

Cornell Emerging Markets Institute

Mark Mobius

Pitch Competition

APPLY TO PITCH

About

This pitch competition is hosted by the Cornell Emerging Markets Institute. In 2021, Mark Mobius announced his generous sponsorship as a learning opportunity for student entrepreneurs to improve their entrepreneurship skills.

The **Cornell Emerging Markets Institute Mark Mobius Pitch Competition** invites students and recent alumni to tackle global challenges under this year's theme: "AI Innovations for Emerging Markets: Transforming Challenges into Opportunities." As artificial intelligence revolutionizes industries, participants will develop AI-powered solutions to address pressing issues in emerging economies, driving sustainable growth and social impact.

Finalists will pitch their ventures at the annual Cornell Emerging Markets Institute Conference on November 6, 2025 at Cornell Tech Campus, presenting to an esteemed audience of global investors, entrepreneurs, and business leaders. This competition provides visibility, mentorship, and resources to support early-stage startups leveraging AI for transformative impact.

By harnessing AI-driven innovation, participants will explore new business models, optimize processes, and unlock scalable opportunities for emerging markets. This competition aims to empower the next generation of entrepreneurs who are using AI to solve real-world problems, fostering inclusive economic development and shaping the future of global business.

Please see attached packet for complete rules and guidelines of the competition and follow the EMI website and social media pages for updates.

Emerging Markets Institute
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2025 Pitch Rules and Guidelines

- Teams may consist of between 2-5 undergraduates, graduates, alumni, or have accredited investors. Teams must include at least one founding member and designate a faculty advisor/mentor from the university or an outside advisor where a founding member attends or has recently graduated;
- Submission author(s) must submit original work. The submission author(s) will retain all rights to their pitch decks and its use prior to and following the competition. However, finalists must agree to allow photography, video, recording of live-stream and otherwise dissemination of their pitch deck presentation within Cornell for faculty, staff, students, and the Emerging Markets Institute for educational purposes. In addition, final presentation recording may be posted on the Cornell Johnson website for public consumption. If a team uses copyrighted materials and/or images from a third-party in their presentation and pitch decks, they must obtain permission and authorization in advance from the owners to use this material;
- Submission author(s) give the competition team the right to post the pitch decks within protected folders in order for student and professional judges to access items, write feedback, and assign numerical scores to the items based on an established rubric.
- Non-confidentiality. Finalists will be pitching live at a large, global conference by the Cornell Emerging Markets Institute. Your presentations will be recorded and may be published on digital channels, including YouTube and the EMI website. Pitch presentations and other pitch activities are also open to the public with media coverage expected. Any information discussed in public pitches by participants should be publically accessible. Further, we are not able to ask judges, reviewers, staff, or the audience to agree to or sign non-disclosure statements;
- Within one week of the live presentations in November, the EMI kindly asks the finalists to record a video and write a blog post sharing their pitch experience to be posted on the EMI website as well as write a thank you note to our event sponsor. EMI also asks the global finalist to speak to the finalists the following year to share guidance on pitching to a global audience.
- Although use of generative AI is not restricted, please ensure originality of any and all content presented.

Judging Criteria for Five Finalists

Weight Criteria

- 20% **Problem:** Is the problem relevant to an emerging market? Evaluate the estimated market size and impact of the proposed solution.
- 20% **Solution:** Is the solution presented clear and viable? Students must be able to convey a clear vision to the panel of judges and have demonstrated a working prototype ready to be validated by users in an emerging market.
- 20% **Operations:** Has the team executed their plan with any clients yet? Do the details of the execution show adaptability and effectiveness?
- 20% **Financials:** Has the team presented a comprehensive financial plan, including realistic projections? Have they effectively budgeted the potential prize money, and does it have a significant impact in achieving their next milestone?
- 10% **Team:** Is the team equipped to operate the business?
- 10% **Competitive Landscape:** Does the team effectively address relevant competition?
- Bonus** **Creativity and Innovativeness:** We encourage out-of-the-box thinking. While this is not an objective criterion, teams may be awarded a bonus up to 10% for superb displays of creativity and innovation.

Important Dates

Submissions Open, March 2nd - March 25, 2025

Requirements:

- A team of a minimum of two students or recent alumni (within the past three years);
- One faculty mentor from the founder's university or alma mater or external advisor;
- One great idea, detailed in pitch deck between 5 to 20 pages;
- A working prototype or proven market validation;
- Market potential in an emerging economy and/or global scaling potential. Financials or projections are required;
- Be in an early development stage and received less than USD 1 million in funding (contactemi@cornell.edu with questions or concerns).

Five Finalists Selected, May, 2025

- Evaluators will review submissions and choose five finalists and two runner-ups to pitch at the EMI annual conference on November 6, 2025.
- Each of the finalists will gain access to optional networking and coaching opportunities prior to pitching at the EMI conference.

Five Finalists Present at the Final Competition, November 6, 2025

- \$10,000* Grand Prize for Global Winner. The best pitch of the finalists will receive a \$10,000 USD prize. We hope the pitch competition and EMI network will serve as a helpful resource for all participants.
- The winner will present at the EMI conference on November 7, 2025, at Cornell Tech campus in New York City.

*The award may be subject to tax withholdings.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO FACULTY ADVISORS

Teams must submit a faculty advisor or external advisor with their submission. The faculty advisor should work at a founder's university (or alma mater if recently graduated). Acting as a pitch advisor is not an official endorsement or nomination of the team. However, the advisor should have reviewed the team's pitch deck and be willing to assist the team prepare for the pitch competition. Teams may share this packet with the faculty mentor or external advisor with a few recommended and discouraged activities of a faculty advisor or external advisor:

FACULTY ADVISORS ARE ENCOURAGED TO

- Give constructive feedback and respond to questions and concerns.
- Suggest resources and individuals for the team to speak with prior to the competition.
- Identify weaknesses that may concern investors and suggest solutions.
- Keep the team's materials confidential unless asked to distribute them by the team.

FACULTY ADVISORS ARE DISCOURAGED FROM

- Altering the team's core idea or concept.
- Taking leadership of the team.
- Discussing information about a team with any parties that the team is unaware.
- Distributing team materials without permission of the team.



FAQ

What is the Emerging Markets Institute?

Founded in 2010, Cornell's Emerging Markets Institute (EMI) at the Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management provides thought leadership on the role of emerging markets—and emerging market multinationals—in the global economy. The Institute pools together preeminent practitioners and academics from around the world to spring the next generation of global business leaders and foster a premier research center for emerging markets in the global economy. EMI's mission is to prepare and support business leaders who seek a competitive advantage as experts of emerging markets.

What if a member of our team is not available to present at the pitch competition?

The Cornell EMI Mark Mobius Pitch Competition committee will reach out to the contact on file to confirm your team's intent to pitch in the final. If your team is no longer operational, cannot be reached or chooses not to pitch at the global finals, you will forgo any possible expense reimbursement to the next runner-up. The competition may reach out to a runner-up with the opportunity to present at the global finals or proceed with the remaining teams.

What if my team and operations has changed significantly over the period of the competition?

Changes early and often are expected of early-stage ventures. The Cornell EMI Mark Mobius Pitch Competition committee will reach out to the contact on file to collect your team's updated pitch deck before the final. Please see the Rules and Guidelines regarding the distribution of your presentations at the public conference in November. Final presentations will be published on online platforms following the EMI Annual Conference and may appear in third-party media coverage. By October, 2025, your team will be asked to confirm that the main contact on file is the presenter and recipient of the finalist. Your team must indicate 2-5 team members that the final award money (\$10,000) would be split between should you win the pitch competition.