

Co-Founder Speed Dating — Library Event Guide (Value Lab)

What this is

A structured networking event where patrons meet potential collaborators quickly and safely. It's about finding **aligned partners**, not “pitching investors.”

Important framing: a “good outcome” can be a co-founder, a collaborator, *or* an accountability partner.

Who this is for

- Libraries building community among aspiring founders
- Patrons who want accountability partners, collaborators, or co-founders

What success looks like

Participants leave with: - 3–6 meaningful conversations - 1–2 follow-up matches
- A clearer sense of what they want in a collaborator

Safety + inclusion (important for libraries)

- Participation is optional; “you can pass” is always allowed.
- No pressure to share personal details.
- Make expectations explicit: respectful conduct, timeboxing, no harassment.
- Encourage contact exchange only by mutual consent (QR form or paper opt-in).

Facilitator guidelines (helps this feel safe and welcoming): - Give people an “out”: “Passing is normal. Listening is participating.” - Model consent: “Only share contact info if both people want to.” - Keep it beginner-friendly: discourage “prove yourself” questions and aggressive pitching. - If a norm is violated: pause the interaction, check in with the attendee, and intervene as needed. (Libraries can treat this like any other community program conduct issue.)

Quickstart setup (30–45 minutes)

Materials checklist

- Timer + bell sound (phone works)
- Name tags

- Printed “profile cards” (below) or QR form
- Seating in two rows or two circles

Room setup (simple)

Option A: Two facing rows (one row rotates)

Option B: Two circles (outer circle rotates)

Run of show (60 minutes — default)

Before you start (5 minutes of setup)

- Put name tags at the entrance and ask people to write:
 - First name + optional one-word skill (e.g., “Sam — design”)
 - Optional: a number (1, 2, 3...) so matching is easier later
- Place “profile cards” on chairs (or display a QR code).
- Decide how you’ll handle matches:
 - Option A (recommended): opt-in matching form/card; the library shares contact info only when both people opt in.
 - Option B: people exchange contact details directly (only by mutual consent).
- Staff positioning: one staff member near the entrance, one floating in the room to help with rotation and norms.
- Accessibility/noise: if possible, choose a room layout that allows quieter edges and clear paths for mobility devices.

0–10 min: Welcome + norms

Host script (copy/paste):

“Welcome to Co-Founder Speed Dating. The goal is simple: meet people who are building, find alignment, and leave with 1–2 follow-ups. You don’t need a polished idea—clarity and kindness matter more than polish.”

Norms: - Be concise - Ask questions, don’t interrogate - Exchange contact only if both want to

Host housekeeping (say this quickly): - “You can pass on any prompt, and you can step out anytime.” - “Please don’t pressure anyone to share personal details.” - “This is not a pitch contest—listen for alignment.” - “We’re keeping time strictly so everyone gets equal turns.”

Optional safety line (recommended): “If anything feels uncomfortable or crosses a line, please come find a librarian right away.”

10–15 min: Explain the format

Rounds: - 5 minutes conversation - 1 minute rotate / reset Do 6 rounds.

How a 5-minute round should feel (simple structure): - 0:00–0:30: Person A intro (name + what you’re exploring) - 0:30–1:00: Person B intro - 1:00–4:00: Ask 2–3 prompts (below) - 4:00–5:00: Close: “Should we follow up?” (yes/no is fine)

How rotation works - Two rows: one row stays seated; the other row moves one seat to the right each round. - Two circles: inner circle stays; outer circle rotates one person to the right each round.

If you have an odd number of attendees - Option A (recommended): create one group of 3 (“trio round”) and keep time the same; rotate the trio each round. - Trio round structure (5 minutes): - Person A talks (1:30), Person B talks (1:30), Person C talks (1:30) - Final 0:30: each person says “follow up / no follow up” (optional) - Option B: the host becomes a “floater” and fills the empty seat. - Option C: leave one chair empty; whoever is without a partner gets a 5-minute “profile card” break and rejoins next round.

Optional enhancement (if you have extra time): “What I’m looking for” mini-workshop (8 minutes) **Purpose:** help people describe what they want (and avoid mismatched expectations).

Host script (copy/paste):

“Before we start, take 8 minutes to get clear on what you bring and what you’re looking for. This makes the conversations kinder and more efficient.”

Have everyone write: - I’m strong at: - *I need help with:* - My preferred working style: - *Availability (hours/week):*

Host tip: keep it beginner-friendly—no resumes, no pressure to “sell yourself.”

Time tradeoff (to keep this a 60-minute event): - If you run this mini-workshop, reduce to **5 rounds** instead of 6. - Quick swap schedule: 0–10 welcome, 10–15 format, 15–23 mini-workshop, 23–53 speed rounds (5), 53–58 match, 58–60 close.

15–51 min: Speed rounds (6 rounds)

Use the prompts below.

Facilitation tips that keep it high-quality - Ring a bell at 4 minutes: “One-minute warning—trade final questions and decide if you want to follow up.” - Ring at 5 minutes: “Stop there—please rotate.” - If someone is monologuing, the host can gently reset: “Let’s make sure both people get time.”

51–58 min: Match + follow-up (quiet)

Have attendees mark: - 2 people they want to follow up with (by name tag number) - One “best next step” (coffee chat, attend next event together, etc.)

Recommended matching method (low awkwardness) - Give everyone 2 minutes to circle up to **two** numbers/names they’d like to follow up with. -

Include a checkbox: “Yes, you may share my contact with these matches if they also select me.” - Library shares contact info only for **mutual matches** (both opted in).

Librarian workflow for mutual matches (privacy-friendly) - After the event (or the next morning), identify mutual matches. - Send a short intro email with both people on the thread (or BCC if your policy prefers), e.g.: - Subject: Co-Founder Speed Dating — intro - Body: “Hi A and B — you both opted in to connect from last night’s event. I’m introducing you here so you can take it from there.” - Data hygiene: keep opt-in cards/forms only as long as needed to make introductions, then dispose/delete per library policy.

Follow-up planning (make it concrete) Have people write one of these next steps: - 20-minute coffee chat / library meeting - Attend the next entrepreneurship event together - 30-minute “idea jam” to compare goals and working styles

48-hour follow-up script (copy/paste) “Hi ____ — great meeting you at the library’s Co-Founder Speed Dating. Want to do a 20-minute chat this week? I’m available ____ or _____. If those don’t work, feel free to suggest another time.”

Optional enhancement (if you have extra time): Open mingle (5–10 minutes) **Goal:** let people reconnect with 1–2 strong matches without pressure.

Guidelines: - Keep it consent-based: “If you want to continue a conversation, ask first.” - Encourage people who didn’t find a match: “It’s normal—try again at the next event or come to a drop-in lab.”

Time tradeoff: treat open mingle as “bonus time” after the official 60 minutes, *or* reduce to 5 rounds and shorten match + follow-up to 5 minutes. - Quick swap schedule: 0–10 welcome, 10–15 format, 15–45 speed rounds (5), 45–50 match, 50–60 mingle/close.

58–60 min: Close

Close script (copy/paste):

“Great work. The next step is to follow up within 48 hours. Momentum dies when follow-up waits.”

Conversation prompts (copy/paste)

Each round, pick 2–3: - What are you building (or curious about building)? - What skills do you bring (design, coding, marketing, ops, community)? - What kind of partner are you looking for? - How do you like to work (fast experiments vs deep planning)? - What’s your “one goal” for the next 30 days?

Common but powerful questions (copy/paste): - “What would make this collaboration a ‘yes’ for you?” - “What’s a clear ‘no’ for you in a partner or

working style?” - “How do you like to communicate (text/email/in-person), and how often?” - “What does ‘showing up’ look like for you—hours/week or a weekly cadence?” - “What’s one small thing we could do together in the next 7 days to test fit?”

Profile card (printable)

- Name:
- What I’m exploring:
- Skills I bring:
- Skills I want:
- Preferred audience/problem space:
- Availability (hours/week):
- Best way to follow up (optional):

Optional add-ons (if helpful): - I’m looking for: co-founder / collaborator / accountability partner / team project - I prefer: in-person / online / hybrid - My “one next step” this week:

Outcomes to track (library-friendly)

-

attendees

-

follow-up matches (self-reported)

- % who wrote a 48-hour follow-up plan
-

After the event: keep momentum going (where Value Lab enhances the journey)

Collaboration energy is high right after meeting—but without a pathway, new teams can stall fast.

Value Lab helps your library keep teams moving: - Partners can continue building with a structured journey that turns “we met” into “we made progress” across multiple sessions. - The library can offer repeatable follow-up programming (drop-in lab, short cohort, showcase) so teams have a place to meet, build,

and stay accountable. - Participants maintain an upward trajectory by continuing their work between events—so this becomes the start of a real journey, not a one-night networking moment.