

Since AI Hackathon — Business Turku (Challenge)

1. Title

Smart Funding Advisor: an AI tool that automatically finds the right public funding instruments and investors for a company.

The goal is to free Business Turku's funding advisors from manual googling and to broaden the view of available funding opportunities.

2. Problem Statement

What is the business or technical problem to solve? Context, why it matters, and pain points:

Business Turku helps growth companies find suitable RDI and VC funding, but currently the search for funding relies heavily on experts' own knowledge of different instruments and investors. Googling for funding instruments is slow, and there are not enough resources – time should be used more for working with companies and less for manual information search.

There is a need for an AI-based tool that understands a company's profile (industry, size, need, stage) and proposes transparently justified funding and investment options. The benefits are time savings, better coverage (including rarer instruments and investors), higher-quality recommendations and a better service experience for companies – and in the long term, the possibility to offer the tool also as a self-service solution for companies.

3. Guiding Question

Focus the challenge:

How can we build, over the weekend, an MVP-level AI tool which, based on the company name and a few clarifying questions:

- quickly generates a summary of the company, and
- finds and with justification prioritizes suitable public funding instruments and investors (incl. information on application/fund opening times and relevance)?

The objective is to prove that such a "smart funding advisor" is technically feasible, practically useful, and can be further developed towards production.

4. Dataset or API Provided

The challenge does not provide access to Business Turku's CRM data, but the solution must be designed so that it can later be integrated into Business Turku's MS Dynamics CRM (e.g. via a REST/Graph interface for fetching and storing company profiles).

During the hackathon, teams can use the following:

Reference list of funding sources (example links):

- For example: ELY (Yritysrahoitus - ELY-keskus - ELY keskus), Business Finland (www.businessfinland.fi), Finnvera (www.finnvera.fi), ministry instruments (Yritysrahoitus - Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö, Rahoitusmahdollisuudet - Maa- ja metsätalousministeriö), EU programmes (Horizon Europe, Digital Europe, Innovation Fund, LIFE, CEF EU Funding & Tenders Portal), foundations, Nordic and other international programmes Funding – Nordic Energy Research.

Own collected / open data:

- Public websites of funding programmes and investors (text descriptions, eligibility criteria, focus areas).

Assumed company data (input to the solution):

Structure e.g. JSON/table with fields such as:

- company name, Business ID (Y-tunnus)
- industry (e.g. NACE code or text description)
- revenue class, number of employees
- growth stage (pre-seed / seed / growth stage / scale-up)
- size and purpose of the funding need (RDI, internationalization, investments, etc.)

The goal is that the solution can initially operate with this lightweight input, but with a clear architectural connection point for future CRM integration.

5. Evaluation Criteria

How should solutions be judged? What's most important – e.g., accuracy, scalability, usability, business impact?

Solutions will be evaluated especially on the following aspects:

Quality / accuracy

- How well do the recommended funding instruments and investors match the company's profile, need, and stage?
- Are there clear justifications and sources ("why this programme / investor in particular")?

Usability / explainability

- Is the user interface clear, fast, and intuitive from the perspective of a funding advisor and/or a company?
- Does the user understand what was found and why (explanations, justification texts, filters)?

Scalability & performance

- How could the solution work for tens or hundreds of company profiles?
- For example: p95 latency, end-to-end time for one "case", ability to add new data sources without major changes.

Cost / maintainability

- Is there a rough cost estimate (e.g. €/query, model run costs, hosting)?
- How easy is the solution to maintain and further develop (clear architecture, modularity, documentation)?

Business impact

- Estimated time savings in funding advisory (e.g. less manual googling per case).

- Potential impact on hit rate (more relevant instruments and investors) and customer experience.

Top-3 next steps & pilot readiness

- How concrete and implementable are the Top-3 next steps?
- Is there a clear plan for how the solution can be piloted in real Business Turku cases within 3–6 months?

Mandatory attachment: a 1-page pilot plan for next steps.

6. Submission Format

What deliverables do you expect? (e.g., demo video, pitch slides, code repo, documentation)

Teams are expected to deliver:

- Clickable demo or ≤ 3 min screencast
 - User flow: entering basic company data → recommended funding instruments/investors → justifications and next steps.
- PDF report
 - Findings and results (example case(s))
 - Explanations: what was found and why
 - Top-3 next step proposals
 - 1-page pilot plan
- Short technical description (1–2 pages)
 - Architecture (components, integration points)
 - Models/algorithms, data flows

- Performance and cost thinking (e.g. how this could be run in production).
- Code repo (closed/private)
 - README and “quickstart”: how to run the demo
 - Short description of the structure and which part should be continued into a pilot.

7. Point of Contact (if remote)

Name, email, and preferred contact method for questions during hackathon

On-call mentor(s) onsite (Fri evening & Sun afternoon):

- Katja Hollmén
+358 40 579 9331
katja.hollmen@businesssturku.fi

Backup mentor (remote): name, phone, email