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Katapult Africa, in collaboration and with support from the UK-Funded RISA Fund, is furthering or scope activities, drawing on research to further inform our investment and acceleration strategies, and engage and build the innovation ecosystem. Working across RISA sectors of innovation, climate and agriculture. This initiative will further support our tailoring of Katapult model to Africa and align with RISA fund objectives of innovation system strengthening, and strengthening synergies between research and innovation systems. More about Katapult on [www.katapult.vc](http://www.katapult.vc)

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# Introduction

There are more than 900 entrepreneurial support organisations (ESOs) in Africa.<sup>1</sup> These ESOs run programmes across the entrepreneur's journey from early to late stages. Of those focusing on early stages, one type of programming is 'pre-acceleration'.

However, there is little structured data on how these pre-acceleration programmes are designed, and most importantly, how they perform and how effective they are.

The purpose of this research piece is to contribute to a more informed, inclusive, and efficient pre-acceleration strategy for Katapult and our partners, and to share our findings on best practices within the ecosystem. This piece attempts to shed more light on pre-acceleration programming in Africa within the context and challenges of a lack of common definitions, outdated nationalised analyses, and lack of an Africa-wide data set on early-stage support.

## What seems to be the key definition of pre-acceleration currently?

Our research suggests that pre-acceleration in Africa aligns closely to the definition proposed by Merguei and Costa (2022), which is: 'Early-stage entrepreneurship support organisations which are highly structured and with strong educational content, of short duration (generally less than three months) and aim to support aspiring entrepreneurs in speeding the process of venture concept emergence through fast-paced interactions and problem-solution validation.'

## Who were the key players in African pre-acceleration in 2022/2023 and what did they do?

While this piece started with a list of 60+ early-stage entities in the most active markets, a total of 10 ongoing programmes were analysed in detail, with the others contributing lessons learnt.

Global Programmes	Pan-African Programmes	Country-Specific Programmes
In partnership with local ESOs, Founders Boost (community led, mentor-driven and run for 6-weeks) and Founders Institute (focal-point led, aim to get start-ups into seed accelerators)	TEF Entrepreneurship Programme (for all 54 African countries with scalable business ideas or a business that has been operational for no more than 5 years), Katapult Africa Pre-Accelerator (increase the number of high-quality post-revenue start-ups in its pipeline for investment and support them to join the flagship Africa Accelerator programme and	Jasiri Talent Investor (fully funded one-year programme takes a long-term holistic approach to developing entrepreneurs by providing them with the time and space to identify Market-Creating Innovation and product-market fit), Antler Kenya (seven to 12 weeks for the venture-building track where founders join the community to build a

<sup>1</sup> <https://intelligence.briterbridges.com/>

	access investment.), and Accelerate Africa (A2, prepares early-stage African founders for global scale)	brand-new start-up from scratch), and Flat6Labs seed programmes (4 month programs for businesses to develop their business skills and provide them with a support environment to build their products, test market fit, improve their business models, and pitch to external investors)
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## What is working in these pre-acceleration programmes?

There is a well-documented gap in data in the African market to evaluate the efficacy of various early-stage programmes. This is a problem that is exacerbated by the use of silo'd, inconsistent and incomparable use of definitions and data collection efforts. Additionally, few of the programmes we've looked at publicly publish their learnings in a critical manner.

To derive what could suggest best practices, we drew on insights from interviews with those running these programmes, desk research, and participant feedback where possible.

Selection	Programme Delivery	Outcomes & Outcome Measurement
<p>Target start-ups at the right level of maturity with the right product and team in place</p> <p>Conduct rigorous evaluation at selection to identify the specific needs of the start-ups</p> <p>Selection can be broad on the stage of the business depending on the programme</p> <p>Have an interview component as part of selection</p> <p>Allow entry is on high merit – not everyone gets into the programme</p> <p>Decide to charge based on your objectives – it is noted as a best practice by SCALE<sup>2</sup> but may be the right decision for all programs</p>	<p>Build a community through a cohort approach Have a clear sector, industry, or functional focus</p> <p>Make programmes structured and tailored to fit individual needs of start-ups</p> <p>Use a mix of theoretical and hands-on approach to content</p> <p>Provide access to high-quality mentors and advisors</p> <p>Provide access to industry and customer feedback through demo days and other events</p> <p>Offer clear pathway from pre-acceleration to acceleration – make the “what next?” is known</p> <p>Be not too long, not too short – has to be the right amount of content and length</p>	<p>Measure of success depending on the business's needs and the objectives of the programme</p> <p>Align all stakeholders, including funders and start-ups, on outcomes of the programme</p> <p>Use a data-driven approach to programme optimization, progress towards desired outcomes measured at every stage of the pre-acceleration at an individual start up level</p> <p>Utilize a database of alumni performance that tracks their progress post-programme</p>

	Hire a competent programme team with clear processes on operations	
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## What are the gaps and barriers to pre-acceleration programming?

- Unclear scope: The term “pre-acceleration” is not consistently used and this confusion can lead to a mismatch of expectations among participants and programme operators.
- Mismatch with local context: Programme operators should ensure selection, programme delivery, and outcome expectations match the availability of venture-focused pipeline and funding landscape when designing an acceleration or pre-acceleration programme that has venture investor-readiness as the target.
- Lack of qualified staff: Given the tailored and industry-specific support needed to be on a venture path, the lack of experienced staff is noted in research by Afrilabs<sup>2</sup> as a limitation to good programme design and delivery.
- Grant Prevalence: The prevalence of grant funding can in some cases be to the detriment of alignment with desired business objectives where grants are the focus.
- Data inconsistencies: Key metrics to measure success are not the same for each pre-accelerator programme, which makes the comparison hard.<sup>3</sup>
- Programmes are not consistently run, hence no opportunity to iterate and learn: This not only does not allow for those running the programmes to improve, it consolidates grant funding of such programmes to more international or regional providers of these types of programmes.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.afrilabs.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/AfriLabs-Innovation-Ecosystem-Report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [Landscape Study of Accelerators and Incubators in East Africa](#) p.18

# Methodology and analytical framework

We focused on the 2022/2023 leading markets in Africa's entrepreneurial ecosystem (Kenya, Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, and Ghana), and began by looking at all early-stage ESOs, private and public sector run, to map the pre-acceleration programmes in these countries.

From there, we narrowed down to ESOs that specialise on pre-acceleration programmes and are closer to the chosen definition of pre-acceleration that we used for this piece (see the following section). We then segmented these programmes into global programmes, pan-African programmes, and country-specific programmes.

Out of an initial list of approximately 60 early-stage focused ESOs in the target countries, we identified less than ten ongoing programmes using the analytical framing above, and these became the primary set of players we analysed. For completeness, we supplemented the analysis of these specialised programmes with lessons from all the 60+ programmes that we originally listed.

There is a well documented gap in data in the African market to evaluate the efficacy of various early-stage programmes. This is a problem that is exacerbated by the use of silo'd, inconsistent and incomparable use of definitions and data collection efforts. Additionally, few of the programmes we've looked at publicly publish their learnings in a critical manner.

To derive what could suggest best practices, we drew on insights from interviews with those running these programmes, desk research, and participant feedback where possible. Key research questions we asked were:

1. What seems to be a common definition of pre-acceleration currently?
2. Who were the key players in African pre-acceleration in 2022/2023 and what did they do?
3. What is working in these pre-acceleration programmes?
4. What are the gaps and barriers to pre-acceleration programming?

# A common definition for pre-acceleration

Many ESOs running idea, MVP, and seed-stage start-up programmes would consider themselves “pre-accelerators”. Indeed, one of the most unsurprising findings from interviews revealed a variety of answers to the question, “What is pre-acceleration?”.

Answers ranged from “any support given to MVP or earlier entrepreneurs” to programmes getting existing businesses “investor-ready or into an accelerator programme” to some respondents arguing against using the word altogether.

What was common across all conversations, though was the positioning of pre-acceleration programmes as an upstream activity that helps prepare a business for downstream investments, acceleration or growth.

Katapult’s definition of pre-acceleration, for example, is “an introductory programme that will support impact tech start-ups to graduate towards full impact investment readiness and the Katapult accelerator.”<sup>4</sup>

In 2022, Mergeui and Costa from Maastricht University published research titled “What are pre-acceleration programmes?”<sup>5</sup> Their answer, looking at programmes globally, led to the following definition:

**Early-stage entrepreneurship support organisations which are highly structured and with strong educational content, of short duration (generally less than three months) and aim to support aspiring entrepreneurs in speeding the process of venture concept emergence through fast-paced interactions and problem-solution validation.**

This definition aligns with what we have seen and heard through our conversations on the positioning of pre-acceleration programmes in Africa as an upstream activity. For this research therefore, we used this definition from Mergeui and Costa.

Notably, this definition does not use a specific target of investor readiness or acceptance into an accelerator. It also specifies that the target of these programmes is “venture concept emergence”, suggesting those entering these programmes have not found a product-market fit yet.

Using this definition, we see that pre-acceleration programmes help businesses focus on solving important questions towards their viability and pathway to becoming “viable entrepreneurs”.

But, “viable entrepreneurship” and “venture readiness” are different things - the purpose of some companies may not be to grow impact and returns fast, and therefore other types of capital than

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<sup>4</sup> Pre-accelerator completion and feedback

The expected outcomes:

- Foundational knowledge to build an investment and fundraising strategy
- A pathway to orient the company for impact VC
- A complete understanding of the impact investment due diligence process and a headstart on the completion of Katapult’s due diligence.

<sup>5</sup> [What are pre-acceleration programmes?](#)



venture (and its associated interrelation with acceleration), may be more weightier considerations for some pre-acceleration programmes.

While we adopted this definition for this research, we understand that ESOs are businesses that innovate and create their own models that don't neatly fit into any definition. Indeed the term can never be defined uniformly across the world as different contexts, environments, mix of players, desired outcomes, and other factors will inevitably lead to a localised definition fitting the local context.

## Key players in African pre-acceleration in 2022/2023 and what did they do?

### Primary global programmes we analysed

These programmes have a set curriculum that can be adapted to local contexts. Local ESOs or funders will partner with the owners of these curriculum and offer the programme in person.

Pre-acceleration programme Name	Run by	Location	Programme Description
Founders Boost	Local ESOs & Founders Boost	Global	Founders Boost's pre-accelerator programmes have boosted hundreds of start-ups to success around the globe. The programmes are community led, mentor-driven and run for 6-weeks. Our programmes run concurrently in Spring and Fall in several regions around the world, including North America, Europe & Africa.
Founders Institute	Local ESOs & Founders Institute	Global	Pre-Accelerators exist to help you get into a seed-accelerator. While many Founder Institute Alumni do go on to seed-accelerators like Tech stars, Y Combinator, and 500 start-ups, this is not the sole purpose of the FI programme. In fact, many companies leave FI further along than a seed-accelerator or may not need funding at all. Only approximately 15% of FI alumni go on to join seed-accelerator programmes, and we have relationships in place to facilitate that process when it makes sense for the company.

### Primary pan-African programmes we analysed

These programmes are fully virtual and open to participants across Africa.

Pre-acceleration programme Name	Run by	Location	Programme Description
TEF Entrepreneurship programme	TEF	Pan-Africa	The Tony Elumelu Foundation Entrepreneurship programme is open to Africans from all 54 African countries with scalable business ideas or a business that has been operational for no more than 5 years.
Katapult Africa Pre-Accelerator	Katapult	Pan-Africa	Katapult Africa intends to increase the number of high-quality post-revenue start-ups in its pipeline for investment and support them to join the flagship Africa

			Accelerator programme and access investment. The Katapult Africa Pre-Accelerator is an introductory programme that will support impact tech start-ups to graduate towards full impact investment readiness and the Katapult accelerator. start-ups being targeted will be purpose-driven, tech-enabled and providing solutions in the Food and Climate sectors
Accelerate Africa (A2)	Prosper Africa / Future Africa	Pan-Africa	Accelerate Africa (A2) prepares early-stage African founders for global scale. We ongoing partners who can provide them with access to capital, customers and channels that can catalyse their trajectory such as Global Technology Accelerators like Y Combinator, 500 start-ups and Techs stars; Governments; Global Technology Companies and Entrepreneur Support Organizations.

## Primary country-specific programmes we analysed

The programmes are open to applicants from multiple countries, but programmes take place physically in one location. Flat6Labs runs multiple programmes in multiple countries.

Pre-acceleration programme Name	Run by	Location	Programme Description
Jasiri Talent Investor	Jasiri	Rwanda	The JASIRI TALENT INVESTOR identifies, selects and invests in aspiring entrepreneurs with the potential to create high-impact businesses. This fully funded one-year programme takes a long-term holistic approach to developing entrepreneurs by providing them with the time and space to identify Market-Creating Innovation and product-market fit.
Antler Kenya	Antler	Kenya	Founded on the belief that people innovating is the key to building a better future, Antler partners with exceptional founders across six continents to launch and scale start-ups that address meaningful opportunities and challenges. Antler programmes in Kenya range from seven to 12 weeks for the venture-building track where founders join the community to build a brand-new start-up from scratch. We also offer acceleration for early-stage start-ups.
Flat6Labs Seed Programs	Flat6Labs	MENA	Flat6Labs is the MENA region's leading seed and early-stage venture capital firm, currently running the most renowned start-up programmes in the region. Its Seed Programs are 4-month programs to support entrepreneurs develop their business skills and provide them with a support environment to build their products, test market fit, improve their business models, and pitch to external investors.

## Additional programmes analysed

Annex 1 has the full list of entities and programmes we looked at that lent lessons and best practices to this research paper. Due to the common use of short-term funding, some may no longer be offering programming at all, but their experience still offers insight.

# What have we seen that works in Africa-focused pre-acceleration?

We've looked at pre-acceleration programs across three elements: selection, programme delivery, and outcomes & outcome measurement.

## Selection

We can see certain trends among African pre-accelerators. On selection:

- Selection can be broad on the stage of the business depending on the programme;
- All have an application form;
- The majority have an interview component as part of selection;
- Most do not charge for their programmes despite the recommended best practice from SCALE<sup>6</sup> by Argidius, 2013 to charge (see Annex 2)

While these programmes do not publish their acceptance rates, research on pre-acceleration says selection into pre-acceleration programmes tends to be less competitive than both accelerators and incubator programmes.<sup>7</sup>

## Programme Delivery

Within programme delivery structures, some trends among key players in Africa are:

- Time-frame: programmes range from 4 weeks to 12 months;
- Cohort: All take a cohort approach;
- Programme Tailoring: All programmes are very structured. The on-line programmes offer the least customisation to sectors;
- Digital versus Physical: Most programmes are in-person;
- Support Types: Mentorship, live classes, and peer learning are a focus in almost all physical programmes.

## Outcomes and Outcome Measurement

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<sup>6</sup> [SCALE](#)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352673422000221>

Without published results, interviews gave us the best guide on how pre-accelerators approach setting outcomes and outcome measurement:

**“Our measurement of success depends on the business. If it is a product issue, then we focus on product changes. If team issues, then capacity. If market access, how can we generate revenue” - Pre-accelerator programme Operator**

**“Success should be measured on how much money they levered after the programme. But this could also be revenue or an impact lens as well.” - Pre-accelerator programme Operator**

On outcome measurement, there is also a growing adoption of SCALE across early-stage programming; SCALE<sup>8</sup>, developed by the Argidius Foundation 2013, is a set of evidence-based considerations that can help distinguish cost-effective and impactful business development support (BDS) programmes from the less effective ones (more on SCALE in the Annex).

## Other Lessons Learnt

Looking more broadly for insight, we also noted the below behaviours among all the early-stage programmes that pre-accelerator programs can consider.

Annex 3 also contains some behaviours of non-African pre-accelerator programs.

Program Element	Success Factors
Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targets start-ups at the right level of maturity with the right product and team in place</li> <li>• Rigorous evaluation at selection to identify the specific needs of the start-ups</li> <li>• Participation should not be free – can be subsidised by a third party, but it costs something</li> <li>• Elite status – not everyone gets into the programme, entry is on high merit</li> <li>• Alumni participation</li> </ul>
Programme delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A clear sector, industry, or functional focus</li> <li>• Programme specifically tailored to fit individual needs of start-ups</li> <li>• Mix of theoretical and hands-on approach to content</li> <li>• Access to high-quality mentors and advisors</li> <li>• Access to industry and customer feedback through demo days and other events</li> <li>• Clear pathway from pre-acceleration to acceleration – the “what next?” is known</li> <li>• Not too long, not too short – has to be the right amount of content and length</li> <li>• A competent programme team, clear processes on operations</li> <li>• A community</li> </ul>
Outcomes and outcomes measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All stakeholders, including funders and start-ups, aligned on outcomes of the programme</li> <li>• Data-driven approach to programme optimization, progress towards desired outcomes measured at every stage of the pre-acceleration at an individual start up level</li> <li>• A database of alumni performance that tracks their progress post-programme</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> [SCALE](#)

# What are the gaps and barriers to better pre-acceleration programming?

Some of gaps and risks of pre-acceleration in Africa include:

- Unclear scope: The term “pre-acceleration” is not consistently used. In addition, some pre-acceleration programming is a value-add to an accelerator or incubator and not the main activity these entities do. This confusion leads to a mismatch of expectations among participants and programme operators and limits the ability to learn across programmes.
- Mismatch with local context: There is some research and commentary on the “Silicon Valley” approach and whether acceleration is suitable in Africa<sup>9</sup>. Programme operators should ensure selection, programme delivery, and outcome expectations match the availability of venture-focused pipeline and funding landscape when designing an acceleration or pre-acceleration programme that has venture investor-readiness as the target.
- Lack of qualified staff: Given the tailored and industry-specific support needed to be on a venture path, the lack of experienced staff is noted in research by Afrilabs<sup>10</sup> as a limitation to good programme design and delivery. Adopting standards like SCALE, community building to develop robust expert mentor networks, and better staff training is needed. This problem becomes more pronounced when the pre-acceleration programme performance metrics are less defined.
- Grant Prevalence: The prevalence of grant funding in pre-acceleration in Africa creates a unique environment for programme operators. Internationally, pre-acceleration programmes typically do not provide funding, and in the case of programmes like Founders Institute, charge a participation fee. In Africa, start-ups are faced with a plethora of grant funding opportunities at this early stage. This means that instead of joining commercially oriented programmes or free programmes with only a chance of funding, donor-funded programmes become more attractive. This can in some cases be to the detriment of alignment with their desired business objectives where grant funding remains the focus. The positives are that these kinds of programmes fill a gap where one needs to be filled and create the momentum for early-stage companies to continue articulating their value proposition better and better.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.africanscalecraft.com/stalledacceleration>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.afrilabs.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/AfriLabs-Innovation-Ecosystem-Report.pdf>

- Data inconsistencies: Key metrics to measure success are not the same for each pre-accelerator programme, which makes the comparison hard<sup>11</sup>
- Programmes are not consistently run, hence no opportunity to iterate and learn: As many programmes are donor or grant funded themselves, programmes come and go. Part of the reason for this come-and-go is also commercial non-viability of the programmes. This not only does not allow for those running the programmes to improve, it consolidates grant funding of such programmes to more international or regional providers of these types of programmes.

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<sup>11</sup> [Landscape Study of Accelerators and Incubators in East Africa](#) p.18

# Annex

## Annex 1 – Secondary data of entities and programmes analysed

### Kenya

iHub: iHub is a well-known tech innovation hub in Nairobi, Kenya. They often host start-up programs and events.

Nailab: Nailab is a start-up incubator in Nairobi, Kenya, providing various programs and support for entrepreneurs.

88mph: 88mph is an African seed fund and accelerator program that has supported start-ups in Kenya.

C4DLab: The Computing for Development Lab at the University of Nairobi supports tech start-ups and entrepreneurs.

Safaricom Spark Fund: Safaricom, one of Kenya's leading telecom companies, has a fund that supports tech start-ups.

The Foundry Africa: The Foundry Africa is an innovation and start-up accelerator that operates across Africa.

Impact Hub Nairobi: Impact Hub is a global network focused on social innovation. Impact Hub Nairobi provides support and resources to social entrepreneurs.

Antler is a global start-up generator and early-stage venture capital firm that runs programs in various locations, including Nairobi.

The Nest is a global start-up generator and early-stage venture capital firm that runs programs in various locations, including Nairobi, Kenya, offering support, resources, and mentorship to nurture and scale innovative business ideas and facilitate the growth of start-ups within the local and global entrepreneurial landscape

MEST is an Africa-wide technology entrepreneur training program, internal seed fund, and network of hubs offering incubation for technology start-ups in Africa

Savannah Fund is a seed capital fund and accelerator that operates in Africa, particularly in East Africa, providing early-stage investment and support for tech start-ups through its accelerator program, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in the region

### Ghana

Kumasi Hive: Kumasi Hive is an innovation hub and maker space in Kumasi, Ghana, that fosters technology innovation and entrepreneurship through training and collaboration.

**Ghana Multimedia Incubation Centre:** Ghana Multimedia Incubation Centre is a technology and innovation hub that supports start-ups and entrepreneurs in the multimedia and creative industries in Ghana.

**Mobile Web Ghana:** Mobile Web Ghana is a tech innovation hub and training center in Accra that provides education and support for individuals interested in mobile and web technologies.

**mFriday:** mFriday is a hub in Ghana that provides resources and support for start-ups and entrepreneurs in the tech and digital industries.

**HapaSpace:** HapaSpace is a co-working and innovation hub in Ghana that fosters collaboration and knowledge sharing among entrepreneurs and professionals.

**iSpace Foundation:** iSpace Foundation is an innovation and technology hub in Accra that offers a supportive environment for tech enthusiasts and start-ups to collaborate and innovate.

**Kumasi Business Accelerator:** Kumasi Business Accelerator is an entrepreneurial hub located at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology that provides incubation programs and support for start-ups and entrepreneurs in Kumasi, Ghana.

**Duapa Challenge - British Council Ghana:** The British Council Ghana is an international organization that promotes cultural relations and educational opportunities between Ghana and the UK through various programs and initiatives.

**Invest in Africa - FMO - EY:** Invest in Africa is an initiative that provides Ghanaian businesses access to EY consulting services, fostering business development and growth in the region.

**InnoHub:** InnoHub is a technology and innovation hub in Accra, Ghana, that offers programs and services to support tech enthusiasts and entrepreneurs in their ventures.

**Workshed Ghana:** Workshed Ghana is a collaborative co-working space in Accra that provides professionals and entrepreneurs with a conducive environment to work and network.

**Impact Hub Accra:** a collaborative co-working space and innovation hub in Ghana, fostering a community of social entrepreneurs and change-makers dedicated to creating positive impact through innovative solutions.

**The hOuse Accra:** The hOuse Accra is a co-working space and event venue in Accra that offers a versatile space for professionals and businesses to host various gatherings and meetings.

**NourishLabs:** NourishLabs is a co-working space and innovation hub in Accra that focuses on providing resources and support for professionals and start-ups in Ghana.

**Workstation Accra:** Workstation Accra is a co-working space that offers professionals and businesses a well-equipped environment to work and collaborate on various projects and tasks.

**The Loop:** The Loop is a collaborative co-working space in Accra that provides professionals and entrepreneurs with a conducive environment to work and network.

**Kukun Workspace:** Kukun Workspace is a co-working space in Accra that offers professionals and start-ups a productive environment with various amenities and networking opportunities.



**Agbogloboshie Makerspace Platform:** Agbogloboshie Makerspace Platform is an innovation hub in Accra that provides tools, resources, and community support for creative and technical projects within the local community.

**Africa Internship Academy:** The Africa Internship Academy is an organization based in Accra, Ghana, dedicated to providing professional development and training programs for young professionals and students across Africa.

**Reach for Change:** Reach for Change is a non-profit organization that supports social entrepreneurs and innovative solutions for children and youth, providing mentorship and funding opportunities in Ghana and other countries.

**TEN Ghana:** TEN Ghana, or Transforming Education in Northern Ghana, is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving education and fostering community development in the northern regions of Ghana.

**Kosmos Innovation Centre Business Booster:** Kosmos Innovation Centre's Business Booster is an initiative that supports and fosters entrepreneurship and innovation in Ghana's agricultural sector, providing resources and networking opportunities for start-ups and entrepreneurs.

**EQWIP Hub:** EQWIP (Equipping Women for Participation) Hub: is a global project that empowers young women and men through skills development and entrepreneurship training, with a focus on social and economic inclusion in Ghana and other target countries.

**MEST (Meltwater School):** MEST (Meltwater School) is an entrepreneurial training program and tech incubator in Ghana that supports aspiring entrepreneurs in building successful tech businesses.

**Goba Hub:** Goba Hub is an innovation and technology hub in Accra, Ghana, that provides resources and support for start-ups and entrepreneurs in the tech and digital industries.

**Uncharted:** Uncharted, formerly known as Unreasonable Institute, is an organization that accelerates solutions to address pressing social and environmental challenges globally, supporting social entrepreneurs and initiatives in Ghana and other countries.

## Nigeria

**Co-Creation Hub** - What makes Co-Creation Hub interesting is that they offer both incubator and accelerator programs to start-ups in a broad spectrum of industries.

**ARM Labs Lagos Techstars Accelerator** - The ARM Labs Lagos Techstars Accelerator Program is a dynamic and transformative initiative that aims to provide crucial support and resources to early-stage start-ups based in Africa.

**Google For start-ups Accelerator Africa** - Google for start-ups Accelerator Africa is a groundbreaking virtual program designed exclusively for promising tech start-ups at the Seed to Series A stage across the African continent.

**MEST Africa** - MEST Africa represents a collective of innovation hubs and a comprehensive training initiative for technology entrepreneurs in Africa.

Greenhouse Capital - GreenHouse Capital serves as a cutting-edge nexus, fostering connections between start-ups, corporate entities, and investors in Africa with the shared objective of propelling innovation.

Injini - Injini is an ed-tech accelerator rooted in Africa. Through its accelerator program, Injini staunchly supports visionary founders who ardently strive to revolutionise educational outcomes across the continent.

Orange Corners - Orange Corners strives to fortify the entrepreneurial landscape in Nigeria by empowering young individuals to cultivate their business ideas and thrive as accomplished entrepreneurs.

She Leads Africa Accelerator - While primarily an accelerator, She Leads Africa also offers a pre-accelerator program focused on supporting female entrepreneurs across various sectors.

Lagos Innovates - The Lagos State government's innovation and technology-driven initiative, which includes pre-accelerator programs designed to support start-ups and budding entrepreneurs in Lagos.

Tony Elumelu Foundation (TEF) Entrepreneurship Programme - This program offers pre-accelerator support and resources to early-stage entrepreneurs across Africa, including Nigeria, in various business sectors.

Genesys Tech Hub - A tech-focused pre-accelerator program supporting early-stage start-ups in developing and refining their tech-based solutions.

## Egypt

Flat6Labs - Flat6Labs is a prominent accelerator and seed investor in the MENA region, with one of its locations in Cairo, Egypt. They offer a pre-acceleration program providing early-stage start-ups with mentoring, training, and support.

Injaz Egypt - Injaz Egypt is a non-profit organization offering various entrepreneurship programs, including pre-acceleration support. Their programs aim to foster innovation and guide start-ups in developing their ideas.

AUC Venture Lab - The American University in Cairo (AUC) operates a venture accelerator that supports start-ups, including a pre-acceleration phase, providing mentorship, workspace, and access to a network of investors.

Falak start-ups - Falak start-ups supports Egyptian entrepreneurs by investing in and mentoring start-ups throughout their journey to address their business needs and foster their growth.

start-upbootcamp Fintech Cairo - start-upbootcamp is a network of industry-specific accelerators around the world.

Pmaestro - PMAestro is a growing company that was started with a focus on bringing ideas to life through innovation.

GESR - GESR is a Misr El-Kheir Foundation-affiliated technology entrepreneurship support program.

## South Africa

Founders Factory Africa - This organisation runs a 6-month acceleration program supporting start-ups across Africa. They offer access to capital, expert guidance, and operational support to help early-stage start-ups scale.

Grindstone Accelerator - Grindstone is a structured entrepreneurship development programme that assists high-growth innovation-driven companies to get the fundamental building blocks in place to scale quickly and become sustainable and fundable.

Alpha Code - AlphaCode Incubate's mission is to help disruptive, early-stage start-ups with pioneering ideas meaningfully gain traction and impact the industries they operate in.

Injini - Injini is an ed-tech accelerator rooted in Africa. Through its accelerator program, Injini staunchly supports visionary founders who ardently strive to revolutionise educational outcomes across the continent.

start-up boot camp Cape Town - start-up boot camp is a network of industry-specific accelerators around the world.

Seed Engine - Seed Engine is motivated to establish a new narrative for entrepreneurship in South Africa where women and young people are the founders and executives of high-growth companies that have a positive economic impact and boost up local communities.

Savant - Savant's sector agnostic incubation and venture capital arms help technology businesses from product development through to scale.

TuksNovation - TuksNovation is a high-tech business incubator at the University of Pretoria that helps new businesses develop their products and businesses.

## Annex 2 – SCALE

The SCALE methodology is developed by the Argidius Foundation 2013.

### Selection process

In selection, S.C.A.L.E. recommends programmes S) select the right enterprise with clear selection criteria, use referrals from past and current participants, and set clear expectations for the entrepreneurs; and C) charge enterprises to improve performance: it improves selection of the right candidates, increases their engagement throughout the programme and builds a relationship based on value.

### Programme delivery

In programme delivery, SCALE recommends programmes to A) address problems as entrepreneurs learn best by problem-solving. Help entrepreneurs solve their problems instead of teaching them what they ought to know. This approach fosters growth and productivity.

### Outcome Measurement

In outcome measurement, SCALE recommends programme organisers L) learn by evaluating enterprise performance. Develop monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems. Support the collection of relevant data points for the enterprises and E) lead by example by improving their own organisation to serve enterprises better. This includes a clear and focused strategy, a well-organised and capable team, and a strong governance structure.

## Annex 3 - What does global best practice on pre-acceleration teach us?

Successful global pre-acceleration programs have proven to be crucial stepping stones for start-ups, helping them refine their ideas, business models, and strategies before they enter full-fledged accelerator programs.

The following elements from the general desk review we performed, some of which are already observed in Africa-focused pre-acceleration programmes, could inform future design of Africa-focused programmes:

Program Element	Success Factors
Selection	Focus on the Person, not the Idea: Pulling directly from Merguei & Costa's research: "Most global pre-acceleration programs accept candidates without a team. And in some cases, even without a start-up idea. An interesting example is the 'Founder Institute', which developed a unique application process that assesses the entrepreneurial character of the applicant. The organisation is interested in high-potential entrepreneurs and does not ask for venture ideas in the application. 'Founder Institute' holds that "Great companies start with great people (not ideas)." Among the exceptions, 'Tetuan Valley' requires a team with a Chief Technology Officer." <sup>12</sup>
Programme delivery	<p><b>Focused Curriculum and Training:</b> The program should offer a well-structured and relevant curriculum that covers key areas such as market research, business model validation, product development, and early-stage financing. Workshops, training sessions, and mentorship should be tailored to address the unique needs of early-stage start-ups at a start-up-by-start-up level.</p> <p><b>Mentorship and Networking Opportunities:</b> Access to experienced mentors and a robust network is invaluable for pre-accelerator participants. These mentors should have diverse backgrounds, including successful entrepreneurs, industry experts, and investors. Networking events should be organized to connect participants with potential partners, customers, and mentors.</p> <p><b>Practical Experience and Pilot Projects:</b> Encourage start-ups to engage in real-world projects or pilot tests. This hands-on approach helps them validate their business models, understand customer needs, and iterate their products or services based on practical feedback.</p> <p><b>Peer Learning and Collaboration:</b> Facilitate an environment where participants can learn from each other's experiences and challenges. Encouraging collaboration and peer-to-peer sessions can foster a community of learning and support, which is critical for early-stage start-ups.</p> <p><b>Access to Resources and Tools:</b> Provide start-ups with access to essential tools and resources. This can include office space, legal and accounting services, and technical resources. Additionally, guiding them on how to effectively use these resources can significantly enhance their development process.</p> <p><b>Regular Progress Assessments and Feedback:</b> Implement a system of regular check-ins and progress assessments. Constructive feedback helps start-ups stay on track and make necessary adjustments to their strategies.</p> <p><b>Fostering a Culture of Innovation and Experimentation:</b> Encourage a mindset of continuous innovation and experimentation. start-ups should be motivated to try new ideas, learn from failures, and pivot when necessary.</p>
Outcomes and outcomes measurement	Take a data-driven iterative approach to programme optimisation: Before beginning a programme, programme operators should know what mechanisms they will use for optimisation and set up a performance and data analysis system that has enough feedback loops to provide consistent steer for the pivots that will be needed during programme delivery.

<sup>12</sup> [What are pre-acceleration programs? - ScienceDirect](#)