FINDING A BUSINESS IDEA WORTH PURSUING

The best ideas usually start with problems you know well, skills you already have and communities you belong to.

TYPE: GUIDE REVIEWED: NOVEMBER 2026 TIME: 8 MINUTES LEVEL: BEGINNER

AT A GLANCE

- Good business ideas solve a **real problem** for **specific people** who are **willing to pay**.
- Look where you have an edge: **your experience, your skills and your community**.
- Don't wait for a perfect, brand-new idea. Most successful businesses do something familiar, better, for a group of people others overlook.

Why it matters

Many people stall because they think they need a completely original idea. In reality, most businesses are restaurants, services, shops, trades and tools that already exist in some form. What makes them work is serving a customer well. Starting from a problem you understand gives you a head start that money can't buy.

Where good ideas come from

Source	Ask yourself	Example
Your frustrations	What's annoying, slow or expensive in your daily life?	Hard-to-find halal meal prep near campus
Your job	What do customers or coworkers always complain about?	A nurse sees clinics struggle with scheduling
Your skills	What do people already ask you to help with?	Friends always ask you to do their braids, taxes or websites
Your community	What do people from your background or neighborhood need that others don't offer?	Translation help for immigrant small business owners
Changes	What's new in laws, technology or habits that creates a need?	New rules or a new app that small businesses need help with
Existing businesses	What's popular elsewhere but missing where you are?	A food concept from another city or country

Step by step

1. **List 10 problems** you've seen or felt in the last month. Don't judge yet.
2. **Circle the ones you understand well.** You've lived it, worked in it, or know the people who have it.
3. **For each circled problem, write who has it.** Be specific: "working parents in my building," not "everyone."
4. **Write how they solve it today.** If nobody does anything about it, it may not be painful enough to pay for.
5. **Pick your top three** and score them with **I-12 Idea Scorecard**.
6. **Talk to people** who have the problem before you build anything. See **I-03 Talking to Customers: Learning What They Really Need**.

> EXAMPLE
>
> **Yusuf** drives for a delivery app and kept hearing restaurant owners complain about online reviews they didn't have time to answer. He knew Arabic and English and understood small restaurants. He started a service that manages reviews and social media for family-owned restaurants, beginning with five places on his own delivery routes.

What makes an idea worth pursuing

- **The problem is frequent or painful.** People deal with it often, or it costs them real money or time.
- **People already spend money on it,** even on a poor solution.
- **You can reach the customers.** You know where they are and how to talk to them.
- **You can start small.** You can test it without a big loan or lease.
- **You care about it.** You'll be working on this for years.

Common mistakes

- **Falling in love with a solution** before checking the problem.
- **Choosing "everyone" as the customer.** Specific customers are easier to find and serve.
- **Waiting for a totally new idea.** Better beats new.
- **Keeping the idea secret.** Ideas are rarely stolen. Talking to people is how you improve them.

Your checklist

- ☐ List 10 problems you've seen this month
- ☐ Circle the ones you know well
- ☐ Write who has each problem and how they solve it today
- ☐ Pick your top three
- ☐ Score them with the Idea Scorecard (I-12)

Key words, explained

Word	What it means
Problem-first	Starting with a real need before deciding what to build.
Target customer	The specific person your business is built to serve.
Edge	Something that gives you an advantage, like experience or access.

Where to go next

- **I-02 Who Is Your Customer?**
- **I-03 Talking to Customers: Learning What They Really Need**
- **I-12 Idea Scorecard**

IMPORTANT
This guide is general education from the Project Underdogs Founder Library. It is not legal, tax, accounting, immigration or investment advice, and it is not an offer of investment or a promise of funding. Figures are general examples and ranges, not quotes. Rules change and every business is different, so check your situation with a qualified professional. Full terms: LIB-03 Disclaimer and Terms of Use.