Project Pitch

# **Making Characters Come Alive: A Collaborative Game Development Journey**

## **The Big Picture**

Imagine we're creating a game where every character has their own story, like in "Until Dawn" or "Detroit: Become Human". Each character isn't just a 3D model - they're a complete personality with their own thoughts, looks, and ways of moving through the world.

## **How We Work Together**

### **Character Pods (Think of them as Character Creation Teams)**

Each pod has three specialists working together:

* **Story Person (Cinematic Designer)**: Creates the character's personality, backstory, and how they'd react in different situations
  + Example: "Maria is a retired detective who can't let go of her last case. She's cautious but determined, and tends to analyze everything twice."
  + Implement interactive and narrative systems with techart and programmer help.
  + Help with content creation whenever possible.
* **Technical Artist**: Brings the character to life in Unreal Engine
  + Makes the character look right (using MetaHuman)
  + Sets up how they move and behave
  + Creates special effects or materials they need
  + Example: Setting up Maria's careful walking animation and her detective's observation poses
* **Access to Programmers**: Gets help to make special features work
  + Example: Creating Maria's "Detective Vision" ability to spot clues

### **The Game Master (Think Dungeons & Dragons DM, but for game development)**

* Listens to each pod's character ideas and narrative.
* Creates situations where characters interact
* Example Scenario:  
   "Maria discovers evidence that points to Tom (another character) being involved in her old case. The Game Master tells:
  + Maria's pod: Create an intense interrogation scene
  + Tom's pod: Design defensive/evasive responses Both pods then work together to make this interaction feel natural and compelling."

### **The Support Teams**

* **Programmers**: Build the game systems everyone needs
* **Game Designers**: Create the spaces and mini-games where characters interact
  + Example: Designing the police station where Maria confronts Tom, or creating a evidence-gathering mini-game

## **How We Build It (The Phases)**

### **1. The Big Brainstorm (2 days)**

* Everyone gets together to figure out:
  + What kind of story are we telling?
  + What's our setting?
  + Who are our main characters? (Maximum 3)
  + Example: "A psychological thriller in a small coastal town where a decades-old mystery resurfaces"

### **2. Character Creation (4 weeks)**

Each pod develops their character fully:

* Who are they?
* What do they want?
* How do they move, talk, think?
* What kind of mini-games would fit their personality?

### **3. Making It Happen (Ongoing, 3 sprints per cycle)**

1. Game Master creates situations
2. Pods work on their parts and build a sequence of events based on the situation.
3. Everyone reviews and adjusts. Game masters take each pod’s scenario into a branching narrative.
4. Repeat until we reach an ending (when only one character remains or story reach logical conclusion)

## **The Schedule**

Every 2 weeks we have:

1. Kickoff meeting: "Here's what we're doing"
2. Middle check: "How's it going? Need help?"
3. Final review: "Let's see it in action"

Everyone commits 5 hours per week, spread across the year.

Think of it like we're all writing and directing different parts of an interactive TV show, but instead of just watching, players get to make choices that change how the story unfolds. Each pod owns their character's part of the story, but we all work together to make something amazing.

Project Kickoff

2025 Interactive Cinematic Training Project

# Background and context

Our team aims to enhance cross-discipline collaboration and modern game development skills through hands-on experience building an interactive cinematic game. This training adopts a pod-based structure where cinematics designers, technical artists, and programmers work together to create compelling interactive narratives while learning Unreal Engine 5.5's latest features.

The structure draws inspiration from successful narrative game studios like Supermassive Games and Quantic Dream, combined with an innovative "Game Master" system that drives dynamic story development between characters.

# Objectives

**Skill Development**

* Master Unreal Engine 5.5's new features and workflows
* Strengthen cross-discipline collaboration
* Develop branching narrative design capabilities
* Enhance technical implementation of cinematic gameplay

**Production Experience**

* Create a fully playable interactive cinematic game
* Experience end-to-end character development
* Experience level design for narrative focus game
* Experience game design for narrative focus game
* Practice agile development in game production
* Learn efficient production communication

**Technical Growth**

* Implement modern game systems architecture
* Develop scalable character interaction systems
* Create reusable cinematic gameplay frameworks
* Learn efficient asset pipelines like applying mocap tech and metahuman, chaos simulation tech like Chaos cloth asset and physical animation.
* Resolve technical deficiency in the team

# Scope and deliverables

**Project Scope:**

* 2-3 fully playable characters with unique narratives
* Multiple branching story paths
* Character-specific minigames and interactions
* Complete level environments
* Functional dialogue and choice system
* Unreal 5.5’s specific tech cinematics and animation implementation

**Key Deliverables:**

**Per Character Pod:**

* Complete character design document
* Functional character blueprint with AI
* Character-specific animations and cinematics
* Interactive dialogue trees

**Central Teams:**

* Core gameplay systems
* Level layouts and environments
* Interaction framework
* Main game loop implementation
* Technical documentation
* Mini games design and implementation

# Milestones

| Completion date | Project phase | Description |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Weeks 1-2 | Foundation | * Project kickoff completion * Theme and setting established * Character count finalized * Basic technical requirements defined |
| Weeks 3-6 | Character Development | * Character designs approved * Initial technical prototypes * Basic gameplay systems implemented * Pipeline setup completed |
| Weeks 7-18 | Production Cycles | **Tech Milestone**   * **Cycle 1:** Basic character functionality * **Cycle 2:** Core interaction implementation * **Cycle 3:** Branching narrative integration   **Narrative Milestone**   * **Key Event 1:** First major interaction event * **Key Event 2:** Second major interaction event take into account branching narrative * **Key Event 3:** Ending scenario event |
| Weeks 19-24 | Polish | * Full gameplay system implementation * Final narrative branches completed * Polish and bug fixing * Training documentation finalized |

# Meeting cadence

**Regular Meetings:**

1. **Sprint Start (Every 2 weeks)**
   * Time: 1 hour
   * Participants: All team members
   * Focus: Sprint planning and goals
2. **Mid-Sprint Review**
   * Time: 1 hour
   * Participants: Pod members, Game Master, Directors
   * Focus:
     + Character development progress
     + Tech direction review
     + Game narrative and game design review
3. **End Sprint Review**
   * Time: 2 hours
   * Participants: All team members
   * Schedule:
     + Art review (30 min)
     + Technical review (30 min)
     + Playthrough (45 min)
     + Planning (15 min)

**Additional Check-ins:**

* Daily async updates within pods
* Weekly cross-pod technical syncs
* Bi-weekly director alignment meetings

| **Monday**  Sprint Start | **Tuesday**  No meeting | **Wednesday**  Stand-up | **Thursday**  No meeting | **Friday**  Mid Sprint |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Monday**  Stand-up | **Tuesday**  No meeting | **Wednesday**  Stand-up | **Thursday**  End Sprint | **Friday**  No meeting |

### **Resource Allocation**

**Time Commitment:**

* 5 hours per week per team member
* Additional director availability for reviews
* Game Master dedicated time for narrative development

**Tools and Technology:**

* Unreal Engine 5.5
* Version Control System
* Communication Platform ( Team )
* Documentation System ( Confluence )
* Project Management Tools ( Jira )

**Contact Points:**

* Producer (Truong): Overall coordination
* Tech Director (Hung): Technical guidance
* Game Director (Hieu): Gameplay oversight
* Cinematic Director (Phuong): Narrative supervision
* Build Engineer ( Ha )

Project Plan

# Interactive Cinematic Game Development Training Format

### **Pods (3 max, assigned by lottery)**

* 1 Cinematic Designer
* 1 Technical Artist
* Access to Programming Pool

### **Central Teams**

1. **Technology Hub**
   * Programming Team (under Tech Director)
   * Game Design Team (under Game Director)
   * Game Master (works with Cinematic Director)
2. **Leadership**
   * Tech Director
   * Game Director
   * Cinematic Director
   * Producer

## **Time Allocation**

* 5 hours per week per member
* Year-long project
* 2-week sprint cycles

## **Meeting Structure (per Sprint)**

1. Sprint Start Meeting
2. Mid-Sprint Review (Character storyline presentation to Game Master)
3. End Sprint Review
   * Art review
   * Technical review
   * Playthrough review

## **Development Phases**

### **1. Bluesky Workshop**

* Define game setting
* Establish main theme
* Set narrative tech base
* Constraints: Maximum 3 characters
* Outcome: Core concept lock

### **2. Character Development**

Each pod defines:

* Character personality
* Interaction patterns
* Visual design
* Gameplay mechanics potential

### **3. Iterative Development**

**3-Sprint Cycles:**

1. Game Master defines key events
2. Pods develop solutions
3. Game Master reviews and creates branching narrative
4. New events communicated to pods
5. Cycle continues until narrative conclusion (1 character remains)

## **Core Development Rules**

1. Build vertical slice first
2. One interaction system at a time
3. Test with placeholder art
4. Validate each feature serves story
5. Cut features that don't impact key beats

## **Pod Responsibilities**

### **Cinematic Designer**

* Write narrative
* Define character traits
* Character arc development
* Cinematic and interaction setup
* Propose character reaction narrative from key event

### **Technical Artist**

* Character creation in engine
* AI/Blueprint setup
* Materials
* Meta Human implementation

### **Programming Pool**

* Build requested features
* System implementation
* Technical support for all pods

## **Game Design Team Responsibilities**

* Level layout
* Minigame creation
* Event space design
* Interaction mechanics

## **Production Tracking**

* Each iterative cycle: 3 sprints
* Endings triggered when 1 character remains
* Regular reviews and adjustments
* Documentation of learnings and processes