

# Ulster Bank Hackathon 2020 goes virtual - and global

## Online event, in partnership with Dogpatch Labs, opens up opportunity to teams from around the world as they 'hack' what's next for customers

**21st September 2020** The Ulster Bank Hackathon, in partnership with start-up hub Dogpatch Labs, gets underway next weekend (25th, 26th, 27th September 2020), and for the first time ever will be solely online, with coders, data scientists, designers, entrepreneurs and staff coming together virtually to collaborate and disrupt the future of banking.

Now in its fifth year, the Ulster Bank Hackathon is one of Ireland's most established Hackathons and has a reputation for attracting some of the best and brightest minds. This year, in line with health restrictions, it has been given a new dimension and will take place virtually, with teams focusing on focusing on Climate, Smart Data, and Financial Confidence and Education. The event will be officially opened by Ulster Bank's CEO Jane Howard, who will also deliver the closing remarks on Sunday.

### How it works

Up to 100 'hackers' will virtually gather on Friday evening for the Hackathon's Digital Marketplace of Ideas, where their pre-recorded idea pitch video will be played before they team up for 54 hours of collaboration on ideas that will ultimately form the next generation of banking.

Each team will pitch their final idea on Sunday afternoon to a panel of experts including Ulster Bank Chief Technology and Information Officer, Sheamus Causer, Managing Director Ulster Bank Commercial Banking Division Eddie Cullen, Head of Innovation and Solutions delivery at NatWest Group, Naresh Vyas, Managing Director Dogpatch Labs, Patrick Walsh and Principal at Sure Valley Ventures, Isabelle O'Keeffe. The winner will be announced that evening and will take home the top prize worth €1,500 .

### Start Up

In order to harness the full spirit of innovation for our customers, Ulster Bank has a separate category for staff who have a great idea they want to bring to life and the winners of that category go forward into the Bank's intrapreneurship programme, Start Up. The programme, which won the top prize at the inaugural Deloitte Financial Services innovation awards in 2019, creates an environment to nurture the entrepreneurial culture that exists within the bank. It gives people the time, space and resources to develop their skills as entrepreneurs, while creating real solutions to benefit our customers.

Sheamus Causer, Chief Technology and Information Officer, Ulster Bank said:

*"The Ulster Bank Hackathon has a reputation for creating an exciting, disruptive, safe space for some of the best minds to come together and test their ideas and dreams using technology they wouldn't otherwise have access to, all with the same end goal in mind – how can we change things for our customers for the better? The landscape for financial services is changing every day and that brings huge opportunity for customers. We want to be at the forefront of that, collaborating with and working shoulder-to-shoulder with the fintech community. The Ulster Bank Hackathon allows us to do just that and we are really looking forward to seeing what comes out of this year's event."*

Patrick Walsh, Managing Director, Dogpatch Labs, Dublin said:

*“Dogpatch Labs has a long partnership with the Ulster Bank Hackathon and for us, it offers entrepreneurs a unique opportunity to connect with senior leaders in both Ulster Bank and NatWest Group, which is one of the largest banks in the UK. The event has gone from strength to strength each year and we are proud to be part of it. Moving this year’s Hackathon online has been an opportunity for us to push boundaries even further and we’re delighted to welcome international teams from around the world, including the UK and India and we look forward to meeting them next weekend.”*

To register online for the Ulster Bank Hackathon 2020 or for more information visit: <https://www.eventbrite.ie/e/ulster-bank-hackathon-2020-dogpatch-labs-tickets-119063394819> or check out Twitter, using #wherewillUB

**ENDS.**

Notes to Editors:

- A Hackathon brings a group of people from a number of disciplines together to ‘hack’ out new ideas and bring them to a certain stage to pitch to a multi-disciplinary panel of experts.
- The process is two-fold and as well as creating ideas, participants will be able to avail of some pitch training and mentor sessions both at the event and following the event, for the successful projects.
- Over the weekend, teams work together in online rooms with the help of mentors who specialise in areas such as Product Development, UX Design and of course, Banking. They test their ideas using real-world bank data with Ulster Bank’s API sandbox. The full Microsoft cloud platform will also be available and Microsoft Technical experts will be close at hand, hopping in and out of virtual rooms, throughout the weekend allowing teams to rapidly configure business-ready prototypes and maximise their impact. There will be coaching sessions for pitches, all day coding, mentoring sessions and if all that wasn’t enough – there are scheduled networking / social elements built into the weekend and take away food vouchers for all participants, to keep the much-loved fun, social side of the Hackathon alive.
- This process uses no real customer data, the project will create a ‘sandbox’ of dummy data specially constructed by the project to emulate real situations, to use in the development phase.
- The goal is to provide an environment which fosters intensive innovative thinking and entrepreneurship for new service provision to bank customers.
- Ulster Bank has a long relationship with Dogpatch Labs, with its Innovation team based there for the past five years. This strong partnership is now in its sixth year and continues to allow us to work directly with and beside Ireland’s fintech start-up community.
- Support will be provided over the weekend by a number of external partners:

Microsoft will make available its full Microsoft cloud platform for this year’s Hackathon. Additionally, Microsoft Technical experts will be available throughout the weekend allowing teams to rapidly configure business-ready prototypes and maximising their impact for colleagues and customers alike. Microsoft will also be running an educational Microsoft cloud workshop and will be offering 1:1 virtual coaching as needed by attendees throughout the event.

The multi-talented strategic design team Nile will support teams in shaping their idea, maximising the customer journey and honing their final pitch. <https://nilehq.com/>

Finally, the Code institute will provide support with technical judging as well as mentorship for the teams.