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The Global Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

Mapping the Institutions, Capital and Networks Behind Venture Creation



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About this book

Entrepreneurship does not emerge from founders alone. A working ecosystem combines accessible customers, capable people, institutions that create and transfer knowledge, finance matched to company stage, practical infrastructure, trusted services and a culture that permits experimentation without ignoring risk. A place can have many events and few customers; it can attract large venture rounds while leaving most firms without bankable revenue; it can produce research but fail to turn discoveries into usable products. This guide describes how to map that complexity, identify real bottlenecks and design a manageable ecosystem-building programme. It is written for people who want to measure outcomes rather than celebrate activity.

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1. Define the Ecosystem and Its Boundaries

The ecosystem is a network of outcomes

An entrepreneurship ecosystem is not synonymous with a government startup portal, accelerator brand, coworking building or venture capital fund. It is the collection of capabilities and relationships that enable ideas to be tested, firms to be formed, customers to be won and sustainable organizations to be grown. An ecosystem can be defined for a city, region, sector or cross-border corridor, but the boundary must reflect actual operating connections. A founder in one country may sell to customers elsewhere, work with a distributed product team and raise capital from a third jurisdiction. Geography still affects employment, education, regulation and proximity, but founders do not experience a country's entrepreneurial environment as one uniform system.

Begin by defining who the ecosystem intends to serve. First-time microenterprise founders require different support from deep-tech university spin-offs, high-growth SaaS teams or established family businesses entering new sectors. The expected outcome also matters. Creating more legal entities is not the same as increasing productive businesses, job quality or commercialization. Measure each goal with the correct denominator and time horizon.

Respect differences between available datasets

The World Bank's Entrepreneurship Database defines new business density through newly registered limited-liability companies per 1,000 working-age people, and its latest broadly available series extends through 2024 [R2]. This measures an important formal-registration dimension, not every informal business, startup, side project or venture-backed firm. The 2026 WIPO Global

Innovation Index uses roughly eighty indicators covering innovation ecosystems and ranks 139 economies [R1]. Startup Genome's 2026 research applies a narrower technology-startup and ecosystem methodology [R4]. These sources illuminate different questions, so their headline rankings or counts are not interchangeable.

A region may improve on new registrations without improving survival or customer exports. Another may host world-class research while lacking seed finance. Diagnose what each indicator captures and what it omits before claiming an ecosystem is growing or underperforming.

Chapter output: ecosystem scope, beneficiary groups, outcome definition and measurement caveats. Gate: do not equate entity registrations, innovation rankings and investment returns.

2. Map Actors, Incentives and Missing Links

Institutions have different jobs

An ecosystem map should include founders, early customers, angel investors, venture funds, banks, universities, technical colleges, research labs, incubators, accelerators, coworking providers, professional advisers, corporate innovation teams, regulators, public agencies, talent networks and international distribution partners. Add associations and community organizations that connect underrepresented founders to reliable support. Listing actors is not enough; map the actual exchanges between them: referrals, procurement, mentorship, licensing, apprenticeships, experiments, finance and customer introductions.

For every category, ask who pays, what incentive makes the organization participate and how performance is verified. A university may value student learning, scientific publications and commercialization. A venture fund may seek financial return under its mandate. A corporate buyer may prioritize reliability, procurement compliance and useful innovation. A founder needs customers, cash and timely decisions. Programmes fail when they assume these motives automatically align.

Find gaps at the interfaces

A startup may complete an accelerator yet never reach a paying buyer because the programme measured pitch attendance rather than customer acquisition. A research lab may secure IP rights but lack commercialization specialists. Government procurement may announce innovation goals but require supplier criteria inaccessible to new entrants. Investors may complain about weak deals while refusing the small validation commitments that improve readiness. These are interface failures between organizations, not necessarily an absolute shortage of entrepreneurship activity.

Map the founder journey as a sequence: awareness, problem definition, testing, formation, first sale, repeat sale, team expansion, financing and international growth. Identify the time, money, information and permissions required at each transition. Interview both successful and unsuccessful participants; otherwise the analysis suffers survivorship bias. Focus on the two bottlenecks a small programme can actually change.

Chapter output: stakeholder map, incentive matrix and founder journey with verified friction points. Gate: no public partner claim without a real relationship and permission to describe it.

3. Understand Clusters Without Worshipping Rankings

Density can help, but causality is complex

Entrepreneurial clusters may benefit from experienced employees, repeat founders, local customers, specialist investors and knowledge spillovers. Strong universities and corporate headquarters can increase opportunities for collaboration and high-skill employment. Yet expensive property, concentrated capital, weak access for outsiders and sector dependence can also shape outcomes. A prominent cluster does not guarantee affordable talent or an easy path to a first enterprise sale.

WIPO's 2026 index identifies leading economies and science-and-technology clusters using its defined innovation indicators [R1]. Startup Genome's 2026 methodology uses factors including performance, funding, market reach, talent, AI-native cluster activity and R&D [R4]. Each methodology is valuable for its question, but neither should be treated as a universal score for every startup or as evidence that one city's policy copied elsewhere will produce the same result.

Compare peers and sectors, not only global leaders

For a smaller ecosystem, a more useful comparison may be a similar city with an analogous income level, industrial base, workforce and institutional capacity. Compare sector-specific strengths and gaps. A logistics region might be better placed to validate industrial software than a fashionable consumer app category. A university with strong agriculture science can build applied agtech relationships without pretending to be a full-spectrum technology hub. The question is where genuine existing assets can meet specific customers.

Build a cluster profile with major industries, talent supply, research outputs, customer anchors, procurement conditions, logistics, early finance, cost base and migration friction. Identify which signals are documented data, which come from interviews and which are untested assumptions. Update the profile periodically because an ecosystem is not static.

Chapter output: peer comparison and evidence-based regional positioning. Gate: do not imply WIPO, OECD or Startup Genome recognition of an organization merely because their data is cited.

4. Match Capital to the Venture Lifecycle

Every funding source carries different trade-offs

Bootstrapping, customer revenue, bank credit, grants, angel investment, venture capital, strategic corporate investment, revenue-based arrangements and acquisition finance meet different needs. Venture capital is not the universal goal. A cash-generative services company may sensibly use retained earnings; a science venture may require grants and patient research capital before commercial investment is possible. Founders need to understand dilution, debt service, control rights, reporting expectations and conditions attached to non-dilutive grants.

An ecosystem finance map should show available instruments by company stage, ticket size, sector, eligibility, decision time and true application process. Include what the founder must demonstrate to qualify. A public announcement of a fund size is not proof that a specific startup can access it. A directory of investors is not evidence of introductions, warm relationships or actual funded transactions. Avoid listing unverified personal emails or promising funding outcomes.

Build a capital ladder, not just a demo day

The first capital a venture needs may be a small paid customer experiment, not an equity round. An intervention that helps founders secure a verified problem, pilot scope and qualified customer can improve financing readiness without acting as a financial intermediary. Where investment solicitation, regulated advisory services or the management of other people's funds is contemplated, determine the applicable license and professional obligations first.

Consider a hypothetical deep-tech startup that needs $25,000 to validate manufacturing repeatability, then $200,000 for an industry pilot, then several million for expansion. These are illustrative stage sizes, not typical market data. The ecosystem's job is to connect each milestone to suitable capital and decision evidence, not to manufacture an unrealistic growth forecast.

Chapter output: stage-to-finance matrix and gaps in the capital ladder. Gate: funding introductions and financial services must remain within legal and authorized scope.

5. Connect Universities, Research and Industry

Translation is a distinct capability

Scientific discovery, patenting and venture formation are related but different processes. A promising laboratory result may need reproducibility work, prototype engineering, freedom-to-operate analysis, clinical or regulatory approvals and customer validation before becoming a product. Universities need practical rules for invention disclosure, ownership, research contracting, conflicts of interest and licensing. WIPO's university IP policy toolkit explains the role of clear intellectual-property management and technology-transfer arrangements in university-industry collaboration [R5].

Do not measure successful commercialization only by the number of spin-off announcements. Track paid industry projects, prototype adoption, licensing terms when appropriately disclosed, founders trained, customer contracts and the sustainability of the resulting firms. A patent count may reflect valuable research but not necessarily customer demand. Likewise, an incubator inside a university does not imply degree authority, accreditation or endorsement of a commercial product.

Design specific collaboration pathways

Begin with well-defined industry problems. Invite corporate partners to describe unmet needs through appropriate procurement rules, then match research teams to feasible experiments. Set confidentiality, IP access, publication rights, data safeguards and milestone ownership before sensitive work begins. A proof-of-concept agreement should state what it proves and what it does

not; completion of a pilot must not be represented as a long-term purchase order or investment commitment.

A region could operate a generic 'Research-to-Market Clinic' with short workshops on invention disclosure, customer discovery, IP licensing and pricing. It should openly distinguish education from regulated advice, offer referrals to qualified professionals and publish measured outputs. There is no suggestion that Silicon Founders has already established this programme.

Chapter output: research-to-market process map and template for a fair project charter. Gate: no claimed university relationship, IP transfer or credential without verified authority.

6. Remove Infrastructure and Policy Friction

Founders encounter practical costs, not policy slogans

Business registration, banking access, reliable connectivity, work permits, payment acceptance, logistics, contract enforcement, tax clarity and data rules affect the real cost of starting and operating. A country's nominal incorporation fee may be low while opening a business bank account or completing cross-border KYC remains difficult. Diagnosis should examine the complete founder journey. Regulatory simplification must not remove essential protections for consumers, workers, privacy or public safety.

The OECD's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Diagnostics materials organize indicators across inputs, entrepreneurship outputs and distributional balance [R3]. Such an approach helps policymakers locate system bottlenecks rather than presume the same solution applies everywhere. A single incubator cannot compensate for inaccessible customers or broken payment infrastructure; nor does building a technology park automatically create skilled teams.

Prioritize reforms with measurable ownership

Choose a small number of interventions, assign a responsible organization, identify the process to change and establish a measurement baseline. An example may be reducing average time from a complete eligible application to a clearly communicated decision; another may be increasing the proportion of small suppliers completing an actual procurement pilot. Confirm the baseline and official scope before announcing improvements. Avoid artificial targets that encourage low-quality registrations or reported events instead of meaningful business formation.

Public and private institutions should publish transparent eligibility, conflict rules and complaint paths. Accessibility and language options can expand participation, but translation alone is insufficient when eligibility requires resources unavailable to the target group. Measure who benefits, not just who attends.

Chapter output: friction register, agency owner and measured intervention priority. Gate: reforms and permissions must be verified through the proper authority.

7. Build Cross-Border Bridges With Verifiable Value

Internationalization is a customer process

Cross-border programmes should connect specific supply capabilities with specific demand. A delegation visit is not an export sale. A memorandum of understanding is not necessarily a funded project. A useful bridge involves qualified buyer discovery, market intelligence, distributor or channel diligence, procurement understanding, language and service localization, logistics, tax and data review. Define what each intermediary actually contributes and how results are evidenced.

Remote-first ventures can access global expertise, but cross-border hiring, intellectual property and customer data still raise local questions. A venture with customers in one jurisdiction and engineers in another must understand contracting, invoicing, support hours and data processing. Global opportunity does not erase local operating obligations.

Choose corridors using complementarity

Different regions have different assets. A cluster with strong engineering talent may benefit from access to industry buyers elsewhere; a capital-rich market may seek specialized research or venture-building capability. A proposed corridor should begin with verifiable complementary needs rather than assumptions about prestige. Compare the cost of acquiring one credible customer or licensed partner through the corridor with direct commercial alternatives. A relationship manager should record the organization's official identity, source, stated interest and next authorized step; no relationship is real simply because a name appears in a CRM.

A cross-border ecosystem initiative should preserve the independence of its participating institutions. It should not borrow a partner's regulatory credentials, accreditation or financial permissions. Contracts, rights and representations require explicit authority.

Chapter output: corridor selection criteria and qualified international relationship pipeline. Gate: no invented partnership, institutional endorsement or customer acquisition result.

8. Measure Outcomes and Inclusion With Discipline

Activity is not impact

Events hosted, newsletters sent and registered members can be useful operating measures, but they are not equivalent to revenue, employment, business survival or innovation commercialization. Use a hierarchy: resources deployed, services delivered, immediate user outcomes, firm-level behavior change, and broader economic outcomes. Distinguish attribution from association. A startup joining an accelerator and later raising capital does not prove the accelerator caused the raise. Track comparison groups or plausible alternative explanations when feasible.

An ecosystem dashboard should include stage-specific indicators: number of qualified participants, customer discoveries completed, paid pilots, new repeat customers, revenue collected, investment commitments actually signed, jobs that meet clear definitions and export contracts with evidence. Count only verified outcomes and specify cohorts and time periods. Preserve privacy by using aggregated reporting and obtain appropriate permission for named case studies.

Inspect distribution of opportunity

Aggregate gains can conceal who lacks access. Examine founders by geography, business stage, accessibility needs and other categories where data can lawfully and responsibly be collected. Distinguish differences in participation from evidence of discrimination. If mentorship is available only during weekday working hours, founders with other obligations may be excluded; if all support requires fluent English, otherwise capable businesses may be missed. Design alternatives and test whether they improve participation without lowering quality.

The World Bank registration series and OECD ecosystem data illustrate the need to understand definitions and population coverage before comparisons [R2][R3]. A credible dashboard includes a data dictionary and explicit caveats rather than a single composite 'ecosystem score' presented as objective truth.

Chapter output: outcome and inclusion dashboard with sources, denominators and audit dates. Gate: no financial, job-creation or impact claim without documented evidence.

9. Design a Twelve-Month Ecosystem Action Plan

First quarter: diagnosis and selection

Set the geographic and sector scope, map institutions, interview representative founders and buyers, and gather baseline data. Create a small steering group with clear decision rights, conflicts disclosure and an accountable secretariat. Choose only two or three bottlenecks that a twelve-month programme can realistically influence. Identify what needs formal government or institutional approval before public announcement.

Second quarter: test interventions

Pilot a founder-to-customer discovery programme, a research commercialization clinic or an investor-readiness education series as appropriate to verified demand. Define intake standards and publish transparent eligibility. Record actual participants, delivered sessions, customer actions and costs. Keep referrals to investors or other regulated providers within proper legal boundaries. Do not use pilot participation as an endorsement of future earnings.

Third quarter: strengthen the links

Expand the interventions that demonstrate useful outcomes, and discontinue ones that attract attention without customer value. Help partner organizations exchange verified project information with appropriate permissions. Measure whether founders receive more qualified introductions, faster decisions or better technical assistance. Continue to test accessibility and geographic reach.

Fourth quarter: review and decide

Produce an evidence-led report with spending, outputs, verified firm outcomes, limitations and recommended next decisions. Compare the results with the baseline and explain uncertainty. Renew a programme only when it can demonstrate a defensible contribution; revise it if adoption is low. An ecosystem improves through repeated coordination between real actors, not through one launch ceremony or an ever-growing list of logos.

Chapter output: twelve-month operating calendar, decision record and evidence-based impact report. Gate: scale, grants and institutional commitments follow verified authority and results.

Appendix A. Ecosystem Actor Map and Interview Guide

Build one row per organization: official name, category, geographical scope, target beneficiaries, eligibility, offer, published fees, official source, last-verified date, contact channel, stated capacity and known relationships. Keep unverified relationships out of public materials. Ask founders about time to first sale, customer procurement, access to finance, local service barriers and which support genuinely changed an outcome. Ask investors about ticket stage, qualification criteria and recurring diligence gaps; ask corporate buyers about problems they are legally and operationally willing to purchase solutions for.

Appendix B. Ecosystem Diagnostics Scorecard

Use five dimensions with equal maximum internal scores of 20: customer and market access, talent and research translation, finance matched to stage, infrastructure and governance, and inclusive connectivity. Record 0-5 for each of four questions per dimension, using clear evidence citations. Add a separate confidence label: verified quantitative data, structured interview evidence, anecdote or unknown. Totals help prioritize research; they are not a recognized global ranking or an accreditation grade. Reject the temptation to inflate scores when data is missing.

Appendix C. Twelve-Month Intervention Roadmap

Quarter 1: ecosystem boundaries, baseline, stakeholder interviews, decision rights, two priorities. Quarter 2: two controlled pilots with costs, owners, eligibility and measured outcomes. Quarter 3: improve or stop pilots using customer and founder evidence; test international links where a buyer pathway exists. Quarter 4: independently review results, publish factual limitations, decide continuation and budget. For every milestone record owner, due date, permission gate, evidence, cost and next decision.

Appendix D. Partnership and Programme Evidence Register

A record should show the named organization, official website, contact channel, date verified, outreach permission, discussion topic, written response, relationship state, agreed scope, rights to

publish its name, relevant conflicts and follow-up owner. Use states such as RESEARCHED, CONTACTED, INTEREST EXPRESSED, AGREED IN WRITING, OPERATING and CLOSED. Do not collapse an introductory call into a partnership or an announced programme into a delivered outcome. A separate financial register should capture actual receipts and expenditure, not assumptions.

Appendix E. Sources and Editorial Verification

Source check: 31 October 2026. The following sources are methodological and contextual. Their differing definitions, data coverage and publication schedules must be respected.

[R1] WIPO, *Global Innovation Index 2026*, rankings and methodology: https://www.wipo.int/en/web/global-innovation-index/2026/index

[R2] World Bank, *Entrepreneurship Database: Methodology*, registration-based measures: https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/entrepreneurship/methodology

[R3] OECD, *2025 Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Diagnostics Dataset*, 2026 explainer: https://www.oecd.org/en/data/insights/data-explainers/2026/06/oecd-2025-entrepreneurial-ecosystem-diagnostics-dataset.html

[R4] Startup Genome, *Global Startup Ecosystem Report 2026: Methodology*: https://startupgenome.com/report/the-global-startup-ecosystem-report-2026/methodology

[R5] WIPO, *IP Policies for Universities and Research Institutions*: https://www.wipo.int/en/web/technology-transfer/ip-policies

regulatory wording, verify current source URLs and any ranking figures, conduct editorial QA, approve copyright ownership, and obtain publication authority before uploading to the public