



GROUNDSWELL
STARTUPS

HACKATHON 2026

IMPACT REPORT

Co-powered by



databricks | **BOXMICA**





48 HOURS.
ONE ECOSYSTEM.
INFINITE IDEAS.

A weekend where ideas became motion

Groundswell Startups is a nonprofit incubator and prototype lab built on a simple idea: when people, resources, and knowledge are shared openly, innovation accelerates.

As part of the broader Space Coast Initiative (SCI), the annual SCI Hackathon serves as a platform to bring that philosophy to life by bridging academia, industry, and grassroots innovation through action.

Hackathon 2026 was a coordinated effort across stakeholders, participants, mentors, judges, partners, volunteers, and community members. Each contributing to a shared outcome: moving ideas forward.

Over the course of a single weekend, early-stage concepts were tested, refined, and transformed into working prototypes. More importantly, confidence was built, connections were formed, and momentum was created.

This report captures that impact through the lens of each stakeholder, highlighting what was built, and how an ecosystem comes together to build it.

PARTICIPANTS

From curiosity to creation

For participants, the Hackathon served as an entry point into the innovation ecosystem, meeting them wherever they were in their journey.

Some arrived with early concepts, others with more defined ideas, but all engaged in a process designed to move thinking into action. Through access to tools, datasets, mentorship, and rapid build cycles, participants were able to test assumptions, iterate quickly, and produce tangible outcomes.

Across 18 teams, 13 working prototypes emerged, each representing a transition from concept to execution.

More importantly, participants left with a stronger sense of agency.

Nearly all participants reported satisfaction with the experience, while 78% indicated increased confidence in advancing their ideas toward real-world application. 87% expressed intent to continue working on their projects beyond the event.

These outcomes suggest that the Hackathon is enabling creation in the moment while also increasing the likelihood that ideas persist and evolve afterward.

Participants consistently cited growth in technical capability, startup thinking, and team-based execution, learning how to build, communicate, and collaborate under real constraints.



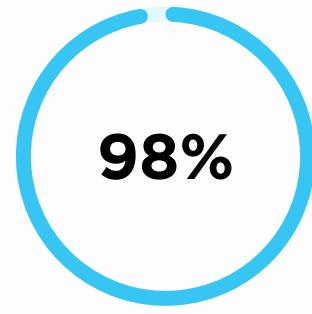
ONE OF THE BIGGEST TAKEAWAYS WAS LEARNING HOW TO TAKE A BROAD, CONCEPTUAL IDEA AND QUICKLY BREAK IT DOWN INTO A **TANGIBLE, PRESENTABLE SOLUTION** UNDER A TIGHT TIME CONSTRAINT.

- PARTICIPANT





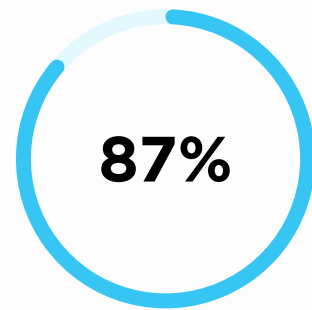
STAKEHOLDERS



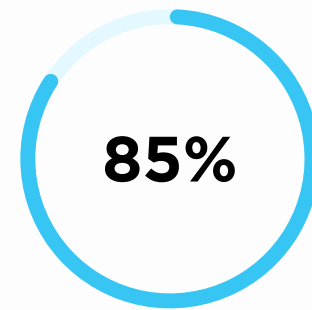
OVERALL
SATISFACTION



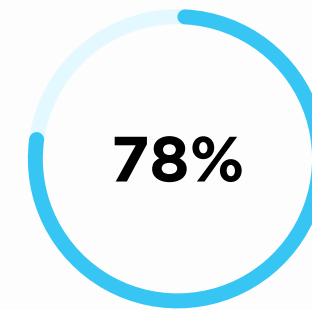
PARTICIPANTS



INTEND TO
CONTINUE



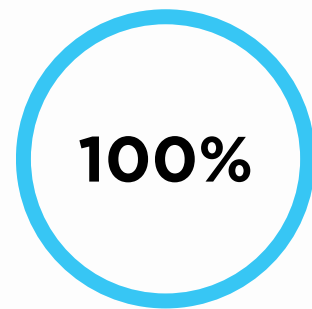
HAD CHANCES
TO NETWORK



INCREASED
CONFIDENCE



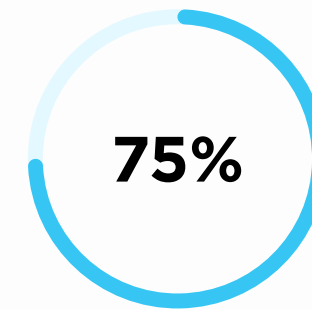
JUDGES



FOUND CRITERIA
CLEAR AND FAIR



RATED TRACKS
EFFECTIVE



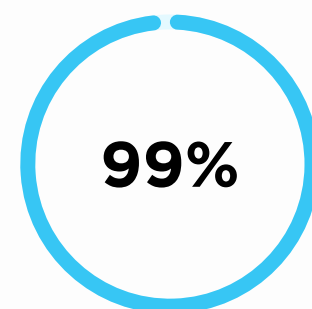
SAW VIABLE
POTENTIAL



MENTORS

4.1/5

WORTHWHILE
TIME



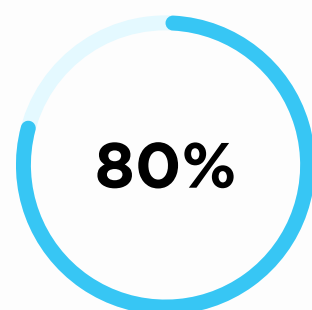
APPROVAL
RATING

3.2/5

UNEXPECTED
POSITIVE RESULTS



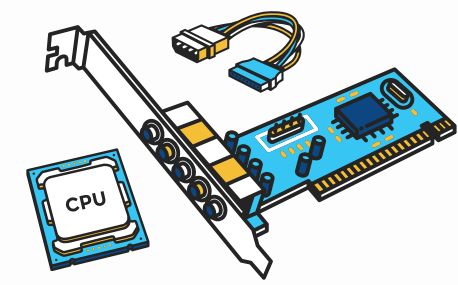
VOLUNTEERS



MORE LIKELY TO
GET INVOLVED

“ I WAS ABLE TO SIT DOWN WITH EACH OF THE TEAMS AND GIVE THEM TOOLS AND ADVICE ON APPROACHING THEIR PROJECTS FROM MY PERSPECTIVE.

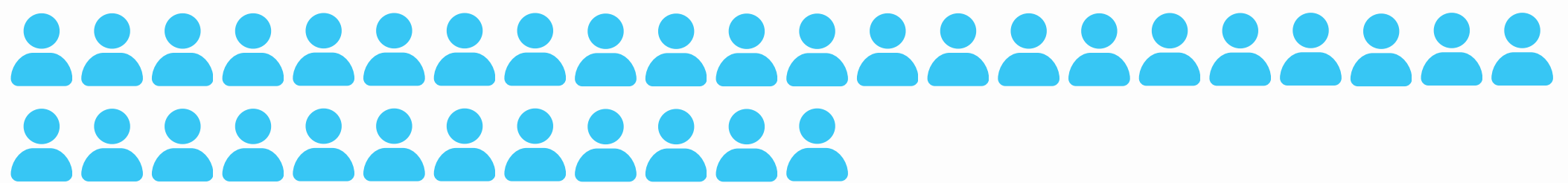
- MENTOR



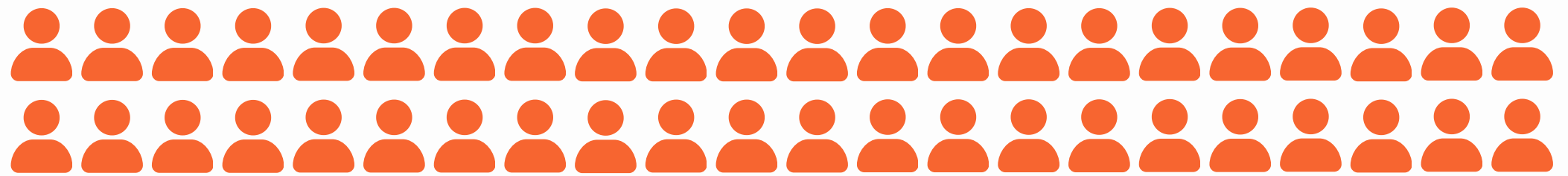
13 PROTOTYPES



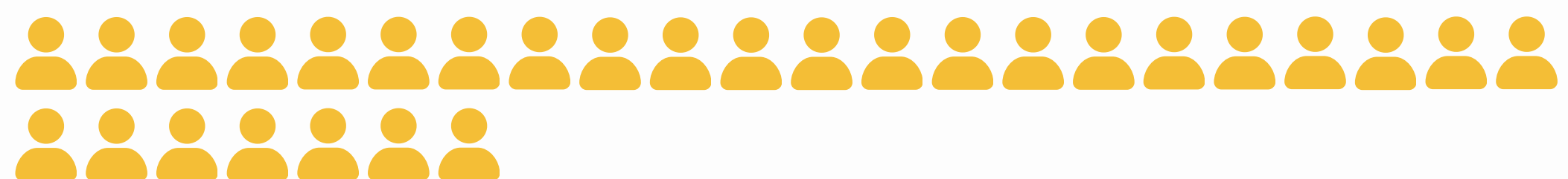
HACKERS



TINKERERS



MENTORS



18 TEAMS



4 TEAMS CAUGHT JUDGES' EYES FOR POTENTIAL INVESTMENT, HIRING, OR PARTNERSHIP.



MENTORS

Give-first culture in practice

Mentors from Groundswell, BoxMica, and Databricks brought their technical expertise and the willingness to invest time, insight, and energy into early-stage builders.

Their role was to enable progress by helping teams clarify direction, navigate uncertainty, and build with greater confidence.

This approach resonated strongly with participants, with mentorship receiving near-universal satisfaction ratings.

At the same time, the experience created value for mentors themselves. Many reported forming new professional connections, identifying potential collaborators, and engaging with ideas at their earliest stages.



JUDGES

Shaping what impact looks like

Judges played a critical role in bridging creativity with application.

Their responsibility extended beyond evaluation; they helped define what meaningful innovation looks like within the context of real-world constraints.

By assessing feasibility, scalability, and impact, judges provided participants with a clearer understanding of how their ideas might evolve beyond the Hackathon.

Feedback from judges indicates that the process was clear, fair, and effective, with strong engagement across both software and hardware tracks. A majority also identified clear startup potential within participating teams.

This reinforces the Hackathon's role as both a creative exercise, and as an early-stage validation point within a broader innovation pipeline.



PARTNERS AND VOLUNTEERS

Ecosystem in action

The SCI Hackathon is not built by a single organization; it is enabled by a network.

Ecosystem partners contributed tools, datasets, expertise, and sponsorship, expanding what participants could explore and build within a limited timeframe. Their involvement ensured that ideas were not only creative but grounded in a real-world context.

Volunteers, guests, and community members played an equally important role, supporting operations, maintaining energy, and reinforcing the collaborative nature of the event.

Many engaged out of a desire to support the local startup ecosystem or out of curiosity, and left with a stronger connection to the community and its potential.



THE INITIATIVE

Building the Pipeline

Hackathon 2026 reflects Groundswell's broader role within the Space Coast Initiative: building the infrastructure that allows ideas to move forward.

What begins as a weekend of rapid prototyping becomes part of a longer journey, where participants continue building, mentors stay engaged, partners remain invested, and the community grows stronger.

This is not a standalone event. It is a mechanism for activation.

A way to connect academia, industry, and grassroots innovation through doing, not just discussing.

And a step toward a more connected, capable, and collaborative innovation ecosystem.

Thank you

This experience was made possible through the support of our sponsors and ecosystem partners.

Your commitment to innovation, community, and collaboration continues to empower builders and ideas at every stage.

Thank you for being a part of this journey.



Hackathon 2026 demonstrated what is possible when people, resources, and intent align around creation.

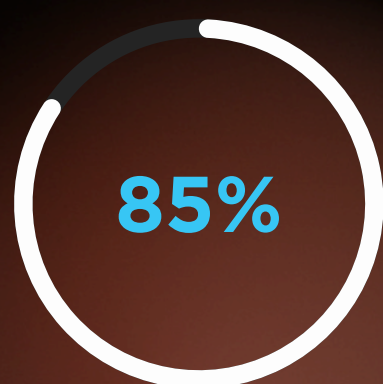
Beyond the prototypes and presentations, the true outcome was momentum, ideas set in motion, relationships formed, and confidence built to continue beyond the event.





OVERALL SATISFACTION

Insights and data presented in this report were developed in collaboration with Strategic Evaluations Inc, whose post-event analysis provides a deeper understanding of participant experience and outcomes.



NETWORKING

The 2026 Hackathon demonstrates strong performance across key dimensions including satisfaction, mentorship, confidence-building, and post-event intent.



INCREASED CONFIDENCE

Together, these findings highlight the Hackathon's success in delivering a high-quality experience and enabling participants to move from idea to action.



INTENT TO CONTINUE



MENTORSHIP