

Annex I: Terms of Reference (ToR)

Programme Title: University Incubator Network for Startups (Brain into Business)

A. Background

The "Brain into Business" Programme, launch in 2014, has been a flagship initiative of the National Enterprise Development Authority (NEDA) designed to foster entrepreneurship among university undergraduates. While the programme successfully facilitated the provision of grants and early-stage support over the past decade, analysis of programme outcomes reveals that the majority of supported enterprises remain at the micro level, with limited scalability and sustainability.

In response to these findings and following consultations with key stakeholders, NEDA has identified the need to reposition the programme toward a more innovative, targeted and impact-driven approach. The programme is now evolving into the University Incubator Network for Startups model, which emphasizes industry integration, acceleration and the development of a structured pathway programme.

B. Objectives and Scope of the Programme

The primary objective of the "Brain into Business" Programme is to establish a national university-based startup incubation network across 25 universities to drive innovation and high-growth venture creation.

Specific Objectives:

- **Broadening Participation:** Engaging at least 20% of the undergraduate student population across selected universities through structured awareness and entrepreneurship development.
- **Targeted Support:** Providing incubation and acceleration support to approximately 10% of identified startups, including facilitated access to finance.
- **Scale and Sustainability:** Producing approximately 200 startups by 2026 and 5,000 startups by 2030 through a phased, ecosystem-driven approach.

Scope of the Programme:

The programme scope includes:

- Establishing formal incubation programmes in 25 universities.
- Developing structured pre-incubation and incubation curricula.
- Facilitating commercialization, funding readiness and market access.

- Implementing eligibility criteria focused on technology-driven ventures with a mandate for women-led and sustainability-focused startups.

C. Implementation Tasks

- The Partner Organization shall be responsible for executing the following tasks in alignment with the Pilot Phase (June 2026 – December 2026).
- Selection Phase: Selection of minimum 4 universities for the pilot programme rollout.
- Curriculum Design: Development of structured modules for pre-incubation (validation & MVP development) and incubation (business structuring & market readiness).
- Ecosystem Engagement: Deployment of Entrepreneurs-in-Residence (Full-Time) to lead incubation activities and ecosystem engagement at the university level.
- Acceleration & Matchmaking: Facilitating investor matchmaking and providing scale-up support for high-potential ventures.
- The Partner Organization shall be responsible for submitting a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework for the pilot phase and the rollout phase separately.

D. Timelines for Pilot Phase

The pilot programme is scheduled to span 6 months.

Phase	Duration	Focus Area
Stage 1	01 Week	Awareness & Ideation
Stage 2	02 Months	Validation & MVP Pre-Incubation development
Stage 3	02 Months	Incubation (Business structuring & market readiness)
Stage 4	02 Months	Scale-up support & Investor Matchmaking

E. Schedule of Deliverables/Outputs

The Partner Organization shall deliver the following to NEDA:

- Inception Report: Detailing the selection of pilot universities and the framework for the 06-month pilot programme.
- Progress Reports: Monthly updates on student enrollment, startup pipeline development and engagement metrics.
- Final Pilot Evaluation Report: Comprehensive review of the pilot phase, including the number of startups formed, funding readiness achieved and recommendations for the National Rollout (2027–2030).

F. Procedure for Review of Outputs

All reports and strategic plans will be presented to the NEDA Board of Directors and the programme steering committee for approval. Periodic review meetings will be held to assess the progress of the "Entrepreneur-in-Residence" placements and the progress of the startup pipeline.

G. Obligations of Partner Organizations

The selected Partner Organization shall be contractually bound to undertake and complete the pilot phase of the programme. Upon the successful completion of the six (06) month pilot phase, as evaluated and approved by the Authority, the Partner Organization shall continue with the implementation of the subsequent four (04) year rollout phase.

Withdrawal, termination, or transfer of obligations by the Partner Organization shall not be permitted after the commencement of the pilot phase or upon its completion, except with the prior written approval of the Authority and only under exceptional circumstances.

The Partner Organization shall remain fully responsible for ensuring the successful implementation of both the pilot phase and, subject to successful evaluation, the rollout phase, maintaining continuity, quality, and adherence to all agreed deliverables throughout the entire contract period.