

FoundersHack 2026 Preliminary Judging Criteria

This is not a university assessment. Rigid rubrics do not determine how successful a startup is. This rubric exists to maintain fairness and consistency across submissions. The organisers will not provide a detailed explanation of what is required to obtain a specific percentage of available points, but they do provide guidance. Be scrappy, think deeply about what you are solving, and just build.

Scoring Breakdown

Category	Weight	Points
Problem	25%	25
Solution	25%	25
Business Case	10%	10
Prototype Execution	20%	20
Presentation	20%	20

Problem (25 pts / 25%)

Ref.	Criteria	Pts.	What is being assessed?
A1	Problem identification & assessment	10	• How critical is this problem in terms of urgency and the frequency with which you face it? • Has the problem been clearly and concisely articulated, verbally and/or visually? • Does this account for the understanding of the pain point you are addressing? • Why is today the right time to solve this problem?

A2	Customer Validation	15	• How many customers have you spoken to? • Has user interaction been accounted for in your solution? • How would you rate the overall quality of the methods used to gain customer feedback?
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Solution (25 pts / 25%)

Ref.	Criteria	Pts.	What is being assessed?
A3	Unique selling proposition	13	• How does the solution adequately address the problem? • What barriers might there be to adopting the solution? • How does the product offer genuine and unique value? • Did you leverage AI in your solution? If yes, how did it impact solution quality?
A4	Defensibility and functionality	12	• How can it sustain differentiation from competitors? • Does it aim to tackle something interesting? (Creativity & ambition) • Can this be feasibly built with today's technologies?

Business Case (10 pts / 10%)

Ref.	Criteria	Pts.	What is being assessed?
A5	GTM Strategy	5	• How has and how will demand for the product be assessed? • What channels will be used to acquire customers initially? • How does the specific acquisition channel suit your solution?
A6	Market trends & risks	5	• What do you think is the impact of market trends on your solution in the foreseeable future? • How have current & potential risks been assessed?

Prototype Execution (20 pts / 20%)

Ref.	Criteria	Pts.	What is being assessed?
B1	Implementation	10	Marks are provided in accordance with both the scope of the prototype (see B1 Implementation Performance Bands for more detail)
B2	Value delivery	8	• Is the intended value delivered through its features? • How will the value of the prototype and key assumptions be tested? This requires specific reference to the build.
B3	Documentation	2	Provide an appropriate GitHub repository, working Figma prototypes, or other relevant documentation in the submission.

B1 Implementation Performance Bands

Band	Descriptor
85-100%	Interactive prototype and running local web app or mobile app (or equivalent).
75-85%	Partially interactive prototype with unfinished features, with partial use of hardcoded demo elements for those partial features.
60-75%	High-fidelity prototype (Figma, Adobe XD, InVision, etc). Minimally interactive prototype with heavy use of hardcoded demo features.
0-60%	Low-fidelity proof of concept showing a particular function or process. Functioning demo prototype, non-interactive.

Presentation (20 pts / 20%)

Ref.	Criteria	Pts.	What is being assessed?
C1	Delivery	8	• Verbal clarity and articulation. • Engagement, and sensibility of flow between topics. • Speaking role is shared sufficiently equally amongst the team.
C2	Presentation Design	7	• Readability and interpretability. • Quality of presentation slides • Design improves the clarity of the speaker's message and strengthens persuasiveness.
C3	Progress updates	5	Team posts a daily progress video longer than 30 seconds to the #daily-updates channel, briefly sharing build progress. This can relate to business feasibility or technical progress. 1 x due Friday 11:59PM (50%). 1 x due Saturday 11:59PM (50%).