# Impact of Ecosystem Enablers on Startup Life Cycle

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## ABSTRACT

India witnessed a great leap in the entrepreneurship landscape with the launch of the Startup India initiative in 2016 and has recently embarked the next phase of growth as 'Startup India 2.0'. India is making a strong presence in global startup ecosystem with the launch of 'Startup20', the policy platform created under India's G20 presidency and BRICS Startup Forum. Startups have gained greater relevance as a major driving force of Innovation and economic growth across the nation. But startups execute in a very challenging, complex, and highly competitive landscape with a high failure rate. They need a very supportive ecosystem and enabler programs to overcome the challenges and scale up as productive enterprises. Fail Fast or Succeed (FFS) program initiated by Kerala Startup Mission in 2020 is a Customized support program based on lean startup methodology for quick validation of startups to move forward, pivot, or exit. The mortality rate of startups is high in the initial phase where the ideas get validated and quick realization happens. As the validated startups move to next stage, the mortality level becomes less and they attain faster growth. The program works very closely with startups from idea validation to scaling up by the formation of stage-wise cohorts, alignment of mentors, business development sessions, investor pitch support, industry validation, and execution of scale-up accelerators and incubators. This unique and holistic program is a pioneer in the startup ecosystem acting as a guide post startups and other ecosystems.

Key Words - Startup Life Cycle, Ecosystem, Fail Fast or Succeed (FFS), Enablers, Kerala Startup Mission, Startup India, Entrepreneurship

## I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship and innovation are the buzzwords of today's economic landscape. In his 75th Independence Day speech, Honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for India to become a leader in innovation and job creation. India revamped and accelerated the innovation journey with the launch of 'Start-Up India', 'Make in India', Digital India', 'Atal Innovation Mission', and 'Skill India' initiatives. India's significant improvement in the ranking of the Global Innovation Index from 81 in 2015–16 to 40 in 2022 confirms that we are in the right direction (WIPO, 2022). The Startup India initiative was strategically launched in 2016 by the Government of India to promote a robust start-up ecosystem in the country resulting in higher employment generation(Startup India, 2021). India currently boasts about having 3rd largest startup ecosystem of 99,380 start-ups from a mere 733 reported in 2016-17 (Startup India, 2021). This tremendous growth is a holistic one, with the creation of lakhs of new jobs, 47 percent presence of start-ups in tier two and tier three cities, and women-led start-ups counting to 45 percent (Women Entrepreneur, 2023).

Indian startup ecosystem is on the path of maturity and has embarked the next phase of growth as 'Startup India 2.0'. India is making a strong presence in the global startup ecosystem with the launch of 'Startup20'(Aggarwal and

Narain, 2023), the policy platform created under India's G20 presidency(Vaishnav and Yousuf, 2023) and BRICS Startup Forum to promote collaboration among startups, investors and incubators across its member countries(Jakhar, 2023). However, startups execute in a very challenging, complex, and highly competitive landscape with a high failure rate (Endris and Kassegn, 2022). They need a very supportive ecosystem and enabler programs to overcome the challenges and scale up as productive enterprises.

Fail Fast or Succeed (FFS) program initiated by Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) is a Customized support program based on Fail Fast or Succeed fast to achieve startup goals quickly. FFS works very closely with startups from idea validation to scaling up by formation of stage-wise cohorts, alignment of mentors, Business development sessions, Investor pitch support, and industry validation, execution of scale-up accelerators and incubators. This unique and holistic program is a pioneer in the startup ecosystem acting as a guide post startups and other ecosystems.

## A. The Startup Ecosystem – Purpose and Growth

Startups in India and across the world have received increased attention in the last two decades. They have a big role to play as impactful vehicles for socio-economic development, job creation and growth. This is highly relevant as India gears its journey to become one of the top three economies in the world and a developed nation. In the formative years, the key features of startups are innovativeness, scalability, and rapid growth. Startups are founded by passionate people to create unique and irreplaceable products and services(Korreck, 2019). India's large youth population bring in a rich demographic dividend. Startup India launched in 2016 is the decisive and phenomenal intervention by the government of India which brought innovators, entrepreneurs and leaders to drive sustainable economic growth and large scale employment(Thakur, 2023). Startups are adding flavor to the Indian Market. India is identified as an under-penetrated consumer-driven market with scope of exponential growth. The central government through 'Startup India' is addressing the problems faced by young Indian entrepreneurs and removing the operational and regulatory bottlenecks (Chandiok, 2016). Startups bring technology enhancement, new market development, entrepreneurship and promote self-reliant India with readiness to meet future with confidence. The government of India is taking many steps like easy registration, low-cost patent filing, tax benefits, exemption in tenders and digital support to nurture startups(Kumar, 2021). The great Indian startup movement catalyzed by 'Startup India' has created a favorable environment for entrepreneurship and startups in India.

Recently India embarked 'Startup India 2.0', the second phase of entrepreneurship with focus on deep tech technologies like space, remote sensing, artificial intelligence, robotics, drones, defense and semi conductors(Aggarwal and Narain, 2023). Under India's G20 presidency 'Startup20', a policy platform for global startup ecosystem is formulated which offers a great opportunity to internationalize India's startup ecosystem(Vaishnav and Yousuf, 2023). India is all set to launch BRICS startup forum to facilitate collaboration and share best practices among entrepreneurs, investors and incubators(Jakhar, 2023).

Startups are priority channels for social, economic, and industrial development. But it is found that 60 percent of startups fail in the first stage of operations (three to five years) as they face high competition and operate in a highly chaotic environment with limited resources. Entrepreneurial Ecosystems build collaborative networks with different actors like angel investors, venture capitalists, suppliers and innovation agencies which help to address the knowledge and resource gaps and help startups to overcome the challenges. Adopting a life cycle approach can aid in sustaining the success of new startups(Passaro et al., 2020). With their inherent ability to innovate, startups can strengthen and turn India as a powerhouse of solutions for the world. The current young generation is technology and entrepreneurship-savvy. Their strengths can be channelized in the right direction with the right government and ecosystem support. The development of startups in modern technologies can strengthen the job market (Thomas, 2021). Startups thrive on innovation and creativity. Startups affect GDP, GNI, per capita GDP and export of the nation resulting economic development. They help in creating more jobs and improve the standard of living (Girnara, 2020).

## B. Challenges in The Startup Ecosystem

Starting a business today is challenging and complicated considering the frequent changes in technology, innovation, product development, competition, and regulatory laws (Alqahtani, 2022). Startups encounter setbacks during the scaling-up stage because of a lack of business models, finances, the right talent, and product acceptance in the market. Government has a big role to play in strengthening the ecosystem starting from ideation till scaling up. Government should take specific measures in simplifying registration and compliance procedures, and build awareness and support in mentor identification (Chincholkar, 2021). Barriers faced by startups include idea not viable, lack of funding, limited resources, nature and location of business, incorrect target market, lack of essential skills and Government rules and policies (Kumar, 2021). Startup failures are caused by internal factors like lack of managerial experience, industry knowledge, technical expertise and access to finance. External factors include lack of market response, supply chain management, high cost of production and distribution and intense competition (Sudiana et al.,

2020). Startup is a new vehicle to exploit a new idea. Main challenges faced by startups include marketing, financial and other challenges. Government of India has brought in a number of initiatives like self-certification, Startup India hub, Grants and patent protection to nurture and grow the startups (Jegadeeshwaran and Kaleeshwari, 2021). Startups face a series of challenges during the early development phase and many encounter the Valley of Death where the business is unable to break even and have a break through. The causes include limited funding, high initial cost, lack of cooperation, government support, and selling and marketing issues. The solution includes team building, technology development, ecosystem, collaboration, funding, business development, technology management, company building and early marketing to bridge the gap of the valley of death (Gbadegeshin et al., 2022). Startups face huge competition and a chaotic and rapidly evolving environment with limited resources. The major challenges include funding and investor connections, lack of business knowledge, marketing strategy for generation of customers and revenue, the threat of regulations, lack of mentorship, intense competition, good branding strategy, regional and global business expansion plan, and talent crunch. Startups struggle to overcome these challenges but very few survive. 60 percent of startups fail within the first 5 years of their creation. This high failure rate of startups needs our immediate attention. Startup failure rates can be reduced only with the right mentorship, support system, programs, and enablers to nurture and grow them in the early life cycle stages (Chincholkar, 2021).

### C. The Startup Ecosystem and its Enablers

Enablers, accelerators, and incubators are providing startups with growth advice and necessary tools for decision-making (Chandiok, 2016). Enablers of startup sustainability include internal factors like product/service market position, partnership and resources, funding strategy, and team. External enablers are the entrepreneurial ecosystem, industrial and market, regulatory and political, socio-Cultural and technological environment. The research summarized that the entrepreneurial ecosystem has the most effect on all other factors for long-term viability of the business. The creation of a collaborative and supportive ecosystem bringing enabling agents like investors, incubators, accelerators, mentors, and government bodies can boost the growth and success rate of startups (Alqahtani, 2022). Government has an important role to play in this regard. A focused study and approach is the key to understanding the unique needs and challenges at different stages of the Startup lifecycle. Silicon valley has proved itself as a well-integrated and balanced ecosystem promoting and sustaining leading-edge innovation and pioneering entrepreneurship. Silicon valley innovation and Startup model is a comprehensive model which identified the micro factors – big idea/product, team & talent, pivot and persevere, meso level institutions for funding, supporting innovation, government and network and supporting agencies like accelerators, legal counselors and mentors plus macro level pointing to the culture applauding innovation and entrepreneurship. Silicon Valley identifies the major role accelerators play in developing and pivoting startup products, bringing to market, business model and marketing strategy refinement, training, funding, helping in getting first customers, networking, and creating a startup conducive culture (Ester, 2017). Startups contribute to economic growth and social change of a nation by developing innovative products and services. But Startups are newborn and face many challenges especially from a shortage of resources. Ecosystem-based approach support exchange of business opportunities, financial support and networking. Incubators provide administration, counseling, operational and some times financial support. Accelerators support networking and business consulting(Ojaghi et al., 2019). Support of incubator, accelerator and mentoring and being part of entrepreneurial ecosystem gives access to complementary resources was beneficial in scaling up(Bertucci Ramos and Pedroso, 2022). Business incubators add value by combining the entrepreneurial spirit of start-ups with supporting resources that are needed for new businesses. Incubators help to save cost and reduce risks by providing infrastructure, training, networking and technology access (Wasdani et al., 2022).

### D. Lean Startup Methodology

Startup life cycle includes different stages which are pre-startup/discovery, startup and growth. Discovery phase includes validation of the idea, identification of the target market and verification of product-market fit. The startup phase includes the implementation of the idea, defining and refining the business model and getting revenue. Growth is increasing the customer base and identifying strategies for aggressive growth (Sharma et al., 2018). Startup stages are classified as pioneering, growth and expansion. Finding solutions for problems and idea validation happens in the pioneering stage. Commercialization occurs in the growth stage. Startup team, business models, funding and incubators play a major role in startup success(Binowo and Hidayanto, 2023). Lean startup methodology favors experimentation over elaborate planning, frequent customer feedback over intuition or assumptions, and iterative design or big design development. Minimum Viable Prototype (MVP) and pivoting are important concepts that are part of this(Blank, 2013).

Innovation forms the foundation for startups. It is the successful commercial implementation of new ideas in product/service, process or business model. Frugal innovations maximize customer and shareholder values with less

resources. Lean and agile startups which are data driven following light business models are frugal by birth and has an advantage of other firms (Prabhu, 2017). Startups turn unsuccessful because their identified idea is not viable, or they failed in executing the idea well enough to gain market share before running out of cash. Lean startups is a methodology to check product market fit with a minimum viable product through build measure learn feedback loop (Allen, 2022). Eric Ries introduced the Lean Startup term in his famous book 'The Lean Startup'. Lean startup methodology is based on build, Measure and Learn approach. It starts with Idea which gets translated to MVP for quick validation. Based on the test, decision to pivot or persevere is decided (Ries, 2008).
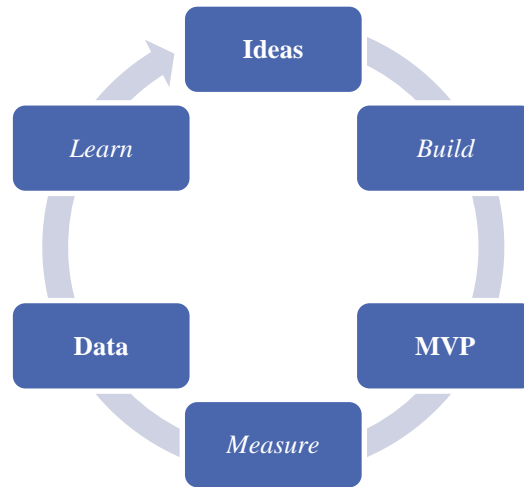


**Figure 1: The Lean Startup Methodology**
*Source : Secondary (The Lean Startup, Eric Rice)*

Listening to customers early is very important for startup success. More startups fail because of lack of customers. Customer Validation is an iterative process starting with customer discovery. The hypotheses and assumptions are tested during customer validation and necessary changes are adopted in the Minimum Viable Product accordingly (Blank, 2013).
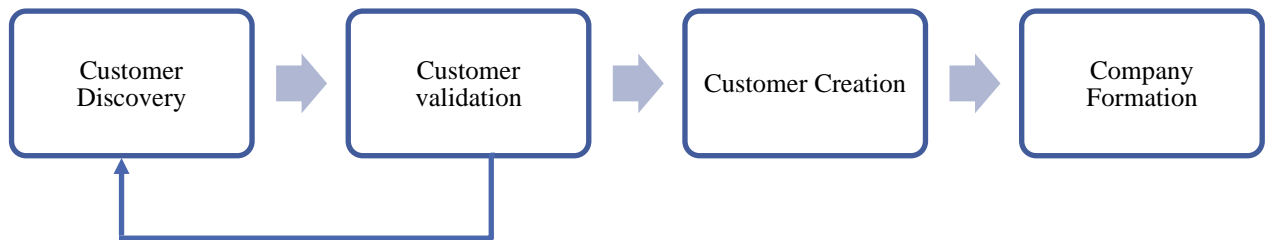


**Figure 2: Customer Development Process**
*Source : Author*

Techstars run mentorship driven three months accelerator programs to support entrepreneurs by doing things faster. Getting Feedback early is the lifeblood of any startup. Early advice and feedback help in addressing important questions and trying out different options (Cohen, 2019).

### E. Kerala Startup Mission

Kerala has been a pioneer in developing and promoting entrepreneurship. The state was identified as the top-performing state in startup ranking of states for three consecutive years including 2021. Kerala has set apart one percent of the state's annual budget for entrepreneurship development initiatives. The Kerala Startup Mission (KSUM) is the nodal agency of the government of Kerala for promoting entrepreneurship in the state by implementing Kerala Technology Startup Policy schemes and support programs. Kerala currently has 3900 plus registered startups, 20 Lakh

plus sq. feet of incubation space, 40 plus incubators and 300 plus innovation centres across the state of Kerala(Kerala Startup Mission, 2021).

**F.  Fail Fast or Succeed (FFS)**

Fail Fast or Succeed (FFS) is a cohort-based flexible and customized startup life cycle program defined by Kerala Startup Mission to enable startups at various life cycle stages. It was initiated in 2020 and is based on the Lean Methodology principle of fail fast to identify a new solid idea or succeed faster and achieve the startup goals(Kerala Startup Mission, 2020). The mortality rate of startups is high in the initial phase where the ideas get validated and quick realization happens. This saves much wastage of time, manpower and cost of early startups. As the validated startups move to next stage, the mortality level becomes less and they attain accelerated growth. From the previous experiences, it is well understood that for every startup's journey there needs to be a serious intervention to make them move to the next stage.  It is a comprehensive model that is being refined after every Cohort implementation with the learnings.

**Table 1: FFS - Cohort Statistics**

| Life Cycle Stage | Number of Cohorts Completed |
|---|---|
| F1 - Pre – Incubation | 4 |
| F2 – Product Development | 2 |
| F3 – Pilot | 2 |

| Life Cycle Stage | Count of Startups that Participated in Global events |
|---|---|
| F4 – Scale Up | 220 |

*Source: Author*

FFS includes stages defined from F1 to F4 with a unique set of activities and program enablers for each stage. Startups will be matched to the corresponding stage based on their current life cycle stage and maturity. FFS also gives startups flexibility to join the FFS at any of the stages based on their current life cycle stage. FFS provides the required checkpoints and realization time to continue and move forward to subsequent stage, exit or pivot.
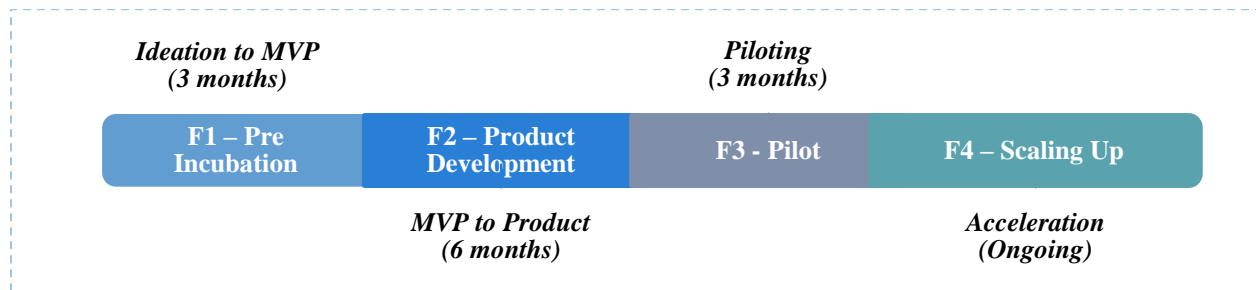


**Figure 3: FFS Startup Life Cycle**
*Source: Author*

**A.  F1 – Pre Incubation – Idea to MVP**

Pre-Incubation is a well-crafted and intensive program spanning 12 weeks to empower an aspiring entrepreneur to move from the Ideation to the MVP stage. There are multiple checkpoints in this phase based on FFS principles which guide startups to continue forward, make changes, or exit.
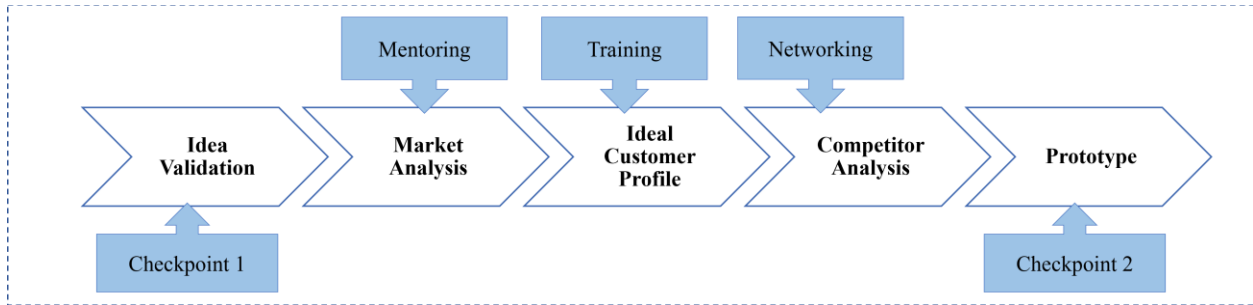
**Figure 4 : F1 – Pre-Incubation**
*Source: Author*

**Table 2: Pre-incubation Summary**

| Pre Incubation | Count |
|---|---|
| Number of Cohorts completed/In progress | 4 |
| Total number of overall registrations | 800 |
| Selected after preliminary screening | 250 |
| Startups that went to the next level after completion | 50 |

*Source: Author*

The detailed activities of pre-incubation phase are provided for reference below.

**Table 3: Pre-Incubation activities**

| Activities | Enablers & Programs |
|---|---|
| ● Idea screening for feasibility & Viability<br>● Problem to Solution Fit<br>● Market Analysis<br>● Ideal Customer Profile (ICP)<br>● Competitor Analysis<br>● Business Model Canvas<br>● MVP Development | ● Mentor Identification<br>● Idea validation<br>● Problem Solution Canvas preparation<br>● Ideal Customer Profile Identification<br>● Business Model Canvas preparation<br>● Pitch deck preparation support<br>● Demo day for investors |

*Source : Author*

## B. F2 - Product Development

Journey from a minimum viable prototype (MVP) to a product could be very uncertain for many startups. F2 - Incubation is the second stage program spanning 6 months. It is designed to help early stage to mid stage startups looking for a kick-start and connects. The program creates the optimal environment for such startups to scale up by providing support in the form of labs, incubation space, development tools and connecting the company with widespread network of evaluators and mentors, who are also investors, accelerators, and industry veterans. B2B, B2C and B2G need specific strategies and approaches in this phase.
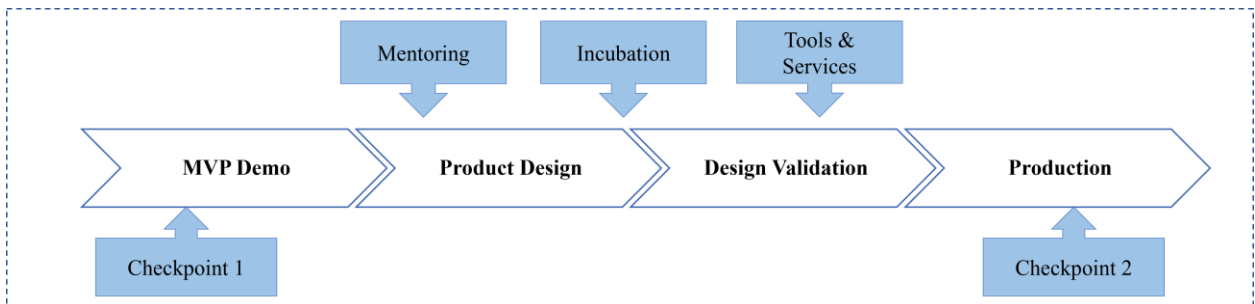
**Figure 5 : F2 – Product Development**
*Source: Author*

The detailed activities of product development phase are provided for reference.

**Table 4: Product Development activities**

| Activities | Enablers |
|---|---|
| ● Product Feature list<br>● Technical Solution<br>● Design for Manufacture & Assembly (DFMA)<br>● Bill Of Material<br>● Vendor/Supplier Identification<br>● Product Development<br>● Infrastructure | ● KPI alignment with Mentor<br>● Weekly Progress Catch-up & Demos<br>● Design support<br>● Tools & Services Support<br>● Peer Learning<br>● Cohort Office Hours<br>● Product Demo<br>● Incubation support |

*Source : Author*

## C. F3 – Piloting

Piloting phase includes programs that enable start-ups to perform Product validation and industry feedback and support startups to scale up and generate more revenues. It also includes Collaboration, Co-innovation, and Co-creation initiatives between Start-ups and corporates. Piloting initiatives include market/revenue accelerator programs like Scale 10X, conducted in partnership with GrowthX which was a 16 weeks program for 20 startups.
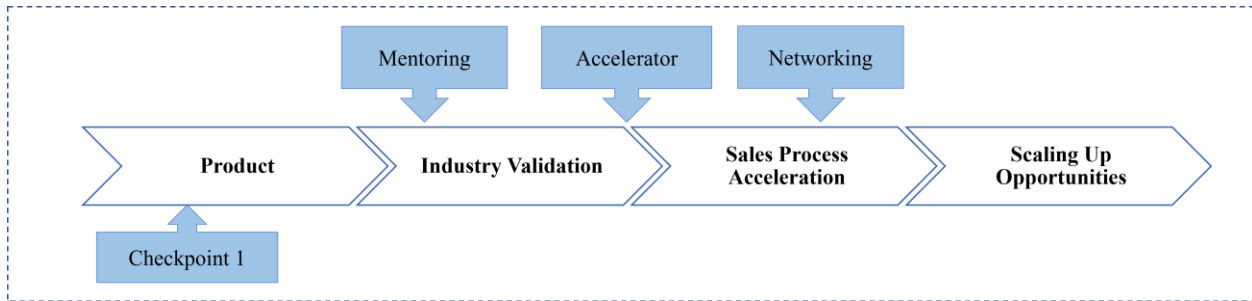


**Figure 6 : F3 – Pilot**
*Source: Author*

**Table 5: Product Development – Summary**

| Product Development  (Current Sprint) | Count |
|---|---|
| Number of registrations | 100 |
| Number of startups selected after initial screening | 25 |

*Source : Author*

Below are the activities and enablers of Pilot phase given for reference.

**Table 6: Pilot activities**

| Activities | Enablers |
|---|---|
| ● Product validation and industry feedback<br>● Scale up and generate more revenue | ● Market/Revenue accelerator program<br>● Industry validation of the start-up products - PoC/Co-innovation/Co-creation<br>● Incubation support |

**D. F4 - Scaling up**

Opportunities for learning, marketing, branding, networking, fundraising, partnerships. Outcomes include Business Expansion, setting up of global offices, new business leads, and investments. GITEX GLOBAL GITEX ("Gulf Information Technology Exhibition") is one of the world's most influential meeting places for the technology industry; bringing together thought-leaders, creators, innovators and makers to discuss, debate and challenge new ideology, showcase new products and identify future opportunities that takes place in Dubai World Trade Centre. 20 Startups from Kerala participated in 2021 and 40 in 2022.

**Table 7: Scaling up activities**

| Activities | Enablers |
|---|---|
| ● Identify Potential clients and partners<br>● Gain contacts and knowledge<br>● Go To Market Strategy<br>● Networking and mentorship<br>● Learn from similar companies | ● Global Market expansion support<br>● Event delegations<br>● Global accelerator programs<br>● Business Connects/Industry Connects<br>● Soft landing Supports<br>● Partnership Connects & Alliances support |

*Source: Author*

## G. METHODOLOGY

**A. Objectives**
- To study the unique Fail Fast or Succeed - Startup Life Cycle Support program.
- To assess the beneficiary perception of the Fail Fast or Succeed program and its different life cycle stages

**B. Population**

The population for the study includes startups at different life cycle stages from incubation to Scaling up which are currently registered in Kerala.

**C. Sample**

The sample for the study includes startups that completed specific life cycle stages from incubation to Scaling up.

**Table 8: Sampling Design**

| Stages | Current Cohort Population count | Number of Respondents | Percentage of respondents |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Pre-Incubation** | 40 | 27 | 67.5% |
| **Incubation** | 25 | 19 | 76% |
| **Pilot** | 20 | 13 | 65% |

*Source : Author*

A questionnaire Survey was executed as the medium for data collection. Three different questionnaires were shared with questions addressing the specific stages of startup life cycle - pre-Incubation, product development and pilot.

## H. FINDINGS

**A. F1 – Pre-Incubation Analysis**

The feedback was collected from set of startups who were part of the pre-incubation cohort. There was good representation from urban and rural startups. Urban was 52 percent while Rural was 45 percent. 82 percent startups were founded by young entrepreneurs (20 -30 age group). 78 percent startups were product based while 22 percent were service based.

**Table 9: Pre-Incubation Feedback**

| Parameters | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Problem to Solution Fit readiness | 48% | 44% | 4% | 4% | |
| Detailed Market Analysis | 26% | 52% | 19% | 4% | |
| Ideal Customer Profile Identification | 30% | 48% | 22% | | |
| Detailed Competitor Analysis | 26% | 63% | 11% | | |
| Comprehensive Business Model Canvas | 30% | 48% | 22% | | |
| Develop prototype | 41% | 48% | 7% | | 4% |
| Mentor support | 19% | 56% | 15% | 11% | |
| Training Programs | 44% | 44% | 11% | 0% | |
| Network with similar startups | 15% | 33% | 41% | 11% | |
| Idea on Fund generation, grants etc | 15% | 48% | 33% | 4% | |
| Pre-incubation program was beneficial | 48% | 44% | 8% | | |

*Source: Author*

Overall, the pre-incubation program was quite beneficial to the startups and enabled them to make considerable progress on key parameters. 92 percent participants responded positively and found the program beneficial. The scoring was above 75 percent for all the parameters assessed like program to solution fit, market analysis, customer identification, competitor analysis, mentor support, training programs except financial awareness activities and networking. As the program is in evolving phase, there needs to be special focus in the two areas identified and should continue to assess the improvements.

### B. F2 – Incubation Analysis
The respondent group consisted of startups who had completed pre-incubation as well fresh entrants who directly joined the current cohort. 79 percent belonged to urban while 21percent belonged to rural sector. 37 percent of founders were young (20 to 30 years) while 32 percent belonged to age group (30 to 40) and 32 percent were from age group greater than 40. 74 percent are product-based startups while 26 percent belong to services.

**Table 10: Product Development Feedback**

| Parameters | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Product development support | 21% | 26% | 26% | 11% | 16% |
| Design support for the product development | 11% | 16% | 47% | 11% | 16% |
| Technology support for the product development | 11% | 16% | 47% | 11% | 16% |
| Tools & Services credit support for the product development | 11% | 37% | 26% | 11% | 16% |
| Mentor support and expert guidance | 21% | 32% | 32% | | 16% |
| Training programs | 21% | 47% | 16% | | 16% |
| Network with similar startups | 21% | 32% | 21% | 11% | 16% |
| Received idea on Fund generation, grants, Legal aspects etc | 26% | 37% | 21% | | 16% |
| Program was beneficial in the startup journey to move forward to next phase | 26% | 47% | 11% | | 16% |

*Source: Author*

The startups found the overall program beneficial to move forward. 73 percent provided positive feedback. The feedback was 50 percent or more for the parameters including product development support, tools & services credit support, training programs and networking with similar startups and idea on fund generation. The two areas where

we can improve are providing additional design and technical support during product development which will prove beneficial for the startups in the productization phase.

## C. F3 – Pilot phase Analysis

The respondent group consisted of startups who had completed incubation as well as fresh entrants who directly joined the accelerator program. 77 percent belonged to urban while 23 percent belonged to rural sector. 46 percent of founders were from age group greater than 40 while 39 percent of founders belonged to age group (30 to 40) and only 15 percent belonged to 20-30 age group. 62 percent are product-based startups while 31percent belong to services.

**Table 11: Pilot Feedback**

| Parameters | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Review of Market Strategy was beneficial | 54% | 46% | | | |
| Review and update of understanding of customers to reach out was beneficial | 39% | 61% | | | |
| Review of current resources for optimization | 31% | 61% | 8% | | |
| Review of the sales process was beneficial | 23% | 69% | 8% | | |
| Provided clarity on the startup fundraising/investment process | 15% | 8% | 62% | 8% | 8% |
| Mentor support and expert guidance | 15% | 39% | 38% | 8% | |
| Hands-on workshops were sufficient | 31% | 23% | 38% | 8% | |
| Identified areas to scale up and grow | 23% | 77% | | | |
| Program participation was beneficial in the startup journey to move forward confidently | 31% | 69% | | | |

*Source: Author*

The startups found the overall program quite beneficial in the piloting phase to be ready for scale-up phase. 100 percent respondents responded positively about the program effectiveness. The majority of the parameters scored extremely high (greater than 90 percent) while mentoring and hands on workshops scored 54 percent. The program needs to have a special focus on financial education which will be beneficial for the startups in pilot phase.

## D. F4 - Scaling Up

Startups can join the scale-up program directly or after completion of pilot phase or after completion of all the life cycle stages. Till now 220 startups have benefited from this initiative. 40 startups participated in the 2022 GITEX event held in Dubai. Startups get Market access support, product launch support, global exposure to launch in new country, registration, investment, business development support and opportunities to participate in Tech show case events. These delegations are government sponsored with startups incurring only 10 percent of the overall cost. There is also opportunity for delegation and partnership collaboration, ecosystem meet up, round table pitching meetings for investors and government support.

## I. CONCLUSION

There is a tremendous focus on startups in India today as the major driving force of Innovation and economic growth which is expected to accelerate further. But as we all know, startups execute in a very challenging, complex, and highly competitive landscape. They need a very supportive ecosystem and enabler programs to overcome the challenges and succeed with quick and accelerated delivery and minimal cost.

Fail Fast or Succeed (FFS) program is based on lean startup methodology of faster and early validation. Startups decide to move forward, pivot and exit based on early feedbacks. The program works very closely with startups at different life cycle stages from idea validation to scaling up by formation of stage-wise cohorts, alignment of mentors, Business development sessions, Investor pitch support, industry validation, execution of scale-up accelerators and incubators. This unique and holistic program is a pioneer in the startup ecosystem acting as a guide post to startups and other ecosystems.

## J. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

This study focused on identifying the enablers of the startup ecosystem with consideration to its life cycle stages. The study measured the effectiveness of the enablers in the startup life cycle activities and overall performance. The FFS program proved to be really beneficial for participating startups to move forward confidently in its startup journey. In the pre-incubation phase, there was 45 percent of rural startups which got reduced to 21 percent in product development phase. Rural startups need infrastructure, advisory and financial support to embark and succeed in product development. The representation from young entrepreneurs (20-30 age group) was 82 percent in pre-incubation which got reduced to 37 percent during product development. Young entrepreneurs need additional mentoring and guidance from industry experts to persevere and sustain. The enabler programs need to strengthen financial awareness initiatives and provide additional design and technical support during product development phase. Similar programs are a need of the hour in all ecosystems across India that are working with startups to improve the overall success rate and fulfill India's vision to be a leader in entrepreneurship.

## K. ORIGINALITY AND CONTRIBUTION

The paper is prepared with the actual learnings and experience of the FFS program run by Kerala Startup Mission.

## L. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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