

Organiser Handbook

Your practical guide to planning and running a VET hackathon

01 Welcome

This handbook is designed for the lead organiser and the core organising team. It covers everything from pre-event logistics and volunteer coordination to day-of operations and troubleshooting. Read it alongside the Hackathon Guide (Chapters 2 and 5) for full context.

The guide assumes you have completed the planning phase: objectives are set, the budget is approved, the venue is confirmed, mentors are recruited, and participants are registered. This handbook picks up from there.

KEY PRINCIPLE

A well-run hackathon is invisible to participants. They notice smooth logistics only when something goes wrong. Your job is to make the event feel effortless – which requires careful preparation and calm, decisive management on the day.

02 Organising Team Roles and Responsibilities

Assign these roles before the event. One person should not hold more than two roles unless the event is very small. Confirm assignments at the final team briefing.

Role	Responsibilities
Lead Organiser	Overall responsibility. Makes final decisions. Point of contact for all escalations. Manages the public-facing programme on event day.
Logistics Coordinator	Venue setup, catering coordination, materials preparation, registration desk, teardown.
Participant Coordinator	Welcome pack distribution, team assignments, attendance tracking, welfare monitoring, certificate distribution.
Tech Support	All technology: AV, Wi-Fi, platform setup, troubleshooting. Assigned during entire event, not shared with other roles.
Mentor Coordinator	Organises mentor briefing, manages rotation schedule, runs mentor huddles, collects session logs.
Communications Lead	Live social media, photographer coordination, press contact, post-event communications.
Facilitator(s)	Team dynamics support, ideation facilitation, intervention in problem-solving sessions. Minimum one per 5 teams.
Roving Support	Runner for ad hoc tasks, registration overflow, participant support. Can be a senior volunteer.

 **TIP**

Brief the whole team one day before the event. Walk through the minute-by-minute schedule. Test all technology. Confirm mentor and judge readiness. Share emergency contacts with everyone. Assign day-of positions.

03 Pre-Event Checklist

3+ Months Before

<input type="checkbox"/>	Core organising team confirmed and roles assigned
<input type="checkbox"/>	Event objectives and success criteria finalised
<input type="checkbox"/>	Budget approved and spending authorities confirmed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Venue identified and provisionally booked
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hackathon format selected (in-person / hybrid / virtual)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Theme(s) confirmed from DigiCollab framework
<input type="checkbox"/>	Target participant profile defined

2 Months Before

<input type="checkbox"/>	Participant registration open and promoted
<input type="checkbox"/>	Venue contract signed; catering agreement in place
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mentor recruitment complete; confirmation emails sent
<input type="checkbox"/>	Challenge brief(s) drafted and reviewed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Technology platforms selected and tested
<input type="checkbox"/>	Promotional materials distributed (poster, social media, press release)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Code of Conduct finalised

1 Month Before

<input type="checkbox"/>	Participant registration closed; selection complete
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teams formed and participants notified of team assignments
<input type="checkbox"/>	Welcome pack drafted and ready to distribute
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pre-event training sessions scheduled and invitations sent
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jury / judges confirmed; judging rubric shared with them
<input type="checkbox"/>	Volunteer briefings scheduled

1-2 Weeks Before

<input type="checkbox"/>	Welcome pack sent to all participants
<input type="checkbox"/>	Technology setup check complete (Wi-Fi, AV, platforms, backup devices)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Venue floor plan finalised; team table layout confirmed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Catering confirmed; dietary requirements communicated to caterer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical materials prepared: name badges, printed handouts, stationery, signage
<input type="checkbox"/>	Final team briefing held; all roles confirmed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Emergency contacts shared with whole team
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contingency plans reviewed and communicated

Day Before

<input type="checkbox"/>	Venue access confirmed for setup
<input type="checkbox"/>	Equipment delivered or transported
<input type="checkbox"/>	Final reminder sent to participants with venue, schedule, and what to bring
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mentor coordinator confirms all mentors are confirmed and briefed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tech support tests all equipment in the actual venue space

04 Day-of-Event Operations

KEY PRINCIPLE

The event day is not the time to make big decisions. Every decision that can be made in advance should be made in advance. Your role on the day is to execute the plan, stay calm, and handle exceptions.

Pre-Event Setup (07:00 - 08:30)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrive at venue; confirm access and clear any overnight issues
<input type="checkbox"/>	Final venue check: team tables, power strips, signage, whiteboard surfaces
<input type="checkbox"/>	Test all technology one final time: projector, microphone, Wi-Fi, platforms
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set up registration desk: name badge folders sorted by team, welcome materials stacked
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange catering for breakfast/coffee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Background music on (energising but not distracting)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assign team positions and confirm everyone knows their post

Time (Day 1)	Programme
08:30–09:15	Registration and breakfast. Participants check in, receive badges and welcome folders, find team tables.
09:15–09:45	Opening ceremony. Welcome, event overview, schedule walkthrough, theme introduction, opening inspiration.
09:45–10:30	Challenge introduction. Briefs presented to each team, optional guest speaker, Q&A.
10:45–11:30	Team formation and icebreakers. Team introductions, team-building activity, establish norms.
12:30–14:30	Ideation and brainstorming. Design thinking introduction, ideation sprint, team concept selection.
14:45–17:00	Solution development – first sprint. Development work, mentor rotations.
17:00–17:45	Mentor check-ins. Each team presents progress to their mentor.
17:45–18:15	Day 1 wrap-up and reflection. Team reflection and plan for Day 2.

Time (Day 2)	Programme
08:30–09:00	Participant arrival and setup. Teams review Day 1 progress.
09:00–09:15	Day 2 kickoff. Morning energy, schedule reminder, final-push motivation.
09:15–11:00	Continued development sprint. Mentor rotations (final round).
11:00–12:00	Presentation preparation. Teams prepare and rehearse final pitches.
12:00–13:00	Lunch. Jury briefing held in parallel.
13:00–15:00	Final presentations. Each team pitches to the jury (5 min pitch + 3 min Q&A).
15:00–15:30	Jury deliberation. Organising team manages waiting time with refreshments.
15:30–16:30	Awards ceremony. Results announced, certificates distributed, group photos.
16:30–17:00	Closing and farewell. Final thanks, next steps, post-event survey QR code.

05 Managing Volunteers and Staff

Volunteers are essential to a smooth event. Brief them thoroughly, assign clear tasks, and check in regularly.

Role	Briefing and responsibilities
Registration Volunteers	Manage the registration desk: check participants against the list, distribute badges and welcome folders, direct participants to team tables. Briefing required: 30 minutes before doors open.
Room Helpers	Assist with logistics: refill stationery and Post-its, manage catering stations, assist with any physical setup needs. Briefing required: during pre-event setup.
Tech Support Assistants	Support the lead tech person: help participants with platform access, troubleshoot minor device issues. Must be technically confident. Briefing required: day-before setup.
Photography / Documentation	Follow the shot list (provided by Communications Lead). Upload to shared drive in real time. Not available for other tasks while shooting.

TIP

Hold a 15-minute volunteer briefing at the start of the day, even if they were briefed before. Walk through the day's schedule and confirm where each person is posted. Give everyone the lead organiser's phone number.

06 Troubleshooting Common Challenges

The table below covers the most common challenges organisers face on the event day. Read through it before the event so you are not encountering these for the first time in the moment.

Challenge	Organiser response
Technology failure (Wi-Fi, AV, platform)	Activate backup immediately: mobile hotspot for Wi-Fi; printed handouts for platform content; switch to in-person presentation if projector fails. Assign tech support to the issue while the programme continues without interruption.
Participant no-shows	Redistribute no-show participants to other teams to maintain team size. Do not leave any team with fewer than 3 members. If too many no-shows, merge two small teams.
Team dynamics breakdown	Deploy a facilitator immediately. Assess severity. Minor: facilitator handles with structured conversation. Major (welfare concern, persistent conflict): lead organiser intervenes directly.
Mentor does not appear	Notify the mentor coordinator. Redistribute that mentor's teams temporarily to other mentors. Adjust rotation schedule. Escalate to lead organiser if unresolved after 30 minutes.
Catering problem (late, insufficient, wrong)	Contact caterer immediately. Use contingency budget to order alternatives if needed. Adjust schedule to allow more time if a meal is delayed. Keep participants informed.
Team scope too ambitious	Facilitator and mentor align to help the team define an MVP. Use the Solution Development Canvas Section 5 (Feasibility) to force scoping. Set a firm decision deadline.

Medical or welfare incident	Remove the person from the main space if appropriate. Contact emergency services if required. Inform the lead organiser immediately. Do not continue the programme without addressing the welfare need.
Jury member cannot attend	Confirm reserve juror (always have one identified). Brief them before presentations begin. Adjust deliberation time if needed.

07 Communication and Coordination

Internal communication during the event is as important as communication with participants. Use a dedicated group chat (WhatsApp, Signal, or Slack) for the organising team. Assign someone to monitor it at all times.

Scenario	Protocol
Escalation path – minor issues	Relevant role handles independently and reports to lead organiser at next scheduled check-in.
Escalation path – moderate issues	Relevant role notifies lead organiser immediately via group chat. Lead organiser decides response.
Escalation path – major issues	Lead organiser notified immediately by phone call. Lead organiser takes direct control. All other team members support as directed.
Participant communication	All programme announcements via the lead organiser or a designated MC. One voice at the front of room.
Press enquiries	Directed to Communications Lead only. All other staff decline to comment and redirect.

TIP

Do not make unilateral programme changes without informing the lead organiser. Even small deviations from the agreed schedule cascade.

08 Post-Event Checklist

Same Day

<input type="checkbox"/>	All participants have received their certificates
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feedback / evaluation surveys distributed and QR code shared
<input type="checkbox"/>	Equipment collected and accounted for
<input type="checkbox"/>	Venue left in agreed condition; any damage reported
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thank-you messages sent to mentors, judges, and key volunteers
<input type="checkbox"/>	Photos and videos uploaded to shared drive
<input type="checkbox"/>	All team project submissions collected and stored

Within 1 Week

<input type="checkbox"/>	Participant feedback data compiled and initial analysis completed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Budget reconciliation completed; receipts collected
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mentor session logs collected and filed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Certificates issued to any participants who did not receive theirs on the day
<input type="checkbox"/>	Internal debrief meeting held: what worked, what did not, lessons for next time
<input type="checkbox"/>	Press release / post-event social media posts published

Within 1 Month

<input type="checkbox"/>	Final event report drafted and circulated for partner review
<input type="checkbox"/>	Learning outcomes assessment data analysed and documented
<input type="checkbox"/>	Impact evaluation report completed (see Annex 2.3.3)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Budget closed; final figures reported to project coordinator
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lessons learned documented and filed for future events
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contribution to DigiCollab dissemination activities completed (EPALE, social media, partner newsletter)

09 Risk Assessment Matrix

Review this matrix before the event. For any risk rated HIGH, ensure mitigation is in place and communicated to the whole team.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Low participant turnout	Medium	High	Active pre-event communication; reminder emails; confirm attendance 48 hours before.
Technology failure (Wi-Fi / AV)	Medium	High	Test equipment the day before; have mobile hotspot ready; printed backup materials.
Mentor cancellation (last minute)	Low	High	Identify reserve mentors at recruitment stage; mentor coordinator has direct contact with all.
Team dynamics breakdown	Medium	Medium	Trained facilitators on duty; clear escalation path; Code of Conduct signed by all.
Medical or welfare incident	Low	High	First aid contact identified; emergency services number posted; lead organiser briefed.
Catering failure	Low	Medium	Backup caterer or supermarket option identified; contingency budget allocated.
Jury member cancels	Low	High	Reserve juror always identified at recruitment stage.
Programme runs over schedule	High	Medium	Buffer time built into schedule; facilitator empowered to shorten transitions; lead organiser holds time.
Negative press or social media	Low	High	Communications Lead monitors in real time; media policy shared with all staff; lead organiser is sole spokesperson.