

Youth Innovation Showcase 2026

Judge Instructional Video Transcript

Table of Contents

Judge Information, Orientation, & Guidelines	1
Session Outline	1
Welcome to All Judges!	1
What is YIS?	1
Key Components of the Youth Innovation Showcase	1
Judging Philosophy	2
Innovations	2
Judging Criteria.....	2
Primary Judging Rounds: Semi-Finals & Finals	3
Semi-Final Judging.....	3
Semi-Finalist Interviews.....	3
The Interview Process - Questioning.....	3
Finals Judging.....	4
Providing Feedback to Participants.....	4
Different Models for Providing Supportive Feedback	4
Frequently Asked Questions	5
Thank You!	5

Judge Information, Orientation, & Guidelines

Hello! This video will address the Youth Innovation Showcase Judge Information, Orientation, and Guidelines for the current year.

Session Outline

Our outline for today is a warm welcome to you as a judge, a general orientation to the judging process and forms, key reminders for providing constructive and supportive feedback to youth, and a few notes on the impact of the Youth Innovation Showcase on participants.

Welcome to All Judges!

Welcome! Thank you for volunteering to serve as a judge at this year's Youth Innovation Showcase. We are so excited that you will be joining us this year and are grateful for the support you will be providing to youth around their STEM innovations and ideas.

What is YIS?

Now in its eighth year, the Youth Innovation Showcase is a STEM competition for youth in BC and the Yukon between 12 and 19 years of age. The primary purpose behind the Youth Innovation Showcase is to give youth a platform to show off their unique innovation projects, so they can get hands-on experience exploring science and technology and can be recognized for their hard work and ingenuity.

Key Components of the Youth Innovation Showcase

Submissions are split into two age categories: 12-15 and 16-19. Each category will have Semi-Finalists and Finalists.

There are two (2) primary judging rounds in the Youth Innovation Showcase, each with similar components. We will discuss each component in further detail.

First, review youth Pitch Videos and 1-Page Innovation Reports.

Second, attend a 15–20-minute interview with each youth.

Third, provide supportive and constructive feedback to youth on their project using the judge scoring form.

Please note that both the Semi-Final judging round and the Final judging round have a live interview with the youth. You will have signed up to judge one, or both, of these judging rounds in the judge registration form.

Judging Philosophy

Many participants have been working hard for months in preparation for the Youth Innovation Showcase, and they will find their discussions with you and your feedback to be a highlight of the event. Youth will look up to their judges as role models - as the type of entrepreneur or scientist they would like to become. While this is a competitive event, our priority is that all youth have a positive judging experience.

Your role as a judge is not only to evaluate the merit of various projects, but also to provide helpful and constructive feedback as an expert in your field. Please acknowledge the strengths in each project you evaluate, and phrase suggestions and feedback constructively. Detailed feedback should be provided on written scoring forms that will be anonymously delivered to the participants after each round.

Innovations

The Youth Innovation Showcase is restricted to innovation projects, which are projects that focus on the development and evaluation of innovative devices, models or techniques, or approaches in technology, engineering, or computers. An innovation can be a brand-new product or service, or an existing product or technology that is being used in a brand-new way.

Judging Criteria

The projects will be evaluated based on four criteria: Innovation (40%), Communication (35%), Functional & Realistic (15%), and Engagement (10%). The Pitch Video and 1-Page Innovation Report are important in that they should demonstrate the youth's ability to communicate concepts, methods, and results relevant to their project. Prettiness or flashiness of the Pitch Video and 1-Page Innovation Report are of far less value in the scoring process.

In brief, we have outlined the four criteria.

Innovation looks at the novelty or ingenuity in the youth's approach to solving their problem and designing their innovation. This criterion is also based on the subject matter of the project and how challenging it would be for the youth's age category. In general, the innovations and subject matter in the older age category (16-19 years old) are expected to be more challenging than those in the younger age category (12-15 years old).

Communication looks at how well the youth can convey the details of their project without jargon or overly technical language. This is a large part of the Youth Innovation Showcase as we specifically want youth to practice effective communication with judges from different scientific or industry backgrounds.

Functional & Realistic looks at how the innovation is presented. Specifically, will it work the way the youth claims and will it effectively address the challenge the youth have identified, irrespective of if it has been prototyped and tested.

Engagement looks at how well the youth captured your attention and gained your interest. This can often be expressed as the youth's passion or enthusiasm for their project.

Primary Judging Rounds: Semi-Finals & Finals

Now that we have outlined the general criteria for judging Youth Innovation Showcase projects, we are going to look at the two judging rounds and the processes you will undertake as a judge for each round. Again, you will have selected whether you are judging the Semi-Final round, the Final round, or both, during judge registration.

Semi-Final Judging

If you are a judge for the Semi-Final judging round, you will receive an e-mail with links to the project files and interview times for each project that you have been assigned, as well as a link to the online scoring form by October 26. Please review the Pitch Video and 1-Page Innovation Report for each project in preparation for the interview. These will provide a general sense of each project you are responsible for adjudicating and will be an opportunity for you to draft questions you may wish to ask the youth in the interview. Interviews will take place on Tuesday, November 17. Judge Semi-Final score forms are due by Friday, November 20 at 12PM Pacific Time (PT).

Semi-Finalist Interviews

The interview process is entirely virtual and will be 15-20 minutes at set times for each project you are adjudicating. You will be part of a panel of up to four (4) judges during each interview. Please start the interview at the assigned start time, regardless of how many judges are present. At the beginning of the interview, introduce yourself and ask each youth and other judges to do the same. Allow the youth two (2) minutes to summarize their innovation broadly before transitioning into the questions and conversation. From there, ascertain through questioning, the youth's contribution to and knowledge of the project. Please note that their display aspects are secondary to their general knowledge and understanding. From the interview component, you are basing your scores primarily on the quality of the answers in the interview.

The Interview Process - Questioning

While communicating with the youth during the interview, pose all questions in a positive, encouraging, and conversational manner. Even if you experience any dismay at a project, do not convey this to the youth through tone of voice, body language, or lack of attention or interest. Remember, these interviews are the highlight of the event for many youths and your role as a judge can directly impact their interest in continuing in science or not. You

may wish to provide verbal feedback during the interview. If this is the case, note it on the judging form and ensure you share it in an encouraging and positive manner.

As the conversation and discussion end, be sure to thank the youth for their interest in science, for their work on the project, and for having the courage to compete at the Youth Innovation Showcase. As interviews are scheduled back-to-back, please be cognizant of time and keep track of your time for each interview.

Finals Judging

If you are a judge for the Final judging round, you will receive an e-mail with links to the project files and interview times for each project that you have been assigned, as well as a link to the online scoring form by January 9. Please review the updated Pitch Video and 1-Page Innovation Report for each project in preparation for the interview. These will provide a general sense of each project you are responsible for adjudicating and will be an opportunity for you to draft questions you may wish to ask the youth in the interview. For the Finals, judge teams will be made up of two (2) judges, to allow for a deeper discussion of the project, and youth will be interviewed multiple times by different judge teams. Please start the interview at the assigned start time, regardless of how many judges are present. Interviews will take place on Tuesday, January 12. Judge Finals score forms are due by Friday, January 15 at 12PM PT.

Providing Feedback to Participants

At all times it is important to keep in mind the intended audience for your feedback – the participants and youth involved in the Youth Innovation Showcase. Remember that your feedback will be sent to the youth after each round. It is imperative that all feedback be constructive, supportive, and encouraging. For example, rather than using “You should have done this ...”, you could use “For your next project, consider doing ...”. Think about the framing of your feedback and keep it neutral. Remember, you are reviewing the project, not the youth.

Different Models for Providing Supportive Feedback

In general, people do not wish to be told only what they have done incorrectly or what needs to be changed. Instead, it is important to have balance in your feedback utilizing both positive and constructive feedback throughout. For this purpose, we share two different models for providing feedback that you may wish to use as a guide when providing youth feedback. These models can be applied to each aspect of the project or criteria on the judging form.

For the Glow and Grow model, this highlights one item where the project was glowing and one item where the project can grow in the future. For the Feedback Sandwich model, this begins with one item that was done well with the project, then adding one constructive

feedback on that aspect of that project that could be done differently and ending on one aspect of the project that should be continued in the future.

In all instances, please acknowledge what was done well and provide constructive suggestions for improvement or future work.

Frequently Asked Questions

You may still have a few questions about being a judge for the Youth Innovation Showcase. Here are a few frequently asked questions that we have been asked throughout the judging experience.

Q1: How do I differentiate my evaluation for youth that worked with mentors in a university lab versus those who did everything at home?

Although you want to keep this in consideration, the key for your role is to determine how creative and how much critical thinking the participants are using based on the resources that they have. Yes, a participant could be working in a lab but if they cannot answer questions in terms of why they used a specific technique or experiment, or how their innovation addresses their stated problem, then that is less valuable than a participant who did everything at home and carefully designed each step and can explain them fully.

Q2: What if I am not an expert on the topic?

That is great and a valuable experience for the youth. A key aspect of the Youth Innovation Showcase is making sure all youth can explain their project to diverse audiences and ensure whether expert or novice, that all judges have a sense of the project.

Q3: May I judge more projects than I am assigned?

Absolutely! You will receive an e-mail with information related to the judging experience for this year. From there, you can let us know by replying to that e-mail if you can judge any more projects.

Q4: What if I have a conflict of interest for a project I am assigned to judge?

If you identify any conflicts of interest, please reply to the e-mail with your assigned projects as soon as possible so we can re-arrange the judging distribution and swap you to a different project. We want to ensure all youth projects are equally evaluated.

Thank You!

Last and most certainly not least, thank you for volunteering to be a judge for this year's Youth Innovation Showcase. We really appreciate the time you are giving to be a judge at our event! Your participation makes the youth experience inspiring and enriching. We are working hard to make the judging process better each year for the participants and the

judges. We welcome any suggestions and comments you may have and encourage you to contact us. We hope to see you again next year!

For any questions about the judging process, providing supportive feedback, or other aspects related to your role as a judge, feel free to connect with us at Science Fair Foundation BC. You can reach us via e-mail at info@youthinnovation.ca. Thank you and have a wonderful day!