

AEUS Sono Innovation Competition — 2026 Scoring Rubric

Judge instructions: Score each criterion independently on the 1–5 anchors below before any group discussion. Anchors are behavioral: score what the pitch actually demonstrates, not what you infer the project could become.

Total score = sum of all nine criteria (maximum 45).

For Criterion 5, judge impact relative to the project's scope and requested budget, not absolute global reach.

Criterion	1	2	3	4	5
1. Problem Statement & Significance <i>Is the problem clearly stated, and is there evidence it matters?</i>	Problem absent or not ascertainable; judge cannot state what is being solved.	Problem implied but never stated directly; scope and stakes left to inference.	Problem stated in a clear sentence; severity and scope asserted but unsupported.	Problem clearly stated with specific evidence of scope or severity (data, frequency, cost, or a concrete case).	Clearly stated and evidence-supported; presenter also explains why the problem persists and why now is the moment to solve it.
2. Solution & Mechanism <i>Is the solution clear, and does it plausibly act on the stated problem?</i>	Solution unclear; cannot be connected to the problem.	Solution described, but the link to the problem is asserted rather than explained.	Solution clearly described with a plausible mechanism linking it to the problem.	Clear solution with an explicit mechanism that addresses the problem's root cause rather than a symptom.	Clear solution and mechanism; presenter also addresses limitations or alternatives and explains why this approach over others.
3. Innovation & Originality <i>How new is this, and does the presenter know the existing landscape?</i>	Reproduces an existing product or approach without modification.	Minor tweak to an existing approach; similar solutions exist and are not acknowledged.	Meaningful improvement on existing approaches; presenter demonstrates awareness of what already exists.	Creative adaptation: imports a method or technology from another field, or applies existing tools in a genuinely new way.	Novel approach with no clear precedent; would change how peers think about the problem.
4. User-Centricity <i>Does the design reflect real insight into a specific end user and their context?</i>	No identifiable end user.	End user named only generically (“residents,” “patients”) with no insight into their workflow.	Specific end user named; solution reflects at least one concrete workflow reality.	Deep insight into the named user's context (constraints, environment, moment of use); design decisions are traced to user needs.	Evidence of direct user input (observation, interviews, or pilot feedback) that visibly shaped the design.
5. Potential Impact (Relative to Scope) <i>Judge impact relative to project scope and dollars requested — a small project executed excellently can score 4–5.</i>	Benefit limited to the presenter or a single use case; unclear who else gains.	Meaningful benefit to one program or department, with no path beyond it.	Local benefit plus a credible template that other programs could replicate.	Clear replication or dissemination pathway (openly shared, multi-site adoption, or a national platform).	Plausibly shifts practice or education beyond the local setting; impact is large relative to the dollars requested.
6. Outcome Measurement <i>Are there specific metrics and a workable plan to collect them?</i>	No measurable outcome stated.	Outcomes implied (“we’ll see if it helps”) without metrics.	At least one specific metric named, including what will be collected.	Multiple metrics spanning levels (e.g., learner satisfaction and skill or behavior change), with the collection method described.	Multiple metrics plus a defined methodology (who, when, how, and a comparison or baseline); the plan could be run as written.
7. Feasibility of Execution <i>Will this actually get built with the requested resources in the award period?</i>	Not completable with the requested resources or timeline; major barriers unaddressed.	Possibly completable, but the plan omits key steps, skills, or approvals.	Credible plan; team has (or can access) the needed skills, and the timeline is realistic.	Prototype, pilot, or preliminary work already exists; the award removes a named, specific barrier.	Working version demonstrated; the award funds a defined next step with near-certain completion within the award period.

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8. The Ask <i>Is the funding request specific, itemized, and right-sized to the plan?</i>	No funding amount stated.	Amount stated with no explanation of how it will be used.	Amount stated with general categories of use.	Itemized budget in which amounts map to project steps.	Itemized, right-sized budget: every dollar is tied to a step and milestone, and the presenter distinguishes what the award enables from what already exists.
9. Pitch & Storytelling <i>Delivery craft: narrative arc, pacing, and memorability within 3 minutes.</i>	Disorganized; the viewer cannot follow the argument.	Logical but flat; information delivered without a narrative arc.	Clear arc (problem → journey → solution → ask) with appropriate pacing for the 3-minute format.	Compelling arc with an authentic emotional connection to the users and problem; visuals reinforce rather than repeat the narration.	Exceptional craft: a memorable, repeatable pitch that a viewer could retell accurately an hour later.