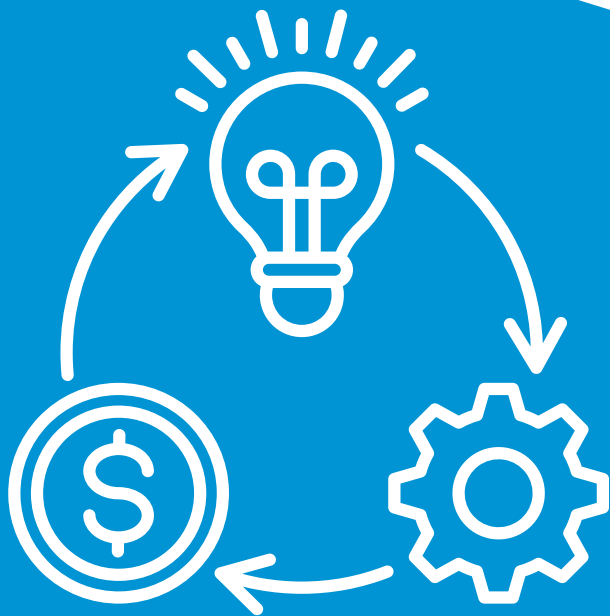


MAHASKA PITCH COMPETITION



ENCOURAGE ENTREPRENEURSHIP
STRENGTHEN EXISTING BUSINESSES
SUPPORT INNOVATIVE IDEAS

APPLY BY
OCT. 1, 2026

PITCH COMPETITION
NOV. 16, 2026



Purpose of the Competition

Turn Your Business Idea into Reality.

The Mahaska Chamber & Development Group's Mahaska Pitch Competition is designed to encourage entrepreneurship, strengthen existing businesses, and support innovative ideas that contribute to the economic vitality of Mahaska County.

Whether you're launching a new business, expanding an existing one, introducing a new product, or investing in growth, this competition gives entrepreneurs the opportunity to compete for grant funding while sharing their vision with community leaders, business professionals, and investors.

Selected finalists will present a live business pitch before a panel of judges. Winners will receive funding to help move their projects forward while contributing to a stronger local economy.

The competition is intended to:

- Encourage entrepreneurial growth in Mahaska County.
- Support business expansion and innovation.
- Create jobs and increase local investment.
- Strengthen our downtowns and commercial districts within Mahaska County.
- Showcase the incredible talent and ideas throughout Mahaska County.

THANK YOU

The Mahaska Pitch Competition is made possible by the following sponsors:



Eligibility Requirements

Existing Business

- Business must be physically located in Mahaska County, Iowa.
- Business must have been operating for a minimum of one (1) year prior to the application deadline.
- Business must be for-profit. Business must be legally registered with the State of Iowa or, if operating as a sole proprietorship, legally registered in Mahaska County.
- Business must be in good standing with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations.
- Business must demonstrate current operations, including active sales, tax history along with financial records, customers, or services.

Start-up Businesses

- Business must commit to locating its primary operations in Mahaska County, Iowa, within 12 months of receiving the award.
- Businesses must present a clear plan for establishing a physical presence in Mahaska County (storefront, office, manufacturing facility, home-based business, or commercial space as applicable).
- Business must demonstrate the potential to create jobs, expand the local tax base, or provide a needed product or service in Mahaska County as well as show cash flow projections.

Applicants must be 18 years of age.

Grant fund uses could include business growth, expansion, equipment, inventory, technology, marketing or start-up costs.

Ineligible uses include debt repayment, real estate purchases, political activities or reimbursement for expenses incurred before award approval.

Application Requirements

- All applications must be submitted to the Mahaska Chamber ddegroot@mahaskachamber.org by 5 PM on **October 1, 2026**.
- Submissions must include
 - Completed Application
 - Project Budget (including cash flow projections or current financial records)
 - Letter of Support
 - IRS Form W-9

Judging Process and Timeline

1. August 25, 2026 Applications Open
2. October 1, 2026 at 5 PM Deadline to Submit Application & supporting materials
3. October 9, 2026 Notification of acceptance for pitch finalists
4. November 16, 2026 Live Pitch event • Location and Time coming soon!

Awards

Existing Business Awards

- 1st Place = \$6,000
- 2nd Place = \$3,000
- 3rd Place = \$2,000

Start-up Business Awards

- 1st Place = \$5,000
- 2nd Place = \$2,500
- 3rd Place = \$1,000

Application

Business Name:

Owner(s):

Primary Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Business Address:

Website/Social Media:

Business Type (select all that apply):

- Start-up
- Existing Business
- Home-based business
- Retail
- Restaurant
- Manufacturing
- Service
- Agriculture
- Other

How long has your business been operating?

Number of current Full-time employees:

Number of current Part-time employees:

Project Information:

How would you use the funds if awarded? Describe your project and what you plan to accomplish?

Amount Requested:

Maximum Request: \$

Total Project Cost: \$

Matching Funds (if applicable please list sources): \$

Budget Summary (10 points)

Provide a detailed breakdown of how grant funds will be spent. Please use budget form included.

Business Innovation (20 points)

Tell us about your business.

What problem are you solving and what products or services do you offer? Why did you start this business and what makes your business unique?

Growth Potential (20 points)

Describe how this funding will help your business. Please include numbers and data. Do you have revenue growth? Do you have expansion plans or operational improvements? What are your business goals over the next 3-5 years?

Community Impact (10 points)

How will this project benefit Mahaska County? Example: job creation, increased tourism, downtown investment, local purchasing, community partnerships, quality of life improvements

Business Readiness (10 points)

Describe your readiness to complete this project. Include - timeline, financing secured, staffing, etc.

Marketing Strategy (10 points)

How will you market and promote your business and proposed project? Please describe your plans for social media, website, advertising, events, community outreach, and partnerships.

Financial Sustainability (10 points)

How will this project continue to generate revenue after the grant funds have been spent?

Agreement

I certify that all information contained in this application is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that if selected as a finalist, I will participate in the Mahaska Pitch Competition on November 16, 2026 and agree to provide a follow-up documentation regarding the use of awarded funds.

Applicant signature:

Date:

Judging Score Sheet (100 Points)

Evaluation Criteria	Points	Score
Innovation	20	_____
Is the business idea, product, or service unique? Does it solve a problem or meet a market need in a creative way? How does it differentiate itself from competitors?		
Growth Potential	20	_____
Does the business have a realistic plan for growth? Is there a strong market opportunity? Can the business increase sales, create jobs, or expand over time?		
Community Impact	10	_____
How will the business positively impact Mahaska County? Will it create jobs, attract visitors, fill a community need, support other local businesses, or enhance quality of life?		
Business Readiness	10	_____
Is the business prepared to implement its plan? Has the applicant demonstrated planning, research, operational readiness, and the ability to execute successfully?		
Presentation	10	_____
Was the presentation organized, engaging, and professional? Did the presenter communicate clearly, answer questions effectively, and demonstrate confidence and passion?		
Marketing Strategy	10	_____
Is there a clear plan to reach customers? Are the target market, branding, advertising, and customer acquisition strategies well defined and realistic?		
Budget & Use of Funds	10	_____
Is the proposed budget realistic and well thought out? Will the requested funds have a meaningful impact on the business? Are expenses clearly justified and aligned with business goals?		
Overall Viability	10	_____
Does the business demonstrate a strong likelihood of long-term success? Would this investment help the business achieve measurable results?		
.....		

Total Possible Score: 100 Points

Budget Worksheet _____

Brief Item Description	Total Cost
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Total Project Cost \$ _____
Amount Requested from Pitch Competition \$ _____
Business Match/Other Funding (if applicable) \$ _____
List sources, other grants, loans, self, etc.

