



Accelerating Circular Solutions to Single-Use Plastics

Technical Playbook



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PRESENTS

THE SUP CHALLENGE

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Introduction



Accelerating Circular Solutions to Single-Use Plastics is intended to serve as an end-to-end guide for market acceleration of circular products and services. It outlines a set of activities and considerations that should be undertaken in order to seed and support interventions between companies developing and offering circular solutions—solution providers—and partner companies that are their target customers.

The frameworks and approaches documented are based on learnings and insights from two programs implemented and supported by The Incubation Network—the Circular Impact Market Accelerator and The Single-Use Plastics (SUP) Challenge—and the nine Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESOs), 85 startups and 61 partner companies across five countries in South and Southeast Asia that participated in the two programs.

The Circular Impact Market Accelerator was a six-month program and the first product accelerator in India to focus on plastic reduction and waste management, and bridging the gap between circularity solutions and their acceptance in restaurants. The program was first implemented in 2020-2021 by AtWorks, an ESO.

Following the success of the Circular Impact Market Accelerator, the approach was scaled to launch The SUP Challenge in the following year. The SUP Challenge was a ten-month cohort-based program that supported eight ESOs in accelerating market adoption of upstream solutions across five countries in South and Southeast Asia. The SUP Challenge focused on reducing single-use plastic consumption and waste in the foodservice industry. The environmental insights and plastic impact from this program are available in [The SUP Challenge Insights Report](#).

This playbook comprises five components.

Each component identifies a set of steps and related considerations for program design. The five components are:

- 1 **Engaging Partner Companies**
- 2 **Engaging Startups**
- 3 **Pilot Planning**
- 4 **Pilot Management**
- 5 **Post-Pilot Support**

While this guide is derived from experiences supporting accelerators focused on the foodservice sector, the modules are intended to serve programs focused on any industry with the goal of advancing circular solutions that meet that industry's needs.

Section 01

Engaging Partner Companies

Engaging Partner Companies

1.1 Identifying Suitable Sectors

Sectors subject to external pressures to reduce their plastic footprint will sense the urgency and need to support movement towards plastic circularity. Such drivers, amongst many, can include compliance, competition, societal demands and business relevance.

Compliance

Sectors that must observe circularity compliance set out by government legislation and industry regulations will have to explore alternatives. For plastic circularity, look for national roadmaps on plastic pollution, the restrictions imposed or to be initiated on material use, and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) norms.

Competition

Sectors with market saturation will be inclined to develop competitive advantages to differentiate from competitors, where sustainability adoption and circularity practices are seen as ways to gain an edge over other businesses.

Societal Demands

Consumer behavior and sentiment towards plastic usage and waste can become a compelling driver for a sector to adopt circularity. With the accessibility of media through digitalization and social platforms, companies of specific sectors can be subject to scrutiny and withdrawal of support from customers and associated brands due to unfavorable practices.

Business Relevance

A sector's ability to support innovations indicates its continued growth and desire to remain relevant. Acceptance of circularity opportunities and resources can demonstrate that a business is capable of adapting and changing to meet rapidly evolving consumer preferences and needs.



Example

Key questions to understanding suitable sectors for circularity intervention



Map out what the wider contexts are for different sectors with regards to circularity pressures to narrow down and identify suitable sector(s) for circularity intervention. Some questions to ask includes:

1. What are the current plastics hotspots in use and waste, and contribution?
2. What are the plastic circularity and policy environment for the sector and allied sectors?
3. What are the societal expectations on the sector and their responsible practices?
4. Where and how does sustainability (not just plastics) feature in the sector?
5. How do the sector's consumers view sustainability and the need to shift?
6. What are the sector's consumers' sentiment for living more sustainably, and the demographic variances of this?

1.2 Identifying Suitable Companies as Partners

Analyze companies in a chosen sector using a set of key factors that can determine the success of a circularity intervention, including but are not limited to, a company's operational size, sustainability ethos, profit margin of products and services, plastic consumption and consumer interactions with a brand (referred to as brand touchpoints).

Operational Size

The operational size of a company can be telling of its ability to make decisions and take actions that advance progress to circularity. A company with national and global presence is likely to have sizable teams that can support collaboration, but could prolong execution due to standard operating processes that require multi-level checks within and between departments. A local and/or independent company may have smaller teams, but can be more adaptable and quicker to accommodate collaborations due to less formalized processes. Estimates of operational size can be based on employee count, number of outlets, revenue and sales volume.

Sustainability Ethos

Companies with strong sustainability policies and principles are more inclined to commit to circularity interventions, by dedicating staff and/or capital resources. Look for sustainability practices emphasized by a company and any teams put in place to manage a company's long- and short-term transition towards sustainability.

Profit Margin of Products and Services

Companies are likely to accept circularity solutions if the total cost of adopting an alternative is not drastically different from existing solutions. Total cost should factor the cost to purchase, use, and dispose of or return the solution. Gauging this difference can help estimate a company's ability to absorb the higher costs of circularity solutions.

Most participating companies in The SUP Challenge and the Circular Impact Market Accelerator were willing to accept circularity interventions if the cost difference was up to 3 times of the existing solution. Some were willing to absorb the costs while others would pass down the incremental cost to customers.

Consumption of Plastics

High use of plastics and/or high generation of plastic waste as part of its work protocols or sale of products and services also indicate a greater likelihood that a company will be open to exploring circularity interventions. High plastic consumption can additionally indicate economies of scale when adopting alternative solutions, the visibility of impact when making the switch, and the urgency for a shift away from plastics.

Brand Touchpoints

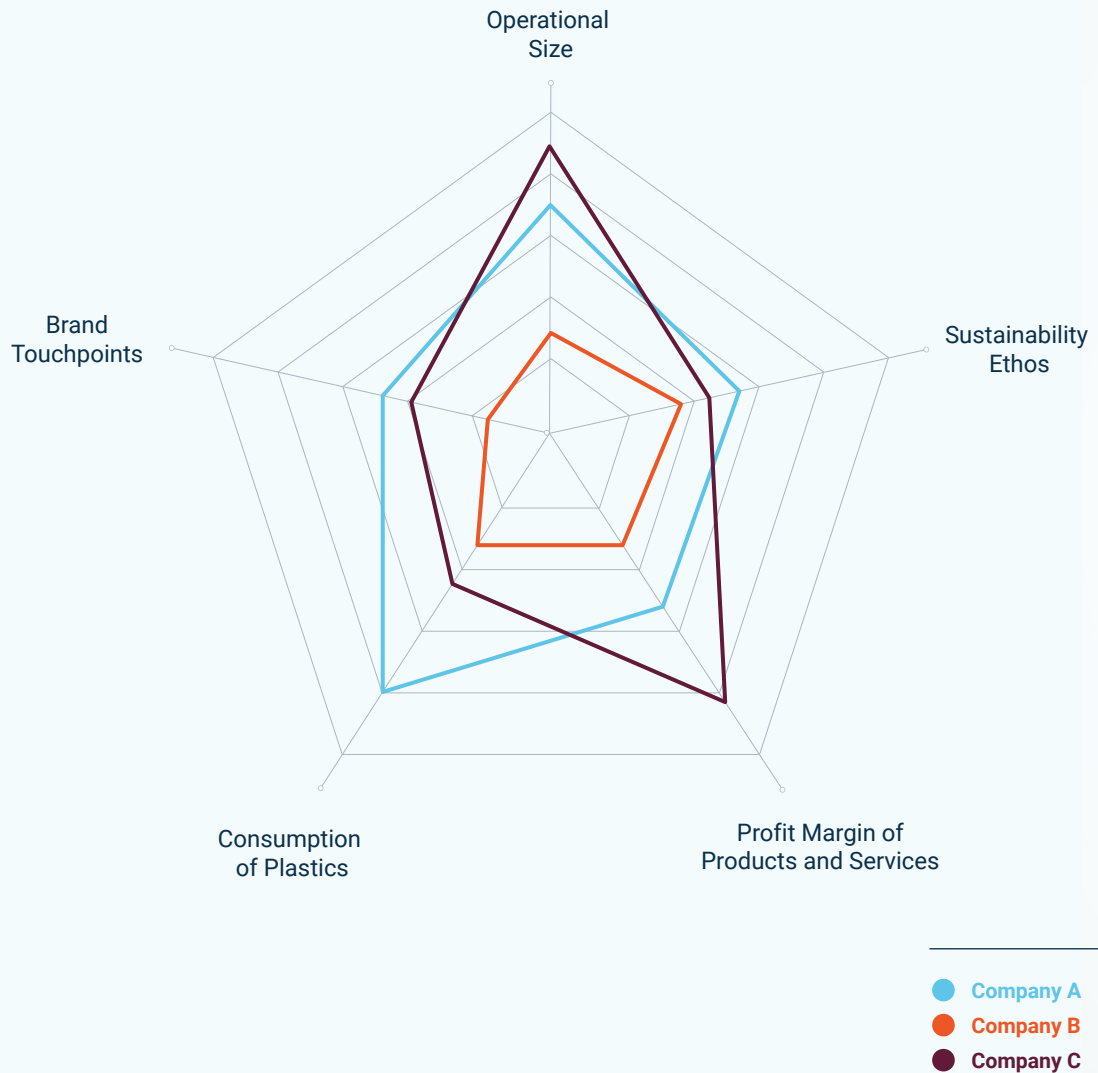
Companies that focus on customer experience prioritize positive interactions between their consumers and the individual parts of their businesses and offerings. They rely on the touchpoints customers have with their product, including customer service, staff, and promotional materials, to improve their performance and esteem with customers, and can be incentivized to do the same with circularity interventions that can enhance the customer experience.



Example

Assessing Suitability of Companies for Partnerships

Lay out the key factors that can influence the suitability of companies for circularity interventions and map companies of interest against a spidergram. The visualization will help profile companies for comparison, allowing a quicker understanding of the ideal companies to partner with.



1.3 Communicating Partnership Opportunities to Companies

Companies that have adopted plastic circularity will need to achieve additional targets, while companies that have yet to adopt plastic circularity will need support to move away from plastics. Communicating partnership opportunities for circularity intervention requires addressing motivations that align with the companies' strategic directions or influencing key decision-makers.

Due Diligence

Circularity solutions are often proposed by early-stage startups that companies may have little to no knowledge about. Offering to source and vet the solutions from startups without the agenda of for-profit businesses puts ESOs in a great position to provide fair assessment. This saves partnering companies time and capital required to find viable solutions and conduct due diligence on the certifications and regulatory requirements expected.

Customized Solutions

Companies favor solutions that are as close to identical in fit and function to their existing use and operations as possible. While circularity interventions may not equate to a perfect switch of solution, offering tailored solutions can ease the companies' concerns surrounding the disruptions and costs associated with testing incompatible products and services. The process of customization can also be a tool for the company to explore its own plastics value chain more critically, and push them to think about how deeply they want to engage in addressing their plastic usage. It can also help them discover approaches to address existing pain points.

Controlled Interventions

A facilitated pilot allows companies to quickly gain access to multiple solutions for quick trials on their own terms. The accessibility granted to circularity interventions can be co-developed between the companies and startups, with support and guidance from ESOs. This gives companies a high autonomy on pilot progression. The duration of pilots, location of interventions, volume of trials, number of iterations to solutions, and staff and customer touchpoints can all be offered as variables to operational norms for comparison.

Expert-led and Managed Transitions

The provision of circularity and entrepreneurial expertise to solution providers by ESOs during the intervention period demonstrates a strong sense of commitment to companies in supporting their path towards plastic circularity. It presents additional resources to boost the companies' circularity transition in the form of mentorship that can be costly and outside of the nature of their operation.

Staying Ahead of the Curve

Access to a multitude of startups and their solutions allow the companies to sense the development and maturity of existing options for consideration and adoption. This keeps companies close to a collective that is anticipatory of regulatory changes, which can prove to be an advantage that can prepare companies for circularity transitions over their competitors.

1.4 Management of Partnering Companies

Companies' intention to support circularity interventions should be formalized early on as business decisions take time to develop. This can be done with letters of intent, touching on broad areas of commitment, which include, but are not limited to:

Dedicated Staff

Identifying and implementing interventions is a time-consuming process that requires partnering companies to walk through operational procedures for in-depth assessments. It is crucial to request dedicated staff who can take ownership of the circularity intervention process, serving the role of a liaison to move conversations and progress internally.

Access to Business Operations

Partnering companies need to commit a segment of their business operations for circularity interventions. While companies can set boundaries to minimize disruptions to existing products and services when offering access for pilots, it is key to communicate the importance of setting a real world stress test for solution providers. This includes access to operational staff, infrastructure and other resources needed to enable the circularity interventions to take place.

Evaluating Real World Stress Tests

The Incubation Network team supported over 90 pilots across South and Southeast Asia to better understand the viability of proposed solutions.



Section 02

Engaging Startups

Engaging Startups

2.1 Identifying Suitable Startups as Solution Providers

Defining the profile of startups ideal for circularity interventions is an essential step towards building a fit with partnering companies' needs. The wider the scope of solutions engaged, the higher the chances of success in finding multiple intervention points for pilots.

Stage of Solution

Circularity intervention requires solutions that are ready to deploy. For market-access to happen, the startups engaged should have a minimum viable product that can be trialed with the partnering companies. Where governmental and industrial regulations require, the solutions should also have obtained the necessary certifications and meet the compliance requirements.

Cost of Solution

The initial cost of adoption of alternative solutions for plastic circularity will typically be higher than existing expenses budgeted by companies. Setting a ceiling on the cost of solutions offered by startups based on local market contexts to anticipate budgeting concerns from partnering companies can pave the way for the startups' market entry. Aside from that, it can be useful to know the future costs of solutions upon startups achieving parity and/or scale, which will typically be lower than current costs and may fit the partnering companies' budget considerations.

Type of Solution

The scope of potential circularity interventions for companies can be wide-ranging and overwhelming. By narrowing and determining where circularity intervention for a company's plastic value chain can happen will help bring focus to the types of startups that can be engaged. This also allows for more targeted technical assistance for startups.





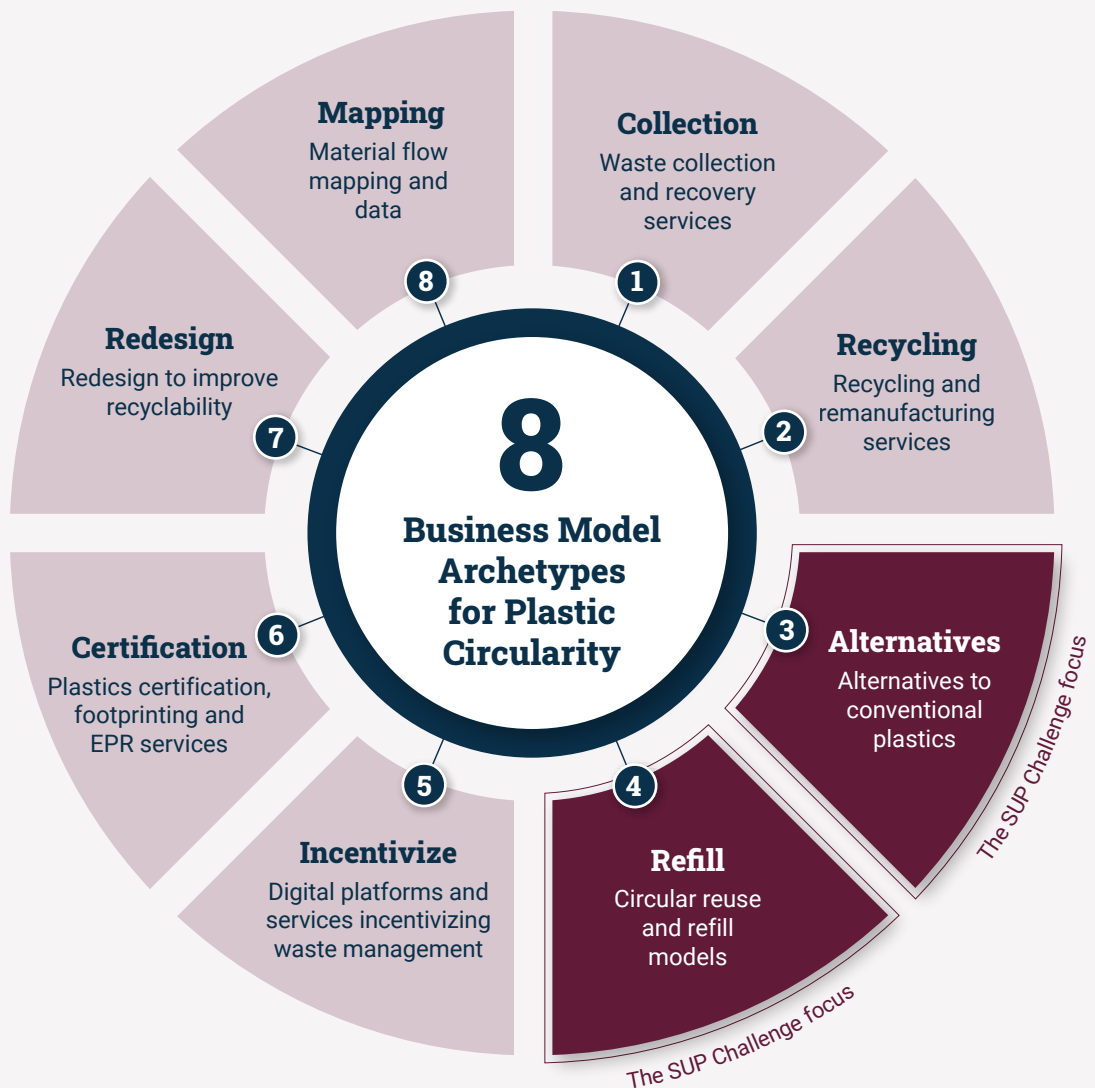
Tool

Business Model Archetypes for Plastic Circularity



The Incubation Network has identified eight business archetypes that encompass the activities and services in the plastic circularity industry: Collection; Recycling; Alternatives; Refill; Incentivizing; Certification; Redesign; and Mapping.

The SUP Challenge aimed to address a reduction in SUPs in the foodservice sector. As such, solutions fitting the business model archetypes of 'alternatives' and 'refill' were determined suitable for circularity interventions for the program.



2.2 Communicating Opportunities to Startups

Attracting the interest of suitable startups requires communicating specific benefits. Specifying the parameters and benefits of participation will allow startups to understand their readiness to undertake circularity interventions. This is vital in identifying, managing and reducing risks associated with working with selected startups.

Market Access

Startups often face challenges and competition in getting their products and services out to the market due to their small brand names and lack of convincing client portfolios. Providing them the opportunity to connect and co-create circularity interventions with their business offerings allows startups to build new relationships with influential contacts from partnering companies that could convert to potential clients.

Recognition and Validation

Startups value the social validation that comes from being accepted and recognised by cohort-based support programs. It is a form of endorsement by the organizations supporting the program and its cohort of startups, and signifies approval of the startups' offering and potential which can in turn become their gateway to other opportunities.

Feedback on Product Market Fit

The opportunity to co-design and implement a circularity intervention provides startups with deeper involvement in the process of finding product market fit with partnering companies. This suggests the need for a program timeline that builds in product and service iterations at different points of a pilot period based on feedback, which can become foundational to the startups' growth and scale.

Expert Resources

Startups look for support to improve on business growth and performance outside of pilots and tests. Providing technical assistance and mentorship drawing on industry knowledge and insights that are often time-intensive or otherwise difficult to access can create a compelling case for their participation.

Brand Visibility

It is opportune for startups to ride on the visibility of a cohort-based program's marketing materials that can boost their existing promotional efforts. This can be offered in a variety of ways, including profiling the startups on traditional and new media, such as social media posts, articles and media releases.

Sales Acquisition

Circularity intervention opens up sales acquisition in two ways for startups. Firstly, the startups' products and services will be paid for the pilot period, ensuring little to no capital loss for startups. Secondly, partnering companies may convert to be clients for startups. The pipeline from pilot provider to product and service supplier will thus serve as a different sales channel for startups.

2.3 Outreach Channels

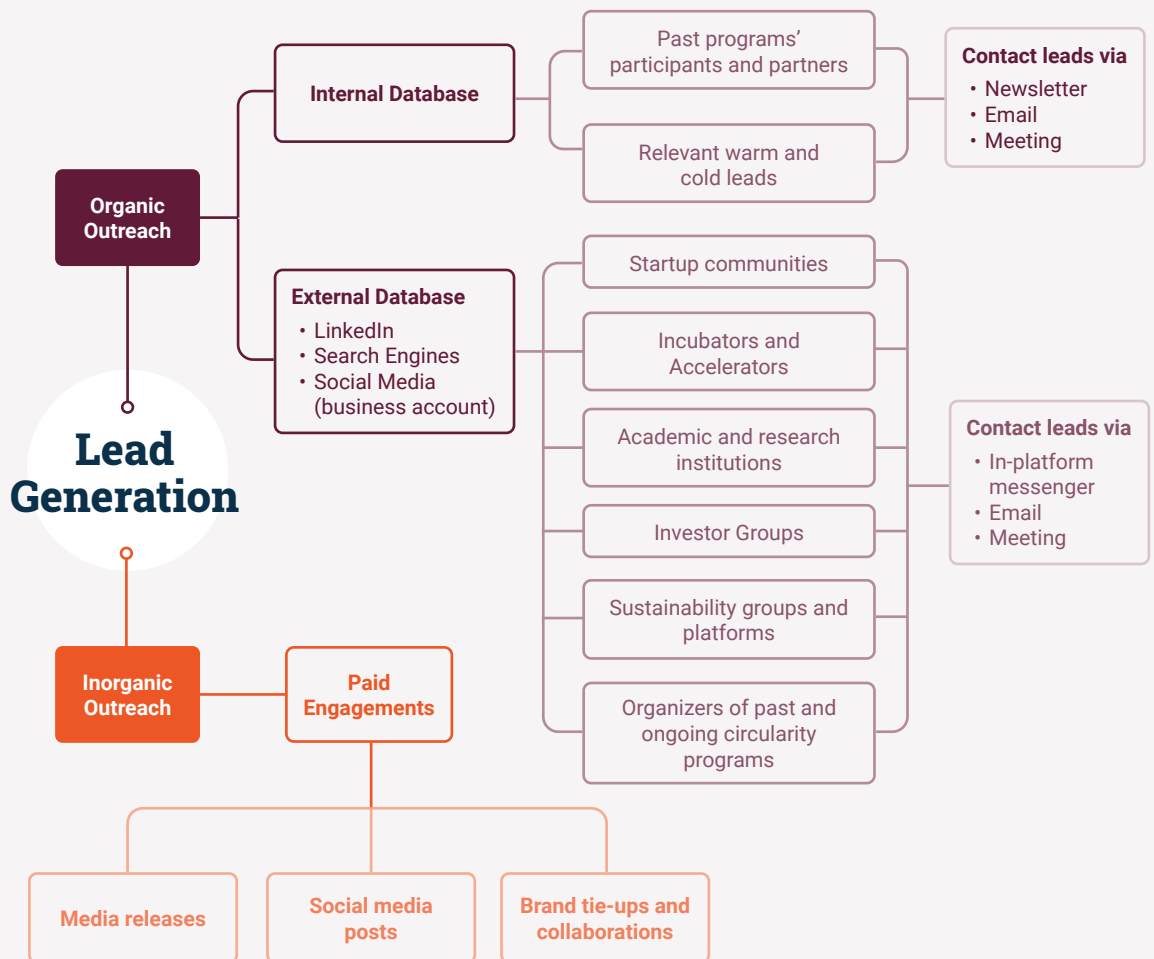
Mapping Pipelines

Sourcing suitable startups is best done through reliance on existing pipelines and networks of applicable solution providers. This can be done via inorganic or organic outreach, through in-house capacities or partnerships.



Lead Generation Map to Access Suitable Startups by The Incubation Network

The Lead Generation Map provides several approaches to access suitable startups for circularity interventions, based on methods undertaken by the ESOs of The SUP Challenge. While the map has determined a combination of organic and inorganic methods, the list remains non-exhaustive. It is recommended for organizations looking for leads to play into strengths of existing resources, such as assessing internal databases for relevant contacts, having ample staff and time to conduct desktop research for external leads, or setting aside budgets for paid leads.



Application Requirements

It is essential to put in place a form to collect applications with information that can be used for follow-up. The form requirements should ideally be short to capture as many expressions of interests as possible, requesting enough information for contacting and first-level screening purposes, such as the solution's description, readiness for deployment and prior deployment experience. This allows casting of a wider net for initial interest, with further assessments of suitability to follow.

2.4 Management of Startups

Circularity interventions cannot happen without the commitment from startups as solution providers. It is important to define and communicate the program process and delivery to ensure selected startups will not drop off or drop out, and formalize the acceptance of the terms and conditions laid out. These considerations include, but are not limited to:

Founders' Commitment

The founding team is crucial in the success of a startup, as they are key drivers of a startup's development of business offering and models. The circularity intervention process will bring about challenges that have direct impact on core business functions and solutions. Having the founders' commitment will ensure their awareness of growth opportunities from the process.

Program Duration

The duration should take into account time required to onboard startups, provide technical support for pilot-readiness, pilot setup between startups and partnering companies, pilot period inclusive of iterations and feedback loop, and post-pilot transition to adoption or further support for improvements.

Cadence of Communication

As startups typically rely on lean teams, and partnering companies are conscious of time commitment, it is important to set a cadence for check-ins, updates and inputs that will allow both sides to come together for co-creation opportunities without delaying progress in circularity intervention. Set up communication channels with the startups and request availability of their team when needed.

Format

Depending on geographical locations, time zone differences and the nature of circularity interventions, the format of program delivery can be a hybrid of online and offline modality to suit situations and maximize resources.



Section 03

Pilot Planning

Pilot Planning

3.1 Problem Mapping to Scope Areas for Circularity Interventions

3.1.1 Understanding Plastic impact

Undertake a consultative and collaborative approach to scoping a company's plastic consumption and generation of plastic waste to capture potential intervention areas. Scoping should focus on uncovering broad insights, such as the company's relationship with sustainability, prior experimentations with circularity interventions, the roles plastics play in their operations, and aspirations for an alternative solution. This can be done through interviews and site visits with stakeholders across the plastic value chain of a company, tapping into the knowledge collectively held by practitioners and encouraging their participation and buy-in for any circularity intervention.

3.1.2 Mapping Plastic Value Chain

With the learnings gained from understanding a company's plastic impact, apply a systems analysis by mapping out their plastic value chain to identify plastic hotspots within and outside of the company's control. Organize the information, quotes and visuals gathered to detail the plastic pain points faced by the company, including the people with oversight of the hotspot business units. This can illustrate the main areas of importance for circularity intervention, as well as the stakeholders and key drivers to influence and effect change.

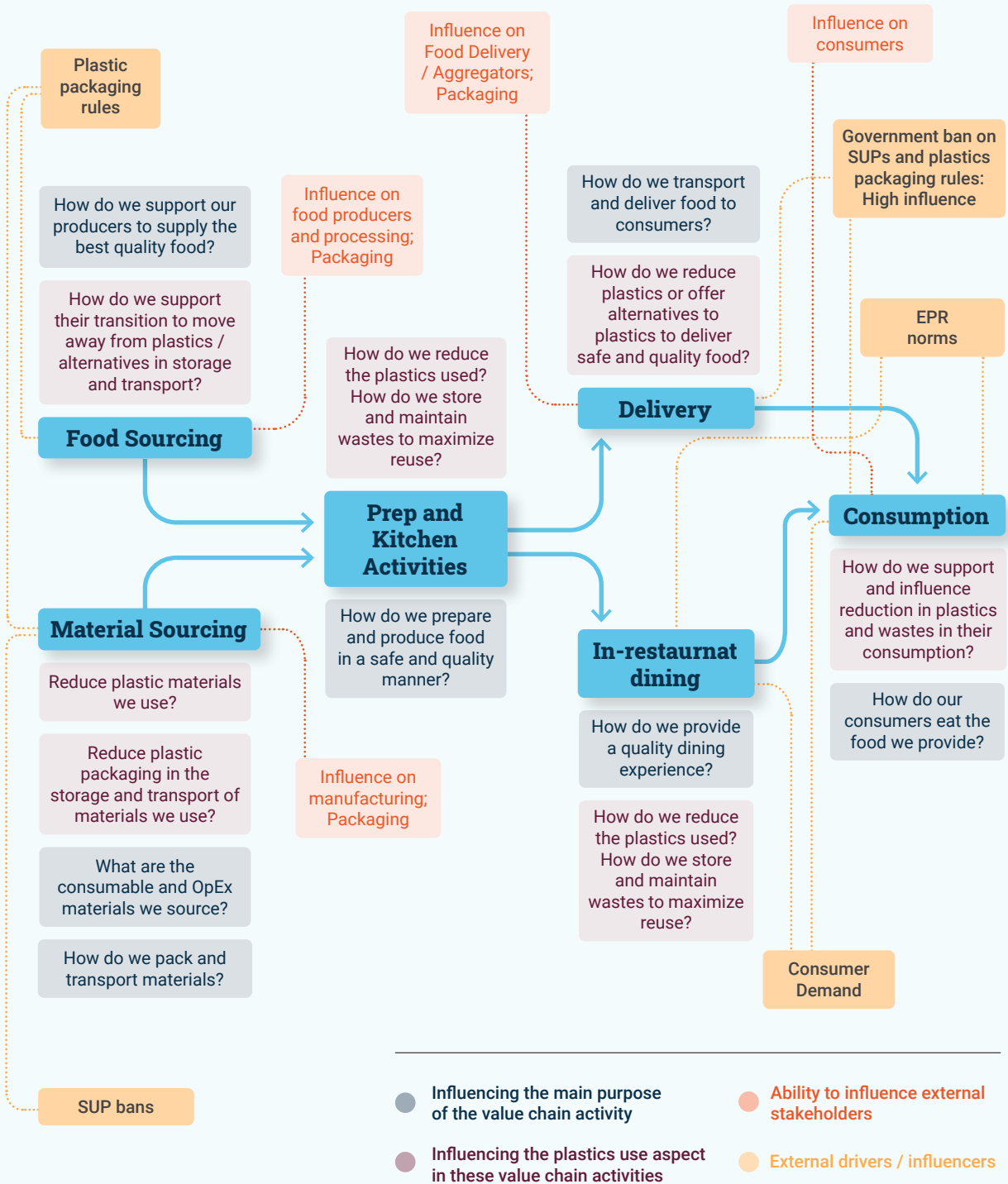




Plastic Hotspot Value Chain Map



The value chain map below outlines the key actions and drivers giving rise to plastic impact for a foodservice operator in India. It documents a birds-eye view on the clusters and interconnectivity of activities from a systems perspective to highlight possible circularity interventions.

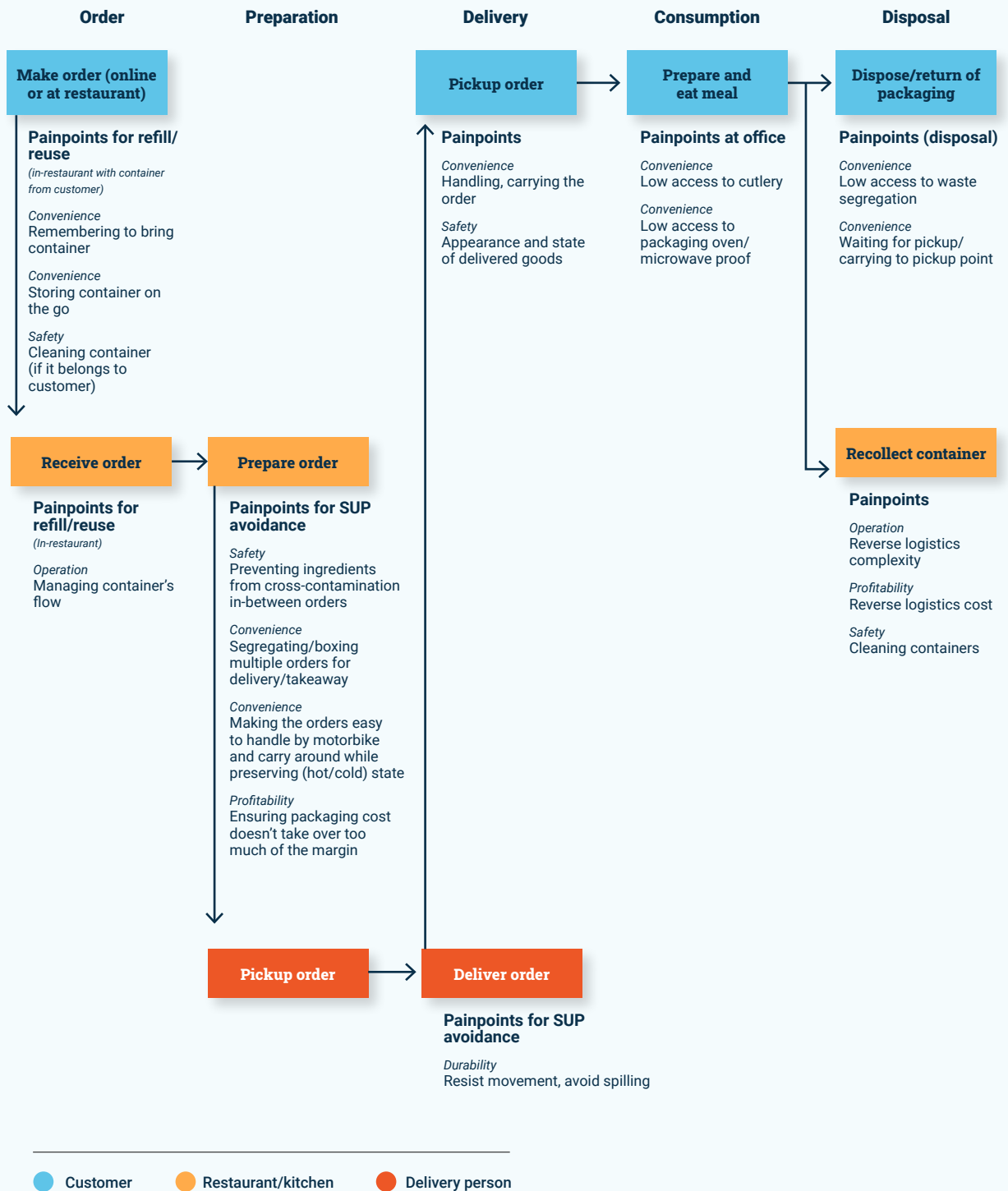




Foodservice Operator's Plastic Journey



The plastic journey map below depicts the plastic experience faced by a foodservice operator, their customers and their logistics partner when preparing for an order. It provides a step-by-step walkthrough to pinpoint the purposes plastics serve, which give rise to the consumption and generation of plastics.



3.2 Conceptualizing Circularity Intervention

The shortlisting of circularity interventions is highly dependent on the combination of an in-depth understanding and assessment of the partnering company’s plastic value chain, as well as the latter’s consensus on access and agreement to conduct pilots with solution providers. The following steps can be taken to conceptualize circularity interventions.

3.2.1 Achieve Consensus on Areas for Intervention

Several factors can determine if a plastic hotspot is low-hanging fruit for circularity intervention, such as scale of plastic consumption and waste to indicate possible economies of scale; urgency for alternatives due to policy requirements; autonomy of influence over intervention area to ensure control; and availability of solutions to pilot. Narrow the options with partnering companies to make certain they are agreeable with the selected intervention areas and have buy-in to adopt alternative solutions.

3.2.2 Match Startups with Intervention Areas

Once the intervention areas have been defined, a match of solution to intervention area can be done based on the facilitating organization’s understanding of solution specifications. Alternately, startups can be provided with the mapped plastic value chain for self-assessment and proposal of suitable intervention points. The ideal circularity solution should replace plastics without affecting quality. While matches may not be a direct replacement of existing processes and solutions, they should still be considered for piloting and adoption as they can ease transitions to circularity.



Pilot Design Framework



Evergreen Labs created a Pilot Design Framework to aid the matchmaking between solution providers and pilot partners. The framework provides transparency for the pilot design process, allowing each stakeholder involved to clearly understand the solution that will be piloted and what it replaces, including solution characteristics, quantities, and pricing.

Pilot Design Framework		
Information	Solution Provider	Pilot Partner
Company		
Person in charge		
Position		
Email		
Address		
Phone		
Social media links		
Organization type		
	Piloting Product	Current Product
Product name		
Pictures of products		
Certifications		
Pricing		
Material		
Characteristics		
Customization (printing, size, shape)		

3.2.3 Provision of Solution Pitch to Partnering Companies

Present matched solutions to partnering companies, specifying the intervention areas and replacement solutions. As partnering companies may be inundated with options for several plastic hotspots, presentations should be made easy to review. This can include utilizing a template for each proposal, drawing attention to high-level systemic features and goals, including pictures and videos featuring the solution, highlighting certifications that meet governmental and industrial regulations, and providing information on pricing, materials, characteristics, and customization options. The proposal of matched solutions can be delivered via slides, recorded pitch, or live presentations.



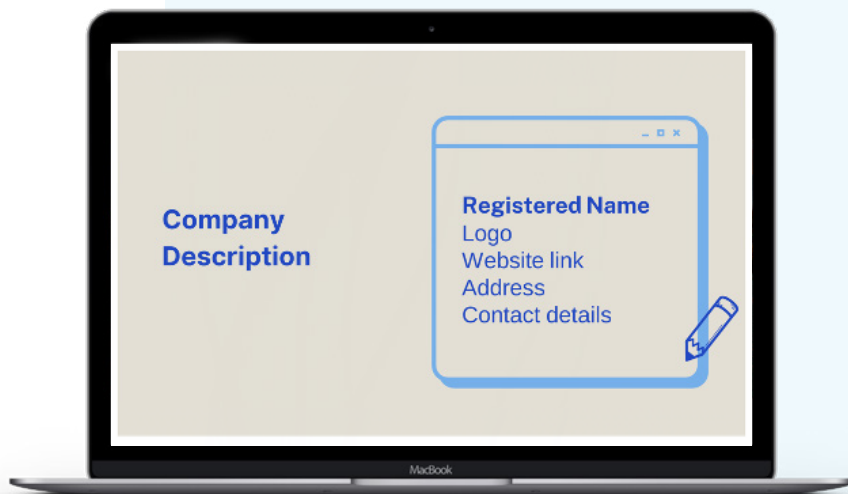
Example

Proposal Template to Present Upstream Solutions for Circularity Intervention



A proposal template was provided by Climate Collective Foundation to their participating startups to standardize the information each startup needs to provide to their partnering companies. The template requested the following information:

- Company details, including registered name, logo, website, and contact details
- Proposed solution, including description of product/service, target audience, and costs
- Specifications of solution, including certifications and technical aspects
- Customer Value Proposition, including competitor analysis
- Relevance of solution in phasing out plastics
- Past experiences in similar pilot activities
- Impact of solution, including volume of plastics to be removed, jobs created, and local communities benefited



3.3 Roadmapping Activities and Support for Circularity Interventions

A plan should be put in place to map out the activities and support required between a matched startup and their partnering company. This serves to clarify and organize the steps that will take place to enable successful delivery of circularity interventions.

3.3.1 Considerations for Circularity Intervention

The period during which the circularity intervention takes place involves ongoing coordination between the matched startup and their partnering company. Create a roadmap that touches on the timeline of activities that will occur, which should comprise the following phases: set-up; deployment; feedback loops; re-deployments; and the intervention close-out. While deployment and feedback phases are unlikely to experience delays, it is crucial to set aside longer duration for set-up and close-out of interventions, where most disruptions to existing systems would occur. Take into account time that may not be within control of involved stakeholders, such as the importing timelines, any technological set-ups and logistical changes.

3.3.2 Provision of Intervention-Readiness Support

Define areas of support required by the startups to enhance their readiness for circularity intervention. As startups generally lack industry experience, cohort-based support to boost industry-specific knowledge can quickly provide targeted learning. Support can also be offered in the form of one-on-one mentorship and access to technical expertise to suit the unique needs of the startup and their solutions.

3.3.3 Enabling Capital Support for Circularity Interventions

Financial assistance can make or break a circularity intervention. Mobilizing grants for circularity intervention is an ideal offer to remove financial barriers associated with implementation, such as the cost of providing the solutions, or lengthy accounting protocols from a partnering company seeking their finance department's approval to cover intervention costs. Where grants are not possible, a discussion is then necessary between the startups and their matched partners to determine financial accountability and any anticipated challenges.





Pilot Plan



A pilot plan was developed by Evergreen Labs to align on activities and expectations between a startup and their partnering pilot company. Functioning like a roadmap, the pilot plan provides an overview on stakeholder engagement and milestones.

General Information About Pilot

Solution:	Pilot Partner:	ESO Contact:
Pilot Location:	Pilot Model:	

Pilot Detailed Plan

Activities	Method	Frequency	Person Responsible	Schedule	Status
Baseline survey	Onboarding life cycle analysis	Online form	Startup onboarding	ESO + Solution	Week 1
	Impact on plastic avoided in Partners	Online form	Partner onboarding	ESO + Pilot Partner	Week 1
	First startup assessment	Online form	Before the pilot starts	ESO + Solution	Week 2
Pilot co-design	Co-design meeting with Partner	Online/ offline discussion	Before the pilot starts	ESO + Pilot Partner	Week 3
	Co-design meeting with Solution	Online discussion	Before the pilot starts	ESO + Solution	Week 3
Pilot kickoff	LOI between Solutions and Partners	Online and offline discussion		ESO + Solution	Week 3
Feedback loop	Feedback loop #1 from Partner	Online form		ESO + Pilot Partner	Week 4
	Feedback update #1 with Solution	Call		ESO + Solution	Week 4
	Feedback loop #2 from Partner	Online form		ESO + Pilot Partner	Week 6
	Feedback update #2 with Solution	Call		ESO + Solution	Week 6
	Feedback loop #3 from Partner	Online form		ESO + Pilot Partner	Week 8
	Feedback update #3 with Solution	Call		ESO + Solution	Week 8
	Feedback loop #4 from Partner	Online form		ESO + Pilot Partner	Week 10
	Feedback update #4 with Solution	Call		ESO + Solution	Week 10
Endline survey	Onboarding life cycle analysis	Online form	After the pilot ends	ESO + Solution	Week 12
	Impact on plastic avoided in Partners	Online form		ESO + Pilot Partner	Week 12
	Second startup assessment	Online form		ESO + Solution	Week 12



Example

100-Day Plan on Actionable Steps and Support for Startups



A diagnostic panel made up of potential partner companies and industry experts was set up for each selected startup by Villgro Philippines to brainstorm on potential solutions and identify actionable steps and milestones the startup can accomplish throughout the program to form the 100-day plan.

100 Day Plan		The 100-day plan is an actionable, short term plan that the startup can execute within that time frame.				
Area	Milestone	Action Steps	Priority	Incubation Support	Complete By:	Updates
Intellectual Property	Customization	Understand customers' preference for customization	Low	Set up discussions between startup and pilot partner	Week 4	
Market	Consumer Study	Conduct consumer validation studies - i.e. focus group discussion/interview/surveys	High	Provide lifecycle assessment mentor	Week 5	
Marketing	Reduce FAQ	Provide an FAQ section on website to clarify any questions right away	Low	None - team has tech expertise	Week 10	
Operations	Reduce Sales Lead Time	Based on pilots, understand current customer touchpoints and identify ways to automate responses and reduce lead times to close potential customers	Mid	Provide business development mentor	Week 12	
Partnership	Conducting Pilot	Provide samples to pilot partner Customize products for pilot Gather feedback from pilots	High	Monitor pilot progression	Week 8	
Product	Pricing/Competitive Analysis	Clearly delineate market position and benchmark against other direct and indirect competitors in the market	High	Provide pricing experts	Week 3	
Sales	Lengthen Runway	Figure out ways to scale revenues to stretch runway Develop priority sales pipeline	Urgent	Provide business development mentor	Week 3	
Team	Expanding the team	Look into hiring interns and business development officers on an incentive basis	Urgent	Circulate hiring opportunities	Week 4	
Technology	Automation	Consider having an API to provide customers with information	Mid	None - team has tech expertise	Week 6	



Pilot Readiness Assessment



A Pilot Readiness Assessment was developed by Seedstars to assess the pilot readiness of their cohort of startups. The assessment categories include: team; product and operations; market and revenue; performance management and funding; and administration. The startups were asked to pre-evaluate themselves based on guiding questions, then attend an assessment session with Seedstars to determine the level of support each startup needed in pilot negotiation, scoping, and implementation.

Pilot Readiness Score Evaluation			First Evaluation by Startup			Second Evaluation by ESO		
No.	Category	Scoring Guideline	Answers & Links to Data	Evaluation Score Startup	Comments	Answers (if any changes)	ESO Evaluation Score	Comments
Team								
1	Do you have a complimentary pilot team?	1) No and plan to get one 2) Not yet but have a plan to set up one 3) Yes						
2	How committed is the pilot team?	1) Slightly engaged, for now it's just one of many tasks 2) Partially engaged, ready to work on it part-time 3) Highly committed, will be ready to work on it full-time						
3	Does the pilot team have the product and market knowledge?	1) No 2) No, but there are mentors and advisors to help 3) Yes						
4	Does the pilot team have the soft skills to initiate and negotiate the pilot?	1) No 2) No, but there are mentors and advisors to help 3) Yes						
5	Do you have a group of necessary advisors to support your pilot?	1) No 2) No, but we have a list of whom we need 3) Yes						
Product & Operations								
6	What is your product development stage?	1) Concept stage 2) Product development stage 3) Production stage						
7	Have you decided on the product you will use for the pilot?	1) No, there are still multiple options 2) Yes, but we still need to narrow it down 3) Yes, it is very clear						
8	Do you have all the necessary patents and licenses to operate in the country of your pilot?	1) No, and no idea whether those are needed 2) In the process of obtaining it or researching 3) Yes, or we know for sure those are not needed						
9	Do you have all the operational processes ready and tested?	1) No, the operations are still unclear 2) Testing the operational processes 3) Operational processes are tested and ready to go						
10	Do you have the necessary logistical set up?	1) No, and there is no logistical plan 2) No, but there is a clear plan 3) Logistical setup is tested and ready to go						



11	How challenging is it to scale your production/ service offering?	1) Very difficult 2) Can be scaled but haven't explored the exact means 3) Definitely scalable and has traction to prove it						
12	Do you have the core product ownership?	1) No, our product development is fully outsourced 2) Partly, some product development activities are outsourced 3) Yes, we have full product ownership						
13	Is your product built with user experience in mind?	1) No 2) Yes, but we have not tested it with the users yet 3) Yes, and we have tested it with the users						
14	Is your product built for change, do you have a contingency plan?	1) No, haven't thought about it 2) Yes, but we will not be able to make any changes during the pilot 3) Yes, and we can make changes during the pilot						
Market & Revenue								
15	Have you defined your pilot target?	1) No, there are still multiple options 2) Yes, but there is no understanding of the decision-making unit or personas 3) Yes, and we have an understanding of the decision-making personas						
16	Have you proven the market need?	1) No, there is no proof of the market need 2) There is a theoretical proof of the market need (e.g., interviews-based) 3) There is a clear proof of the market need: there are customers willing to pay for our product						
17	Have you analyzed your competition and alternatives?	1) No, there is no competition analysis 2) Partially 3) Yes, we have a coherent analysis of competitors and alternatives						
18	Do you have a compelling pricing strategy?	1) No, we have not defined the prices yet 2) Yes, but current prices are in disadvantage compared to the competitors 3) Yes, and we have a compelling business case						
19	Do you have a sales forecast?	1) No 2) Yes, but the numbers do not have any market basis 3) Yes, and we have a proof from the market						
20	Do you have a strategy to overcome the market entry barriers?	1) No, and no entry barriers knowledge 2) We have analyzed the entry barriers and are working on a strategy 3) Yes						
21	Do you have further growth strategy?	1) No 2) Yes, but no details 3) Yes, we have a detailed growth strategy						
22	Unit economics: estimated LTV:CAC ratio?	1) 1:1 - 2:1 2) 3:1 - 4:1 3) 5:1 or more						



Performance Management & Funding								
23	Do you understand what your pilot KPIs are?	1) No, I do not understand what my pilot KPIs are 2) I know my KPIs but need help applying them to the pilot 3) Yes, I understand my pilot KPIs						
24	Do you have a system to collect your KPI data?	1) No 2) Yes, but it will depend on manual data collection 3) Yes, there is an automated data collection system						
25	Do you have a KPI dashboard?	1) No, I do not have it 2) I am currently building one 3) Yes, I have a KPI dashboard						
26	Do you have a financial budget/ forecast?	1) No 2) I am currently building one 3) Yes						
27	How do the majority of your customers pay you for your products and/ or services?	1) Pay solely by cash 2) Cash, cheque and credit card payment 3) All of the above and cardless payments such as mobile money and digital wallet						
28	When do the majority of your customers pay you for your product/ service?	1) More than 30 days 2) Between 15 - 30 days 3) Less than 15 days						
29	How will you assess the pilot success?	1) There is no plan 2) We are building a plan 3) There is a clear plan						
30	Do you have a calculation on how much money you will need to support the pilot?	1) No 2) Yes, but it is very rough 3) Yes, we have a full overview						
31	Do you have a clear pilot funding strategy?	1) No 2) Yes, but it depends on the willingness of the pilot partner to pay for a part of it 3) Yes, there is a clear funding strategy that covers all the needs						
32	How long is your pilot runway (the time you have funding for)?	1) 0 months 2) 2 months 3) 3 or more months						
Admin								
33	Do you have a video that introduces your company?	1) No 2) Working on it 3) Yes, it is ready						
34	Do you have a compelling pitch?	1) No 2) Working on it 3) Yes, it is ready						
35	Do you have a pilot case ready?	1) No 2) Working on it 3) Yes, it is ready						
36	Do you have materials to back up your pitch?	1) No 2) Working on it 3) Yes, we have a data room ready						
37	Do you have online presence?	1) No, not even a website 2) Yes, a website 3) Yes, a website and social media accounts						
38	Do you have all the necessary legal documentation?	1) No 2) Working on it 3) Yes, we have the pilot contracts ready						
Total Score			0			0		
			0.00%			0.00%		

3.4 Charting Goals and Defining Measurements For Circularity Interventions

3.4.1 Charting Goals

Keeping in mind the objective of circularity intervention is key in defining its success. The startups and their partnering companies need to come to an agreement on the intention of the intervention in order to not have misaligned expectations; this agreement should include long-term targets and short-term wins. This consensus will also shape the conversations and collaboration through the process. If the objective is to test out a market-ready solution for adoption post-intervention, rigorous stress tests should be conducted as well as sales acquisition talks. If the intention is to provide an avenue for a startup to test its viability in the market, the expectations to onboard the startup for adoption may not be the outcome, but instead will focus on gathering valuable insights and feedback that can improve the solution's performance.

3.4.2 Defining Measurements

Outcomes of circularity interventions should be measured to provide all stakeholders with quantitative and qualitative results for discussion on plastic impact and adoption viability. Chart out indicators and communicate to both the startups and partnering companies data collection expectations, ensuring transparency on data needs and usage in order to attain their cooperation. Data points should be collected at three junctures: startup onboarding phase, pre-intervention (i.e. baseline), and post-intervention (i.e. endline), to follow the startups' development and progress made on plastic impact over the engagement period.

No.	Examples of Indicators	Why it is measured	How it is collected	When it is collected
1	Number and proportion of startups that progress to the next stage of development	To determine if the support provided to the startups during the program enabled their progress from one stage of business maturity to the next	ESOs will have to identify which business milestones were completed prior to joining the program, and which ones are completed during the program period itself	Onboarding and Endline
2	Estimated amount of plastic waste avoided over project duration in metric tonnes	To calculate the impact of each pilot on reducing plastic waste	Calculate the weight of each plastic item that will be replaced as part of the pilot, multiply by the units of plastic item avoided (based on estimates), and subtract any plastic waste generated from using the alternative solution during the pilot	Onboarding, Baseline and Endline
3	Estimated amount of plastic waste that can be potentially avoided per year in metric tonnes	To determine the potential impact from each pilot if the solution is adopted over a period of 1 year, as well as introduce comparability between solutions	Take the actual plastic impact from each pilot, control for sales volume and length of pilot, and then extrapolate the impact across 365 days	Baseline and Endline

Section 04

Pilot Management

Pilot Management

4.1 Setting Up Circularity Intervention

Scale and Volume

Decide on the scale and volume of solution deployment, such as the number of products provided, the extent of services rendered, duration of the interventions, and the outlet(s) or branch(es) where the circularity intervention will occur.

Deployment-Readiness

Check that solutions are ready to be piloted. This includes ensuring any customizations made to the solutions are complete, arranging for and confirming the arrival of physical products to pilot sites where needed, and any technological and logistical set-ups necessary for deployment. Product sampling can also be considered at this point to gauge the solutions' readiness for pilots.

Staff Training

Ensure staff involved in the deployment process are well-aware of their interactions with the solutions and are capable of navigating the change. They should also be aware of the intervention start date to provide timely implementation.

Customers' Awareness

Provide materials that can communicate to customers the changes they will be experiencing as part of the pilots. This seeks their understanding of any inconvenience faced and can invite their participation during the intervention journey.



Example

Pilot Activation

Marketing activation was introduced to all pilots supported by Instellar, wherein participating startups were asked to set aside an amount from their pilot grant to co-create marketing materials with their pilot companies. This initiative served as a customer touchpoint to educate them on the pilot and alternative solutions used, as well as an experiential incentive for partnering companies.

The pilot activation between solution provider Plépah and pilot partner Burgreens involved packaging sleeves that doubled up as information leaflets about the pilot, and as holders to keep the packaging sealed.



4.2 Deployment of Solution

Ensure the solution is implemented as planned. This includes running checks with the partnering company's staff and receiving their confirmation on pilot start date. If possible, conduct site visits to observe the solution in action and highlight any corrections needed. The length of the deployment period is dependent on the nature of solutions piloted. A direct product replacement need not require long trial time to discern the solution's capabilities. Solutions that require an overhaul on parts or the whole of existing systems will require a longer pilot period to determine consistency in deployment.

4.3 Feedback Loops

Conduct timely check-ins with partnering companies to gather insights on the circularity intervention. Build in multi-stakeholder feedback loops that can involve the partnering companies' staff at various touch points associated with the solution, including teams that manage procurement, set-up, operations, utilization, maintenance, and customer service, as well as customers that will interact with the solutions. Explore doing site visits to observe the implementation and interview relevant stakeholders about their experience of the implementation process. Take the feedback gathered to discuss opportunities for iterations and refinements to the solution with the startup to strengthen the use case of the solution. While feedback loops are important, assess the necessity and number of feedback loops required so as to not lose the interest of partnering company's involvement and buy-in due to time commitment.

4.4 Re-Deployment of Solution

Undertake re-deployments of the solution if any changes were made. This allows the startups to conduct multiple tests on the viability of changes, and provides a chance for partnering companies to consider an improved version of the solution.

4.5 Closure of Circularity Intervention

Set an end-date to complete the pilot period. This prevents prolonging trials that serve no valuable purpose and only serve to delay the assessment of the deployed solution. When wrapping up circularity intervention, plan for the wind-down of the deployed solution and the return of previous processes. This could result in re-training of staff to revert to past practices, and re-educating customers on changes to expect.

Section 05

Post-Pilot Support

Post-Pilot Support

The post-pilot phase requires transitional support to sustain the startups' progress. This enables the startups to assess business risks and take on actionable next steps to attain market penetration and adoption.

5.1 Encapsulate Learnings and Challenges

Draw from the feedback and obstacles faced during the circularity intervention period and turn these into insights to assess areas for improvement. This should include any positive experiences and unfavorable circumstances at different stages of the pilot implementation, from setup to execution.

5.2 Evaluating Measurements and Impact

Circularity intervention provides vital data and information that can enable startups to make data-driven strategy decisions and address identified gaps. Collect and compare the baseline and endline data, referencing the original goals and intentions the circularity intervention set out to measure, both quantitative and qualitative. The insights derived can facilitate the considerations of priority areas to address the piloted solution's plastic impact and its market-fit for their clients.

5.3 Provision of Organizational Support

Based on the quantitative and qualitative insights obtained, organizational-level support should be offered to startups to take their solution further. Consider the long-term impact of such benefits. If a startup aims to gain market access, support provided can focus on customer acquisition and pricing. If a startup was assessing market viability, support can focus on regulatory compliance and go-to-market strategies. Where further market and product development is necessary, consider investment funnels for future circularity interventions, and consumer behavior analysis to influence market adoption and growth. Such capacity building support can come in the form of tailored mentorship and access to key networks.

5.4 Furthering Market Adoption Opportunities

Set up engagement opportunities between the startups and their partnering companies to follow up on market adoption opportunities. This could require further due diligence and onboarding to be determined and directed by the partnering companies. Utilize the measurements derived from the circularity intervention period to provide evidence-based results and impact assessment points. Leverage the pilot that took place as a stepping stone for additional sales acquisition opportunities with other companies.



Conclusion

As this playbook shows, there are a multitude of steps, considerations and logistics to account for when planning programs to support the development of SUP alternatives. While this might seem overwhelming, the goal of the playbook is to make the process more accessible and replicable.

The insights garnered from The SUP Challenge are not limited to the operational requirements of implementing circular solutions; piloting the use of circular solutions also offers a rich set of insights and data on the impact and value of the solutions themselves. For this reason, The Incubation Network has also published two reports intended to serve as companion pieces to this playbook: [The SUP Challenge Insights Report](#), which presents details on the program's implementation as well as high-level insights from four life cycle assessments (LCAs) conducted on pilots; and [The SUP Challenge Life Cycle Assessments Report](#), which details the full methodology and results for the LCAs.

The approach of The SUP Challenge and the Circular Impact Market Accelerator in advancing market readiness of SUP alternatives was highly localized, which is key to market acceptance given the variability of local environmental, political, social and economic conditions, and specific to the foodservice sectors. It is the shared hope of all partners involved that this set of resources will inspire similar efforts and programs around the world and across sectors, and that these additional efforts will continue to accelerate the pace of growth and adoption of circular products and services.

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Funders



PREVENT Waste Alliance

The PREVENT Waste Alliance serves as a platform for exchange and international cooperation for organizations from the private sector, academia, civil society and public institutions who jointly engage to advance a circular economy. The PREVENT members contribute to minimizing waste, eliminating pollutants and maximizing the re-utilisation of resources in the economy worldwide. They strive to reduce waste pollution in low- and middle-income countries and work together for the prevention, collection, and recycling of waste, as well as the increased uptake of secondary resources. The PREVENT Waste Alliance was launched in 2019 by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

For more information, visit: prevent-waste.net



ECCA Family Foundation



ECCA Family Foundation was established in 2020 to support and inspire transformative change with a strong focus on preserving our global ecosystems, especially the oceans and forests, and on protecting biodiversity for our future generations.

For more information, visit: eccafamily.foundation



AtWorks



AtWorks is an impact-focused entrepreneur platform based in India. Since 2014, they have directly supported over 400 startups to scale and grow. AtWorks seeds and co-develops effective programs around venture building for impact across Asia, including Climake, a growth platform for climate tech startups to access markets, equity and non-dilutive capital.



Climate Collective Foundation



Climate Collective Foundation is a Section 8 non-profit based in India focused on empowering entrepreneurs throughout the Global South by building, or strengthening, local climate startup ecosystems. They manage a community of more than 6,000 climate tech startups and aspiring climate tech entrepreneurs and focus their work in India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Bhutan.



Evergreen Labs



Evergreen Labs, headquartered in Danang, Vietnam since 2016, is an innovative venture studio focused on building back a better future with an aim to solve pressing environmental and social challenges through circular, transformative solutions in emerging Asia. Evergreen Labs' work and solutions have been scaled or implemented in Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Philippines, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Singapore, and Africa.



GoMassive Incubators



GoMassive Incubators Pvt Ltd is an India-based incubator, headquartered in the Delhi NCR region, that is working in the area of climate change and sustainability through various initiatives. GoMassive is also a sponsor of the Climate Angels Fund (SEBI registered) and is investing in startups solving for plastic waste and circular economy among other startups working in the area of climate change.



Instellar



Instellar is an Indonesian-based, purpose-driven company that helps businesses be more impactful, sustainable, and scalable. They have been working on various distinguished projects and programs since 2014, playing the role of a catalyst, a connector, and a community platform, to develop an ecosystem for mission-driven businesses and social enterprises in Indonesia.



RISE IMPACT



RISE IMPACT is passionate about social innovation and entrepreneurship that catalyzes systemic change in Thailand. They specialize in delivering social enterprise consultation as well as impact venture incubation and acceleration programs. Their impact incubation program, Snowball, mainly focuses on early-stage impact ventures doing pilot tests and exploring potential early adopters. Since 2019, they have worked with 13 impact ventures in various sectors such as education, environment, health, and more.



Schoolab



Schoolab is a global innovation studio based in Paris, San Francisco, and Ho Chi Minh City that trains, advises, and accompanies its clients and partners towards responsible innovation by activating the entrepreneurial and collaborative qualities of people. Schoolab has focused its impact-driven mission to support its partners around circular economy, diversity, equity and inclusion, and sustainable cities and communities.



Seedstars



Seedstars was founded in 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland, and has a network of thousands of entrepreneurs, investors, incubators, corporations, and government organizations from more than 90 countries. In Asia, Seedstars has a presence all over the continent. As an impact-driven company, Seedstars does a lot of sector-specific work in support of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



Villgro Philippines



Villgro Philippines is an early-stage impact incubator and investor headquartered in Manila. They support innovators who are addressing the most urgent social and environmental issues through innovative market-based models. Villgro Philippines has a direct portfolio of 39 enterprises across health, education, agriculture, affordable housing, and women and girls in Southeast Asia.

Startups

Abscon F&B Pvt Ltd
Advance Materials Sai Gon Co Ltd
Alga Bioteknologi Indonesia
Allas
Alterpacks Pte Ltd
AmplePac
Astu Eco Pvt Ltd
Avani Eco
Bambrew
Bambuhay
BANC
Baneu
Bare Necessities Zero Waste Solutions
Beco
Biogreen Biotech Pvt Ltd
BioReform Pvt Ltd
Brown Reed Agri Waste Innovations Pvt Ltd
Cloudwash
Cupable India
Daunuang
Delifill
DropRefill
Ecomap
Econesia
Ecopak
EcoplastID
Ecoware
Embuer Health Pvt Ltd
EQUO
EveGrocer
Evlogia Eco Care
Evoware
Fangthai Factory Company Limited
Fibercell
Galaxy Biotech
Glassic
Go Do Good
Go Purun
Good Food Loop
Green Joy
Greenwaste Papua
Hope Box
HRK
iBag
Ibanss
Imaga
Infinite Cercle
InfinityBox
iRefill
Izifill
Kagzi Bottles Pvt Ltd
Kasoi
KauBali
KidKid Co Ltd
Kiwari Bamboe
Koinpack
La Fabrica Craft
Mana.st Company Limited
Micro Vending Tech
Mo Cau Xu Tien
MOSS
Nano Onions
Nazava
NOPA
NU
Plépah
PlusTreat
PT Seaweedtama Biopac Indonesia
Qudrat
Recube
Refillable
Regeno Bio Bags
Rumah Jambe-e
SACHI-Group Inc
Salin PH
Sampurna Earth
Sprout Pvt Ltd
Srishti Lifescience Private Limited
Tana
Teostraw
Terra Bioware
Tien Duc
Unpack
Zerocircle Alternatives Pvt Ltd
ZeroPlast Labs

Food and Beverage Companies



India

Artjuna
Aurum Brew Works
Fruilicious
Impresario Handmade Restaurants
Indian Hotels Company Limited (Taj Resort & Convention Centre)
Mojigao
Prana
The Beer Cafe
Villa Nova



Indonesia

Aston Cangu
Atas Nama Kopi
Bali Water Station
Berasa Catering
Burgreens
Cielo Coffee & Eatery
Good Belly
Honu
INDISCHE 1931 Coffee & Roasters
Jkovkoffie
Joglo Mas Foodcourt
Kopi Bawah Tangga
Kopi Hidup Baru
Kopi Kalyan
Kyuri Burger
Little Bali
Mikkro Espresso
Moody Dimsum
Nasi Peda Pelangi
Rhedish Point
Smooly Juice
The Roots
Warung Fotkop
Warung Lestari (chain with 37 warungs)
Work Coffee Indonesia
Yoisho



The Philippines

Bizu Patisserie and Cafe
Butterboy
Common Folk
Crossroads
Hatch & Hoolman
The Green Table



Thailand

361 THREE SIX ONE
Blackheath Bistro
Broccoli Revolution
Coffee Car Cafe
My Beer Friend
One O-one Cafe
Petit Patisserie
Singha Complex
theCOMMONS
The Yard
Yai Yaa Restaurant



Vietnam

Cafe Xom Chieu
Coco Casa
Coffee Bike
Eco Green Boutique Hotel Da Nang
Hyatt Regency Danang Resort And Spa
Pizza 4P's
Rusted Beer
Savall Chocolate
Sofitel Saigon Plaza



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