



Workbook for Projects participating in a Stone Soup collaboration

This is a workbook for project leaders and teams to complete together that will help everyone get on the same page and get the most out of our event series. It's prioritized and sequenced so that you start with the biggest questions and get progressively more granular and then eventually use these answers to translate into a roadmap of deliverables.

This guide will lead you through a linear process and set of questions that will help you refine your proposed idea and improve your odds of success with your initiative. This is the distillation of the ideas from the [Stone Soup Formula](#) resource guide and is designed to be the minimum set of exercises that yield the maximum return for getting to a viable project. Our event series is a progression of events in a very specific sequence:

1. Open Call Q&A Pitch event ← onboarding new participants and projects
2. Biweekly cowork sessions ← team formation and prep work
3. Validation Day ← a day-long sprint of customer interviews and prototyping
4. Build Day ← a day-long build sprint to launch the MVP
5. Demo Night ← publicly showcasing the MVP and recruiting investment & interest

Venture Type

Circle the venture type best describes the project you're proposing. If unsure find [descriptions here](#):

1. A for-profit startup
2. A non-profit venture
3. An open source project

Problem Clarity

What is the essence of the problem you're seeking to solve?. Who is impacted by this? What is the scope in terms of total people affected and ramifications if this problem is left unsolved? Do you know for a fact in the landscape of adjacent issues that this is the one to solve?

Target audience and/or customer

Whether you have a profit motive or not you'll have at some point a human in the loop: Who is this for? If paid, who is the customer (which can be different than the user)? Describe these stakeholders:

Product/Service Value Proposition

Your initiative if successful has some benefit to these stakeholders. Describe what they are getting via your product in tangible, practical terms:



Absent your proposed project, what are these people currently doing to mitigate this issue?

These are the alternative solutions which may include competitive products, doing nothing at all or some low-tech or completely different workaround to deal with the issue.

What does your MVP look like?

A MVP is a “Minimum Viable Product” and is the smallest feature set that delivers the core value you're proposing. It's an early version that's really good at doing one thing. What would the bare minimum version of your product look like that will allow you to get in market and have people begging for your product or service?

Aspirational Press Release

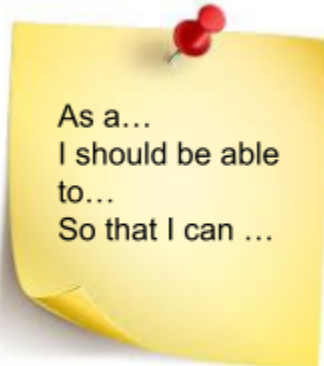
Amazon uses a practice in their approach to product development in which they write what they call the “PR/FAQ” before ever even beginning development of the product. They project themselves forward to the intended date of launch and write the press release they aspire to run at that time. With the rest of this page write your best shot at the bullet points of this aspirational PR (doesn't need to be fancy language - just the plain-english, important points and maybe a quote or two from a fictitious user on the value he/she received):

The Bob Ross Design Process

This is a gated design process to move from idea to clickable prototype. <https://grid7.co/bobross>

User Story Development

Whatever the product or service you're delivering, once you have a high-level understanding of what it should accomplish, the next step is to brainstorm and capture the functionality of the thing via user stories on post-it notes. User stories are simple, atomic scenarios of interaction expressed in ad lib format using this format:



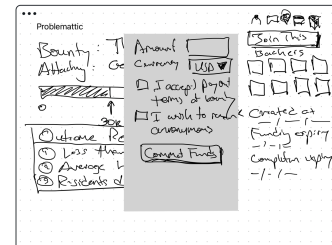
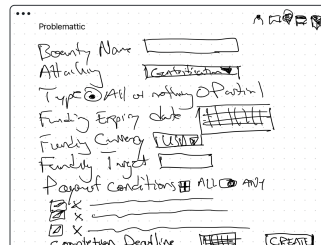
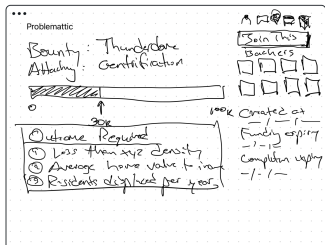
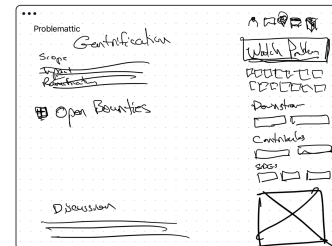
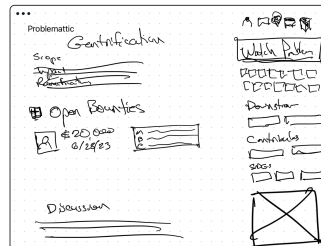
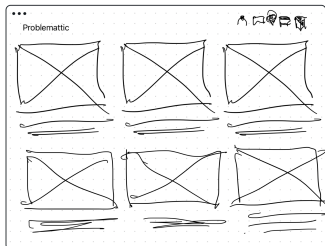
so an example would be...

This exercise is best done with actual post-it notes standing at a whiteboard with your team. You can then cluster them based on sensible groupings of features or stakeholders. This is a [great primer](#) on writing effective user stories if you need help.

Take the next 30min and with your team capture all the user stories that have the minimum set of functionality for your MVP (minimum viable product).

Low-fidelity Wireframe

Now is where we translate a conceptual understanding of the functional requirements of your user stories into a user interface. Our ultimate goal here is eventually to get to a simple clickable prototype that you can use in your customer interviews to demo what you're proposing. At this stage our task is to draw out the screens of the proposed website or application. Don't worry if you're not a sketch artist- this doesn't need to be pretty, it just needs to be a stick figure quality drawing of the application. Here are the screens I drew when designing the Bounty system for Stone Soup Protocol:



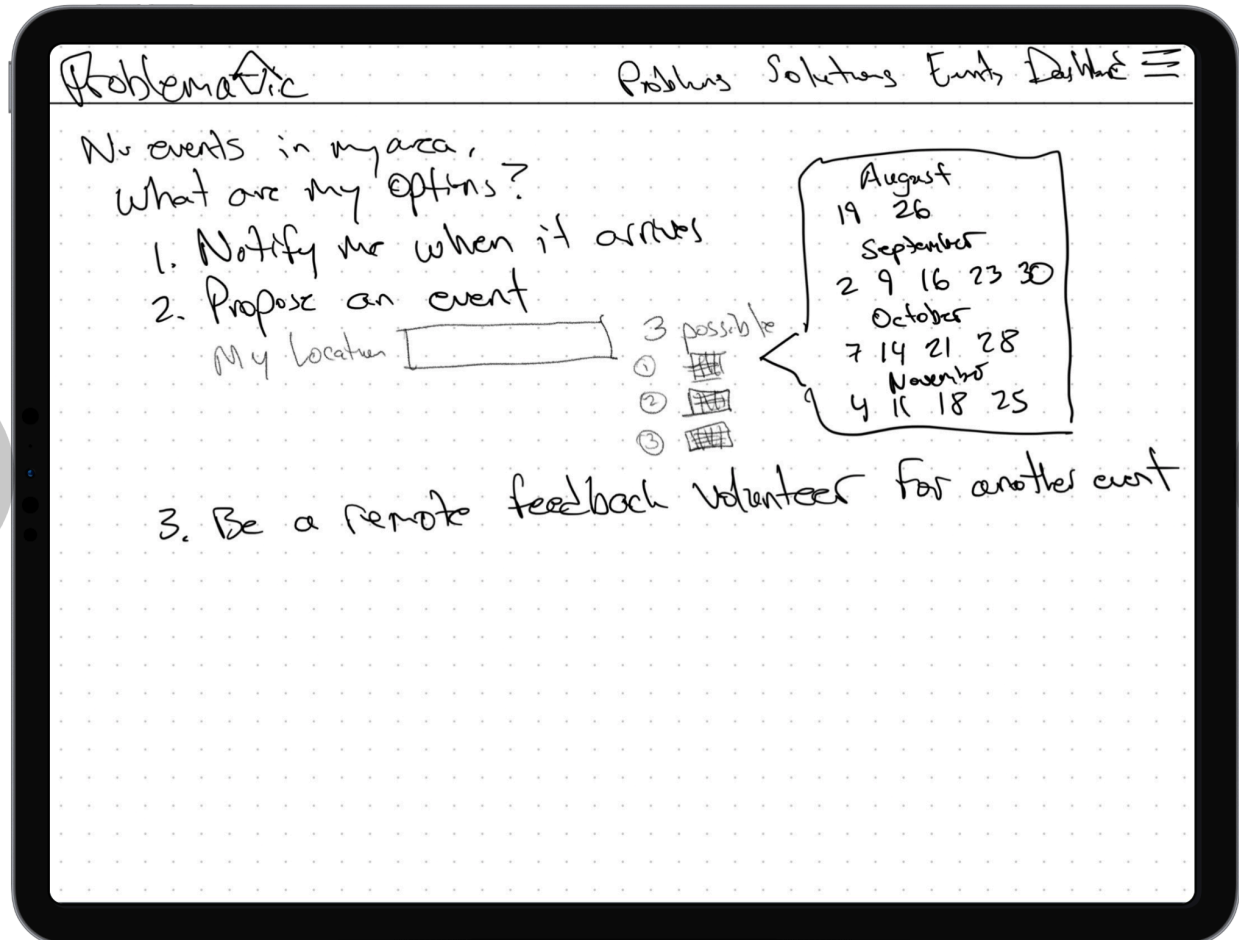
You can just sketch these out on paper or a whiteboard and take a photo. Or if you prefer to work digitally I have found [Mockup app](#) on an iPad is my favorite way to quickly mockup screens.

However you want to work, sketch out your screens and attach them to this doc.

Creating the clickable Prototype

At this point we have everything we need to turn our sketches into an artifact that people can interact with as if it were an actual application or website on your phone. We're going to use [MarvelApp](#) to do this next part. Create a free account on that site and then follow the wizard to upload the screens you made. You can watch this [brief 5min video demo](#) I made here if you want to see how this works but you'll essentially be uploading the screens then chaining them together by designating certain elements as links.

You can see my last MarvelApp prototype for the wikipediaified Events system here:



Once you've created your prototype, put the share link to it below:

Customer Interviews

Ok we're now at the exciting part where the rubber meets the road and you get to start interviewing potential customers and users in the field. Steve Blank calls this "getting out of the building" because answers don't exist within the walls of your workspace. Doing effective customer interviews is an art unto itself but we're going to simplify it and break it into two stages:

1. **Fishing Expedition:** in this phase you're asking open ended questions and learning about their situation. You're not presenting your prototype or talking about the product you envision. You have to set aside everything we just did and really get into listening and interview mode. Think of it like you're mining this person for an understanding of their situation. Sample questions include:
 - a. Tell me about your average day when you're attempting to accomplish XYZ.
 - b. What have you tried thus far in solving this problem?
 - c. What is the real motive behind that?
 - d. If you could wave a magic wand and solve this, what would you ideally want that to look like?
 - e. What do you think the ramifications are of not solving this?
 - f. Who else do you think is in this same boat?
2. **Product Demo:** Once (and only once) you've finished this open-ended interview to mine info on the problem space, you can present your proposed solution. This is not a sales pitch. This is you getting their first impression on your product and how they might interact with it. Sample questions include:
 - a. "So we had this idea for an app which might help you solve this issue in the future. Can I shoulder surf while you interact with it to get your first impression? Just talk stream of consciousness style what comes to mind as you use it..."
 - b. What do you find confusing about how it works?
 - c. What else do you wish it could do?
 - d. How would you describe this app to someone like yourself who is in the same boat as you? What terminology would you use?
 - e. Are there online or offline communities where you could see people sharing this?

These ^^ are all just sample questions. Once you do a few of them you'll get the flow of it.

You should aim to do as many of these interviews as it takes until you can read their minds and you know what their answers will be before asking. Take notes. Pay attention to body language, emotionally-charged phrases and indicators of pain. Once the data starts to look the same and you have obvious clusters and patterns then this phase is done.

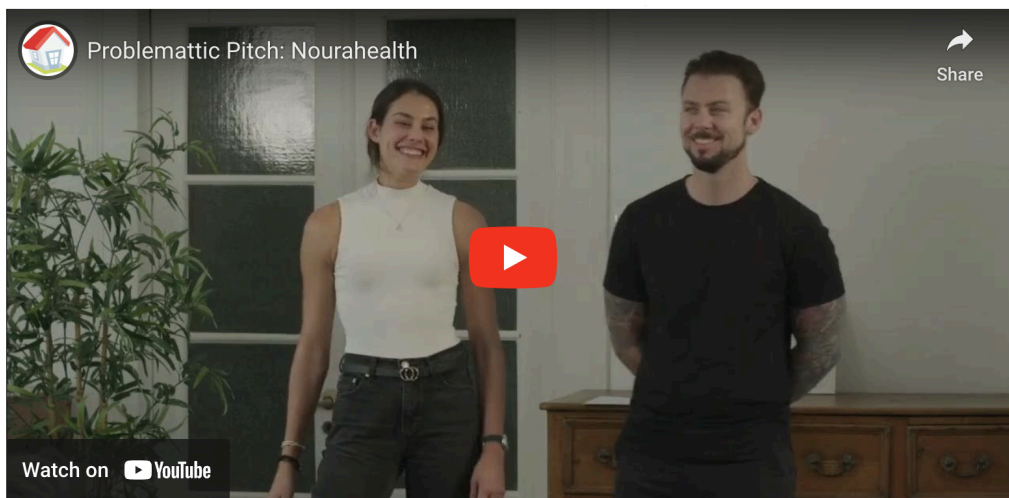
Given how time-constrained the event is however, you'll only do a handful of interviews for now. But this is a practice you should start doing at every opportunity as it's a superpower that will enable you to build a product that customers love.

The Pitch

OK it all culminates in a pitch you're going to give based on what you learned from your customer interviews. This is your opportunity to win funding and development to get your idea built at our next Buildathon. Let's talk about what makes a good pitch and where people tend to run astray:

DO THIS	AVOID THIS
Focus on what you learned about the problem from talking to users. Relay powerful quotes and any repetition of ideas that show demand.	Worry about making fancy Powerpoint slides. Cite wildly speculative massive market sizes ala "if we just get 1% of 1 Trillion Euros..."
Tell a concrete story.	Speak in abstract terms.
Keep slides simple (if you use them at all). Use images and huge fonts if you must use words. Ideally show your clickable prototype and talk us through it.	Use slides as a crutch and reading long paragraphs or bullet points verbatim. People will tune out to what you're saying and try to read the slides instead.
Engage the judges and audience. Talk to them as if you're sitting at the head of a dinner table and sharing what you learned from the day.	Use overly sophisticated language, marketing speak, acronyms without explaining what they mean.
End with a clear ask or call to action for the audience. The audience in the room wants you to succeed and has a huge collective network - take advantage of it! This is the moment at which people are most inclined to offer intros and referrals so pounce on them.	Have everyone in your group give a piece of the talk. Split the talk amongst six presenters and have each person talk spontaneously about some random aspect of what you did. End with an unclear next step or conclusion.


Here is a video of the pitch that won our last event:





Next Steps


Congrats, you made it through Validation Day!!


If your project is not already listed in the [Project library](#) you'll want to add it:





[Problems](#)
[Projects](#)
[Bounties](#)
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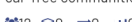
[Propose a Project](#)


Last Modified






CO-IN
A Platform for Open and Honest Conversations on Difficult Topics
ADOPT ME

Date Created: 4/15/23
Date Last Updated: 1/31/24

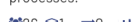


StepUP
A gamified platform that empowers local residents to transform cities into walkable, car-free communities
ADOPT ME

Date Created: 4/14/23
Date Last Updated: 1/31/24




G-Rate
"Trip Advisor of Sustainability" for local businesses.
ADOPT ME

Date Created: 10/19/22
Date Last Updated: 1/31/24




João Knows
A chatbot-based virtual assistant to help non-native speakers navigate complex, bureaucratic processes.
ADOPT ME

Date Created: 10/19/22
Date Last Updated: 1/31/24

Depending on whether your team won the event you may see some investment and donated development labor to help get your proposed project off the ground at this point. There should be a Build Day scheduled for 1-2 weeks from now. Make sure you sign up to participate in that as it's where we turn these validated ideas into reality.

We encourage your team to continue working and to use the infrastructure provided by Problematic. You can post requested deliverables on the site and recognize contributions by "paying" contributors in the project token:








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Nourahealth

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Open opportunities:

- 
Creation of a custom portal app for our users
Need to develop a customer portal that allows clinicians to interface with users
- 
Various marketing and sales copywriting
Need compelling copy written for various emails and webpages
- 
Email sequences and automation
Need ability to send transactional emails on key events and trigger automated followup contingent upon user behavior.
- 
Landing Page & Lead Capture mechanism
Need a way to tell the story effectively, capture leads and start the customer journey



Login to Watch


Skills Needed:

Software Engineer	UX/UI Designer	Machine Learning
Marketing Copy	Marketer	Marketing Strategy
CRM	Automation	Conversion Optimization
Funnel Design	Nocode	Copywriter
Membership Platforms		

Problems Implicated:

Declining Metabolic Health

SDG's Affected:

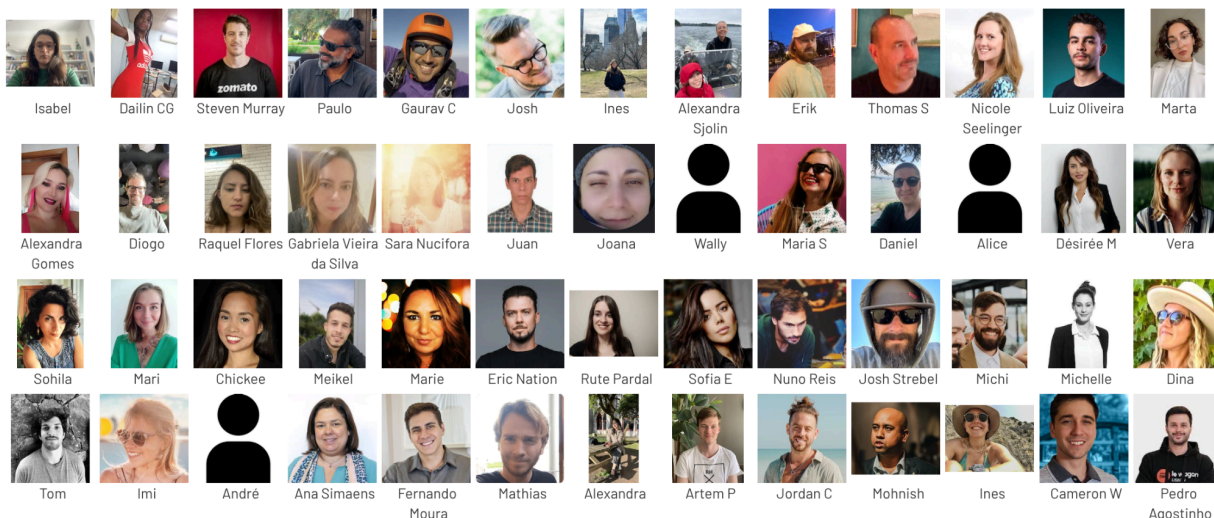

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



This gets you visibility amongst the growing community of members and if people have chosen to receive notifications based on the SDG or Problem your addressing or purely based on the skill or role required, this is a good way to recruit people to help with your initiative. We have a searchable member community of all the contributors you need coded by skill set and geo proximity that is growing daily:



Problems Solutions Bounties Events **People** Login



We also have bounties on various problems and impact investors willing to fund early-stage projects:



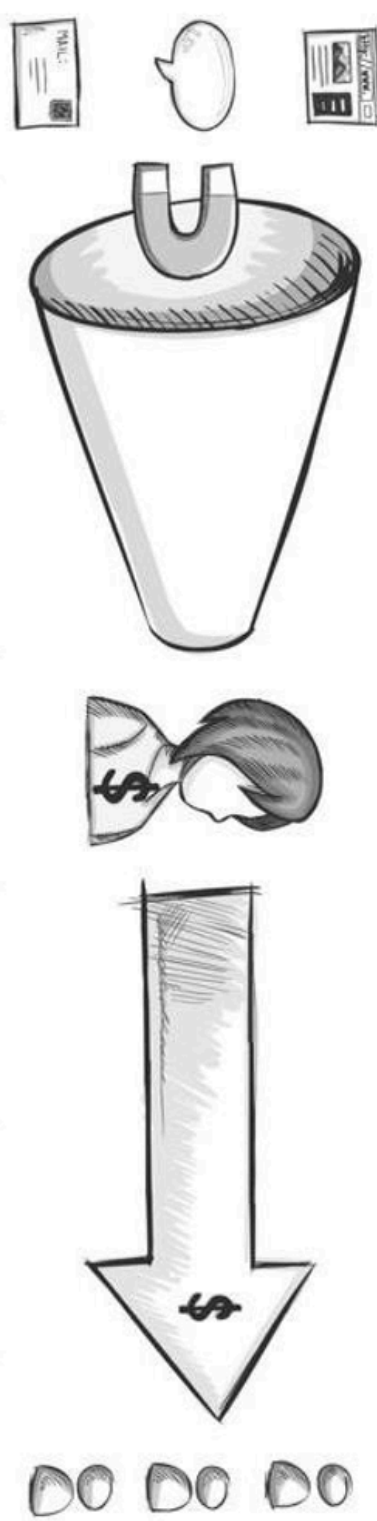
Problems Solutions **Bounties** Events People Login



× Fundraising × Funded

Apples to Apples Accounting	Green Machine	Student Safety Net	Flip Flop Detector
Internalize the negative externalities of corporations so they're reflected in the stock price.	Reduce carbon emissions by shaping the transportation habits of a population towards greener alternatives.	Reverse the trend of the worsening mental health crisis amongst college universities.	Discover and call attention to behavior of elected officials that's inconsistent with their stated positions pre-election.
Funding Deadline: 10/20/23 Completion Deadline: 1/31/24 Funding Target: \$15,000 Funding Type: All or Nothing Winner: Best by Deadline	Funding Deadline: 12/01/23 Completion Deadline: 12/01/23 Funding Target: \$12,000 Funding Type: Partial OK Winner: Best by Deadline	Funding Deadline: 10/30/23 Completion Deadline: 1/31/24 Funding Target: \$10,000 Funding Type: All or Nothing Winner: First to Deliver	Funding Deadline: 10/30/23 Completion Deadline: 12/31/23 Funding Target: \$15,000 Funding Type: All or Nothing Winner: First to Deliver
Lobbyist Influence Corporate extraction of wealth	Climate Change Urban Sustainability	Mental Health Issues Social Isolation/Loneliness	Lobbyist Influence Learned Helplessness

The Problematic platform is designed to give anyone the launchpad to birth and grow an impact project. The best thing is to get involved in the forums and in the Discord channel for your city. Included below is an Appendix of various other tools that will be helpful in giving you clarity on your project. The [Problematic Way](#) is a guide is the culmination of over two decades of startup experience consolidated into a dense guide across a number of topics which will be valuable. If you have any questions [ask here in the forums](#). I look forward to helping you launch and grow an impactful venture that helps the world. - Sean



<div>PROBLEM</div> <div>List your top 1-3</div>	<div>SOLUTION</div> <div>Outline a possible solution for each problem.</div>		<div>UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION</div> <div>Single, clear, compelling message that states why you are different and worth paying</div>	<div>UNFAIR ADVANTAGE</div> <div>Something that cannot easily be bought or copied.</div>	<div>CUSTOMER SEGMENTS</div> <div>List your target customers and users.</div>
<div>EXISTING ALTERNATIVES</div> <div>List how these problems are solved today.</div>	<div>KEY METRICS</div> <div>List the key numbers that tell you how your business is doing.</div>	<div>HIGH-LEVEL CONCEPT</div> <div>List your X for Y analogy e.g. Youtube = Flickr for videos.</div>			
	<div>CHANNELS</div> <div>List your path to customers (inbound or outbound).</div>				
<div>COST STRUCTURE</div> <div>List your fixed and variable costs.</div>		<div>REVENUE STREAMS</div> <div>List your sources of revenue.</div>			