



Phase One closing Oct. 9 for 14th annual A.H. Nickless Innovation Award competition

Prior to high school STEM competition's deadline, students must register, form teams and submit project proposals for consideration

UNIVERSITY CENTER, MICH., Sept. 23, 2026 – The first phase of the 14th annual [A.H. Nickless Innovation Award](#) – a high school STEM competition that awarded more than \$815,000 in scholarships and grants to local students and high schools in its first 13 years – will close in early October.

Seeking to inspire passion for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) subjects and challenge students to work in teams, think innovatively and develop solutions to problems impacting the world, the award is an annual competition for high school students ages 13 to 18 in Bay, Midland, Saginaw and Tuscola counties. Teams' project topics typically include – but are not limited to – alternative energy, healthcare, science, technology and life sciences.

Phase One of the competition ends at 4 p.m. EDT Oct. 9. Prospective participants can find more information about the competition, read the rules and regulations, download the abstract template, and register at ahninnovationaward.com.

During Phase One, students register for the competition and form teams; each team is required to identify a problem and submit a two-page abstract describing its proposed project to address that problem. A panel of regional experts will then select up to 20 teams to continue in the competition; each of those teams will be granted \$1,000 with which to conduct its research and develop a viable solution during Phase Two, which lasts until the March 31, 2027, project submission deadline. On Saturday, April 24, 2027, the teams will present their projects during a daylong public event at Saginaw Valley State University.

Members of the three winning teams will receive scholarships, and each of those teams' schools will receive a STEM education grant. Available prizes total \$77,500 annually and are awarded as follows:

- **First place** receives up to five **\$5,000 scholarships** for student team members and a **\$20,000 STEM education grant** for the school.
- **Second place** receives up to five **\$2,500 scholarships** for student team members and a **\$10,000 STEM education grant** for the school.
- **Third place** receives up to five **\$1,000 scholarships** for student team members and a **\$5,000 STEM education grant** for the school.



For 2025-26, [the winning teams – representing Herbert Henry Dow High School in Midland and Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy – earned a combined total of \\$53,000 in scholarships for the student team members and STEM education grants for their schools.](#)

Fostering student innovation for more than a decade

The 2026-27 competition marks the 14th year of the A.H. Nickless Innovation Award. Since the first competition in 2013-14, \$816,500 has been awarded to participants and their schools, including \$396,500 in student scholarships and \$420,000 in STEM education grants. In all, more than 625 students developed and presented a total of nearly 200 team projects in Phase Two of the competition during its first 13 years.

About the A.H. Nickless Innovation Award

The A.H. Nickless Innovation Award was created by the Nickless Family Charitable Foundation to honor the memory of the late Arthur H. Nickless, a local innovator and owner of Wolverine Telephone Company. With a goal of inspiring passion for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), the competition is open to high school students in Bay, Midland, Saginaw and Tuscola counties and awards up to \$77,500 per year in scholarships to students and STEM grants to schools. A total of more than \$815,000 has been awarded since the first competition in 2013-14. For more information, visit ahninnovationaward.com.