

Before the Weekend

Q: Is this event for me?

A: If you see a challenge faced by your community and have the seed of an idea that could help solve it, Startup Weekend Otaki is for you.

If you have a business idea that you think would have a positive impact on your whānau, community, Aotearoa or the world, Startup Weekend Otaki is for you.

If you're part of a not-for-profit group like a marae committee or community organisation, and have an amazing idea, or a head-scratching challenge, and could do with some support and structure to bring the solution to life, Startup Weekend Otaki is for you.

Whether you are a serial entrepreneur or new to the startup or change-making scene, you'll fit right in as long as you are motivated to build a solution, product or startup and are open to new ideas. We believe that great ideas can come from anywhere. The event is intended to be a collaborative and inclusive forum for sharing, learning, building, and having fun. We expect each member of the startup community to be inclusive of all people and their ideas at Startup Weekend and we welcome all, regardless of experience, industry or background.

Is it only for business or tech ideas?

No. Startup Weekend is an opportunity to bring an idea to life, ideally it will be able to pay for itself, so it's important to work through how the money will work.

Here are some examples of problems and solutions that people have taken through Startup Weekend Otaki:

The problem: Emergency grab-bags are great for some of us, but in an evacuation situation, our kaumātua struggle to put them on and walk while wearing them, especially in the panic of an emergency.

The solution: Evacuation Jackets for kaumātua - think *grab-bags* built and designed for our elderly, with everything they need in an emergency situation, in an easy-to-wear and access jacket.

The problem: Many of our streets in Otaki are named after tūpuna with amazing and inspiring stories. Many of us don't know those stories.

The solution: Stories attached digitally to our street names so anybody can learn about the stories and history of our town and those who were here before us.

An idea we talk to another Startup Weekend (Tairāwhiti)

The problem: Many of us grow up without a good understanding of how to work with money. Our financial literacy is often lacking.

The solution: A financial-literacy board-game in te reo Māori.

Q: I'm part of a group, can we attend together?

A: Yes, in 2025 we're allowing a limited number of pre-existing groups take part, focusing on an issue or idea they all care about. This might be a whānau, working through a business idea, a marae committee working on a plan to share resources between various hapū, or something else. If you have a group of 3-5 people who can already work together, you're welcome to come as a team, just let us know on the registration form.

Q: Do I have to participate in all three days?

A: Apart from the organizing team, mentors, speakers, event volunteers and judges, everyone who participates in the event is expected to participate in all three days. This is important not only to preserve your own learning experience, but also to minimize distractions or disruptions for the team you choose to join. We welcome any friends, family or colleagues you would like to invite to watch your final presentation to see all you have accomplished in just one weekend. Please check the [registration page](#) for availability.

Q: How do I register?

A: Tickets can be purchased at [registration page](#)

Q: Do I need a team?

A: Everyone who attends the event as a participant is expected to come to the event without a team and then join and participate with a team at the event. This is important to preserve the Startup Weekend educational experience. The ideal team consists of members from diverse backgrounds and experiences who collaborate to build a great minimum viable product (MVP) using the [Lean Canvas](#) framework. The more people you have on your team to help you do market research and business model development, the quicker you'll develop an MVP to pitch on Sunday.

Q: Will accommodation be provided?

A: We offer marae style or open sleeping area accommodation. Linen is provided but please bring with you blankets, towels and personal or medical care items. Please indicate if accommodation is required when purchasing your ticket.

Q: Do I have to pitch an idea to attend?

A: No, but we highly encourage you to. You can pitch an idea you've been thinking about for years, or something you think of at the last minute during the event. Please don't pitch an idea that you've already been developing or have been working on outside of Startup Weekend. The point of the event is to learn how to go from ideation to product.

Pitching provides invaluable practice for public speaking. You won't regret pitching, but might regret not pitching.

Q: What are the judging criteria?

A: Business Model: How does the team plan on making this a successful business?

- Is it a unique idea?
- What is their key value proposition?

- Have they thought about competition, how to scale, acquiring customers, and their revenue model?
- Have they identified a specific target market?
- How will they acquire their first 100 customers?

Customer Validation: Are teams building something that people actually want?

- Did the team talk to customers?
- Who will be their users, who will be their customers, and are they different?
- How many users have they interviewed?
- Did they target the correct people to interview?
- What did they learn from their customer interviews?
- What are the core needs of their users?

Execution & Design: Have they established an MVP — the minimum set of product features to be able to start collecting data?

- What feedback did they get to inspire their Minimum Viable Product (MVP)?
- Did they build a prototype? Any medium is fine, including paper or Google Slides.
- How effective is their MVP for the purpose of the weekend?
- How functional is their technical demo, if applicable?
- How easy is it for the user to navigate and use their product?
- Were they able to incorporate customer feedback into the solution?

Q: Where can I find a schedule for the event?

A: A schedule will be posted to the event website around 3 weeks before the start of the event.

Q: What should I bring for an in-person event?

A:

- Laptop/Portable Computer
- Power cord for Laptop
- Notepad and pen
- Business cards (or a business card app)
- Your phone - feel free to take pictures or video of the event
- Optional: A second monitor, keyboard, etc.... Whatever helps you to be most productive.
- Lots of energy!

Q: How do I prepare?

A:

- You can find a list of tools that can help you prepare for the weekend [here](#).
- Doing some [market research](#) will give you a better understanding of the problem you are trying to solve.
- Practice your pitch. You'll have 60 seconds on Friday to persuade other participants to join your team. Make it clear, concise, and convincing! The elements of a good 60 second pitch are to:
 - State who you are and what your background is
 - Mention what problem your product is solving
 - Explain the product and how it solves the problem
 - What skill sets you need on the team like a developer, marketer or designer
 - Provide a name for your startup
- Get familiar with some of the tools that you can use during the weekend like the [Lean Canvas](#).
- Get some rest!

Q: What is the refund policy?

A: Full refunds are available up to three days before the first day of the event. These can be processed through the Lil Regie site where you purchased your ticket.

Q: What are the rules?

A: There are rules and a code of conduct in place for the weekend which help to ensure that everyone has a great experience.

The Participant Code of Conduct

Techstars Startup Weekend is always open to all. We're committed to making everyone feel included and welcome — before, during and after the weekend. We want to provide all participants with an incredible networking and learning opportunity.

The event is intended to be a collaborative forum for sharing, learning, building, and having fun.

We believe that great ideas can come from anywhere. We expect each member of the startup community to be inclusive of all people and their ideas at Startup Weekend. As such, by registering as a participant, you acknowledge that any ideas shared by you or anyone else over the course of the event are contributions to the overall experience of the Startup Weekend community.

If you, as a participant, are worried about someone 'stealing your idea,' please reconsider sharing specifics about your idea. You can bring another idea to work on and take your experience, learnings, and contacts from the weekend to further develop your idea after the weekend. Bringing legal documentation to the event is not allowed, and Startup Weekend Ōtaki does not get involved in any legal matters.

We believe that everyone should act with integrity and be held accountable for their actions. You agree to act professionally, treat everyone with respect and dignity, and treat the event facilities with proper care.

You agree that you are responsible for any accidents or damages that you cause. You also agree to not hold Startup Weekend Ōtaki or any of the event supporters liable for any loss, damage, injury, or any other unforeseeable incident.

During the Weekend

Q: What happens on Friday, Saturday and Sunday?

A:

Friday: Participants typically arrive between 5-7 p.m., begin networking, and have dinner. After an ice-breaking game and an introduction by the Facilitator, there will typically be a short talk with a speaker. Then, the “Pitchfire” will commence: anyone intending to pitch will have 60 seconds to give their best pitch. No presentations are needed for Friday, it will just be you and a mic. After pitches are finished, all participants will vote on their favorites, and using these votes, the top ideas will be selected to be worked on over the weekend. The Facilitator will provide guidance on team formation. Then teams will form organically, consolidate, and get to know each other and begin working.

Saturday: Teams will work all day, with the occasional breaks to eat, listen to short talks, or attend a short workshop. Breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks will be provided. In the afternoon mentors will be circulating to provide advice in the field of their expertise for those teams that want it. The organiser will provide mentor signup sheets online for the team to schedule their meeting.

Sunday: Breakfast, lunch and dinner also will be provided on Sunday.

Teams will work uninterrupted from morning until mid-afternoon. They’ll begin wrapping up their product/prototype and presentation around 3 PM to do tech-checks and practice their presentation. After all judges have arrived, presentations will begin. Each team typically has five minutes plus around a three to five minute Q&A from the judges (this varies occasionally). The judges will select the top teams and the event usually ends with a small celebratory get-together.

Q: What types of ideas can I pitch?

A: All business ideas are welcome, whether it’s for-profit or non-profit organisations. The ideas do not have to be tech related, however given the short timeframe to develop your product, we recommend that even non-tech ideas focus on a scalable tech-related

deliverable (for example, a website) by Sunday to be able to demonstrate the Minimum Viable Product.

Q: Can I pitch more than one idea?

A: Depending on the number of ideas pitched and the event schedule, you may or may not be able to pitch multiple ideas. Prioritize your ideas: pitch your best idea (and the one you have most prepared for) first. Please note that you will only be able to work on one idea through the weekend.

Q: Can I pitch my existing business?

A: No. Techstars Startup Weekend Ōtaki is designed to be the most effective platform for growing new businesses from the ground up over the course of a weekend. A key facet of the weekend, and a central value for participants, is the spirit of complete collaboration, buy-in, and ownership. We've found that having existing businesses in the mix undermines this spirit, in addition to creating an unequal playing field alongside those ideas that are truly conceived at the grass-roots level.

Q: What if my idea doesn't get selected?

A: The purpose of the Friday voting isn't to exclude certain ideas, but simply to highlight the most popular and high-potential pitches and end up with a manageable number of teams - ensuring that each team has a variety of backgrounds and skills. If your idea isn't selected, but you've managed to form a team around the idea, you're welcome to work on it over the weekend. If you decide to do so, however, please tell the event Organizer and Facilitator.

Q: Am I expected to work for 54 hours?

A: No. At some events, certain teams will decide to work all through Friday and/or Saturday night, but this is by no means obligatory or expected.

Q: What resources/assistance are provided over the weekend?

A: A key part of every Startup Weekend is the valuable advice and assistance provided by the event's speakers and mentors. In the spirit of our motto, "No Talk, All Action," we try to keep talks short and sweet, focusing on practical issues (i.e. "How to give a

persuasive pitch” and “Best approaches to customer validation”) that can actually help you and your team better achieve your weekend goals. Mentors - community experts in various fields ranging from entrepreneurship, software development, marketing, finance, law, and more - dedicate their time to provide advice. In addition to the most valuable resources at the weekend (the people), we’ve put together a list of some useful resources and tools for before, during, and after the weekend. Check out the Tools for Participants [here](#).

Q: How do I, or my team, address the issue of Intellectual Property or Ownership?

A: Participants have signed an agreement when they registered for tickets to not bring any legal documentation to the event. Startup Weekend Ōtaki doesn’t retain or claim ownership to any ideas, as that is left up to the teams. We do acknowledge that the issue of patents and copyrights is an important one. It’s also one that is a question of risk and reward for participants.

Our guidance around this issue is that Startup Weekend Ōtaki is about the educational experience of learning how to build a business, so even if participants don’t pitch the idea that they are worried about someone ‘stealing’, they can still take the learnings from the weekend and apply it to their idea afterward. They should also focus on making valuable connections with mentors and other participants during the weekend who they want to involve going forwards, so participation is still valuable, regardless of the idea.

Techstars Startup Weekend does not support or take part in the signing of any legal documents at the events, and cannot provide financial or legal advice. And, whilst mentors with legal backgrounds are often present and able to give general advice, they are not permitted to give specific legal counsel.

Q: What are we supposed to have accomplished by the end of the weekend?

A: While there are no specific requirements in terms of what teams should have accomplished by Sunday, it’s in your best interest to plan your execution around what you’ll be judged for on Sunday:

- Customer Validation: did you research your business idea?
- Execution and Design: what did you build?

- Business Model: do you have a plan for the future?

As far as presenting goes, some of the most common presentations include any, or a combination, of the following:

- Website wireframes or more developed sites
- Mobile App wireframes to fully functional apps
- Videos (for product demonstrations for example)
- Slide decks with product screenshots, embedded videos etc
- Live product demos
- Skits

Q: Why is it a competition?

A: Competition is not a central theme of Startup Weekend Ōtaki. Our goal is to cultivate a positive and educational atmosphere. We do believe, however, that some friendly competition can be beneficial to all parties and accurately reflects the realities of startup life. Just as it's important to gather 'real-world' feedback over the weekend, it's also important to have real-world pressures and obstacles.

After the Weekend

Q: Are teams expected to continue after the event?

A: Whether or not you continue to work on the idea, with some or all of your team, is completely up to you.

Q: How can I get more involved?

A: Having participated in a Startup Weekend, you are now part of an extensive global network of passionate entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs, mentors, startup talent and community supporters.

- Organize a Startup Weekend

Startup Weekend is open to all, and we encourage anyone who wants to support their community to apply to run a Startup Weekend. Please read through the [Techstars Startup Weekend Organizer Responsibilities](#) to evaluate whether you are ready for the challenge.

- Join a Techstars portfolio company

Another way to get involved is to join our [Talent Network](#), where you can join one of our Techstars portfolio companies to gain more experience working in a startup, before you take the plunge to start your company.

- Share your Successful Company Story

We love hearing about Techstars Startup Weekend success stories! If you would like to share your experience with us, please send us an [email](#). It'd make our day! Sign up for your local Techstars Startup Digest

Receive information on the best tech and startup events happening in your area.

[Subscribe to Startup Digest.](#)

- Virtual Meet and Greet

Curious to learn more about possible next steps for your startup? [Chat with Techstars](#) to learn more about our Give First culture, mentorship-driven accelerators, resources for entrepreneurs, and community programs in your city that can help accelerate your startup.

- Accelerators

Ready to take your startup to the next level? [Join one of Techstars' 3-month accelerators](#) to gain funding, mentorship and access to the Techstars network for life. Applications open six times a year, and stay open typically for 12 weeks. After applications close, we'll review them for about seven weeks, and spend time getting to know even more about your team, target market, progress, and idea. Our goal is to notify the final group of companies being accepted within eight weeks from the application closing date.

Appendix

Glossary

A few terms you might run into over the weekend:

Persona: A fictitious customer profile based on first and second-hand research that helps determine who you should be directing your marketing efforts towards

Problem/Solution Fit: When you have established through customer interviews that you have found a problem people have and that people are interested in the solution you have for it.

Product/Market Fit: Once your product is out in the market and has real users, this is when you've gone beyond problem/solution and are building demonstrable traction for your product.

Pivot: When you encounter a challenge with your assumptions about the problem, the customer, or perhaps the market itself, and you have to make meaningful and fundamental changes to the product strategy.

Lean Startup: From the Eric Ries book, this can most simply be described as the process of constant iteration through the idea of "build, measure, learn".

Customer Development: Steve Blank's framework of talking to your potential customers to validate the hypotheses you have around their problems, and solutions that might solve those problems.

Unique Value Proposition: a clear statement that describes the benefit of your offer, how you solve your customer's needs, and what distinguishes you from the competition.

Prototype: Anything that conveys the value proposition of your solution, but doesn't have to be a functional product.

MVP: The most bare-bones and essential product you can possibly build while still providing the value proposition.

Go-to-Market: Strategy built on a mix of sales and marketing, tested to see what channels and tactics will most effectively convert customers to your product.

CAC (Customer Acquisition Cost): The cost of getting one more customer to buy/join your product.

LTV (Lifetime Value of a Customer): The average revenue generated by a customer. (This must be more than your CAC!)

B2B: A business model where your company creates products for other businesses.

B2C: A business model where your company creates products for consumers.