



Junior
Achievement™

NSLS

National
Student
Leadership
Summit

Company of the Year: Guidelines and Criteria for Participants



**June 9 - 13, 2024
Washington, D.C.**

studentsummit.ja.org

Junior Achievement Core Purpose

To inspire and prepare young people to succeed in a global economy.

Junior Achievement Core Values

- Belief in the boundless potential of young people.
- Commitment to the principles of market-based economics and entrepreneurship.
- Passion for what we do and honesty, integrity, and excellence in how we do it.
- Respect for the talents, creativity, perspectives, and background of all individuals.
- Belief in the power of partnership and collaboration.
- Conviction in the educational and motivational impact of relevant, hands-on learning.

JA National Student Leadership Summit

The Summit is Junior Achievement’s opportunity to celebrate the achievements of students from across the United States. This pinnacle event brings 15 JA student companies to Washington, D.C. for three days of high impact JA experiences. Students will demonstrate their business acumen, creativity, and entrepreneurial thinking in a competitive environment—showcasing their companies to Members of Congress and business leaders. In addition to the competition, JA Company Program students will have the opportunity to participate in workshops led by national experts in innovation, entrepreneurship, and business. To get a feel for the event, visit [facebook.com/JAStudentSummit](https://www.facebook.com/JAStudentSummit) or watch the video from the 2023 NSLS here:

https://youtu.be/k_YpLwPn9Po?si=dWQSGdCcT0YNmYli

Eligibility

Permitted Minimum and Maximum Age of Participants

Students representing their companies in the competition must have been enrolled in high school during the 2023-2024 school year. Middle school students or students who graduated prior to 2024 will automatically be asked to withdraw from the competition. Students that fall outside of these guidelines can only be approved to participate by the Senior Vice President of Junior Achievement USA Education Department and the local JA Area President.

Number of Participants per Company

For the competition, a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 5 students are allowed to represent their student company at the JA National Student Leadership Summit.

JA Company of the Year Competition Information

Overview

The JA Company of the Year Competition is not simply a business competition for young people. Qualifying JA Companies must be able to successfully apply 21st century skills (such as creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and communication) and demonstrate entrepreneurial thinking during each competition element.

The goal is to balance the business achievements of each team as a whole with the personal development of each individual team member. For a team to win this award, it is not enough just to run a financially successful JA Company or to have created an exciting product or service. JA Company members also must demonstrate that they understand how and why the company performed as it did.

Independent judges will determine company performance against the competition criteria as compared with other JA Companies during each stage of the competition process. First, second, and third place honors will be awarded.

Submission and Selection Timeline

April 22 – May 3	Student Company Submission Period
May 6 – May 9	Finalist Selection
May 10	Finalists Announced
May 17	Complete Event Registration
June 9 – 13	JA National Student Leadership Summit

Process and Eligibility

- JA Companies wishing to be considered must provide their local JA Area with their *JA Company Program* company report and commercial/video. **The deadline to submit to JA USA is Friday, May 3.**
- JA Areas throughout the United States may submit JA Companies for consideration.
- JA Companies must have been active during the current school year to be eligible.
- JA Companies must have participated in *JA Company Program* or other JA USA approved variation and follow the JA Program Implementation Standards for these programs. These standards include completing the full curriculum and that a community volunteer has taught the required minimum number of instructional contact hours.
- JA Companies must have submitted a Product Approval Application to USI and been approved.
- All submitted materials must be the original work of JA Company students.
- Only JA Area staff may register student companies for consideration. Upon receipt of the above materials, the JA Area must:
 - Complete the online submission for the JA Company here: <http://studentsummit.ja.org>
 - Upload the company report in PDF format.
 - Upload your commercial or video showcasing your product.

Finalist Selection

- A panel comprised of JA representatives will be convened for the review process.
- The panel will score JA Company Reports based on the provided judging criteria.
- The selection panel will submit finalists to JA USA.
- Up to 15 JA Companies will be selected as finalists for advancement to the JA National Student Leadership Summit.
 - Note: Commercial submissions will be scored for the 15 teams advancing as finalists. Commercial scores will be factored into the final team score.

Announcement of Finalists

- The finalists will be announced on Friday, May 10, 2024.

Competition Stages

There are three stages to the competition:

- **Stage One:** Student Company Online Submission of JA Company Report and Commercial/Video (By May 3)
- **Stage Two:** Finalist Selection (By May 10)
- **Stage Three:** Onsite competition including Entrepreneurship Expo, stage presentation, and interview before the judging panel (June 9-13).

Stage One: Student Company Online Submission

Company Report

The JA Company Report is an opportunity to showcase the team's overall business performance and what was learned and achieved throughout the *JA Company Program* experience.

Guidelines

The report should read as a single business document, not as a series of repetitive directors' reports. The report must be written by company members and should be original and innovative in approach. A recommended approach is to ask company members to provide details on his/her activities and then combine the information into one cohesive document. The format should feature concise and organized business document, not a creative writing essay.

- Any interesting and unique activities undertaken by the JA Company should be included.
- Companies are strongly encouraged to include photographs of their product or service, charts, infographics, or other appropriate visual elements.
- A PDF copy of the report must be submitted electronically to JA USA by the local JA Area as part of the company's competition submission.
- A maximum of 8 pages (or fewer) of 8.5 X 11 sheets are permitted. No appendices are allowed. The report must be free from any factual, spelling, or grammatical errors and should be visually pleasing.
- All reports must have a cover page in addition to 8 (or fewer) report pages. It may include company logos, photos, or graphics. It should include:
 - Company name
 - Year of operation
 - Name of volunteer, teacher/school, and local JA Area
 - City and state
- Page one **must** be an Executive Summary and include:
 - Company name and/or logo
 - Mission statement
 - Product/service description
 - Summary of financial results
 - Summary statement of JA Company performance
 - Index of JA Company Report contents

Judging Criteria

- **Guidelines Compliance** – The report should adhere to guidelines noted above. This includes meeting page number requirements, including an Executive Summary, avoiding spelling or grammatical errors, and attention to visual appearance.
- **Financial Performance** – The company should include information about financial performance such as break-even analysis, capitalization, total units sold, revenue generated, expenses incurred, profit margin, investor return, and liquidation. A financial statement of activities, profit and loss statement, or liquidation report is also required.
- **Innovation** – The report should demonstrate how the company's product, service or specific business strategy incorporated innovation and/or innovative thinking and how that impacted overall business performance.
- **Marketing and Sales Strategies and Methods** – The company should share specifics on marketing and sales activities. This may include information on overall marketing strategy, target audience, competitive advantage, product/service features and benefits, sales methods, and customer service techniques. Students are strongly encouraged to provide examples of any social media pages, websites, advertisements, or other resources created to support these efforts.
- **Leadership and Organization** – The report should showcase company leadership and describe.

how they were identified, how they motivated employees, describe strategies used to achieve company goals, and share how processes were developed and improved to maximize business performance.

- **Learning Experiences and Future Application** – The company should share any successes, challenges, failures, or key learnings from the *JA Company Program* experience as well as include examples of how this experience will shape future plans of the company or its members.

Commercial / Video

The commercial / video is an opportunity to showcase the benefits of the company's product and innovative approach to meeting their customers' needs.

Guidelines

- The presentation should grab the viewers' attention and spotlight the company's product or service. The commercial should bring to life the benefits and use of the product/service in a way that will be memorable for viewers.
- The clip should clearly demonstrate how the product or service adds value/fulfills a need for the target audience.
- When making the video, think of some of the best commercials – what made them the best and what made them memorable? Were they funny, innovative, or shocking? Did they tell a story? Did they speak to an experience you personally have felt?
- **Please note: All videos must adhere to copyright protection guidelines. Students may not use copyright protected images, music, or references without express written permission. Any videos that include music copyright infringement will be denied. Please cite the music source (artist and song title) at the end of video even if the music is public domain or royalty free.**
- The maximum time allocated for each video presentation is 1 minute.
 - Commercials should be uploaded using the instructions provided on page 3, no later than Friday, May 3. The format must be in either Windows Media or QuickTime (.mov .mp4 or .wmv).

Judging Criteria

- **Creativity** – Commercials are often funny or innovative making them memorable for the viewer.
- **Relevance and content** – Advertising creates awareness of the product/service and can convey messages, attitudes, and emotions to entice and intrigue audiences.
- **Call to Action** – The commercial should clearly explain how to purchase the product, contract the service, or support the cause based on the value or need.
- **Delivery technique/Style** – The commercial uniquely delivers information to the viewer. The video should grab attention and showcase the product/service or business in a unique way.
- **Clarity of message** – The commercial clearly expresses the product/service and demonstrates how the product adds value/fulfills a need for the target audience.
- **Product demonstration/use** – The commercial should include a demonstration of the product/service in order to provide context for the viewer.

Stage Two: Finalist Selection

Please refer to finalist selection process on Page 3.

Stage Three: On-Site Competition

Please be advised Entrepreneurship Expo booth displays and team presentations must be prepared prior to arriving at the event. The Summit schedule does not allow for team practice time. Teams should expect to be engaged in full-day competition activities for the duration of the JA Summit. More detailed information will be provided to finalists once they have been selected.

Entrepreneurship Expo

Booth Display – This is the first direct encounter your company’s team will have with members of the judging panel as well as the general public.

Guidelines

- Visitors as well as judges will be given the opportunity to observe and interact with company members in action.
- Chaperones are allowed to be at the booth during the Entrepreneurship Expo.
- The Entrepreneurship Expo is open to the public; visitors can examine the booths and ask questions. Booths should display the following:
 - ✓ Name of the company
 - ✓ City and state
 - ✓ Supporting or sponsoring companies (if any)
 - ✓ Names of advisors and teachers
 - ✓ Product and/or demonstration of service
 - ✓ Highlights of sales and final performance
- The booth contents should be produced and funded by the JA Company. More information will be shared with finalists upon selection.

Judging Criteria

- **Product pitch** – A brief pitch should be prepared for the judging panel to provide a snapshot of your business and product or service. This verbal pitch should include an overview of the product or service, the value proposition, and product features and benefits.
- **Visual display of the booth elements** – Teams should create a visual, informative, and engaging display and collateral materials.
- **Genesis of the idea and product conceptualization** – The presentation should highlight the problem and how your product was the solution.
- **Verbal and non-verbal communication skills** – Team members should demonstrate effective communication skills.
- **Ability to apply lessons learned to new situations** – Team members should share how key learnings informed their business decisions and have since shaped their life experiences.

Presentation

Presentation before the Judging Panel

This is your company’s opportunity to engage with the judging panel and demonstrate your knowledge of the company and overall experiences.

Guidelines

- The presentation should summarize the key experiences and achievements of the company. Try to bring to life and include the accomplishments and challenges of your company’s endeavor for the audience. Sharing what you have learned from your mistakes and subsequent solutions is as important as your achievements.
- All company members in attendance at the Summit are required to participate in the presentation.
- Presentations will take place before a public audience, fellow competitors, and the judging panel.
- The maximum time allocated for each presentation is four (4) minutes.
- Immediately following the presentation, judges will have up to four (4) minutes to ask students questions directly related to the presentation, company, or product/service.

- The narrative style should be business-like but may include the use of some humor. Students are encouraged to be creative in their presentation style.
- Presentations must be in Microsoft PowerPoint and not include added audio or video.

Judging Criteria

- **Structure of Presentation** – The presentation should summarize the key experiences and achievements of the company by telling their unique company story.
- **Delivery Technique and Style** – There is an effort to engage the audience and keep the presentation moving at a nice pace. The team exudes confidence and enthusiasm in their stage presentation.
- **Visual Presentation, Visual Aids, and Hand-outs** – The PowerPoint presentation, visual aids, and hand-outs support the presentation in a creative way and should enhance the overall presentation.
- **Relevance and Content** – The presentation should be relevant to the team’s business performance and include in-depth content as well as demonstrate the team’s continuous improvement efforts, while referencing mistakes and successes experienced during company operations.
- **Critical Thinking** – In response to judges’ questions, students demonstrate disciplined thinking that is clear, rational, open-minded, and informed regarding their company or product/service.

Interview

The interview is a very important aspect of the competition because the judges can ask any questions about the students’ understanding of how and why the company performed as it did, the general lessons they gained from the experience, and how these lessons might be applied in other situations.

Guidelines

- Student teams will be interviewed collectively without an audience present. Each student should be prepared to answer questions related to their business performance and learning experiences. Questions will not be shared with students in advance of the interview.

Judging Criteria

- **Development of Personal Skills** – Each student will be asked to share what they have learned and gained from participating in the *JA Company Program* experience.
- **Business Knowledge** – Students should be prepared to answer any specific question related to their business.
- **Lessons Learned** – The company should be prepared to answer questions regarding their business performance and apply it to other situations.
- **Ability to sufficiently answer questions** – The company will be assessed on whether they could sufficiently answer judges’ questions.

Signature Awards

In addition to the JA Company of the Year Competition, Summit finalists will also have the opportunity to compete for other prestigious awards at the JA National Student Leadership Summit. All finalists and winners will be determined by company report submissions, virtual or on-site interviews, and/or other Summit performance. Additional information on these awards will be provided when finalists are announced on May 10, 2024.

Questions

Contact Meg Chapman at meg.chapman@ja.org.