

TECH BLOC + FRICTIONLESS | PARTNERSHIP PREVIEW

## How San Antonio's Leading Tech Nonprofit Will Use AI to Power Every Stage of the TechFuel \$100K Competition

Tech Bloc is San Antonio's only nonprofit exclusively dedicated to growing the city's tech ecosystem, connecting startups, investors, government, and academia across Central Texas. Each year, Tech Bloc produces TechFuel: San Antonio's largest cash-prize pitch competition, backed by Bexar County, awarding \$100,000 in non-dilutive capital to the region's most promising founders. For TechFuel 2026, Tech Bloc has partnered with Frictionless to bring structure, speed, and intelligence to every stage of the process.

### THE CHALLENGE

TechFuel receives hundreds of startup applications each cycle. For 2026, Tech Bloc's screening committee and panel of expert judges must evaluate 100+ submissions from Texas-based early-stage companies spanning biotech, fintech, advanced technology, and more, all while maintaining fairness, confidentiality, and the rigor that \$100,000 in non-dilutive prizes demands. The traditional process relied on spreadsheets, email threads, and manual consolidation of judge feedback. Insights were scattered, evaluation depth was inconsistent, and the executive team spent significant time chasing input that should have been centralized. Tech Bloc needed a smarter infrastructure, one that matched the scale of their ambition for San Antonio's startup community.

### HOW FRICTIONLESS WILL POWER EVERY STAGE

#### 01 ROUND 1: SCREENING | 100+ Applications to 20 Semi-Finalists

Frictionless will ingest all 100+ startup applications and produce structured, investor-grade company profiles for each, covering product innovation, market opportunity, traction metrics, team strength, financial health, and execution readiness. Every submission will be transformed from a raw application into a deep intelligence report, giving Tech Bloc's screening committee a consistent, data-rich foundation to evaluate every founder on equal footing. The committee will use these profiles to narrow 100+ applicants down to 20 semi-finalists aligned with TechFuel's criteria: innovation potential, business model viability, job creation, and impact on San Antonio's ecosystem.

#### 02 ROUND 2: EVALUATION | 20 Semi-Finalists to 5 Finalists

The 20 semi-finalists will pitch and interview with Tech Bloc's executive team and a select group of judges. Full session transcripts will be uploaded into Frictionless, which will generate a comprehensive interview report per company covering key strengths, concerns raised during Q and A, signals of founder readiness, and recommended focus areas. Judges will use Frictionless's collaborative platform to post private evaluations; their observations, scores, and notes will remain confidential, visible only to them. Tech Bloc's executive team will see a unified view of every judge's input plus an AI-generated sentiment summary, transforming hours of feedback consolidation into minutes. From this round, 5 finalists will advance to the live pitch stage.

#### 03 ROUND 3: LIVE PITCH | Judging at Scale on the Tech Day Stage

The 5 finalists will take the stage at San Antonio Tech Day for TechFuel's live pitch event, each delivering a 5-minute pitch followed by a 10-minute Q and A with a panel of 5 expert judges. Frictionless will give the judging panel real-time access to each finalist's full intelligence profile and interview report, ensuring deliberations are grounded in data rather than first impressions. The panel will use Frictionless to align on scoring and arrive at a confident, defensible decision, ultimately awarding \$100,000 in non-dilutive prizes including the \$50,000 Judges' Grand Prize.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

**100+**

Startups Screened

**20**

Semi-Finalists Evaluated

**5**

Finalists On Stage

**\$100K**

Non-Dilutive Prize Pool

**100+ to 20 to 5**

Companies evaluated in 3 rounds

**5 Judges**

Deliberating on real-time AI data

**Hours to Minutes**

Feedback consolidation for the team

**\$100K**

Non-dilutive prizes awarded to founders

*"TechFuel is San Antonio's most competitive stage for early-stage founders, and this year we are raising the bar on how we evaluate them. Partnering with Frictionless means every company gets a fair, data-driven review and our judges can focus on what matters most: finding the founders who will shape the future of this city."*

Tech Bloc Executive Team