



UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION
Progress by innovation



Global Cleantech Innovation Programme

PRE-ACCELERATOR GUIDEBOOK



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1. Introduction

1.1. Why Is Pre-Acceleration Needed?

Pre-acceleration activities are often needed to help early-stage entrepreneurs progress to a point when they can engage and benefit from acceleration support services. The process of acceleration requires the supported venture to have some momentum. An early-stage technology venture without a team, an identified market, an initial business model, initial projections and an initial elevator pitch summarizing their product or service, is unlikely to be appropriate for an accelerator. In the context of the GCIP Accelerator, we need companies to have some basic building blocks in place in order that the time spent in the accelerator can be focused on validation and refinement rather than starting from scratch. The need for a team is eminently practical as a single founder is unlikely to have either the time or the skillset to participate in all of the GCIP Accelerator activities and successfully complete the required assignments.



1.2. Objectives



The primary objective of any pre-acceleration activity is to **assist entrepreneurs to address one or more key gaps** that would cause them to be ineligible for the accelerator or unable to complete the application process. This could include the lack of a team, an unclear business model concept, the lack of any clear innovation and an inadequate understanding of the target market.



An additional objective should be to **increase the participation of under-represented groups, technology sector or regions** through targeted pre-acceleration activities. For example, if the aim is to support increased participation of women entrepreneurs from a specific region, targeted pre-acceleration activities could help early-stage women entrepreneurs build a team, develop their business concept, create an elevator pitch and effectively complete the GCIP application process.



A third objective is to **support the development of new and innovative clean technology products and services** that include business model innovation as well as technological innovation.



A fourth objective is to **provide support and capacity development to a larger and more diverse group of entrepreneurs** than would be served by the GCIP Accelerator. Typically, each GCIP Accelerator cohort is limited to 20 to 30 participants in very specific clean technology sectors. Whereas the range of activities that are part of the GCIP Pre-Accelerator could engage a much wider range of participants.

1.3. Integration With the Accelerator

All the pre-acceleration activities should take place before the closing date for accelerator applications. Ideally at least two weeks should be available for graduates from any pre-accelerator training to complete GCIP Accelerator applications before the closing deadline. In addition, those that have applied to the accelerator but failed initial screening, should be considered for pre-acceleration support. Graduates from some of the pre-acceleration activities such as Hackathons, Ideathons and Founder Connect may take months before they are ready to submit an application for the GCIP Accelerator.

Regardless of whether pre-acceleration graduates are submitting applications for the current GCIP accelerator cycle or the next, it is important that they are integrated with the needs and priorities of the GCIP Accelerator. This means that pre-acceleration support must be responsive to changes in recruitment priorities, common entrepreneur challenges and market trends. Additionally, it is important that pre-acceleration activities, where available, utilize mentors identified for the GCIP Accelerator. The GCIP Pre-Acceleration training thus becomes a useful form of preparation and training for GCIP Accelerator mentors rather than a competing for the same pool of mentors. This can be particularly valuable for mentors that are new to the GCIP Accelerator and have had limited experience advising early-stage entrepreneurs.

It is important to remember that not all of the GCIP Pre-Acceleration Activities detailed in this guide need to be undertaken. Organizers should focus on specific GCIP Pre-Acceleration Activities that most are relevant to their needs at that time. It is expected that needs will change from year to year and therefore the GCIP Pre-Acceleration Activities undertaken will also vary.



GCIP Launch event at COP27



1.4. Where to Begin

Rather than considering pre-acceleration as a required component for all GCIP Accelerator applicants, it should be viewed as an optional activity intended to strengthen the quality and breadth of applicants, particularly those in underrepresented technology sectors, geographical areas or socio-ethnic groups. Some applicants may not require pre-acceleration support as they have the key building blocks already in place: a team, an identified market, a prototype, an initial business model, initial projections and an elevator pitch. In almost every case, some or all of these building blocks will require extensive validation and refinement which will take place during the GCIP Accelerator.

To begin it is important to consider the key gaps and weaknesses from potential or initial accelerator applicants. Some gaps may be addressed through training whilst others will require group facilitation or direct engagement. For example, identification of a market, development of a business model and elevator pitch can all be addressed through training sessions either on-line or in-person. Finding a co-founder would typically require some facilitation and networking as it is not something that can be addressed through a one-off event although networking opportunities can make a huge difference. Time also plays an important factor when considering which specific pre-acceleration activities to execute. For example, Kickstart Sessions and other training activities can typically take place within a period of one to two weeks and therefore can be used to enhance the capacity of applicants to an upcoming or already open GCIP accelerator. In contrast, activities such as Ideathons, Hackathons and Founder Connect events are intended to support the creation of teams and ideas which could take months to develop. Therefore, such activities are best utilized to propagate applicants for a GCIP Accelerator which will open in six to nine months.



2. Pre-Acceleration Activities

2.1. The Ideathon

Objectives

The primary objective of a GCIP Ideathon is to support the development of new ideas which could become future entrants for the GCIP Accelerator. A secondary objective is to increase awareness amongst the Ideathon participants of the GCIP accelerator and the GCIP technology categories such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, waste beneficiation etc.

Duration

An Ideathon is a collaborative group brainstorm which can take place in as little as two hours or an entire day depending on the scope and targeted outcomes. Typically, a GCIP Ideathon would take place over three to four hours and would comprise:

1. Initial introductions, followed by an explanation of the key problems, market context and needs (30 minutes)
2. Brainstorming discussions with exercises, breakout groups and voting (two hours)
3. Discussion and voting on the top ideas (30 minutes)
4. Networking and refreshments (one hour)

Timeline

As an Ideathon is an open brainstorm of ideas, the output will consist of many ideas for new cleantech solutions, a detailed discussion of the best solutions plus connections between participants that could lead to the formation of new teams. It is very unlikely that the output from an Ideathon will act as a pipeline for the current GCIP Accelerator cycle. Instead, it should be seen as seeding development of potential applicants for the next GCIP Accelerator cycle.

Resources

As a community focused brainstorm, an Ideathon is typically most effective as an in-person activity. Therefore, it is important that the space for the Ideathon provides sufficient opportunities for presentations, breakout groups, interaction and collaboration. It is also important that sufficient workspaces with whiteboards, projectors, or other communication tools are available.

Key Roles

Ideathon Chair – Responsible for the overall coordination of the event, including working with event partners.

Ideathon Marketing – Responsible for promotion of the event (most likely primarily online).

Ideathon Registration – Responsible for the online registration of all attendees and on-site registration. Co-ordinates the registration desk at the event and confirms that all attendees are registered. Tracks which attendees have arrived for the event.

Ideathon Facilitator – It is very important to have someone available to act as a facilitator for the session that is experienced with design thinking, ideation exercises and encouraging collaboration.

Sector Experts – If the Ideathon has a specific industry, market or technology focus, it can be very helpful to have sector experts available that can provide more context on the specific challenges and needs. However, it is important that the sector experts provide context to help the generation of ideas from the group, rather than pre-judge or limit suggestions.

Ideathon Activity Overview

Although Ideathons can often be very broad in scope, it is recommended that GCIP Ideathons specifically focus on a GCIP technology category (or sub-category), with additional guidance on sector needs and challenges from local experts. Thus, participants are asked to generate a broad range of ideas on a very specific market need. Participants benefit from having access to sector experts

and networking opportunities, which could include the genesis of a business idea and founding team. Additional motivation could include the availability of prizes and connections to industry partners.

A GCIP Ideathon can take place over varying time periods but it is important that the event includes some consistent workshop elements:



Introductions and Context Setting

Following brief introductions from all participants, a sector expert (or experts) provides context on the key climate related challenges impacting an industry or community that is the focus of the workshop.



Ideation Exercises and Scope

Before the idea generation begins, it is important that the workshop facilitator takes participants through some simple design thinking exercises to spur creative thinking and collaboration.



Idea Generation

In small breakout groups, participants are asked to generate as many ideas as possible within a tight timeframe (e.g. 20 minutes). The focus is on idea generation rather than filtration or prioritization.



Idea Review and Prioritization

Following the initial idea generation exercise, breakout groups are asked to review all the ideas and begin to prioritize the most promising ideas and where beneficial, combine elements of the best ideas. Design thinking includes a variety of models and tools that are human-centric and focused on finding solutions to problems rather than just defining the problem itself. Design thinking has become a key activity of many mainstream businesses since it first received coverage in publications such as Harvard Business Review (HBR) nearly 15 years ago.

Idea Development



The penultimate phase involves each breakout group focusing on the three most promising ideas from their shortlist and preparing a single slide or diagram illustrating each idea.

Idea Pitching



The Ideathon concludes with each breakout group pitching three ideas (maximum of one minute per idea) with further discussion across all the participants. Following all the idea pitching, the entire group votes on the most promising, most innovative, most impactful, and most unexpected ideas. Importantly, the focus is on celebrating the diversity of ideas and the desire to find innovative solutions rather than the critique of any single idea.

Output and Next Steps



Following the Ideathon, a summary of each idea should be available online and participants asked to indicate which ideas they would like to take forward and how they could help. Once groups of supporters have formed around specific ideas (not necessarily all the ideas will be taken forward) GCIP mentors should be available to provide guidance on how each idea could be developed into a viable business concept. Importantly, the GCIP mentors should also articulate the benefits of applying to the GCIP Accelerator and the specific team development required to be eligible.

Key Steps

1 MONTH BEFORE THE EVENT

- Define the focus area and scope for the Ideathon, the audience and the number of expected attendees.
- Secure a suitable location with sufficient space, facilities, and breakout rooms.
- Confirm the availability of an Ideathon facilitator and sector experts (if required)
- Create an event registration webpage and promote the event.
- Secure judges and mentors who can provide feedback on the pitches and demonstrations at the end of the Ideathon.

2 WEEKS BEFORE THE EVENT

- Provide more detailed information to participants on the Ideathon including logistics, how to prepare and what to bring.
- Confirm the availability of a photographer and/or videographer to document all aspects of the Ideathon.
- Continue to promote the event online and with partners. Encourage registered attendees to also promote their attendance at the event through their own social media channels.

1 WEEK BEFORE THE EVENT

- Re-confirm the participation of all attendees and experts
- Continue to promote the event online with partners.

1 DAY BEFORE THE EVENT

- Set up the space ready for the Ideathon, with signage for breakout rooms, refreshments etc.
- Set up a registration and welcome desk for attendees as they arrive.

2.2. The Hackathon

Objectives

The primary objective of a GCIP Hackathon is to spur the formation or development of teams that can create initial prototypes in one or more of the GCIP technology categories in a short time period (e.g. 48 hours). The expectation is that the teams would subsequently apply to a GCIP Accelerator. An important secondary objective is the promotion of GCIP and the cleantech market opportunity to entrepreneurs that would otherwise be unaware of its importance.

Duration

A Hackathon typically lasts approximately 48 hours, often an entire weekend from Friday evening to Sunday evening. A Hackathon could also be held over just one day but the potential to develop and showcase solutions would be very limited and it is likely that the opportunity to develop working prototypes and network with peers would be severely impaired. A one-day Hackathon could be feasible if the focus is very tightly defined and participants form teams and carry out initial development virtually in advance of the event.

Timeline

As the Hackathon is very condensed (48 hours), teams are likely to need significant additional time for development of the business, the product and team before they can apply to a GCIP Accelerator. Therefore at least two months should be available between a GCIP Hackathon and the closing date of the relevant GCIP Accelerator.

Key Resources

To hold a successful Hackathon, it is important to have two key resources readily available:

The Space

The space for a Hackathon could be a university building, a conference center or even offices. It is important to have a space large enough to hold all the participants plus breakout rooms for team workspaces, meetings and sleeping. Ideally the space should have Internet access, whiteboards, audio visual facilities for the presentations and adequate workspace, including specific equipment for hardware development if needed.

Food and Refreshments

Unlike a typical event lasting two or three hours, a Hackathon typically lasts 48 hours. Many teams will work around the clock to develop a prototype before the deadline and therefore food and refreshments will need to be available almost at every hour of the day and night.

Key Roles

Hackathon Chair – Responsible for the overall coordination of the event, including working with event partners.

Hackathon Marketing – Responsible for promotion of the event (most likely primarily online).

Hackathon Registration – Responsible for the advanced online registration of all attendees and on-site registration. Co-ordinates the registration desk at the event and confirming that all attendees are registered. Tracks which attendees have arrived for the event.

Hackathon Mentors – As the objective of the Hackathon is to create a working prototype, it is important to have mentors available that can provide technical guidance and market insights. They could vary from guidance on a specific programming tool or virtual prototyping platform to insights on solar PV or environmental impact calculations.

Hackathon Concierges – The role of the Hackathon concierge is to help participants with issues that would otherwise detract from their ability to develop a prototype within the tight deadline. This could include issues relating to Internet connectivity, workspace access, using equipment, obtaining food and sleeping on-site.

Food & Beverage Coordinator – Keeping a large group of entrepreneurs and

technologists able to work around the clock requires a steady stream of food and refreshments (especially caffeine).

Demo Judges – At the final of the Hackathon, all teams will demo their prototypes and if time permits, provide a short pitch on the solution and its impact. Judges will then provide constructive feedback on each pitch and demonstration, scoring each team before one or more winners can be announced.

Hackathon Activity Overview

Introduction

Hackathons have been popular event formats within various technology sectors for over 20 years and are focused on bringing technologists together to form teams and create a functioning product prototype within a very short timeframe (often a weekend or even just a day). The combination of a tight timeframe to develop a solution and availability of peers for collaboration, spurs the rapid development of ideas into initial prototypes. Many Hackathons have been focused on mobile and web technologies with a demo showcase and awards at the of end of the hackathon. Hackathons have grown substantially in size with some held in stadiums with over 1,000 attendees.

As the popularity has increased so has the availability of prize money. As an example, a 2013 Hackathon organized by technology company Salesforce.com offered \$1m in prizes. Although many Hackathons have focused on software development, with careful planning, a hardware focused Hackathon can also be held. A software focused Hackathon is easiest to implement as participants simply need access to computers, the internet and often freely available programming tools. In comparison, a hardware focused Hackathon would typically need access to workshop facilities including 3D printers.

An alternative solution is to focus a hardware Hackathon on design development with could include the use of software for virtual prototyping (e.g. Autodesk's VRED). Alternatively, partnering with a university engineering department, fablab or makerspace could enable access to workspace and equipment conducive to the development of hardware prototypes. Hackathons can lead to the creation of many new projects, apps and companies. A notable example from the web sector is web API platform company Zapier which grew from a Startup Weekend Missouri

demo project in 2011 to a “unicorn” company with a valuation exceeding \$1bn in early 2021.

Hackathon Timeline

Hackathons typically progress through seven specific stages over a period of approximately 48 hours to a week. Often Hackathons taking place over a single weekend enable greater focus and participation but the technical complexity of a specific hardware area may require extended time. This could include participants completing the initial planning (steps one to three) virtually in advance of the Hackathon or the activities taking place over two or three weekends.

- 1. IDEATE** – Following a description of the Hackathon focus, problem statement or specific challenge, participants self-organize into teams and begin developing multiple ideas for products, apps or services.
- 2. COLLABORATE** – Teams will then select the most appropriate idea to develop into a prototype given the limited time available during the Hackathon. Additional collaborators will be invited to join the team.
- 3. DESIGN** – The team designs key aspects of the product, app or service.
- 4. RAPID PROTOTYPE** – The team develops an initial prototype as quickly as possible, which could involve software development, 3D printing or virtual prototyping tools.
- 5. TEST** – The initial prototype is tested with target customers either online or through face-to-face meetings. The feedback is used to validate or invalidate the key assumptions and initial prototype.
- 6. ITERATE** – Following the earlier target customer feedback, refinements are made to the prototype which is then tested with the target market. Numerous cycles of testing and iteration would take place during the final day of the Hackathon.
- 7. PITCH** – The Hackathon concludes with short pitches from each team outlining their solution, which is then followed by a live demonstration of the prototype. Following feedback from judges and voting by the crowd of participants, an overall hackathon winner (or winners) are announced and celebrated.


A GCIP Hackathon takes the key elements of many Hackathons and adds GCIP specific context and support. Key elements include:

Focus – Most successful Hackathons have a specific sector or issue focus. Therefore, rather than attempting to focus on all of the GCIP technology categories, it is preferable to focus on a sub-set (e.g. energy efficiency and renewable energy). Alternatively, the focus of the Hackathon could be on the targeted audience with an emphasis on supporting prototypes from under-represented groups or regions.

Team Support – It is important that all participants have access to support through the Hackathon, including business support (who is the target customer?) and technical support (coding, hardware fabrication etc.). Often Hackathons continue throughout the night as participants are busy building their prototypes and therefore it is important that technical help and resources throughout the day and potentially night.

Concierge Support – Due to the length of a Hackathon (48 hours+) and need to develop a working prototype without running out of time, all participants need to remain motivated and focused. It is important that during this time they do not have to focus on finding refreshments, snacks, food or even a place to sleep. It is helpful if the Hackathon includes an opportunity for participants to sleep on-site and to have access to snacks and meals around the clock.

Recognition and Awards – It is essential to recognize and celebrate the best teams at the end of the Hackathon. Additional exposure could include coverage on GCIP and partner social media channels.



No matter how brilliant your mind or strategy, if you're playing a solo game, you'll always lose out to a team.

Reid Hoffman, LinkedIn Co-founder

Key Steps

2 MONTHS BEFORE THE EVENT

- Define the focus area and scope for the Hackathon.
- Determine who you wish to attract to the Hackathon and the intended output (teams, ideas, GCIP accelerator applications etc.).
- Define the number of attendees that are expected and the partners that will be needed for outreach.
- Secure a suitable location with sufficient space, facilities, and breakout rooms.
- Calculate the extended cost for food, refreshments and other expenses based targeted number of attendees. Remember to include GCIP program staff, Hackathon mentors, judges and other event supporters in the number of expected attendees and overall cost. Confirm that your event budget will support the expected number of attendees.
- Create an event registration webpage and begin promoting the event with the support of partners.

1 MONTH BEFORE THE EVENT

- Confirm that the secured event location has Internet access, audio visual equipment, workspace and anything else that is needed for the Hackathon to be success.
- Provide more information about the focus of the hackathon to registered attendees.
- Continue to promote the event with partners.
- Identify sources of food and refreshment close to the Hackathon location. Research cost and how food and refreshment will be brought to the event venue throughout the 48-hour duration of the Hackathon.
- Recruit mentors and judges to participate in the event. Remember to include mentors that would be willing to provide support outside of normal working hours.

- Confirm prizes and awards that can be presented to the top pitches and demonstrations at the end of the Hackathon.

2 WEEKS BEFORE THE EVENT

- Provide more detailed information to participants on the Hackathon including logistics, how to prepare and what to bring (e.g. laptop, sleeping bag etc.).
- Provide written guidance to mentors and judges on their role at the Hackathon.
- Update cost estimates and resource requirements based on the current number of registered attendees and rate of registration.
- Confirm an inspiring speaker (or speakers) to frame the focus on the accelerator and key challenges or needs being addressed.
- Confirm the availability of a photographer and/or videographer to document all aspects of the Hackathon.
- Continue to promote the event online and with partners. Encourage registered attendees to also promote their attendance at the event through their own social media channels.

1 WEEK BEFORE THE EVENT

- Confirm the food and refreshment requirements (placing orders with vendors if required).
- Re-confirm the participation of all mentors and judges
- Continue to promote the event online with partners.

1 DAY BEFORE THE EVENT

- Set up the space ready for the Hackathon, with signage for breakout rooms, designated sleeping areas and quiet zones.
- Set up a registration and welcome desk for attendees as they arrive.

2.3. Founder Connect

Objectives

The primary objective is to support the formation of new teams by connecting sole founders with potential co-founders with complementary skills and experience. Sole founders would be in-eligible for the GCIP Accelerator and therefore supporting the development of a team increases their eligibility and increases the pool of qualified applicants. The second objective is to help teams to address any key gaps through the introduction of potential team members with complementary skills. For example, a very science focused team of founders could connect with a potential co-founder with essential sales and business development experience.

Duration

A Founder Connect session needs to allow sufficient time for presentations, facilitated introductions and networking. A two-hour event is the likely the shortest possible duration for all activities to take place.

Timeline

As the objective of the session is to support initial team formulation, it could be months before the team is ready to apply to a GCIP accelerator. Ideally, these sessions should take place at least six months before the application deadline for a GCIP accelerator to enable sufficient time for the team to form and develop. Therefore, in many cases, a Founder Connect session will be supporting the formation of teams for the next accelerator cycle, which is likely to be in the next calendar year.

Key Roles

Presentation Lead – Responsible for coordinating the presentations or pitches from participants. This could include briefing presenters on the slide format or elevator

pitch limits. Collecting information and presentation slides in advance of the event and introducing each presenter during the session.

Networking Facilitator – Responsible for making introductions between participants that share a common market focus and have complementary skills. Often this could include introducing a technical founder to business experts and serial entrepreneurs with complementary skills.

Event Chair – Responsible for the overall coordination of the event, including working with event partners.

Event Marketing – Responsible for promotion of the event (most likely primarily online).

Event Registration – Responsible for the advanced online registration of all attendees and on-site registration. Co-ordinates the registration desk at the event and confirms that all attendees are registered.

Activity Description

The key components of Founder Connect are:

1. **Initial introductions by company founders seeking additional team members or co-founders.** This can be either a short elevator pitch (one minute) or a short presentation (two to three minutes) with slides (five slides maximum). The focus should be on what makes the company and its solution unique with a clear outline of the required profile of co-founders or additional team members.
2. **Facilitated introductions made in advance and during the event.**

Rather than rely just on serendipity, it is important to make facilitated introductions between founders and potential co-founders or additional team members. This could take the form of email introductions prior to the event or informal introductions between event attendees. In order to make these introductions, it is important to gather the needs and preferences of all attendees and to cross reference this with the known profiles and resumes of each individual.

Informal Networking

To complement the initial presentations and facilitated introductions, it is important to also have some opportunities for informal networking. Ideally this could be centered around refreshments and an inspiring guest speaker. Some structure can easily be provided to the informal networking through the use of a badge identification system. As used at many types of technology events around the world, attendee badges, and in particular, their colour, can be a simple solution to identify the specific interest of the wearer. For example, this could be:

Red Badge

Looking to join a start-up as a co-founder or team member

Green Badge

Renewable energy startup looking for a co-founder or additional team member

Blue Badge

Water efficiency startup looking for a co-founder or additional team member

Grey Badge

Green building startup looking for a co-founder or additional team member

Orange Badge

Transportation startup looking for a co-founder or additional team member

Key Steps

The key steps to holding a successful Founder Connect activity are:

1. Secure a location for the Founder Connect activity, ideally a space large enough for networking and presentations with some form of audio-visual support (speaker system, projector etc.)
2. Create online event registration forms for startups and potential co-founders and team members. Additionally, create a post-event online questionnaire for attendees to provide feedback on the Founder Connect activity and the connections they have made.
3. Invite all of your current or previous applicants that were deemed ineligible as they were sole founders without a team. Additionally, invite all previous or current

applicants that wish to expand their team. Request that all startup attendees register their needs online in order to participate.

4. Reach out to anyone within your network that may wish to join a startup as a co-founder, additional team member or advisor. Request that registrations are made online using the team member form which will collate details of role preference, sector interest, experience etc.
5. Utilize outreach partners such as Universities, Research Labs, Incubators and Co-working spaces to find additional teams and potential team members.
6. Match registered attendees based on needs, skillsets, location and sector. Where possible make introductions online between registered attendees that seem to be a good match.
7. At least three weeks before the event identify which startups will pitch and communicate the requirements to them.
8. Check that the registered attendees match the needs of the presenting startups. For example, if ten startups are searching for co-founders with business development experience, ensure that this is represented in the registered attendees. If there is any mismatch between registered attendees and startup needs, work with partners to recruit additional attendees that with a skillset and interests that match the greatest needs.
9. On the day of the event, ask all attendees to self-identify their primary focus and needs based on the badge colour concept, for example. Where possible facilitate introductions throughout the event.
10. Track formal introductions and random connections during the event. Invite all attendees to complete the event questionnaire, which details of connections made and follow-up.
11. Using the completed questionnaires, self-reported information and email exchanges identify which connections have led to a positive outcome (team developed) or where gaps still exist. Where gaps exist consider either holding an additional Founder Connect event or reach out to those attendees individually that still require help with connections.

2.4. Applicant Business Clinics

Objectives

The applicant business clinics are intended to help early-stage entrepreneurs complete the GCIP accelerator application process and address issues that would otherwise cause the applicant to fail the initial accelerator eligibility screening. The aim is to increase the number of qualified applicants to the accelerator by resolving any confusion relating to the application process and eligibility through a confidential 1:1 discussion.

Duration

An applicant business clinic could last from between 20 to 45 minutes per applicant.

Timeline

Ideally, the applicant business clinics should be available to applicants that fail the initial accelerator screening or are making little progress in the completion of their application (e.g. only one section of the application form completed after multiple weeks). The impact of the applicant business clinics will be most significant for early applicants and therefore access to the clinics should be positioned as an added benefit for starting an application early. Ideally, at least two weeks should be available between the culmination of the clinics and the accelerator deadline.

Key Resources

In-person clinics will require access to meeting rooms at a location easily accessible to entrepreneurs. It is often preferable to have multiple clinics available at the same location, enabling an entrepreneur to book individual sessions with multiple domain experts covering key areas of need (e.g. intellectual property). However, the applicant business clinics can be easily held online, and this provides maximum scheduling flexibility for both the entrepreneur and GCIP mentor.

Key Roles

Applicant Business Clinic Coordinator

It is important to have someone who can identify entrepreneurs that would benefit from a clinic consultation due to either potential confusion with the GCIP application process or a failure to pass GCIP eligibility screening. The coordinator will need to match entrepreneurs with appropriate mentors and clinics. Additionally, the coordinator will need to follow up with each applicant after the clinic to ensure that applications are completed or resubmitted before the final deadline.

Clinic Mentors (Applicant Mentors)

Applicant mentors are business experts able to provide guidance on key topics relating to the initial accelerator screening and judging such as market potential, intellectual property etc. Mentors need to be also able to provide guidance on the completion of all sections of the GCIP Accelerator application form. Applicant mentors can provide support either through the applicant business clinics or virtual online consultation via Skype, Zoom or email. The applicant business clinics can be an effective way to test potential GCIP specialist mentors. Typically, applicant mentors providing support online will be asked to provide more general guidance on all aspects of the GCIP application process than the applicant business clinics which are focused, although not exclusively, on a specific topic.

Activity Description

Applicant business clinics are confidential 1:1 session that enable an early-stage entrepreneur to receive advice on the completion of the GCIP application process or a specific business gap that has been identified or would be identified during the screening process. An entrepreneur would be invited to participate in one or more clinic sessions depending on their needs, time before the application deadline and availability of mentors. Each session would last between 20 to 45 minutes depending on mentor availability and scheduling. During the session the goal is to assist the entrepreneur in completing their accelerator application and tackling key gaps in their business which may impact their eligibility and selection for the GCIP accelerator.

Key areas of the application process where entrepreneurs may need additional assistance include:

- Providing a short summary of their company, including a clear description of the problem and solution.
- A one-minute elevator pitch video describing their company and innovation.
- Clearly articulating the problem, solution and technology innovation succinctly.
- Estimating external capital required to achieve commercial readiness.
- Clearly and concisely describing the initial target market for the product and potential environmental, social and economic impact.

Key Steps

1. Recruit mentors available to run in-person or virtual applicant business clinics.
2. Identify early applicants that would benefit from the guidance offered by the business clinics. Assess the key need and gaps required by the early applicants and create a priority list of subject matter experts required. Determine whether the early applicants can be effectively served through online business clinics for maximum flexibility.
3. Recruit mentors for the business clinics that match the identified priority topics.
4. Hold an initial round of applicant business clinics. Provide an opportunity for applicants to participate in more than one session to allow them to receive input from multiple experts.
5. Follow-up with each applicant after the clinics and track when their GCIP accelerator form is submitted (or re-submitted).
6. Follow-up with the business clinic mentors and collate feedback on how the clinics could be improved.

2.5. Kickstart Pre-Accelerator Sessions

Objectives

The ultimate objective is the improved capacity of accelerator applicants; particularly their ability to articulate their business model, product and market.

Duration

Seven sessions of approximately 90 minutes each held over a period of one to two weeks either in-person, online or a combination of both. Additional sessions may be added to accommodate the specific needs of a target sector, region or group.

Timeline

It is recommended that sessions conclude at least two weeks before the GCIP accelerator application deadline to ensure that as many pre-accelerator participants as possible may complete and submit applications online.



Key Resources

Physical Space

If the Kickstart sessions are held-in person, a physical space is required that would accommodate mentors, participating entrepreneurs and judges, approximately 65 to 100 attendees in total. The aim should be to have at least 20 teams participate, which would typically mean 40 entrepreneurs (two per team) plus at least 20 mentors (one per team). Beyond a total group size of 100 attendees, it becomes much harder in regard to facilitating collaboration, discussion and securing suitable event space.

The event space should ideally include break-out rooms to aid with mentor consultations and an audio system with microphones and a designated stage area and focused lighting. However, for smaller and more informal sessions, a smaller and less equipped workspace would be feasible.

Online Platform

As an alternative to an in-person training event, the sessions can be held online with sufficient preparation. It is important to consider that even though online meetings have increased dramatically, very long (two hours or more) online meetings lead to diminishing returns. Ideally, no more than one Kickstart training session (90 to 120 minutes in length) should be held each day. This results in online training taking place over a much longer time-period (seven days) than an in-person session (two days).

Key Roles

Mentors and Judges

Each session requires one trainer (ideally two) to lead the session plus additional resources to provide mentoring support to the participants (which could include the trainers) for Session 5 (the Pitch). Typically, at least one mentor is required for every five participants. The role of the mentor would be to assist the training participants with the creation and refinement of a two-minute verbal pitch. The seventh and final session would require the availability of at least 4 or 5 volunteer judges who could provide feedback and scoring on the pitch presentations. The ideal profile of

a volunteer judge and mentor would be someone that is experienced with elevator pitches and communication.

This could include serial entrepreneurs, business consultants, marketing professionals, investors and sales specialists. It is important that prior to participation as either a mentor or judge, the volunteer studies the requirements of the role and the framework for reviewing and scoring a GCIP elevator pitch. Importantly, the pre-accelerator sessions can be an effective mechanism to test a potential mentor or judge for the main GCIP accelerator.

Scoring and Time Keeping

The final session (session 7) would also require someone to collate the scores from each entrepreneur pitch and keep time, specifically ensuring that each pitch is stopped at two minutes. An additional person in this role would be required for each simultaneous pitch session held.

Activity Overview

The Kickstart Pre-Acceleration Sessions are intended as easily digestible training sessions that help early-stage entrepreneurs communicate the key problem they are solving, identify which customer has the biggest pain and convey their unique solution and its value. The sessions consist of seven interactive workshop modules which culminate in elevator pitches from each participant. Typically, the sessions are held over a period of one to two weeks. Each interactive session lasts 90 minutes but may be adjusted to accommodate simultaneous translation, guest speakers and additional case studies.

Session 1 – The Problem (Pain)

The first session is focused on the identifying problems and customer needs that need to be solved. This session articulates the specific focus areas of the GCIP accelerator and the need to address problems with the biggest need and market potential. Case studies provide examples of how GCIP entrepreneurs have previously refined their focus to address specific problems rather than broad and vague issues.

Interactive Task 1

Participants will be asked to identify the specific problem they are trying to address, why existing solutions are inadequate and to quantify the pain and the potential for monetization. During the session participants will be asked to share their response to this task verbally.

Session 2 – The Solution

The second session focuses on concisely communicating the entrepreneur's technology/product and how it specifically addresses the pain better than the existing alternatives. This session will also introduce the concept of the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) and the process of validation.

Interactive Task 2

Participants will be asked to identify what is innovative and unique about their technology/product and how they are able to address specific customer pain points more effectively than existing solutions. session participants will be asked to share their response to this task verbally.

Session 3 – Technology, Competitive Advantage & IP

This session covers how to define and communicate the benefits of your technology and its competitive advantage. In addition, this session also introduces technology validation, benchmarking, and prototype development. The session ends with a discussion on intellectual property protection and defensibility for early stage cleantech ventures.

Interactive Task 3

Participants will be asked to communicate the stage of the technology/product, its unique benefits and how key aspects of the intellectual property can be protected.

Session 4 – Customer Segmentation

The fourth session provides an introduction to market analysis and customer segmentation. This session is focused on explaining the process of identifying customer sub-segments and the required data, research, and assumptions to do so. The session will include an initial introduction to concepts of the Total Addressable Market (TAM), Serviceable Available Market (SAM) and the Serviceable Obtainable Market (SOM).

Interactive Task 4

Participants will be asked to estimate their TAM, SAM and SOM, including an initial breakdown of the identified customer sub-segments in their SOM.

Session 5 – The Beachhead

The final session before the training focuses on the pitch, is focused on prioritizing the customer sub-segments and identifying the specific sub-segment to focus on first (the beachhead). During this session, participants will learn how to prioritize identified sub-segments which respond to economic pain, value to customers, urgency of need, pressure to buy and first time to sale. The session will also discuss the process of identifying a potential pilot customer, the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) and validating product-market fit. However, it is expected that the process of market validation and developing a pilot customer would take place during the accelerator and not the pre-accelerator session.

Interactive Task 5

Participants will be asked to prioritize their customer sub-segments, identify the most suitable beachhead and explain why.

Session 6 – The Elevator Pitch

The Elevator Pitch session is when the key topics from all the previous sessions come together with participants developing an effective two-minute verbal pitch. The development of an effective elevator pitch helps the entrepreneur to develop their thinking about many aspects of their business and consequently, appropriate answers to the questions in the GCIP accelerator application form.

The intention is that participants will use the pitch to complete the application process for the GCIP accelerator and build on the pitch further for use in the GCIP Academy (if selected).

This session is intended to provide a solid explanation on how to structure and deliver an effective elevator pitch whilst providing significant time to work in small breakout groups with an assigned mentor. The content part of the session (first 30-40 minutes) is focused on:

- Ideal structure of a two-minute elevator pitch – including what should and should not be included
- The “AIDA” steps commonly used throughout marketing communications which refers to the focus on Attention (A), Interest (I), Desire (D) and Action (A).
- Effective delivery of the pitch including style, audience engagement and body language
- During the session numerous examples will be provided that of effective elevator pitches both from within and beyond the GCIP community.

Interactive Task 6

All participating entrepreneurs will be asked to share the text for their initial two-minute elevator pitch and to practice in a small group with an assigned mentor.

Session 7 – Pitch Session & Feedback

The final session is an opportunity for the participants to pitch and receive feedback. Each participant would present and receive feedback from four or more judges utilizing a GCIP score sheet and guidelines. Typically, after each two-minute pitch, the participation would receive two minutes of feedback from the volunteer judges, in addition to any comments provided on the consolidated score sheets. During a 90-minute session, a maximum of 20 pitches could be accommodated. Additional pitches could be included through a longer session or multiple pitching sessions either held consecutively or simultaneously. It advisable to include some form of recognition of the entrepreneur whose pitch scored the highest amongst the judges. This could take the form of an award or small prize. Regardless of the award, it is important to highlight the best pitches as learning examples for all participants to focus on.

At the end of the final session and in follow-up communication via email and/or social media, it is important to remind participants of the process to apply for the GCIP Accelerator and key deadlines. It is beneficial to also highlight how elements of the pre-accelerator pitch can be used directly in the accelerator application form.

Interactive Task 7

Each entrepreneur will be asked to deliver verbally and in writing, a two-minute elevator pitch. In addition, they will be asked to prepare a single slide with their name, team/company team, location and means of contact (telephone, email etc.).

Key Steps

The key steps to holding a successful series of Kickstart Sessions are:

1. Identify the expected capacity of the training sessions based on the number of applications that need assistance or the target for applicant pipeline development.
2. Secure a physical space (in-person sessions) or online platform for the training.
3. Confirm dates and times for the sessions that are optimal for the participants.
4. Find sufficient trainers, mentors and judges. Each session requires one trainer (ideally two) to lead the session plus additional resources to provide mentoring support to the participants (which could include the trainers). Typically, at least one mentor is required for every five participants. The seventh and final session would also require the availability of at least 4 or 5 volunteer judges who could provide feedback and scoring on the pitch presentations.
5. Confirm the participation of all entrepreneurs, mentors, judges and trainers.
6. Hold Kickstart Session 1 whilst recording the initial ideas and efforts of the participating entrepreneurs.
7. Hold Kickstart Sessions 2 to 6 whilst documenting the progress of the participating entrepreneurs. Importantly, highlight any entrepreneurs that are making limited progress and clarify whether this is due to a lack of understanding or limited participation in the training. Focus particularly on the entrepreneurs making the least progress and try to ensure that by session 6 all participants are on track for the final pitch session in session 7.
8. Hold session 7, the final pitch, and record all pitches and feedback from judges. Request feedback on the training sessions from the entrepreneurs, mentors and judges.
9. Based on the final pitches and overall feedback, consider which entrepreneurs might be ready to apply for the GCIP Accelerator. For those that are ready, provide access to an applicant mentor) to help with the completion of the application form. For those that are not ready, work with mentors to provide a short summary to each entrepreneur of areas they should focus on in order to be ready for the accelerator.



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