

2023-2024 Fairfax Area High School Student "Shark Tank" Technology Challenge Overview

The Fairfax Area 50 + Technology Committee is issuing a challenge to high school students in Fairfax County, Fairfax City, and the City of Falls Church to develop an innovative device or app that will have a positive impact in lives of older adults and adults with disabilities.

The Challenge:

Many older adults and adults with disabilities struggle every day to live comfortably in this ever-changing world – a world that is often not designed to accommodate their highly specialized needs. The widely watched televised version of Shark Tank is a platform for inventors of all ages to submit innovative, marketable product ideas that will successfully cater to today's popular culture. This contest opportunity seeks young innovators who will take up the challenge of designing practical products and applications that older adults and adults with disabilities can independently operate to make the world more user-friendly.

This year the committee is particularly interested in innovative (completely new or improves on an existing technology) projects that may enhance the independent enjoyment of life for older adults and adults with disabilities, including wounded warriors. The committee encourages students to consider projects that may offer assistance in such areas as:

- Active free time activities
- Participation in the arts
- Caregiving
- Increase social connections and reduce isolation

Students are encouraged to be innovative and creative – successful projects are not based on stereotypes. Potential projects may be either a web service, robotic, assistive device, mobile app, or any combination. The project should seek to address a need in at least one of the categories listed below (but not limited to the suggestions listed in each category):

- **Health and Recreation:** Promote "healthy aging/lifestyle," eg., encourage physical activity, active participation in recreation and leisure activities, cooking, monitor health status, mobility.
- **Safety:** Enhance physical safety, eg., address fall risk concerns, communicate with caregivers/family/friends, food safety, monitor health risks.
- **Caregiving:** Support family caregivers in managing their caregiving role, eg., monitoring older adult health status, medication management, nutritional status, and/or facilitate remote communication.
- **Social Connection/Reduction in Isolation:** Encourage older adults and adults with disabilities to engage with their community, neighbors, family, friends, social organizations.

Having a means to take care of everyday needs at home or the community is only the beginning. They, just like you, may also want to create, paint, play cards, play sports, communicate with friends/family near and far.

Successful projects are not based on stereotypes but show innovation and a true understanding of the need identified. Students are encouraged to visit senior centers, adult day health care centers and to talk to family members, caregivers, older adults and those with disabilities. It is essential to observe the real-life problems these individuals face every day in their homes and in their communities and then to explore the endless possibilities of real life solutions.

Contest Details:

Finalists will be selected to present their product to a "Shark Tank" panel. Panelists will consist of experts from the fields of education, technology, aging and health care. The winning projects will receive a cash prize and the projects may be considered for potential development. All Finalists in each category will be given an opportunity to demonstrate their products in the spring of 2024.

The innovation will be judged on the following merits:

1. Maximizes independent use by the older adult and/or the person with disabilities, minimizes the need for coaching
2. Simplicity of design and use, non-threatening and easy to understand and use.
3. Meets the need and enhances the quality of life.
4. Demonstrates an understanding of the challenges faced by older adults and/or people with disabilities using technology.
5. Demonstrates evidence of market demand, including what, if any, is currently available to meet the need.
6. Demonstrates positive impact on the lives of those with disabilities and/or older adults.

TIP: Finalists chosen to go into the "Shark Tank" should be prepared to not only demonstrate how the innovation meets each of the 6 merits listed above, but also to document what research was performed, pilot- testing done, and the impact on the audience for which the innovation is intended.

How to Enter:

STEP 1: View and/or download the **"Shark Tank" Challenge Packet** This packet contains all the essential information needed to be successful in developing and submitting a project.

STEP 2: Complete and submit **Initial Project Proposal Form** by Friday, December 15, 2023. The proposal form found in the Challenge Packet requires only a basic project overview and does not require the project be completed. The Initial Project Proposal Form may be emailed to dfstechchallenge@fairfaxcounty.gov. The 50+ Technology Committee will provide feedback on proposal by Monday, January 8, 2024.

STEP 3: The **Final Project Submission Form** found in the Challenge Packet must be returned to us by Wednesday, April 3, 2024. The project submission form assumes that the project has been completed and tested at time of submission. It is highly recommended that you test your ideas and finished project with your target audience. The completed Final Project Submission Form may be emailed to dfstechchallenge@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Include on the Final Project Submission Form:

1. Project Summary (approximately 3-4 pages) – completed on the Final Project Submission form.
2. Video, 3-5 minutes in duration, describing project and how to use. Use only original graphic and audio/video components. Include on the Final Project Submission form as a link.
3. Video, 3–5 minutes in duration, demonstrating successful use by the target audience. Use only original graphic and audio/video components. Include on the Final Project Submission form as a link.
4. Actual software or link to software, if possible.

Contact Information and Resources:

- If you are running into barriers preventing you from participating or completing your project, please contact us at dfstechchallenge@fairfaxcounty.gov.
- **Tech Challenge Resources** page of the “Shark Tank” Challenge Packet will support you in the development of your project. We may be able to assist with equipment challenges, technical questions, access to older adults and caregivers and/or background information (e.g., how Parkinson’s disease affects mobility). For additional questions or assistance, you send a question to dfstechchallenge@fairfaxcounty.gov.

For additional information or questions, interested students and teachers may email the 50+ Technology Committee at dfstechchallenge@fairfaxcounty.gov.

It is **highly recommended** that you test your ideas and finished project with your target audience. For assistance in locating prospective target audiences, please consult the **Tech Challenge Resources** page of the “Shark Tank” Challenge Packet or contact us at dfstechchallenge@fairfaxcounty.gov.

- *Optional:* Have you checked out filing a provisional patent application with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office before submitting your innovation to this challenge?

The Tech Challenge is an initiative of the Fairfax 50+ Community Action Plan which was passed by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in 2014.

The Tech Challenge also supports the Fairfax County's Economic Success Plan that seeks to grow and diversify the economy through innovation, social equity and expanding science, technology, engineering and math education.

Go to the Fairfax County's Older Adults Page, www.fairfaxcounty.gov/OlderAdults, to find services, recreational activities and community engagement opportunities for older adults.