

STARTUP UGANDA

FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC

PLAN

2020-2025

Collaboratively Created by Startup Uganda members and Supporters
June 2020

STARTUP
UGANDA

Startup Uganda’s Strategic Plan has been collaboratively created by Members and Supporters between March and June 2020.

A final version was present and ratified by members on ___

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1. Introduction

Executive Summary

Startup Uganda (SU) is an association of innovation and entrepreneurship support organizations (IESO) working towards strengthening the startup support ecosystem and sector.

Rooted in the fundamental belief that innovators and entrepreneurs are a driving source of economic, social, and environmental sustainable development, the association is committed to creating an enabling environment where startups can access the support they need to start and grow. As an association of organizations, SU's approach stems from the conviction that we are stronger and more impactful together than we are alone. SU endeavours to deepen the trust, sharing and collaboration between members and the ecosystem at large.

SU was initiated in 2019 by eight IESO members with support from the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). The association intends on expanding its reach and impact by including a greater number and variety of IESOs, and to work with government, private sector, donor communities, and other ecosystem supporters. Towards these ends, SU embarked on a strategy development process to set comprehensive priorities and a path for development and growth. This Strategic Plan (2020-2025) is an internal, guiding document for SU members, executive committee/ board of directors and secretariat.

Strategy Development Process

Members and supporters contributed to the strategy development process through multiple iterative and co-creational steps that took place between March and June 2020. The process was guided by the core question: *How might we strengthen and elevate the innovation and entrepreneurship support ecosystem in Uganda through our association?*

The process included an initial review of the foundational documents and existing structures within the association, a collaborative visioning workshop, key informant interviews with diverse stakeholders, situational and SWOT analyses, and strategy co-creational and review sessions. Input from these sessions have culminated into the Strategic Plan, representing the collaborative efforts and commitment of SU members, Executive Committee/ Board of Directors, secretariat and supporters.

Outline of the Strategy Plan

The Strategic Plan has been developed considering the realities faced by innovators and entrepreneurs, member needs and priorities, and contextual realities that the association and its members work in. These have been presented in the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis in the next Section.

In the subsequent section, the Strategic Plan articulates a shared vision and mission, and presents the strategic direction: goals and objectives of the association for the next five years, 2020-2025. The Plan of Action identifies corresponding actionables to achieve the objectives and goals, upon which annual work plans will be developed and institutionalized.

Lastly, the document lays out Strategic Priorities. These key focus areas for the next year (2020-2021) will prioritize the laying of a robust foundation for the association, starting to create value for members and projecting a shared identity and vision.

2. Startup Support Ecosystem

Based on the emerging structure and aspirations of the association, member and stakeholder priorities and needs, and the environment influencing the startup support sector, SU conducted a SWOT analysis to guide the strategy development process. The Analysis has been conducted specifically from the perspectives of SU and its members.

Strengths

- **Openness and goodwill to work together.** There is an understanding amongst members that this is the right time to come together, and a willingness to explore collaboration. There is a strong perception—internally and externally—of the potential of SU and its members in initiating this process.
- **Initial seed support.** The financial resource and hosting support provided by UNCDF is valuable, not only as seed funding, but also in terms of the endorsement, acknowledgement and access that comes with their backing.
- **Functioning secretariat.** The seed funding also makes it possible for the association to be coordinated, initiate activities and communicate between members and externally. As a functioning secretariat, it is also able to convene and build an emerging community within and around SU.
- **Strategy development process.** On-going efforts to collaboratively create SU’s vision and 5-year strategy is seen as a positive step in building a member-driven association, and an effort to get it right from the start.

Weaknesses

- **Missing clarity of identity and governing structures.** Collectively created and shared policies around governance, management, membership charter, committees, mandates, etc. are missing, creating confusion and the potential for mistrust. Furthermore, a cohesive and shared understanding of SU’s identity is lacking. Even ESO members expressed being unsure about who SU serves, its mandate and focus.
- **Poor internal communications and transparency.** Real or perceived lack of transparency and gaps in internal communications is creating a sense of mistrust and dis-inclusion.
- **Limited knowledge of each other and trust between ESO members.** The perception that ESOs compete for funding, contracts, etc. combined with limited communication and transparency between ESOs creates a barrier for collaboration.
- **Single donor dependence.** With only one main financial supporter, SU risks being seen as an “initiative of UNCDF”, as opposed to an “initiative of ESO” — a perception that a number of respondents warned. Seeking out additional income sources would help in balancing the perception and dynamic.

Opportunities

- **Uganda’s entrepreneurial predisposition.** The perception of Uganda as one of the most enterprising countries in the world is strong. At the same time, access to relevant support and infrastructure are imbalanced and limited, to say the least. Together, the entrepreneurial

potential, along with gaps in support, can be seen as critical opportunities for SU and its members to rise to.

- **Growing demand and support.** With more and diverse support for entrepreneurs and innovators, in addition to project-based efforts, SU has the opportunity to represent a wide base of innovation and entrepreneurship support organizations, especially in less-served parts of the country.
- **The convening gap.** As a local and member-led organization, SU is uniquely poised to play the role of ecosystem convener, networker and community-builder, aimed at increasing targeted sectoral information sharing, dialogue and linkages.
- **Collective voice as a bargaining tool.** With donors, investors and the government, while amplifying awareness of our ESO impact.
- **Increased support at the ecosystem level.** A number of recent ecosystem understanding, strengthening and coordination efforts create key opportunities for members and strategic networking and partnership possibilities for SU. The increase also indicates growing potential for more targeted donor and investor interest.
- **Government openness.** There is potential for engaging with the government on regulations, planning and policy-making if SU is able to develop an aligned and representative base and voice.

Threats

- **Fragmented ecosystem efforts.** No concerted efforts have been made to align ESOs efforts and investments. Working in silos has created inefficiencies, scattered impact and perceived competition. Without trust-building efforts, explicit incentives and structures for collaboration, there is a risk of losing members.
- **Funding for entrepreneurs.** Financing gaps for entrepreneurs at all levels persists, and can undermine innovation and entrepreneurship support efforts.
- **Potential misalignment.** In order to keep members engaged, SU's mission and activities needs to align with the priorities and needs of members. Understanding and addressing member needs should be the starting focus of SU.
- **Competition concerns.** SU should be careful not to compete with members for funding or to overshadow member programs. Furthermore, where new opportunities are channeled through the association, SU should take extra precaution to create structures for objective and transparent bidding.
- **Other associations.** With growing interest in the innovation and entrepreneurship space at multiple levels, there are other initiatives that ESOs could see as a substitute. If SU is unable to create an inclusive and representative space it also creates opportunities for break-away groups to form similar initiatives.

3. The Strategic Plan

3.1. Our Identity

Our Vision

A modern and prosperous Uganda where innovators and entrepreneurs easily access the relevant support that they need to start, grow and scale their businesses.

Our Mission

SU is an association of innovation and entrepreneurship support organizations working together to improve collective capacities, influence and impact, and to create a more enabling environment for innovators and entrepreneurs — that, in turn, drives development across Uganda.

3.2. Our Strategic Direction

Our Goals and Objectives

Startup Uganda will use the following six strategic goals over the next five years (2020-2025), as our guide towards the vision and mission. The first four relate to our external impact and work with and through our members, the last two look inwards, having been developed to ensure the establishment of a strong foundation for our new association to grow on. In order to achieve these goals, corresponding Strategic Objectives have also been identified to provide a clear and substantive framework for SU leadership, team and members in the coming years.

Goal 1. Strengthen and celebrate the innovation and entrepreneurship sector, domestically and internationally.

- Objective 1.1. Improve the quality and access of services and support available to entrepreneurs and innovators, by facilitating shared information, standards and metrics across the sector, and by conducting targeted sector-wide research.
- Objective 1.2. Engage and strengthen members through targeted programs and services, aligned with their needs and priorities.
- Objective 1.3. Increase the visibility of the sector, SU, its members and their collective work and impact, to diverse domestic and international audiences.

Goal 2. Facilitate collaboration and cooperation within the sector.

- Objective 2.1. Enable increased collaborative opportunities, through active ecosystem convening, information sharing and partnership-enabling structures.

Goal 3. Advocate for an enabling innovation and entrepreneurship environment.

- Objective 3.1. Advocate for the creation of more enabling policies that support entrepreneurs and innovators, as prioritized by members and their communities.

Goal 4. Increase the sustainability of, and investments to entrepreneurs and innovation and entrepreneurship support organizations.

- Objective 4.1. Increase investments to entrepreneurs and innovators.
- Objective 4.2. Unlock opportunities and additional revenue streams for members —individually and collectively—through programs, consulting and research.

Goal 5. Strengthen our association and secretariat.

- Objective 5.1. Establish long-term organizational structures for the association and secretariat.
- Objective 5.2. Align SU's strategy and activities with members' needs and priorities annually.

Goal 6. Represent diverse innovation and entrepreneurship support organizations across Uganda.

- Objective 6.1. Represent a significant number of all IESOs in Uganda and ensure a large member base outside of Kampala.

3.3. Our Plan of Action

Goal 1: Strengthen and celebrate the innovation and entrepreneurship sector, domestically and internationally.

Strengthening the impact and reach of the ecosystem goes hand-in-hand with increasing awareness, knowledge and information sharing within it. Amplifying our successes and progresses, both within the country and internationally, will further our commitment to establishing Uganda as a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Objectives 1.1: Improve the quality and access of services and support available to entrepreneurs and innovators, by facilitating shared information, standards and metrics across the sector, and by conducting targeted sector-wide research.

Actionables

- Annual member survey; collect basic organizational and programmatic information from members, starting in 2020.
- Share information with entrepreneurs and innovators, actively increasing awareness of the support available to them, starting 2020. (See also 2.3)
- Develop and promote shared terminology, criteria, standards and metrics on A. stages and needs of entrepreneurs, and on B. the services, impact and success of ESOs; Initiate in 2021, pilot by 2022 and adopt as industry-wide standards by 2025.
- Establish SU's Research Unit, with research as a key function of the association, by 2022. Publish an annual ecosystem research report, starting 2022.
- The shared standards and report will guide members internally to improve quality and impact, and to be shared externally as an annual report to engage investors and funders.

Objective 1.2: Engage and strengthen members through targeted programs and services, aligned with their needs and priorities.

Actionables

- Offer capacity development support to members, guided by direct input on need and preferences, and shared standards, by 2021-2022.
- Actively seeks capacity development opportunities and funding for members within our ecosystem and externally.
- Actionables under other Objectives (including 1.1 Investments, 1.2 Opportunities, 2.3 Visibility, 3.1 Collaboration, and 4.1 Advocacy), reinforce this Objective.

Objective 1.3: Increase the visibility of the sector, SU, its members and their collective work and impact, to diverse domestic and international audiences.

Actionables

- Develop and implement a simple communications plan to engage with multiple stakeholders, including entrepreneurs, investors, funders, pvt. sector, government, media, development organizations, etc.; 2020.
- Curate and share information on the ecosystem specifically for entrepreneurs — online and offline; 2020.
- Host events, such as the Kampala Innovation Week; 2020.
- Publish and share research on and from the ecosystem, starting 2021.

Goal 2: Facilitate collaboration and cooperation within the sector.

SU was founded on the conviction that we are stronger and more impactful together. The association aims to leverage, consolidate and connect the strengths and efforts of its members to unlock opportunities, increase quality and drive greater impact.

Objective 2.1: Enable increased collaborative opportunities, through active ecosystem convening, information sharing and partnership-enabling structures.

Actionables

- Create SU members' portal/ platform; increase understanding and knowledge sharing between members. Initiated by 2020-2021, and established as the 'go-to' source for information on members, by 2022. (See also 1.2)
- Conduct annual member surveys, starting in 2020.
- Identify process and structural barriers to collaboration, by 2020.
- Create simple structures to encourage initial partnerships for sharing existing resources and exploring opportunities. (Eg. legal, management and operational templates, examples and case studies, curriculum, etc.); by 2021.
- Explore and facilitate new collaborative opportunities for members. Starting with developing systems for objective and transparent bidding by 2022. And active/ regularly channeling opportunities to members by 2025.
- Establish ecosystem convening and networking as a key function of the secretariat and priority of the association; set a tone and culture of openness and sharing within the sector; 2020.
- Co-host regular ecosystem-wide networking events with other ecosystem stakeholders; starting in 2020-2021.

Goal 3. Advocate for an enabling innovation and entrepreneurship environment.

Startups are subject to policies, regulations and institutional parameters. While SU members support innovators and entrepreneurs to grow, it is just as important to address the external environments they work in. SU engages with multiple audiences and stakeholders to create more enabling environments that facilitate growth, incentivize formalization, encourage innovation and drive development.

Objective 3.1: Advocate for the creation of more enabling policies that support entrepreneurs and innovators, as prioritized by members and their communities.

Actionables

- Form an advocacy working group with SU members; 2020
- Create initial SU advocacy engagement plan, and initiate policy related messaging and engagement as SU by 2020-2021.
- Update advocacy strategy and formulate development community and government engagement plans by 2021-2022.
- Advocate for the passing of the Startup Act Uganda, by 2023.
- Mobilize resources for the advocacy function (and establish membership fees reinforces SU's ability to represent and advocate) by 2021.
- SU advocacy strategy to formulate government engagement plan.

Goal 4: Increase the sustainability of, and investments to entrepreneurs and innovation and entrepreneurship support organizations.

Access to appropriate financing remains one of the major challenges facing entrepreneurs in Uganda. In order to address this systemic issue, innovative financing and investment approaches need to be explored, identified and developed. Similarly, IESOs also face financial sustainability constraints and resourcing challenges. In order for SU members to survive and sustain long-lasting and impactful services, more investment, grant, and revenue opportunities need to be secured.

Objective 4.1: Increase investments to entrepreneurs and innovators.

Actionables

- Explore shared investment platforms, approaches and opportunities with members, starting in 2021.
- Establish funding and investment initiatives, jointly developed by members, such as a crowdfunding platform, investment fund, etc. that increase access to funding for startups, by 2022.

Objective 4.2: Unlock opportunities and additional revenue streams for members —individually and collectively—through programs, consulting and research.

Actionables (See also 3.1)

- Facilitate increased understanding and sharing of knowledge between members through an information sharing platform/ portal (for IESOs), starting in 2020.
- Lay the groundwork for collaboration. Develop structures and business models for contracting members for specific roles, functions and programs, by 2021.
- Actively seek out and channel collaborative opportunities (research, consulting, programmatic, etc) for members, by 2022.
- Explore SU’s role and business model in channeling/ implementing opportunities to/ with members (while ensuring to not compete with members), by 2022. Establish an income source for SU from channeling opportunities, by 2025.

Goal 5. Strengthen our association and secretariat.

In order to create value for members and their communities of innovators and entrepreneurs, it is imperative for SU to create a sound foundation for our emerging association to be built on.

Objective 5.1: Establish long-term organizational structures for the association and secretariat.

Actionables:

A. Institutional Arrangements

- Association registration and legal requirements are reviewed and updated by the secretariat regularly and as needed.

B. Strategic Planning

- Initial 5-year strategy is collectively developed with members, and ratified by the Executive Committee, 2020.
- Core values/ guiding principles are co-developed and incorporated into the strategy by 2021.
- The secretariat leads an annual strategy review, with input from relevant working-groups and members (See also 5.2). The Board votes on the strategy update/ review annually.

C. Governance

- Develop a working governance policy that outlines procedures and protocols of the Board of Directors — this could be rolled out in phases, with an initial policy developed by 2020-2021..
- The policy document should include, but is not limited to:
 - Board composition,
 - Qualifications,
 - Responsibilities,
 - Rules for electing the Board,
 - Rotation policy,
 - Officers and their roles,
 - Meetings,
 - Etc.

D. Management

- The secretariat is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the association, with proactive and hands-on support from the Executive Committee/ Board of Directors; 2020.
- Full-time, senior management and specialized expertise, (especially for the research unit, collaborative programs, and advocacy coordination) are appointed as the association grows. The Board is responsible at the strategy and governance level, and is less involved in day-to-day management; 2021.
- The SU Coordinator/ Manager is the focal point for members.
- Working groups and committees, composed of member ESO staff, take on the responsibility of managing or advancing specific topics in line with the Strategic Plan could include:
 - Advocacy (or Policy),
 - Knowledge and Research (that could also cover the capacity development function),
 - Convening and collaboration,
 - Communications (covering the web platform and portal development),
 - Strategy and operations, etc.

- The secretariat develops simple and clear procedures to enable working groups to work smoothly; including:
 - Composition,
 - Goal-setting,
 - Sharing information and recommendations from the groups to members, and
 - Decision-making processes.
- Policies and procedures to guide the day to day management of the secretariat are developed (Eg. HR Policy) by 2021.

E. Membership

- Articulate and share an initial (working) criteria and categories for SU membership by 2020, review and establish these by 2021
- Develop simple and easily available application and selection processes, 2020
- Establish a quarterly cycle for new-member applications and selection, 2020.
- Criteria categories could include:
 - Established organizations,
 - Legal registration,
 - Track record of supporting innovators and entrepreneurs,
 - Willingness to be actively involved in SU programs and leadership,
 - Committed to SU's vision and mission (and aligned with shared to-be-articulated) values,
 - Willingness to pay membership fees, etc.
- Memberships Categories could include:
 - 1. Full members,
 - 2. Associated members,
 - 3. Affiliated members,
 - 4. Honorary members,
 - 5. Future members (see 5.1).
 - (Create a roster for individual consultants, 2021.)
- Develop an SU member information packet and orientation process, clearly articulating SU membership processes, expectations and contributions, benefits and value-add, orientation of new members, etc.
- Create a membership expansion/ recruitment plan, prioritizing inclusivity, especially enabling ESOs working with underserved communities and geographies to become members.

F. Resource Mobilization

The implementation of this Strategic Plan requires increased resource mobilization and income generation efforts. Considering the context of the sector, initial fundraising efforts start with strengthening linkages to existing developmental funders in the space, especially highlighting SU's ecosystem- and ESO-strengthening potential.

SU will not compete with members programmatically or for funding. Where possible, SU will leverage the services and programs offered by individual members or ecosystem players, to benefit all SU members.

- Develop a resource mobilization plan, starting with grants and donations in 2020-2021, and beginning to explore earned-income opportunities by 2022.

- Develop communications and fundraising content and tools eg. pitch deck, concept note, speaking points, etc., enabling effective fundraising; by 2020
- Establish a membership fee for Full members by 2021.
(While the amount will likely be considerably lower than budgetary needs, fees signify a shared commitment to the association and support our ability to be representative on the advocacy front.)

G. Internal Communications

- Develop a clear and simple internal communications strategy, 2020
- Set easy-to-use structures for receiving, sharing and curating information; 2020
- Form a communications working group; 2020.

H. Data Management

- Initiate conversations around data sharing, pricing and management preferences of members (prior to website/ portal development), 2020-2021.
- Establish SU's data policy, 2022.

I. M&E (of SU)

- Identify a simple feedback channel for members to provide feedback proactively, and if needed, anonymously.
- Institutionalize the strategic plan; create annual work plans and operational budgets, by 2021. Within each actionable/ objective/ goal, the work plan will include:
 - Activities, Timelines, Responsibility holders, Outcomes, Outputs, Budgets, etc.
- Develop an annual M&E plan and systems to review and evaluate performance against the work and strategic plans, ensuring alignment with members and creating intended impact; starting in 2021.

Objective 5.2: Align SU's strategy and activities with members' needs and priorities annually.

Actionables

- Conduct Annual member survey, starting in 2020
- Review activities and strategy annually, using the M&E plan.
- Host Annual members' Summit/ AGM.

Goal 6. Represent diverse Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support Organizations across Uganda.

Objective 6.1: Represent a significant number of all IESOs in Uganda and ensure a large member base outside of Kampala.

- Develop clear recruitment expansion plans and procedures. Map and survey IESOs and start actively recruiting per plan; 2021. Open membership application process for Q3 and Q4 of 2020.
- Develop and share membership criteria and categories, application and selection processes, and a quarterly member application process. (See also 5.1.E.)
- Aim for 20% of all UG IESOs to become SU members by 2021, and 70% of all IESOs to become SU members by 2022.
- members from outside of Kampala constitute 10% of SU membership by 2022.
- Develop the SU Future Members Program; supporting high-potential IESOs outside of Kampala who do not yet meet membership criteria. 2 ESOs supported by 2 to 4 established ESOs per year, starting 2021.

3.4. Strategic Priorities and Next Steps

Drawing from the five-year strategic plan, the Strategic Priorities are key areas that the association will focus on over the next year (2020-2021). As a relatively new organization, Startup Uganda is currently in the start-up phase itself. As such, our Strategic Priorities relate to setting a robust foundation, and addressing and leveraging the most immediate issues and opportunities facing our association.

Setting Internal Structures and Systems

To effectively engage and leverage members, the association will improve internal communications, articulate clear membership criteria and processes and enable member-led committees to advance the work of the association. A simple and concise governance policy will increase clarity and lead to more participation and shared ownership.

Increasing Information and Knowledge Sharing

Responding to the need for more information exchange within the association, and with external stakeholders, SU will create an initial member survey and a member portal to collect and share information internally, and develop an online platform showcasing the sector (entrepreneurs, members and their work) to external audiences.

Adding Value to Members

Seeing the value of SU membership will drive members to be more invested and committed to establishing and growing the association. SU will start adding value to members with relatively easier-to-achieve activities, such as: opportunities for capacity development, hosting smaller and social events for members, streamlining and increasing internal communications and exchange and initiating conversations around SU's advocacy engagement plan and approach.

Convening and Networking Within the Ecosystem

Increased engagement within and convening of the startup ecosystem benefits not only SU members, but also entrepreneurs and our ecosystem as a whole. This will be initiated through shared activities with other ecosystem level initiatives, co-hosting networking events and starting to establish a culture of openness and sharing.

Share our Unified Identity and Strategy

Projecting SU's identity and strategy helps to align members to the vision and mission and attract other IESOs to join. Furthermore, proactively sharing the strategy and vision with multiple ecosystem stakeholders, like the government, donors, investors, etc., increases the ability to guide and direct developments within the sector, creating more targeted opportunities for members and their innovator and entrepreneur communities, while also bringing SU further along its financial sustainability path.

VISION

A modern and prosperous Uganda where innovators and entrepreneurs easily access the relevant support that they need to start, grow and scale their businesses.

MISSION

UPDA is an association of innovation and entrepreneurship support organizations working together to improve collective capacities, influence and impact, and ensure the sustainability of the sector.

