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Advanced Acceleration Guidebook



Global Cleantech
innovation programme

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Glossary

Accelerator

It is a structured capacity building programme designed to accelerate the growth of innovative cleantech startups and SMEs by strengthening their business models, enhancing their market and investment readiness, connecting them with mentors, investors and ecosystem partners to enable the commercialization and scaling of technologies.

Cleantech

A broad range of solutions (technologies, processes, services, business models, and their combinations) that lead to an increase in positive impact or a decrease in negative impact on climate change mitigation, transition to a low-emission economy, sustainable energy systems, and other dimensions of environmental sustainability. Climate technology, clean energy technology etc. are subsets of cleantech.

Cleantech Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

The network of entrepreneurs, startups, support organizations, investors, policymakers, research institutions, corporations and other stakeholders that work together to enable the creation, growth, and scaling of cleantech enterprises.

Cleantech Innovation and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem (CIEE)

The network and interactions among innovation and entrepreneurship stakeholders and the social, economic and policy environment, and their combined influence on the development and commercialization of cleantech solutions.

Cleantech Innovation Ecosystem

The network of stakeholders, institutions, policies, financing mechanisms, and support services that enable the creation, development, commercialization and scaling of innovative clean technologies as solutions.

Country/National Child Project

In the context of GEF, country-specific GCIP implementation project designed in line with the GCIP Global Programme, to address the maturity, priorities, and needs of the national cleantech innovation ecosystem.

Ecosystem

The wide range of stakeholders, factors and influences as well as the interactions between these. Can range from a low-level, small context such as city or community, to the high-level macro-view of whole countries or regions.

Entrepreneurship

Willingness and ability to turn an innovation into a profitable business model through identifying or creating a market opportunity.

Finalists

Selected group of semi-finalists advancing to the final stage of the accelerator and judging process.

GCIP Alums/Alumni

Entrepreneurs and companies that have successfully completed a GCIP accelerator cycle and remain engaged through the programme's alumni network.

GCIP Coordination Child Project

Global coordination project responsible for maintaining the GCIP methodology, ensuring consistency, and supporting collaboration across all national child projects.

Gender Mainstreaming / GEEW (Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women)

Cross-cutting activities ensuring equitable recruitment, participation, opportunities, and benefits for women and men throughout the programme.

Generalist Mentor

Experienced entrepreneur, investor, or cleantech professional providing overall business coaching and strategic guidance to participating startup and MSME teams. Generalist mentors may not invest in a mentee company during the competition cycle.

Global Accelerator

Global competition for innovators from developing, emerging, and transition economies without a national GCIP project, held after the national accelerators conclude.

Implementing Agency

In the context of GEF donor, the organization responsible for providing overall programme oversight, technical guidance and quality assurance throughout the implementation of the GCIP project. The Implementing Agency supports the NPPE, ensures compliance with project objectives and standards, and facilitates knowledge sharing and coordination across participating countries.

Innovation

The development of new, adapted, or alternative solutions and/or improvements to existing processes or addressing challenges.

Innovation Challenges

Mechanism for identifying demand-driven solutions to industrial climate and sustainability challenges by matching innovators with private-sector-defined market needs.

Investment Readiness

The degree to which a startup, product or solution is prepared to attract and secure external investment. It reflects the maturity of the venture, including a validated business model, scalable solution, capable team, financial planning and a compelling value proposition for investors.

Manufacturing Readiness Level (MRL)

A standardized scale used to assess the maturity of manufacturing processes, technologies, and production capabilities for a specific technology, component, or system. The MRL framework evaluates the readiness of manufacturing from initial concept and process development through stable, full-rate production, supporting the transition from innovation to commercial-scale manufacturing.

National Academy

Core component of the GCIP Accelerator, designed to equip participating entrepreneurs with the knowledge, skills and tools needed to strengthen their business models, validate their technologies and prepare for market growth and investment through expert-led workshops, mentoring and networking opportunities.

National Accelerator

Country-level platform and competition process that brings together national cleantech stakeholders and delivers the annual GCIP accelerator.

National Project Executing Entity (NPEE)

The institution/organization within the participating country that is responsible for the day-to-day implementation and execution of the national GCIP project. The PMU sits within the NPEE that manages the project implementation at the national level.

Post-Acceleration Support

Continued support for GCIP alumni focused on business growth, internationalization, partnership development, investment readiness, and access to finance.

Project Management Unit (PMU)

The operational unit responsible for the day-to-day management and implementation of the GCIP project. It coordinates project operations, stakeholder engagement, procurement, communications, training, mentoring and event delivery, ensuring the effective execution of national GCIP activities.

Proof of Concept (PoC)

An early demonstration that verifies the technical feasibility and potential effectiveness of an innovation, providing evidence that the proposed solution can successfully address the intended challenge.

Semi-finalists

Applicants selected from the pool of entrants to participate in the GCIP accelerator programme and receive structured support. Typically 15-25 nationally and 10-15 globally.

South-South and Triangular Industrial Cooperation (SSTIC)

A UNIDO-led cooperation approach that promotes the exchange of knowledge, technologies, expertise and resources among developing countries to advance inclusive and sustainable industrial development. Through triangular cooperation, these partnerships are further supported by developed countries or multilateral organizations to enhance their impact and scale.

Specialist Mentor

Subject-matter expert providing technical advice in a specific area, such as finance, marketing, engineering, legal affairs, or intellectual property.

Technology Readiness Level (TRL)

A standardized scale used to assess the maturity of a technology, from early-stage research to full commercial deployment. The TRL framework ranges from TRL 1 (basic principles observed) to TRL 9 (actual system proven in an operational environment) and is widely used to evaluate technological progress and readiness for commercialization.

Winners / Runners-up

Top-ranked finalists selected by the judging panel based on the programme's evaluation criteria.

LIST OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Alumni entrepreneurs/companies	Entrepreneurs who went through the GCIP Accelerator(s)
AAOV	Average Annual Output Value
Adjacent Segment	Identified market close to the targeted beachhead market
Angel Investor	Individual who invests in a startup in return for convertible debt or equity
Applicant	Startup/MSME team that applies to participate in the GCIP Accelerator(s)
B2B	Business-to-Business
B2C	Business-to-Consumer
Beachhead (market)	Small market that a startup/MSME can readily enter and dominate
Business Model	Description/plan of how a company plans to create, deliver, and capture value through its products or services
Business Model Canvas	Template and visual tool for mapping out and evaluating a business model, developed by Alexander Osterwalder ¹
COGS	Cost of Goods Sold
Customer Discovery	Process of understanding targeted customers and their needs, preferences, and pain points
Customer Validation	Process of confirming that a product/service meets the needs of the customers and validating assumptions about the market and the solution
Early Adopter	Customer who uses a product or technology as soon as it enters a market
EIR (Entrepreneur-in-Residence)	Experienced entrepreneur who provides expertise and guidance to startups

¹ More information: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/videos/tools-for-business-model-generation-entire-talk/>

Evangelist	Someone who actively promotes a product or service, often acting as a brand ambassador and spreading positive word-of-mouth
GANTT Chart	Bar chart that illustrates a project schedule, showing the start and finish dates of a project's elements, such as resources, planning, and dependencies, invented by Henry Gantt ²
GCIP Global Forum	Annual Global Awards and Forum organized by GCIP (name used during 2023-2025 is 'Cleantech Days')
Investor Connect	National or global GCIP activity that connects investors to entrepreneurs via curated meetings, offering tools for networking and pitching
Mentor	Business expert that provides ongoing guidance to assigned teams
Milestone	Important point in the timeline of the growth of a company (e.g. first sale)
Mock Judging	Test run of a judging session to prepare entrepreneurs for the final pitching round
MRL	Manufacturing Readiness Level
MVP	Minimum Viable Product
OEM	Original Equipment Manufacturer
SAM	Serviceable Available Market
SOM	Serviceable Obtainable Market
Sub-segment	Part of a larger identified market segment
TAM	Total Addressable Market
TRL	Technology Readiness Level
VC	Venture Capital or Venture Capitalist

² More information: <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/gantt-chart.asp>

1. INTRODUCTION

The **United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)** is a specialized agency of the United Nations with a unique mandate to promote, dynamize and accelerate industrial development. The guiding principle of UNIDO's activities is low-emission, climate-resilient development. This means promoting policies, technologies and practices so that countries can take climate action and create millions of new, decent jobs. UNIDO sees innovation as key to mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) form the backbone of the economy and generate a large share of economic value. Given the scale of climate mitigation and adaptation action needed, it is critical that MSMEs are supported to be part of the solutions, be they as entrepreneurs, in the context of small-scale industries and clusters or through their participation in regional and global value chains.

The **Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP)** of UNIDO, supported by the **Global Environment Facility** and the **Green Climate Fund**, envisions a world where innovative cleantech solutions drive climate mitigation, environmental protection, sustainable economic growth, and social inclusivity. GCIP mission is to empower MSMEs and start-ups in emerging markets and developing economies, enabling them to become engines of low-carbon industrial development and green job creation while contributing to a just energy transition.

GCIP fosters homegrown clean technology solutions to tackle climate and energy transition challenges, including greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction, improved energy and resource efficiency, and enhanced access to clean energy. GCIP provides entrepreneurs with essential tools to develop business models, commercialize technologies, and access investment opportunities, while also collaborating with national governments to strengthen local innovation ecosystems, enhance policy frameworks, and build institutional capacities. By supporting the development of self-sustained cleantech innovation ecosystems, GCIP ensures a continuous pipeline of solutions that drive just sustainability transitions.

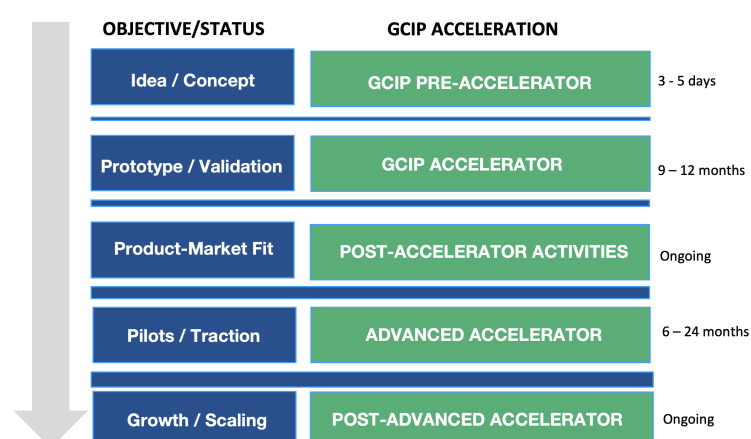
1.1. OVERVIEW OF GCIP ACCELERATION SUPPORT

GCIP provides direct assistance to early-stage startups and MSMEs to elaborate their business models, enhance their capacity and competitiveness and help them with market opportunities. GCIP's support is tailored to guide entrepreneurs during the critical phases of their growth journey through specialized levels of intervention:

- **PRE-ACCELERATOR:** Designed for innovators at the earliest stage of concept development, this phase helps participants **assess market needs, refine value propositions, and strengthen their business cases** through mentorship, training, and ecosystem engagement. *More information about the GCIP Pre-Accelerator can be found in the [following guidebook](#).*
- **ACCELERATOR:** At this stage, startups focus on **prototyping, product-market-fit validation, and business model optimization**. Participants receive targeted coaching, technical and financial guidance, and access to industry

and investor networks to ensure their solutions are commercially viable and investment ready. *More information about the GCIP Accelerator can be found in the [following guidebook](#).*

- **POST-ACCELERATOR:** This is a range of **flexible and tailored support interventions** to provide **practical assistance to GCIP Accelerator alumni following their participation in the GCIP Accelerator**. Most ventures graduating from the GCIP Accelerator are not immediately ready to progress to the Advanced Accelerator and need to first achieve product-market fit and build continuous revenue. As the transition from one stage of cleantech venture acceleration to another is not the same for every startup, **additional flexible support is required to assist the community of GCIP alumni as they develop their businesses at different speeds**. Initially, these activities focus on supporting product and market validation, helping companies strengthen their business before advancing to the Advanced Accelerator. *More information about the GCIP Post-Accelerator can be found in the [following guidelines](#).*
- **ADVANCED ACCELERATOR:** Targeted support is provided to growth-stage cleantech startups that have achieved early product-market fit and are generating revenue. It is designed to help ventures scale by addressing the complex challenges that arise after initial market entry. Support is delivered through a flexible structure that includes **specialized mentors** and a dedicated **Entrepreneur-in-Residence (EIR)** who work closely with each startup. Startups receive tailored guidance across selected **Advisory Topics** based on their stage of development and specific growth priorities.
- **POST-ADVANCED ACCELERATOR:** This is a range of even more specialized support activities for alumni who have already achieved significant growth in revenue, market traction, and investment. Recognizing the time constraints of CEOs and management teams, the programme offers **customized, efficient and accessible support both in-person and online to help companies scale rapidly**.



Picture 1: Summary of the GCIP Acceleration Activities and Programmes

1.2 INTRODUCTION TO ADVANCED ACCELERATION

ADVANCED ACCELERATION IS THE SUPPORT PROVIDED TO GROWTH-STAGE VENTURES THAT HAVE ACHIEVED THE INITIAL STAGES OF PRODUCT-MARKET-FIT, CHARACTERIZED BY GROWING REVENUES FROM SELLING THE MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT (MVP) TO A SET OF EARLY-PAYING CUSTOMERS.

This handbook provides guidance for the implementation of the **GCIP Advanced Accelerator**, which delivers tailored support to **growth-stage cleantech ventures** that have achieved early **product-market fit**—typically demonstrated by revenue from a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) and engagement from early-paying customers. These ventures are ready to move beyond validation and face new challenges such as scaling operations, entering new markets, strengthening their teams, and securing investment.

The Advanced Accelerator is designed to be **flexible and responsive**, offering customized support based on each startup's specific growth needs and strategic priorities. Support is delivered through a combination of **specialized mentors** and a dedicated **Entrepreneur-in-Residence (EIR)**, who work closely with each venture to provide expert guidance. Startups receive targeted assistance across a range of **Advisory Topics**, including organizational development, product and technology strategy, marketing and sales, operations, and finance.

For countries implementing the program for the first time or operating with limited resources, a more focused version—called the **Emerging Advanced Accelerator**—can be used to deliver high-impact support in priority areas while building local capacity over time.

This handbook outlines the core structure, delivery models, selection processes, and implementation guidance to support Programme Management Units (PMUs), mentors, and partners in running effective, high-impact advanced acceleration interventions.

The definitions of key **advanced acceleration tools** within the GCIP context:

ADVANCED ACCELERATOR	EMERGING ADVANCED ACCELERATOR
Tailored support programme for growth-stage cleantech ventures that have achieved product-market fit. It provides specialized services, such as investment readiness, international exposure, and strategic partnership, to help scale innovative climate solutions with high impact potential.	A simplified approach designed for countries conducting the Advanced Accelerator for the first time. It provides cohort-based support to growth-stage cleantech ventures, focusing on the most urgent and common challenge.

1.2.1 WHICH COMPANIES IS THE ADVANCED ACCELERATOR FOR?

The Advanced Accelerator is specifically designed for growth-stage ventures. Within the context of this Guidebook, **growth-stage ventures** are defined as those **companies that have validated customer demand and reached product-market fit, evidenced by repeated and growing revenues. The revenue growth can be achieved by selling a product or service to a growing set of customers and/or a limited set of customers with repeated sets of purchase orders.** Usually, companies participating in an Advanced Accelerator have **secured some initial funding to fuel growth** either

in the form of seed investments, significant grants or revenue from customers. It is important to **consider whether a company is ready for an Advanced Accelerator or whether support is still needed with finalizing the MVP and achieving product-market fit.** This is **especially true of graduates of the GCIP Accelerator**, even finalists and winners, that may still be in the process of validating many market opportunities and pivoting to the optimal product-market fit based on early customer feedback. **GCIP alumni companies who did not win in a previous cohort are welcome to reapply to another GCIP Accelerator** once they have reached new milestones in their startup's development. This allows them to fully leverage the programme to validate and refine their MVP and work toward achieving product-market fit.

1.2.2 SHOULD A COMPANY APPLY TO THE ADVANCED ACCELERATOR OR REJOIN THE GCIP ACCELERATOR?

One can think of the **GCIP Accelerator as the process to successfully launch a business and search for its product-market fit.** On the other hand, the **Advanced Accelerator can be understood as the process of building a business, when disciplines beyond sales and marketing become particularly important.** It is rare for cleantech startups to find the ideal product-market fit on their first try. In many cases, early customer revenue is mistaken as confirmation of strong market fit, when it may only reflect short-term or opportunistic sales. A cleantech startup often needs to pivot in response to market dynamics and to explore alternative markets. Pivoting for a hardware-focused cleantech startup can be complex, requiring multiple tests and certifications. Therefore, the process of invalidation, pivoting and validation in cleantech can often be measured in years rather than months.

The **experience of the first phase of GCIP (2014-2019)** has demonstrated that due to the extended timelines and complexities of growing a cleantech venture, most startups graduating from the main GCIP Accelerator are not ready for advanced acceleration because they have not fully validated market demand and often have not achieved initial product-market fit.

Therefore, **many cleantech startups that pivot to a new product may derive significant benefit from participating in the GCIP Accelerator again** as they work to identify the best beachhead market, the first small market the company can dominate, and validate new market opportunities based on early customer feedback.

It is therefore important to evaluate whether the cleantech startup has reached the milestones that make it suitable for the customized business building process of an Advanced Accelerator, or whether the GCIP Accelerator may be a more appropriate path to validate new market opportunities and find an initial product-market fit.

While GCIP alumni that have pivoted and developed a new product may be eligible to reapply to the GCIP Accelerator most GCIP alumni should additionally engage with the available **GCIP-Post Accelerator activities** as they continue to validate new market opportunities and finalize product-market-fit. These support activities are covered in the separate guidebook 'GCIP Post-Accelerator Support Guidelines'.

CASE STUDIES



Ramaness Parasuraman
Founder and CEO

Free The Seed

Biodegradable packaging from agricultural waste

In 2009, a Malaysian cleantech startup set out to turn agricultural waste into sustainable solutions that could tackle both environmental and social challenges. That company was Free the Seed, founded to produce biodegradable and compostable packaging made from waste paddy straw, using proprietary cellulose-based biotech formulations. By 2014, the team had developed a working proof-of-concept but faced challenges in business model development, investment readiness, and scaling its innovation.

To move forward, Free the Seed joined the Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP) in Malaysia in 2014. During the GCIP Accelerator, the company received tailored support in areas such as go-to-market strategy, intellectual property, investor pitching, and business valuation. At the end of the cycle, Free the Seed won the national GCIP pitching competition, receiving a US\$ 30,000 award and the opportunity to attend the Cleantech Open Global Forum in San Francisco — a global visibility experience that helped the company build international exposure and investor connections.

Since then, Free the Seed has moved from pilot stage to full-scale commercialization, operating a 24/7 production facility and partnering with major buyers. The company now reduces approximately 600,000 kg of CO₂ annually and has created jobs for over 1,300 local farmers through its biomass supply chain, while aligning its business with circular economy and net-zero goals.

Looking back, the company notes that targeted advanced acceleration support could have further shortened its time to market and helped address scale-up challenges earlier. With tailored guidance, the company could have secured investment faster and expanded its reach more strategically, accelerating the delivery of climate solutions both locally and globally.

CASE STUDIES



Duygu Yilmaz
Co-Founder and CEO

Biolive

Bioplastic raw materials produced from agricultural wastes

In 2017, a cleantech venture from Türkiye set out to tackle plastic pollution using one of the country's most abundant agricultural by-products: olive pits. That was the beginning of Biolive, a company founded to transform agricultural waste into biodegradable plastic alternatives. Biolive's early efforts to commercialize its innovation faced technical and business growth challenges. Seeking support, Duygu **joined the Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP) in 2017**. Following Biolive's participation in the acceleration activities, the company was awarded **1st Prize in the Advanced Materials Category**. The award significantly boosted the company's visibility and attracted investor interest.

Over the next few years, Biolive expanded its product development efforts while building industrial-scale manufacturing capacity. **In 2023, the company returned to GCIP, this time with a new mycelium-based material innovation product**. Despite earlier success, Biolive recognized that entering new sectors and markets with a different technology would require renewed strategic guidance. **The team once again participated in GCIP, winning the Sustainable Entrepreneur Award and further strengthening its reputation in Türkiye's cleantech sector**.

Today, Biolive stands at a critical juncture. With growing traction in both domestic and international markets and a strong alignment with circular economy principles, the company is actively preparing for global expansion. Its next phase focuses on commercializing the mycelium-based product line, identifying optimal market entry points across industries, and building relationships with international investors and strategic partners.

Biolive's GCIP journey, spanning two Accelerator cycles over six years, offers a clear illustration of the non-linear path many cleantech ventures follow. Initial breakthroughs may need to be followed by periods of reinvention, re-validation, and scale-up, particularly when multiple innovations are brought to market. For Biolive, targeted advanced acceleration support could unlock new markets and funding opportunities, helping the company extend its impact globally.

<https://biolivearge.com/>

1.3 CHALLENGES AND NEEDS OF GROWTH-STAGE CLEANTECH VENTURES

1.3.1 CHALLENGES

While early-stage cleantech companies in the GCIP Accelerator need capital to build and deliver a minimum viable product (MVP) or prototype and survive the initial phase in which the MVP is deployed, **growth-stage cleantech ventures face a different set of challenges related to building their businesses.** This can include team-building; technology development; product reliability; business model validation and scalability; operations management; supply chain and distribution network development; organizational structure definition; legal affairs; working capital financing; capital funding; financial management; or corporate governance³.

Growth-stage cleantech ventures also face **additional challenges specific to the sector**, which can include long product development cycles; capital-intensive prototypes; long and expensive testing; certifications and sales cycles; need of large amounts for working capital; as well as customer and product support in the field.

In comparison, digital business ventures have the capability to demonstrate value and scalability much faster, as they are not dependent on long development and validation timelines that cleantech hardware products often require. The shorter interval between pilot or MVP deployment and full product launch, observed in digital technologies like SaaS and apps, is one of the reasons many investors prefer startups dedicated to such technologies over hardware focused clean technology companies.

These combined challenges place extra pressure on the operations and finances of growth-stage cleantech startups, which often have limited resources and small teams. For example, building a full-scale prototype, installing it at a pilot customer's site, operating it, and making improvements during the pilot phase is already demanding for a well-established company. For a growing cleantech startup with a new and unproven technology, this process is even more critical — and can determine whether the company succeeds or fails.

It is important to note that both hardware and digital cleantech solutions are essential and complementary in driving systemic sustainability transitions. Startups developing software solutions for cleantech play a transformative role in enabling the digitalization of sustainability efforts, optimizing resource use, and accelerating the shift toward a more sustainable future. Hardware solutions, meanwhile, are critical for enabling the physical deployment of low-carbon infrastructure and directly reducing emissions across key sectors such as energy, transport, industry, and agriculture.

Accordingly, the interventions provided through the GCIP Advanced Accelerator should be designed to support both hardware and digital ventures, tailoring guidance and resources to their distinct challenges and growth pathways—particularly recognizing the additional support that hardware-focused solutions require to scale effectively.

Taking into consideration the special needs of cleantech companies and the unique features of the markets in which they operate, the **advanced accelerator aims to**

³ Note that market development is not included in the challenges because for the company to be considered a growth-stage venture, it needs to have already achieved product-market fit.

provide a range of different solutions to support cleantech growth-stage companies.

1.3.2 NEEDS

Advanced acceleration participants have achieved a stage in which there are initial and scalable revenues that validate customer demand. Besides sales management, entrepreneurs in this stage need to pay additional attention to supply chain management, operations and finance to make sure that their growing ventures can overcome the challenges of growth and establish a strong position in the marketplace. When compared to traditional accelerator programmes, the **support provided by advanced accelerators focuses in-depth on key business functions.**

Advanced accelerator support typically extends over a longer period because it focuses on “building businesses” – a multidisciplinary effort that goes beyond product development and requires tailored guidance from specialist mentors. This process involves support in areas such as operations, finance, sales, and scaling strategy.

No single expert, such as an EIR or mentor, can cover all these topics. Therefore, multiple experts are engaged to provide the necessary support throughout the business-building process. This multidisciplinary approach is essential for reducing execution risks and strengthening the internal systems of cleantech startups as they grow.

Advanced acceleration should be tailored to the specific needs of the startup. While cohort-based activities may be included, they should involve startups operating in the same or similar markets. These group activities should primarily focus on promoting peer-to-peer learning.

1.3.3 ADVANCED ACCELERATION ADVISORY TOPICS

During the growth phase, cleantech startups encounter a range of complex and often unpredictable challenges related to scaling teams, technologies, sales and internal systems. Unlike the sequential, validation-focused approach used throughout the GCIP Accelerator, the Advanced Accelerator must offer a more flexible and responsive structure. **Support tools and services should be tailored to the specific and evolving needs of each startup** – whether in a single targeted area or across several critical domains simultaneously. To address these varied needs, growth-stage startups can access expert guidance through a range of **Advisory Topics**, including:

1. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

2. TECHNOLOGY AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

3. OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

4. MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR SCALING

5. SALES ORGANIZATION AND PROCESS

6. DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL MANAGEMENT

7. INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION

8. FINANCE AND FUNDING

9. MERGERS, ACQUISITIONS AND EXITS

10. IMPACT MEASUREMENT AND MANAGEMENT

In addition, **countries may define and introduce further Advisory Topics** based on the specific needs and priorities of their national startup cohorts. This flexibility ensures that the Advanced Accelerator remains adaptable and relevant across different contexts, and capable of delivering high-impact support aligned with the growth trajectories of participating startups.

For further details on the Advisory Topics, please refer to Section 3.4.

1.4 FLEXIBLE AND INCLUSIVE ADVANCED ACCELERATOR STRUCTURE

A **critical aspect of tailoring an Advanced Accelerator is building flexibility and inclusivity into its structure**. This is especially important for engaging women entrepreneurs and other underrepresented groups, who may face unique barriers to full participation. When setting up an Advanced Accelerator, it is necessary to consider **strategies to ensure that logistics, culture, and policies enable everyone to participate equitably**. These may include:

1. FLEXIBLE PARTICIPATION OPTIONS

2. SUPPORTIVE LOGISTICS

3. GENDER-SENSITIVE TRAINING

4. SAFE AND INCLUSIVE ATMOSPHERE

5. EQUITABLE PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES

6. INCLUSIVE NETWORKING AND “DEAL FLOW”

FLEXIBLE PARTICIPATION OPTIONS: Implement **hybrid and remote participation formats in the Advanced Accelerator**. This allows entrepreneurs who are balancing caregiving and professional responsibilities or other personal commitments to engage in the acceleration curricula without sacrificing other commitments.

SUPPORTIVE LOGISTICS: **Provide support to reduce barriers to participation**. This could include childcare services, travel stipends for those commuting or on-site family-friendly spaces (e.g. a quiet room for nursing mothers or a kids’ corner). Such measures help ensure that entrepreneurs – especially women, who often bear disproportionate caregiving duties – can attend and focus on the training curricula.

GENDER-SENSITIVE TRAINING: **Offer gender-sensitive training for facilitators, ensuring mentors, panelists, and evaluators are aware of unconscious biases in investment decisions and feedback**. By raising awareness of unconscious biases, an Advanced Accelerator can create a fairer evaluation and mentoring environment.

SAFE AND INCLUSIVE ATMOSPHERE: **Create safe, inclusive spaces for learning and networking, ensuring all voices are heard and valued in discussions, workshops, and industry events**. Set ground rules for workshops and discussions that encourage respectful dialogue and equal participation. A code of conduct can be introduced to clearly outline expected behavior.

EQUITABLE PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES: **Ensure equitable access to program benefits, including leadership roles within the cohort, decision-making**

opportunities, and speaking engagements. Ensure women entrepreneurs have equal access to all the benefits of the advanced acceleration.

INCLUSIVE NETWORKING AND “DEAL FLOW”: Be mindful of how networking events and investor interactions are structured. Often, crucial introductions to investors or partners (the “deal flow”) happen in informal settings or through networks that have traditionally excluded certain groups. To counter this, design networking sessions where mentors and investors meet all teams systematically, rather than only through ad-hoc personal connections. **Create networking formats that ensure female founders and other underrepresented entrepreneurs get equal interactions with potential investors, corporate partners, and experts.**

1.5 GENDER MAINSTREAMING WITHIN ADVANCED ACCELERATION

Climate change and environmental degradation affect women disproportionately, and at the same time, **women remain underrepresented in the cleantech entrepreneurship and innovation**, representing 32 per cent of the workforce in clean and renewable energy jobs and leading only 7 per cent of energy startups. Ensuring women’s equal participation in cleantech innovation is both a matter of mitigating the negative consequences of climate change on women and creating economic opportunities for women to lead the process.

Global data shows that **without intentional design**, business accelerators can inadvertently widen gender gaps in outcomes. After reviewing 14,985 entrepreneurial ventures that applied to more than 300 accelerator programmes worldwide, the Global Accelerator Learning Initiative (GALI) reported *a clear pattern of all-women teams benefiting significantly less from acceleration services than teams led by men.*⁴ Successful gender-inclusive accelerators are **“developed with and for women”** – meaning they address women’s specific barriers through effective outreach, flexible entry criteria, childcare support, diverse mentor and judge pools, and bias training⁵.

Gender mainstreaming of all activities and outputs is a **core principle of the Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP)**. GCIP’s guiding principle is to provide equal opportunities for women and men to lead, participate in, and benefit from all acceleration activities. In practice, this means **empowering women entrepreneurs at every stage and engaging women innovators across the acceleration process as direct beneficiaries, mentors, trainers, and judges.**

To support the success of growth-stage cleantech ventures led by women, **advanced acceleration activities should apply inclusive practices, offer targeted support, and follow clear strategies that help women-led businesses grow.** This includes addressing any drop-off that might occur from earlier stages and tackling the unique challenges women founders face in scaling up (such as limited access to

⁴ **A Decade of Learnings on Gender-lens Acceleration: Case Studies from Asia**, Abigayle Davidson, Brianna Losoya-Evora, Ayam Shrestha, Ayaka Matsuno, Etsuko Ito, October 2024
https://andeglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/A-Decade-of-Learnings_ANDE_SPF_Final.pdf#:~:text=that%20applied%20to%20more%20than,make%20acceleration%20programs%20work%20for

⁵ **Strategies for Incubators and Accelerators: Strengthening Ecosystems for Women Climate Entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa**, Linda Jones, David Boyer, Katie Turner, Irene Akite, Simon Gathecah, Beatrice Mateyo
<https://www.wocan.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/ANDE-report-on-Women-Climate-Entrepreneurs.pdf#:~:text=addressing%20gender,Three%20excellent%20resources>

investor networks or biases in later-stage funding). **By integrating gender considerations into advanced acceleration activities, GCIP national teams can ensure that women-led cleantech startups get the most out of their participation and succeed in the long term.**

1.5.1 OBJECTIVES OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN ADVANCED ACCELERATION

- **ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS** to all stages of the Advanced Accelerator, including recruitment, mentorship, funding, and visibility.
- **ADDRESS STRUCTURAL BARRIERS** that limit women's participation in growth-stage cleantech entrepreneurship.
- **PROMOTE INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP** and decision-making within startups and the accelerator ecosystem.
- **INTEGRATE GENDER-RESPONSIVE PRACTICES** across all operational components of the accelerator.

Further information and guidance on gender mainstreaming within Advanced Accelerator operations and management is included in Chapter 2 of the present Guidebook in sections 2.1 to 2.6.

1.5.2 INCREASING VISIBILITY OF WOMEN IN ADVANCED ACCELERATOR

A strategically tailored Advanced Accelerator does not stop at internal design; it also extends to how the Advanced Accelerator **shows its entrepreneurs** to the outside world in an inclusive and empowering way. Increasing the visibility of women-led startups in the cleantech sector is essential to **challenging industry stereotypes, inspiring new applicants, and attracting additional resources for gender-inclusive activities**. Some effective tactics here can include:

SHOWCASE WOMEN-LED SUCCESS STORIES: Regularly feature stories and achievements of women-led startups from the Advanced Accelerator to challenge stereotypes and inspire future female participants. Use dedicated websites, newsletters, and social media to publish spotlight articles or video testimonials of female founders and their ventures. Additionally, ensure these success stories are shared at industry conferences and investor fora.

LEVERAGE HIGH-PROFILE PLATFORMS: Leverage global and regional events to spotlight women-led cleantech innovations and amplify their impact. Secure speaking slots, exhibitor spaces, or panel participation for women participants of the Advanced Accelerator.

CREATE A PUBLIC “FEMALE FOUNDERS” DIRECTORY: Develop a directory of women entrepreneurs who have participated in the Advanced Accelerator to facilitate connections with investors, corporate partners, and government entities looking to diversify their portfolios.

FEATURE WOMEN AS SPEAKERS AND EXPERTS: Feature women entrepreneurs as keynote speakers and panelists at high-profile industry events to increase representation and credibility. For example, if the Advanced Accelerator hosts a demo day or a webinar series, ensure that women founders get roles as presenters or panel moderators. Similarly, recommend women mentors and alumni as speakers for external tech and sustainability events.

ENGAGE MEDIA PARTNERS FOR COVERAGE: Build partnerships with media outlets to publish interviews, case studies, and op-eds highlighting the contributions of women in cleantech. Consistent media coverage helps change public narratives by providing relatable role models and demonstrating women's leadership in driving innovation.

ESTABLISH DIVERSITY TARGETS: Ensure at least 40% representation of women entrepreneurs in the advanced accelerator program, mentorship initiatives, and funding opportunities.

CULTIVATE ALLYSHIP AND ADVOCACY: Encourage male allies and industry leaders to actively advocate for and sponsor women entrepreneurs in cleantech, fostering a culture of inclusion. Additionally, invite influential industry figures to publicly recognize the accomplishments of women-led startups, for example, through awards or mentorship commitments.

2. ADVANCED ACCELERATION OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

2.1 APPROACHES TO SELECTING STARTUPS FOR ADVANCED ACCELERATOR

There are **two valid approaches** for selecting ventures to participate in the Advanced Accelerator, depending on the context and structure of the national programme:

1. **INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENTS**
2. **OPEN CALL FOR APPLICATIONS**

In both approaches, the assessment of startups shall be conducted by **a panel of at least three judges** with proven expertise in **business development, entrepreneurship, and cleantech** domains. This ensures objective, balanced, and technically sound evaluation.

2.1.1 INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT (NO CALL FOR APPLICATIONS REQUIRED)

This approach can be used when the Advanced Accelerator targets ventures that have completed the GCIP Main Accelerator. **No formal call for applications is required**, but the opportunity must be **openly communicated** to ensure transparency and equal access for all eligible ventures.

KEY FEATURES

- The opportunity is **openly shared with all eligible GCIP Accelerator graduates**, ensuring equal visibility.
- Ventures are **individually assessed** using the Readiness Assessment Framework (presented in the following section).
- It is recommended that a combination of GCIP Project Management Unit (PMU) staff, Entrepreneurs-in-Residence (EIRs), and specialist mentors conduct the evaluation of ventures. Importantly, specialist mentors and EIRs conducting the evaluation must have prior experience of the cleantech market sectors that relate to the advanced accelerator applicant.

Qualified ventures are contacted directly and offered participation. Promoting continuity and efficient use of program resources.

2.1.2 OPEN CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

This approach is used when participation in the Advanced Accelerator is extended beyond GCIP Accelerator graduates, or when required due to funding or procedural obligations. A **formal call for applications** ensures transparency, equal opportunity, and compliance with relevant policies.

KEY FEATURES

- A public **call for applications is launched** to invite eligible startups.

- Required when engaging **ventures beyond the GCIP Accelerator**.
- Necessary if the program includes **financial awards, grants, or public/donor funding** that require competitive selection.
- Used when **policies or institutional frameworks** mandate a public call.
- Applications are reviewed by judges using the criteria in **Advanced Accelerator Readiness Assessment Framework**, and the top-scoring ventures are invited to participate.

2.3 ENTRY READINESS ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

To make proper use of the resources available at the Advanced Accelerator, growth-focused cleantech ventures must be at an advanced stage of development. The **Advanced Accelerator Entry Readiness Assessment Framework** presented below provides a method to evaluate candidate ventures and identify those that are ready for the Advanced Accelerator participation.

The assessment consists of 5 criteria: Team, Market Opportunity, Product Market Fit, Technology Readiness and Impact Potential.

Please note that further criteria may be added based on the maturity of the ecosystem and the pool of eligible startups. Additional criteria may include Supply Chain Development, Finance and Investor Readiness (see Annex A).

ADVANCED ACCELERATOR ENTRY READINESS ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	RANGE	MINIMUM REQUIRED SCORE	MAXIMUM SCORE
TEAM	1 to 5	4	5
MARKET OPPORTUNITY	1 to 5	4	5
PRODUCT-MARKET FIT	1 to 5	4	5
TECHNOLOGY READINESS	1 to 5	4	5
IMPACT POTENTIAL	1 to 5	4	5
<i>*Additional criteria may be added by the PMU considering the local ecosystem (see Annex A)</i>			
<i>*Additional criteria may be added by the PMU considering the local ecosystem</i>			
TOTAL	1 to 25	20	25
<i>Companies with scores lower than 4 for any criterion are not ready to participate in the Advanced Accelerator Programme.</i> <i>Companies with scores equal to 20 and above and a minimum score of 4 on any given criterion are ready to participate in the Advanced Accelerator Programme.</i>			

Advanced Accelerator participants must reach a minimum score of 20 points, in which each assessment criterion has a value of ‘four’ or better. If a company has a ‘three’ grade (or less) for any criterion, it must work on that specific criterion before being evaluated again for acceptance into the Advanced Accelerator.

Companies currently deemed unsuitable for the Advanced Accelerator should be provided with a debriefing of the results of the assessment with specific details of areas that need to be improved. Ideally, this debriefing should be in the form of a written report and a verbal discussion that would enable the applicant to ask questions.

Each criterion is scored using the following standardized assessment scale:

POINTS BY ASSESSMENT VALUE

ASSESSMENT VALUE	POINTS
STRONGLY AGREE	5
AGREE	4
UNSURE	3
DISAGREE	2
STRONGLY DISAGREE	1
DID NOT EVALUATE THIS CRITERION	0

The evaluation criteria are explained in more detail in the following sections.

2.4 ADVANCED ACCELERATOR READINESS ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

2.4.1 TEAM

The Team assessment component is important because a team that is skilled, experienced, and properly organized is a key requirement for successful participation in an Advanced Accelerator. Startups being considered should have key staff for roles such as marketing, sales, finance, and operations in addition to a CEO and COO. They cannot be a startup with just two team members as is allowed in the GCIP Accelerator.

SAMPLE TEAM ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- **Is the leadership team equipped to sustainably manage and grow the business?** Are there defined roles across key functions, and does the team have the capacity to execute a growth plan?
- **Do the founding team members have relevant experience and domain knowledge in the startup's target market(s)?**
- Does the team demonstrate a strong understanding of the industry and customer landscape?
- **Are the founders receptive to coaching and feedback from mentors and advisors?**
Do they show openness to external guidance and a willingness to adapt?
- **Gender diversity** in the leadership team and inclusive hiring and leadership development strategies that create opportunities for women in technical and executive roles.

2.4.2 MARKET OPPORTUNITY

The Market Opportunity assessment component is important because the Advanced Accelerator requires companies to have a well-defined market opportunity, which entails a market with purchase power to acquire the offered cleantech products and/or services and a credible competitive advantage to successfully position the venture in the target market.

SAMPLE MARKET OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- **Has the company clearly defined a significant market opportunity and its total addressable market (TAM)?** Is the broader market need compelling, and is the opportunity supported by credible data?
- **Has the company identified a focused and realistically reachable initial target market (SAM)?** Is the Serviceable Available Market aligned with the company's current capabilities, and is the go-to-market plan actionable?
Has the company articulated a distinct competitive or unfair advantage? Does the venture possess a clear differentiation—such as proprietary IP, cost structure, partnerships, or technological edge—that gives it a defensible market position?

2.4.3 PRODUCT-MARKET FIT

A key distinction between the GCIP Accelerator and the Advanced Accelerator is the stage of the company regarding the fit between the product or service and the market needs. Whereas GCIP Accelerator participants identify the promising markets and value propositions, and pivoting as needed, Advanced Accelerator participants have already identified the product-market fit as customers are buying the product or solution which is meeting their needs, and they are ready to invest time in scaling up the business around the initial product-market nexus. Sample assessment questions:

- **Is there credible evidence of customer validation for the solution or MVP?** Have customers shown interest through purchases, pilot programs, feedback, or letters of intent?
- **Can product-market fit be clearly identified or is it demonstrably emerging?** Are customers using—and ideally paying for—the product in a repeatable, scalable manner?
- **Has the company clearly defined the problem or market opportunity it seeks to address?** Is the need significant, specific, and validated by real customer pain points or market gaps?

2.4.4 TECHNOLOGY READINESS ASSESSMENT

Advanced Accelerator is focused on supporting companies that are ready to scale up their businesses, therefore, their technologies must be ready for large scale deployment as well. The Technology Readiness Assessment is based on widely accepted methodology developed by NASA in the 1970s.

ASSESSMENT QUESTION

Has technology been demonstrated in a relevant or operational environment (i.e., at least TRL 6 on the Technology Readiness Level scale)?

TRL 6 indicates a **prototype demonstrated in a relevant environment**, while TRL 7 and above reflect **system demonstration in real operational settings**.

2.4.5 IMPACT PROJECTIONS AND VERIFICATION

Due to the nature of their commercial activities, growing cleantech ventures are well-positioned to deliver positive environmental and social outcomes as they scale. Nonetheless, often entrepreneurs are unsure how to identify and quantify such positive outcomes in a manner that is clear, without needing a specialized team with additional costs, and is accepted by capital providers (equity and debt investors).

The Advanced Accelerator supports entrepreneurs in using tools, such as Impact Projection and Verification, that can simplify and automate the measurement of positive environmental and social outcomes.

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- **Has the company calculated and/or verified its potential for reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions?** Has the startup estimated its emissions reduction impact using accepted methodologies or tools?
- **Have other positive environmental impacts been identified and quantified (e.g., water savings, waste reduction, resource efficiency)?** Does the company understand and communicate its full environmental value proposition?
- **Has the company identified and/or verified its social impact, and are relevant sustainability policies in place?** Has it articulated contributions to social outcomes (e.g., job creation, gender inclusion, community development) and adopted ethical business, HR, and resource use practices? Evaluate gender responsiveness through inclusive solutions and business models that promote women's empowerment and social equity.

2.5 ENHANCING GENDER INCLUSION IN THE ADVANCED ACCELERATOR READINESS ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

To ensure gender inclusivity, the selection process should actively address barriers that women entrepreneurs face, encourage diverse participation, and ensure equitable evaluation. Below are key additions that can make the Advanced Accelerator Readiness Assessment more gender-inclusive:

2.5.1 GENDER-INCLUSIVE EVALUATION PROCESS

- **DIVERSE EVALUATION PANEL:** Ensure that the evaluation panel includes women mentors, investors, and industry experts, providing a balanced perspective in assessing ventures.
- **GENDER-BIAS TRAINING FOR EVALUATORS:** Conduct unconscious bias training for mentors and evaluators to recognize and mitigate potential biases in assessing leadership styles, risk-taking behaviors, and growth strategies.
- **INCLUSIVE REVIEWER ROTATION:** Rotate evaluators from diverse professional and demographic backgrounds, including women and underrepresented groups, to avoid homogeneous perspectives in decision-making.

2.5.2 PROACTIVE OUTREACH AND EQUITABLE SELECTION PROCESS

CONDUCT TARGETED OUTREACH FOR WOMEN-LED VENTURES

- If no open application process is conducted, ensure intentional outreach to identify and invite high-potential women-led ventures to participate in the assessment.
- Extend outreach beyond typical tech hubs to include women in rural areas or less-networked groups.

ADAPT SCORING FLEXIBILITY FOR NON-TRADITIONAL GROWTH MODELS

- Women entrepreneurs often take alternative business growth paths, such as organic scaling, community-driven expansion, or hybrid financing models. Ensure the scoring system recognizes diverse scaling approaches, rather than focusing solely on traditional VC-backed growth models.
- Consider allowing a conditional acceptance process, where ventures that meet the criteria but face structural barriers (e.g., funding disparities) receive additional mentorship or funding readiness support before full entry into the Advanced Accelerator.

TRACK GENDER-DISAGGREGATED DATA

- Maintain records of gender representation in each assessment cycle to track progress and adjust outreach to ensure a diverse cohort of participants.
- Use this data to refine program offerings and ensure that women-led ventures receive equitable access to resources.

BROADEN THE PIPELINE AND EQUITABLE SELECTION

- Partner with women's business networks, cleantech and climate-tech women's associations, and community organizations.
- Ensure women are on judging panels, provide unconscious bias training for evaluators, and use gender-neutral criteria

By embedding gender-inclusive evaluation methods, outreach strategies, and criteria refinements, the Advanced Accelerator Readiness Assessment Framework can ensure equal access for women-led ventures. These enhancements will not only increase the diversity of participants but also strengthen the long-term impact of cleantech innovation by empowering women entrepreneurs as industry leaders.

2.6 KEY PMU ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

The GCIP Advanced Accelerator is designed to build upon existing Accelerator programs, leveraging available resources and personnel. To foster an equitable and inclusive cleantech innovation ecosystem, all key roles within the program should actively support diverse participation, mentorship, and leadership opportunities for women entrepreneurs. *The key functions include:*

2.6.1 PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Oversee overall planning, budgeting and execution of the Advanced Accelerator

- Coordinate startup onboarding, readiness assessments and milestone reviews
- Manage scheduling of all cohort sprints, interventions and formal cycle-end reviews
- Track portfolio progress against tailored growth plans and three-month intervention cycles
- Maintain the central calendar of PMU, EIR, mentor and expert engagements

Who: PMU Project Coordinator/Manager and Project Assistant

2.6.2 JUDGING AND SELECTION SUPPORT

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Plan and coordinate all judging sessions for startup selection and awards
- Brief judges on criteria, unconscious-bias mitigation, and gender-inclusive evaluation
- Compile and analyze judging data to ensure fairness and diversity of cohort intake
- Provide logistical and communications support to judges and nominees

Who: PMU Project Coordinator/Manager and Project Assistant

2.6.3 TECHNICAL PROGRAMMING AND EXPERTISE

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Curate and update the list of **Advisory Topics** (e.g., Org Dev, Tech Development, Operations, Marketing, Sales, Distribution, Intl. Expansion, Finance, M&A/Exits)
- Coordinate delivery of sprint-style cohort trainings on high-priority topics (2–3-day sessions)
- Manage the pool of domain experts and guest speakers for cohort and private sessions

Who: PMU Technical Expert

2.6.4 COMMUNICATIONS AND ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Develop and execute visibility, outreach, and alumni promotion strategies
- Produce and distribute gender-balanced success stories, press releases, and social media campaigns
- Maintain the alumni database and facilitate ongoing peer-to-peer networking
- Collect and share gender-equitable resources (e.g., funding calls, training programmes)

Who: PMU Communications Expert and Project Assistant

2.6.5 MENTORSHIP AND EIR COORDINATION

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Recruit, train, and manage both EIR and specialist mentors
- Assign a primary EIR to each startup upon onboarding; adjust as milestones shift
- Facilitate alignment of EIRs/mentors to tailored growth plans and Advisory Topics
- Conduct regular check-ins, track interventions, and collect feedback from startups
- Liaise between startups, EIRs, mentors and PMU to ensure cohesive support delivery

Who: Mentorship and EIR Engagement Manager

2.6.6 GENDER INCLUSIVITY AND EQUITY OVERSIGHT

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Embed gender equity targets (e.g., ≥40% women-led startups, ≥50% women mentors/EIRs) into programme KPIs
- Design and deliver unconscious-bias training for PMU staff, mentors, judges, and investors
- Track gender-disaggregated metrics across applications, funding, mentorship access, and outcomes
- Advise on tailored interventions to address barriers faced by women entrepreneurs

Who: Designate gender focal point in the PMU

2.7 ROLE OF EIRS AND SPECIALIST MENTORS IN THE ADVANCED ACCELERATOR

In the GCIP Advanced Accelerator, personalized support is paramount. While cohort-based sessions can address shared challenges, most assistance is tailored to the unique needs of each participating company through direct interventions by Entrepreneurs-in-Residence (EIRs) and specialist mentors.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING CONSIDERATION: Expand mentorship beyond business growth, incorporating confidence-building, leadership training, and negotiation skills to empower women in pitching and decision-making.

2.7.1 ASSIGNMENT AND ROLE OF EIRS

Upon onboarding, each startup is paired with a primary EIR selected based on the company's sector, growth objectives, and specific challenges. The EIR serves as the main point of contact, guiding the startup through its acceleration journey.

As the startup evolves, its needs may change. In such cases, the primary EIR may be replaced or supplemented with another EIR possessing the requisite expertise to address new challenges. This flexibility ensures that startups receive the most relevant and effective support throughout their development.

2.7.2 DISTINCTION BETWEEN EIRS AND SPECIALIST MENTORS

While both EIRs and specialist mentors provide valuable guidance, their roles differ in scope and depth:

- **Entrepreneurs-in-Residence (EIRs):** EIRs are seasoned professionals with extensive experience in building and scaling startups. They engage intensively with companies over extended periods, assisting in achieving specific milestones such as securing funding, launching products, expanding into new markets, or building teams. Their involvement often requires significant time commitments, and they are typically compensated through daily rates, retainers, or success-based incentives.
- **Specialist Mentors:** Specialist mentors are domain experts in the Advisory Areas (see section 3.3) who offer specialized support on specific topics relevant to the startup's growth, such as intellectual property, finance, marketing, sales, or manufacturing. Their engagement is usually short-term and focused on specific challenges. Given the complexity and depth of support required in the Advanced Accelerator, mentors are often compensated to ensure consistent and committed assistance.

3. ADVANCED ACCELERATION SUPPORT STRUCTURE

3.1 CUSTOMIZED AND COHORT-BASED SUPPORT

The GCIP Advanced Accelerator is designed to provide tailored support to growth-stage cleantech ventures, recognizing that each startup faces unique challenges and opportunities. Unlike the standard GCIP Accelerator, which follows a fixed curriculum over four to five months, the Advanced Accelerator offers a flexible program duration ranging from **6 to 24 months**, allowing for a more individualized approach.

3.1.1 CUSTOMIZED SUPPORT

Each participating venture undergoes a comprehensive readiness assessment conducted by the Programme Management Unit (PMU) in collaboration with an assigned Entrepreneur-in-Residence (EIR). This assessment identifies the startup's specific needs across various domains, such as business model refinement, technology development, market entry strategies, financial planning, and team expansion. Based on this, a **Tailored Growth Plan** is developed, outlining clear objectives and milestones.

Support is delivered through **individualized work sessions**, where the EIR, specialist mentors, and technical experts engage directly with the startup. These sessions follow a **Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA)** cycle:

- **Plan:** Define objectives and strategies.
- **Do:** Implement planned actions.
- **Check:** Monitor progress and outcomes.
- **Act:** Adjust plans based on feedback and results.

This iterative process ensures that support remains relevant and responsive to the startup's evolving needs.

3.1.2 COHORT-BASED SUPPORT

While the primary focus is on individualized support, the program also incorporates **cohort-based learning** when beneficial. Startups operating in similar sectors or regions may face common challenges, such as regulatory hurdles or market dynamics. In such cases, the program organizes **intensive “sprint sessions”**—typically lasting two to three days—where these startups can engage in peer-to-peer learning, share experiences, and collaborate on solutions.

Examples of focused cohorts include:

- Consumer-focused solar companies in Pakistan
- eBike companies in Southeast Asia
- Companies selling to electricity utilities abroad

- EV companies entering new markets
- Energy efficiency startups tackling an international market entry
- Women mentorship circles where women entrepreneurs share insights, strategies, and support networks within the cleantech sector

These sessions are often enhanced by guest speakers with specialized knowledge. The PMU Technical Expert, PMU Mentoring Expert, and EIR Engagement Manager play crucial roles in organizing these sessions and ensuring that guest speakers are well-prepared to address the specific needs of the cohort.

Confidentiality and potential conflicts of interest are carefully managed to ensure a safe and productive environment for all participants.

3.2 DELIVERY MODEL FOR THE ADVANCED ACCELERATOR

The GCIP Advanced Accelerator follows a structured yet flexible delivery model to support the specific needs of growth-stage cleantech startups. This model combines individualized planning, expert-led interventions, and ongoing monitoring to cater to each startup's unique needs.

3.2.1 VENTURE ONBOARDING

STARTUP ONBOARDING AND EIR ASSIGNMENT

Upon acceptance into the program, each startup undergoes an onboarding process. During this phase, the Programme Management Unit (PMU) assigns a Lead EIR based on the startup's sector, specific needs, and growth objectives. The EIR serves as the primary liaison, guiding the startup through the acceleration journey.

STARTUP READINESS ASSESSMENT

Each startup begins with a structured readiness assessment led by the PMU in collaboration with the lead EIR. This assessment identifies the company's development stage, growth priorities, and key challenges, and forms the basis for the tailored growth plan. It can incorporate comments and insights from the reviewers involved in the entry readiness assessment (*see page 40*) and consider the additional criteria (*Annex A*).

TAILORED GROWTH PLAN

Following the assessment, a tailored growth plan is developed for each startup. It defines the startup's **growth objectives**—such as entering new markets, raising investment, or scaling operations—and identifies relevant **Advisory Areas** for targeted support. The plan outlines an indicative **timeline** for support delivery, typically spanning 6 to 12 months, structured into three-month intervention cycles. It also includes **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** to measure progress against the defined objectives. As each startup progresses at a different pace, the plan is milestone-driven rather than time-driven.

KPI GUIDANCE BOX

The KPIs are included in the Tailored Growth Plan and should be **specific, measurable metrics** that directly reflect the startup's growth objectives. They act

as clear markers of progress and help focus advisory support on outcomes that matter.

- KPIs are **co-defined and startup-owned**, ensuring they are relevant to the venture's strategic priorities and internal capacity.
- **Missed KPIs** are treated as **learning opportunities** — used to refine strategies, identify support needs, and adapt the growth plan as needed.

EXAMPLE KPIs (LINKED TO ADVISORY TOPICS):

- **Sales:** Increase monthly recurring revenue (MRR) by 10%
- **Operations:** Reduce customer onboarding time by 30%
- **Finance:** Finalize a 24-month financial model with funding gap analysis
- **Marketing:** Lower cost-per-lead (CPL) by 15% across digital channels

3.2.2 VENTURE SUPPORT SERVICES

THREE-MONTH INTERVENTION CYCLES WITH ADAPTIVE SUPPORT

Support is delivered through structured three-month cycles that follow a Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) approach. Each cycle begins with a planning phase to define the advisory areas and required interventions, followed by implementation through expert sessions, mentoring, and technical guidance. Progress is tracked through regular weekly or bi-weekly check-ins with the EIR.

At the end of each cycle, a formal review involving the startup, PMU, and the EIR is held to assess outcomes, address challenges, and update the growth plan and expert assignments for the next cycle. KPIs, defined in the growth plan, should be reviewed at each intervention cycle and adjusted as needed. This adaptive structure ensures that support remains relevant, practical, and responsive to each startup's evolving needs.

EXPERT-LED SUPPORT ACROSS ADVISORY TOPICS

A pool of specialist mentors (technical and business experts) is coordinated by the PMU in consultation with the EIR. Specialist mentors are assigned at the beginning of each cycle, depending on the startup's current growth priorities and identified Advisory Topics (see section 3.3). Experts are typically engaged for focused, time-bound assignments and may rotate based on the startup's evolving needs.

FORMAT AND FREQUENCY OF INTERVENTIONS

Specialist mentor support is delivered in short, intensive sessions (typically 1–3 days per cycle), either in person or remotely. These are followed by asynchronous follow-up or document review as needed. The EIR ensures that all support remains coordinated and aligned with the growth plan to prevent duplication and overburdening the startup.

OPTIONAL SPRINT-STYLE COHORT TRAINING

In cases where startups share similar technologies or market contexts, cohort-based training may be offered in 2–3-day sprint sessions. These short, focused trainings allow ventures to engage with shared challenges (e.g. regulatory issues, funding mechanisms) without long-term commitments. Topics are selected based on common needs and facilitated by invited experts. Participation in such sessions is optional and tailored to relevance.

PROGRESS MONITORING AND ADJUSTMENT

A simple progress-tracking report is maintained by the EIR to document key milestones, interventions, and changes to the tailored growth plan. These reports should be shared regularly with the PMU to ensure effective progress monitoring. Formal reviews at the end of each cycle support milestone-based planning and allow the PMU and the startup to adjust the growth plan and support strategy as needed.

3.3 EMERGING ADVANCED ACCELERATOR

The **Emerging Advanced Accelerator** is a simpler version of the GCIP Advanced Accelerator, designed for countries running it for the first time or where resources are limited. It helps early growth-stage cleantech startups by focusing on the most important support areas, while also helping the country build experience and capacity to run a full Advanced Accelerator in the future.

In a first-cycle Emerging Advanced Accelerator, most startups are still solidifying internal systems and preparing for scale. Therefore, the following five topics are recommended as immediate priorities:

The recommended topical areas in an Emerging Advanced Accelerator:

1. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE
2. TECHNOLOGY AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT
3. OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT
4. MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR SCALING
5. SALES ORGANIZATION AND PROCESS

By focusing on these core areas, the Emerging Advanced Accelerator can help cleantech startups build a solid foundation for sustainable growth. Curriculum and delivery methods should be tailored to the specific needs of each cohort. For detailed guidance on teaching content, see Sections 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7 and 3.8.

3.3.1 RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS AND EXECUTION

The full Advanced Accelerator model relies on intensive, customized support—often with a dedicated EIR per startup. While this remains the long-term goal (see Sections 3.1 and 3.2), it may not be feasible in the early stages. The Emerging Advanced Accelerator offers a viable alternative by focusing on **cohort-based sprint sessions** across the five priority areas.

DELIVERY MODEL

- Sprint-based support over **2–3 days per topic**, combining expert-led group work with 1:1 mentor support.
- Ventures participate in **4–5 sprints** over **3–4 months**.
- The duration is shorter than a full Advanced Accelerator (which may last **6–24 months**) but still ensures targeted, high-impact engagement.

MENTORSHIP AND EXPERT SUPPORT

- At least **one specialist mentor per advisory topic**.
- Target ratio of at least **one generalist mentor per 3–5 startups**.
- During the pilot cycle, identify which mentors could potentially transition into EIR roles in future cohorts.

COHORT COMPOSITION AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

A successful Emerging Advanced Accelerator cohort should be **diverse, balanced, and complementary**. Cohort design should consider:

- **Industry diversity** (e.g., energy, water, agri-tech)
- **Stage of development**
- **Team dynamics and readiness**
- **Resource availability and mentor bandwidth**
- **Cohort size** – minimum of **five startups** is recommended to ensure valuable peer learning. Smaller cohorts may limit the benefits of collaboration.

Mentors should have relevant experience in cleantech, business development, entrepreneurship, human resources, and operations.

3.4 ADVISORY TOPICS

The **Advisory Topics** offered in the Advanced Accelerator are selected based on the specific needs of the startups participating. Rather than following a fixed sequence, the programme is flexible and demand-driven, allowing ventures to receive targeted support in the areas most critical to their growth and scale-up journey. *The Advanced Accelerator provides tailored guidance across a set of commonly required Advisory Topics:*

1. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE
2. TECHNOLOGY AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT
3. OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT
4. MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR SCALING
5. SALES ORGANIZATION AND PROCESS
6. DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL MANAGEMENT
7. INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION
8. FINANCE AND FUNDING
9. MERGERS, ACQUISITIONS AND EXITS
10. IMPACT MEASUREMENT AND MANAGEMENT

The **first five topics** listed above are relevant for all growth-stage ventures in the Advanced Accelerator, but they are particularly important for countries launching the Advanced Accelerator for the first time or operating with limited resources — referred to as conducting an **Emerging Advanced Accelerator (see section 3.2)**. These five topics serve as the core focus areas for the Emerging Advanced Accelerator, as they typically address the most immediate needs of early-stage growth startups.

Additional Advisory Topics may be added based on the **readiness assessment and cohort-specific priorities**, ensuring that the support remains practical, targeted, and relevant.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING CONSIDERATIONS: Address gender-specific barriers in the topics, such as the unique challenges women face in negotiating contracts, accessing venture capital, and scaling businesses in male-dominated industries.

Each Advisory Topic is explained in detail in the following sections of this guidebook.

3.5 ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

*A **strong organizational structure and sound governance practices** are essential for the long-term growth and resilience of cleantech startups. This topic supports ventures in establishing internal systems that ensure strategic clarity, regulatory compliance, and transparency—while fostering leadership accountability and institutional readiness for scale. Some of the key organizational development and corporate governance areas the ventures should have competence in are found below.*

COMPANY FORMATION AND LEGAL STRUCTURE: Teach ventures about different legal structures (e.g., LLC, C-Corp, B-Corp) and help them choose the most appropriate option based on their goals, ownership structure, and liability considerations.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES: Introduce startups to the principles of corporate governance, including the roles and responsibilities of directors, officers, and shareholders, as well as best practices for decision-making, transparency, and accountability.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND ADVISORY BOARDS: Explain the importance of establishing a board of directors or advisory board to provide strategic guidance, oversight, and support to the startup. Teach startups how to recruit and onboard board members effectively.

COMPLIANCE AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS: Educate startups about the regulatory landscape relevant to their industry, including environmental regulations, intellectual property laws, data privacy regulations, and other compliance requirements. Help startups understand their obligations and how to navigate legal and regulatory challenges.

3.6 TECHNOLOGY AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

*Supporting ventures in **designing, validating, and improving their cleantech innovations** is central to achieving market readiness and competitiveness. This topic helps startups manage the development lifecycle efficiently, assess technological feasibility, and protect intellectual assets. Some of the key Technology and Product Development areas the ventures should have competence in are found below.*

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT LIFECYCLE: Introduce startups to the product development lifecycle, from ideation and concept validation to design, prototyping, testing, and commercialization. Teach startups how to effectively manage each stage of the process and iterate their product based on customer feedback.

TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION: Help startups assess and select the appropriate technologies and solutions for their cleantech products or services. Teach startups how to evaluate technological feasibility, scalability, cost-effectiveness, and compatibility with their business goals.

INNOVATION AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY: Discuss strategies for fostering innovation and protecting intellectual property in cleantech startups. Teach startups about different forms of intellectual property (e.g., patents, trademarks, copyrights) and how to safeguard their innovations.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE: Teach startups about the importance of quality assurance and regulatory compliance in cleantech product development. Help startups establish processes and systems to ensure product quality, safety, and compliance with applicable standards and regulations.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS: Encourage startups to explore collaboration opportunities and partnerships with other organizations, research institutions, and industry stakeholders. Teach startups how to identify potential partners, negotiate agreements, and leverage resources to accelerate product development and market entry.

3.7 OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

Effective operations management enables cleantech ventures to scale sustainably while optimizing costs, processes, and resource use. Understanding Operations Management is crucial for ensuring efficiency, scalability, and sustainability in their business operations. This topic supports startups in developing systems for production, logistics, and compliance. Some of the key areas in Operations Management the ventures should have competence in are found below.

SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT: Introduce startups to the principles of supply chain management, including sourcing raw materials, production processes, inventory management, and distribution. Teach startups how to optimize their supply chain for cost-effectiveness, reliability, and environmental sustainability.

PROCESS OPTIMIZATION: Teach startups how to identify inefficiencies and bottlenecks in their operational processes and implement strategies for optimization. This includes streamlining workflows, reducing waste, improving productivity, and enhancing quality control.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION: Help startups effectively allocate resources such as human capital, equipment, and financial resources to support their operations. Teach ventures how to prioritize resource allocation based on strategic objectives, customer demand, and budget constraints.

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE: Educate startups about regulatory requirements relevant to their operations, including environmental regulations, health and safety standards, and labor laws. Teach startups how to ensure compliance with applicable regulations and maintain ethical and sustainable practices.

SCALING OPERATIONS: Help startups develop strategies for scaling their operations as they grow and expand their business. Teach startups how to plan for scalability, anticipate capacity constraints, and adapt their operations to accommodate increased demand and market growth.

3.8 MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR SCALING

Marketing is essential for driving growth, increasing market share, and achieving long-term success. This topic helps startups develop scalable marketing strategies and establish strong market positioning. Some of the key Marketing Strategy areas the ventures should have competence in are found below.

MARKET SEGMENTATION: Teach startups how to identify and segment their target market based on demographic, geographic, psychographic, and behavioral factors. Help startups understand the importance of targeting specific customer segments with tailored marketing messages and offers.

VALUE PROPOSITION DEVELOPMENT: Guide startups in developing a clear and compelling value proposition that communicates the unique benefits and value of their cleantech products or services to target customers. Teach startups how to differentiate their offerings and position themselves effectively in the market.

BRAND DEVELOPMENT AND POSITIONING: Discuss the importance of brand development and positioning in building brand awareness, credibility, and loyalty. Help startups define their brand identity, values, and personality, and teach them how to effectively communicate their brand message to target audiences.

MARKETING CHANNELS AND TACTICS: Introduce startups to various marketing channels and tactics for reaching and engaging target customers. This includes online channels such as websites, social media, email marketing, and search engine optimization (SEO), as well as offline channels such as events, trade shows, and direct mail.

CONTENT MARKETING: Teach startups how to create and distribute valuable, relevant, and engaging content to attract and retain customers. Discuss content marketing strategies such as blogging, video marketing, podcasts, and white papers, and how to leverage content to build thought leadership and credibility in the industry.

LEAD GENERATION AND CONVERSION: Help startups develop strategies for generating leads and converting them into customers. Teach startups how to optimize their lead generation efforts through tactics such as lead magnets, landing pages, call-to-actions, and lead nurturing campaigns.

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM): Introduce startups to CRM systems and tools for managing customer relationships, tracking interactions, and nurturing leads throughout the customer journey. Teach startups how to use CRM data to personalize marketing efforts and improve customer engagement and retention.

3.9 SALES ORGANIZATION AND PROCESS

A structured and strategic sales function is vital to business sustainability and growth. This topic equips startups with the tools and frameworks needed to convert interest into revenue and scale sales operations effectively. Some of the key Sales Organization and Process areas the ventures should have competence in are found below.

SALES STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT: Guide startups in developing a clear and comprehensive sales strategy aligned with their business goals and target market.

Help startups define their target customer segments, value proposition, competitive positioning, and pricing strategy.

SALES TEAM STRUCTURE: Discuss different sales team structures and configurations, such as inside sales, field sales, channel sales, and hybrid models. Help startups determine the most appropriate sales team structure based on their industry, target market, and growth objectives.

SALES ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: Define key sales roles and responsibilities within the organization, including sales representatives, account executives, sales engineers, and sales managers. Teach startups how to define job descriptions, set performance expectations, and establish accountability measures for each role.

SALES PROCESS DESIGN: Guide startups in designing and optimizing their sales process to efficiently and effectively move prospects through the sales funnel from lead generation to closing. Discuss best practices for defining sales stages, qualifying leads, conducting discovery calls, delivering presentations, negotiating contracts, and closing deals.

CHANNEL PARTNER MANAGEMENT: Discuss strategies for managing channel partners, distributors, resellers, and other third-party sales channels. Teach startups how to recruit, onboard, train, and support channel partners to drive revenue growth and expand market reach.

3.10 DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL MANAGEMENT

Distribution Channel Management is essential for cleantech startups transitioning from early adopters to the mainstream market. This topic helps ventures build and manage multi-channel distribution strategies that align with their product type and customer profile. Key areas to teach include:

CHOOSING THE RIGHT DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS: Educate ventures on evaluating direct (e.g., internal salesforce) versus indirect channels such as resellers, value-added resellers (VARs), and system integrators (SIs). Include exercises in mapping their customer journey to appropriate channels.

EVALUATING DISTRIBUTION PARTNERS: Guide ventures through frameworks for selecting partners based on technical capabilities, reach, after-sales support, and alignment with brand.

RETAIL STRATEGY: Train startups to assess physical and digital retail opportunities, including marketplaces, specialty stores, and big-box chains. Explore promotion and packaging implications.

CHANNEL TRADE-OFFS: Teach the pros and cons of different models with respect to margin, customer access, brand control, and scalability. Include cost-benefit case studies and introduce key metrics such as customer acquisition cost (CAC) by channel and partner ROI.

INTERNAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS: Help ventures design internal teams (e.g., channel account managers, technical support liaisons) to ensure partner success. Provide sample service level agreement (SLA) structures and conflict resolution mechanisms.

PRICING STRATEGY: Teach how to develop pricing strategies that align with each distribution channel. Include tools for calculating wholesale vs. retail pricing, managing tiered discounts, and addressing channel conflict.

3.11 INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION

International expansion presents an opportunity for scale, but requires deliberate planning and deep market understanding. This topic helps ventures prepare for global growth while mitigating risks. Teach the following areas:

READINESS AND BARRIERS: Train ventures to evaluate their operational, legal, and financial readiness. Identify common barriers such as capital expenditures (CapEx), protectionist policies, and fragmented regulatory frameworks.

MARKET RESEARCH AND SELECTION: Teach tools for evaluating markets based on demand, competition, policy alignment, and ease of doing business. Include practical exercises in prioritizing country opportunities.

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS AND STRUCTURES: Guide ventures on entry strategies including joint ventures, licensing, and partnerships. Discuss the role of local country managers, agents, and public export support programs (e.g., trade attachés, export credit agencies).

PRODUCT LOCALIZATION: Teach how to adapt offerings for local language, compliance, packaging, voltage standards, and cultural relevance. Include case examples of successful localization pivots.

CUSTOMER TRUST AND RISK AVERSION: Instruct ventures on building trust in new markets through guarantees, pilot installations, and presence at industry forums. Address regulatory certification and local data privacy laws.

GENDER-INCLUSIVE GROWTH: Promote frameworks and partnerships that support women-led ventures in overcoming access and visibility challenges in foreign markets. Highlight inclusive procurement opportunities and women-in-trade initiatives.

3.12 FINANCE AND FUNDING

This topic enables ventures to manage internal finances and prepare to raise both equity and non-dilutive capital. It also covers investor engagement and post-funding compliance. Key areas to teach include:

FINANCIAL FORECASTING AND UNIT ECONOMICS: Instruct on building financial projections tied to operational milestones. Include templates for unit economics, cash runway analysis, and revenue forecasts.

CAPITAL STRUCTURING AND RISK MITIGATION: Teach optimal debt-to-equity ratios and scenario-based sensitivity models. Introduce basic stress testing techniques.

INVESTMENT FACILITATION: Provide end-to-end training on investor targeting, due diligence checklist preparation, term sheet negotiation, and capitalization table (cap table) modeling. Make investor introduction.

NON-DILUTIVE FUNDING: Train ventures in identifying grants and public financing, writing proposals, and meeting post-award reporting requirements. Include sample grant applications and pitch narratives.

GENDER-RESPONSIVE FINANCING: Discuss inclusive evaluation frameworks, bias training for funders, and alternative instruments (e.g., revenue-share models, blended finance). Highlight venture capital (VC) funds and angel investor networks focused on women entrepreneurs.

3.13 MERGERS, ACQUISITIONS AND EXITS

Understanding exit options is key to long-term venture planning. This topic supports ventures in preparing for mergers and acquisitions (M&A) opportunities and investor returns. Key teaching areas include:

EXIT STRATEGY PLANNING: Teach common exit paths such as initial public offering (IPO), acquisition, and asset sale. Help ventures evaluate which path aligns best with their business model and investor timelines.

M&A READINESS: Train ventures to prepare virtual data rooms, align corporate records, and understand valuation principles such as earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) multiples.

NEGOTIATION AND DEAL STRUCTURING: Instruct ventures on working with legal and financial advisors, earn-out structures, and allocation of post-deal risks.

POST-MERGER INTEGRATION: Discuss cultural, operational, and brand alignment strategies post-acquisition. Emphasize talent retention and customer continuity.

PEER LEARNING AND CASE STUDIES: Provide real-world examples of cleantech exits and facilitate peer exchange on lessons learned.

3.14 IMPACT MEASUREMENT AND MANAGEMENT

This topic helps startups develop simple, credible systems to track their impact, align with ESG standards and position themselves for sustainability-aligned growth. Some of the key Impact Measurement and Management areas the ventures should have competence in are found below.

IMPACT METRICS AND MEASUREMENT SYSTEMS: Support ventures in identifying and tracking key indicators e.g., CO₂e avoided, energy saved, waste reduced, jobs created. For ventures without technical teams, recommend proxy tools to estimate impact using available activity data. Help integrate metrics into internal dashboards, pitch decks, and growth plans. Provide guidance on how to position verified impact and certifications as a competitive advantage in sales, and partnership negotiations.

CARBON ACCOUNTING AND CLIMATE FINANCE ACCESS: Guide startups in estimating emissions reductions using standards such as GHG Protocol and ISO 14064. Provide technical assistance to align with approved methodologies for voluntary carbon markets (e.g., Verra, Gold Standard) and support early-stage documentation, baselining, and linkages with aggregators or validation bodies.

ENVIRONMENTAL CERTIFICATION AND GREEN LABELING: Assist ventures in pursuing certifications such as ISO 14001, B Corp, or recognized product eco-labels (e.g., Energy Star, FSC). Reference global guidance and checklists to simplify the process.

Highlight how certifications enhance credibility with buyers, support eligibility for green procurement, and unlock ESG-driven partnerships.

ESG READINESS AND INTERNAL GOVERNANCE: Support ventures in developing ESG-aligned practices, including policies on environmental compliance, inclusive HR, and governance. Introduce basic disclosure formats aligned with investor expectations, using frameworks such as IRIS+, SASB, or IFRS Sustainability Disclosure Standards. Help ventures translate their impact profile into procurement-ready credentials for public tenders and ESG-driven supply chains.

LIFECYCLE SUSTAINABILITY AND CIRCULARITY: Encourage adoption of circular models and sustainable product design. Focus on recyclable materials, waste reduction, and end-of-life planning. Support startups in identifying Scope 3 emissions and emissions hotspots across their supply chain to inform design and sourcing improvements.

ANNEX A: ENTRY READINESS ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Applicants to the Advanced Accelerator will be assessed based on the following core criteria: **Team, Market Opportunity, Product-Market-Fit, Technology Readiness Level (TRL), and Impact Potential.**

Depending on the maturity of the ecosystem and the candidate pool, additional criteria may also be applied, such as:

1. STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

2. OPERATIONAL EXECUTION CAPABILITY

3. SUPPLY CHAIN DEVELOPMENT

4. FINANCE AND FUNDING

5. INVESTOR READINESS

These criteria, in addition to the core criteria, can be used to assess startups both during the selection process for the Advanced Accelerator and in the evaluation of entrant needs. Unless specified otherwise, each criterion should be assessed according to the table below.

ASSESSMENT VALUE	POINTS
STRONGLY AGREE	5
AGREE	4
UNSURE	3
DISAGREE	2
STRONGLY DISAGREE	1
DID NOT EVALUATE THIS CRITERION	0

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

The **lifecycle of a growing cleantech venture is expanded due to the nature of the business and the technical challenges involved in the development, testing, and certification of many clean technologies.** Ventures that are already operating and ready for scaling up are best suited for Advanced Accelerator participation, because the support provided is focused on growing revenues and developing the organization to support such growth.

Therefore, **cleantech ventures that are in the initial technological and/or product development are not suited for Advanced Accelerator participation.** Similarly, ventures that have been operating at a pilot scale and that have not developed all their business functions are not suited for Advanced Accelerator participation.

Using the table below, one should assess the venture stage of development and attribute the points according to the identified stage.

STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT	
	Points
1 - Venture currently under development, not operational	1
2 - Venture established, product or technology developed, ready for pilot testing.	2
3 - Venture operating at low or pilot scale	3
4 - Venture operating for over 12 months, but NOT READY for scale-up	4
5 - Venture operating for over 12 months, and READY for scale-up	5
Did not evaluate this criterion	0

OPERATIONAL EXECUTION CAPABILITY

Due to the extensive demand for clean technology services and products, growing cleantech ventures must develop several operational execution capabilities to serve their customers in different geographic markets, provide timely technical support and repairs on the field.

The Advanced Accelerator is well-equipped to support growing cleantech ventures in navigating operational complexity and building the capabilities required to grow revenues while supporting customers and products in the field.

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Is the product/solution scalable with the existing technical capabilities of the venture?

2. Is the product/solution commercially scalable?

3. Is the organizational structure mature to support growing revenues/scaling up the business?

4. Is there a work plan for the next 12 months in place?

5. Are sustainability policies on ethical business practices, HR practices and use of resources in place?

SUPPLY CHAIN DEVELOPMENT

Growing cleantech ventures that participate in the Advanced Accelerator have already identified product-market-fit and are ready to ramp up revenues by selling their products and/or services. The revenue growth can only happen when there is a well-defined supply chain that supports the company's growth, providing supplies and production inputs on time, on price, and according to pre-specified technical performance requirements.

The Advanced Accelerator will support the development and improvement of the supply chain with the support of specialist mentors and consultants. The assessment of the venture supply chain development maturity is therefore important to optimize the support the Advanced Accelerator can provide.

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Are the key supplies specified, and the technical performance requirements documented?
2. Is there a process to qualify suppliers for the key supplies mentioned above? Is such a process documented and continuously performed?
3. Is there a quality assurance process to inspect key supplies?
4. Is there a tracking system to document supplies, components, sub-assemblies as they integrate a final system/product?
5. Are there mid-and-long-term supply agreements in place with key suppliers?

FINANCE

Growth-stage cleantech ventures in general have growing demands for working capital. These ventures have an even more acute need for working capital because often they make a capital investment to provide ongoing services (e.g., renewable energy, plastic pollution mitigation), but are paid on a pre-defined schedule (e.g., weekly, monthly).

In other instances, the venture invests resources in acquiring a customer over many months, before signing a long-term contract with recurring payments. In either case, the mismatch between upfront capital investment and revenues, or between upfront customer acquisition costs and revenues, is a common concern in growth-stage cleantech ventures.

Therefore, it is important to have a well-structured financial model and finance capability within the organization to make sure the venture is prepared for times of limited liquidity or the need for short-term working capital. The Advanced Accelerator supports ventures in structuring their financial models and identifying short-term, midterm and long-term capital needs.

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Are the key cost drivers identified?
2. Has the Customer Acquisition Cost been properly identified?
3. Are the working capital needs clearly identified?
4. Have the Capital Expenses for the next 24 months been properly quantified?
5. Are the financing needs (uses of funds) for the next 24 months clear?
6. Does the scaling plan look financially feasible?

INVESTOR READINESS

Although all new ventures need capital, the focus of the Advanced Accelerator is on helping companies that have achieved product-market-fit and are ready to scale up their revenues and operations. The Advanced Accelerator specializes in supporting growing cleantech ventures in identifying sources of capital, both equity and debt,

that best match the needs of the company with the investment strategy of the sources of capital. These sources of capital are different from those that would typically be invested in early-stage cleantech ventures, therefore, there is no benefit in trying to use the Advanced Accelerator to support early ventures.

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Are the financing needs (uses of funds) for the next 24 months clear?

2. Does the scaling plan look financially feasible?

3. Are the expected sources of funding/investors clearly mapped?

4. Is the investor narrative clear and compelling?

5. Is the company ready to meet investors?

(Note: in this context, assume investors specialize in investing in this regional market, technology, and stage of development)

Based on the questions above, assess the Investor Readiness component using the point-scoring system shown in the table below.

INVESTOR READINESS ASSESSMENT	SCORE
1 - Ready for Investor Introduction in 25 months or longer	1
2 - Ready for Investor Introduction in 19-24 months	2
3 - Ready for Investor Introduction in 13-18 months	3
4 - Ready for Investor Introduction in 4 to 12 months	4
5 - Ready for Investors in up to 3 months	5
Did not evaluate this criterion	0



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