



LETTER TO THE COMMISSION

LTC No: 26-161

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the Fort Lauderdale City Commission
FROM: Rickelle Williams, City Manager *RW*
DATE: May 21, 2026
SUBJECT: StartUp FTL Summer Ideation Cohort Launch

The purpose of this Letter to the Commission (LTC) is to inform the City Commission of the Economic Development Division's launch of the StartUp FTL Summer Ideation cohort. This LTC highlights how the initiative advances the City's economic development strategy by providing entrepreneurs with the training and mentorship necessary to successfully launch and grow their businesses within the City of Fort Lauderdale.

StartUp FTL is a complimentary business education program offered by the City of Fort Lauderdale and led by the Community Services Department's (CSD) Economic Development Division. The program supports local entrepreneurs during critical early stages of their business development by providing practical learning and real-world applications. By building entrepreneurs' confidence, the program ensures participants are better equipped to pursue opportunities and overcome challenges as they establish and grow their businesses. Facilitated in an accelerated six (6)-session format, the program encourages deeper dialogue and focused learning while delivering the comprehensive value of a traditional cohort experience.

The StartUp FTL initiative utilizes a hybrid format, combining in-person and virtual sessions for maximum flexibility. Participants engage with the renowned Kauffman FastTrac® curriculum, a resource provided at no cost to participants thanks to funding from the City. This investment reflects the City's commitment to fostering a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem and promoting inclusive economic mobility. By focusing on essential functions critical to operational success, the program addresses the unique challenges faced by emerging business leaders.

The Kauffman FastTrac® model provides participants three (3) StartUp FTL cohort options, which are sometimes blended into one (1) cohort. StartUp FTL cohorts are:

- StartUP FTL Accelerated Ideation Cohort: A six (6)-week program designed for individuals with a business idea, helping them move from concept to launch with guided instruction and support. Cohort participants learn how to register their business, understand business costs, and next steps for developing their business.

- **StartUP FTL Accelerated Grow Cohort:** A six (6)-week program that supports small business owners with one to five (1 – 5) years of operating history. This program will enable business owners to strengthen and improve their business operations through implemented best practices, and other tools and guidance to grow their business.
- **StartUP FTL Regular Cohort:** A ten (10)-week program geared towards preparing entrepreneurs and small business owners to succeed using the Kauffman FastTrac model. The Kauffman FastTrac model is a hands-on course that includes easy-to-follow lessons, group discussions, and personalized support where you will learn how to research your market, understand your customer base, build a strong business plan, learn to pivot, understand finances, and prepare for disasters.

Program Evolution and Current Schedule

Developed in Fiscal Year 2024 (FY2024), StartUP FTL has demonstrated steady growth through successful cohorts teaching Kauffman's Ideation and Grow curriculum in Fall 2024, Spring 2025, and Fall 2025. Applications for the fifth cohort, which will focus on Ideation curriculum, will open on May 21, 2026, and close on June 21, 2026. The fifth cohort opportunity and application window is being promoted by the City's Strategic Communications Department and promoted on the City's website

Curriculum and Weekly Modules

The upcoming Accelerated Ideation Cohort focuses on establishing a robust business foundation and refining launch strategies. The six (6)-week accelerated format covers:

- **Week 1:** Talking About Your Business Idea
- **Week 2:** How to Register Your Business
- **Week 3:** Business Model Design & Best Client Ever
- **Week 4:** Market Research Through SizeUpFTL
- **Week 5:** Understanding Overhead Costs & Revenue Streams
- **Week 6:** Building a Business Plan
- **Program Closeout:** Course Wrap Up & Continued Growth Planning

Eligibility and Commitment

StartUP FTL is tailored for individuals with developing business ideas or those in the earliest stages of a business launch. To ensure the program's integrity and success, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Reside in or operate a business within the City of Fort Lauderdale;
- Possess a viable business concept ready for development; and
- Commit to attending all sessions and completing all associated assignments.

Through this targeted support, the City continues to expand opportunities for local entrepreneurs, ensuring they can take confident, informed steps toward formalizing their businesses.

The City's Strategic Communications Department and Economic Development Division will promote the StartUp FTL application period through the City's communication channels and community partnerships to encourage participation from eligible residents and business owners. Interested applicants may access the application through the City's StartUp FTL application page at [StartUp FTL: Application](#).

If you have any questions, please contact Porshia Garcia, Community Services Department Director, via email at PGarcia@fortlauderdale.gov, or at 954-828-5249.

c: Shari L. McCartney, City Attorney
David R. Soloman, City Clerk
Patrick Reilly, City Auditor
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