GRADES 9–12 / NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 2026

AI for Business Innovation Launchpad

Build an idea. Create a prototype. Prepare for your next pitch.

A joint program of ICUBE at the University of Toronto Mississauga and the Erindale Youth AI Innovation Incubator.

Turn AI learning into a project you can present

Have an idea that could improve school, community life, or the way a business works? Use existing AI tools to explore a real need, develop a business concept, build an initial prototype, and present your solution. Working in small teams, you will test assumptions, respond to feedback, and explain the value of your idea with evidence.

The Launchpad also introduces what could come next: suitable pitch competitions, entrepreneurship programs, and business advisory resources. You will finish with a project portfolio and a practical plan for exploring opportunities through ICUBE and IDEA Mississauga, subject to each provider's eligibility and selection requirements.

Who Is Eligible

Enrollment is limited to students in **Grades 9–12** who are enrolled in the **Erindale Youth AI Innovation Incubator** or are participants in the **School 2.0 AI Business Innovation Startup Challenge**.

What you will take away

A tangible project
An opportunity brief, a one-page business concept, a prototype or clearly labeled mockup, testing notes, and a short pitch presentation.

Pitch experience
Practice explaining your idea, demonstrating its value, answering questions, and improving it through feedback.

A next-step plan
A shortlist of suitable opportunities, a draft application summary, and a 30-day action plan for further development.

ICUBE certificate
Students will receive a certificate from ICUBE, University of Toronto Mississauga.

Program format

Saturday schedule	Activity
9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.	Core in-person session
12:00–12:30 p.m.	Lunch break
12:30–2:30 p.m.	Optional workshop and project support

Dates: November 7, 21, 28; December 5 and 12, 2026. All times are Toronto time.
Duration: 15 scheduled core hours, plus up to 10 optional workshop hours.

Five sessions: from opportunity to prototype

The morning sessions provide all essential learning and deliverables. Afternoon workshops offer extra practice, feedback, and project-development time.

01 AI foundations and business opportunities

Saturday, November 7, 2026

Core session. Explore how AI can support research, design, marketing, customer service, and business operations. Evaluate AI-generated information and discuss responsible use. Identify a customer or community need, form teams, and select an opportunity where AI can help. Introduce the difference between a learning project, an incubator program, and a pitch competition; share a 60-second idea introduction.

> **Core outcome.** A business opportunity brief identifying the intended users, their problem, and a practical role for AI; an initial spoken introduction to the idea.

Optional workshop. Explore AI tools for business tasks, compare opportunities, and develop questions for potential users.

02 Customer needs and business model design

Saturday, November 21, 2026

Core session. Use design thinking and practice interviews to investigate customer needs. Compare existing solutions and define a value proposition. Develop a simple business model covering customers, delivery, and initial cost or revenue assumptions. Distinguish AI suggestions and simulated interviews from evidence gathered from people. Begin an opportunity shortlist and identify questions about program fit and eligibility.

> **Core outcome.** A one-page business concept with target customers, proposed value, alternatives, and clearly labeled assumptions; a draft shortlist of possible next-step opportunities.

Optional workshop. Practice customer interviews, explore the market further, refine the business model, and review publicly available application requirements.

03 Using AI to develop a business prototype

Saturday, November 28, 2026

Core session. Map the customer experience and build a simple prototype of a product, service, or business process. Use AI to support design or development, or demonstrate an AI-supported workflow. Explain the customer benefit, where human judgment is needed, and which features work versus those represented by a mockup. Practice a short demonstration and organize evidence for the final portfolio.

> **Core outcome.** A storyboard, workflow, clickable mockup, or simple demonstration, with a clear explanation of AI's role and a plan for testing the idea.

Optional workshop. Extend the prototype, practice the demonstration, troubleshoot implementation, and capture portfolio screenshots or a short walkthrough.

> You do not need a finished company or a production-ready AI system. A clear storyboard, workflow, or mockup can meet the prototype requirement when its limitations are explained honestly.

From testing to a pitch and a next-step plan

04 Testing business value and preparing a pitch

Saturday, December 5, 2026

Core session. Conduct structured peer or user tests, record feedback, and make at least one justified improvement. Review the customer value and basic cost, pricing, or delivery assumptions. Develop a three- to five-minute pitch covering the problem, users, solution, role of AI, alternatives, business model, evidence, and next steps. Practice questions about feasibility, impact, and team contributions.

> **Core outcome.** A revised prototype, a short testing record, and a draft pitch deck. Use a practice checklist covering problem clarity, evidence, differentiation, feasibility, responsible AI use, and communication.

Optional workshop. Rehearse the pitch and Q&A, improve the demonstration, and adapt the project summary to one relevant program or competition. Check that opportunity's actual criteria rather than assuming one format fits all.

05 Launchpad showcase and next-step clinic

Saturday, December 12, 2026

Core session. Present a three- to five-minute business pitch and prototype demonstration, followed by questions and feedback. Explain how user insights and testing shaped the concept and how AI contributed. Complete an individual reflection. In a next-step planning activity, identify an appropriate opportunity, check published eligibility and timing, note unresolved questions, and prepare a draft application summary and a 30-day action plan. Presentation timing may be adjusted to the number of teams.

> **Core outcome.** A final pitch and demonstration, individual reflection, organized project portfolio, and a realistic continuation plan. Possible next steps include more user testing, improving the prototype, seeking advisory support, or preparing a separate application.

Optional workshop. Refine portfolio materials and application drafts, practice an introductory conversation with an advisor, and plan further testing or development. External meetings and placements are not included unless separately arranged.

Final project and participation

Each team submits an opportunity brief, one-page business concept, prototype, testing notes, pitch deck, and next-step plan. The portfolio includes a short AI-use record identifying what AI helped produce and which claims were checked. Individual reflections explain each student's contribution and learning.

All essential deliverables are supported in the morning sessions. Optional workshops provide additional practice; they are not required to complete the core project. Students distinguish peer feedback, real customer evidence, assumptions, and simulated data. Use consent-based feedback and avoid placing personal or confidential information in AI tools.

> Your next-step plan should name one suitable opportunity, the materials you already have, what still needs work, any eligibility questions, and the first action you will take. Completing Launchpad does not guarantee external admission, funding, or a competition place.

Beyond the Launchpad

Pitch and entrepreneurship pathways

These are opportunities to explore, not automatic progression routes. Launchpad helps you prepare the evidence, prototype, business concept, and communication skills needed for a separate inquiry or application. Program details below were reviewed on November 1, 2026.

ICUBE Ideation Lab: further idea development

Ideation Lab supports early-stage ideas through business-model development, workshops, and mentorship; completing its requirements can create an opportunity to enter its own pitch competition. Launchpad does not replace those requirements. Confirm future intake dates, under-18 participation, selection, and any fees with ICUBE. Its published Fall 2026 application deadline was September 28. [1]

IDEA Mississauga: advice and a student business route

IDEA's Business Advisory Services include business-planning guidance, workshops, referrals, and other support. Your project brief can help you prepare an inquiry; confirm suitable services for high school students. [2] Summer Company advertises training, mentoring, and grants of up to $3,000 for eligible students aged 15–29. Published requirements include Mississauga residence, Canadian citizenship or permanent residence, and a full-time summer commitment. A 2027 waitlist is advertised, but some FAQ dates remain from 2026; confirm the new intake's rules. International students without the required status would not qualify under the published criteria. [3]

Pride Pitch: a specialized opportunity for eligible teams

Pride Pitch supports 2SLGBTQ+ entrepreneurs; at least one team member must identify as 2SLGBTQ+, and additional affiliation and business-stage rules apply. The listed event took place on August 27, 2026. Eligible teams may explore a future edition after confirming its rules and timing. Participation is optional; students do not need to disclose personal identity information in class. [4]

Regional pitch events and longer-term growth

Sauga Pitch has included an Early Stage and Students category and has been presented by ICUBE, SpinUp, Sheridan EDGE, and IDEA Mississauga. The detailed page reviewed describes the 2024 event, not a confirmed upcoming intake. Use it as a regional example and confirm future opportunities before applying. [5] IDEA's Step-Up program and its showcase are aimed at more developed ventures, not typical beginner projects. Starter Company Plus requires applicants to be at least 18 and not attending or returning to school full-time, so it is not a general route for this cohort. [6–7]

> Explore → check fit and eligibility → prepare materials → apply separately → participate only if accepted. Age, residency or status, affiliation, venture stage, fees, availability, and selection rules may differ by opportunity.

Official resource pages

1. ICUBE: Ideation Lab | 2. IDEA: Business Advisory Services

3. IDEA: Summer Company | 4. ICUBE: Pride Pitch

5. ICUBE: Sauga Pitch | 6. IDEA: Step-Up Program

7. IDEA: Starter Company Plus