



TSAI  
CENTER for  
INNOVATIVE  
THINKING at  
YALE

## Spring 2019 Tsai CITY Accelerator Application

Tsai CITY's Accelerator, which runs every fall and spring semester, guides students and teams with innovative ideas through the process of building effective organizations, projects, and ventures through workshops, mentorship, and funding. The Accelerator provides an enriching learning opportunity for students with innovative ideas.

Applicable ideas include (but are not limited to) for-profit businesses, social enterprises, non-profits, civic or arts start-ups, faith-based organizations, apps, tech platforms, community programs, and civic/social movements. Teams of all sizes are welcome, though each team must include at least one full-time Yale student. This extracurricular activity is expected to take 5-10 hours per week.

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Please answer the questions below to tell us a bit more about your idea and your team. Unless otherwise noted, please answer questions in 1-3 sentences. Feel free to use this document, which includes all of the questions, to think through the questions below: [bit.ly/city-2018accelerator-draft](https://bit.ly/city-2018accelerator-draft)

Applications are due at 11:59pm on January 16, 2019.

For questions regarding the application, please contact Emma Funk ([emma.funk@yale.edu](mailto:emma.funk@yale.edu)) or Nya Holder ([nya.holder@yale.edu](mailto:nya.holder@yale.edu))

\* Required

**What is the name of your idea or team? \***

Thinksplaces

### About You + Your Team

Teams of all sizes are welcome, though each team must include at least one full-time Yale student. For non-Yale team members, feel free to leave the Yale-specific information blank.

Note on demographic data:

Here at the Tsai CITY, our mission is to inspire and support students from diverse backgrounds and disciplines to seek innovative ways to address real-world problems. We are asking for demographic information to ensure that we are creating opportunities for and supporting students from all backgrounds and experiences. Please complete the questions below about you and your team, and note that the demographic questions are optional.

**Team Member 1: Name \***

Sarim Abbas

**Team Member 1: Email Address \***

[sarim.abbas@yale.edu](mailto:sarim.abbas@yale.edu)

**Team Member 1: Net ID \***

sa857

**Team Member 1: School at Yale \***

Yale College

**Team Member 1: Major/Department \***

Computer Science

**Team Member 1: Graduation Year \***

2020

**Team Member 1: What is your gender?**

Male

**Team Member 1: What racial and/or ethnic group(s) do you identify with?**

South Asian / Punjabi

**Team Member 1: What are identities that you hold that are important to you?**

Examples include gender, race, ethnicity, political affiliation, generation, education level, cultural identity, occupation, sexuality, family structure, housing status, mental health (health status/ability), incarceration status, institution affiliation, primary language, religion, immigration status, medical history, first-gen, income/ socio-economic class, quality of education, occupation, and/or parent's education

Cultural identity, socio-economic class

**Team Member 2: Name**

Felicia Chang

**Team Member 2: Email Address**

felicia.chang@yale.edu

**Team Member 2: Net ID**

fc357

**Team Member 2: School at Yale**

Yale College

**Team Member 2: Major/Department**

Computer Science

**Team Member 2: Graduation Year**

2021

**Team Member 2: What is your gender?**

Female

**Team Member 2: What racial and/or ethnic group(s) do you identify with?**

Taiwanese American

**Team Member 2: What are identities that are important to you?**

Examples include gender, race, ethnicity, political affiliation, generation, education level, cultural identity, occupation, sexuality, family structure, housing status, mental health (health status/ability), incarceration status, institution affiliation, primary language, religion, immigration status, medical history, first-gen, income/ socio-economic class, quality of education, occupation, and/or parent's education

Cultural Identity, socioeconomic class, gender

**Team Member 3: Name**

Teeger Blasheck

**Team Member 3: Email Address**

teeger.blasheck@yale.edu

**Team Member 3: Net ID**

tib72

#### Team Member 3: School at Yale

Yale College

#### Team Member 3: Major/Department

Economics

#### Team Member 3: Graduation Year

Choose ▾

#### Team Member 3: What is your gender?

Male

#### Team Member 3: What racial and/or ethnic group(s) do you identify with?

Caucasian/Chinese

#### Team Member 3: What are identities that you hold that are important to you?

Examples include gender, race, ethnicity, political affiliation, generation, education level, cultural identity, occupation, sexuality, family structure, housing status, mental health (health status/ability), incarceration status, institution affiliation, primary language, religion, immigration status, medical history, first-gen, income/ socio-economic class, quality of education, occupation, and/or parent's education

Cultural background, socio-economics class, educational level

Please list the names, email addresses, and Net IDs of any additional team members. You can also feel free to use this space for those team members to respond to the optional demographic questions above.

Your answer

#### About Your Idea

##### Describe your idea in one sentence. \*

Thinksplaces is an online platform that makes collaboration easier by centralizing project recruiting, search browsing, and exposure to connect creatives and skilled persons across disciplines and bring their ideas to life.

##### What is the current stage of your idea? \*

- IDEATION: "I have an idea. I haven't started building it, but I have some design ideas. My plan for the idea is not fully developed."
- WELL-DEVELOPED IDEA: "My idea is well-developed, but I have not begun prototyping or user/customer development."
- PROTOTYPING: "I have a well-developed idea. I have completed some user/customer discovery, and I am in the process of developing a prototype."
- ALPHA/BETA: "I have a well-developed plan for my idea and a team of co-founders, contractors, and/or advisors in place. I have a prototype that customers have begun to use."
- LAUNCHED: "My idea is now up and running, and available to potential users. At least some users/customers are actively engaging with it."

##### Who is your target customer/population? \*

Please describe in 1-3 sentences.

Our target audience includes anyone at

##### What pain point or unmet need are you addressing? How do you

**know this is a problem for your target customer/population? \***

Please describe in 1-3 sentences.

Assembling synergistic teams to work on ideas is difficult, especially in the vastness of Yale - the Thinkspaces team knows about this firsthand.

We have interviewed or heard from dozens of potential users, some of which who have gone on to officially use our site, and they all share this pain.

Groups like the CEID and Tsai City have tried to tackle this matchmaking problem before. Now, we hope to partner with them and build an community of creators.

**What impact will your idea create? How do you plan to measure the success and/or social impact of your idea? \***

Please describe in 1-3 sentences.

We won't rest easy until we've unified Yale's fragmented entrepreneurship ecosystem by innovating the project creation process; some of our greatest successes might look like an undergrad entrepreneur at Tsai collaborating with a PhD at the School of Medicine - all via our web platform.

Our reputation-based platform will reward contributions to indie projects, and more projects will overcome their initial obstacles and be founded at Yale.

Since this is a web platform, we can easily track how much progress we make via the number of visitors, matches, and successful projects come about because of our platform; our prototype already observes roughly 200 active users and 5 project submissions per month.

**What makes your idea innovative? How have the successes and failures of others within the same sector, geography, or demographic informed your work? \***

Please describe in 1-3 sentences.

Current collaboration channels heavily rely on word of mouth and serendipity. Thinkspaces, on the other hand creates a community-driven, centralized, and curated system of projects. By creating a semi-public (to protect project IP) system to display ideas and skilled persons, those in need know that there is a reliable source to find what they're looking for.

**How will your idea make money or financially sustain itself? \***

Please describe in 1-3 sentences.

1. Special features/tiers of service: richer editing tools for profiles and projects, sophisticated search features to find users, and boosted exposure with higher listings

2. Advertising: from education-related companies, productivity tools, groups at Yale

3. Data value: sell snapshots of college demographic to VCs or recruiters

**How many potential customers/users have you spoken to so far? What have you learned from them? \***

Please describe in 1-3 sentences.

1. Groups at Yale (Launch, YES, Tsai, and CEID): Learned about iterating quickly, collecting feedback, protecting IP, better understanding needs of entrepreneurs

2. Greater New Haven community (Healthcare Haven Hub and Origami Labs): Bridging the gap between those inside and outside the Yale community

3. Everyday people (Entrepreneurship Bazaar, Extracurricular Bazaar, friends, and strangers): Approachability, ease of access, and "Why isn't this already a thing?"

**How will this combination of workshops, mentorship, funding, and pitching opportunities advance your work on this idea?**

Please describe in 1-3 sentences.

We believe the expertise that Tsai CITY has to offer would greatly help us with regard to areas such as marketing strategies, business model development, and platform design (UX, UI, features, etc.). We would also benefit from the connections that Tsai CITY has already developed in the Yale entrepreneurial ecosystem to test our platform and gather consumer data. Lastly, funding will help us develop the platform via greater opportunity for investment and also greater marketing opportunities to grow our community.

**Describe each team member's role in working on the idea thus far, and their areas of expertise. What uniquely qualifies them for their roles? \***

Please describe in 1-3 sentences.

Sarim is the co-founder of Thinkspaces. He is a junior studying Computer Science. He is the technical point person on the team, rapidly learning and utilizing best practices for web development. He has a command of cutting edge frameworks like React that allow for rapid prototyping. He has a duct-tape programmer's mindset: to him the core feature of any product is a release date. He has worn multiple hats as the startup has grown - not only in programming but also in design and business strategy.

Felicia is the cofounder of Thinkspaces. She is a Computer Science major but has a background in design and interests in product management. As a result, she has been involved in the development in a number of areas including branding, marketing, and web development. At this stage of our venture, she has mainly been focused on conducting user research through surveys and A to B testing in order to expand our user base.

Teeger is a cofounder of Thinkspaces. He is an economics major with a passion for innovation and entrepreneurship. Up to this point, he has mainly worked on UX design and the business side of Thinkspaces, creating marketing strategies, meeting with organizations to create new connections, and working with Yale Launch to develop our business model and pitch deck. Having studied art throughout his life, he also serves as a UI design consultant. He just finished CS50 this past semester and hope to be able to contribute to the coding side of Thinkspaces soon.

**Is your team missing any key skill sets? What is your plan to fill this need in the future? \***

Please describe in 1-3 sentences.

As students, we have a very limited amount of time to work on a startup in addition to classes and other responsibilities. Thus, we are in need of people who can work on the coding side so we can progress at a faster pace. We would also benefit from consulting with people who have greater experience in business strategy for social platforms.

**For each team member, describe how participating in the Accelerator would factor into their career aspirations and future plans with this idea and beyond. \***

Please describe in 1-2 sentences for each team member.

Sarim wants Thinkspaces to be his laboratory for testing out novel programming techniques and architectures - gaining valuable experience in software engineering. He also wants to learn valuable skills in product management, business strategy and startup survival. He also wants to see what it takes to build a thriving online community.

As a cofounder of Thinkspaces, Felicia hopes to learn key skills in product management. Through gaining hands on experience in the accelerator, she hopes to have a better intuition on how to identify key issues in a product and how to best solve those issues. She would also like to gain better insight on how to lead and manage people on her team.

Teeger: My goal has always been to start a company. With Thinkspaces, I have found a project that I am truly passionate about to work on with cofounders who I have full faith and trust in. This Accelerator would directly train me in the skills I'll need as I continue to work in Thinkspaces and possibly future startup endeavors.

**What unique perspectives will each of your team members bring to the group? \***

Please describe in 1-2 sentences for each team member.

Sarim grew up playing MMOs, and knows what a vibrant online community should look like. He is mad about web dev and the latest web tech, and was featured recently on Lifehacker and Product Hunt. He's ready to bring this experience to Thinkspaces.

With an arts background, Felicia can help create more creative solutions and visions for how the product should work and look.

Teeger has spent two and a half years growing his connections within the entrepreneurial ecosystem at Yale. As such, he has a uniquely comprehensive understanding of the entrepreneurship ecosystem and has access to a plethora of connections which Thinkspaces will use. He also has experience with

marketing and is artistically trained for design.

**What resources have you sought out (at Yale and/or beyond) to support your work on this idea?**

This might include (but is certainly not limited to) books, websites, podcasts, workshops, events, conferences, programs, courses, other incubators, and/or mentorship.

Books: Lean Startup by Eric Ries, Hooked by Nir Eyal, Zero to One by Peter Thiel, The Innovator's Dilemma by Clayton M. Christensen, The Leadership Challenge By Kouzes and Posner, Steve Jobs by Walter Isaac, The Wizard of Menlo Park by Randall E. Stross

Podcasts: A16Z, How I Built This, How Success Happens

Courses: Udemy's React JS Complete Guide, CS50, CS323

Groups: Origami Labs, The Hub, Tsai CITY (workshops and classes), CEID, Yale Launch, YES

Movies and TV: Walt Before Mickey, The Founder, Silicon Valley

**OPTIONAL: Include an unlisted YouTube link of a 2-min max video featuring the team pitching your idea.**

We are not looking for production value—only substance—so any rough cut will do. Feel free to simply take a video on your smart phone. We will not watch more than the first 2 minutes of anything submitted.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02I>

**OPTIONAL: If you have a link to a product, prototype, or additional materials, please include it here.**

<https://thinkspaces.org/>

**A Few Final Questions**

Are you applying with a Yale laboratory-based technology? \*

- Yes  
 No

Did you work with a faculty member to develop your idea? \*

- Yes  
 No

Have you established your startup/venture/organization as a legal entity? \*

- Yes  
 No

Where else (at Yale or beyond) are you getting funding for this idea? Please list both pending and secured funding sources, as well as the amounts of each. \*

UOFC grant  
Pitch Competitions

Anything else you'd like to share with us?

Your answer

SUBMIT

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

