



2026 Gateways to Blue Skies Competition:
**RepAir | Advancing
Aircraft Maintenance**

Q&A Session #2

**January 27, 2026
3:30–4:30 PM Eastern**

(Please mute all mics.)

The Gateway to Blue Skies Competition is administered by the National Institute of Aerospace (NIA) on behalf of NASA



Session Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- 2026 Theme Overview
- Proposal & Video Expectations
- Programmatic Reminders
- Open Call for Questions
- Wrap Up



Judges



- **Steven Holz (LaRC) - Co-Chair & NASA Sponsor**
- **Brian Cole (FAA) - Co-Chair**
- Jim Baumiller (Southwest Airlines)
- John Bombaro (LaRC)
- Scott Colling (Southwest Airlines)
- Greg Emerson (American Airlines)
- Natasha Neogi (LaRC)
- Andy Provenza (GRC)



Overview of 2026 Theme:

**RepAir | Advancing
Aircraft Maintenance**



Context for and Discussion of 2026 Theme



Post-secondary student **teams will conceptualize novel maintenance advancements that can be implemented by 2035 or sooner with the goal of improving efficiency, safety, and/or costs for the industry.**

Teams are encouraged to consider high-potential technologies and systems that aren't currently mainstream or highly regarded as becoming mainstream in the future and imagine beyond the status quo.

Proposal and Video Expectations



- What are we looking for in the proposal?
- What we **DO** want to see:
 - **Aviation first! Solutions must directly address aircraft maintenance issues/opportunities.**
 - Solutions that equip existing industry to deal with problems/opportunities they have now
 - High-level systems concepts
 - Consideration of how proposed technology can integrate with or replace existing systems
 - End-user consideration and engagement
 - Decisive and scoped concept choices (one system does not fit all solutions)
 - The ability to close gaps in current aviation maintenance management approach

Proposal and Video Expectations, cont'd...



- What do we **NOT** want to see, concepts focusing on:
 - Business aviation
 - Military aviation
 - General aviation
- What are we looking for in the video?

Proposal and Video Expectations, cont'd...



The Use of AI: (from the guidelines)

"Teams may not have any portion of their submissions created by non-team members, which includes the use of tools such as Generative AI.

- AI can be used for editing purposes, but not to generate content or imagery. "

Incorporate AI related technologies into my concept

Use AI to write our proposal

Use AI to help me expand my pool of research sources

Use AI to make images or charts

Use AI to help make the video submission

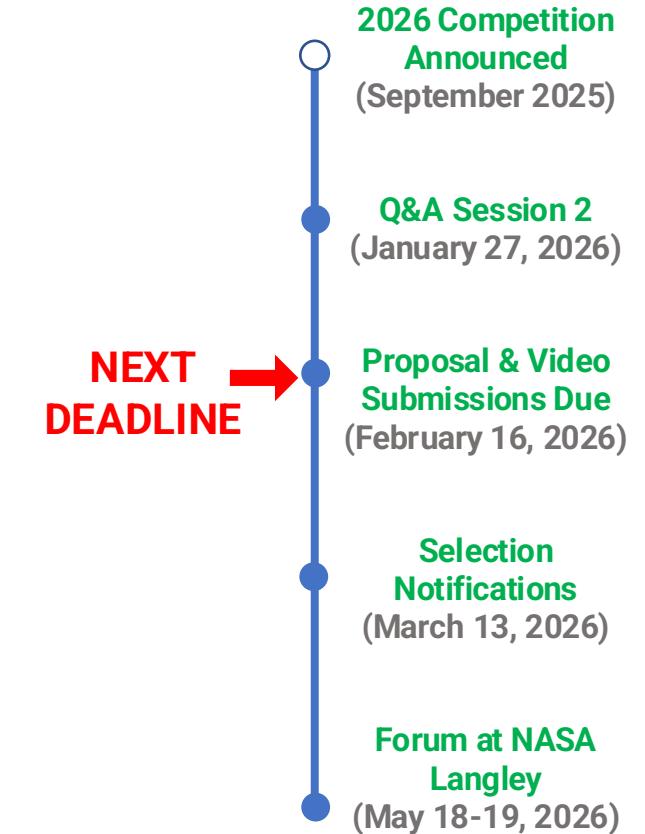
Red = No
Yellow = Maybe
Green = It's ok

Programmatic Remarks



Read the Competition Guidelines in full!

- They provide the foundation upon which your submission will be judged.
- Carefully review the evaluation criteria.
- **Important!** You will need to submit some additional items with your proposal:
 - A W-9/Vendor Form
 - Primary Academic Advisor must sign the Faculty Attestation Form.
 - **NEW Participation Agreement – 1 per team, signed by advisor on the Attestation Form**
- YOU are selling your proposed concept to the judges!
- Finalists selected based on Proposal and Video Submission.
 - Remember to use the [Proposal Checklist](#) to ensure all required proposal items are accounted for prior to submitting.



Existing Resources



Visit the GBS FAQ Webpage for the following resources:

- Q&A Session #1 (November 20, 2025)
 - Video/Audio Recording
 - Summary Document
 - Presentation Slides (Chart Deck)
- Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- This Q&A Session and associated documents and recordings will be posted on the FAQs Webpage for future use.
 - <https://blueskies.nianet.org/faq>

Open Call Format



To Ask A Question:

1. Use “Raise Hand” Function in Teams to ask verbally.
 - You will be called on to pose your question.
 - If possible, please turn on your camera while speaking.
2. Type questions into the Chat.
 - The host will pose questions to co-chairs during the call.

OR



Additional Questions?



Please direct all future questions to the GBS Program Team at blueskies@nianet.org.

All questions, including those asked on the call will be transcribed and posted to the GBS FAQs shortly.

<https://blueskies.nianet.org/faq>



SHELLEY SPEARS
Director, Education
and Outreach



STACY DEES
Higher Education Challenges
Portfolio Manager



AMY MCCLUSKEY
Gateways to Blue Skies
Program Coordinator



**Thank you, and best
of luck to all teams!**