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CONTACT: Lauren Gawthrop
Impressions Marketing
Media@KentuckyGSE.com
859-363-6441 (text)



The Governor's School for Entrepreneurs Opens Application Portals for High School and Collegiate Programs

Collegiate Pitch 2026 will take place at SparkHaus Entrepreneurial Workspace in Northern Kentucky

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — The Governor's School for Entrepreneurs (GSE) is now accepting applications for its Summer Startup program for high school students and its Collegiate Pitch competition for college-age entrepreneurs. In 2026, GSE will once again partner with the University of Kentucky Gatton College of Business and Economics to host the Summer Startup program, while its Collegiate Pitch competition will take place at SparkHaus, the new entrepreneurial space in Covington, Kentucky.

Kentucky high school and college students can apply for these transformational, free programs at kentuckygse.com.

"The Governor's School for Entrepreneurs is an incredible opportunity for Kentucky students, and we're seeing real results as GSE alums produce new patents, businesses and services following this great experience," said Gov. Andy Beshear. "I encourage students to apply for these programs so they can gain access to mentors, experts and entrepreneurs who will help students achieve their dreams."

GSE Summer Startup

Applications are being accepted for the 2026 GSE Summer Startup from all Kentucky 9th-, 10th-, and 11th-grade students interested in entrepreneurship. Applications will be accepted until 11 p.m. EST on Jan. 16, 2026. GSE does not consider grade-point averages or standardized test scores in its application. During the immersive three-week program, students will live on campus at the University of Kentucky in Lexington from June 20 to July 12, 2026.

The intensive, nontraditional learning experience develops entrepreneurial skills with a lifelong impact. The goal of GSE is to help foster economic growth across the commonwealth by supporting

the business dreams of students who have the drive and passion to be entrepreneurs and create jobs that support economic growth in Kentucky.

GSE Collegiate Pitch

GSE's Collegiate Pitch program is Kentucky's largest intercollegiate pitch competition with thousands of dollars in funding awards, along with valuable feedback from entrepreneurial experts. The competition fosters innovation and entrepreneurship by giving college students the opportunity to develop and pursue their business ideas, while also recognizing the ventures most likely to succeed and create jobs for Kentuckians.

The competition will take place Feb. 28, 2026, at SparkHaus in downtown Covington. As a first step in the application process, interested students must submit the required Intent to Compete form by Dec. 5, 2025. The form and more information about Collegiate Pitch can be found at kentuckygse.com. Funding awards range from \$3,000 to \$15,000.

"GSE and the state of Kentucky are proud to champion student entrepreneurs across the Bluegrass," said Anne Jewell, president and CEO of GSE. "From high school through college and beyond, GSE is a steady source of support to help their ventures thrive in communities throughout the commonwealth. We're thrilled to join forces with the University of Kentucky's Gatton College of Business and Economics and SparkHaus to advance this inspiring mission."

Kentucky was one of the first states in the nation to create a Governor's School for Entrepreneurs. To date, 1,258 high school students have graduated from GSE's Summer Startup program since it began in 2013. Each year, millions of dollars in scholarships are available to GSE graduates from colleges and universities across Kentucky. More than 70 businesses have been launched in Kentucky by Summer Startup graduates. Through GSE's Collegiate Pitch, hundreds of student entrepreneurs at 19 colleges, representing more than 50 Kentucky-based businesses, have won funding since 2019.

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The Governor's School for Entrepreneurs

The Governor's School for Entrepreneurs (GSE) identifies, inspires, and empowers Kentucky's future innovators. GSE's Summer Startup program develops entrepreneurial skills in high school students and qualifies them for college scholarships. GSE's Collegiate Pitch program is Kentucky's largest intercollegiate pitch competition, offering thousands of dollars in prizes. Because of strong partnerships with entities like the Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet and the Cabinet for Economic Development, along with private and public supporters, GSE programs are free for selected student entrepreneurs. For more information, visit kentuckygse.com.