

During the week of November 6, three Big Idea pitch competitions occurred in Hastings (seventh year), Grand Island (second year), and Columbus (second year). Between the three communities, nearly 60 ideas were submitted collectively. Of those ideas, 10-12 ideas were selected to pitch at the night of each Big Idea competition in the respective community. Each competition saw over 125 attendees and, in some cases, over 200. This year was a testament to the entrepreneurial energy in each community and Central Community College's role in leading the ecosystem. Although each competition had its own creative flare that represented the community best, the pitches were strong, the room was filled with excitement and inspiration, and local talent was given the much-deserved spotlight. Now, we are looking forward to the opportunity to continue the conversations with each finalist as we help make connections and provide resources to bring their ideas to fruition.

Cash prizes included \$500 for 3rd place, \$1,000 for 2nd place, and up to \$5,000 for 1st place all of which were sponsored by local businesses and community organizations. Top 5 also receives the professional resources package that includes free and discounted services donated by local professionals and experts. The top three ideas in each community were as follows:

Big Idea Grand Island

1. Danielle Helzer - Rooted Books
2. Michelle Simmons - Simmons Sweet Mobile Treats
3. Enny Ellison - Indo-Archipelago

Big Idea Hastings

1. Michael Consbruck - The Cheese and Wine Shop
2. Danielle Kostner - Razzberry Beret Threads & Goods
3. Wendy Gwennap - SWAP App

Big Idea Columbus

1. Pizza Food Truck - Leo and Tina Oliva
2. Macey's Snow Cones - Macey Johannes
3. Music Studio - Oscar Vazquez Medrano