalists in your PitchFork Challenge!

## PREPARING FOR THE FINAL

### Extended Q&A Session

Remember that there was no Q&A during the Semi-Final round? Instead, soon after the Semi-Finals, we schedule a date for the judges to have 20 minutes with each of the four Rural Startup Business Track finalists (but not the Idea track finalists — they are under enough pressure to fit everything they need to say in two minutes!).

- The judges keep their rubric forms, which have their notes from the Semi-Final, and bring them to this session.
- Each finalist has their slide deck up and projected onto a large screen so the

judges can reference the presenter's slides in their feedback.

- Importantly, before each Q&A session begins, we tell the entrepreneurs that the comments they are about to hear are coming from different perspectives. It's perfectly natural that, at times, the judges may contradict each other. It's up to the entrepreneur to take what makes sense to them and leave what doesn't. This is their business. A statement like this at the beginning is vital as it allows the judges to express their particular point of view without appearing to be in conflict with each other. And it makes it clear to the entrepreneurs that they must ultimately take ownership of what is important feedback and what is not.



- The PitchFork Challenge Manager should take careful notes about the Q&A and feedback for each participant, and email the notes to each participant afterwards. Participants will be too overwhelmed to take their own notes and the meeting moves quickly in 20 minutes!

- As each presenter meets with the judges, review important upcoming dates.

### Final Dress Rehearsal and Tech Check (Required)

Similar to the Semi-Final round, there is a required dress rehearsal with the PitchFork Challenge Manager only. And largely for the same reasons — based on what they have learned, finalists have had two weeks to update and fine tune their pitches.

Schedule this two days prior to the Finale event to make sure the pitches are done and to choreograph the technology —

from projector clickers to wireless microphone handoffs. Each finalist signs up for a 30 minute slot to run through their pitch twice.

At this point, no major feedback is given because we are now so close to the final Challenge event.

The room is also set up as it will be for the finale to help the presenters understand and visualize the event. It's helpful for the presenters to practice in the room they will present in.

## THE PITCHFORK CHALLENGE FINAL

It's the big day! Everything you've done has been in preparation for today.

The basic format and structure of the Finale remains the same:

### Idea Track | 3 Presenters

- 2 minute presentation
- 1 summary slide
- 2 minutes after pitch for judge Q&A (if there is available time, questions can be taken from the audience)

### Rural Startup Business Track | 4 Presenters

- 5 minute presentation
- 12 slides (maximum)
- 6 minutes after pitch for judge Q&A (if there is available time, questions can be taken from the audience)

### Structure and Atmosphere

- You want the Finale to be a well-publicized and well-attended free public happening.
- Make snacks, hors d'oeuvres, and beverages available. As in the Semi-

Finals, create a printed program agenda for attendees and have one waiting on each seat. You want to host a high-quality event that will reflect well on you!

- All finalists should actively engage in networking before and after the presentations.
- In addition, Hannah Grimes has found that creating a detailed agenda and script for the emcee, judges, and presenters is very helpful (*see Appendix 19 for a sample*).
- All participants will have submitted their pitch decks for the dress rehearsal two days before. Any 11th hour edits need to be submitted to the PitchFork Challenge Manager 24-36 hours prior to the Finale.

As with previous rounds:

- Everything continues to be closely timed and a count-down timer and a laptop/comfort monitor with the slides are clearly visible to the presenter as they present.
- Pitch presenters stand "on stage" and face forward. They may not use notes.

### To-Do Lists and Supplies

For a handy checklist of things to do and stuff you'll need for the Finale, see *Appendix 20* for the Finale list.

### And the winner is...!!

While everyone mixes, mingles and socializes, the judges excuse themselves and deliberate immediately after all the finalists have presented. Then the winners are announced!

It is reasonable to expect that the judges will be able to reach their final decisions

in 15 minutes or so. In addition to the rubric, Judges have now had three substantive engagements with the finalists. A relationship has emerged. Which entrepreneurs have grown and evolved? Who has been open to ideas and suggestions? Which pitches have improved?

Have something special to award to each track winner. Perhaps it's one of those "big checks." Or a trophy of some sort. Hannah Grimes is fortunate to have a nearby Charter school that has a skilled teacher who makes beautiful wooden plaques with laser etching. Every year, she creates a special award for the winners. Whatever it is, make it memorable, make it special, and make it worthy of a photo in your local or regional newspaper!

Congratulations, you've done it! And you've helped your local entrepreneurs and economy in a very big way.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS: COMMUNICATION, COACHING, AND MARKETING**

Here are four more thoughts worth emphasizing to help you make your PitchFork Challenge a success.

### **Communication**

From day one until you send thank you notes to your judges, communicate regularly, consistently, and clearly to all the different parties involved in PitchFork — applicants, presenters at every stage (and each track), judges, coaches, the emcee, and colleagues.

You want to ensure that everyone understands the process and the next steps, and has enough time to plan and prepare.

### **Coaching**

Deeply embed teaching, support, guidance, and coaching into your PitchFork experience.

The essential, overriding goal of PitchFork is to help local businesses grow. Every entrepreneur who is a part of Pitchfork should feel that their business has evolved and that their skills have improved as a result. It may sound cliché, but everyone should feel like their business "won," regardless of who was awarded the cash prize.

Hannah Grimes' staff and select pro bono coaches make themselves readily available to support, encourage and guide presenters. This coaching ranges from business knowledge, such as clarifying financials or better defining target markets, to presentation style and pitch deck organization.

### **Marketing and Promotion**

Promote PitchFork as much as possible and as early as possible. Not only do you want to attract as many applicants as you can, you want to attract sponsors, and have an enthusiastic full house for the Semi-Finals and the Finale!

Consider all the channels available in your geography: local newspapers and radio stations, flyers posted on coffee shop community bulletin boards, online listings, and shared social media.

Also leverage area business chambers of commerce, civic clubs, partner organizations and businesses, board members, and the networks of the judges, coaches, participants, and the emcee.

Whether people attend or not, this promotion communicates to your community that businesses are starting and growing, and it's a positive, exciting thing!

### **Debrief!**

Hannah Grimes has come to appreciate the value of debriefing — we now bake this step into literally every program we offer and every event we produce.

Use a survey to gather feedback from all participants. Schedule a time within two weeks of the Finale to bring together staff, judges, and other volunteers to share feedback, comments, ideas, and ways that PitchFork can be improved for your next Challenge event!



# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

### Sample: PitchFork Event Application

#### PitchFork How to Apply:

Please submit your completed PitchFork application to: [programs@hannahgrimes.com](mailto:programs@hannahgrimes.com) with the following information:

- Responses to application questions
- Current balance sheet
- Annual Profit & Loss from the past three years

#### PitchFork Application Cover Page

Business Owner Name(s):

Business Name:

Business Sector:

Email:

Phone Number:

If selected, you are required to attend pitch coaching sessions prior to the presentation. Are you able to attend the two sessions for the PitchFork event you are applying to present at? Please see our website for the [required outlined dates](#).

PitchFork Application Questions:

- 1) Entrepreneurship is commonly thought of as an exercise in problem solving, so to start things off, **tell us about the problem you are interested in solving.**
- 2) Next, **tell us about your solution.** At this point, your solution can simply be an idea or vision for a product or service, it does **NOT** need to be a prototype, working app, etc. [Examples: Uber offered a new solution to the problem of taxis being hard to find]
- 3) Describe how your solution is better than current solutions? Think about how your solution is more valuable from the perspective of potential customers than current solutions (this will form the core of your “customer value proposition”). [Hint: Common value propositions include being easier to use, less expensive, more reliable, safer, more accurate etc.] Suggestion: present the value proposition in the statement format of “[Company] provides [product or service] that allows [define the user] to [identify the problem you are addressing] by [improvement over current options] in a cost-competitive way.” In other words, describe why you are better, cheaper, faster.
- 4) If this is relevant, tell us about how your solution works and how you plan to protect it? Is it built on an underlying technology? Is it a different approach to offering a service? Is it a new

kind of process? etc. Is there any intellectual propriety (Patents, Copyrights, Trademarks) associated with your solution? If not, how do you plan to protect it from competitors' copying your idea?

- 5) Now, tell us about the market for your solution. Who will be your first customers (i.e. early adopters) and how many are there? How about other groups of customers? Add these together to estimate the overall market size for your solution and share how this overall market changing (i.e. is it growing, etc.)
- 6) Describe your revenue model and pricing models. How did you decide on these? Offer as much detail and support as possible. [Hint: A revenue model shows how you will be paid for providing your solution. Common revenue models include subscription (e.g. Netflix), ad-supported (e.g. Google), "Freemium" (e.g. LinkedIn), and direct-sales (e.g. Tesla)]
- 7) **Describe your sales and distribution plans.** How will you reach your customers to let them know about your solution? If they decide to purchase your solution, how will you deliver it to them?
- 8) **Tell us about your team.** Cover your backgrounds, skills, connections to this problem/solution etc. Investors will support an A team with a B idea over a B team with an A idea – explain why you have the A team. Do you have any business, technical, or industry experts that have agreed to advise you in developing your venture? How are you unique? Why will this team be the one in which someone will make an investment?
- 9) **Help us understand how you arrived at your answers to questions 1-8.** Did you conduct interviews with customers, industry experts, key partners etc.? Did you administer any surveys? Did you analyze reputable secondary data sources? Please offer as much detail as possible.
- 10) **How much and what kind of investment does your business need?** What will you do with the funds raised? How do you plan on repaying your investors?
- 11) **Do you need support in developing any of the above questions?**

Adapted from UNH Holloway Competition

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Sample: Acceptance Email**

Dear [NAME],

Thank you for applying to pitch your business opportunity at our upcoming PitchFork Event — an amazing opportunity to learn how to better tell your story and connect with local investors, customers, and community champions.

Congratulations! You have been selected to pitch your business at PitchFork on [DATE].

Please see the attached documents to help you prepare for our Pitch Practice on [DATE] and please reach out and let me know if you have any immediate questions or need help with your presentation. We are here to support you to be your very best.

Sincerely,  
PitchFork Event Manager

### **...(and Declined)**

Dear [NAME],

Thank you for applying to the PitchFork Event. We received a wide-range of worthy applications and our decision was a difficult one — only three businesses are selected to present at PitchFork. The Selection Committee decided to not include your business in this event.

We hope that you will persevere and apply to future PitchFork Events! We also encourage you to use us as a business resource as you develop your business further. You can schedule a meeting with me if you would like to meet with me, and also take advantage of our programs and pro bono coaches for business advising.

Thank you for your interest and all of your hard work. Don't be a stranger and keep us posted on your next steps!

Sincerely,  
PitchFork Event Manager

## APPENDIX 3

### Sample: Presentation Coaching Assessment Form

**BUSINESS NAME:**

**Presentation Prompts:**

- Do we know what the “problem” is?
- Do we know what their “solution” is?
- Do we know what their business does and is capable of doing?
- What are the opportunities?
- Who are their customers/market?
- What’s the impact of the money on their business?
- Is the ask clear?
- Filler count (uhm, you know, so):

Strengths/Keep:	Weaknesses/Work on:
Ideas/Things to consider:	Notes: (backup slides):

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Pitch Practice (Closed Event): To-Do Checklist and Supplies**

#### **Pre-Practice Event**

1. Review the applications and select who will be selected to participate
2. Email the decision (accept/decline) to all applicants. To those who are accepted remind them of all of the required dates in the email and a summary of requirements, deadlines, and event logistics.
3. Email the coaches ahead of time with a link to the DropBox Folder with the selected presenters' applications and attachments so they can review them prior to the Pitch Practice.
4. If possible, set up the room as it will be for the PitchFork Event

#### **Post-Practice Event**

1. Send Thank You's to coaches and volunteers
2. Send a reminder email to participants for help and coaching. Fully engage in coaching leading up to the PitchFork Event. Meet with the presenting entrepreneurs to coach business content, pitching and presentation style, and organizational readiness for equity or debt.
3. Promote/market PitchFork to build momentum and buzz.

#### **Supplies**

- Confidentiality and Media Waiver forms
- Pens and paper
- Projector
- Screen
- Laptop (Comfort Monitor)
- Clicker to advance the slides
- iPad/laptop for a countdown timer for the presenter
- Pitch deck from each presenter — their best available for the practice
- Presentation Coaching Assessment form for coaches

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **PitchFork Event Audience Program Template**

[LOGO]

PitchFork Spring Pitch

[DATE]

[START TIME - END TIME]

[LOCATION]

[TIME]        Networking and Cocktails (schedule for one hour)

[TIME]        Welcome (schedule for 5 minutes)

Presenters (schedule 7 minute pitches and 5 minute Q&A)

[TIME]        [Pitch 1: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[TIME]        [Pitch 2: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[TIME]        [Pitch 3: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[TIME]        Close and Thanks

[TIME]        Networking and Cocktails (schedule for one hour)

On the reverse side, Hannah Grimes typically recognizes and thanks volunteer coaches and event partners and sponsors.

## **APPENDIX 6**

### **Day Of Rehearsal and Public PitchFork Event: To-Do Checklist and Supplies**

#### **Rehearsal and Tech-Check**

##### **Pre-Rehearsal and Check**

1. Confirm each presenters time slot and inform them of the logistics for the day
2. Email encouragement to presenters and any other reminders for the event
3. Inform the coaches of the line-up and also the logistics for the day

##### **Supplies**

- Laptop for pitch decks
- Projector
- Projection screen
- Clicker to advance the slides
- iPad/laptop for a countdown timer for presenters
- Wireless microphones if appropriate
- Final pitch decks

#### **The PitchFork Event!**

##### **Pre-Event**

1. Write draft script for event emcee and review with him/her
2. Create and email the presentation line-up and agenda for all parties: presenters, coaches, emcee, and colleagues
3. Create an program/agenda for the audience to follow along
4. Arrange all room set-up, food and beverage catering
5. Make informational and marketing materials from presenting businesses and the sponsoring organization(s) available

##### **Post Event**

1. Send thank you's and congratulations to everyone involved
2. De-brief with presenters, coaches, and colleagues

##### **Supplies**

- Laptop for pitch decks
- Projector
- Projection screen
- Clicker to advance the slides
- iPad/laptop for a countdown timer for presenters
- Wireless microphones if appropriate
- Final pitch decks

## **APPENDIX 7**

### **Sample: PitchFork Challenge Application**

#### **WHAT CATEGORY ARE YOU APPLYING FOR?**

- Rural Startup Business track (\$10,000 cash award)
- Idea track (\$1,000 cash award)

#### **Rural Startup Business Track:**

1. Company Name
2. Primary Company Contact Name
3. Company Address
4. Phone Number
5. Email Address
6. Company Principal Place of Business
7. Date of Company Formation
  - 7.1. Upload and provide documentation of formation SP, LLC, Corp, etc.
  - 7.2. If in business prior to 2019, provide proof of business tax filing (first page of your taxes)
8. Industry
9. Primary Product of Service Offering
10. Team
11. Number of employees
12. Total funding to date
13. Revenue generated in the past 12 months:
  - 13.1. Please upload company financials (current balance sheet and cash flow and all activity for P&L of business existence)
14. Projected revenue and expenses for 2018 and 2019:
  - 14.1. Please upload the company's cash flow projections by month for 2018 and 2019
15. Projected operating expenses for the next 12 months
16. Projected break even time frame including when the owner(s) will be able to take an owners draw or payroll (salary). (month and year)
17. Detail how the company will spend the PitchFork Challenge award of \$10,000?
18. Briefly provide a company overview
19. Briefly provide an industry overview and describe the market opportunity
20. Briefly describe the competition
21. Briefly describe the company's business model (how will you make money?)
22. Briefly describe why you choose to build a business in the this rural region.
23. Briefly describe the assets and strengths of the community for your business and what are the assets and strengths that you and your business will contribute to the community?
24. Please upload the company's business plan

#### **Idea Track:**

1. Primary Contact Name
2. Primary contact number
3. Company principal place of business
4. Email address
5. Industry
6. Primary product or service offering
7. Briefly describe the business idea
8. Briefly describe an industry overview and describe the market opportunity
9. Briefly describe the competition
10. Briefly describe the business model.
11. Briefly describe why you want to start a business in this rural region.

12. What are the assets and strengths of the community for your business idea and what are the assets and strengths that you and your business will contribute to the community, if launched?
13. Detail how you will spend the PitchFork Challenge Idea Track Award of \$1,000 to advance the business idea?

### **WHO'S ELIGIBLE?**

The PitchFork Challenge is open to any resident and business that is located in the counties below with a population of 30,000 or less:

- NH: Cheshire, Sullivan, and Hillsborough
- VT: Windham, Bennington, and Windsor
- MA: Franklin

Rural Startup Business Track:

- Business must be for-profit
- May not be more than three years old by September 1, 2019
- May not have raised more than \$250,000 in funding
- May not have earned more than \$250,000 in past year revenue
- Complete and upload the attached Intake form

Idea Track:

- Business idea is for-profit
- Business idea has not earned any revenue
- Complete and upload the attached Intake form

### **WHAT WILL I WIN?**

- Print and digital media exposure on The Keene Sentinel's and Radically Rural websites and social media platforms
- Article of PitchFork Challenge and announcement of the winners printed in a special Radically Rural insert in The Keene Sentinel
- For the Rural Startup Business Track: \$10,000
- For the Idea Track: \$1,000

### **WINNER REQUIREMENTS:**

Winners of the awards will be required to:

- Report their award use expenditures
- Complete a business financial tracking form for three years after the award is received
- Document quarterly for the first year with photos if applicable the use of the award and the impact of the award
- Be available for social media, blog, and website marketing and promotion

By completing and submitting this application, I hereby grant permission and consent to the Hannah Grimes Center to use the information contained in this application and any additional photographs, videos or information provided throughout the course of this project for presentation under any legal condition, including but not limited to: publicity, marketing, advertising and web content.

### **IMPORTANT DATES:**

**July 30:**

PitchClinic: a best practices of how to pitch

**August 15:**

First round of pitches (closed event) to the judges only. Includes Q&A. Eliminate two from each track — Idea and Rural Startup Business

**August 29:**

PitchFork Challenge Semi Finals (free public event). No Q&A time. Second round of eliminations — two businesses from each track move on to the finals.

**September 5:**

Q&A Session (20 minutes each rural startup finalist) with the judges

**September 17:**

Required dress rehearsal and tech check two days before PitchFork Challenge Finals

**September 19:**

PitchFork Challenge Finals. Q&A time. — Winner announced!



## **APPENDIX 9**

### **Sample: Invitation to be a Judge**

Dear [NAME],

We are holding our second annual PitchFork Challenge this year with the final pitch competition to be held during the annual Radically Rural Summit (September 19 & 20).

Entrepreneurs will pitch their rural business product/service to win a \$10,000 cash award. We will also have a track for people to pitch a business idea to win \$1,000 to advance their business idea.

We are asking you to be part of the judging panel to help us decide who will win both.

To help you make this decision we are asking our judges to commit to all of the following dates/times:

- ◆ Wednesday, August 14: 8:15am until 12:30pm: Hear the first cut of entrepreneurs pitch and provide feedback.
- ◆ Thursday, August 29: 5:00pm-8:00pm: Live semi finalist pitch (5:00pm-7:00pm). After, you will narrow down the field from ten to six and make the decision as to who will go to the final event to have an opportunity to win \$10,000 (7:00pm-8:00pm deliberation).
- ◆ Thursday, September 5: 8:30am-11:30am: 20 minutes of Q&A with each finalist to help them understand your questions, concerns and the strengths you see and to develop their final pitch.
- ◆ Thursday, September 19: 2:00pm-5:00pm: Live final pitch event during the Radically Rural Summit (2:00pm-4:00pm) and make the decision for the prize awards (4:00pm-5:00pm). At the CONNECT event from 5:30pm- 7:30pm the announcement of the winners will be made.

We value your insights in understanding entrepreneurial and investment opportunities and hope you will accept our invitation to be a judge at our PitchFork Challenge.

Let us know if you have any questions we can answer to help you make your decision.

## **APPENDIX 10**

### **Sample: Acceptance Email**

Dear [NAME],

Thank you for applying to pitch your business opportunity at our PitchFork Challenge with a chance to win \$10,000.

Congratulations! You have been selected to go to the next round which is to pitch on August 15. Please be aware that the judges will eliminate two businesses and two ideas after listening to the pitches on the 15th so we encourage you do your very best to polish your pitch!

Please see the attached documents to help you prepare for August 15 and please reach out and let me know if you need help with your presentation. We are here to support you to be your very best.

Sincerely,  
PitchFork Challenge Manager

## APPENDIX 11

### Sample: Statement of Confidentiality



#### Statement of Confidentiality

**Our mission is to provide the space, tools and connections that innovative entrepreneurs need to build strong businesses, thriving local economies, and vibrant communities in the Monadnock Region.** We fulfill our mission primarily through workshops, coaching sessions, and other hands-on programs that help entrepreneurs and nonprofit leaders succeed.

As a member of the entrepreneurial community, you recognize that it is vital to protect our program participants' valuable information, ideas, and intellectual property in their process of building and growing an organization. To protect our entrepreneurs' ideas and organizations, Hannah Grimes Center staff, instructors, interns, volunteers, board members, contractors, and other affiliated parties may be asked to sign a statement of confidentiality.

**I acknowledge that:**

- Confidential business information includes, but is not limited to, business data in any form, financial information or statements, marketing strategies, pending business projects/proposals, proprietary production processes, personnel/payroll records, and any other information that might harm, increase competition for, or otherwise negatively impact an organization
- Confidential information is shared by the business voluntarily
- I may **not** act on, distribute, share, or publish information that could be classified as confidential
- Confidential information, at the request of the business, may be used to determine scholarship qualification for an individual, business, or organization

Those who do not respect the Hannah Grimes Center's statement of confidentiality may be subject to legal action.

---

Your Name

Your Signature

Date

Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship // 25 Roxbury Street, Keene, NH 03431

**APPENDIX 12**  
**Sample: Media Waiver**



**MEDIA WAIVER**

**Consent and Grant of Rights**

I, on behalf of myself, grant to the Hannah Grimes Center on a perpetual, irrevocable and unrestricted basis the right to use, reuse, publish and re-publish Subject's photographic portraits or pictures and/or electronic/digital/video footage of the Subject or the written content, photography or electronic/digital/video footage of Subject's business pitch as long as they are involved in the PitchFork Challenge 2020 at the Hannah Grimes Center facility, in which the Subject's Likeness or business pitch may be included in whole or in part as a composite. The rights granted herein to use the Subject's Likeness and the business pitch shall extend to any reproductions in color or otherwise, made through any medium and in any and all media now or hereafter known whether used singularly or in conjunction with printed and/or other accompanying material and whether used for any purpose whatsoever, including commercial purposes, and regardless of the manner in which said use is transmitted (e.g., television broadcast, electronic or digital media, printed material, newsprint, brochures, all printed collateral, motion pictures and video).

**Release**

I warrant that I am over the age of 18 and have the right to contract in my name. I have read and understand the content of this form prior to signing it.

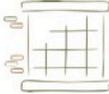
---

**Signature**

**Date**

## APPENDIX 13

### Sample: Pitch Clinic Slide Deck



**HANNAH GRIMES**  
Center for Entrepreneurship

**Pitch Clinic**

---

Kate Kirchofer and Sara Powell  
Program Directors

Welcome and Congratulations!



### Introductions

- Name
- Business name/business idea
- Quick description of business/idea

### Pitch Details

Idea Track	Rural Small Business Track
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Two minutes- timer</li><li>• No notes</li><li>• 1 slide</li><li>• Power Point or Google slide format only</li><li>• Aug 19- there will be time for Q&amp;A with judges</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Five minutes- timer</li><li>• No notes</li><li>• 10 slides or less</li><li>• Power Point or Google slide format only</li><li>• Aug 19- there will be time for Q&amp;A with judges</li></ul>

## What makes a good pitch?

- Tell a personal story – why this business and why you?
- Keep it simple
- Show your product, wear it, sample etc.
- Visuals supplement your story
- Outline your business model
- Practice early and often with people before it's "good"
- Be repetitive
- Data and stats
- Less text on the slides

## When presenting

- Don't look at your power point on the screen- face the audience/judges
- Have a snappy, clear, crisp sentence as your start off to get their attention
- Try not to ramble
- When taking feedback and questions – know that it is to improve your business, your idea, and your pitch. It comes from a place of helping.
- ~ 140 words is one minute- write a script

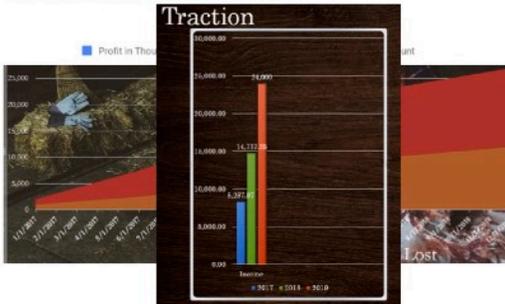
## Pictures help supplement or support



## Show your product



## Visuals for financials



## Title

- Slide 1
- Logo
- Name/title
- Email/cell phone
- Website
- Strong opening statement

• From Guy Kawasaki's template

## Problem/Opportunity

- Slide 2
- Describe the issue or pain point that you're solving/alleviating or the pleasure your providing

## Value Proposition of Product

- Slide 3
- Explain the value of the pain you alleviate

## Underlying Magic

- Slide 4 and 5 can be combined
- Describe the technology or magic behind your product or service.

## Business Model

- Slide 5
- Explain how you will earn money/get paid and make a profit

## Go to Market Plan

- Slide 6
- Explain your current traction, successes so far, or test runs
- Explain how you are going to reach your customer

## Competitive Analysis

- Slide 7
- Provide a complete view of the competitive landscape

## How You'll be Judged

- Through the lens of [community benefit](#) which should be addressed in the pitch:
- Traction
- Team
- Product
- Market
- Community benefit
- Pitch performance

## Important Dates

- **Live pitch on Wednesday, 8/19 at 8:15am- 12:00pm**
  - Tuesday, 8/18 at 8am: Pitch decks due in Power Point or via Google Slides
  - Idea Track- prepare and present a 2-minute live pitch with one slide
  - Rural Startup Track- prepare and present a 5 minute live pitch accompanying slide deck
- **The Semi-Finals: Thursday, 9/3 5:00pm-7:30pm**
  - Tuesday, 9/1 (by appointment): tech checks for microphone
  - Wednesday, 9/2 by 8am: Pitch decks due in Power Point or via Google Slides only
  - Invite your friends, family, and potential clients

## Finals at Radically Rural



- September 24: one day summit with six different tracks: Arts & Culture, Community Journalism, Entrepreneurship,
- Entrepreneurship track: PitchFork finals will be the second session
- Thursday, September 24 at 11:00am-12:45pm the finals
- Thursday, September 19 at 5:30pm-7:30pm CONNECT event announcement

## **APPENDIX 14**

### **Round 1 (Closed Event): To-Do Checklist and Supplies**

#### **Pre-Event**

1. Review the applications and select who will advance
2. Email the decision (accept/decline) to all applicants. To those who are accepted remind them of all of the required dates in the email and has all the requirements, deadlines, and event logistics.
3. Email the judges ahead of time with a link to the google drive with all of the accepted presenters' applications so they can review them prior to hearing their pitches.
4. Be available and encourage all of the applicants to meet with the person running the competition.

#### **Post-Event**

1. Inform the presenters who advanced to the semi-finals and remind them of important dates.
2. Meet with any of the presenters who would like to discuss their presentations and their businesses.
3. Promote/market who advanced forward to the semi-final round to build momentum and buzz.

#### **Supplies**

- Projector
- Projection screen
- Laptop (Comfort Monitor)
- Current pitch deck from each presenter
- Clicker to advance the slides
- Rubrics for the judges
- iPad/laptop for a countdown timer for the presenter

## APPENDIX 15

### Sample: Progressing (and Eliminated) from Round 1 to Semi-Finals Email

Hi PitchForkers!

Thank you all for your presentations earlier today and congratulations!

I'm pleased to announce everyone will present live on August 29 at the semi-finals at 5pm-7:30pm, here at HGC, on their way to win either \$1,000 for their business idea or \$10,000 for their rural startup! The judges wanted to see everyone's second pitch before they decided to eliminate someone!

Here are some observations and notes from the judges that you should all be aware of when revising your presentations for the semi-finals on August 29:

- The criteria in which you are judged: Traction, Team, Market, Product, Community Benefit and Pitch performance need to be addressed in your presentation, but more so for the Rural Startup Track since you have more time.
- Practice. Practice. Practice for your time limit and for your nerves.
- Please make sure you all state what you would do with the prize money and how it would advance your business/idea. Can you represent this visually?
- For those with a pitch deck, some of you looked and talked to the screen instead of engaging the audience. Don't read the screen/talk to the screen, even though it is so alluring to do so! Also, don't position your body that it looks like you are there to talk directly to the judges, but look to the audience as well.
- Notes of any kind (cards, paper, notebooks, iPads, phones, etc) will not be allowed with you as you present in the semi-final and final round. Memorize your pitch for this next round!
- You can and should revise your pitch and therefore your pitch deck. We hope the questions and feedback are helpful to you as you further develop your presentation for the semi-finals.
- Idea track presenters: please send me a customized/branded power point slide (one slide only) that has the following: your name(s), business name and or business concept statement by 8am August 27.
- Business opportunity presenters: please send me your final power point presentation by 8am August 27.
- Everyone, [please register to attend the semi-finals](#) and have your friends and family register as well! Fill the audience with your support!

I will reserve the Roxbury room (the room we were in today) for Monday, 8/26 from 8am until 5pm and Tuesday, 8/27 from 8am until 5pm (this is for tech check and dress rehearsal) and Wednesday, 8/28 (8am until 5pm). Any of you can drop in and practice in this room then. You may want to self organize a group too. If you would like help with you pitch prior to the tech check, then just email me to set up a time to run through your pitch.

Tuesday, 8/27 is the tech check by appointment from 9am until 5pm. I want each of you to schedule at least 30 minutes with me so that I can show you how to use the microphone headset and for you to run through your pitch twice with me. I want to see how you land on time and also your updated version of your pitch. Because of this, I will need your final presentation prior to the tech check so I can see your slides.

#### **Take the time to practice in the room.**

Below are important required dates coming up. **Please note that we added an option for a "mini mixer" for Radically Rural guests to network with you after your pitch and before the CONNECT event.** It will occur right after the pitch and we'll have refreshments in our co-working space, the Hive, for everyone afterwards to just exhale and enjoy the completion of the pitch.

## **Important Dates**

August 27, 9:00am-5:00pm: Practice and tech rehearsal before the semi-finals. This is all about making sure you land your pitch at the allotted time and tech check. No feedback will be given (unless you want it). It will be just be with [PitchFork Challenge Manager]. **Email [PitchFork Challenge Manager] your slide/deck by 8am.**

August 29, 5:00pm - 7:30pm: PitchFork Challenge Semi-final Live Event

September 5, 8:30am - 11:30am: Q&A time with the judges in 20 minute increments and by appointment via Kate. This is just for the rural startup track finalists

September 17, 9:00am - 5:00pm: Required dress rehearsal and tech check by appointment with [PitchFork Challenge Manager]. **Email [PitchFork Challenge Manager] your slide/deck by 8am.**

September 27, 1:00pm - 5:00pm: PitchFork Challenge Final Event with a **mini mixer from 4pm until 5pm in the Hive. Meet the entrepreneurs who just pitched their startup business or idea!**

September 27, 5:00pm - 8:00pm: CONNECT 2019/announce winners. Finalists, will need to purchase their ticket to CONNECT, which will be at a discounted rate.

I'll send out more information next week about the semi-final event and I can meet with anyone about their pitch prior to the tech check.

If any of you have any questions, just email me.

I'll send out individual emails to you with feedback from the judges.

Again, congratulations!

[PitchFork Challenge Manager]

## **...(and Eliminated)**

Dear [NAME],

Thank you for applying and pitching your business through two rounds of the PitchFork Challenge! This was a tough decision yesterday. The judges liked your business and you. However, the judges decided not to bring you forward to the semi-final round due to questions about your scalability, market potential, and your pitch performance. They thought that your slides were not cohesive enough and that your story about why you choose to do this work and why it's important to your potential clients was not strong enough.

We hope that you use us as a business resource as you develop your business further. You can schedule a meeting with me using [this link](#) if you would like to meet with me and also use our pro bono coaches for business advising.

You can also register to attend the [Radically Rural](#) summit to cheer on your fellow entrepreneurs or just register to see who wins the awards at the CONNECT event at a discounted labor day rate (\$10 less) by using the promo code: CONNECT10. The code is case sensitive!

Thank you for all of your hard work and being part of the PitchFork Challenge. I know you do great work, but I think knowing why your business exists and how it will grow to support both [BUSINESS OWNER NAME] and possibly more will take time to invest in working on your business instead of in the business.

Don't be a stranger and keep us posted on your next steps!

[PitchFork Challenge Manager]

## **APPENDIX 16**

### **Semi-Final Audience Program and Agenda Template**

[LOGO]

PitchFork Challenge Semi-Final

[DATE]

[START TIME - END TIME]

[LOCATION]

[TIME]           Networking and Cocktails (schedule for half hour)

[TIME]           Welcome (schedule for 5 minutes)

Idea Track Presenters

[START TIME - END TIME]

[Pitch 1: NAME and 3-5 WORD BUSINESS IDEA DESCRIPTION]

[Pitch 2: NAME and 3-5 WORD BUSINESS IDEA DESCRIPTION]

[Pitch 3: NAME and 3-5 WORD BUSINESS IDEA DESCRIPTION]

[Pitch 4: NAME and 3-5 WORD BUSINESS IDEA DESCRIPTION]

[Pitch 5: NAME and 3-5 WORD BUSINESS IDEA DESCRIPTION]

[Pitch 6: NAME and 3-5 WORD BUSINESS IDEA DESCRIPTION]

Rural Startup Business Track Presenters

[Pitch 1: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[Pitch 2: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[Pitch 3: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[Pitch 4: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[Pitch 5: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[Pitch 6: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[Pitch 7: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[Pitch 8: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[TIME]           Close and Thanks

[TIME]           Networking and Cocktails (schedule for half hour)

On the reverse side, Hannah Grimes typically recognizes and thanks volunteer coaches and event partners and sponsors.

## **APPENDIX 17**

### **Semi-Final Round (Public Event): To-Do Checklist and Supplies**

#### **Pre-Event**

1. Set up an RSVP system for the semi-final (we use an online registration tool, such as EventBrite).
2. Market and promote this to the public well in advance.
3. Send out a press release to the local newspaper, if applicable.
4. Arrange food/drinks.
5. Create and print agenda with the line-up for the presenters and judges for the attendees

#### **Post-Event**

1. Inform the presenters who advanced to the semi-finals. Have each of them sign up for a Q&A time slot with the judges and remind them of important dates and logistics of that Q&A session.
2. Thank and remind the judges of the Q&A session details

#### **Supplies**

- Projector
- Projection screen
- Laptop (Comfort Monitor)
- Current pitch deck from each presenter
- Clicker to advance the slides
- Rubrics for the judges
- iPad/laptop for a countdown timer for the presenter

## APPENDIX 18

### Sample: Progressing (and Eliminated) from Semi-Finals to Final Round Email

Hello All,

Thank you all for your presentations last night and congratulations — you did it! I was so impressed with each pitch and so were the judges. They were astounded with the improvement of each presentation.

I'm pleased to announce the following people will present live on September 19 at the PitchFork Challenge FINALS during our Radically Rural Summit at 2pm-4pm, here at HGC, on their way to win either \$1,000 for their business idea or \$10,000 for their rural startup business!

Idea Track Presenters:

- [NAME]
- [NAME]
- [NAME]

Rural Startup Business Track Presenters:

- [NAME]
- [NAME]
- [NAME]
- [NAME]

Next week, we have set aside time for each Rural Startup Business Track presenter to meet with the judges on Thursday, September 5. **Please email me your availability for all the following time slots by Monday, 9/2** and I will do my best to match you with your top choices. The judges all have questions for you and feedback for your final presentation.

Option 1: 8:30am-8:50am

Option 2: 8:50am-9:10am

Option 3: 9:10am-9:30am

Option 4: 9:30am-9:50am

Idea Track presenters, I will email you individually with feedback from the judges with suggestions for the final pitch.

All finalists need to purchase a ticket to the [CONNECT](#) event. Currently, we are running a Labor Day special rate for the event which will give you a \$10 discount. Use the following (case sensitive) promo code: CONNECT10.

#### **Important Dates**

September 5, 8:30am-10:30am: Q&A time with the judges in 20 minute increments and by appointment via Kate.

September 17, 8:00am- 6:00pm: Required dress rehearsal and tech check

September 19, 1:00pm-5:00pm: PitchFork Challenge Final Event and Mini-Mixer with Radically Rural attendees

September 19, 5:30pm-7:30pm: CONNECT 2018/announce winners

I am available to meet with all of you if you would like help on your pitch.

Again, congratulations!

Have a wonderful weekend.

[PitchFork Challenge Manager]

## ...(and Eliminated)

Dear [NAME],

Thank you for applying and pitching your business through two rounds of the PitchFork Challenge! This was a tough decision yesterday. The judges liked your concept and passion about your business idea. However, the judges decided not to bring you forward to the final round due to questions about your revenue model and market potential.

We hope that you use us as a business resource as you develop your business further. You can schedule a meeting with me using [this link](#) if you would like to meet with me and also use our pro bono coaches for business advising.

You can also register to attend the [Radically Rural](#) summit to cheer on your fellow entrepreneurs or just register to see who wins the awards at the CONNECT event at a discounted labor day rate (\$10 less) by using the promo code: CONNECT10. The code is case sensitive!

Thank you for all of your hard work and being part of the PitchFork Challenge. It was a real pleasure getting to know you through this process.

Don't be a stranger and keep us posted on your next steps!

[PitchFork Challenge Manager]

## APPENDIX 19

### Sample: Final Agenda and Script (for Finalists, Judges, and Emcee)

[LOGO]

PitchFork Challenge Final

[DATE]

[START TIME - END TIME]

[LOCATION]

[TIME]           Networking and Cocktails (schedule for half hour)

[TIME]           Welcome (schedule for 5 minutes)

Idea Track Presenters

[START TIME - END TIME]

[Pitch 1: NAME and 3-5 WORD BUSINESS IDEA DESCRIPTION]

[Pitch 2: NAME and 3-5 WORD BUSINESS IDEA DESCRIPTION]

[Pitch 3: NAME and 3-5 WORD BUSINESS IDEA DESCRIPTION]

Rural Startup Business Track Presenters

[Pitch 1: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[Pitch 2: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[Pitch 3: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[Pitch 4: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[TIME]           Close and Thanks

[TIME]           Networking and Cocktails (schedule for one hour)

Congratulations to making it to the [YEAR] PitchFork Challenge Finals!

We are so excited to have all of you — judges, businesses, idea generators, emcee, and coaches — join us for the PitchFork Challenge Finale! Thank you for all of your diligence and hard work that has gotten us to this point!

The final event is similar to the lead up events, except that [EMCEE NAME] will be the event emcee and will facilitate the Q&A section with the judges and the presenters. Judges will have the first opportunity to ask questions, if there is time remaining, a question from the audience will be accepted.

#### **Business Idea Track Information:**

1. Each presenter will have 2 minutes to pitch their idea with one slide in the background. The pitch is based solely on the crafting of your words.

2. After each presentation, there will be two minutes for Q&A time from the judges. [EMCEE NAME] will facilitate the Q&A portion.

### **Rural Startup Business Track Information:**

1. Each presenter will have five minutes to present with a pitch deck.
2. After each presentation, there will be five minutes for Q&A time from the judges. [EMCEE NAME] will facilitate the Q&A portion.
3. The judges will be thinking about the following items when scoring your pitch: Traction, Team, Market, Product, Community Benefit, and Pitch performance.

### **Roles:**

Event Emcee: [NAME, OCCUPATION/TITLE]

Judge: [NAME, OCCUPATION/TITLE]

### **Timeline:**

1:00 pm. Arrival: Presenters, Judges, emcee, HGC staff, and volunteers

1:15 pm. Photos (presenters by group, judges and emcee)

1:30 pm. Doors open for attendees

2:00 pm. Emcee: Welcome/thank sponsors, flow of the event, intro judges

### **Idea Track Presentations:**

2 minutes for presentation, 2 minutes for Q&A, 1 minute for transition

[TIME]: [NAME]

[TIME]: [NAME]

[TIME]: [NAME]

[TIME]: [EMCEE NAME]: Thank you

## Rural Startup Business Track Presentations:

5 minutes for presentation, 5 minutes for Q&A, 1 minute for transition/scoring

[TIME]: [NAME]

[TIME]: [NAME]

[TIME]: [NAME]

[TIME]: [NAME]

[TIME]: [EMCEE NAME]: Closing, thank you, and mini-mixer

[TIME]: Judges deliberate

[TIME]: JUDGES/EVENT SPONSOR(S): Announce PitchFork \$10,000 AND \$1,000 winners

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## Timeline with Emcee's Script:

### Timeline:

1:00pm Arrival: Presenters, Judges, MC, HGC staff, and volunteers  
1:15pm Photos (presenters by group, judges and MC)  
1:30pm Doors open for RR attendees  
2:00pm [EMCEE NAME]: Welcome, flow of the event, intro judges, and voting process for Idea Track

[EMCEE NAME]: Welcome to the second annual Radically Rural Summit created by the Hannah Grimes Center and the Keene Sentinel, and welcome to the 2019 PitchFork Challenge Finals! We are so happy you are here. My name is [EMCEE NAME], and I will be your MC today. I have... [BRIEF BIO]

I would like to introduce our judges:

[JUDGE NAMES AND BUSINESS/TITLES]

The PitchFork Challenge is a business pitch competition focused on supporting the rural entrepreneurial ecosystem. It was created to provide money and momentum to increase the rate of rural startups by supporting the idea phase and the early challenging years of being a startup. The Hannah Grimes Center created the PitchFork program in 2016 in response to low startup rates in rural areas after the great recession. This is not just another pitch competition, but a great way to jumpstart ideas, connections, and small businesses. We'll share all that we learned in putting this challenge together so that you can take it back to your rural area and create something similar. The PitchFork Challenge "How To Guide" is available on the Hannah Grimes Center's website. We hope today's event will inspire more rural entrepreneurs everywhere to start a business.

Today, we'll have two pitch categories. The first category is the Idea Track. We will have THREE entrepreneurs present their business ideas on their way to win \$1,000 to further their

business idea. They are not fully formed businesses yet, but they are in the all-important idea phase!

After the idea track round, we will hear pitches from FOUR local entrepreneurs under our rural startup business track. Today's winner will receive \$10,000 to boost their startup.

Note: the people presenting today have successfully made it through three judging rounds! (clap)

A quick reminder, to please make sure your phone is turned off!

Alright, let's get started with the idea round. Each presenter will have two minutes to pitch their idea, with an additional 2 minutes afterward for the judges to ask questions from the presenter.

Let's get started with our first presenter .....

- Announce each person (clap them up)
- Facilitate the 2 minute Q&A ([NAME] will time this)
- Thank the presenter and judges (the hook to end the Q&A time)
- Repeat

### **Idea Track Presentations**

2 minutes for presentation, 2 minutes for Q&A, 1 minute for transition

[TIME] [Pitch 1: NAME and 3-5 WORD BUSINESS IDEA DESCRIPTION]

[TIME] [Pitch 2: NAME and 3-5 WORD BUSINESS IDEA DESCRIPTION]

[TIME] [Pitch 3: NAME and 3-5 WORD BUSINESS IDEA DESCRIPTION]

EMCEE: Thank you [NAMES] for presenting your business ideas. Remember, the award will be announced this evening at the CONNECT event.

Next, we'll have the FOUR startup entrepreneurs present for five minutes for their chance to win \$10,000! After each pitch we'll also 5 minutes for Q&A from our judges and you the audience.

Without further ado, let's welcome the first presenter.....

- Announce each person and business name (clap them up )
- Facilitate the 5 minute Q&A ([NAME] will time this)
- Thank the presenter and judges (the hook to end the Q&A time)
- Repeat

## **Rural Startup Business Track Presentations**

5 minutes for presentation, 5 minutes for Q&A, 1 minute for transition/scoring

[TIME] [Pitch 1: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[TIME] [Pitch 2: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[TIME] [Pitch 3: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

[TIME] [Pitch 4: NAME and BUSINESS NAME]

3:43pm: EMCEE: Closing, thank you, and mini-mixer

**EMCEE:** Thank you to the entrepreneurs for their compelling business pitches. Let's give all the presenters and our judges a big round of applause! (clap)

Thank you for attending PitchFork Challenge and Radically Rural and supporting small business Entrepreneurs.

We hope you have enjoyed listening to the pitches. The awards will be announced at tonight's CONNECT event beginning at 5:30. The CONNECT Event will be at Keene State College's Mable Brown Room, which is about a 10 minute walk from here. Remember, the how-to-pitch-guide is on our website, at [hannahgrimes.com](http://hannahgrimes.com).

In closing, we invite you to a mini-mixer just down the hall at our co-working space, The Hive. There you can meet and connect with the Entrepreneurs, and enjoy a cocktail. Thank you all for coming!

3:45pm: Volunteers will help move people to the HIVE  
4:00pm: PitchFork Challenge Finals end the mini mixer begins  
4:15pm: Judges deliberate in the Buckminster conference room on the lower level.  
5:30pm: CONNECT Event at KSC's Mabel Brown Room  
6:30pm: Sponsors will announce the two award winners. Script will be given day of event.

## **Contact Information**

Hannah Grimes:

[PITCHFORK CHALLENGE MANGER]

PHONE

EMAIL

## **APPENDIX 20**

### **Finale/Final Round (Public Event): To-Do Checklist and Supplies**

#### **Extended Q&A Session (Private)**

##### **Pre-Event**

1. Confirm each presenters time slot and inform them of the logistics for the day
2. Inform the judges of the line-up and also the logistics for the day

##### **Post-Event**

1. Email summary of feedback session to each entrepreneur
2. Meet with any of the presenters and entrepreneurs

##### **Supplies**

- Paper and pen for the judges and presenter
- Laptop
- Projector
- Projection screen
- Clicker to advance the slides
- Pitch decks from the semi-final event

#### **Final Tech Check**

##### **Pre-Event**

1. Email presenters to sign up for their tech check rehearsal and any other event reminders
2. Create the layout for the room the final pitch event will be in and have it set up for the tech check if possible

##### **Post-Event**

1. Email encouragement to presenters and any other reminders for the finale
2. Email the judges reminders for the finale

##### **Supplies**

- Projector
- Projection screen
- Laptop
- Current pitch deck from each presenter
- Clicker to advance the slides
- iPad/laptop for a countdown timer for presenter
- Wireless microphones if possible

#### **The Finale**

##### **Pre-Event**

1. Write draft script for event MC and review with him/her
2. Create and email the presentation line-up and agenda for all parties: presenters, judges, emcee, and fellow colleagues
3. Create an agenda for the final event for the audience to follow along
4. Arrange for the award/plaque for the winner(s)
5. Create process for giving the prize money to the winner(s)

##### **Post-Event**

1. Send thank you's and congratulations to everyone involved
2. Inform the winner(s) of the process for receiving the prize money
3. Cut the check(s)
4. De-brief with presenters, judges, and colleagues

##### **Supplies**

- Projector
- Projection screen
- Laptop for the slide presentations
- Clicker to advance the slides
- Wireless microphones if possible
- iPad or another laptop for a countdown clock for the presenters
- Rubrics printed for the judges
- An award to present the winner(s)