

LEAN

STARTUP

METHODOLOGIES



BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This session represents a key transition in the KALEIDOS training programme—from idea generation to early-stage business modelling—and forms an essential part of the Ideas Generation Programme. It provides participants with the conceptual frameworks and practical tools needed to transform co-created solutions into innovation pathways with market and ecosystem relevance.

The session draws heavily from Lean Startup principles, promoting a mindset of experimentation, iteration, and evidence-based decision-making. By working with business modelling tools such as the Business Model Canvas (BMC), participants develop a more strategic understanding of how their solutions create value for users and society.

In addition, this session strengthens an active engagement with tools that facilitate strategic thinking, customer discovery, and impact modelling, participants build their capacity to lead or contribute to mission-driven innovation processes within academic and multi-stakeholder contexts.

Ultimately, this session supports the KALEIDOS goal of enabling research-based solutions to evolve into validated, user-focused and value-oriented innovation initiatives.

OBJECTIVE

To equip participants with practical tools and mindsets from the Lean Startup methodology to turn their early concepts into validated, user-oriented business models. Participants explore their value proposition, key partners, customer segments, and revenue streams, testing the feasibility and relevance of their ideas in real-world ecosystems.

TARGET AUDIENCE

- ◆ KALEIDOS participants working on early-stage innovation projects
- ◆ Researchers and professionals seeking to translate research outcomes into viable solutions
- ◆ Teams exploring entrepreneurial pathways or preparing for stakeholder engagement
- ◆ Individuals with limited experience in business modelling, market validation, or lean methodologies

METHODOLOGY AND CONTENT

This session followed an applied and iterative learning approach grounded in the Lean Startup methodology. The training combined conceptual framing with guided exercises, enabling participants to analyse and improve their initial ideas by exploring impact potential, business modelling, and user validation strategies. The session was structured around six interconnected blocks:

▶ 1. IMPACT AND MISSION DEFINITION

Participants defined the broader mission behind their idea, linking it to societal or ecosystem-level challenges. They explored potential Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that would help measure progress and impact over time.

▶ 2. PROBLEM/SOLUTION REFRAMING

Teams revisited and refined their problem statement and proposed solution to ensure coherence with user needs and contextual realities. Emphasis was placed on validating assumptions rather than assuming fit.

▶ 3. MISSION-DRIVEN BUSINESS MODELLING

Using the Business Model Canvas (BMC), participants mapped the key elements of their solution: value proposition, customer segments, channels, cost structure, revenue streams, key partners, and more. This process helped clarify strategic dimensions and identify unknowns.

▶ 4. LEAPS OF FAITH IDENTIFICATION

Teams identified the core assumptions ("leaps of faith") on which their business model relied—particularly those related to user interest, behaviour, willingness to pay, or delivery feasibility. These were flagged as key areas for validation.

▶ 5. CUSTOMER DISCOVERY

A brief introduction to customer discovery helped teams understand how to test their assumptions through real-world engagement. This included a walkthrough of good practices in user interviews, common pitfalls, and interpretation of qualitative feedback.

▶ 6. CUSTOMER INTERVIEW DESIGN

Participants worked on drafting a first list of interview questions, designed to explore users' experiences, problems, and motivations—without leading or pitching the idea. The goal was to learn, not to sell.

Throughout the session, facilitators used real examples and guided teams with targeted questions. The structure encouraged a mindset of hypothesis testing, strategic listening, and solution iteration—key to developing innovation projects that are both impactful and viable.

MATERIALS NEEDED

To support the interactive and strategic nature of the session, the following materials were used:

- ♦ Business Model Canvas (BMC) – available in both printable and digital formats for team-based work.
- ♦ Mission & KPI templates – to help teams define their societal goal and indicators of success.
- ♦ Problem/Solution reframing worksheet – to revisit and refine the challenge-solution fit.
- ♦ Leaps of Faith map – for identifying and documenting key assumptions behind each business model.
- ♦ Customer Interview Guide – including sample structure and question design tips.
- ♦ Collaborative tools – such as sticky notes, flipcharts, markers (in-person); or digital whiteboards, shared documents, and breakout rooms (online).
- ♦ Presentation slides – providing visual cues, theoretical framing, and instructions for exercises.

All materials were designed for flexible use in both face-to-face and online settings, ensuring accessibility and smooth facilitation across contexts.

The [slides used in session 4](#) can be found on the KALEIDOS website.

EXERCISES FOR FACE-TO-FACE AND ONLINE SESSIONS

This session was structured as a guided workshop combining conceptual explanation and interactive exercises, with full adaptability to both face-to-face and online environments. The goal was to support participants in translating early ideas into structured, testable innovation models.

► **1. MISSION & IMPACT DEFINITION:** Participants articulated the mission behind their innovation and identified at least one Key Performance Indicator (KPI) to track its potential impact.

► **2. PROBLEM/SOLUTION REFRAMING:** Teams revisited their original problem statement and refined it through guided questions such as:

- ♦ "What assumptions are we making?"
- ♦ "What is the root user need we are addressing?"

► **3. BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS (BMC):** Each team filled in their BMC, section by section, including value proposition, customer segments, channels, and cost structure.

► **4. LEAPS OF FAITH IDENTIFICATION:** Participants identified and labelled the riskiest assumptions in their model—especially around desirability, viability, and feasibility.

► **5. CUSTOMER DISCOVERY INTERVIEW DESIGN:** Participants created a list of open-ended questions to validate their assumptions through user interviews.

Each exercise ended with a short group reflection to consolidate learning and align on next steps. In both delivery formats, facilitators played an active role in prompting iteration, challenging assumptions, and supporting team alignment.

OUTCOMES OF THE SESSION SKILLS AND COMPETENCES ADDRESSED

This session enabled participants to take a significant step forward in transforming their ideas into structured, testable innovation models. By applying Lean Startup tools and methods, they gained a deeper understanding of how their proposed solutions could create value in real-world contexts—and how to iteratively validate their assumptions.

► KEY OUTCOMES

- ◆ Completion of the first version of a Business Model Canvas for each project.
- ◆ Clear definition of the project mission and its potential social impact, linked to measurable KPIs.
- ◆ Identification of core "leaps of faith", highlighting which assumptions required validation.
- ◆ Drafting of a first customer interview guide, focused on learning from users rather than pitching.
- ◆ Strengthened understanding of the importance of testing and iteration in early-stage innovation.

► SKILLS AND COMPETENCES ADDRESSED

This session directly contributed to the development of several cross-cutting and role-specific competences identified in the KALEIDOS D1.1 Analysis and Portfolio of Professional Skills and Competences for Open Science, including:

- ◆ **Strategic thinking** – Participants learned to align innovation efforts with mission, market needs, and value creation, using tools like the Business Model Canvas and Mission/KPI alignment.
- ◆ **Critical thinking** – The Lean approach required ongoing questioning and refinement of assumptions through customer discovery and problem-solution fit analysis.

- ♦ **Decision making** – Teams had to prioritise features, pivot strategies, and interpret customer feedback to guide their innovation pathway.
- ♦ **Systemic thinking** – The session encouraged understanding innovation not as isolated development, but embedded in complex user, funding, and institutional ecosystems.
- ♦ **Interact professionally** – Participants developed their ability to communicate and collaborate with diverse stakeholders during interviews and iterative feedback processes.
- ♦ **Increase impact of science on policy and society** – Lean startup tools helped participants focus their projects on measurable value, real-world outcomes, and sustainable change.
- ♦ **Mobilise resources** – Teams considered cost structures, partnerships, and investment needs—laying the groundwork for realistic implementation strategies.

This session reinforced participants' capacity to move from creative ideation to practical experimentation, laying the groundwork for further development and implementation of Open Science-based innovations.



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