

# Barrier Breakers 2026

## EVALUATION CRITERIA & JUDGING RUBRIC

Barrier Breakers uses two separate evaluations: one when you apply (to select Demo Day finalists) and one on event day (to determine winners). Like Y Combinator, we care about your potential and ability to execute-not just your idea.

### Application Review Criteria

Criterion	What We're Looking For
<b>Team &amp; Execution Ability</b>	Why is your team suited to tackle this barrier? What unique skills, experiences, or perspectives do you bring? Why should we believe you can actually build this?
<b>Problem Clarity</b>	How well do you understand the barrier you're addressing? Have you done research? Do you understand the root causes and who is most affected?
<b>Solution Potential</b>	Is your initial approach thoughtful and feasible? Does it address the actual problem, not just symptoms? Is it realistic to build?
<b>Ambition &amp; Impact</b>	How big could this be if it works? Could it help hundreds, thousands, or millions of young adults? Are you thinking big enough?

*Note: There is no limit on applications. All teams that apply will compete-either in Demo Day (top team per track) or the Innovation Gallery (everyone else). Both have cash prizes.*

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### Event Day Judging Rubric

Same rubric for Demo Day and Innovation Gallery. Each criterion scored 1-5. Maximum 100 points total.

#### Problem Understanding (25 points)

Score	Description
5 (21-25)	Exceptional research. Deep understanding of root causes, affected populations, and systemic factors. Cites data and sources.
4 (16-20)	Strong understanding. Clearly explains the barrier with good supporting evidence.
3 (11-15)	Adequate understanding. Describes the problem but lacks depth or supporting research.
2 (6-10)	Surface-level understanding. Identifies the barrier but misses key factors.
1 (1-5)	Minimal understanding. Vague description of the problem.

#### Solution Quality (25 points)

Score	Description
5 (21-25)	Highly innovative and feasible. Addresses root cause. Working prototype or detailed implementation plan.
4 (16-20)	Creative and practical solution. Clear path to implementation.
3 (11-15)	Reasonable solution but lacks innovation or has feasibility concerns.
2 (6-10)	Generic approach. Unclear how it would actually work or be implemented.
1 (1-5)	Solution doesn't clearly address the problem or is unrealistic.

#### Presentation (25 points)

Score	Description
5 (21-25)	Compelling and professional. Clear narrative, engages audience, handles Q&A confidently.
4 (16-20)	Well-organized and clear. Good communication with minor areas for improvement.
3 (11-15)	Adequate presentation. Gets points across but lacks polish or clarity in places.
2 (6-10)	Disorganized or unclear. Difficult to follow the main points.
1 (1-5)	Unprepared or unable to communicate the concept effectively.

#### Impact Potential (25 points)

Score	Description
5 (21-25)	Transformative potential. Could help thousands+ of young adults. Clear path to scale.
4 (16-20)	Significant potential impact with realistic implementation path.
3 (11-15)	Moderate impact potential. Would help some people but limited scale.
2 (6-10)	Limited impact. Unclear who would benefit or how many.
1 (1-5)	Minimal or unclear impact potential.

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### Judge Scoring Worksheet

BARRIER BREAKERS 2026 - MARCH 20, 2026

**Team Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Track:**     ☐ Transportation     ☐ Housing     ☐ Healthcare     ☐ Community     ☐ Literacy

**Division:**     ☐ Demo Day     ☐ Innovation Gallery

**Judge Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Criterion	1	2	3	4	5	Score
Problem Understanding	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	/25
Solution Quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	/25
Presentation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	/25
Impact Potential	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	/25
TOTAL:						/100

**Strengths:**

**Areas for Improvement:**

**Additional Comments:**