Stanley Consultants

CWEEL WASH Innovation Challenge

PARTICIPANT FAQ

Answers to common questions about eligibility, submissions, evaluation, finalist pitching, awards and next steps.

About the Challenge

Q: What is the CWEEL WASH Innovation Challenge?
A: CWEEL and Stanley Consultants have partnered to seek innovative sanitation and hygiene solutions that remain safe, accessible and functional during crises while operating with minimal or no grid electricity.

Q: What problem is the challenge trying to solve?
A: The challenge focuses on WASH systems that can deteriorate during flooding, displacement, conflict or infrastructure disruption. Participants are invited to propose resilient approaches that protect health, dignity and community well-being.

Q: What types of ideas are welcome?
A: Concepts may be technical, strategic, programmatic, behavioral or interdisciplinary. Conceptual and early-stage ideas are welcome and do not need to be fully developed or market-ready.

Eligibility and Participation

Q: Who can participate?
A: The challenge welcomes AEE and CWEEL members, students, emerging professionals, NGOs, startups, industry experts, community practitioners, planners, public health specialists and interdisciplinary teams.

Q: Can I participate individually or as part of a team?
A: Both are allowed. Participants may submit individually or as a team or organization. Team members can be added when completing the submission form.

Q: How many solutions may I submit?
A: Participants may submit up to three solutions. Each submission must be entered separately and will be evaluated independently.

Q: Do submissions need to be in English?
A: Yes. Each solution must be submitted in English.

Q: Can I use AI to help develop my submission?
A: AI-assisted submissions are permitted, but entries must reflect original thinking, contextual judgment and participant accountability. Submissions created solely through AI without meaningful participant contribution will not be reviewed or selected as a winning idea.

Challenge Categories and Requirements

Q: Which category should I select?
A: Choose the category that best represents the primary focus of the solution: Engineering & Technical Design; Planning, Strategy & Systems Resilience; or Community Engagement, Human-Centered Design & Behavior.

Q: Can my idea address more than one category?
A: Interdisciplinary ideas are welcome, but the submission should identify the one category that best represents its primary focus.

Q: Which pain points may my idea address?
A: The challenge identifies six pain points: service continuity under stress; energy dependence; mobility and deployment speed; public health risk; community acceptance and cultural fit; and monitoring, functionality and outcomes.

Q: What minimum design parameters must my solution meet?
A: The solution must operate with minimal or no grid electricity; address at least two priorities among mobility, low maintenance, environmental sustainability, community engagement and disease prevention; include a practical deployment plan; identify measurable outcomes; and consider sustainability, repairability and local capacity.

Q: What should be included in the submission?
A: Include the problem context, proposed solution, energy strategy, WASH functionality, deployment plan, community fit, measurable outcomes, and monitoring and evaluation plan. Optional online references and attachments may also be included.

Q: Are supporting attachments required?
A: No. Supporting materials such as diagrams, articles, precedents or pilot data are optional, but may help explain or strengthen the concept.

Submitting a Solution

Q: How do I submit my solution?
A: Complete the submission form through the blue Add Solution link on the challenge page.

Q: When is the submission deadline?
A: Submissions must be received by 11:59 PM US Eastern Time on November 9, 2026.

Q: Will late submissions be accepted?
A: No. Late submissions will not be considered.

Q: What should I review before submitting?
A: Confirm that the submission form is complete, written in English, aligned to one category, addresses the minimum design parameters and clearly explains the problem, solution, energy strategy, deployment approach, community fit and measurable outcomes.

Evaluation and Finalist Selection

Q: When will solutions be evaluated?
A: The evaluation period is November 9 through December 4, 2026.

Q: Who will evaluate the submissions?
A: Solutions will be evaluated by representatives from CWEEL and Stanley Consultants, along with industry experts.

Q: How will solutions be evaluated?
A: Entries will be reviewed against the challenge evaluation criteria. Participants should ensure their submissions clearly address the stated challenge requirements and minimum design parameters.

Q: How many solutions will advance?
A: The top solutions (up to six) will advance to the pitch-preparation phase.

Q: How will participants learn their status?
A: All participants will be notified about the status of their submissions following the review process.

Pitch Preparation and Webinar

Q: What happens if my solution is selected as a finalist?
A: The top finalists will be notified and will work with a pitch coach between December 7, 2026 and January 22, 2027 to further develop their solutions and prepare for the presentation.

Q: What should finalists prepare?
A: Finalists should be prepared to clearly present the crisis need, target users, proposed solution, energy-resilience strategy, deployment plan, community fit and measurable outcomes. Final presentation instructions will be provided to selected participants.

Q: When will the pitches take place?
A: The top solutions will be presented during a closed session virtual event in January 2027. The exact date and presentation details will be shared with finalists.

Q: Who will attend the webinar?
A: Finalists will present to an expert panel. Final audience and participation details will be provided directly to finalists.

Awards, Recognition and Next Steps

Q: When will the winner be selected?
A: The winner will be selected by industry experts in February 2027 and announced by email.

Q: What is the top award?
A: A $1,000 cash award will be presented to the top submission, with additional recognition for standout concepts across challenge categories.

Q: Will finalists receive recognition?
A: Yes. Category winners and finalists will be recognized through challenge communications, with the winning idea planned for showcase at the 2027 AEE World Conference.

Q: What opportunities may be available after the challenge?
A: Selected participants may gain visibility through CWEEL and AEE networks and may have opportunities to connect with NGOs, industry leaders, academic institutions or humanitarian organizations interested in advancing innovative WASH ideas.

Q: Does participation guarantee a pilot or implementation opportunity?
A: No specific pilot or implementation outcome is guaranteed. Potential connections may help participants refine concepts, explore pilots, identify partners and move ideas toward real-world implementation.

Q: Who owns the intellectual property in my submission?
A: Participants retain ownership of their ideas, concepts and submissions, subject to the official Challenge Agreement. Participants should review those terms before submitting.

Before You Submit

- ☐ My submission is in English and identifies one primary category.
- ☐ My solution addresses the challenge objective and at least one pain point.
- ☐ I considered community needs, privacy, safety, accessibility and local capacity.
- ☐ I reviewed my submission for completeness and clarity.
- ☐ I will submit before 11:59 PM US Eastern Time on November 9, 2026.

Still Have a Question?

Please send an email to innovate@stanleygroup.com. Questions should be submitted early enough to allow participants to incorporate any guidance before the deadline.

Note: This FAQ summarizes participant information provided for the challenge. If this FAQ differs from the official Challenge Agreement or challenge page, the official materials govern.