

SLINGSHOT CHALLENGE 2026

Selection Criteria Explained

Want to know what the Slingshot Challenge selection panelists are looking for when they review videos? The panelists give each video a rating in each of the seven [Selection Criteria](#). To help you max-out your rating, we have given you some video examples for each category to spark your own ideas and inspiration. **Just think of this as your Slingshot Challenge cheat-code.**



Photo: Ian Nichols/National Geographic



ISSUE COMMUNICATED EFFECTIVELY

Link clear global descriptions of the problem with **specific and easy-to-imagine** local examples of the problem, like [No Food Left Behind](#). They saw a national issue, but investigated how it impacted their local community.

Tell the story of your discovery of the problem as a way to share important statistics like [Reducing Academic Paper Consumption](#). In this video, the creator uses playful storytelling to introduce her research. She also translates her data into a format people can understand when she says schools use “250 trees worth of paper each year” rather than saying “2,012.031 pages.”

Be specific about the **exact problem you want to solve**. The [Starting a Pure Day with PureDae](#) team focused on air pollution caused by cars stopped in traffic jams at specific high-traffic intersections in their home city. In the [Trash Cup Challenge](#), students use photography and video to show the problem of plastic waste in the local river.



EMOTIONAL IMPACT

Introduce the audience to **you and your community** through your words and images. Watch how [Los Angeles Climate](#) introduces the videomaker and his community with a personal voice and casual video of the community in the environment.



Use a story that **shows, not just tells**, the impact of your issue on you and your community. The [Trovador-Tree Planting Robot](#) whisks the audience away on a bike ride through Portugal’s fire-scarred landscapes, vividly narrating the toll on its lush greenery. Then, the video uses a real interview to drive the message home, all eliciting an emotional response from the audience.



UNIQUE/CREATIVE

Can you make it easy for **new groups of people** to help solve local problems? The [Urban Pollinators](#) team invited local gardeners to rethink the way their green spaces could support the environment. The [Dishes on Demand](#) team found ways to make school sports teams partners in eliminating disposable plasticware.



Some of the most creative solutions are **applications** that help people make green decisions, like [Reducing Academic Paper Consumption](#). Do you think people would live greener lives if only they had a tool to help them? Make an app for that!

Think about **new ways to make people care** and want to act. In [Escuchando el Humedal](#), the challenge participant records the sounds of the wetlands to share with his community.

EFFECTIVE USE OF VIDEO MAKING TECHNIQUES

Show the audience **real people in real places**. [Take Action for Endangered Species](#) uses photographs and videos collected from the past to tell the story, while [Trovador-Tree Planting Robot](#) uses live videos shot on location and an interview to bring the audience into the setting.

Use **live video and “actors” to show your story**. In [Dispensing Plastics](#), the team used live shots of students at school, mixed with graphics to illustrate the problem.

Mix up your **video shot types to create visual drama**. The panning and zooming used in [Wildlife Superheroes](#) and [Escuchando el Humedal](#) create a sense of movement and make the viewer feel like they are walking through the same unique locations as the videomaker. See the [Participant Toolkit](#) for more details on shot types.





CLEAR, ACHIEVABLE CALL TO ACTION

Include a **detailed description** of your solution and the **action people can take**. In [Friendly Neighborhood Composters](#), the videomaker outlines her hyper-local solution and shows how neighbors can use a QR code to take action.

Think about **what each person can do**, even if it is unusual. In [Blue crab](#), the team provides recipes that encourage people in Italy to catch, kill, and eat a delicious, but threatening, invasive species.

EXPLORER CONNECTION

Learn more from stories of impact about [National Geographic Explorers](#) or search the [Explorer Directory](#). Find an Explorer whose **project inspires you** and dig a little deeper by watching videos of presentations or exploring their website. You may get great ideas like [Fight Floods, Transform Cities](#) and [Firemapper: Collecting Wildfire Data](#) or find an inspirational quote like [Mazah: Food Waste Fighting App](#).



Remember, there are **special awards** for drawing connections to National Geographic Explorers.

RECYCLER: WHERE WE CREATE LIFE



COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Be clear and specific about how the problem is **impacting your community** with examples. Also show how your proposed actions will make a difference in the community. [RECYCLER: Where we create life](#) uses on-site footage to show how humans have destroyed and repaired the land in the videomakers own home region.

Show **who will need to act** and how you will work with them to take action. [Friendly Neighborhood Composters](#) shows how the videomaker helps her neighbors make their trash a little greener.

Work with an **existing group** that is already **helping your community**. The [Wildlife Superheroes](#) video shows how their team is working with a local science center to reach young learners with exciting technology. The [Trash Cup Challenge](#) team connected canoeing clubs with wildlife groups to protect the river they all love. These groups brought new ideas and energy to existing organizations to spark change.