

DATE 2026-02-19

STATUS **Active** -- Living Document

TAGLINE *We build together.*

ID345 Accelerator

Colorado's First AI Accelerator. Born from a Community of Builders.

SECTION 01

Program Overview

ID345 started as a Wednesday night meetup in Denver -- a room full of people who wanted to build things with AI. Not just talk about it. Build. Every week, that room got fuller. Coders showed up alongside artists, startup founders sat next to people who had never written a line of code, and something remarkable happened: they started helping each other ship real products.

That community now spans 3+ chapters, with sessions alternating between AI coding and AI generative media and art. We have watched members go from "I have an idea" to "I have paying customers" in weeks. AI has made it possible for anyone with a clear problem and the drive to solve it to build something real. What has not changed is that builders do their best work when they are not alone.

ID345 Accelerator exists to give that next step to the builders who are ready for it.

This is a 6-week program, mostly remote, with weekly in-person sessions at the ID345 space in Denver and a Demo Day finale where cohort companies present to investors, mentors, and the broader community. Each cohort is intentionally small -- 10 to 15 companies -- because we believe in depth over scale, especially in a first cohort.

What makes this different from other accelerators? Three things.

We come from community, not from capital. Our cohort members are not strangers cold-applying to a program. They are builders we have watched grow,

validated by real peers, pressure-tested in real sessions.

We welcome non-traditional founders. Some of our most impressive builders have never written traditional code. AI has changed who gets to be a founder, and our program reflects that.

We build together. This is not a program where you disappear into a Zoom room for six weeks. The ID345 community -- mentors, alumni, fellow builders -- stays with you before, during, and after the cohort.

The program is led by a director with 15 years of global accelerator experience and an early-stage VC background. This is not our first accelerator. But it is Colorado's first AI accelerator, and we are building it the way we build everything here: together, with the community, one honest step at a time.

SECTION 02

Investment Thesis

The next wave of fundable startups will not come from Stanford CS programs. They will come from communities like ID345.

Here is what has changed. AI development tools -- large language models, no-code platforms, generative frameworks -- have collapsed the cost and complexity of building a first product. A solo founder with domain expertise and a clear customer pain point can now ship a working prototype in days, not months. The barrier to entry is no longer technical skill. It is clarity of problem, speed of execution, and willingness to iterate.

This shift has created a new class of founder: people who deeply understand a market because they have lived in it, and who can now build for that market directly. Teachers building ed-tech. Healthcare workers building patient tools. Creatives building

production workflows. These founders do not look like the typical accelerator applicant, but their startups are closer to product-market fit on day one because their insight is earned, not researched.

What Makes a Great Founding Team in the AI Era

AI has changed what a founding team needs to look like. A dedicated development team is no longer the prerequisite it once was -- a domain expert with modern AI tools can build a working product. But domain expertise alone is not enough to build a company.

The most critical gap we see in early-stage AI startups is not technical. It is go-to-market. A nurse who deeply understands hospital workflows has earned insight that no outside researcher can replicate -- but without the ability to sell, distribute, and acquire customers, that insight stays trapped in a prototype. Go-to-market strategy and sales capability are now among the most important factors in whether an AI startup succeeds or fails.

The strongest founding teams combine three things:

- **Domain expertise** -- deep, lived understanding of the problem and the customer
- **Product sense** -- the ability to translate that understanding into a solution people will actually use
- **Go-to-market capability** -- a clear plan for how the product reaches customers, and someone on the team who can execute on sales, distribution, and partnerships

In the AI era, what used to require a three-person team -- domain expert, developer, business lead -- can now be covered by one or two people on the product and technical side. But the GTM function cannot be automated. The founders who succeed will be the ones who understand that building the product is only half the job. Getting it into the hands of paying customers is the other half.

ID345 is where these founders already gather. Our community acts as a natural filter: members who show up week after week, who ship projects, who help others debug -- they have already demonstrated the consistency and drive that early-stage investors look for. Community validation is a leading indicator of founder quality.

The opportunity for early investors is straightforward: get access to a curated pipeline of AI-native startups led by founders who build fast, solve real problems, and have been pressure-tested by a community of peers before they ever pitch a fund.

Colorado is underserved in AI startup infrastructure compared to coastal hubs, but it has the talent, the cost advantages, and now the community to support a serious pipeline. ID345 Accelerator is how that pipeline gets built.

SECTION 03

Cohort Composition Strategy

Building a Deliberate Portfolio

The first cohort of 10 to 15 companies is assembled intentionally. How we compose the cohort reflects our thesis about what works, what we want to learn, and how we manage risk across a small portfolio.

Not every company in the cohort needs to be building an AI product. Some of the strongest opportunities come from founders who use AI as a competitive advantage in a traditional market -- not as the product itself, but as the engine that lets them move faster, serve customers better, or operate at a scale their competitors cannot match.

Three Categories of AI Startups

AI Wrapper Companies

Startups built on top of existing AI models and APIs. These companies add value through user experience, workflow integration, vertical specialization, or data curation rather than through novel AI research. They ship fast and iterate quickly. The risk is defensibility. The opportunity is speed to market and direct customer value.

Deep AI Technology Companies

Startups building novel AI capabilities, proprietary models, or foundational infrastructure. These companies have stronger technical moats but longer development timelines, higher capital needs, and more uncertainty about product-market fit. They require founders with both deep technical skill and the ability to translate that technology into a product someone will pay for.

AI-Advantaged Companies

Startups that are not AI-focused in their value proposition but use AI to compete unfairly in their market. A logistics company that uses AI to optimize routing. A healthcare platform that uses AI to reduce administrative burden. A creative agency that uses AI to produce at 10x the speed of competitors. These founders are often domain experts first, and their AI advantage is a means to an end, not the end itself.

Portfolio Mix

For the first cohort, we target a deliberate mix across these categories:

CATEGORY	TARGET RANGE	RATIONALE
AI Wrapper	3–5 companies	Fast iteration, strong Demo Day potential, validates speed-focused program design
Deep AI Tech	2–4 companies	Higher ceiling outcomes, tests ability to support technically complex startups
AI-Advantaged	3–5 companies	Closest to product-market fit, strongest domain expertise, validates non-traditional founder thesis

This is not a rigid formula. The right composition depends on the quality of applicants in each category. But going in with a framework ensures we are making intentional choices

about the portfolio, not just filling seats.

SECTION 04

The Mentor Network

How Mentorship Works at ID345

Every startup in the cohort is assigned a dedicated mentor from the ID345 community. These are experienced builders, founders, and professionals who have been active in our community and understand the AI-era founder journey.

Mentor Commitment

Each mentor is required to provide **two touchpoints per week** with their assigned startup. Mentors set their own schedule for these check-ins -- they can be virtual or in-person, formal or informal -- but they must happen consistently. This is not optional coaching. It is structured accountability.

On top of mentor check-ins, each startup also has a separate weekly **30-minute 1-on-1 with the program directors and staff**. This means every startup has at minimum three dedicated support conversations per week: two with their mentor, one with leadership.

Mentor-Director Sync

Every **Friday**, mentors meet with the program directors to discuss startup progress, flag concerns, and coordinate support. This ensures no startup falls through the cracks and that mentors have the backing they need to be effective.

Specialist Mentors

In addition to assigned mentors, each week we bring in **specialist mentors** who are experts in that week's theme. These specialists are present on **Tuesday or Thursday**

(alternating weeks) to run focused working sessions, office hours, and deep dives on the weekly topic.

- **Week 1 specialists:** Problem definition, customer discovery frameworks
- **Week 2 specialists:** Product development, technical architecture, AI implementation
- **Week 3 specialists:** Market research, customer interviews, validation methods
- **Week 4 specialists:** Business modeling, pricing strategy, unit economics
- **Week 5 specialists:** Pitch coaching, financial modeling, investor relations
- **Week 6 specialists:** Demo preparation, presentation skills, networking strategy

SECTION 05

Six-Week Program Outline

The Weekly Rhythm

Every week follows the same core structure so founders can build a rhythm. The content and focus changes each week, but the cadence stays consistent:

DAY	ACTIVITY	FORMAT
Monday	30-min 1-on-1s with directors/staff	In-person or virtual
Monday	Founder weekly lunch (encouraged, self-organized)	In-person
Tue / Thu	Specialist mentor sessions (alternating weeks)	In-person at the space
Wednesday	Community event -- startups pitch and demo	In-person at ID345
Friday PM	Founder Stories session	In-person or virtual
Friday	Mentor-director sync meeting	Virtual
Ongoing	Assigned mentor check-ins (2x per week minimum)	Mentor's schedule

Week 1: Foundation and Vision

Theme: Who are you building for and why?

Founders lock in their problem statement, define their target customer, and present their current product state to the cohort. This week establishes a shared baseline and identifies the biggest gaps to close in the next five weeks.

Monday

1-on-1 kickoff meetings. Directors assess each startup's current state, set initial goals, and align on what success looks like by Demo Day.

Tuesday

Specialist session on problem definition and customer discovery frameworks. How to articulate your problem in a way that investors, customers, and mentors immediately understand.

Wednesday

Community event. Each startup gives a 2-minute introduction -- who they are, what they are building, and what problem they are solving. First public practice.

Friday

Founder Stories -- a guest founder shares their journey from idea to launch. What they wish they knew at the start. Q&A with the cohort.

MENTOR FOCUS

Getting to know the startup, understanding the founder's vision, and identifying the biggest risks early.

Week 2: Product and Build Sprint

Theme: Stop talking. Start building.

Intensive building week focused on getting to a working prototype or significantly improving an existing one. Structured feedback sessions from mentors and peers on usability, technical approach, and scope.

Monday

1-on-1s focused on build priorities. Directors help founders scope what they can realistically ship by Friday.

Thursday

Specialist session on product development, technical architecture, and AI implementation patterns. Hands-on working session.

Wednesday

Community event. Startups show what they have built so far -- even if it is rough. Feedback from the community on usability and direction.

Friday

Founder Stories. Mentor-director sync reviews build progress across the cohort.

MENTOR FOCUS

Technical guidance, scope management, and keeping founders focused on the minimum viable product.

Week 3: Customer and Market Validation

Theme: Get out of the building.

Founders are pushed to talk to real customers. This week is dedicated to customer discovery conversations, market sizing exercises, and stress-testing assumptions -- with the goal of having real user or customer feedback by Friday.

Monday

1-on-1s review customer outreach plans. Who are you talking to? How many conversations? What are you trying to learn?

Tuesday

Specialist session on market research methods, customer interview techniques, and validation frameworks.

Wednesday

Community event. Startups share what they learned from customers this week. Raw feedback, surprises, and pivots in real time.

Friday

Founder Stories. Mentor-director sync focuses on validation results and whether any startups need to pivot.

MENTOR FOCUS

Helping founders design good customer conversations, interpreting feedback, and deciding what to act on.

Week 4: Business Model and Go-to-Market

Theme: How does this become a business?

Shift from "what are we building" to "how does this make money." Founders define revenue models, pricing strategies, acquisition channels, and unit economics.

Monday

1-on-1s focused on business model clarity. Directors pressure-test each startup's revenue assumptions.

Thursday

Specialist session on financial modeling, pricing strategy, and unit economics. Hands-on workshop with templates.

Wednesday

Community event. Startups pitch their business model -- not just the product. The community asks hard questions about revenue and scalability.

Friday

Founder Stories -- a founder who struggled with monetization shares their path to revenue. Mentor-director sync reviews business model progress.

MENTOR FOCUS

Financial reality checks, helping founders think about pricing, and connecting them with potential customers or distribution channels.

Week 5: Pitch Preparation

Theme: Tell your story to investors.

The focus shifts to getting pitch-ready for a VC audience. This includes financials, the pitch deck, and how to network and do outreach to investors. We bring in experts for each area.

Monday

1-on-1s focused on pitch readiness. Directors review first draft pitch decks and financial projections.

Tuesday

Specialist session on pitch coaching -- structure, storytelling, and how to handle tough investor questions.

Wednesday

Community event. Full pitch practice. Each startup delivers their pitch to the community and gets direct, specific feedback. Every slide, every claim, every number gets pressure-tested.

Friday

Specialist session on investor outreach, networking strategy, and how to follow up after Demo Day. Mentor-director sync focuses on final pitch refinements.

MENTOR FOCUS

Intensive pitch coaching. Mentors run mock investor meetings with their startup and provide line-by-line feedback on the deck.

Week 6: Demo Day Preparation and Demo Day

Theme: This is not a graduation. It is a launch.

Final polish on products and pitches. The week builds toward Demo Day -- a big in-person event at the ID345 space.

Monday

Final 1-on-1s. Last adjustments to pitches, products, and Demo Day logistics.

Tuesday / Wednesday

Dress rehearsals. Full run-throughs of the Demo Day format with timing, transitions, and AV checks.

Demo Day

- In-person event at the ID345 space
- Open to investors, mentors, community members, press, and the public
- Each startup delivers a **6-minute pitch** followed by Q&A

- Networking reception after pitches
- Investors and mentors connect directly with founders

MENTOR FOCUS

Final prep and moral support. Mentors attend Demo Day and are available for introductions.

SECTION 06

Selection Criteria

What we look for in applicants:

Problem Clarity

- You can explain the problem you are solving in plain language, and it is a real problem that real people or businesses have right now
- You have direct experience with or deep understanding of the problem space

Builder Mindset

- You have already started building something -- it does not need to be polished, but it needs to exist beyond an idea
- You ship. You iterate. You do not wait for permission to start

Coachability

- You actively seek feedback and do something with it
- You are comfortable saying "I do not know" and then going to find the answer
- You can disagree respectfully and change your mind when the evidence warrants it

Speed and Adaptability

- You can learn new tools quickly and are not intimidated by unfamiliar territory
- You have demonstrated the ability to make meaningful progress in short time frames

Go-to-Market Awareness

- You understand (or are actively working to understand) who pays for your product, why they pay, and how you reach them
- You think about your market, not just your product
- You have a point of view on how your product gets into the hands of customers -- through direct sales, partnerships, community, content, or other channels
- If you are a domain expert, you can articulate how your domain knowledge translates into a customer acquisition advantage

AI-Native Approach

- Your product or service leverages AI in a meaningful way -- not as a label, but as a core part of how it works
- You are building with modern AI tools, whether that means writing code, using no-code AI platforms, or combining both

Team and Commitment

- Solo founders are welcome. Teams are welcome. What matters is that the people involved are fully committed for 6 weeks
- You can dedicate meaningful time each week to the program, attend weekly in-person sessions, and be present for Demo Day

Community Fit

- You treat other builders with respect and generosity
- You are willing to help others in the cohort, not just focus on your own company
- You understand that "we build together" is not a slogan -- it is how this works