Guide 4: Develop a solution

Your goal

Develop a product idea that responds to what you learned about customers. Explain how the product could help and what you would need to provide it.

Bring your customer research from Task 3. If the research challenged your starting idea, use that learning. Do not build a solution around a claim that your evidence does not support.

What to produce

A product idea that addresses your customer's problem, need, or want.

A short description or sketch can help you explain the idea. Include how it helps the customer and a first view of the resources needed. Use paper or your own document. Follow your teacher's instructions. The comparison and prompts below are support, not extra official requirements.

Key terms

- **Product:** a good or service offered to customers.
- **Good:** a physical item, such as a bag.
- **Service:** work done for someone, such as a repair.
- **Problem-solution fit:** how well a solution addresses a customer's problem, need, or want.
- **Feasible:** possible to carry out with the skills and resources available.

An app can provide a service. You do not need to create an app or a new invention for this project. A useful improvement to an existing product can be a starting idea.

Step 1: Return to the customer

Write a brief reminder of the customer group and the experience your research identified.

Which part matters most to customers? What do they already do about it? What did they say works well? Use these answers to guide your solution.

Keep research findings separate from your own suggestions. A customer describing a difficulty does not prove they want your proposed product.

Step 2: Consider different solutions

Think of more than one way to meet the need before choosing. You can compare ideas in notes or a simple table.

For each option, ask:

- How would it help the customer?
- What would the customer need to do to use it?
- What skills, time, tools, and materials would we need?
- What might make it difficult to provide?

A physical item is not always the best answer. A service or a change to an existing process could work better. Choose a manageable idea that follows your school's safety and other rules.

Example: Ready Pouch considers options

Ready Pouch is our fictional example business. Its proposed product is a small pencil pouch for students.

Suppose its research supported a difficulty in finding pens quickly. This condition is part of the example, not a real research result.

Possible solutions include a small pouch, an organiser fitted inside a bag, or advice on arranging supplies. These options use different resources and require different customer actions.

A small pouch could keep pens together and move between bags. However, it might add little value for students who already use a bag pocket successfully. A large organiser could hold more items but might not fit small bags.

The team could select the small pouch as an idea to test. They should explain the reason for that choice, not claim that the research has already proved the pouch will sell.

Step 3: Choose and describe an idea

Explain what your product does and how a customer would use it. Focus on the features that help with the identified need.

For example, “a pouch with a wide opening” describes a feature. “Pens are easier to see and reach” explains the possible benefit.

Do not list features without explaining their purpose. More features can increase cost or make a product harder to use.

Step 4: Check the resources

List the main resources you would need. These might include people, skills, materials, equipment, space, or time.

Mark which resources you already have and which you would need to obtain. If costs are unknown, state that they are estimates to research later.

You do not need a full production plan yet. You do need a reasonable explanation of how the idea could work. Ask your teacher before activities that involve spending, selling, equipment, or other risks.

Your turn

Describe your idea using these prompts:

1. Our customer is…
2. Research suggests they need or want…
3. Our proposed product is…
4. It could help by…
5. We would need…
6. We still need to test…

You can add a labelled sketch if it helps. A neat drawing does not replace an explanation of the customer benefit.

Check your work

- I connected the idea to my actual customer research.
- I explained how the product could help.
- I considered other ways to meet the need.
- I identified important resources and limits.
- I have not claimed that the product is already proven to work or sell.

Next: Test the solution

In Task 5, you will make and test a prediction about problem-solution fit. You may need to change your idea after the test.

Independent guidance based on the AP Business with Personal Finance CED, printed pages 155-156. This is not an official College Board resource.