Partnering for Impact

Results and Insights from the Scaling Frontier Innovation Program.
Investigative studies are part of a series of focused knowledge products produced by Moonshot Global and Living Collaborations—the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Partners for the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s (DFAT) Scaling Frontier Innovation (SFI) Program. Investigative studies support learning about topics related to the SFI Program as well as the broader interests of DFAT and Asia-Pacific entrepreneurship and impact investing ecosystems.

Investigative Studies are in-depth studies covering the SFI Program’s Key Learning Questions as prioritised by DFAT. Before commencing an investigative study, a concept note with questions to be explored, the methodology used to explore them, and the parties involved in the exploration are developed and approved. Then, the investigation is carried out, and findings, analysis, and recommendations are validated and disseminated.

This investigative study reviews partnerships formed to implement the SFI Program to draw from this experience and inform DFAT’s partnership approach. For additional information on the topic covered by this investigative study, please contact Michelle Halse at michelle@livingcollaborations.com.
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1.0 Introduction to the SFI Program
The Scaling Frontier Innovation (SFI) Program is an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s (DFAT) innovationXchange (iXc) that supports social enterprises to scale their development impact in the Asia-Pacific region.¹

SFI’s components (Frontier Innovators, Frontier Incubators and Frontier Brokers) focus on different but interdependent parts of the ecosystem that supports entrepreneurs. The goal is to catalyse growth in enterprises, stronger acceleration support, greater connectedness and larger capital flows to Asia-Pacific enterprises achieving development impact.

The iXc was established in 2015 to facilitate greater experimentation, partnership building, and learning across DFAT.² This came at a time when international development donors began to embrace the view that solving the world’s most persistent and complex challenges requires collaboration with external, often atypical partners.³ ⁴

1. https://www.scalingfrontierinnovation.org
2.0
Overview of Partnerships in the SFI Program
The SFI Program was a collaborative endeavour from its origins.

2.1 SFI Program Overview

Its design emerged from widespread research and conversations with many people involved in the entrepreneurship and impact investing ecosystem globally with particular consideration of the Asia-Pacific context. As Christine Heenan from The Rockefeller Foundation noted, “Asia in particular sits at the crosshairs of some of the world’s most pressing challenges – from climate change to preventable diseases to inequality. But the region also possesses tremendous assets waiting to be unleashed to help solve these problems. It has [a] unique culture of entrepreneurship. Through partnership, we can ensure these forces converge to help all of humanity rise.”

DFAT identified the opportunity to play a catalytic role by investing in diverse aspects of the entrepreneurship ecosystem, and selected three key components to achieve the following goals:

1. Create sustainable poverty reduction in the Asia Pacific region through scaling of the aggregate impact of social enterprises; and
2. Influence the delivery of aid in the Asia Pacific region by demonstrating the efficacy of new market-based approaches in achieving development impacts.6

SFI Program partnerships include players that are well situated within the broader innovation system. A few examples include the advisory group, capability development providers, and panelists and guides for the Frontier Innovators component; best practice providers and the advisory board for Frontier Incubators component; collaborative networks interested in SFI communications products, and other funders and research partners active in the ecosystem. These wider SFI Program partners bring their experience and current relationships with other innovation system players to catalyse greater effects from the SFI Program than would otherwise be achievable.

The three components and a high-level view of the partnerships within them are:

Frontier Innovators

DFAT and their implementing partner SecondMuse designed the Frontier Innovators Program to promote the work of select social enterprises or ‘innovators’ by providing them with opportunities for peer learning, grants of AUD100,000, guides to offer one-on-one advice, an in-person training, and customised technical assistance to grow their impact.

Frontier Incubators

Frontier Incubators was designed to support the capacity development of incubators and accelerators in the region. To strengthen the quality and stability of support accessible to entrepreneurs by establishing capacity development partnerships between emerging organisations and global leaders in the field (Program Partners). The goal was to strengthen the connectivity of participating incubators and accelerators and build their capacity by testing and sharing global and regional good practices to make quality support available to more social enterprises and entrepreneurs in the region. Designed and implemented by SecondMuse, Conveners.org, and ygap, Frontier Incubators supported 30 incubators and accelerators in partnership with 11 Program Partners.

6. See page 19 for further detail of the SFI Performance Framework.
**Frontier Brokers**

Aiming to better connect social enterprises with the capital that they need to scale their development impact the Frontier Brokers component supports new innovations in investment mechanisms and vehicles to attract new capital. Organisations developing these mechanisms were selected through a competitive procurement that included a co-creation workshop to encourage collaboration among ecosystem players and to help ensure a focus on gender lens investing and inclusivity. The selected teams include Athena Global Alliance (Biduk platform); Brightlight Group with Investing for Good, SecondMuse and University of Melbourne (Asia Pacific Impact Notes); Good Return with Palladium/Enclude (Impact Connect); and IIX (Equity at Scale program). DFAT is making a deliberate investment in supporting and encouraging networking among the Brokers, as well as between the Brokers and other intermediaries in the ecosystem, and between those organisations who participated in the Frontier Innovators and Frontier Incubators components.

These components commenced sequentially as demonstrated by the following timeline.

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7. The Brokers’ co-creation workshop was held in November 2018. Contracting of the firms to implement the Brokers’ component was concluded April 2019.
This staged implementation and overlap of partners created the opportunity for DFAT to learn from each sequential procurement and refine the scope, type of organisation, selection criteria, and procurement method to best support deep collaboration on an experimental program.

Central to the flexibility and innovation in procurement was the creation by DFAT of the Innovation Resource Facility to manage and coordinate procurement and implementation for innovation programs, described in the box below.

WHAT IS THE INNOVATION RESOURCE FACILITY?

“The innovationXchange has established an Innovation Resource Facility (IRF) to provide Australian Aid with efficient access to high quality technical advisory services in frontier fields of aid and development. The IRF has been designed to provide access, more broadly, to non-aid-related innovation skills to enhance DFAT and other Commonwealth Government departments’ innovation capabilities.”

The Innovation Resource Facility (IRF) is a contracting mechanism that was set up to support the iXc and wider DFAT teams working on innovation. The IRF has a brief to engage new partners and private sector organisations, reflecting iXc’s objective to partner with new and diverse organisations. The IRF managed the procurement for Frontier Innovators and Frontier Incubators as well as for the monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) and communications partners.

The IRF was able to support procurement for such an unusual program by enabling DFAT to:

- Access private sector partners, particularly smaller companies that have less experience working with traditional aid programming but offer unique skills and expertise,
- Minimise procurement risk by serving as an intermediary between DFAT and partners to take on new programs, partners and approaches, through new contracting, and
- Achieve innovation program goals through fit-for-purpose procurement for flexible implementation approaches to adapt contracts and reporting to meet the expectations of all parties in collaborative relationships.

9. Held by DT Global Australia Pty Ltd (formerly AECOM).
10. In their learning report, R4D notes that internal DFAT partners of the iXc valued the provision of specific and deep expertise in finance, impact investing and MEL via the IRF.
2.2 SFI Partners

The following table describes the full set of SFI Program Partners and their roles.

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### Funding Partners

**innovationXchange (iXc)**

The iXc is part of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), which is the international development donor funding the design and implementation of all three components of the Scaling Frontier Innovation (SFI). The iXc’s mission is to achieve impact through applying new tools and approaches, scaling capability and culture, empowering DFAT staff, and utilising innovation to maximise opportunity, security and strength for Australia and our region.

**Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF)**
- [https://www.spf.org/en/](https://www.spf.org/en/)

The SPF is a private Japanese foundation that seeks to address the diverse and complicated issues that human society is encountering in the 21st century. The SPF partnered with DFAT and the Frontier Incubators Implementing Consortium (SecondMuse, conveners.org, and ygap) to fund the development and testing of the Gender Lens Incubation and Acceleration Toolkit.

### Managing Contractor

**DT Global**
- [https://dt-global.com](https://dt-global.com)

DT Global is an international development firm that serves as the managing contractor for DFAT’s Innovation Resource Facility (IRF). The IRF managed the procurement for and collaborated with Frontier Innovators and Frontier Incubators as well as for the SFI monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) partner.

**Type of Contract: Direct to DFAT**

### MEL Partner

**Moonshot Global (Moonshot)**
- [http://moonshotglobal.com](http://moonshotglobal.com)

Moonshot is an advisory services firm with corporate capabilities in: evidence, learning, and impact; innovation and entrepreneurship; capacity development; and investment advisory. Moonshot, along with Living Collaborations, is serving as SFI’s MEL Partner across all three components.

**Type of Contract: Through IRF**

**Living Collaborations**
- [https://www.livingcollaborations.com](https://www.livingcollaborations.com)

Living Collaborations’s goal is to create and strengthen collaborations that are seeking to address complex development challenges by fostering social innovation and multi-stakeholder partnerships. Living Collaborations, along with Moonshot, is serving as SFI’s MEL Partner, focusing on evaluating SFI partnerships, across all three components.

**Type of Contract: Through IRF**
**Communication Partners**

**TheStoryBoxes**  
https://www.thestoryboxes.com

TheStoryBoxes is a Brisbane-based storytelling studio that specialises in moving and emotive content with purpose. TheStoryBoxes were contracted through the IRF to design the original SFI and Frontier Innovators websites and to produce the Frontiers documentary series that highlighted three of the social enterprises involved in Frontier Innovators.

*Type of Contract: Through IRF*

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**Your Creative**  
https://yourcreative.com.au

Your Creative is an award-winning creative agency in Melbourne. They design and build brands, strategies and technology. Your Creative was contracted by DFAT to design an updated SFI website to integrate branding across Frontier Innovators, Frontier Incubators, and Frontier Brokers.

*Type of Contract: Direct to DFAT*

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**Implementing Partners**

**SecondMuse**  
https://www.secondmuse.com

SecondMuse collaborates with visionary cities, countries, nonprofits and startups, to develop the communities and networks that help drive social, environmental, and economic innovation. SecondMuse designed and implemented Frontier Innovators and collaborated with Conveners.org and ygap (the Implementing Consortium) to design and implement Frontier Incubators and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation for the development of the Gender Lens for Incubation and Acceleration Toolkit. SecondMuse is also part of the Brightlight consortium, along with Investing for Good and the University of Melbourne, that is implementing the Asia Pacific Note Series under Frontier Brokers.

*Type of Contract: Through IRF*

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**Conveners.org**  
https://www.conveners.org

Conveners.org has built a community of mission-driven conveners and accelerators to convene and learn from each other, build the larger capacity of the field, and construct pathways to more efficiently realise positive change. Conveners.org partnered with SecondMuse and ygap (the Implementing Consortium) to design and implement Frontier Incubators and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation for the development of the Gender Lens for Incubation and Acceleration Toolkit.

*Type of Contract: Through IRF*

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**ygap**  
https://ygap.org

ygap backs early-stage impact ventures in emerging markets as a means to support economic and social development, and currently runs programs in Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Pacific Islands and Australia. ygap partnered with SecondMuse and Conveners.org (the Implementing Consortium) to design and implement Frontier Incubators and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation for the development of the Gender Lens for Incubation and Acceleration Toolkit.

*Type of Contract: Through IRF*

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**Akina**  
https://www.akina.org.nz

Ākina is New Zealand’s leading social enterprise (SE) development organisation, operating in New Zealand and the Asia-Pacific region. Ākina delivers a range of capability building programmes for SEs at different stages of development and provides specialist capacity building and advisory services in enterprise development, financing and market access, and sector development. Akina was one of the eleven Program Partners selected to provide custom support under Frontier Incubators.

*Type of Contract: Through IRF*
Fledge

http://fledge.co

Fledge is a network of conscious company accelerators and seed funds, searching the world of great mission-driven for-profit startups. By inviting 6–8 at a time to an intense 10–week accelerator, and investing in each using a unique revenue-based equity structure, Fledge creates a long-term relationship to continue guiding them from idea to success. (So far) Fledge runs programs in Seattle, Vancouver, Lima, Barcelona, and Padua, and are expanding in 1–2 cities per year. Fledge was one of the eleven Program Partners selected to provide custom support under Frontier Incubators.

Type of Contract: Through IRF

Global Entrepreneurship Network (GEN)

https://www.genglobal.org

GEN operates a platform of programs in 170 countries aimed at making it easier for anyone, anywhere to start and scale a business. By fostering deeper cross border collaboration and initiatives between entrepreneurs, investors, researchers, policymakers, and entrepreneurial support organisations, GEN works to fuel healthier start and scale ecosystems that create more jobs, educate individuals, accelerate innovation, and strengthen economic growth. Its extensive footprint of national operations and global verticals in policy, research, and programs, and ensures members have unparalleled access to the most relevant knowledge, networks, communities, and programs. GEN was one of the eleven Program Partners selected to provide custom support under Frontier Incubators.

Type of Contract: Through IRF

invest2innovate (i2i)

https://invest2innovate.com/

i2i supports startup communities in growth markets, and has been operating in Pakistan since 2011. i2i supports entrepreneurs via the i2i Accelerator, an annual four-month program that provides business support and access to mentors and investment. i2i has licensed and customised its curriculum to support a number of initiatives, including the National Incubation Centre Islamabad, the Grameenphone Accelerator in Bangladesh, and trainings for youth in Pakistan, Ukraine and Nepal. i2i was one of the eleven Program Partners selected to provide custom support under Frontier Incubators.

Type of Contract: Through IRF

Miller Center’s Global Social Benefit Institute (GSBI)

https://www.millersocent.org/

Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship is the largest and most successful university-based social enterprise accelerator in the world. Miller Center’s Global Social Benefit Institute (GSBI) helps social entrepreneurs to help more people. Since 2003 GSBI programs have accelerated 900+ social entrepreneurs, who have raised over $940M+, and positively impacted the lives of 300M+ people. The Miller Center was one of the eleven Program Partners selected to provide custom support under Frontier Incubators.

Type of Contract: Through IRF

Spring

https://spring.is/

Spring exists to change the world through entrepreneurship. A certified B Corporation, Spring supports entrepreneurs who are using business as a force for good through incubation, acceleration, leaders roundtables, funding training, workshops, and ecosystem development advisory services. Headquartered in Vancouver, Canada, Spring supports entrepreneurs via City Partners in over 10 countries around the world. Spring was one of the eleven Program Partners selected to provide custom support under Frontier Incubators.

Type of Contract: Through IRF

Social Enterprise Academy (SEA)

https://www.socialenterprise.academy/

SEA delivers transformational learning and development programs focused on leadership, entrepreneurship, learning and social impact for people working for social purpose at all levels, and organisations at all stages. 12 country teams are currently in development. With local adaptation and innovation by a growing team of partners across Africa, Asia and Europe, the Academy aims to help build the strength of the social enterprise movement. SEA was one of the eleven Program Partners selected to provide custom support under Frontier Incubators.

Type of Contract: Through IRF
The Difference Incubator (TDi)
[https://tdi.org.au/]
TDI's mission is to awaken the possibility of doing good and making money by returning to the roots of business. They work across Australia and the Pacific with entrepreneurs and businesses to create sustainable business models that create measurable impact. TDi combines their significant experience in entrepreneurship, finance and investment, innovation, design, development and measurement with a flexible and relational approach that builds capacity and sustainable results. TDi was one of the eleven Program Partners selected to provide custom support under Frontier Incubators.

Type of Contract: Through IRF

Uncharted
[https://uncharted.org/]
Uncharted is the next generation of accelerator that uses the power of an entrepreneurial accelerator to address major social and environmental issues like the future of food, urban poverty, and hate and discrimination. They scale and connect organisations in three ways. 1. Accelerate: Resourcing organisations with mentors, funders, and customised training. 2. Connect: Bringing together ventures who are all tackling the same problem so they can share insights and find collaboration opportunities. 3. Empower: Giving power away and empowering others to change the world, whether through one-off specialised training or licensing their world-class curriculum. Uncharted was one of the eleven Program Partners selected to provide custom support under Frontier Incubators.

Type of Contract: Through IRF

Village Capital
[https://vilcap.com/]
Village Capital builds bridges for entrepreneurs who are creating an inclusive and sustainable world. Their programs connect high potential, early-stage entrepreneurs with the people, institutions, and capital they need to succeed. Since 2009, Village Capital has supported more than 1,000 entrepreneurs through their programs, and partnered with affiliated investment funds, including VilCap Investments, that have invested seed capital in more than 90 program graduates. Through their VilCap Communities program, Village Capital provides an all-inclusive solution for program design, management, and implementation of a venture development program. VilCap was one of the eleven Program Partners selected to provide custom support under Frontier Incubators.

Type of Contract: Through IRF

Villgro
[https://www.villgro.org/]
Villgro Innovations Foundation is India’s oldest and one of the world’s largest social enterprise incubators. Villgro supports innovative, impactful and successful for-profit enterprises who are tackling some of the most pressing challenges in the developing world—access to healthcare, education and modernising agricultural practices. Villgro’s unique incubation model is being replicated in Kenya, Philippines and Vietnam. Villgro was one of the eleven Program Partners selected to provide custom support under Frontier Incubators.

Type of Contract: Through IRF

Athena Global Alliance
[https://athenaglobalalliance.com]
Athena Global Alliance (Athena) is an advisory firm focused on narrowing the gap between innovative ideas and access to capital. Working at the nexus of social entrepreneurs and impact investors, Athena strives to bring creative and positively disruptive solutions to those businesses, ideas and products that have been left out of the traditional financing space. Athena is leading the design and implementation of the BIDUK project under Frontier Brokers.

Type of Contract: Direct to DFAT

Brightlight
[https://www.brightlightimpact.com]
Brightlight is a “for profit with purpose” organisation formed in 2016, as an impact investment firm that provides institutional grade impact investment solutions. Brightlight is leading a consortium of SecondMuse, Investing for Good, and the University of Melbourne, to design and implement the Asia Pacific Note Series under Frontier Brokers.

Type of Contract: Direct to DFAT
**Investing for Good**  
[https://www.investingforgood.co.uk](https://www.investingforgood.co.uk)  
Established in 2004, Investing for Good (IFG) is a leading impact investing intermediary that has played a central role in developing the impact investing market in the UK and globally. IFG is part of the Brightlight consortium, along with SecondMuse and the University of Melbourne, that is implementing the Asia Pacific Note Series under Frontier Brokers.  
**Type of Contract:** Through BrightLight

**University of Melbourne**  
[https://www.unimelb.edu.au](https://www.unimelb.edu.au)  
The University of Melbourne is a leading Australian research university, with the largest cohort of research students in Australia. The University of Melbourne is part of the Brightlight consortium, along with SecondMuse and Investing for Good, that is implementing the Asia Pacific Note Series under Frontier Brokers.  
**Type of Contract:** Through BrightLight

**Good Return**  
[https://www.goodreturn.org.au](https://www.goodreturn.org.au)  
Good Return is a social purpose organisation that is working to create a world without poverty. Good Return works in the Asia-Pacific, with low-income households, financial service providers, social enterprises, NGOs, governments and social investors to research, design and implement game-changing initiatives to support financial inclusion. Good Return is partnering with Palladium/Enclude to design and implement the Impact Connect project under Frontier Brokers. Good Return is also playing a network facilitation role to support collaboration, learning and communication between the four Frontier Broker consortia and other ecosystem stakeholders.  
**Type of Contract:** Direct to DFAT

**Palladium/Enclude**  
[http://enclude.thepalladiumgroup.com](http://enclude.thepalladiumgroup.com)  
Palladium works with governments, businesses and investors to solve the world’s most pressing challenges. Enclude, a Palladium company, are a partner of Good Return on the Frontier Brokers Impact Connect project.  
**Type of Contract:** Through GoodReturn

**IIX**  
[https://iixglobal.com](https://iixglobal.com)  
IIX is a global organisation transforming the world through a new approach to sustainable peace. Over the past decade, IIX has built the world’s largest crowdfunding platform for impact investing, Impact Partners, developed a proprietary Impact Assessment, created innovative financial products such as the Women’s Livelihood Bond, operated award-winning enterprise technical assistance programs and established an Impact Institute for training and education. IIX is leading the Equity@Scale project under Frontier Brokers.  
**Type of Contract:** Direct to DFAT
2.3 SFI Partnership Classification

Central to this Investigative Study was a decision to classify distinct types of partnerships operating across the program amongst the large number of participating organisations. These distinctions call for different types of analysis and lead to different conclusions. In recognition of the diverse collaborations created and active throughout the SFI Program, over the course of the study, three discrete types of partnerships were identified.

01. Operational Partnerships

Operational partnerships that helped DFAT/iXc leverage diverse skills, resources, and connections that enhanced program design and implementation. These fit-for-purpose partners, drawn in to collaborate on the SFI Program with the iXc in various consortia, brought diverse skills, resources, and connections. They were awarded roles through competitive procurement processes and had roles in program adaptation and implementation; monitoring, evaluation and learning; and communications. This study outlines the enablers and obstacles to partnering and shares accounts of additional value created through the partnerships. ‘Operational partners’ is used to differentiate from ‘implementation partner’, which may imply more traditional contracting for specific and predetermined implementation against an agreed design, than an equal and collaborative relationship.

02. Capacity Development Partnerships

Capacity development partnerships that strengthened the ecosystem by providing access to leaders from accelerators / social impact organisations / investors who delivered targeted capacity building and business support. Frontier Incubator cohorts (Cohort Partners) gained access to these leaders (Program Partners) for targeted capacity development and business support. This study leverages data from the developmental evaluation methodologies applied throughout the SFI Program implementation to surface experience and value that resulted from the carefully brokered, customised, and equitable partnerships formed between Cohort Partners and Program Partners.

03. Peer Networks

Peer networks that catalysed connections within and across all components of the SFI Program to yield more integrated, adaptive, and agile implementation rather than a siloed approach focused on achieving predetermined objectives, and on creating the conditions for added value from peer learning, strengthened regional connectivity and serendipitous opportunities for collaboration. Peer networks underpinned other programmatic activity in Frontier Innovators, Frontier Incubators, and Frontier Brokers in recognition that network connections bring value in and of themselves, as well as the potential for shared action, influence, and scale. The Scaling Frontier Innovation Program has activated global networks to gather insights to inform feasibility and design, to expand recruitment of entrepreneurs and accelerators, to surface evidence from selection processes, and to activate ties between program participants and key players in the ecosystem. It is anticipated that this network-centric approach contributed to a network effect from DFAT’s investments. This type of partnership will be reviewed mid-2020 to allow time for the Frontier Brokers component to experience at least a year of implementation. An addendum to this study on peer networks will be published in the second half of 2020.

11. Kelly, L. and Roche, C., (2014) in a report for ACFID also recognise and recommend distinguishing between different types of partnerships.
12. In ICVA’s case study of UNICEF-NGO partnerships, they state “the term ‘implementing partners’ does not reflect an equal partnership”
14. One of the reasons for the network focus was the network-centric approach of Innovators/Incubators lead contractor, SecondMuse.
3.0

Approach to the Investigation
The intention to investigate the diverse partnering approaches used across the SFI Program emerged as important in mid-2018 following the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Strategy co-creation workshop led by the MEL partner team of Moonshot Global and Living Collaborations.

Several factors influenced this decision:

- MEL partner team expertise in the measurement of multi-party partnerships in place on complex programs,
- Recognition of the complex context for the SFI Program and that implementation was likely to be iterative and responsive to learning,
- Awareness of the place of multi-stakeholder partnerships in ecosystem / system-level change,\(^{15}\)
- The large number of participating organisations collaborating across SFI on many levels and in different ways,
- iXc desire to optimise partnerships and awareness that the strength and effectiveness of collaboration could influence the outcomes of the program;\(^{16}\) and
- iXc demand for learning from the processes and experiences of collaboration for future program approaches.

This investigative study reviews internal partnerships formed to implement the SFI Program to draw from this experience to inform the formation and implementation of other partnerships in the iXc and DFAT more broadly. The study focuses on internal partners involved in program implementation. As a result, this study is complementary to the retrospective research that is being undertaken by Results for Development (R4D) to explore what the iXc has learned about the best ways to partner with other entities within DFAT and with external partners, to leverage opportunities for impact.

The investigative study also informs the performance evaluation of the SFI Program by reviewing the extent to which the SFI Program contributed to the strengthening of the ecosystem in the Asia Pacific for scaling the impact of social enterprises (See Outcome Area 2 in the Performance Framework below). The MEL partner team adapted the SFI Program Performance Framework in mid-2019 to include a specific measure related to partnerships. Outcome area 2.4 (see figure 2 below) measures the extent to which Scaling Frontier Innovation solutions prioritized strengthening connections between and among innovators, incubators, and brokers. Two indicators were developed: percentage of SFI ‘family members’\(^{17}\) who cite added value from participation in the SFI program and percentage of brokers who cite increased engagement in the Brokers network as a result of network convening activities. The second of these two indicators relate to the role of network convenor played by Good Return, which will be reviewed in the addendum to this investigative study.

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17. The term SFI family was coined by the MEL partner team in the MEL Strategy document to signify the array of partners involved in SFI Program design and implementation.
The SFI Program is creating sustainable poverty reduction in the Asia Pacific region through scaling the development impact of social enterprises.

The SFI Program influences the delivery of aid in the Asia Pacific region by demonstrating the efficacy of new market-based approaches in achieving development impacts.

Outcome Area 1
Capability of social enterprises in the Asia Pacific region to scale their development impact increased

Outcome Area 2
Ecosystem for scaling the impact of social enterprises in the Asia Pacific region strengthened

Outcome Area 3
Availability of private sector capital for social enterprises in the Asia Pacific region increased

Outcome Area 4
Awareness of social entrepreneurship and impact investment as mechanisms for achieving development impacts in the Asia Pacific region increased

Outcome 1.1
Capability of selected social enterprises in the Asia Pacific region to measure and communicate their development impact increased

Outcome 1.2
Availability of private sector capital for social enterprises in the Asia Pacific region increased

Outcome 2.1
Access to effective incubation and acceleration services for social enterprises in the Asia Pacific region increased

Outcome 2.2
Effectiveness and efficiency of impact investment deal brokering process in the Asia Pacific region improved

Outcome 2.3
Solutions supported by DFAT prioritize increased capacity of stakeholders in gender lens investing

Outcome 2.4
Solutions supported by DFAT prioritize strengthening connections between innovators, incubators, and brokers

Outcome 3.1
Capital accessible to social enterprises in the Asia Pacific region increased

Outcome 3.2
Capital provided and brokered to social enterprises has a positive effect on women and girls

Outcome 4.1
Awareness of SFI Program objectives, activities, and outcomes among ecosystem partners, development partners, and DFAT increased

Outcome 4.2
Access to evidence, knowledge, and lessons regarding the implementation of market-based approaches to the achievement of development impacts increased
3.2
Goals and Research Questions

The goals of the study are to:

- Investigate the partnerships formed to implement the SFI Program, and draw from this experience to offer recommendations to inform the future formation and implementation of other partnerships across the iXc and DFAT,
- Understand the added value arising from the incorporation of partnerships in the SFI Program—to DFAT, to partners, to beneficiaries/program participants and especially the contribution to a ‘network effect’ or ecosystem change beyond the core programmatic activity,
- Gather evidence to inform the practice of engaging and working with new SFI Program partners, and
- Explore and understand the complexities of collaborating on a Government-led initiative.

The following research questions were pursued, to meet these goals:

- To what extent have partnerships been integrated in a deliberate and strategic way within the SFI Program?
- How has the partnering approach influenced implementation?
- What added value has been created as a result of the partnerships within the SFI Program?
- How does intentional partnership formation and management of the partnership process influence perceptions of success and added-value?
- From the perspective of partners, has the integration of partnerships contributed to additional benefits for women or other marginalised groups?
- Were there common characteristics across partnerships that supported success or created challenges to collaboration? What were they?
- What, if anything, from the approach of integrating partnerships under the SFI Program should be applied to the definition of an approach for partnerships for future DFAT programming?
3.3 Methodology

A non-experimental, mixed-methods approach was used to facilitate triangulation, enable the examination of questions from different perspectives, and incorporate as many partner perspectives as possible. These partners included DFAT/iXc, DT Global (IRF) as supporting contractor to SFI, and those organisations who were implementing Frontier Innovators, Frontier Incubators, Frontier Brokers, and crosscutting functions such as MEL and communications.

A range of qualitative and quantitative methods were employed:

- Network mapping to document the many and diverse partnerships and connections,
- Reviewing project documents and some of the key literature on evaluating partnerships and networks,
- Conducting semi-structured, in-depth key informant interviews (by video conference or phone) with the core SFI partners, the iXc and relevant others at DFAT and within the impact investing ecosystem,
- Analysing observational data collected throughout program implementation through the developmental evaluation approach employed by the MEL partner,\(^{18}\)
- Reviewing program documents (e.g., grant reports, learning reports, etc.),
- Conducting a survey using the Partnership Learning Loop analysis framework and tool,\(^{19}\)
- Identifying trends across program components that could influence outcomes attributable to the partnering approach, and
- Synthesising lessons learned based on the study’s analysis framework.

\(^{18}\) The Moonshot–Living Collaboration team applies a hybrid traditional–developmental evaluation (DE) approach to respond to the the complex nature of the SFI Program and the contexts in which it is being implemented. DE leverages processes—such as results reflections, most significant change inquiries, and ethnographic observations—which provide real-time, or close to real-time, feedback to program staff thus facilitating a continuous development loop.

\(^{19}\) The analysis framework and investigative study survey questions were adapted from Partnership Learning Loop http://www.learningloop.nl/.
Network mapping:
An interactive network map shows all SFI participating organisations, with differentiated connections to demonstrate different kinds of relationships such as direct connections, indirect connections, and network participation.

Key Informant Interviews:
Purposive sampling was used to identify interview participants from DFAT/iXc, DT Global, SecondMuse, Convenors.org, YGAP, Moonshot Global, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, and IIX, selected for their participation in various types of partnerships throughout the SFI Program. Interviews were conducted with 13 individuals (some participated in multiple interviews), representing nine partner organisations. The interviews were conducted largely via video conference (Zoom), with a small number face-to-face. A semi-structured approach was taken to conduct the interviews, which allowed for the exploration of unanticipated responses and examples of emerging and unexpected benefits from the partnerships. Interviews were transcribed and coded using qualitative analysis tools (Dedoose), and themes were identified to reflect and group findings.

Observations:
Relevant data on partnerships was extracted from notes on observations made from the Process Historian methodology applied by the MEL partner on all components of the SFI Program. Throughout the program, pre/post-workshop surveys for Frontier Incubators and Frontier Brokers included partnership-related questions.

Surveys:
The primary survey conducted in August–September 2019 using the Partnerships Analysis framework gathered data about the Capacity Development Partnerships formed for Frontier Incubators, and the Incubators Peer Network. Using the Partnership Learning Loop customised partnership review tool, this survey was sent to 25 organisations, with the option of up to two individual responses per participating organisation. Thirty total responses were received from 20 Cohort Partners (from a possible 19 organisations), six Program Partners (from a possible 11 organisations), and four from the Consortium and Government partners. Geographically, the respondents were from South East Asia (13), South Asia (8), UK/Europe (2), North America (2) and Australia (1). Participation was voluntary, responses were anonymous, and all questions were optional.

20. The Process Historian methodology was developed at DAI and first co-implemented by Moonshot staff Claire Daley and her then DAI colleague Komal Bazaz Smith. It is a DE approach that pairs an individual from the MEL team with implementers to observe program nuances, document iterations, identify and respond to challenges as they arise, and help showcase successes with a focus on utilisation of learning. It employs a mix of social science tools and learning approaches—systems mapping, network analysis, social learning and participatory evaluation, outcomes harvesting, rapid feedback loops, data visualisation—to assist experimental program implementers to iterate throughout implementation, contribute to institutional memory, inform future decision-making, capture lessons learned, and contribute to continuous learning and improvement.

21. As part of the MEL consortium, the primary researcher had access to all of those involved in the SFI Program. Participants were contacted by the researcher by email and were asked to complete the survey. Surveys were sent to respondents in the form of a link. The survey had two sections: part 1 was completed by Cohort Partners and Program Partners, part 2 was completed by all Frontier Incubators participants (Cohort Partners, Program partners, Implementing Consortium, DFAT and DT Global).
3.4 Partnership Measurement Framework

The SFI Partnerships Measurement Framework includes dimensions for measuring partnerships across the critical areas of forming partnerships, collaborating on implementation, and discovering the added value that a partnership approach may generate. This framework guided our inquiry into the different types of partnerships, framed the interview and survey questions, and enabled reflection on the significance of various process elements, personal characteristics, and behaviours to strengthen collaboration.

Figures 3-6 elaborate on the three dimensions and indicators.

Setup, design and daily operations which addressed:
- Setup and design
- Effective management
- Communication
- Decision making
- Sound leadership

Collaborative mindsets and skills which addressed:
- Diversity
- Equity
- Genuine Interest and Support
- Openness and Transparency
- Partner Engagement

Added value arising from partnerships and networks which addressed:
- Added value for entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurship ecosystem
- Added value for organisations
- Partnership Synergy
- Types of added value
- Collaborative spirit of the network (Networks only)
The Setup Design and Daily Operations Dimension observes process features associated with the beginning of a partnership or collaboration as well as the systems and processes that become regular, daily rhythms for partners working together.

**FIGURE 4:** Setup, Design and Daily Operation Indicators

**Setup & Design**
- Shared objectives
- Individual objectives
- Roles and responsibilities
- Involvement in the design phase
- Resourcing

**Effective Management**
- Collaborative systems and procedures
- Managing differences
- Partnership facilitation

**Communication**
- Feedback and learning
- Gaps or duplication being addressed
- Flow of relevant information

**Decision Making**
- Consideration of different points of view in decision making
- Clarity in decision making processes

**Sound Leadership**
- Being empowered to share ideas
- Resources and power
- Strategic guidance
The **Collaborative Mindsets and Skills** Dimension observes individual and collective behaviours, practices, and experiences that are known to foster trust and create the conditions for collaboration and innovation.

**FIGURE 5:**
Collaborative Mindsets & Skills Indicators

- **Diversity**
  - Incorporating individual expertise & ways of working
  - Valuing diversity of partners
  - Flexibility in approach

- **Equity**
  - Respect for input from partners
  - Inclusion in decision making

- **Genuine Interest & Support**
  - Supportive culture
  - Clear expectations
  - Relationship building

- **Openness and Transparency**
  - Seeking of feedback or advice
  - Comfort voicing concerns
  - Being clear about limitations

- **Partner Engagement**
  - Commitment
  - Sharing risk
  - Regular exchange of ideas
The **Added Value** Dimension observes different types of value experienced by individual partners themselves (people and organisations), partnership synergy meaning the value from working together, and value experienced by actors in the ecosystem.

**FIGURE 6:**
Added Value Indicators

- **Added Value for Entrepreneurs & the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem**
  - Wider reach
  - More impact
  - Stronger influence on ecosystem

- **Added Value for Organisations**
  - Ambitions & interests met
  - Worth the investment

- **Partnership Synergy**
  - Complementarity
  - Leveraging expertise & resources
  - Emergence of new approaches
  - Better results from collaboration

- **Types of Added Value**
  - Learning knowledge & expertise
  - Networking
  - Skills & capacity building
  - New opportunities
  - Contributes to scaling
  - Increased effectiveness
  - Gaining recognition & respect from others
  - Innovation
  - Financial or in-kind benefits
  - Increased advocacy power

- **Collaborative Spirit of the Network**
  - Sense of pride
  - Enthusiasm
  - Care for the future
  - New experience of partnering
  - Comfort amongst partners
4.0

Literature Review
A desk review of literature was conducted to understand (i) emerging practice in evaluating partnerships within international development, with a particular focus on how others have considered collaborative mindsets and skills as important dimensions of successful partnerships, and (ii) the role that multi-stakeholder partnerships play in the development of the entrepreneurship ecosystem, and in supporting social entrepreneurs. The research drew on a range of materials from practitioners, researchers, think tanks, Government and foundations, professional associations, and consulting firms.

4.1 Emerging Practice in Evaluating Partnerships in International Development

Non-exhaustive research in this area revealed that the SFI Program investigative study is focusing on similar questions that have recently been explored on a limited basis by others. Key focus areas that are the most relevant to the SFI Program investigative study include a survey of partners to surface lessons on partnerships, efforts to develop a typology of partnerships, and measurement tools and approaches:

Lessons Learned on Partnerships

Across the literature, themes emerged about the importance of flexibility, openness, diversity, communication, clarity, trust, shared ownership, and measuring outcomes and impact:

- The International Council of Voluntary Agencies undertook a case study of UNICEF and its nongovernmental organization (NGO) partnerships for humanitarian response. This case study derived from interviews and surveys of a large number of NGO partners to UNICEF offers many lessons, which are commonly understood but less often mentioned. A summary of findings from UNICEF’s partners was:
  - Aligned goals are critical;
  - Innovators highly value support for atypical interventions;
  - Top-down designed solutions are not always the right solutions;
  - Donor partners need to share public visibility with partners; and
  - Partnerships require deep trust and ongoing communication and engagement, sharing of perspectives and problem solving / solution shaping.

McConnell foundation discovered in its ‘12 Lessons Shared’ learning report (2018) that openness, respect, and ‘candid personal relationships’ are key to establishing successful collaborations. In the same vein, complementing this lesson, Rockefeller also emphasises that good partnerships require humility, a willingness to compromise, and the ability to look past differences and remain open-minded to new ideas and approaches.

“Philanthropic partnerships, when successful, are fueled by the same characteristics that contribute to any kind of successful partnership: mutual respect, complementary strengths, and the synergy that makes their cumulative impact greater and more far-reaching together than independently.”

McConnell goes on to say that collaborations flourish around strong visions that are loosely held (McConnell, 2018).

‘Defining the scope of innovative collaborations is a delicate business. Too specific and you leave little room for the contributions of your partners. Too open-ended and your collaboration lacks direction. To address this paradox, collaborators must learn to hold a vision, without getting too attached to their ideas.’ (Lesson 7, 12 Lessons)

McClure and Reichardt suggest a foundation of trust is paramount, along with aligned goals, clear roles, shared processes, inclusion of differing approaches, reflection, learning, measurement, and adaptation. They also see as essential the role of a ‘choreographer’ in a collaboration—sometimes called a ‘partnership broker’ and often not formally identified. The partnership broker contributes to success through key functions of collaborative leadership such as: community building, convening, knowledge management, amplification and advocacy, resource mobilisation and implementation coordination.

Other pieces of literature write about ‘partnership brokering’ emphasising the diverse leadership skills required to build collaborative capacities in partners, to foster equity, inclusiveness, and experimentation, to navigate different stages in the life of a partnership, and to hold space for resolution of differences and conflict.

Riddell and Moore explored peer learning in partnerships and found that specific aspects of their ‘applied dissemination’ (or ‘scaling’) learning process and design were critical for peer-learning, including a) participant selection (working on different challenges but with shared context around ambitious social change enabling mutual support), b) the conditions created by the convenors c) the culture and environment the learning group created and nurtured together, and d) the timely introduction of content and frameworks to support learning.

27. Seen as essential by Scriven in an ALNAP Study (cited by McClure and Reichardt, 2019)
Typology of Partnerships

- The Australian Council for International Development to gain a “deeper understanding of the changing landscape of partnerships developed a typology to help understanding of emerging partnerships models being used (particularly by Australian NGOs).” It recognised the challenge of demonstrating the added value of working in partnership to achieve development outcomes and concluded that value depends on the purpose of the partnership. They describe the following different types of partnerships:
  - Partnerships for more effective development at the local level- building the capacity and independent ability of the local organisation
  - Partnerships to support civil society development-capacity building organisations to work together
  - Partnerships which leverage a more effective response to complex change situations
  - Partnerships which add quality to the work of all partners
  - Partnerships and alliances for social change

- McClure and Reichardt also classify three specific types of collaboration, fit for humanitarian action, and suggest each one is treated uniquely with customised tactics, underscoring the benefits of identifying and structuring different collaboration types, as we have attempted for the SFI partnerships.

Measurement Tools and Approaches

- Hardy et al. (2003), from the UK Government Strategic Partnering Taskforce, provide an assessment tool, which addresses six principles that emphasise clarity in purpose, shared objectives, and values between partners, understanding partners’ priorities, use of trust-building behaviours, network perspectives, deep partner engagement, clear arrangements and systems for collaboration, measurement, and learning. The six principles are:
  - Recognise and accept the need for partnership
  - Develop clarity and realism of purpose
  - Ensure commitment and ownership
  - Develop and maintain trust
  - Create clear and robust partnership arrangements
  - Monitor, measure and learn

- The Partnering Initiative, with UN DESA, published a guidebook that distinguishes between the following two types of value creation from partnerships targeting development impact (or SDGs) and strongly endorses and supports with a framework and tool, measuring outcomes and value creation from partnerships.
  - Added-value of the partnership - which incorporates both added value from partnering (i.e., ‘collaborative advantage’ in this model) and stronger outcomes by working together (the idea of the outcome being ‘greater than the sum of the parts’)
  - Added value to each partner individually.


30. Including tightly integrated connections; side-by-side performance; and forming dynamic, adjustable networks to respond to shifting needs - which map remarkably closely onto different SFI partnerships, for example the operational partnerships (tight integration); brokers experiments (side by side performance) and networks (in each component)


32. The Partnering Initiative and UN DESA, 2018. Maximising the Impact of Partnerships for the SDGs.
4.2 Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships in the Development of the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

- Both Keystone Accountability, with iScale,\(^\text{33}\) and the Center for Evaluation Innovation,\(^\text{34}\) address network evaluation approaches, with an emphasis on the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships in influencing the development of an entrepreneurship ecosystem.

- The Singapore government, which is committed to supporting social innovation, recognises ‘that cross-sector partnerships are needed for an ecosystem that supports innovation and social impact, because “not all problems can be solved by merely business or [the] social sector.”’\(^\text{35}\)

- The McConnell Foundation’s partners reflect that (social) ‘Innovations don’t emerge, they are patiently excavated from the status quo,’ and that it is ultimately institutions (regulatory, financial, and others) that determine whether an innovation sees the light of day.\(^\text{36}\) McConnell’s story of Dark Matter Labs underlines the importance of focusing on removing institutional barriers, such as old manufacturing models, to innovation.

- FSG identifies multi-stakeholder partnerships as a key element of investing in ecosystems. The Omidyar Network\(^\text{37}\) engaged FSG to: 1) develop a taxonomy for the different ways that Omidyar Network approaches ecosystem investments, 2) identify best practices in the field for evaluating ecosystem investments, and 3) recommend how these practices might be applied to Omidyar Network’s investment, strategy development, and learning processes. The authors identify multi-stakeholder partnerships as one of the four principal methods used in ecosystem investments, along with research, convening, and policy influence.

- The ‘Collective Impact’ approach, pioneered by Harvard Business School,\(^\text{38}\) mandates five essential elements of a system-focused collaborative endeavour:
  - A common agenda—A shared vision and joint approach to change that addresses each participant’s interests and contributions;
  - A shared measurement system—Performance framework to understand results and success and support learning and adaptation;
  - Mutually reinforcing activities—Diverse but complementary action by many different actors, addressing different aspects of a problem;
  - Constant communication—Discipline of frequent and structured communication, trust-building and learning;
  - Dedicated “backbone” support—Dedicated staff to guide vision and strategy, support activities, establish shared measurement practices, build public will, advance policy, and mobilise resources.

37. As Omidyar Network evolved its philanthropic investments from scaling individual organisations towards a focus on influencing systems or sector-level change, now referred to as ‘ecosystem investments’. Mack, K., et al, 2016.
5.0

Case Study on Operational Partnerships
5.1 About the SFI Operational Partnerships

This Case Study reviews the relationships between the iXc and its core SFI operational partners, including SecondMuse, Conveners.org, ygap, DT Global, Moonshot Global and Living Collaborations (the MEL team) and Good Return (as Frontier Brokers Network Facilitator). We refer to choices made under Frontier Brokers to support collaboration, although this component will be considered separately in 2020.

These organisations have worked closely together, within consortia and with the iXc and DT Global, on all aspects of the evolving design and adaptive implementation throughout each SFI Program component. The close working relationship with the iXc, in particular, has been a very different experience from a traditional contract with a government donor. We were interested in learning how the partnerships worked, what factors underpinned their success, and whether there was value in this way of working within this context.

As explained in the ‘Partnership Classification’ section, we selected the term ‘operational partner’ in place of ‘implementing partner’ despite the latter being more commonly used. We wanted to distinguish from situations where organisations are engaged to implement a predetermined program and relate to DFAT principally through tightly contracted terms even if they are called ‘partner.’ We are signalling a different, deeply collaborative way of operating as partners for this global program.
5.2 Findings Across the Partnership Measurement Dimensions

The findings from our investigation of the intentional partnering approach taken on the SFI Program’s operational partnerships reflects the experience during the Frontier Innovators and Frontier Incubators components, while including some reference to the setup and design phase of Frontier Brokers. Data were gathered primarily from semi-structured, in-depth interviews with operational partners, and is presented against the dimensions and indicators of the Partnership Analysis Framework, namely:

- Setup, design and daily operations,
- Collaborative mindsets and skills, and
- Added value arising from partnerships.

“This has been much more collaborative than I had envisaged. Multiple stakeholders, sub-components, emergent design… It demonstrates leading ways to be collaborative. I haven’t seen a great deal of other development programs like this. It has set the standard for how we should work in a decentralised and remote way - a big learning experience.”

– Innovation Resource Facility Partner
**5.2.1 Dimension 1: Setup, Design and Daily Operations of SFI Operational Partnerships**

This dimension observes processes associated with the beginning of a partnership as well as the systems and processes that become regular, daily rhythms for partners working together. The expectation is that each of these processes contributes to strong and effective partnerships. Further, this dimension addresses the actual setup and design (objectives, roles, participation in design); effective management and leadership (that empowers all partners, addresses power, mobilises resources); communication and clarity; and participation in decision making.

The findings reveal that for the SFI Program, the iXc acted in new and important ways to set up, design, and operate these operational partnerships in a collaborative way that yielded an innovative and adaptive program.

**Indicator 1: Setup and design**

This first indicator recognises the importance of partners sharing objectives and incorporating their individual objectives into the joint work of the partnership. Participation in design to build ownership, clarity in roles, responsibilities and resourcing also establish strong foundations for collaboration.

The SFI Program showed positive results against this indicator: SFI Partner selection and procurement approaches, including risk management, increased the chance of collaborative relationships.

The SFI Program’s partner selection process illustrates how shared and individual objectives were incorporated into the work: SFI Partner selection was focused on identifying organisations that had shared objectives and mission alignment with SFI Program goals, who were comfortable with ambiguity, co-design and collaboration, and who were keen to do something ambitious together in this field. Lead partners were contracted through the IRF and directly to DFAT through both nontraditional and traditional procurement mechanisms.

“The way we framed what we wanted to achieve, attracted these organizations that are mission-driven, and [who knew] we were always going to need collaboration… The selections contributed to establishing a collaborative culture, without really working to overtly create it.”

– iXc

These lead partners in turn formed partnerships with other subcontractors who also shared the objectives and mission and brought complementary skills and expertise. For example, the Frontier Incubators Consortium of SecondMuse, Convenors.org and YGAP combined expertise in innovation, convening and incubation; the MEL Consortium of Moonshot Global and Living Collaborations combined expertise in innovative finance, learning and partnering as well as developmental and traditional evaluation. Mission alignment and commitment to outcomes also brought high expectations and ambitions, which were sometimes difficult to reconcile with real and constrained budget envelopes.

The staged implementation of each component, and overlap of partners involved, created the opportunity to learn from each sequential procurement and refine the scope, type of organisation, selection criteria and procurement method to best support deep collaboration on an experimental program. All contracted parties were called partners and given opportunities to contribute to program design.
For example:

• iXc/DT Global learned from their procurement experiences and shifted towards more flexible arrangements, making good use of initial strategy and design contracts followed by implementation contracts to enable adaptive and collaborative work.

• In the Frontier Brokers component, the iXc and DFAT’s Procurement team piloted an innovative procurement mechanism—a two-stage co-creation, involving an initial co-design workshop with potential partners, to refine the final Request for Proposal and encourage connections. This method resulted in more nuanced projects based on market experience and expertise of the bidders (rather than iXc being prescriptive, which is often the case with government procurement).

• In addition, under Frontier Brokers, the iXc allocated a portion of funding to one organisation to play a network facilitation role among all of the contracted organisations. This arose out of the procurement process where it became clear that all players in the brokering space would benefit from more interaction, sharing and learning with each other.

“IT’S ABOUT HOW YOU GO TO THE MARKET - HOW YOU PITCH YOUR PROGRAM, WHAT YOU’RE LOOKING FOR - EXPERTISE, NOT JUST TENDERING WITH FULLY SCOPE DESIGN AND ASKING FOR RESPONSE - INSTEAD, [SAYING] WE WANT THIS OUTCOME, HAVE A PROBLEM TO SOLVE, LEAVES ROOM FOR MISSION ALIGNED ORGANISATIONS TO COME ON THE JOURNEY WITH YOU.”

- iXc

The role of the IRF as a facilitator and administrative coordinator of a myriad of contracting arrangements supported DFAT in maintaining clear roles, responsibilities, and resourcing in a participatory manner across the SFI Program: The iXc, through the IRF, had access to procurement and contract management which could support partnering with new and diverse (and sometimes smaller) organisations. Through the IRF, it was possible (and important) for the managing contractor to hold some of the risk of such an innovative program (such as higher uncertainty of outcomes from experimental projects, working with new partners less familiar with DFAT requirements), instead of shifting risk to the implementing organisations.

For the SFI Program, the IRF program manager built in maximum flexibility in how the work could evolve, within a contracted environment.

For example:

a. To accommodate a developmental evaluation / adaptive management approach, the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Partner contract included specifications for a suite of deliverables (knowledge products / reflection points / learning events), while also allowing the specific content of those deliverables to be determined based on DFAT and emerging programmatic needs.

b. The early contracts were written to transfer all the risk from DFAT—as per a standard aid environment (eg, with clauses such as ‘on a reimbursable basis’, ‘payment in arrears’). However, in the transition from Frontier Innovators, to Frontier Incubators, the IRF revised the contracts, deliberately holding more risk, for example through pre-payment of program expenses (e.g. for large, international convenings).

c. In future procurements, for example, in contracts for Frontier Incubators Program Partners, it was critical for the program that the IRF could navigate the bureaucracy without allowing it to prevent the innovation.
“We’re trying to bring in more, better quality social enterprises to grow and scale businesses. That is the intent of this program. It comes back around to trust, having relationships, meeting people face-to-face and building genuine relationships... we’re explicitly writing [flexible, outcome-focused] contracts which can accommodate adaptation; which carries risks for everyone. But relationship management then becomes important, so you’ve got to be aware of what’s going on and where.”

– IRF

Indicator 2: Effective Management

This indicator explores the systems and procedures established to support collaboration, how differences are managed, and the presence of partnership facilitation.

The SFI Program showed positive results against this indicator: SFI operational partners drew on multiple collaboration platforms and tools, and exhibited partnership facilitation behaviours to support a collaborative culture.

SFI Program partners worked remotely for the most part, across many time zones, and drew on a wide range of tools—for communication, project management and administration—including Zoom, WhatsApp, Slack, Airtable, and Google Drive. These flexible collaboration platforms and tools are not uniformly available for DFAT when working with external partners, however, iXc was able to pioneer their use, and demonstrate how essential they are for the highly collaborative manner of working that was established within the SFI Program. It also should be noted that the SFI Program used Govteams, to provide visibility and access to key documents to the iXc and DFAT departments. While this facilitated basic file sharing, SFI Program operational partners favored other collaboration platforms noted above. The Govteams link was limited to document sharing between internal DFAT teams.

While there was no specifically nominated partnership facilitator, all partners exhibited partnership facilitation behaviours such as ensuring open flow of information, co-creating meeting agendas, drawing on each other’s strengths, and sharing facilitation of reflection meetings. The iXc played a conscious role in shaping this collaborative culture of openness and learning.
Indicators 3 & 4: Communication and Decision Making

These two combined indicators explore information flows, accommodation of different points of view, feedback and learning, how partners address gaps or duplication, and how decisions are made.

The SFI Program showed positive results against these indicators: Operational partners placed a high value on communication and established an important practice of deeply collaborative and strategic meetings.

SFI partners held fortnightly meetings, taking a deeply collaborative approach; the meetings included progress updates, reflection and learning, addressing strategic questions, risk mitigation, joint problem solving, co-creation and identifying and shaping new opportunities. Leadership and decision-making was shared. Each meeting’s agenda and decisions were documented in shared, dynamic, continuous Google Docs, which helped in ensuring clarity, efficiency and collective memory. All partners found these meetings to be very important and also considered them unusual in their experience. Communication and record keeping were adapted to the collaborative implementation and virtual nature of this work. Accountability and focus on outcomes were the same, if not more significant than in transactional relationships. Communications and decision-making were shared, open, and were not one-way or hierarchical.

Using Zoom for video meetings rather than phone conference enabled the essential face-to-face connection which partners identified as a key success factor in these relationships.

“Weunder SFI, the engagement between DFAT and partners has been very different - always strategic rather than operational, e.g., the fortnightly calls with the MEL partner are totally strategic and unique. There is such strong engagement, a sense that we are all in it together.”

– IRF Partner

Partners placed a high value on communication and maintained a pattern of constant, regular communication within consortia and with the iXc/DT Global team. This created intentional feedback loops which enabled rapid problem solving and finding opportunities for new partnerships and collaboration.

With geographically dispersed partners and most collaboration occurring remotely, partners found the occasional opportunity for face-to-face connection invaluable to build relationships and create a sense of team. For example, partner meetings were scheduled alongside AVPN Summits to leverage planned travel for multiple purposes.
Indicator 5: Sound Leadership

This indicator explores how leadership within partnerships empowers sharing of ideas, how resources and power are managed, and the presence of strategic guidance.

The SFI Program showed positive results against this indicator: Based on findings from the interviews, DFAT’s framing of relationships among implementing organisations as partnerships contributed to, as well as reflected the reality, that:

- Working relationships were close and shared power and in some cases resources;
- Program, activities, measurement and (learning/communication/tools) products were often co-designed and adaptive;
- Efforts were made to understand each other’s strategic interests and incorporate mutual benefit and equity;
- Risk was shared across partners, and
- There was a collaborative spirit.

This framing of what it meant to be partners, emerged from experience (and mission alignment, shared values and desire to work collaboratively) rather than from any overt discussion on setup, and reflected the partners collectively taking a partnering approach.

5.2.2 Dimension 2: Collaborative Mindsets and Skills of SFI Operational Partnerships

This dimension observes individual and collective behaviours, practices and experiences known to foster trust and create the conditions for collaboration and innovation and looks for evidence of diversity, equity, openness and transparency, genuine interest and support amongst partners, and the engagement or commitment of partners, understanding that each of these behaviours are trust-building, and foster belonging and safety to underpin experimentation.

SFI Program Partners brought (and defaulted to) highly developed collaborative mindsets and skills which underpinned the capacity to sit comfortably with ambiguity, reflect collectively, share leadership and adapt.

Indicator 1: Diversity

This indicator explores how diversity is incorporated at many levels including ways of working, expertise, types of partners, and how flexibility for different approaches is shown.

While strides were made over the course of implementation, notably with the development and operationalisation of the Gender and Power strategy, there is room for improvement in this area: As a global program, SFI has embraced diverse organisations and cultures and ramped up influence around gender-lens investing, but there is room for improvement when it comes to diversity in language.

Diversity was built into the design of SFI, by selecting to span the diverses countries, languages and cultures of the Asia Pacific region. The different types of organisations involved added an additional layer of diversity.

39. Daniel Coyle (in his book ‘Culture Code’) emphasises the micro-behaviours which, when deliberately practiced, foster belonging in teams. In our Analysis Framework, we seek to capture this element by identifying examples of ‘genuine interest and support’ such as sharing personal joys and concerns, building in shared fun and relaxation, adapting to meet partner needs - believing these contribute to creating a culture of trust from which creativity and innovation arise.

40. Diversity in language was more challenging, and while delivered in English this limitation was acknowledged and some accommodations were made to support speakers of other languages as the program adapted. Creative solutions to working across multiple languages are sought.
Leveraging expertise and trusting each other’s contribution has been a feature of these consortia relationships. While not specifically within the Operational Partnerships considered here, the broader SFI Family’ includes organisations large, medium, small, local, global, public, private, social, charitable, academic, generalist and specialist. Participants have gained value from the opportunity to engage with organisations they otherwise would rarely encounter and examples are emerging of these new connections yielding beneficial outcomes.

As the SFI Program matured, the emphasis on gender was also strengthened, leading to the development of a specific gender strategy, which was then operationalised through MEL, Frontier Incubators and Frontier Brokers; YGAP stepped into an expanded role in leading a gender lens incubation and acceleration theme for Frontier Innovators, and the MEL team developed a gender-specific measurement framework for the Frontier Brokers component, in collaboration with all Brokers partners.

However, there is still room to improve in accommodating diversity, especially in language proficiency, and in voices that offer a reality-check from contextualised field experience.

“I would have loved to see more people in the room from the regions we’re working in. Very hard to do this. In the design phase, YGAP was the only one to say ‘this might not work’... brought a more realistic voice. Let’s bring cohort partners into the next phase.”

– YGAP

Indicator 2: Equity

This indicator explores equity (seen in respect and inclusion) as a partnership-building principle because of its equalisation of power.

The SFI Program employed new approaches that led to better than expected results in this area: Co-creation and sharing decision making contribute to equity within relationships that by nature are driven by contracts.

Respect for each other’s contribution and the desire to make the best, joint decisions and achieve the strongest outcomes possible created the foundations for the collaborative dynamic between SFI operational partners. In reality, this means sharing power, which can be challenging in a contracted relationship, where money is the dominant resource and comes from one source (DFAT). DFAT staff are aware of the large amount of power they possess as the commissioning donor and tried to shift this dynamic in the SFI Program through the collaborative way of working and by not making unilateral decisions.

Equity was an overtly intentional principle underpinning the Frontier Brokers two-stage procurement, creating the opportunity for diverse organisations to shape the priorities of the program, and to build partnerships before bidding competitively. During the co-creation workshop, gender and power dynamics were specifically prioritised, which altered the dynamics between the mix of organisations.

“We went into the Brokers procurement with recognition of gender and power - in Jakarta (co-creation workshop), this conversation shifted which voices were authoritative. Everyone began to prioritise that expertise.”

– iXc
Indicator 3: Genuine Interest and Support

This indicator recognises the supportive culture and relationship building that is the glue in partnerships, keeping people committed and holding things together through challenges.

This was one of the key strengths of the SFI Program: SFI Operational Partners recognise the significant opportunity they have had to work in genuinely supportive relationships for this experimental program.

Partnerships often rise or fall depending on the people involved, and this program is no exception. Partners recognise the significance of the diverse yet aligned mix of people, organisations, mindsets and skills coming together at this point in time when it was possible to work in this collaborative way on a prototype program.

Specific examples of partners showing genuine interest and support to each other include:

- There was hands-on involvement from the iXc partner. The iXc team members were active partners, not detached funders, and they committed considerable time to regular meetings, and engaging with the wide network of participants.
- The approach to meetings, where it was expected that all voices would be heard and ideas would rise and fall on their merit. People leading various tasks would be given generous feedback and suggestions, and the space to reflect and decide whether to accept or not the feedback on their way to a solution.
- The SFI Family invested time and effort into forming genuine personal relationships. Spending time together after hours, having fun in both work and social settings, and enjoying co-implementation of work all contributed to the success of the collaboration.

“I think everyone’s personality and intention [contributed to success]. Maybe it’s about the type of work we are trying to do. I think there is an extra level of goodwill from the leads on most of the partners and contracts. Everybody wants it to succeed, because they believe it’s of value.”

- iXc

Indicator 4: Openness and Transparency

This indicator reflects on the trust-building quality of openness, observed in the comfort partners feel to voice concerns or limitations, and the ways partners seek or give feedback/advice.

The SFI Program showed positive results against this indicator: Openness has been a characteristic of the Operational Partnerships within SFI, as highlighted by partners describing their feedback loops, reflection and learning-focused discussions. This has been particularly evident in the consortia relationships which were formed, tested and strengthened under SFI, and who have gone onto further collaborations.

It was a deliberate decision by the iXc to be fully engaged, alongside the Consortium, with Incubator Program Partners and Cohort Partners, rather than to remain behind the scenes, which has been reported to be a major contributor to building trust in this wider group of organisations —something that was especially important while undertaking experimental work in the Pacific region.

41. In his book ‘Creativity Inc,’ Ed Catmull, founder of Pixar describes the culture of their ‘Braintrust’ meetings, where peers review early versions of films, identify what is not working, and offer ‘good notes’ to the Directors, ie constructive diagnostic feedback that helps identify where attention is needed and to encourage and inspire the next step in creating the best possible film. ‘Frank talk, spirited debate, laughter and love’ are the essential ingredients. This is the idea of ‘genuine interest and support’ for each other in the work, for the sake of the bigger goals.
Other examples of openness and transparency include:

- The first agenda item of the regular partner meetings was open sharing of any wider news or change, particularly within DFAT, which may be relevant to partners.
- Partners making connections between their networks, prior work or opportunities, for each other’s benefit.
- Working collaboratively on major deliverables, reviewing draft documents, supporting workshop designs, and planning major events.

“At the Singapore Incubators workshop where DFAT set the stage for the program - a lot of people felt that we were making ourselves vulnerable by being so open, doing things that might be risky, but we hoped others would have the same approach. This happened for a lot of people in Singapore. It set the stage for people to have the courage to open up.”

– iXc

**Indicator 5: Partner Engagement**

This indicator considers the commitment of partners, approaches to sharing risk, and the regular exchange of ideas.

Partner engagement refers to engagement by the various partners including direct participants and also the commitment from their wider organisations to help achieve the partnership objectives and to share risk.

The SFI Program employed new approaches that led to better than expected results in this area: In SFI, partner engagement was experienced in:

- Genuine co-creation; especially the iXc being open to suggestions from partners and willingly running with those ideas
- Connection to wider teams within DFAT for information sharing, learning events and potential collaboration
- Operational partners carefully managing potential or perceived conflicts of interest in a public sector context. For instance, when elements of program design came up against partners’ existing products and services, they could not be seen to engage or advantage themselves (e.g. Consortium partners had programs which easily fit the scope of SFI, but in their role as implementing partner they could not play a dual role).

Some limitations were experienced as a result of DFAT processes and budget constraints, which can be slow and restrictive and not always fit-for-purpose for engaging with private sector agencies working with DFAT on innovation. For example, travel rules and budgets limited movement and face-to-face engagement opportunities; and partners would have valued more access to DFAT Posts to engage them in the local ecosystem activity.
5.2.3 Dimension 3: Added Value from the Operational Partnerships

The Added Value Dimension observes different types of value experienced by individual partners themselves (people and organisations), partnership synergy (meaning the value from working together), and value experienced by actors in the ecosystem. This dimension asks whether partners’ interests and ambitions were met and whether partnering was worth the effort. Were there better results from collaborating, such as the emergence of new approaches or opportunity to leverage partners’ expertise?; Did we achieve greater reach, impact and influence in the entrepreneurship ecosystem through this collaborative approach?

This was one of the key strengths of the operational partnerships: SFI partners offer evidence of added value at each of these levels.

In the majority of interviews, respondents noted that iXc’s SFI Operational Partners have ‘gone above and beyond’ their contract terms, delivering more value to the program, the participants and DFAT than anticipated. This was attributed to the deep commitment of mission-driven organisations to the impact of the work. An example of ‘going above and beyond’ on the Incubators component: the Consortium (SecondMuse, YGAP, Convenors.org) openly shared with the Incubators Network their approaches to designing and implementing the program, adding another layer of learning and modelling remote collaboration. They also openly exchanged results, research and ideas for ecosystem building, in anticipation that it may lead to something unexpected.

“All the organisations and individuals are personally invested in this work. They believe in entrepreneurial potential as a means of contributing to localised empowerment and sustainable development. It’s a personal pursuit.”

– SecondMuse

Partners also experienced the benefits of being involved in a dynamic and leading edge program that incorporated solutions to different aspects of problems to be solved in entrepreneurship strengthening. Based on findings from the interviews, partners conveyed that the SFI Program has brought increased global recognition and respect for all Operational Partners; to DFAT for the unique investment at ecosystem level; and to SecondMuse and Consortium partners specifically for their role in catalysing ecosystem change across Asia Pacific. Table 2 below provides examples of added value experienced from taking a deliberate approach to partnering on the SFI Program.
Examples of Added Value from Operational Partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Added value for entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurship ecosystem</th>
<th>Added value for the partner organisations</th>
<th>Partnership synergy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Emergence of a new partnership between Consortium members and Sasakawa Peace Foundation to create a Toolkit for Gender Lens Incubation and Acceleration (See section 5.3 for the story).</td>
<td>• The iXc and the SecondMuse-led Consortium are jointly shaping the model for the next phase of ecosystem support investment, emerging from the collaborative, learning-focused partnership and feedback loops from the ecosystem, thereby offering all partners greater confidence in the relevance and potential for impact of the future design.</td>
<td>• YGAP have deepened their capacity and created new opportunities for gender-focused leadership, particularly through delivering the gender thematic for Frontier Incubators and the GLIA Toolkit in a new partnership with Sasakawa Peace Foundation (See ‘Mini Case Study’ in section 5.3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Capacity to crowd-in other stakeholders and connect with other programs. For example, at the Incubators Workshop, the IRF Partner were able to introduce the SFI Communications Partner, The StoryBoxes, to a key contact from the Yunus Centre at Griffith University School of Social Business. Through this connection, and reintroduction to the iXc, Griffith University is developing a side project to use the ‘Frontiers’ documentary series in their Social Enterprise course curriculum.</td>
<td>• A new global peer-network of Incubator CEOs, formed out of the face-to-face connection at the Incubators Workshop, self-organised to meet virtually on a monthly basis to support each other strategically and have even arranged an international F2F meetup, demonstrating the extent of the personal and professional value they found in the face of this collaboration.</td>
<td>• Convenors.org have had the opportunity to use their ‘Convening Circles’ product in the GLIA Pilot, and develop an accompanying guide.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 Added value: Partnering to Design and Test the Gender Lens Incubation and Acceleration Toolkit

A unique partnership, which emerged from connections made during the Frontier Incubators program, illustrates unexpected value that arose from the open-minded and collaborative approach taken by the SFI Program Operational Partners. The partnership, formed between the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF) and YGAP, Convenors.org and SecondMuse through connections made during Frontier Incubators, emerged from shared interest in making incubators, accelerators and investment more inclusive for women. A new partner contributed additional resources enabling the development of a new toolkit that brought additional value to entrepreneurs and SFI Operational Partners.

“It’s been a dream partnership for us. Everyone is so passionate and cares about this product. I’ve learned a lot from our partners. We’ve been doing work around developing a toolkit from the research side but working with practitioners and having pilot partners involved in design and continuous feedback - resulted in a fruitful collaboration. I’ve learned so much from seeing this process from their eyes as well. I highly recommend the partners to other organisations - if we were to try to do it alone, the final output would not be as good as what we’re coming towards. Collective action has brought a lot of extra value for us.”

– Lily Yu, SPF

The free, interactive GLIA Toolkit emerged from the content y-gap created for the Frontier Incubators. In a highly collaborative process, the toolkit was piloted by six Frontier Incubator organisations across Southeast Asia.

“We had ongoing discussions with Sasakawa—about their interest in creating access to capacity building for marginalised groups, particularly interested in gender in marginalised communities. They were asking ‘Can you develop a toolkit for intermediaries?’ YGAP also had that in mind. We both wanted to make the content available widely. And how to disseminate was a great role for Convenors.”

– Manita Ray, ygap

Crucial to this opportunity being realised was an openness from the iXc to welcome in partners with aligned but expanded interests and additional resources, to collaborate within the network of organisations involved in Frontier Incubators, in this case without DFAT oversight and control.
### Table 3: Examples of Added Value from the Partnership to Design and Test the GLIA Toolkit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Added value for entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurship ecosystem</th>
<th>Added value for the partner organisations</th>
<th>Partnership synergy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieving wider reach, more impact and stronger influence by</td>
<td>Supporting robust, mutually beneficial co-design and co-implementation arrangements that led to</td>
<td>Stemming from complementarity and leveraging expertise and resources and catalyzing new approaches and better results such as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating, testing and launching an industry-first, open-source toolkit to guide incubators/accelerators in developing strategies that better support women entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and attract suitable investment;</td>
<td>• Extending their own specialisation in gender inclusive strategies;</td>
<td>• Sasakawa Peace Foundation complementing the Frontier Incubator program outputs with additional funding to pilot a new toolkit;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Providing opportunity for pilot partners, from amongst the Incubators Cohort, to develop their own gender strategies, while testing the Toolkit; and</td>
<td>• Acquiring a new partnership and additional resources;</td>
<td>• Partners working with the Frontier Incubators network of incubators/accelerators to provide feedback and a testing environment;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increasing awareness of incubators and accelerators in the region to the needs of women entrepreneurs and/or how to design / structure programs to be more inclusive of women and people with disabilities.</td>
<td>• The opportunity to integrate their own research and/or services within the new project, e.g. Convening Circles, SPF research; and</td>
<td>• Creating a new open source resource to operationalise the SFI gender strategy without additional funding being provided by DFAT; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Extending the opportunity to work together as a synergistic consortium.</td>
<td>• Combining efforts to launch and promote the GLIA Toolkit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several **preconditions** set the stage for this partnership to emerge:

- The iXc and operational partners decided to incorporate a gender-lens in the design approaches for both Frontier Incubators and Frontier Brokers and had begun integrating this lens into strategy, approaches and results frameworks.
- YGAP was awarded a small additional contract to take the lead on operationalizing the Gender and Power strategy in the Frontier Incubators component by developing a curriculum to support incubators/accelerators in gender lens investing. This curriculum was introduced at the Design Workshop in Singapore in November 2018, and through Incubators Network thematic sessions.
- SPF has a history of active investment in GLI research and their Asia Women Impact Fund. They were interested in practical guidance to support women entrepreneurs, and saw a gap in the available tools for intermediaries in Asia. SPF was aware of the SFI Program and connected to the iXc and DFAT gender-focused teams.
- SecondMuse, Conveners.org and YGAP, took a network-centric approach, leveraging global networks to strengthen the design, discover the Asia-Pacific actors, add value to events, develop capacity and build the ecosystem. They hosted the Frontier Incubators Design Workshop concurrently with AVPN in 2018, and invited guests, including SPF, to attend the final day when gender-lens was the focus.
“DFAT’s openness and flexibility has been a great benefit for SPF. Open to expanding scope, sequencing new opportunity, bringing in a new partner, leverage new resources, and not grabbing all headline and control... This is the power of bringing people of similar interests together - passionate and dedicated to supporting the end users. We would not have been able to achieve that ourselves. Foresight by DFAT to design Frontier Incubators in a way that could draw other partners in... We attended (Singapore workshop) as an observer and determined this was the right team, who were highly skilled and all brought something different but complementary. It was an easy decision that this team could really deliver.”

– Lily Yu, SPF

The partners identified the following success factors for the partnership:

- iXc’s openness to new ideas and partners and valuing the operationalisation of the Gender and Power strategy with new resources.
- SPF investment and proactive engagement, coming with the idea and being prepared to support practitioners.
- Consortium partners’ credibility in GLI and ecosystem building.
- The face-to-face convening as a forum for bringing together ecosystem players.
5.4 Insights from the SFI Program

An analysis of findings from this investigative study surfaces the following insights about the partnering experience of the operational partners on SFI Program.

1. Partnerships work best and create added value when they are deliberately undertaken.

Building on the conclusions and recommendations from R4D’s learning report on the progress of the iXc’s first three years, partnering on innovation-led programs should ideally feature

- Alignment of partners and participants on goals and development impact,
- Allocation of dedicated resources to participate in and manage the collaborative relationships,
- Management of geography and timezone challenges with collaborative tools, and
- Experimentation with appropriate procurement to enable partnering with a range of less typical actors.

As one of the flagship programs for the iXc the SFI Program has prioritised seeking new ideas from innovators outside DFAT and learning how to partner effectively with a more diverse range of organisations, in this case, highly specialised organisations. All parties involved in the SFI Program have demonstrated a continued commitment to upholding the same features mentioned by the R4D report throughout the life of the Program. Through robust partnering, the SFI Program has manifested the desired ‘more holistic ecosystem model for supporting change agents in challenging contexts, driving market and policy-level change’ in addition to supporting specific innovations.42 Central to achieving this has been the deliberate focus on forming, managing, and measuring and adapting partnerships. This primary approach has been supported by skilled staff from both the DFAT and the contractor sides, and a collaborative mindset that values flexibility and co-implementation, practised by all parties.

2. Collaborative relationships are possible within a contracting environment.

Creating collaborative relationships with shared strategic interest, risk, and governance is not straightforward within a contracting environment. Contracting can make this more difficult since contracts may cause organisations and individuals to revert to transactional and hierarchical dynamics. However, the partnering experience on the SFI Program demonstrates that partners bound by contracts can achieve deep collaboration and adaptive programming where there is an intention to

- Build trust and relationships between all parties,
- Leverage diverse contributions,
- Create dynamics of equity for innovation, and
- Allocate risk where it is best managed.

The SFI Program set up mechanisms for shared decision-making; leveraging and valuing contributions or additional resources from partners for the benefit of the partnership; and adapting scope, plans, or approaches to suit emerging priorities or opportunities. The SFI Program managed risk through close engagement and collaboration, reinforcing contractual mechanisms with mission and activity alignment and trust among partners.

“I feel like with the MEL partner, it was more evolving and adaptive - we had a clearer intention that they are our partner working with us on the journey. Whereas the communications contract was to make a documentary, and manage delivery. Even though they have become our partners - I didn’t know [at the beginning] it was our intention.”

- iXc

“Our traditional mechanisms, focused on risk and compliance, are not the way to deliver aid, they do not achieve change, innovation or impact.”

– IRF

For donor/funding bodies who aim to achieve collaborative partnership while operating within budgetary constraints and formal accountability frameworks, it is essential to name and carry out the intentions described above and support them with approaches such as those used in the SFI Program.

Figure 8 below provides the MEL partner’s summary review of the state of partnerships on the SFI Program as seen through the partnership continuum, a tool that is used internally at DFAT and within the iXc, in partnership-building guidance materials. While the design, execution and adaptation of activities have been highly collaborative, the framework for implementation—with contracts for services or grants provided against milestones, and with governance where all parties are accountable to DFAT—has been recognisably transactional. Overall, the partnering approach can be viewed as more collaborative than transactional.

43. This figure was adapted by DFAT from a concept developed by the Partnership Brokers Association, 2019 ©.
3. SFI Operational Partnership setup and design demonstrated hallmarks of collaborative relationships.

The SFI Program in its setup and design stage demonstrated the following hallmarks of collaborative relationships:

- The SFI’s Program’s focus on identifying and attracting organisations that had shared objectives and mission alignment with SFI Program goals underpin collaborative partnerships.

- The flexible, purpose-built procurement created opportunities for learning. Combined with the adaptive management approach DFAT took to implementation, flexible procurement gave DFAT both the data to draw upon and the opportunity to refine the scope, type of organisation, selection criteria and even procurement method from one component to the next.

- Procurement through the IRF and through DFAT’s first-ever co-creation attracted organisations comfortable with ambiguity and adaptation. Once contracted, these organisations formed partnerships with other subcontractors which also held shared objectives and mission alignment.
5.5 Recommendations for Future Programs

The insights from the partnering experience of the operational partners on the SFI Program, with some contextualisation to goals and geography, can be applied to other programs implemented by DFAT and bi-laterals.

While recognising that not all programmatic contexts can invest the time required for deep collaboration, there are trade-offs made in the choice of approach, and consequent use of time. More traditional approaches invest time managing large contractors and contracts, compliance, reporting and accountability; and while risk may feel better managed, the potential for learning is reduced by this arms-length approach. The choice of approach - more traditional contracting, or more collaborative- will ultimately reflect what the donor/funding body is seeking from the investment.

Below are recommendations that frame the insights as considerations for future programs. In keeping with the structure of this investigative study, they are presented along the partnership measurement dimensions.

5.5.1 Setup, Design and Daily Operations

Ensure collaborative setup approaches, which establish the principles upon which partners intend to work, by

- **Planning, Designing, and Carrying Out Flexible Procurement:** Identify procurement mechanisms that can be flexible enough to deliberately involve partners who are likely to implement the program in its design. Where mechanisms do not exist, pursue alternatives, such as working with procurement staff to pilot and test new aspects of existing mechanisms, developing new mechanisms, or establishing a co-design or co-implementation arrangements with other entities, such as foundations or other donors, which have more flexibility. Incorporate a balanced approach to risk to support partnering - balancing the level of risk being taken with the trust placed in partners to deliver, and with the size of organisations involved.

- **Optimising Implementation and Governance Arrangements:** To further solidify collaborative setup, design, and daily operations, donors could extend design mechanisms, such as memoranda of understanding or Guiding Principles documents, to guide power sharing and joint decision making. These mechanisms could also facilitate contributions from partners both within contracts that are as flexible as possible or incentivise contributions and/or participation beyond contracted terms. One way to accomplish this is to use budgets flexibly, anticipating the unexpected and enable provisioning of resources to needs as they emerge. For example, donors could reserve a portion of funding for collaboratively planned activities that respond to changes on the ground.

- **Starting with Clearly Defined and Articulated Intentions:** When working in collaborative relationships, being clear about the intention to do so and overtly exploring interests and contributions of all partners offers the potential for improved program effectiveness, relevance, and unexpected added value. Framing program implementation relationships as partnerships can inspire and encourage participants to consider a diverse range of contributions, such as in-kind resources or networks, which they can bring forward as contributions. In more restrictive environments, such offerings and connections may be viewed narrowly as out of scope or a potential conflict of interest.

- **Ensuring High-Value, Collaborative Partnerships Requires Multiple Steps.** Identify partners for the shared value they can bring, beyond the contacted scope of work. Then, once identified and through flexible procurement processes, engage them in the program. As all partners are engaged, put processes in place to periodically and jointly discuss how the shared value can be realised, and capture this in a work plan. Then, over the course of implementation, results should be reviewed to ensure that shared interests and deep alignment have been maintained.
5.5.2 Collaborative Mindsets and Skills

Build upon effective Setup, Design, and Daily Operations to provide a scaffolding for collaboration by

- **Be Clear About What It Means To Call Each Other ‘partner’**: Exploring meanings attached to such a ubiquitous label, which can mean many different things to different people, helps create clear expectations amongst partners for their unique relationship. Partners should discuss this up front, co-creating objectives and mutual expectations of each other.

- **Agreeing Upon Metrics To Jointly Monitor And Evaluate The Partnership**: To discover what is working well, what can be strengthened, and what should be eliminated, partners should agree on metrics for the partnership itself. These can be drawn from the Partnership Measurement Framework in this investigative study. For example, addressing elements of process, behaviours or mindsets, results and unexpected value. Once agreed, partners should make time to periodically undertake reflective processes to gather information on and track progress against these indicators. Knowing how the partnership itself is faring enables timely resolution of issues or adaptation in approach.

- **Investing In Relationship Building And Collaborative Tools And Processes**: Partners should invest in relationships by taking a genuine interest in each other and creating collaborative processes and rhythms, for example, by combining face-to-face and virtual connections; and establishing clear systems and processes such as intentional meeting management. A sound baseline level of trust will facilitate resolution of difficulties encountered from unexpected challenges or unforeseen events, such as a change in the enabling environment. Putting in place collaborative processes will reinforce relationships throughout implementation.

- **Using Specialist Partnership Facilitators/Brokers At Critical Formation And Review Stages**: Partnership brokers bring attention and specialist collaborative skills to partnering processes and relationship factors to create the enabling conditions for genuine exchange, support, courage and creativity; essential for innovation or experimental partnerships. The presence of these skills throughout the relationship will foster reflection, trust, mutual benefit, responsibility and strengthened outcomes.

- **Developing Collaborative Mindsets including a deliberate focus on diversity, openness, equity and respect for unique contributions and perspectives, and practicing the subtle behaviours that foster belonging and safety**: Creating ‘safe’ contexts to experiment—for example, using design methods and tools in co-design teams, or through opportunities to attempt short-term, low-risk activities—will support learning and enable program adaptation.
5.5.3 Added Value

Added Value Comes From Openness And Courage: When working in a complex context and especially when taking a catalytic role on a development challenge where results, change and consequences are not easily predictable, collaborative partnerships create the potential for stronger results and added value.

Harnessing the shared interest and resources of aligned actors creates the conditions for a multiplication effect from the investment. Holding an open mind, a stance of curiosity, deep listening and keen attention to the potential of others to reveal new ideas, opportunities, connections and innovations is essential to realising added value.
6.0
Case Study on Capacity Development Partnerships to Strengthen an Entrepreneurship Ecosystem
“In my opinion, the genuine collaborative approach makes all the difference. There is so much openness and trust between us and our program partners that we had the freedom to work on challenges with the appreciation of our context and the effort to understand our local experience deeper.”

- SE Asia Cohort Partner

6.1 
About the SFI Capacity Development Partnerships

Capacity development relationships were the focal point of Frontier Incubators. The program aimed to strengthen Accelerators and Incubators across the Asia-Pacific region by creating access to experienced leaders and avenues for individual learning, mentoring, team and organisational capacity building, peer learning and opportunistic collaboration. The capacity development partnerships were created between a competitively selected set of Incubators from across Asia-Pacific (Cohort Partners) with established Incubators and Accelerators (Program Partners) from across the world. The Cohort Partners were selected from the respondents to a call for emerging incubators and accelerators focused on social impact in Asia-Pacific, which were interested in receiving assistance to address challenges in investor relations, business model sustainability and/or building networks/partnerships. The Cohort Partners ranged from co-working hubs and education-based accelerator platforms to private-sector organisations and gender-specific business incubators. The Program Partners were mature incubators and impact venture accelerators with valuable skills and experience and a willingness to assist with the development of other organisations. The selection process for the Program Partners incorporated many principles previously described in Case Study of SFI’s Operational Partners - ie, they were mission aligned, collaborative and adaptable, interested in building the entrepreneurship ecosystem, and (mostly) recognised the potential value for their own organisation from contributing to the program.

The capacity development partnerships were formed in either one-to-one or many-to-one arrangements, where either one Program Partner or a small group of Program Partners supported each Cohort Partner. A face-to-face matching process catalysed self-organising, self-selection and partnership formation between the partners and allowed matches to be more customised to Cohort Partner needs. Cohort Partners did not receive direct grants, but were provided a range of in-kind support through these partnerships. (See The Frontier Incubators Interim Review for additional information on the Frontier Incubators component.)

These matches are represented on the following diagram:
CASE STUDY ON CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

FIGURE 9:
SFI Capacity Development Partnerships

KEY:
- Program Partners
- Incubators with 1 Program Partner
- Incubators with 2 Program Partners
- Incubators with 3 Program Partners
- Incubators with No Program Partners
The following analysis explores the findings from the intentional partnering approach taken to form the Capacity Development Partnerships, within the Frontier Incubators component of the SFI Program. The evidence emerged from the Partnership Learning Loop Survey and is presented across the dimensions of the Partnership Measurement Framework (see Figure 10).

Setup, design and daily operations which addressed:
- Setup and design
- Effective management
- Communication
- Decision making
- Sound leadership

Collaborative mindsets and skills which addressed:
- Diversity
- Equity
- Genuine Interest and Support
- Openness and Transparency
- Partner Engagement

Added value arising from partnerships and networks which addressed:
- Added value for entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurship ecosystem
- Added value for organisations
- Partnership Synergy
- Types of added value
- Collaborative spirit of the network (Networks only)
6.2 Findings Across the Partnership Measurement Dimensions

6.2.1 Dimension 1: Setup, Design and Daily Operations of Capacity Development Partnerships

The findings reveal four main ideas:

1. **Learning flourished for both partners as a direct result of the intentional formation of equitable, nontraditional partnerships.**

   This was achieved through:
   - **Selection:** Ensuring clarity and transparency in the selection and setup of the two groups—Cohort Partners and Program Partners; finding the right partners; and making clear why everyone was involved and their contributions;
   - **Roles and Relationships:** Structuring the relationships, overtly, as partnerships, calling each group ‘partner’; establishing clear roles; and introducing concepts of power and equity in the first face-to-face meeting of all partners;
   - **Partnership Facilitation:** Offering transparency in the flow of information; and facilitating an equitable and participatory method for matching Cohort Partners and Program partners that was self-organising, self-selecting (voluntary), value-driven and based on agreement between the partners; and
   - **Co-creation of Content:** Creating the opportunity for those receiving the support to be active in shaping what they received and how—reflecting the needs, interests, priorities and resources of all parties—solidified the sense of ownership; requiring Cohort Partners and Program Partners to co-design the proposals for the support program to foster mutual benefit and responsibility; and promoting creation of a partnering agreement between Cohort and Program partners.

2. **A powerful first face-to-face connection** between Cohort Partners and Program Partners contributed to modeling and actively creating a collaborative culture and establishing the expectations of partnership, whereby:
   - Process was carefully designed (partnership facilitation);
   - Principles of equity and power were introduced;
   - Knowledge and experiences were explored; and
   - Relationships were developed.

   A strong peer group culture emerged from the November 2018 Design Workshop in Singapore, which is described in depth in the Frontier Incubators Interim Review, and featured as a culture-forming highlight for many Partners. The convening design and facilitation capability of the implementing team was fundamental to this success, as was the resourcing for such an intensive face-to-face experience.

   “As a first time engagement there was a spirit of co-production and experimentation, which contributed to checking in with each other about what the outcomes and approach of the engagement needed to be. If it were repeated, keeping this balance and openness would be a great feature of the program.”

   – EU/UK Program partner

   “(there was a) partner mindset (rather than a) hierarchy mindset.”

   – North American Program partner
3. **Process facilitation / partnership brokering was essential to the experience and value for partners.**

This was evidenced through the selection of partners, when creating connections and establishing the network culture, throughout matching, and regular check-ins during the capacity development phase. The intentional processes to create clarity in roles, processes and decision making established a foundation of trust for collaboration throughout the program.

4. **A combination of face-to-face and virtual connection was important, along with clarity in systems, tools and processes to promote effective collaboration.**

Systems and expectations were set and communicated clearly at the outset of the partnerships, while adapting and improving over time while partnerships were in the support phase. Implementing Consortium maintained active and responsive connection to all partners, addressing questions, gaps, and conflicts quickly as they arose, to ensure the partnerships would continuously develop and sustain. Partners valued the opportunity for a face-to-face visit within the capacity development partnerships.

**SURVEY RESULTS**

This chart shows the average scores across the full set of respondents, for the indicators for Setup, Design and Daily Operations (i.e. setup, leadership, management, decision making and communication).

The scores are consistently high (avg 6/7) for all Indicators from all respondents, indicating high satisfaction with the processes of setup, design and daily operations of capacity-building partnerships.

The data was disaggregated by role for Cohort Partners and Program Partners, however, the two group scores were not significantly different, so are presented here in a combined average score of 6.024 out of 7 (SD: 1.14). When disaggregated by region, however, partners from the South Asian region experienced the setup and design slightly less favourably than all other regions (Avg: 5.31).

‘**Early trust building and contact ..., frequent verbal contact (calls / video) and also building clearer understanding between partners (were keys to the success between Cohort Partners and Program Partners)**’

– EU/UK Program Partner
6.2.2 Dimension 2: Collaborative Mindsets and Skills of Capacity Development Partnerships

Collaborative mindsets and skills were recognised amongst participants (Cohort and Program Partners and the partnership facilitators/Consortium partners) as the modelling and active creation of a collaborative culture, and are indicators under this dimension of the Partnerships Measurement Framework.

- Diversity: Incorporation of diverse partners and flexibility to design two Incubator cohorts to accommodate different needs and readiness.
- Equity: Creation of processes for self-directed learning and participatory decision making.
- Genuine Interest and Support: Provision of contextualised support program, culture of adding value, sharing resources and expanding impact together.
- Openness and Transparency: Adherence to principles of seeking input, responding quickly, adjusting course, adapting support program.
- Partner Engagement: Continuous conversation between matched partners, and amongst larger network and the continual presence of the iXc as an active partner in all network activity.

Furthermore, respondents identified a deliberate focus on power and gender dynamics, equity, respect for each unique actor and their context, capability and challenges underpinned the sense of ownership in the learning relationship, and the unfolding adaptability in what partners did together. Partners here experienced equity in the following tangible ways:

- Being able to openly voice their insights without judgement,
- Being able to ask burning questions and share concerns, and working together to find solutions,
- By receiving active listening,
- Valuing each others work explicitly,
- Seeking to understand new contexts,
- Collectively agreeing on what is needed, wanted, and will be provided in terms of support,
- Flexibility to changing needs,
- Making space for feedback,
- Respecting differences in opinions, inviting everyone to share their thoughts and experiences,
- Incorporating space for different operating models, not expecting uniformity, and
- Bringing a partner mindset versus a hierarchy mindset.

“They listen to us and what our needs are, and sometimes they help to coach us through certain things (e.g. business model) and sometimes they will see a gap that they can provide direct technical advice on, and share tools and resources with us, which is hugely beneficial.”

– SE Asia Cohort Partner
Additionally, collaborative mindsets pervaded the nature of the delivery of the capacity development support. The learning and support was strength and opportunity focused rather than deficit-based, meeting Cohort Partners at their point of growth and challenge. Partners were able to adapt the focus of support along the way to ensure it was customised and demand driven. This demonstrated genuine interest and support in the needs of the Cohort Partners and flexibility in approaches.

"It was equal all the way. While being in that partnership, the sense of ownership was always retained by us (the Cohort partners). Though they were heavily advising us, that does not mean that we sensed any lack of balance while working together. On the other hand, the partners were curious to know about our ecosystem as well, stemming from their objective of consulting us better."

– S. Asia Cohort Partner

**SURVEY RESULTS**

This chart shows the average scores across the full set of respondents, disaggregated into the indicators for Collaborative Mindsets and Skills.

*The scores are consistently high (avg 6/7) for all indicators from all respondents, indicating partners perceived high levels of these collaborative mindsets and skills in their partnerships.*

The data was disaggregated by role for Cohort Partners and Program Partners, however, the two group scores were not significantly different, so are presented here in a combined average scores. Both Cohort and Program Partners rated the majority of indicators a 6 out of 7 (SD: 0.99). Only Partner engagement scored 5.6 out of 7.

Respondents from South Asia and Australia/New Zealand regions generally gave lower scores than other regions (an average of 5.67 compared with 6.1), with North Americans giving the highest scores (6.7). This may reflect cultural expectations and patterns of collaboration.

‘They (the Program Partners) genuinely care about our organisation and want us to succeed. They listen to us and what our needs are’

SE Asia Cohort Partner
### 6.2.3 Dimension 3: Added Value of the Capacity Development Partnerships

This was one of the key strengths of the capacity development partnerships: SFI partners offer evidence of added value at each of the levels in the table below.

#### TABLE 4: Examples of Added Value from Operational Partnerships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Added value for entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurship ecosystem</th>
<th>Added value for the partner organisations</th>
<th>Partnership synergy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Cohort partners benefitting from Skills and capacity building:** “We were given new templates to work with, which allowed us to view our impact and business models from a new perspective.” SE Asia Cohort Partner | Supporting robust, mutually beneficial capacity development arrangements that led to:  
- Effectiveness in Cohort Partner interventions: “We revised our theory of change with a regenerative approach and lens … and integrated it into our strategy. We are actively writing proposals and reaching out for partnerships for our new approach.” - S.Asia Cohort Partner | **Both sides valuing working together beyond the SFI Program:**  
**New opportunities to work together:**  
- “We are developing a new program concept on supporting small-scale women entrepreneurs and the insights and technical expertise from our mentor (Program partner) has helped us in defining our approach.” - SE Asia Cohort Partner  
- “I feel there is significant untapped (as yet) potential … to work with the Cohort Partners to support Social Entrepreneurs in their eco-systems. We have already submitted a joint proposal with one of our partners.” - A/NZ Program Partner  
**Network of valuable connections:**  
- “We were introduced to other key members from Partner’s team to support us. From valuable networks, new opportunities to work with Partners beyond Frontier Incubators are open to us.” - SE Asia Cohort Partner |
| **Learning, knowledge and expertise:**  
- “Learning about new content, approaches, facilitation styles, how different situations are dealt with. Exploring new projects together and ways to improve collective impact.” - EU/UK Program Partner  
- “We can get access to the whole Funding Training program (for Startup) provided by [our Partner]… It’s a great source of knowledge and expertise that we have ever got access to.” - SE Asia Cohort Partner |  |  |
| **Possibility to upscale activities**  
- “Engaging with the Cohort Partner in Indonesia enhanced our understanding and connections to the ecosystem, improving the chances of scaling our long term work.” - EU/UK Program Partner  
- “We were able to form our scaling strategy which comes in perfect timing since we are expanding our bootcamp operations and activities… in other cities. Also we were able to leverage the network to advocate our credentials when expanding.” - SE Asia Cohort Partner |  |  |
**SURVEY RESULTS**

The results indicate a high level of added value was realised from the partnerships.

This chart shows the average scores across the full set of respondents, for the indicators for Added Value. One indicator (Added Value of the Network) is not used for the Capacity Development partnerships. Types of Value is presented on the next page.

The data was disaggregated by role for Cohort Partners and Program Partners but was not significantly different so is presented here as average scores of 6.1 out of 7 on all KPIs (SD: 0.94).

“Our program partners helped us to re-evaluate our business model, and importantly our value proposition. They also helped us to identify areas we need to strengthen, and answered a lot of our questions that we were very uncertain about - e.g. systems that we need to have in place in order to scale.”

– SE Asia Cohort Partner
The average score across the whole group for the set of questions addressing **Added value for entrepreneurs and the entrepreneur ecosystem** was 6.26 out of 7.

The average score across the whole group for the set of questions addressing **benefits to their own organisation** was 6 out of 7.

The average score across the whole group for the set of questions addressing **Partnership Synergy** was 6.05 out of 7.

Although both Cohort and Program Partners indicated a similar level of added value (6.42 and 6.14), the type of added value for different partners varied considerably.

This chart displays weighted averages disaggregated by role. Cohort Partners indicated a higher level and a greater variety of added value than Program Partners.

‘**Learning, knowledge and expertise**’ scored the highest with a weighted average of 88.13%, followed by ‘**Network of valuable relations**’ with a score of 73.6%.

‘**Increased Advocacy Power**’ scored the lowest with a weighted average of 20.54%, followed by ‘**Financial or in-kind benefits**’ with a score of 30.39%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Added Value</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Cohort Partners</th>
<th>Program Partners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning, knowledge and expertise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Network of valuable relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills &amp; Capacity Building</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possibility to upscale our organisation’s activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased effectiveness of our interventions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gaining recognition and respect from others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial or in-kind benefits</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased Advocacy Power</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Cohort Partners indicated that their top three types of value were:

- learning, knowledge and expertise (wgt avg: 94.4%)
- skills and capacity building (wgt avg: 83.5%)
- Network of valuable relations (wgt avg: 68.1%)

Program Partners, on the other hand, indicated that their top three types of value were:

- Network of valuable relations (wgt avg: 89.4%)
- New opportunities (wgt avg: 71.7%)
- Learning, knowledge and expertise (wgt avg: 68.8%)
6.3 Insights from the SFI Program

An analysis of findings from this investigative study surfaces a major insight about the partnering experience of the capacity development partners on SFI Program.

Capacity Development partnerships can achieve more than the specified capacity development when undertaken in a context of an equitable relationship. This may mean greater than expected results, unexpected additional outcomes, deeper and broader development, greater satisfaction, and mutual benefit.

These findings suggest that a focus on equity and partnership in capacity development programs is well worth considering, where strong, trust-based relationships enable partners to co-design the support and respond to changing needs, as an avenue to stronger results and positive unexpected benefits.

There are considerable resource commitments needed to take such a partnership approach on a global or regional program, for example, for face-to-face convenings and active facilitation of virtual connection and collaboration between partners. The question of additional value becomes important to justify such investments.

As well as those aspects of value described above, specific results demonstrated by Cohort Partners show further value realised from the approach:

- 100% Cohort Partners recognised increased knowledge, increased networking ability and being matched with the right partner
- 90% acknowledged they received support in the right areas
- 20% of Incubators reported increased performance in the reporting period while the program was still active, which was earlier than anticipated.
Based on the partnering experience of the capacity development partners on the SFI Program, some concrete recommendations that are applicable to other programs that incorporate capacity development, are presented here along the partnership measurement dimensions.

Setup, Design and Daily Operations:

- **Building Equitable Relationships**: Fostering equitable relationships and incorporating a demand-driven approach to capacity development support is a prerequisite for delivering added value to all involved. This is especially true when working at ecosystem level with the private sector but likely to hold true for capacity development programs in other aid and development contexts.

- **Optimising Implementation and Governance Arrangements**: Addressing power dynamics overtly and creating mechanisms for co-design and joint decision making to achieve maximum learning by both providers and recipients of capacity development assistance intentionally gives agency to the support recipient.

- **Ensuring Face-to-Face Support**: Where possible, when conducting regional or global programs, invest in face-to-face experiences to build partnerships, and design carefully the remote experiences of collaboration. When working remotely, retain a relationship focus alongside a task focus, attempting to foster the same dynamics that a face-to-face experience would build, such as equity, hearing all voices, leveraging diverse contributions, sharing leadership, accommodating different thinking / learning / communication styles, and having clear decision making processes.

- **Actively Facilitating Partnership Formation**: Incorporate partnership facilitation from someone suitably skilled and trained to add the partnership lens to all processes and to foster an intentional culture of collaboration. This facilitation is crucial at project planning and startup but also necessary at the midpoint to ensure that relationships are on track or can be course corrected. Ideally, this person would have a role throughout implementation.

Collaborative Mindsets and Skills:

- **Agreeing on Metrics to Jointly Monitor and Evaluate the Partnership**: Set this intention and select a framework for monitoring at the outset or early in the partnership. Make measurement participatory and learning/adaptation-focused. Use relevant partnership evaluation expertise, frameworks and tools. Create opportunities for partners to learn about each other, to discover the richness in the diversity and build respect for each other’s unique characteristics and skills.

- **Investing in Relationship Building and Collaborative Tools and Processes**: Create carefully the collaborative infrastructure for the partnerships—tools, platforms, skills and behaviours, roles, rhythms and patterns of engagement. Deliberate construction and scaffolding result in deeper connections and faster and better surfacing of synergies that can be leveraged. Recognising how powerfully equity in partnerships contributes to building respect and delivering innovation and value, it can be valuable to have an open conversation about what demonstrates equity to each partner and what does not feel equitable. Do this at the outset and at defined, periodic reflection points throughout the partnership. This will support partners in committing to and operationalising the systems, behaviours and decision processes their partners will experience as equitable. Donors/funders modelling collaborative behaviour (regardless of role or position), with clear and observable intention to address power dynamics, sets clear expectations and creates the space for a collaborative culture to emerge.

Added Value:

- **Planning for Unexpected Added Value**: Ensure that all programmes that include partnerships capture examples not only of added value achieved but also of perceptions by partners of added value unrealised. Expect unexpected benefits, and make room for them through deeply collaborative, co-designed programs, built on equity between partners. Reserve implementation time, potential for adaptation on activities, increased level of effort and additional budget to facilitate realising added value once the new potential has been identified.


Partnering for Impact

Results and Insights from the Scaling Frontier Innovation Program.