

B.A.L.L. FOR LIFE

BE A LEGACY LEADER

2025 – 2026 #IYKYK PITCH BRIEF

SPONSORED BY #EXPERIANBALLFORLIFE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH HOMEFREE-USA
CENTER FOR FINANCIAL ADVANCEMENT® (CFA)

INTRODUCTION

The #IYKYK Pitch Competition, part of Experian's B.A.L.L. for Life™ Credit Academy, invites college and university students to develop a bold, culturally relevant campaign that promotes Experian's consumer credit and money-saving tools. Pitch a complete campaign—from storyline and spokesperson to sample content and activations – positioning Experian as the ultimate financial sidekick, or “BFF” (Big Financial Friend). The top team wins \$40,000; six teams earn all-expense-paid trips to Southern California, February 27-March 3, 2026.

The competition is open to all CFA participants and students at Experian inclusion and belonging partner schools who [complete their learning module and quiz](#) by December 31, 2025.



[Watch video highlights](#) and [see action photos](#) from the 2025 finale.

YOUR 2025-2026 #IYKYK CHALLENGE

Did you know the Experian app lets you cancel subscriptions, compare auto insurance, and boost your credit score? [Redeem your free promo code](#) and share it!

This year, you're amplifying existing Experian tools – not pitching new products. Your mission: create the next evolution of

Experian's BFF campaign for your generation.

You are one of the top creative marketing agencies and you have just been contracted by Experian Consumer Services (ECS) to bring a cool, fresh perspective to the forefront. This isn't about reinventing what is already out there – this is about driving awareness with a culturally relevant twist. Experian is the financial education classroom, and we need your help getting students in the seats! Take it from Andrea Whisler, GTM Marketing Specialist, “Everything we have to offer is more than just credit.”

That's why we're charging you with the task of diving deep into the app. With premium access using the provided promo code on the competition website you'll be able to leverage tools like the credit score simulator, EVA (Experian Virtual Assistant), score planner and so much more – why? Because we don't want to gate keep this information, we need to share it!

Develop a full marketing campaign that positions Experian as the ultimate financial sidekick for Gen Z. Uncover the present Experian tools that resonate the most with your peers and highlight them in the campaign. Your pitch should include everything from the campaign storyline and personas to sample content, scripts, and activations (use your imagination and marketing genius). Whether it's a digital series, a pop-up experience, or a viral moment, your idea should make Experian feel like a real one – funny, helpful, and always on your side. This is your moment to flip the narrative, speak your truth, and create something unforgettable.

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Key Focus Areas

- **Creative Campaign Development:** Build a campaign with visuals, messaging, and sample content that speaks to Gen Z about building their financial legacy with Experian as their “BFF.”
- **Personas:** Develop personas representing diverse Gen Z segments, including backstories, motivations, and financial goals.
- **Storytelling:** Use relatable, memorable stories that show how Experian’s tools fit into Gen Z’s daily lives.
- **Cultural Integration:** Show how Experian can connect with Gen Z in spaces like social media, music, fashion, and gaming.
- **Experiential Activation:** Design an event or experience that brings your campaign to life on campus or in the community.
- **Tool Integration:** Feature Experian’s existing tools (Boost™, SmartMoney™, subscription cancellation, etc.) in creative, useful ways.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

What is a Marketing Campaign?

A marketing campaign promotes a product, service, or brand through coordinated messages and experiences. For Gen Z, campaigns should go beyond advertising to connect with values, identity, and community. According to Salam & Pratiwi (2024), successful Gen Z marketing strategies prioritize authenticity, digital fluency, and relationship-building. Campaigns that resonate with this generation often leverage humor, social relevance, and interactive formats to build sustainable engagement. In the context of the #IYKYK Pitch Competition, students will approach campaign creation to amplify Experian’s mission – educating and empowering young people through culturally relevant storytelling and creative activation.

Think about what makes certain marketing campaigns award-winning. For example, The Big Issue & LinkedIn – [Raising Profiles Campaign](#). According to Team Lewis Magazine, “The campaign won a Cannes Lion Grand Prix in 2021, showcasing the power of ethical marketing and innovative content strategies.” The collaboration empowered homeless individuals to increase their reach by providing access on the platform and developing digital marketing skills. Or Coca-Cola’s [BeatCan Campaign](#), “-ingeniously connected refreshment with music, turning cans into musical prompts. This innovative approach allowed consumers to engage with the brand through sound, creating memorable interactions. The campaign earned a Silver Lion.”

EXPERIAN CONSUMER SERVICES (ECS) BFF STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES

1. **Brand Transformation:** Experian is evolving from a credit bureau to a full financial services partner. *“We will transform how we see ourselves – not as the credit bureau we’ve been – but as the complete financial services solution for all consumers that we’re becoming.”*
2. **Customer-Centric Ecosystem:** The BFF campaign creates a 360-degree brand experience—every touchpoint reflects the BFF spirit. *“We stop creating ‘advertising campaigns’ and start creating something much more effective and far-reaching: a 360-degree Brand Ecosystem.”*

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3. **Emotional Connection & Lifelong Relationships:** Build lasting emotional bonds by supporting consumers throughout their financial journey. *"We don't just transact. We relate. We create lifelong bonds with our customers."*
4. **Personalization & Accessibility:** Offer personalized, easy-to-understand financial solutions. *"We'll make it our mission to prioritize helping people before we help ourselves."*
5. **Empathy + Scale:** Combine empathy with the resources of a global financial institution. *"Big enough to help consumers achieve their financial goals yet personalized to be ready to help with everyday finances."*

WHAT IS EXPERIAN'S BFF CAMPAIGN?

Experian's [BFF campaign](#), featuring Sam Richardson, uses humor and warmth to show Experian as more than a credit bureau – a trusted financial ally. The multi-channel campaign highlights tools like auto insurance comparison, subscription cancellation, and identity protection, aiming to build emotional connection and long-term engagement.

It's about showing up not just during financial milestones, but in everyday moments – offering tools, support, and encouragement that make financial literacy feel approachable and empowering. Ultimately, the campaign seeks to make Experian synonymous with **Financial Power to All™**, especially for younger audiences navigating their first financial decisions.

Tone & Voice Guidelines

- Speak like a friend, not a corporation.
- Be helpful, honest, and empathetic.
- Avoid jargon, pressure, or condescension.
- Use humor and storytelling to connect emotionally.

The campaign aims to resonate especially with Gen Z and Millennials, who often turn to internet searches or friends for financial advice rather than traditional institutions. By presenting Experian as a relatable and supportive financial partner, the campaign reinforces its mission of Financial Power to All™ and seeks to build lasting trust in a fragmented financial landscape.

ECS President, Dacy Yee, gives a lot of insight in this video: [Your BFF Experian](#).

Nostalgia- Past Campaign History

Experian's past campaigns, like the John Cena "Purple Cow" ad and the Flau'jae Johnson collaboration, used pop culture and authenticity to connect with young audiences. The BFF campaign builds on this legacy, celebrating friendship and financial empowerment. Now, Experian is leaning into nostalgia with the BFF Campaign, a celebration of friendship, shared growth, and financial wins.

CONCLUSION

The #IYKYK Pitch Competition empowers students to create bold, culturally relevant campaigns that showcase Experian's financial tools. By developing diverse personas and innovative strategies, participants help redefine financial education and inclusion, supporting Experian's mission: Financial Power To All™.

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2025-2026 IYKYK PITCH COMPETITION KEY DETAILS

Official Website: www.experian.com/cfa (#IYKYK section)

Key Contacts:

- **Raudy Perez:** Sr. Director, Inclusion & Belonging External Partnerships | [LinkedIn](#), raudy.perez@experian.com, 512.925.8447
- **Taryana Gilbeau:** Inclusion & Belonging Program and Events Manager | [LinkedIn](#), taryana.gilbeau@experian.com
- **Maria “Josefina” Munoz:** Wellbeing, Inclusion & Belonging Specialist | [LinkedIn](#), maria.munoz@experian.com

2025-2026 KEY ACTIONS & DATES (Submissions to cfa.credit.academy@experian.com.)

- **TODAY** | [Sign up for official SMS updates](#)
- **OCT 21** | Virtual kickoff ([slides](#))
- **NOV 10** | Non-CFA school virtual kickoff
- **NOV 30** | [Confirm team](#) & submit “Official Rules”
- **DEC 31** | Complete [learning module and quiz](#)
- **JAN 05** | Quarterfinals blueprint/commercial due 12PM ET
- **JAN 09** | Quarterfinals results by 4PM ET (SMS)
- **JAN 12** | Semifinals KBYG at 6PM ET
- **JAN 23** | Semifinals blueprint due 1PM ET
- **JAN 26–28** | Semifinals virtual pitches
- **JAN 30** | Semifinals results show 6PM ET
- **FEB 02** | Finals KBYG #1 at 6PM ET
- **FEB 02–25** | Finalists work with mentors and coaches
- **FEB 04** | Mentor matching begins top 6 teams
- **FEB 09** | Coach (finalists) & mentor (opt-in) matching
- **FEB 09** | Elevator pitch video due (Top 3 teams)
- **FEB 16** | Finals KBYG #2 6PM ET
- **FEB 23** | Finals blueprint/presentation due 1PM ET
- **FEB 27 – MAR 03** | Finals in Costa Mesa, CA

	QUARTERFINALS	SEMIFINALS	FINALS
BLUEPRINT	Yes	Yes	Yes
COMMERCIAL Upload to YouTube (unlisted)	Yes 3 min. max	No	No 60 sec. max
CAMPAIGN ASSETS	No Collage, mood board, story, etc.	Mock-ups Read semis section	Polished Read finals section
GO-TO-MARKET	No	General	Detailed
LIVE PITCH	No	20 min (max) Virtual	25 min (max) In-Person
Q&A W/JUDGES	No	5-10 min	10-15 min

NOTE: Your campaign idea should not introduce new products and product features but rather amplify existing tools and resources.

THE QUARTERFINALS | THE CONCEPT BRIEF | JANUARY 05-08, 2026

Submit blueprint January 05 by 12pm CT / 1pm ET.

Quarterfinals focus on the campaign strategic concept, clarity, and relevance. Judges will evaluate how well the concept is communicated, its potential impact, and how it best addresses the problem statement. Develop the core campaign idea, theme, creative and messaging direction. This stage focuses on brainstorming, research, and outlining the campaign’s “big idea” and connection to the target audience.

Requirements: Email blueprint to cfa.credit.academy@experian.com. Ensure commercial is uploaded to YouTube (unlisted) and hyperlinked in your blueprint.

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- **Blueprint:** Use the template to detail your campaign concept, strategy and story. Highlight key features, activities, and/or tactics. Showcase how your campaign will make the most impact. Pressure test your concept with consumer research to shape its components and test viability.
- **Commercial:** Create a 3-minute (max) video that clearly explains your campaign. Keep the explanation simple while exercising creativity. Ensure your campaign identifies the existing Experian products and features your team has decided to showcase and why.
- **Creative Assets:** Mood board or inspiration collage; written campaign storyline or elevator pitch.

Judging Criteria:

- **Clarity & Communication (30%):** Is the campaign idea clearly explained in the brief and video? Is it easy to understand? Does it clearly highlight existing Experian consumer products, features, and/or services?
- **Impact & Potential (25%):** What is the potential for the campaign to make a meaningful difference?
- **Creativity & Originality (20%):** Is the strategic idea fresh, bold, and culturally relevant to the target audience identified?
- **Relevance to Gen Z & BFF (15%):** Does the concept speak directly to Gen Z and Experian's BFF positioning?
- **Feasibility (10%):** Is the plan realistic and achievable with available resources?

THE SEMIFINALS | THE CAMPAIGN STRATEGY & TACTICS | JANUARY 26-28, 2026

Submit revised blueprint January 23 by 12pm CT / 1pm ET.

The Top 12 teams move their solution from concept to reality by illustrating tangible components, tactics, assets, and a general go-to-market (GTM) plan. The semifinals focus on strategic planning, showcasing sample creative assets, and engaging the target audience. Judges will assess how well the assets—whether drafts, mockups, or partial content—express the core creative ideas and demonstrate campaign engagement with Gen Z. The priority is creativity, relevance, and integration with the campaign strategy. Present assets that capture the campaign's look, feel, and messaging; they should be representative but don't need to be fully polished or final.

Requirements:

- **Blueprint:** Revise your campaign concept using feedback and new ideas. Ensure your blueprint is a strong, stand-alone introduction for judges, serving as a high-level outline and rationale.
- **Commercial:** Optional—include multimedia only if you choose to enhance your live, virtual pitch.
- **Creative Assets:** Provide mock-ups for social posts or ad visuals, sample video scripts or storyboards, draft flyers, or experiential activation outlines as sample assets.
- **Go-to-Market:** Present a general strategy for launching your solution; detailed tactics are required for the finale.
- **Live Pitch:** Prepare a live, virtual pitch (20 minutes max) to elaborate on your campaign, demonstrate key components, and share your go-to-market strategy. Log in 15 minutes early to MS Teams for prep with Raudy before judges arrive.
- **Q&A:** Be ready for a 5–10 minute Q&A to defend your campaign. Prepare for some questions, but expect others to require on-the-spot thinking—it's okay not to have all the answers immediately.

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Judging Criteria:

- **Creativity & Originality (30%):** Are campaign ideas, GTM execution and creative assets innovative and compelling? Do sample assets (mockups, scripts, visuals, outlines, etc.) show creativity, relevance, and integration? Do they highlight existing products?
- **Impact & Potential (25%):** What is the potential for the campaign to make a meaningful difference for engaging Gen Z in authentic, interactive, and culturally relevant ways?
- **Strategic Depth & Planning (20%):** Are campaign goals, KPIs, and engagement channels well defined? Is there a clear, general go-to-market approach?
- **Presentation & Delivery (15%):** Is the live virtual pitch engaging, confident, and well-organized?
- **Feasibility (10%):** Is the plan realistic and do creative approach and assets demonstrate viability?

THE FINALS | THE CREATIVE PITCH | FEBRUARY 27-MARCH 03, 2026

Submit 60-second (max) elevator pitch commercial by February 9. Revised blueprint and presentation due February 23 by 12pm CT / 1pm ET.

Top 3 competition teams deliver polished, launch-ready campaign assets and a live presentation. This stage emphasizes quality, consistency, and public readiness. Judges will evaluate launch readiness, impact potential, and presentation effectiveness. Teams receive coaching, feedback, and rehearsal time to prepare. All creative materials—such as a finished video ad, social media carousel, event plan, or branded visuals—must reflect the campaign's final design and be production-ready for public launch.

Requirements:

- **Blueprint:** Refine your concept using feedback; create a clear, stand-alone introduction for judges to review.
- **Commercial:** Produce a 30–45 second elevator pitch video introducing your solution and inviting attendance at the live finale (due Feb. 09).
- **Creative Assets:** Deliver final, production-ready materials (e.g., video ad, social media carousel, branded visuals, or activation plan).
- **Go-to-Market:** Submit a detailed GTM plan with estimated costs and campaign KPIs.
- **Live Pitch:** Prepare a 25-minute (max) in-person presentation covering your campaign, creative assets, and GTM strategy.
- **Q&A:** Prepare for a 10–15-minute Q&A to defend your campaign, addressing both prepared and on-the-spot questions.

Judging Criteria:

- **Strategic Depth & GTM Plan (30%):** Is the marketing campaign and go-to-market strategy achievable, detailed, actionable, and market-ready? Does it highlight existing tools and features?
- **Creativity & Originality (25%):** Is the campaign idea and execution culturally relevant to Gen Z, innovative, compelling, and original?
- **Presentation & Delivery (20%):** Is the live pitch engaging, persuasive, confident, and well-organized?
- **Impact & Legacy Integration (15%):** Does the campaign build on Experian's legacy (purple cow, Flau'jae, etc.) and drive lasting impact underscoring our mission of Financial Power to All?
- **Polished Creative Assets (10%):** Are creative assets (video, carousel, activation plan, etc) presented production-ready and visually refined?

Use this template to summarize your campaign idea for the 2025-2026 #IYKYK Pitch Competition.

TEAM NUMBER & NAME:

THE CHALLENGE (SUMMARIZED FROM PITCH BRIEF)

Develop the next phase of Experian's BFF campaign tailored for Gen Z. As a leading creative agency, deliver a fresh, culturally relevant campaign positioning Experian as the ultimate financial sidekick for this generation. Highlight and amplify the Experian tools that resonate most with Gen Z.

YOUR CAMPAIGN MAIN IDEA (ALL ROUNDS) – 1400 characters

Share your campaign vision and story. Highlight which Experian features, tools and resources you will amplify and why. What makes your campaign fresh, bold and culturally relevant? Keep clarity, impact, creativity and originality in mind.

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YOUR IDEA IN ACTION (ALL ROUNDS) – 1400 characters

What are the key campaign components? Why are they important? Define personas. Keep feasibility in mind.

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COMMERCIAL LINK URL

Upload your commercial to YouTube
unlisted.

TAKING IT TO MARKET (SEMIFINALS & FINALS) – 1200 characters

Describe how the campaign will be launched and promoted to reach the target market. What are the key components of your go-to-market approach? What marketing strategy and tactics will you use to drive awareness and engagement?

VALIDATION (SEMIFINALS & FINALS) – 1200 characters

Explain the steps you have taken to validate your campaign, refine your assets, and get feedback from target audience.

FINANCIALS & FUNDING (FINALS ONLY) – 1200 characters

Outline the costs with building and launching your campaign. Any potential revenue streams (if applicable)?