LINUX ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

OPEN SOURCE STUDENT INNOVATION CHALLENGE 2027

Official Project Rules & Judging

Approved project framework · English edition

FREE PARTICIPATION | REGISTRATION NOV 1, 2026 – MAR 31, 2027 | SUBMISSIONS APR 1 – JUL 31, 2027

01 Purpose and scope

The Linux Association of Canada (LAC) organizes the Open Source Student Innovation Challenge 2027 as a national educational initiative within Open Source Week 2027. The Challenge promotes student creativity, technical learning, responsible innovation, collaboration and meaningful open-source contributions. Participation does not guarantee an award, financial assistance or showcase selection.

02 Participant eligibility

Eligible participants are students enrolled at recognized Canadian educational institutions, including international students studying in Canada. Divisions: (1) Junior Innovators: Grades 7–12 or equivalent; (2) College & Polytechnic Innovators; (3) University Innovators, including graduate students; (4) Emerging Innovators: graduates of eligible Canadian programs between April 1, 2026 and March 31, 2027 inclusive. Eligibility is assessed as of March 31, 2027, subject to the stated recent-graduate rule. Proof of status may be requested securely. Minors require verified parent or guardian consent before registration is finalized.

03 Teams and entry limits

Participation is FREE. A person may participate in only ONE competing project. Individuals or teams of up to FOUR may enter. Every team member must be eligible and registered in the SAME division; mixed-division teams are not permitted. Teams identify one primary contact and each member’s contributions. Teachers, mentors and supervisors may advise but must not perform the substantive student work.

04 Official schedule

All dates use Saskatchewan Central Standard Time (CST, UTC−6), observed year-round. Registration: November 1, 2026 at 00:00:00 to March 31, 2027 at 23:59:59. Project submissions: April 1, 2027 at 00:00:00 to July 31, 2027 at 23:59:59. Evaluation and finalist selection: August 1, 2027 at 00:00:00 to August 20, 2027 at 23:59:59. Selected projects may be invited to the national showcase September 3–4, 2027 at Prairieland Park in Saskatoon. Registration and project submission are separate obligations. Late entries are ordinarily not accepted; a consistent published procedure may address verified system-wide technical failures.

05 Eligible projects

Projects must demonstrate meaningful innovation, development or technical contribution involving open-source technology. Areas include Linux, software, AI, cybersecurity, cloud, robotics, automation, accessibility, embedded systems, open firmware, electronics, environmental and community technology. Original builds, improvements to existing projects, research prototypes, capstones, coursework and independent projects may qualify. Projects must demonstrate progress beyond a concept and are judged within their educational division.

06 Originality and intellectual property

Registered students must perform genuine, substantial work and identify their contributions. Properly licensed reuse and extensions of open-source projects are encouraged. Plagiarism, fabricated results, undisclosed third-party authorship or misrepresentation are prohibited. Participants retain ownership of their original intellectual property. LAC receives only the limited non-exclusive permission necessary to evaluate submissions and, with appropriate permissions, share approved project descriptions, images and demonstrations for Challenge reporting and promotion.

07 Open-source publication

A publicly accessible source-code repository OR equivalent open technical documentation is MANDATORY no later than July 31, 2027 at 23:59:59 CST and must remain accessible throughout judging. Software projects should publish relevant participant-created source code and suitable licensing; hardware projects may provide schematics, firmware, design files and assembly instructions. Documentation must explain how to understand, reproduce, build or evaluate the project. Identify dependencies, credit contributors and respect third-party licenses. Do not publish credentials, personal data, confidential research or proprietary material. Safety or legal limitations must be explained; LAC determines whether the available open material meets the requirement.

08 AI-assisted development

AI assistance may be used for research, brainstorming, debugging, testing, accessibility support, documentation and limited code generation. Material AI use MUST be disclosed, identifying tools, purposes and approximate scope. Students must personally make and understand the principal technical decisions, implementation and validation. Work produced primarily by AI with minimal meaningful student contribution is ineligible. Judges may question participants about architecture, code, methods and limitations. Knowingly concealing substantial AI use or falsely claiming AI output as independent work can lead to disqualification. No fixed AI-generated-code percentage applies; legitimate assistive technology accommodations are respected.

09 Safety, ethics and legality

Projects must comply with applicable Canadian law, institutional policies and safety requirements. Unauthorized access, deployment of malicious software, unlawful surveillance, unsafe physical demonstrations and improper use of personal information are prohibited. Defensive cybersecurity projects must use authorized controlled environments. Human-subject research must satisfy applicable ethics requirements. LAC may restrict demonstrations or reject unsafe or unlawful projects.

10 Required submission materials

Each submission must provide: title and division; registered team and member contributions; project summary and problem statement; solution and technical approach; open-source repository or equivalent documentation with applicable licenses; setup or reproduction instructions; evidence of functionality; impact and limitations; disclosure of AI assistance and third-party contributions; and demonstration materials. A demonstration VIDEO, if provided, may be no longer than FIVE MINUTES; accessible alternatives must be available. The portal will specify accepted formats and upload limits. Submitted links must remain accessible during judging.

11 Judging criteria

Eligible projects are scored out of 100 points: INNOVATION & CREATIVITY 25; OPEN-SOURCE CONTRIBUTION 25; TECHNICAL EXECUTION 20; REAL-WORLD IMPACT 20; PRESENTATION & COMMUNICATION 10. Judges consider age, division, experience, available resources and demonstrated learning rather than institutional prestige or project cost. Multiple qualified judges should score independently where practical.

12 Tie-breaking and conflicts

If total scores are tied, compare the OPEN-SOURCE CONTRIBUTION score first, then INNOVATION, then TECHNICAL EXECUTION. Remaining ties are referred to an independent judging panel using a documented procedure. Judges disclose conflicts of interest and must not evaluate projects with significant personal, supervisory or financial ties. Sponsorship does not confer authority to determine winners. Scores and decisions are documented.

13 Finalists and awards

Evaluation and finalist selection conclude by August 20, 2027 at 23:59:59 CST. LAC may then conduct eligibility checks and obtain permissions before public announcements. Awards or recognition will be provided, but award categories, values and any scholarships or prizes remain under development and are not guaranteed. Selected finalists may be invited to present September 3–4, 2027 in Saskatoon; participation does not automatically include travel, accommodation, funding or exhibition space.

14 Conduct and procedural review

All participants, mentors, judges and organizers must act respectfully. Harassment, discrimination, intimidation, cheating and deliberate interference are prohibited. LAC may investigate rule violations, request explanations and issue documented disqualification decisions. Participants may request review of procedural errors or conflicts of interest; technical scoring decisions remain final except for demonstrable administrative or procedural irregularities.

15 Privacy and consent

LAC collects only information reasonably required to administer the Challenge. Contact details will not be provided to sponsors for independent marketing without appropriate consent. Parent or guardian consent for minors must be independently verified before a minor’s registration is accepted; a checkbox completed by the student alone is insufficient. Public use of identifiable student names, images and work requires appropriate permissions. A published privacy notice must explain use, retention, security and contact rights.

16 Administration and amendments

The official Challenge website is the authoritative source of current procedures. LAC may clarify processes and correct errors fairly, but should avoid material changes to eligibility, deadlines or scoring after registration opens except where required by law, safety or circumstances outside reasonable control. Material changes must be published and communicated. The English and French editions express the same rules; any interpretation dispute is resolved by LAC in a fair and consistent manner.

Official website: linuxassociation.ca/student-innovation-challenge/ · info@linuxassociation.ca