

Tips to Plan an American Space/BNC Pitch Practice Session Using #YLAIPitchPerfect Resources

What is #YLAIPitchPerfect? The YLAI Network business marketing campaign, #YLAIPitchPerfect, will foster economic growth and job creation among entrepreneurs in Latin America and the Caribbean. The campaign focuses on the importance that public speaking and pitches play in successfully telling a business' story and creating opportunities for funding. To learn more about the campaign and access resources visit <https://ylai.state.gov/entrepreneurship/>.

Which audience is #YLAIPitchPerfect designed for? These resources include practical information that can be beneficial to young leaders at any stage of personal and professional development. Suggested audiences include:

- YLAI Network members in your area (primarily aspiring entrepreneurs ages 18–35).
- Business, marketing or finance students; small business owners; new entrepreneurs.
- Students learning the English language who are focusing on oral skills and public speaking.

What does the campaign encourage the Network members to do?

1. At the beginning of the campaign, YLAI Network members were asked to complete a YLAI PitchPerfect Toolkit to help them reflect upon their business goals and start building components of their pitch.
2. After completing the toolkit, Network members watched a series of five short videos that focused on developing their pitches even further.
3. Now, Network members are encouraged to take their pitch development offline and practice their pitches with a colleague or small group.
4. After practicing their pitches, Network members are asked to submit short reports to us with more information about their pitches, at which time they will receive special #YLAIPitchPerfect certificates to share with their family and friends on social media!

How can you participate? To give YLAI Network members, students or other young professionals the opportunity to practice and refine their pitches, we encourage you to host pitch practice sessions at your American Space or BNC! Here's how you can get involved:

Planning for the pitch practice session:

- ✓ Select a date and time to host a pitch practice session at your American Space or BNC. We recommend an hourlong session, but this practice session can also be incorporated into an event or training that you might already have planned. If you need help advertising your session, consider using #YLAIPitchPerfect-branded posters where you can fill in the specifics for your event! The posters can be downloaded in English ([18x24](#) or [24x36](#)) or Spanish ([18x24](#) or [24x36](#)).
- ✓ Consider asking a YLAI Network member or Fellow interested in entrepreneurship to host the pitch practice session (your local embassy or consulate contact may be able to recommend someone). Another option is to build the session into English Access classes or other relevant training sessions that you already have planned.
- ✓ Invite YLAI Network members or other interested groups to the pitch practice sessions. Keep in mind your room size when sending out invites. An ideal size for an event like this is 10–15 people to help attendees feel comfortable. However, if your group size is smaller or larger, it can also work! Let us know if you need help inviting YLAI Network members, and we can assist with email promotion of your events.

If you have questions or would like help with inviting YLAI Network members in your area for your pitch practice session, please contact YLAI Network team member Brandy Eber at NewtonBA@state.gov.

- ✓ We recommend asking attendees to complete the YLAI PitchPerfect Toolkit (downloadable in [English](#) or [Spanish](#)) prior to attending a pitch practice session so that they have their pitches already drafted.
- ✓ **If attendees of the pitch practice sessions aren't yet YLAI Network members, ask them to join at <https://ylai.state.gov/network/>!**

At the pitch practice session (recommended 1 hour in length):

Keep in mind your group size. You may need to extend the session longer than 1 hour if you have a larger group.

- ✓ [10 minutes] Start the practice session with an icebreaker so that participants and facilitators feel more comfortable with each other. Many studies have shown that public speaking is often a person's biggest fear, so you want to create a welcoming and comfortable environment for people to feel confident in practicing their pitches. Here's a suggestion that ties well into the topic:
 - "My Slogan": After you explain that many companies have slogans or mottos that reflect their values, ask each person to write (or borrow) a slogan to describe himself or herself. Ask a few volunteers to share that with the group, explaining why that slogan best represents them.
- ✓ [15 minutes] Give the attendees some time to finalize their pitches and bounce some ideas off their peers. Remind attendees that they can use their YLAI PitchPerfect Toolkit ([English](#) & [Spanish](#)) and these [five short pitch videos](#) to help them develop pitches, if they haven't done so already. If attendees have businesses, ask them to focus on those specific businesses during their pitches. If someone doesn't yet have a business, have the attendee focus more on developing a strong elevator pitch about himself or herself or an entrepreneurial idea.
- ✓ [25 minutes] Break attendees into teams of two or three and have them use this pitch peer assessment ([English](#) & [Spanish](#)), which is also located at the end of their toolkits, to provide constructive feedback to each other. Have them take turns presenting their pitches and acting as the peer reviewers. Encourage them to present their pitches multiple times, as much as the time allows for everyone to have a chance to present, so that they become more confident in their pitches. Please note that people will be at different levels of comfort and skill. Do all that you can to make the environment feel safe and open for attendees to practice their pitches.
- ✓ [10 minutes] Spend the last portion of the practice session by encouraging attendees to continue their pitch development after the session and note that entrepreneurial leaders never stop growing and refining their goals and pitches. **Ask attendees to submit the required information through a form ([English](#) & [Spanish](#)) to earn a special #YLAIPitchPerfect certificate!**

After the pitch practice session:

- ✓ Send us photos or videos and a short description of the pitch practice session. We can turn it into a post for the YLAI Network blog or share it on the YLAI Network Facebook page.

Do you have attendees who aren't quite ready to develop a pitch but are interested in entrepreneurship? Share *Startup Smart: A Handbook for Entrepreneurs* ([English](#) & [Spanish](#)) and the YLAI Network Entrepreneurship Toolkit ([English](#) & [Spanish](#)) with them to help them reflect on their business goals!

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