

USI Resident Start-Up Bootcamp & Challenge

Bootcamp Curriculum & Schedule

Participants join with a legally formed, for-profit business and use two proven frameworks – the Who Owns the Ice House entrepreneurial mindset and the Ice House Opportunity Discovery Canvas – to sharpen their problem, solution, and customer connections, bring their business model together, and build a pitch.

Five live sessions run once a week, 60-90 minutes each, delivered virtually. Participants build their Discovery Canvas section by section, then turn it into their pitch. Selected participants complete pre-kickoff work (the USI Business Success Portal modules and one technical-assistance consultation) before Session 1, and office hours are held on off weeks for questions and feedback. Attendance of 90% is required to qualify for the pitch competition.

Schedule at a glance

#	Dates	Session title	Canvas focus
1	Week of Oct 5	Mind and Heart Set for Entrepreneurship	Problem (boxes 1-3)
2	Week of Oct 12	Solutions You Bring to the Table	Solution (boxes 4-6)
3	Week of Oct 19	Creating Key Connections	Connection (boxes 7-9)
4	Week of Oct 26	Bringing Your Canvas Together	Full canvas + business model
5	Week of Nov 2	Pitch Prep	Canvas → pitch

The Opportunity Discovery Canvas

Each session builds one section of the canvas. By Session 4 participants have completed all nine boxes; in Session 5 those sections become the backbone of the pitch.

PROBLEM	SOLUTION	CONNECTION
1. Describe the problem you want to solve.	4. Describe your proposed solution.	7. How will customers learn about your solution?
2. Describe the type of people who have this problem.	5. How will your solution be different?	8. How will customers purchase your solution?
3. How are they currently solving the problem?	6. Will people pay for your solution?	9. Why will customers choose your solution?

Session-by-session

Session 1 · Week of October 5 Mind and Heart Set for Entrepreneurship

Discovery Canvas focus: PROBLEM (boxes 1-3)

- Mindset: shift from being a victim of circumstances to an agent of choice, building resilience and persistence (Ice House "Choice" and "Persistence").
- Discovery Canvas – Problem: name the problem you solve, who has it, and how they solve it today (boxes 1-3).
- Business Model Canvas: define your Customer Segments – the specific groups you serve.

Learning outcome: You'll approach entrepreneurship as a self-directed path and frame your problem as an opportunity while narrowing your target customer.

Session 2 · Week of October 12 Solutions You Bring to the Table with Your Business

Discovery Canvas focus: SOLUTION (boxes 4-6)

- Discovery Canvas – Solution: describe your proposed solution, what makes it different, and whether people will pay for it (boxes 4-6).
- Business Model Canvas: sharpen your Value Proposition – the unique product or service that solves the customer's problem.
- Validate your solution through quick experiments and early willingness-to-pay signals.

Learning outcome: You'll refine a differentiated value proposition and test whether customers will pay.

Session 3 · Week of October 19 Creating Key Connections

Discovery Canvas focus: CONNECTION (boxes 7-9)

- Discovery Canvas – Connection: how customers will learn about you, how they'll buy, and why they'll choose you (boxes 7-9).
- Business Model Canvas: map your Channels (how you reach customers) and Customer Relationships (how you build trust and loyalty).

Learning outcome: You'll map how customers find, buy from, and stay loyal to your business.

Session 4 · Week of October 26 Bringing Your Canvas Together

Discovery Canvas focus: Full canvas + business model

- Pull all nine canvas boxes into one clear story.
- Business Model Canvas: Revenue Streams and Cost Structure (how you make money and what it costs); Key Activities, Resources, and Partnerships (what it takes to deliver).
- Legal structure & taxes: because you're already formed, confirm whether your current structure (LLC, S-Corp, C-Corp, or DBA) still fits and review how it affects your liability and taxes. (General information only, not legal or tax advice – confirm decisions with a professional.)

Learning outcome: You'll connect your canvas to a viable business model – revenue, costs, operations, and structure – ready to turn into a pitch.

Session 5 · Week of November 2 Pitch Prep

Discovery Canvas focus: Canvas → pitch

- Use your Discovery Canvas as the backbone of your pitch: Problem → Solution → Connection → business viability → your ask.
- Build your pitch deck and rehearse your delivery, drawing directly on the four canvas sections you completed.
- Map each canvas section to a pitch slide (see the guide below).

Learning outcome: You'll leave with a pitch-ready deck built directly from your canvas, prepared for Pitch Day.

From canvas to pitch

Session 5 turns the four canvas-building sessions into a pitch. Each part of your pitch comes straight from a section of your canvas:

Pitch section	Built from your canvas
The problem & who you serve	Problem – boxes 1-3
Your solution & why it's worth paying for	Solution – boxes 4-6
How you reach and win customers	Connection – boxes 7-9
Why your business is viable	Revenue, costs, and structure – Session 4
Your ask	What you're pitching for on Pitch Day

Homework & office hours

To make the most of the live sessions, participants build their canvas between sessions and review short online resources. Office hours on off weeks give participants dedicated time for questions and feedback.

Questions about the curriculum?

Reach the USI CDFI team at (314) 325-9736 or usi-cdfi@usi-inc.org.

Dates and content are subject to change.