**Addressing food safety challenges in the African informal sector through innovative strategies & use cases**

# D5.4: Incubation and acceleration programs plan A

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Co-funded by the European Union

foodsafety4africa.eu

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| **Grant Agreement No.** | 101136916 |
| **Project Acronym** | FS4Africa |
| **Project Title** | Food Safety for Africa |
| **Type of action** | HORIZON RIA – Research & Innovation Actions |
| **Horizon Europe Call Topic** | Fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food systems from primary production to consumption (HORIZON-CL6-2023-FARM2FORK-01-20) |
| **Start – ending date** | 1January 2024 – 31 December 2027 |
| **Project Website** | foodsafety4africa.eu |
| **Work Package** | WP5: Ecosystem Building, Acceleration and Upscaling |
| **WP Lead Beneficiary** | REFRAME FOOD ASTIKI MI KERDOSKOPIKI ETAIRIA (RFF) |
| **Relevant Task(s)** | T5.3 Virtual Incubation and acceleration program |
| **Deliverable type \| Dissemination level** | R – Document, Report; **\|** PU: Public; |
| **Due Date of Deliverable** | 31 December 2024 |
| **Actual Submission Date** | 17 December 2024 |
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## Document History

| Date | Version | Changes | Contributor(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 18/10/2024 | V0.1 | First Draft of the Deliverable | Tamara Kozic (ITC) and Saša Štraus (ITC) |
| 20/11/2024 | V0.2 | Addressed comments from WP lead | Tamara Kozic (ITC) and Saša Štraus (ITC) |
| 27/11/2024 | V0.3 | Addressed comments from Project Manager | Tamara Kozic (ITC) and Saša Štraus (ITC) |
| 03/12/2024 | LV | Addressed all comments from reviewers | Tamara Kozic (ITC) and Saša Štraus (ITC) |
| | | | |
| | | | |

| FS4Africa Consortium | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Participant Nr.** | **Participant organisation name** | **Short name** | **Country** |
| **1** | INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURE | IITA | NG |
| **2** | STICHTING WAGENINGEN RESEARCH | WR | NL |
| **3** | ITC - INOVACIJSKO TEHNOLOSKI GROZD MURSKA SOBOTA | ITC | SI |
| **4** | COUNCIL FOR SCIENTIFIC AND INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH | CSIR-GH | GH |
| **5** | REFRAME FOOD ASTIKI MI KERDOSKOPIKI ETAIREIA | RFF | GR |
| **6** | UBUNTOO BV | Ubuntoo B.V. | NL |
| **7** | FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION SOLUTIONS (PTY) LTD | FSTS | ZA |
| **8** | UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA | UP | ZA |
| **9** | WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY | WU | NL |
| **10** | KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY FOUNDATION FOR SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT | KEF | EG |
| **11** | AFRICAN UNION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY - NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT | NEPAD | ZA |
| **12** | EGERTON UNIVERSITY | EGE | KE |
| **13** | AGLOBE DEVELOPMENT CENTER | ADC | NG |
| **14** | UNIVERSITAET DER BUNDESWEHR MUENCHEN | UniBw M | DE |
| **15** | BAYER AKTIENGESELLSCHAFT | BAYER | DE |
| **16** | ROYAL INSTITUTION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF LEARNING MCGILL UNIVERSITY | McGill | CA |

# Executive Summary

The purpose of this deliverable, *D5.4 Incubation and Acceleration Programs Plan A*, is to present the initial framework for supporting FS4Africa Use Cases through incubation and acceleration programs. These programs are designed to assist early-stage ventures within the food safety sector by providing structured workshops, mentoring, and essential resources aimed at overcoming startup challenges and fostering business growth.

The deliverable outlines the incubation phase, which includes the development of targeted workshops on key topics such as food safety, business operations, market research, and investment pitching. Each Use Case's specific needs were identified through a detailed needs assessment, which informed the design of the program to ensure tailored support. The work carried out includes the preparation of training materials, scheduling of workshops, and the establishment of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure program effectiveness.

The main conclusion is that the program provides a robust starting point for helping food safety startups validate their ideas and build sustainable business models. It establishes a clear roadmap for future iterations, with planned updates in *D5.5* and *D5.6*, which will build on the initial framework based on feedback and lessons learned.

This deliverable sets the foundation for supporting innovation in the food safety sector and positions the FS4Africa Use Cases to scale their solutions through structured mentorship and training activities.

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|---|---|
| D5.4 | Deliverable 5.4 |

| | |
|---|---|
| D5.5 | Deliverable 5.5 |
| D5.6 | Deliverable 5.6 |
| FS4Africa | Food Safety for Africa (Project Name) |
| LL | Living Lab |
| M | Month of the project |
| Q1 | First quarter |
| Q2 | Second quarter |
| Q3 | Third quarter |
| Q4 | Fourth quarter |
| SWOT | Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats |
| UC | Use Case |

# Project Summary

The Food Safety for Africa (FS4Africa) project is a comprehensive initiative aimed at tackling the multifaceted challenges of food safety in Africa. Recognizing the critical role of food safety in public health, economic development, and environmental sustainability, the project focuses on several key areas:

- Value Chain Organisation, Traceability & Authentication: One of the primary challenges in ensuring food safety is the weak organisation of the food value chain. FS4Africa aims to strengthen these channels to ensure that safe food reaches consumers. This includes improving traceability systems to identify the origin of food products and implementing authentication mechanisms to verify their safety.
- Mycotoxin Contamination: Mycotoxins are toxic compounds produced by certain fungi that can contaminate various food crops, including both food and feed. FS4Africa seeks to address this issue by implementing measures to prevent, detect, and mitigate mycotoxin contamination.
- Pesticide Residues: Another significant concern is the presence of pesticide residues in grains and vegetables. FS4Africa aims to reduce pesticide use through sustainable agricultural practices and to monitor and control residue levels to ensure food safety.
- Microbial Contamination: Microbial contamination, particularly *Escherichia coli* contamination, poses a serious risk to food safety. FS4Africa focuses on implementing sanitation and hygiene practices to prevent microbial contamination and improve food safety standards.
- Food Adulteration: Food adulteration, where inferior or harmful substances are added to food products, is a widespread issue. FS4Africa aims to combat food adulteration through awareness and collaboration with regulators for quality control measures and enforcement of food safety regulations.

The overarching goal of the FS4Africa project is to improve food safety systems across Africa, with a special emphasis on the informal sector. By transforming local markets and enhancing food security, the project aims to stimulate regional trade while minimising negative impacts on the environment, biodiversity, health, and society.

To achieve these objectives, the project leverages the expertise, skills, networks, and tools available within a consortium of partners from Africa and Europe. This collaborative approach facilitates policy development, the implementation of existing policies, and the design of strategies to uplift the informal sector. Digital tools will be employed to transform the informal sector and elevate its status to a more structured level, promoting transparency and accountability.

The project adopts an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating insights from physical sciences, social sciences, humanities, behavioural science, One Health, and biodiversity preservation. By considering the interconnectedness of human, animal, environmental, and plant health, the project aims to develop holistic solutions to food safety challenges.

FS4Africa will provide financial support to researchers, start-ups, SMEs, and other multidisciplinary actors through the launch of two open calls. The first will be addressed to research and technology actors (e.g. SMEs, research organisations) to test, validate and improve the business concepts and tools of the project, while the second will be addressed to Innovation Hubs (IH) to provide training to the use cases and/or projects from the first open call.

FS4Africa is committed to sustainability, adhering to the principle of meeting "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." It builds upon the activities of previous and current EU projects and collaborates with institutions

like the Joint Research Centre, especially the EC Knowledge Centre for Global Food and Nutrition Security, to ensure the successful implementation and impact of the project.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to present a comprehensive framework for "Incubation and Acceleration Programs Plan A". The report aims to present a clear roadmap of how the program will support use cases, particularly within the food safety industry. By focusing on tailored workshops, mentoring, and other resources, we aim to ensure that they can turn their business concepts of products and services developed, into operational, scalable ventures.

## 1.2 Scope and Objective of the Report

The scope of this report is to provide a comprehensive framework for the *Incubation and Acceleration Programs Plan A*, focusing on the incubation phase for FS4Africa Use Cases. The objective is to outline the structure, objectives, and methodologies of the incubation program, emphasizing the support and resources necessary to assist FS4Africa Use Cases (UC) in their early-stage development and navigating their challenges. This includes offering tailored workshops, mentoring, and resources to help participants refine business concepts, navigate challenges, and develop scalable solutions. The report also defines the necessary support and tools for turning these concepts into operational efforts, setting the foundation for future updates in D5.5 (*Incubation and Acceleration Programs Plan B*) and D5.6 (*Incubation and Acceleration Programs Plan C*).

## 1.3 Interconnection to other Deliverables

Deliverable D5.4 – *Incubation and Acceleration Programs Plan A* serves as the initial version of the incubation and acceleration programs plan, outlining the structure and materials for training activities within the project. It sets the foundation for the incubation and acceleration support for use cases and serves as the first step in a phased approach.

Deliverable D5.5 (*Incubation and Acceleration Programs Plan B*) and Deliverable D5.6 (*Incubation and Acceleration Programs Plan C*) are updates to D5.4, reflecting the progress, modifications, and improvements based on the evaluation lessons learned, feedback, and evaluation of the initial plan.

- **D5.4** (due in month 12) is the initial plan, introducing the basic framework and material for the incubation and acceleration programs.
- **D5.5** (due in month 36) is the first update, refining the plan and expanding upon the initial implementation based on ongoing monitoring and evaluation.
- **D5.6** (due in month 48) is the second and final update, incorporating all learnings, adjustments, and final materials for the training activities, which will be embedded in the FS4Africa knowledge platform.

## 1.4 Importance of Incubation and Acceleration

Incubation provides a foundation for early-stage startups, helping them validate their ideas, develop viable business models, and access the essential mentorship, training, and networking opportunities required for success, and help them overcome common startup challenges like product development, market validation, and industry connections. These programs are typically longer-term, but have limited duration, lasting between one to three years, and are geared toward helping startups build a solid foundation. In contrast,

acceleration comes into play at a later stage, and the programs are designed for more mature startups that have already established a product or service and are looking to scale rapidly. These programs are highly structured, time-bound, and focus on growth strategies such as attracting investment, expanding customer bases, and fine-tuning business operations [1]. Together, these phases build a comprehensive support system that transitions businesses from idea generation to market expansion, optimizing their chances of success.

# 2 Needs Assessment and Planning

## 2.1 Identify Mentoring and Workshop Needs

This section identifies the specific requirements for mentoring, coaching, and workshops based on feedback from each UC. It aims to address practical needs and gaps that can be tailored to enhance the effectiveness of the program.

### 2.1.1 Methodological Approach

To effectively design our incubation and acceleration program, we conducted a comprehensive needs assessment for each UC using a structured SWOT analysis approach. This method enabled us to evaluate the internal strengths, weaknesses, external opportunities, and potential risks or threats faced by each UC. These questions were designed to identify both internal resources and external challenges and to highlight the areas where support is needed.

Each UC was invited to share their insights into their strengths, challenges, and areas where mentoring or workshops could fill gaps or enhance their capacity. The process involved gathering feedback through a series of targeted questions, which were divided into four key areas, each focusing on different aspects of their operations. The aim was to understand the areas where mentoring, workshops, and additional resources would be most beneficial.

The specific questions asked to each UC were:

- **Strengths**: What aspects of your project are working well? Where do you have specialized experience or skills that you would be willing to share with other UCs?
    - This question helped to uncover each UC's internal strengths, such as technical expertise, established partnerships, and successful practices. It enabled us to identify areas where UCs could act as knowledge hubs or role models for others in the program.
- **Weaknesses**: What challenges and obstacles are currently hindering your progress, and which of these areas would you like to see addressed in future workshops?
    - The goal of this question was to reveal operational and technical weaknesses or gaps in resources, such as time management issues, technical difficulties, or logistical challenges. This highlighted specific areas where targeted support, through workshops or mentoring, would be essential.
- **Opportunities**: What knowledge areas are most needed within your UC, and which 'go-to' people or SMEs (subject matter experts) would you recommend for workshops on these topics?
    - This focused on identifying areas of growth and innovation within each UC, including the need for new skills, technological advancements, or partnerships. It also helped to identify external experts or specialists who could provide high-value workshops on these topics.
- **Threats**: Are there any risks or limitations that could prevent further successful development?
    - This final question sought to uncover external risks or limitations, such as economic instability, technological failures, or participation issues that could slow down or halt progress. Understanding these risks helped in planning strategies to mitigate potential obstacles.

By analyzing the responses to these questions, we were able to develop a needs-driven approach for mentoring and workshops, ensuring that our support is highly tailored to each

UC's current situation and challenges. The analysis also provided a roadmap for where expert intervention, coaching, or strategic planning would be most impactful, guiding the overall program design.

### 2.1.2 Analysis of Findings

The analysis of the collected responses revealed valuable insights into the specific needs, strengths, and challenges faced by the different UCs. Through the SWOT analysis, we identified key areas where the UCs demonstrated strong competencies, as well as obstacles that could hinder progress.
In this section, we will outline the findings of the SWOT analysis, providing a foundation for the development of tailored workshops and mentoring activities that address both their immediate and long-term needs.

Based on the SWOT analysis and responses gathered from the UCs, the following findings were identified:

**Strengths**: All UCs showcased strong expertise in sample collection, laboratory analyses, and digital platform development. For instance, UC1 and UC2 are strong at stakeholder engagement and evidence generation, while UC3 has successfully developed its aquaponics system and platform. UC4 highlighted its strong collaborations with local farmers and advanced skills in food safety analysis.

**Weaknesses**: Time constraints and operational challenges, such as difficulties in craftsmanship and logistics, were common. UC1 and UC2 both cited issues with time management, while UC3 encountered difficulties with sourcing quality equipment. UC4 faced challenges in tracking produce through informal supply chains, limiting the scope of certain analyses.

**Opportunities**: Regarding opportunities, there is a clear demand for expertise in specific areas, such as IT, horticulture, and solar power solutions, particularly for UC3. UC2 also highlighted the potential for Living Labs (LL), while UC4 sees a need to refine product development processes stemming from research.

**Threats**: The threats include economic instability and resource limitations, with UC2 especially concerned about how inflation may affect stakeholder adoption of new practices. UC3 highlighted risks of equipment failures and staff turnover, while UC4 identified a dependence on farmer participation, which could delay data collection if engagement is low.

## 2.2 Program Planning

The planning process is based on the results of the needs assessment, ensuring the program addresses identified gaps. The target audience includes food system actors and FS4Africa UCs. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will measure the effectiveness of the program, such as participant engagement and progress toward set goals.

### 2.2.1 Program Structure and Content

The Program Structure is structured around key phases: incubation and acceleration, and outlines both incubation and acceleration activities, detailed in Tables 1 and 2.

**Incubation Activities (Table 1):**
The Incubation Phase is a pivotal part of the program, featuring workshops tailored to address key topics identified during the needs assessment. Tailored to the needs of early-stage startups and food system actors, these workshops focus on critical areas such as food safety, business operations, market research, and pitch creation. By targeting these fundamental aspects, the phase aims to build participants' capacity and equip them with essential skills for navigating the complexities of the food systems landscape.

Delivered online in manageable blocks of no more than 2 hours to prevent digital fatigue, the workshops are spread strategically across year two (2025) and year three (2026) of the project duration to ensure accessibility and flexibility. The project partners will share their knowledge with informal actors who have limited access to digital connectivity. They are specifically crafted to benefit FS4Africa UCs, offering a blend of theoretical insights and practical applications. Each session emphasizes interactive learning, fostering collaboration and peer exchange to enrich the experience. Participants will apply the knowledge gained in the workshop to further develop their UCs.

The Incubation Phase provides a platform for knowledge sharing and networking, with a goal of engaging over 10 participants per workshop. By the end of the program, participants will have acquired practical tools and actionable strategies to address food system challenges, refine their solutions, and set up their operations for growth and long-term impact.

**Acceleration Activities (Table 2):**
The Acceleration Phase consists of hybrid pitch presentations by UCs, each designed with maximum half day duration. These sessions, scheduled for the first half of year four of the project duration (2027), will provide a platform for UCs to present their work to a diverse audience of stakeholders. The presentations will focus on identifying key problems, introducing innovative solutions or products, highlighting market opportunities, and outlining sustainable business models developed through the project.

This phase aims to foster dialogue among stakeholders, encouraging collaboration and knowledge exchange across sectors. By addressing pressing challenges in the food system and showcasing practical, scalable innovations, the sessions will also serve as an opportunity to raise awareness about the impact of UCs' efforts. Furthermore, the hybrid format ensures accessibility for a broader audience including informal actors with limited digital connection, maximizing engagement and enabling UCs to connect with potential partners, investors, and decision-makers to support the implementation and scaling of their solutions.

*Table 1: Incubation Activities Plan*

| Incubation Activities | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TOPIC** | **CONTENT** | **SCHEDULED FOR** | | | **FORMAT** | **TARGETED AUDIENCE** | **KPI** |
| **#1 Current and Emerging Food Safety Concepts** | Food safety hazards, management of food safety risks, regulations, best practices, and emerging trends in food safety | **2025** | | | Online Workshop | Food System Actors, FS4Africa UCs | >10 |
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 Q4 | | | |
| | | M13-15 | M16-18 | M19-21 M22-24 | | | |
| | | ■ | | | | | |
| **#2 Basic Business Operations and Financial Management** | Business planning, operational management, budgeting, financial planning, accounting basics, and financial reporting | **2025** | | | Online Workshop | Food System Actors, FS4Africa UCs | >10 |
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 Q4 | | | |
| | | M13-15 | M16-18 | M19-21 M22-24 | | | |
| | | | ■ | | | | |
| **#3 Effective Market Research** | Market research methods, data analysis, and using research to inform business decisions. | **2025** | | | Online Workshop | Food System Actors, FS4Africa UCs | >10 |
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 Q4 | | | |
| | | M13-15 | M16-18 | M19-21 M22-24 | | | |
| | | | | ■ | | | |
| **#4 Marketing and Brand Development** | Market analysis, branding strategies, digital marketing, and customer engagement | **2026** | | | Online Workshop | Food System Actors, FS4Africa UCs | >10 |
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 Q4 | | | |
| | | M25-27 | M28-30 | M31-33 M34-36 | | | |
| | | ■ | | | | | |
| **#5 Setting up a Living Lab** | | **2026** | | | Online Workshop | | >10 |
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 Q4 | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | LL essentials, how to set up a LL, governance and business models for setting up a LL | M25-27 | M28-30 | M31-33 | M34-36 | | Food System Actors, FS4Africa UCs | |
| **#6 Successful Presentation and Pitch Creation for Attracting Investment** | Harnessing the value from ideas and/or historical achievements through stories, presentation skills, body language, creating impactful pitches, and strategies for attracting investors | **2027** | | | | Online Workshop | Food System Actors, FS4Africa UCs | >10 |
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | | | |
| | | M37-39 | M40-42 | M43-45 | M46-48 | | | |

*Table 2: Acceleration Activities Plan*

| Acceleration Activities | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TOPIC** | **CONTENT** | **SCHEDULED FOR** | **FORMAT** | **TARGETED AUDIENCE** | **KPI** |
| **Pitch Presentation UC 1** | Presentation of problem, solutions/products, market opportunities and business model of the UC | **2027**<br>Q1: M37-39 \| Q2: M40-42 \| Q3: M43-45 \| Q4: M46-48<br>■ Q2 | Hybrid Presentation | Food System Actors, Investors | >10 |
| **Pitch Presentation UC 2** | Presentation of problem, solutions/products, market opportunities and business model of the UC | **2027**<br>Q1: M37-39 \| Q2: M40-42 \| Q3: M43-45 \| Q4: M46-48<br>■ Q2 | Hybrid Presentation | Food System Actors, Investors | >10 |
| **Pitch Presentation UC 3** | Presentation of problem, solutions/products, market opportunities and business model of the UC | **2027**<br>Q1: M37-39 \| Q2: M40-42 \| Q3: M43-45 \| Q4: M46-48<br>■ Q2 | Hybrid Presentation | Food System Actors, Investors | >10 |
| **Pitch Presentation UC 4** | Presentation of problem, solutions/products, market opportunities and business model of the UC | **2027**<br>Q1: M37-39 \| Q2: M40-42 \| Q3: M43-45 \| Q4: M46-48<br>■ Q3 | Hybrid Presentation | Food System Actors, Investors | >10 |

### 2.2.2 Mentoring and Coaching Plan

The mentoring and coaching plan will include personalized support from topic experts throughout the program, with online workshops. Table 3 provides a detailed outline of the experts involved and their profiles. This approach ensures that participants receive tailored guidance and insights from experts, enhancing their learning experience and promoting effective skill development.

*Table 3: Mentoring and Coaching Plan*

| | MENTOR/COACH | MENTOR'S PROFILE | TRAINING MATERIAL |
|---|---|---|---|
| **#1 Current and Emerging Food Safety Concepts** | Saša Štraus, PhD | Saša Štraus, PhD, is an agricultural specialist with over 10 years of experience leading research and development projects in agrifood companies. Her expertise spans field production, product development, and organic farming, including livestock management. She has established quality schemes such as GGAP and GMO-free chicken and has contributed to circular economy initiatives by calculating the environmental footprint of products. She holds a PhD in agriculture, focusing on sustainability indicators for agricultural systems. | Each workshop will include a live presentation followed by a Q&A session to engage participants actively. The sessions will be recorded and made available for future reference, allowing participants to revisit the content at their convenience. Additionally, a handout summarizing key points from the workshop will be provided. This document will also include further references for an in-depth exploration of the topic, ensuring participants have comprehensive resources to enhance their understanding. |
| **#2 Basic Business Operations and Financial Management** | Saša Štraus, PhD | | |
| **#3 Effective Market Research** | Natalija Rebrica, M.A. | Ms. Natalija Rebrica is an experienced head of communications specializing in marketing and public relations. With a strong background in market communication and social informatics. Natalija's experience includes managing marketing campaigns, conducting market research, and delivering strategic marketing planning for diverse sectors. She has worked across various sectors, including businesses and research institutions, and is currently pursuing a PhD in Social Informatics, focusing on consumer psychology and technology adoption. Her expertise lies at the intersection of technology and consumer behavior, delivering innovative and impactful communication solutions. | |
| **#4 Marketing and Brand Development** | Natalija Rebrica, M.A. | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **#5 Setting up a LL** | ENoLL | ENoLL, or the European Network of LL, is an international association that supports innovation through LLs—user-centered, open innovation ecosystems where real-life settings are used for co-creation, testing, and scaling of new ideas, products, and services. Established in 2006, ENoLL connects over 150 LL globally and promotes collaboration across sectors such as health, energy, mobility, and smart cities. It fosters partnerships among citizens, researchers, policymakers, and businesses, aiming to drive user-driven, sustainable, and inclusive innovation across Europe and beyond. | |
| **#6 Successful Presentation and Pitch Creation for Attracting Investment** | Tamara Kozic, M.A. | Ms Tamara Kozic is a sociologist with a master's degree in Global Studies. Through her academic journey she has developed a deep understanding of human behaviour and society's intricate dynamics. Her expertise includes empirical research, analysis and statistics, as well as understanding social dynamics, human behaviour, and societal interactions. She specializes on the Multi-actor Approach, and focuses on consumer behaviour in agrifood systems, where she analyses how different stakeholders interact and behave. | |

# 3 Implementation Plan

## 3.1 Timeline and Milestones

Specific milestones were established (Table 5) to reach the KPIs presented in Table 4. We will record numbers against the total target KPIs each year to monitor progress and make necessary adjustments to ensure we meet our goals effectively.

*Table 4: Incubation and Acceleration KPIs*

| **KPIs** | M1-M18 | M19-M36 | M37-M48 | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Incubation and Acceleration Activities | 2 | 3 | 5 | **10** |
| Food System Participants Engaged | ≥20 | ≥30 | ≥50 | **≥100** |
| Incubation and Acceleration Training Material | 6 | N/A | N/A | **6** |

During the first 18 months (M1–M18), two expert-led workshops will be conducted, targeting over 20 participants across all sessions and collecting feedback from at least four participants. From months 19 to 36 (M19–M36), an additional three expert-led workshops will be delivered, with a goal of reaching over 30 participants across all sessions and gathering feedback from at least six participants. In the final phase (M37–M48), one additional expert-led workshop will be delivered alongside four prepared and delivered pitch presentations. Combined, these activities aim to reach over 50 participants across all workshops and presentations. Each activity is focused on enhancing participant engagement and ensuring that feedback is utilized to improve future sessions. The specified participant targets provide a clear measure of success for workshops and presentations. These milestones will facilitate tracking progress and ensuring that the program meets its objectives effectively, while also providing valuable insights for continuous improvement. Participant feedback will be gathered and used to adjust the program content, delivery methods, and engagement strategies to better meet the needs and expectations of future participants.

*Table 5: Incubation and Acceleration Milestones*

| **MILESTONES** | | |
|---|---|---|
| M1-M18 | M19-M36 | M37-M48 |
| Initial 2 expert-led workshops delivered | Additional 3 expert-led workshops delivered | Additional 1 expert-led workshops delivered |
| Collected feedback from 4 participants on workshops | Collected feedback from 6 participants on workshops | 4 pitch presentations prepared and delivered |
| >20 participants reached across all workshops | Additional >30 participants reached across all workshops | Additional >50 participants reached across all presentations and workshops |

## 3.2 Training Materials

The training program will include a variety of comprehensive materials designed to enhance participant learning and engagement. Each workshop will feature a live presentation, followed

by an interactive Q&A session that encourages active participation. To ensure the content is accessible for future reference, all sessions will be recorded and made available to participants at their convenience. Participants will receive a handout (See Annex) summarizing the key points discussed during the workshop, which will also include additional references for those interested in further exploring the topics covered and will serve as a valuable resource for participants to deepen their understanding and apply the knowledge effectively in their work.

# 4 Conclusions

The Incubation and Acceleration Programs Plan A serves as a critical first step in supporting FS4Africa UCs through structured guidance, training, and resources tailored to their unique needs. By focusing on early-stage development through targeted workshops, mentoring, and comprehensive materials, the program lays the foundation for participants to transform innovative concepts into scalable, sustainable ventures. The outlined framework provides a clear roadmap for incubation activities, addressing specific challenges and opportunities within the food safety industry. As the program progresses, subsequent updates in Deliverables D5.5 and D5.6 will build on this initial plan, refining the support structure and ensuring the continuous growth and success of the UCs.

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# 6 Annex I: Training Material for #1 Current and Emerging Food Safety Concepts

# Current and Emerging Food Safety Concepts

## Importance of Food Safety

**Food safety** refers to the production, handling, preparation, and storage of food in ways that prevent foodborne illness and contamination. This critical field involves setting and following guidelines to prevent hazards that could cause harm to consumers, ranging from biological (e.g. bacteria, viruses), chemical (e.g. toxins, pesticides residues), to physical hazards (e.g., metal fragments). As defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO), “Food safety is the assurance that food will not cause harm to the consumer when it is prepared and/or eaten according to its intended use”.

Food safety is fundamental to **public health**, as unsafe food poses a risk of illness, ranging from mild gastrointestinal distress to threatening infections. According to WHO (2022), approximately 600 million people fall ill each year from eating contaminated food, resulting in 420,000 deaths. Children, elderly people, and those with weakened immune systems are especially vulnerable, making effective food safety practices essential to protecting these populations.

Ensuring food safety also addresses malnutrition, as contaminated food can lead to nutrient loss or contribute to diseases that interfere with nutrition absorption.

Foodborne illness has a significant **economic impact**, costing countries billions annually in medical expenses, productivity losses, and trade restrictions. For instance, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that foodborne illnesses in the U.S. result in an economic burden exceeding $15 billion each year (CDC, 2021). Moreover, when outbreaks occur, companies face recall costs, legal liabilities, and loss of consumer trust. For small-scale farmers and food businesses, especially in low-income regions, these costs can be devastating, underscoring the need for robust food safety practices.

In today’s globalized food supply chain, food safety is crucial for **international trade**. To protect consumers and uphold fair trading practices, many countries impose strict food safety regulations on imported goods. Compliance with food safety standards, such as the FSMA in the U.S. or the EU’s General Food Law, helps facilitate trade and prevent the spread of contaminants across borders. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2023 “*Assuring food safety and quality is critical to foster trade and facilitate market access*”. Maintaining high food safety strengthens market relationships, opens up international markets, and improves the

reputation of exporters. Conversely, failing to meet these standards can result in import bans, affecting entire sectors reliant on export revenues.

Consumers expect the food they purchase to be safe, and any lapses in food safety can quickly erode **public trust**. By ensuring food safety, food producers and processors not only protect consumers but also strengthen their brand reputation and competitiveness in the market. Food safety also intersects with food security, such as preventing contamination and ensuring safe handling and storage, reducing food waste, and improving the availability and accessibility of nutritious food for broader populations. A safe food supply is integral to achieving food security and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG2: Zero Hunger and SDG3: Good Health and Well-Being.

## KEY FOOD SAFETY STANDARDS AND GUIDELINESS

### Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and Good Hygiene Practices (GHP)

These frameworks are fundamental to maintaining sanitary conditions. **GAP** guidelines focus on on-farm activities to ensure food is produced, harvested, and handled in a safe and sustainable way. Key elements include soil management, water use, crop protection, worker health, and hygiene. GAP helps prevent contamination from the earliest stage of food production, creating a strong foundation for safety across the supply chain. **GMP** emphasizes standardized procedures in processing facilities, while **GHP** focuses on personal hygiene, cleaning and sanitation to ensure product safety.

### Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP)

A systematic, preventive approach that addresses potential biological, chemical and physical hazards across the production chain. Widely used in processing, HACCP focuses on critical control points, such as identifying points that pose risks, evaluating and managing them through relevant processes, such as cooking, cooling, and packaging, to prevent contamination.

### General Food Law, Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and ISO 22000

+ **General Food Law** is the EU's foundational food safety legislation, establishing principles for food safety, traceability, and risk management across the EU.
+ **FSMA** is U.S.–based legislation focused on preventing contamination before it occurs. It includes new requirements for preventive controls, risk-based inspections, and supplier verification.
+ **ISSO 22000** is an international standard for food safety management systems. It covers all organizations in the supply chain and integrates HACCP principles with ISO's management system structure for consistency and safety.

## TYPES OF FOOD SAFETY HAZARDS

Food safety hazards are any biological, chemical, or physical agents in food that can cause adverse health effects. Understanding these hazards is essential for implementing effective prevention and control measures.

**Biological Hazards**
Microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, parasites, and fungi, can contaminate food and cause foodborne illness.
*Salmonella, Escherichia coli (E. coli), Listeria monocytogenes, Campylobacter, Norovirus,* Mycotoxigenic fungi

**Chemical Hazards**
Substances, that can contaminate food and pose a health risk, such as pesticide residues, toxins, and allergens
*Pesticides, Heavy Metals, Food Alergens, Natural Toxin like Mycotoxins.*

**Physical Hazards**
Foreign objects in food, such as glass, metal, stones, or plastic, can cause injury or choking.

## FOOD SAFETY TIPS AND TRICKS

+ List of food safety tips and best practices for business within the food supply chain, covering each stage from production to distribution.

+ **Implement GAP at the Farm Level:** Ensure clean water, safe chemical usage, and worker hygiene to prevent contamination.

+ **Apply Rigorous Hygiene and Sanitation Standards in Processing (GMP and GHP):** Maintain a sanitized processing environment with staff trained in proper hygiene and allergen management to reduce cross-contamination risks.

+ **Hazard Control:** Implement checks to eliminate physical, chemical, and biological hazards in food products.

+ **Cold Chain Management:** Use temperature-controlled storage and real-time monitoring to keep perishable foods safe throughout storage and transportation.

+ **Traceability Systems:** Use barcoding or blockchain to trace products through each stage, allowing quick recall if contamination occurs.

+ **Supplier Verification**: Choose certified suppliers who adhere to high food safety standards, verified by regular audits and inspections.

+ **Advanced Technologies**: Integrate AI and predictive analytics for real-time monitoring and blockchain for transparency, reducing contamination risks.

+ **Compliance and Certification**: Follow international standards and conduct regular audits to ensure consistent safety practices across the chain.

## EMERGING TRENDS AND TECHNOLOGIES IN FOOD SAFETY

Emerging technologies and trends offer powerful tools for preventing contamination, ensuring compliance, and building consumer confidence, representing the future of a safer and more transparent food supply chain.

1. **Blockchain for Traceability**

Traceability based on blockchain creates an unchangeable, transparent record of every transaction in the food supply chain. This technology allows rapid tracing of contamination sources, thus improving recall efficiency and consumer trust. It is particularly valuable for complex global supply chains where transparency is critical to manage food fraud and safety. It is also important to enhance consumers' trust.

2. **Internet of Things (IoT) and Sensors**

IoT devices and sensors are being used throughout the supply chain to monitor critical factors like temperature, humidity, and shelf-life indicators in real-time. These sensors can alert handlers if a product deviates from its optimal conditions, helping to prevent spoilage and maintain food safety standards.

3. **AI and Machine Learning**

AI is now being applied to identify patterns and predict potential safety risks in food production, processing, and storage. Machine learning models can analyse vast amounts of data from sensors, inspections, and historical incidents to predict contamination risks, optimize storage and processing conditions, and even automate quality control with greater accuracy.

4. **Predictive Analytics for Proactive Safety**

Predictive analytics tools are emerging as essential for anticipating hazards. By analysing historical data, predictive models can forecast issues such as bacterial growth under certain conditions, optimizing processing and storage to proactively mitigate risks. This enables companies to focus resources on the highest-risk areas, improving efficiency and food safety outcomes.

5. **Microbiome and Food Safety**

Emerging research into microbiomes—the community of microorganisms within food environments—can help identify beneficial microbes that prevent pathogen growth and improve food shelf life. Through advanced DNA sequencing, scientists now understand how microbial interactions impact food safety, opening doors to microbiome-based safety solutions.

6. **Biosensors and Rapid Detection Technologies**

Advances in biosensors enable faster, more accurate pathogen detection in food products. These portable, sensitive sensors use biological components to detect specific contaminants (e.g. *E. coli, Salmonella*) in minutes, offering an alternative to lengthy lab tests. This rapid detection is vital for preventing contaminated food from reaching consumers.

7. **Non-thermal Food Processing Methods**

To reduce microbial load without altering food quality, technologies like high-pressure processing (HPP), pulsed electric fields, and ultraviolet (UV) light are gaining popularity. These methods inactivate pathogens without heat, retaining the food's nutritional quality and taste while extending shelf life.

8. **Smart Packaging**

Smart packaging solutions, such as RFID tags and freshness indicators, are now embedded in packaging materials to provide real-time updates on product quality. This can include sensors that detect gas buildup in spoiled products, labels that change colour as products age, and QR codes that link to detailed safety and handling information.

## FUTURE OUTLOOK AND GLOBAL COLLABORATION

The future of food safety relies heavily on global collaboration, as supply chains increasingly span multiple countries and regions, each with unique safety challenges and regulatory standards. Enhanced cooperation will enable a unified approach to managing food safety risks, harmonizing regulations, and responding more effectively to global food safety incidents. With shared data, research, and technologies, the food industry can create more resilient supply chains that prioritize consumer health and environmental sustainability.

1. **Next-Generation Predictive Risk Analysis:**

Predictive analytics, utilizing big data, AI, and the Internet of Things (IoT), are transforming risk analysis by identifying patterns that may indicate potential contamination risks. By analysing climate data, transportation times, and supply chain fluctuations, companies can pre-emptively address risks before they escalate into safety issues.

2. **Sustainable Packaging Innovations:**

With the push towards sustainability, new packaging materials that extend shelf life while reducing environmental impact are emerging. Edible coatings, biodegradable films, and intelligent packaging with sensors that monitor freshness help preserve food safety while minimizing waste. The use of antimicrobial packaging, which inhibits bacterial growth, is also a growing area of interest.

3. **Circular Economy and Safe Recycling in the Food Systems:**

In the drive toward circular economy principles, safe recycling of by-products from food processing is gaining momentum. New guidelines are emerging for the safety protocols. Automated systems in sorting, packaging, and inspection also decrease the likelihood of contamination, while digital records streamline compliance with regulations.

4. **Data Sharing and Real-Time Communication**

With global networks, swift communication across borders is critical. Future food safety frameworks will leverage real-time data-sharing platforms and communication networks that enable rapid response to food safety incidents. These networks allow countries to share vital information, such as outbreak data and recall notices, immediately across regions, helping to contain foodborne illnesses more effectively. Initiatives like the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) promote data sharing and foster trust between international stakeholders, making global cooperation more seamless.

### 5. Policy and Global Standards Harmonization

One key aspect of the future food safety landscape is aligning food safety standards across nations. Organizations like the Codex Alimentarius Commission and the WHO work to create internationally recognized safety standards, aiming to standardize best practices and reduce the risk of cross-border contamination. Greater alignment of these standards helps streamline compliance for global supply chains, making it easier for food businesses to navigate international regulations and ensuring a consistent safety benchmark.

## For more detailed guides and examples, refer to the following organizations and resources:

[2] Food safety (WHO)
[3] Food safety and quality (FAO)
[4] Food Safety Strategy for Africa
[5] Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI)
[6] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Food Safety

# 7 Annex II: Training Material for #2 Basic Business Operations and Financial Management

# Basic Business Operations

## Basic Business Operations in Relation to Food Safety

In the food industry, **basic business operations** are closely tied to food safety. Food businesses must ensure their operations protect consumers by maintaining high standards for hygiene, handling, and production processes. Key operational practices – including production, storage, processing, and distribution – affect the quality and safety of food products. Each part of the food supply chain requires careful monitoring and compliance with safety standards to prevent contamination, spoilage, and potential health risks.

A **business model** serves as a foundational blueprint that outlines how an organization creates, delivers, and captures value. In the food industry, this means defining the processes and resources needed to bring safe, high-quality products to market while meeting consumer demands and adhering to regulatory standards. A well-defined business model not only guides decision-making and operational planning but also aligns an organization's goals with the essential tasks required to run a food business effectively.

This document will cover the essential components of a business operations, emphasizing building a robust business model, and illustrates how food safety fits into this framework.

## UNDERSTANDING BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Business operations include various components essential for achieving organizational objectives. These components can be classified into:

**Production**. The processes involved in creating goods or services, which can include production or sourcing of raw materials, processing and logistics.

**Marketing and Sales**. Strategies to promote products or services, engage customers, and drive sales.

**Customer Service**. Processes for supporting customers throughout their journey, enhancing satisfaction and loyalty.

**Finance and Accounting**. Managing financial resources, budgeting, and financial reporting to ensure profitability.

## CORE ELEMENTS OF A BUSINESS MODEL

A business model defines how an organization operates and delivers value to customers. Key components of a business model include:

- **Value Proposition**. What unique value does the business offer? This could be related to quality, convenience, or safety.
- **Customer Segments**. Identifying and understanding the specific groups of customers the business aims to serve.
- **Revenue Stream**. How the business generates income, including sales, subscription, or service fees.

These components should work cohesively to create a sustainable and profitable business operation.

## KEY ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

Building a business model involves identifying key activities and resources necessary for delivering the value proposition.

- **Key activities** are critical processes that must be performed, such as product development, marketing, sales, and distribution.
- **Key resources** are the assets required to support operations, including human resources, technology, and partnership.

Incorporating food safety measures within these activities can enhance the business model, ensuring compliance and customer trust.

## CHANNELS AND CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

Channels refer to how a business delivers it value proposition to customers. These can include:

- **Direct Channels**. Such as e-commerce platforms or company-owned stores, allowing for direct customer engagement.
- **Indirect Channels**. Utilizing third-party retailers or distributors to reach a broader audience.

Additionally, maintaining strong customer relationships through effective communication and service is vital. Regular feedback mechanisms can help identify areas for improvement, including food safety aspects that may affect customer perception.

## STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Collaborating with partners can enhance a business model by leveraging external expertise and resources. Considerations for strategic partnerships include:

+ **Suppliers.** Partnering with reliable suppliers who prioritize quality and safety can strengthen the supply chain.
+ **Technology Providers**. Working with technology companies can introduce innovative solutions for operational efficiency.
+ **Regulatory Agencies**. Engaging with regulatory bodies ensures compliance with safety standards and fosters credibility.

## INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

In a competitive landscape, continuous innovation is key to staying relevant. Business should encourage a culture of innovation that promotes:

**Process improvement**. Regularly assessing operational processes to identify, inefficiencies and implement improvements.

**Product Development**. Innovating new products or services that align with market trends and consumer demands.

**Technology Adoption**. Leveraging new technologies to enhance efficiency, safety, and customer engagement.

## PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

To ensure that business operation align with strategic goals, organization should establish key performance indicators (KPI) that measure:

- **Operational Efficiency**. Metrics such as production costs, lead times, and inventory turnover.
- **Customer Satisfaction**. Assessing customer feedback and satisfaction scores to gauge the effectiveness of service and safely practices.
- **Financial Performance**. Monitoring profitability, revenue growth, and cost management to evaluate overall business health.

Regular evaluation of these metrics can inform decision-making and drive continuous improvement.

## FUTURE TRENDS AND ADAPTABILITY

As markets evolve, businesses must remain adaptable to changes in consumer preferences, regulatory requirements, and technological advancements. Key future trends in business operations include:

- **Sustainability**. Increasing consumer demand for sustainable practices necessitates integrating eco-friendly solutions within business models.
- **Digital Transformation.** The rise of digital platforms and e-commerce demands businesses to enhance their online presence and operational capabilities.
- **Health and Safety Focus**. Post-pandemic consumer preferences will continue to prioritize health and safety, making it essential for businesses to adapt their models accordingly.

By embracing these trends and maintaining a flexible business model, companies can position themselves for long-term success.

## BUILDING A BUSINESS MODEL

**Building a successful business model involves a series of strategic steps:**

1. **Identify Your Value Proposition**: Determine what makes your product or service unique. This could involve quality, price, convenience, or innovation.
2. **Define Your Target Audience**: Clearly outline your customer segments. Understand their needs, preferences, and behaviours to tailor your offerings.
3. **Outline Revenue Streams**: Decide how your business will make money. Consider multiple revenue models (e.g., direct sales, subscription services, licensing) to diversify income.
4. **Establish Key Partnerships**: Identify essential partnerships that can help enhance your value proposition, improve your distribution channels, or reduce risk.
5. **Define Your Cost Structure**: Analyse both fixed and variable costs associated with your operations. Understanding your costs will help ensure profitability.
6. **Create a Delivery Mechanism**: Decide how your product or service will reach your customers. Consider direct and indirect channels.

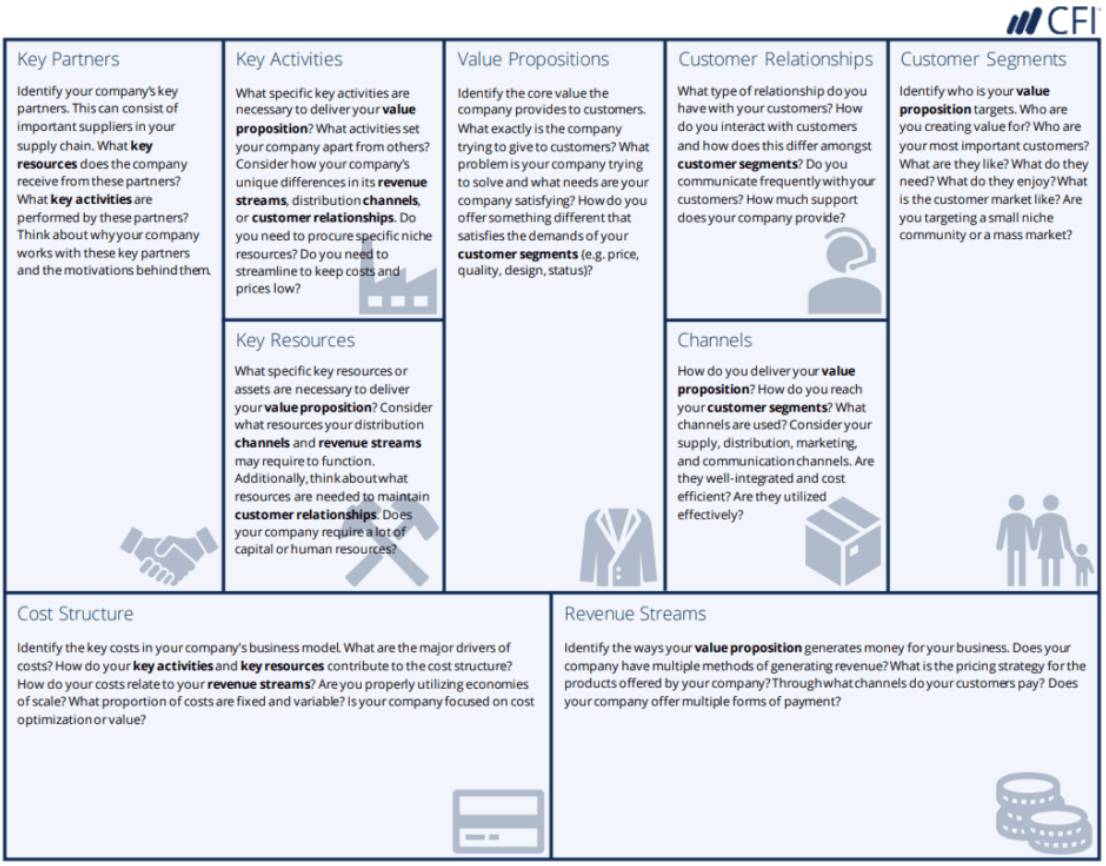
## BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS

The **Business Model Canvas** is a strategic management tool that visually outlines the key components of a business model. It is divided into nine sections, providing a comprehensive overview of the business:

- **Customer Segments**: Define the different groups of people or organizations your business aims to reach and serve.
- **Value Proposition**: Identify the unique value your products or services provide to your customers.
- **Channels**: Outline how you will deliver your value proposition to your customer segments (e.g., sales channels, distribution methods).
- **Customer Relationships**: Describe the types of relationships you will establish with each customer segment (e.g., personalized service, self-service).

- **Revenue Streams**: Identify how the business will earn money from each customer segment (e.g., sales, subscriptions).
- **Key Resources**: List the most important assets required to deliver your value proposition (e.g., staff, technology, equipment).
- **Key Activities**: Outline the critical activities necessary to create and deliver your value proposition (e.g., production, marketing, sales).
- **Key Partnerships**: Identify external companies or suppliers that will help your business succeed.
- **Cost Structure**: Analyse the costs associated with your business model, focusing on fixed and variable costs.

Using the Business Model Canvas allows organizations to visualize their business model and understand how various components interact.




*Business model Canvas (source: https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/management/business-model-canvas-template/)*

## For more detailed guides and examples, refer to the following organizations and resources:

[7] Business Model Canvas: The Definitive Guide and Examples
[8] Business Model Navigator
[9] The Business Model Canvas
[10] Sustainability Canvas

# 8 Annex III: Training Material for #3 Effective Market Research

# Effective Market Research

## What is Market Research?

**Market research** is the systematic process of evaluating the viability of a new service or product through gathering, analysing, and interpreting information about potential consumers' needs and preferences. It aims to understand the behaviours, expectations, and motivations of the target audience to ensure that a product or service effectively meets their needs.

## Key Aspects of Market Research

| | |
|---|---|
|  | **Understanding the Consumer**<br>• Focuses on current, past, and potential customers<br>• Helps in understanding consumer behaviour and preferences, to mitigate the risk of an experience gap (where there is a shortfall between what a consumer expects you to deliver and what you actually deliver) |
|  | **Effective Company Insights**<br>• Involves evaluating product or service design, promotion, pricing, placement, and sales<br>• Assists in optimizing business strategies to align with consumer expectations |
|  | **Competitor Analysis**<br>• Keeps track of competitors' offerings and market presence, to differentiate your products and services from other businesses<br>• Helps to understand how competitors' market offerings interact in the market environment |

| | |
|---|---|
| | **Industry Trends**<br>• Examines overall market trends and economic indicators<br>• Determines the growth direction and potential opportunities within the industry |

## Benefits of Market Research

***+ Reduces** the risk of experience gaps where a product falls short of consumer expectations*

***+ Informs** product development and marketing strategies to better meet market demands*

***+ Provides** critical insights into industry trends and competitor activities*

***+ Helps** in making informed business decisions and mitigating risks*

## Methods of Market Research

**Primary Research:** is market research data that you collect yourself. This is raw data collected through a range of different means – surveys, focus groups, observation, or interviews

**Secondary Research:** is the use of data that has already been collected, analysed and published – reports, studies, and other publications

## Steps in Conducting Market Research

### *Step 1: Define the Problem*

Clearly identify the issue or question that needs to be addressed.

### *Step 2: Identify the target group*

Define your target audience to guarantee that your research is directed toward the appropriate demographic. Tailoring your research questions and methods to collect the most relevant data will be facilitated by understanding the characteristics, preferences, and behaviours of your potential consumers. The more you understand your target audience, the more effectively you can cater your research to their interests and requirements.

### *Step 3: Choose your research methods*

Decide between qualitative methods (e.g., focus groups, interviews) and quantitative methods (e.g., surveys, statistical analysis), identify the number of participants needed for reliable results, and outline how and when data will be gathered. Your choice of methods depends on budget, time constraints, and the type of question you're trying to answer.

### *Step 4: Collect Data*

- Primary Data Collection: Conduct surveys, interviews, or observations. To reach a larger audience, think about utilizing a variety of methods. Make sure your sample size is large enough to be statistically representative and formulate concise but clear questions. Additionally, don't forget to write down all the information you obtain, which you'll come back to if you'd like to emphasize a point or recall some missed information.
- Secondary Data Collection: Gather information from existing sources, such as industry reports, academic journals, and market analyses, and competitor analysis. Review your competitors' strategies, products, pricing, consumer feedback, and financial performance. This will help you assess where your business stands in the marketplace and identify potential gaps or opportunities.

### *Step 5: Analyse Data*

- Quantitative Analysis: Use statistical tools to analyse numerical data (e.g., SPSS, Excel).
- Qualitative Analysis: Identify patterns and themes from non-numerical data (e.g., coding interview responses).

With the data in hand, the stage is set for converting numbers into knowledge. Draw conclusions based on the data analysis and determine the implications for decision-making and strategic planning. Visualise trends and patterns using statistical tools such as charts and graphs. Interpret the findings in light of your research objectives, and reach practical conclusions. Look for patterns and trends to gain important information.

### *Step 6: Report Findings*

Create a comprehensive report with clear, actionable insights. Include visual aids like graphs, charts, and tables to support data presentation.

## Tools and Techniques

In market research, utilizing the right tools and techniques is crucial to obtaining accurate, actionable insights. The choice of tools and techniques can significantly impact the quality of data collected and the subsequent analysis. Here is an overview of the essential tools and techniques that researchers can employ to gather, analyse, and interpret market data effectively.

### Surveys and Questionnaires

Surveys and questionnaires are essential tools for collecting large amounts of quantitative data. They gather information from a specific group of people to understand their opinions, behaviours, and preferences. These can be administered online, via mail, over the phone, or in person. The choice of medium often depends on the target audience and the type of information

needed. Online surveys are particularly popular due to their reach and cost-effectiveness.

### Focus Groups

Focus groups involve guided discussions with a small group of people to obtain qualitative insights. This method is valuable for exploring complex behaviours and attitudes, testing new products, and generating ideas. Focus groups help understand the deeper motivations behind consumer choices and are typically used in the early stages of product development.

### SWOT Analysis

SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis helps identify internal and external factors that can affect a product or business. This strategic tool is used to evaluate a company's competitive position and to develop strategic plans.

### PEST Analysis

PEST (Political, Economic, Social, Technological) analysis examines the macro-environmental factors that can impact an organization. This tool is crucial for understanding market dynamics and identifying potential opportunities and threats that may arise from external factors.

### Competitive Analysis

Competitive analysis involves assessing competitors' strengths and weaknesses to understand their market positioning. This tool helps businesses differentiate their offerings and identify gaps in the market that they can exploit.

## Common Pitfalls

**Poorly Defined Objectives:** Leads to irrelevant or unhelpful data

**Biased Samples:** Skew results and affect reliability

**Insufficient Data:** Limits the ability to make informed decisions

**Ignoring Market Changes:** Failing to update research can result in outdated insights

## Tips



- ✓ ***Define Clear Objectives:*** *Ensure your research goals are specific and measurable*
- ✓ ***Use Reliable Sources:*** *Validate the credibility of secondary data sources*
- ✓ ***Stay Objective:*** *Avoid biases in data collection and analysis*
- ✓ ***Ensure Confidentiality:*** *Protect the privacy of research participants*
- ✓ ***Regular Updates:*** *Market conditions change, so update research periodically*

## For more detailed guides and examples, refer to the following resources:

[11] The ultimate guide to market research and how to conduct it like a pro

[12] 10 Key Steps for Conducting Effective Market Research

[13] 11 Expert Tips for Conducting Better Market Research

[14] How to Do Market Research, Types, and Example

[15] How to Conduct Effective Market Research: a Step-by-Step Guide for Businesses

[16] Market research questions: what to ask and how

[17] Market Analysis Part 2: Competitive Analysis

[18] Market Analysis For Launching A New Company

# 9 Annex IV: Training Material for #4 Marketing and Brand Development

# Marketing and Brand Development

## Understanding Marketing and Brand Development

**Marketing** is the process of promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising, with the goal to increase sales, grow the consumer base, and enhance consumer satisfaction

**Brand Development** is the process of creating and strengthening a brand, including defining the brand's identity, voice, and values, with the goal to build brand awareness, establish brand loyalty, and differentiate from competitors.

## MARKETING

### Why Marketing Strategy

A marketing strategy is essential for identifying your target audience and effectively reaching them with tailored messages that resonate. It helps allocate resources efficiently, ensuring maximum return on investment and sustained business growth.

Before coming up with a marketing strategy, it's important to take a close look at your competitors and understand the market dynamics (See **Effective Market Research**)

### MARKETING MIX - The seven  's of Marketing

**Product**

*What are you offering?*

It can be a physical product, digital item, service, event or experience. Curate the key features of your product and define what makes it unique in your market.

**Price**

*What are you charging for your product?*

Calculate this by determining your net cost of goods and then adding on an additional amount to meet your desired profit margin.

**Place**

*Where do you sell your goods?*

For example, you may have a brick-and-mortar store or an e-commerce platform. Where you sell determines where and how you market your product.

**Promotion**

*How do you promote your products?*

This usually involves a mix of various marketing strategies, including paid advertising, content marketing, social media marketing, and more.

**People**

*Who delivers and supports your product?*

Identify the roles and qualities that represent your brand, ensuring every team member provides consistent, excellent service. Training and development are key to keeping consumer interactions aligned with your values.

**Process**

*What steps are involved in delivering your product or service?*

Describe the consumer journey from first interaction to delivery, highlighting unique processes that ensure a seamless experience. Emphasize efficiency improvements that enhance consumer satisfaction at each stage.

**Physical evidence**

*What tangible elements reinforce your brand's promise?*

Showcase the physical or digital touchpoints that build trust and reinforce your brand's quality. Every element, from packaging to digital presence, should reflect your commitment to a consistent, memorable consumer experience.

## Marketing Strategy

Creating a thoughtful and effective marketing strategy involves several key steps:

✓ **Identify Goals**

Establish both long-term (e.g., sales) and short-term (e.g., increasing engagement, generating leads) goals. These smaller goals provide measurable benchmarks for your marketing plan.

✓ **Create a Consumer Profile**

Develop a detailed profile of your ideal consumer, including who they are, their interests, problems they want to solve, obstacles they face, competitor solutions they consider, and preferred media channels (See **Effective Market Research**). Tailor your marketing channels to where your audience is most likely to engage.

✓ **Develop a Message**

Craft a message that addresses your consumers' problems and positions your product or service as the best solution. Differentiate your offering from competitors to highlight its unique benefits.

✓ **Define Your Budget**

Determine your budget to decide how to distribute your messaging. Options include purchasing advertising, working with influencers, aiming for organic social media engagement, or sending press releases.

✓ **Select Your Channels**

Choose the appropriate marketing channels based on where your consumers are most active and what types of media they trust. Options range from blog posts and social media to paid ads and traditional media.

✓ **Track Measurable Benchmarks**

Set clear, measurable metrics to evaluate the success of your marketing efforts. Possible metrics include new leads, consumer signups, revenue, social media followers, and consumer retention. Choose metrics that align with your campaign goals and business type.

## Benefits of Marketing

+ **Increases Sales:** Marketing can significantly boost your sales by showcasing your products to your target audience, increasing the likelihood of purchases.

+ **Curates a Stellar Reputation:** Effective marketing, particularly on social media, can establish your brand as reputable by highlighting excellent consumer service and engaging content.

+ **Builds Brand Awareness:** Frequent advertising helps your brand stay in consumers' minds, making them more likely to remember and choose your brand when making purchases.

+ **Educates Consumers:** Marketing can inform consumers about your products or services, helping them understand how these can improve their lives.

+ **Supports Business Growth:** Increased brand visibility and consumer base through marketing can facilitate business expansion, potentially transforming a small business into a larger one.

## Marketing Best Practices

+ **Consistency**: Maintain a consistent message and branding across all marketing channels
+ **Engagement**: Actively engage with your audience through social media, email, and other channels
+ **Innovation**: Continuously seek new ways to reach and engage your audience
+ **Analysis**: Regularly analyze your marketing efforts to identify what works and what doesn't, and adjust your strategy accordingly
+ **Consumer Focus**: Always keep the needs and preferences of your consumers at the forefront of your marketing efforts

# BRAND DEVELOPMENT


## Key Components

1. **Brand Identity**: Define your brand's visual elements, such as logo, colours, and typography, to create a cohesive and recognizable look.
2. **Brand Voice and Messaging**: Establish a consistent tone and style for your brand's communication to resonate with your audience.
3. **Brand Positioning**: Determine how you want your brand to be perceived in the market relative to competitors, and communicate this positioning through your marketing efforts.

## Common Pitfalls

➢ **Undefined Brand Identity**

Without a clear brand identity, it's difficult to differentiate from competitors and build a loyal consumer base.

Solution: Define your brand's mission, values, and unique selling propositions (USPs).

➢ **Inconsistent Messaging**

Inconsistent messaging can confuse consumers and weaken brand recognition.

Solution: Ensure all communications are aligned with your brand's voice and values.

➢ **Neglecting Consumer Experience**

A poor consumer experience can damage your brand's reputation and consumer loyalty.

Solution: Focus on providing excellent consumer service and addressing consumer feedback promptly.

- **Ignoring Brand Loyalty**

Failing to foster brand loyalty can result in a high consumer churn rate.

Solution: Develop loyalty programs and engage with your consumers regularly to build long-term relationships.

- **Lack of Adaptability**

Sticking rigidly to your brand strategy without adapting to market changes can hinder growth.

Solution: Be open to evolving your brand strategy based on market trends and consumer feedback.

## For more detailed guides and examples, refer to the following resources:

[19] How to use the 7Ps Marketing Mix

[20] 15 Of Marketing's Most Influential Books

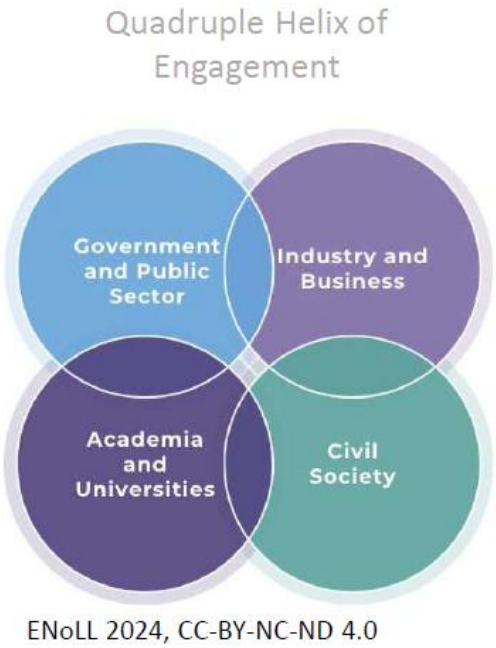
[21] How Brand Building and Performance Marketing Can Work Together

[22] The consumer decision journey

# 10 Annex V: Training Material for #5 Setting up a Living Lab

## Setting up a Living Labs

A Living Lab (LL) is an innovative concept that fosters co-creation and user-driven innovation. It involves real-life, multi-stakeholder environments from quadruple helix (QH) where public and private actors – such as businesses, governments, research organisations, and citizens – collaborate to design, test, and validate solutions in real-world settings. The main objective of LL is to accelerate the development of new products, services, and technologies that address societal challenges, including sustainability, social inclusion, and innovation. Below is an overview of key elements of Living Labs, their benefits, and how they contribute to building a sustainable and safe food system.




### LIVING LAB DEFINITION

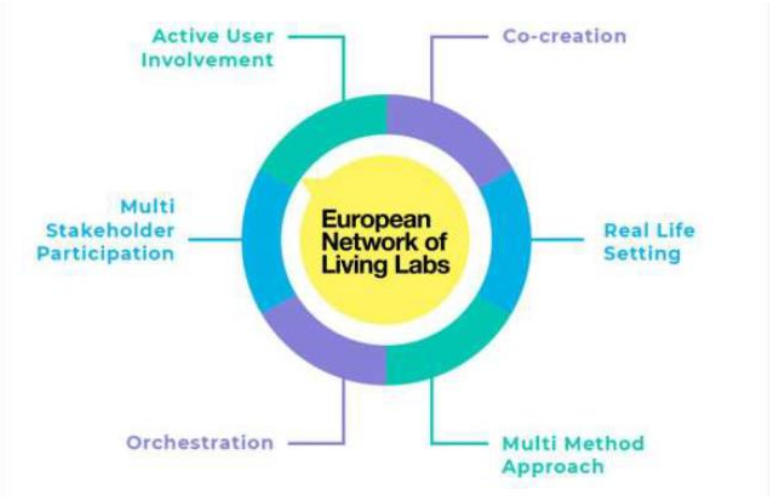
European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL) definition of LL:

"LLs are open innovation ecosystems in real-life environments, based on a systematic user co-creation approach that integrates research and innovation activities in communities, placing citizens at the centre of innovation."

The term LL emphasises its nature as a dynamic and evolving space where stakeholders, including end-users, actively participate throughout the innovation process. LL aims to bridge the gap between research and market application by engaging users early in development to ensure that solutions meet real-life needs. It can also be said that LL operates as an intermediary among citizens, research organisations, companies, and government agencies for joint-value co-creation, rapid prototyping, or scaling up innovation and business.

## SIX KEY PRINCIPLES

- ✓ **Active User**: Involvement: Involving the users in the entire innovation cycle, from design to implementation and evaluation. Ensuring their feedback is captured and implemented.
- ✓ **Co-Creation**: Working with all stakeholders to co-create practical and viable solutions in addressing the needs of the community or sector.
- ✓ **Multi-Stakeholder Participation**: Involve stakeholders from the 4H model and take a holistic view of society.
- ✓ **Real-Life Setting**: Testing solutions in a real-life setting to better understand how they perform in everyday conditions.
- ✓ **Orchestration**: The LL operates as the orchestrator within the ecosystem to connect and partner with relevant stakeholders.
- ✓ **Multi-Method Approach**: Activities are problem-driven. The methodological approach is selected based on the expected outcomes of the activity and the stakeholders who need to be involved.



## STRUCTURE AND KEY COMPONENTS OF LIVING LABS

**A typical LL is structured around several key components. These components work together to foster the co-creation process:**

- **User and Stakeholder Involvement**. At the heart of a LL are the users – whether consumers, citizens, or businesses – who actively participate in designing, testing, and evaluating products and services. Stakeholders from different sectors contribute knowledge, technology, and resources to support the innovation process.
- **Infrastructure and Resources**: This includes physical and digital infrastructures where experimentation and innovation can occur in real-life conditions.
- **Innovation Ecosystem**: LL create ecosystems that bring together a range of 4H stakeholders to work collaboratively in a co-design process.
- **Feedback Mechanisms**: Regular interaction and feedback loops between users and other stakeholders are essential for evaluating and refining innovations. This ensures that the end solution aligns with the users' needs and expectations.

## THREE-LAYERD MODEL

A Living-Lab focuses on

1) A well-structured organisation on the macro level
2) With living lab projects in the meso level
3) Consisting of co-created activities in the micro level

## TYPES OF LIVING LABS

- **Urban LL:** Focused on sustainable urban development and smart city solutions, addressing challenges such as energy efficiency, waste management, mobility, and public services.
- **Agricultural (Food) LL:** Addressing food (agricultural) sustainability, food systems, and rural development. These LL test new farming practices, technologies, and supply chain innovations, including food products.
- **Health and Social Care LL:** Dedicated to improving healthcare delivery and social services, these LL test innovations such as digital health tools, telemedicine, and eldercare technologies.
- **Circular Economy LL:** Focus on sustainability and waste reduction, testing circular economy models for recycling, reusing, and reducing waste.

## BENEFITS OF LIVING LABS

LL offer multiple benefits for businesses, public authorities, researchers, and citizens:

- **Accelerated Innovation:** By testing solutions in real-life environments, LL helps speed up the innovation cycle, moving ideas from research to market faster.
- **Real-life Testing:** Testing innovations in real-life settings allows for better evaluation of practical challenges, feasibility and market readiness.
- **User-Centred Design**: The active involvement of users ensures that innovations are more aligned with their needs and preferences, increasing the likelihood of success in the market.
- **Cross-Sector Collaboration**: LL foster collaboration across multiple sectors, leading to more holistic solutions to complex problems.
- **Knowledge Sharing.** They promote open innovation and knowledge-sharing among stakeholders, accelerating learning and driving more effective solutions.

## CHALLENGES IN LIVING LABS

Despite their benefits, LL faces several challenges:

- **Funding and Sustainability**: Securing long-term financing and ensuring the sustainability of LL can be difficult, especially when relying on multiple stakeholders with different interests.
- **Coordination and Management**: Managing a LL involves coordinating multiple stakeholders with diverse objectives, complicating decision-making and project execution.
- **Scalability**: Scaling solutions tested in a LL from small-scale trials to broader implementation can be challenging, particularly when solutions need to be adapted to different contexts.
- **User Engagement**: Ensuring active and continuous user engagement can be difficult, especially if participants do not see immediate benefits or if their feedback is not incorporated into the process.


## LIVING LABS IN PRACTICE: EXAMPLES

**Smart Cities**. The Amsterdam LL focuses on creating a more sustainable and efficient urban environment. It includes testing smart traffic management systems, energy-saving technologies and public transportation solutions with the active involvement of residents.

**Sustainable Food Production.** The Green Point LL in Slovenia engages farmers, food producers, the HoReCa sector, and consumers to co-create solutions for healthy, local and sustainable food. The LL focuses on testing new farming techniques, circular economy practices, and new technology across the supply chain.

**Healthcare.** The Helsinki LL is exploring digital health innovations that improve the delivery of healthcare services and make them more accessible to underserved populations. This includes testing telehealth platforms and wearable health devices.

For more LL, you can look at the ENoLL Member Catalogue.

## For more detailed guides and examples, refer to the following organisations and resources:

[23] ENoLL Knowledge Hub

[24] Bridging the gap between open and user innovation? Exploring the value of Living Labs as a means to structure user contribution and manage distributed innovation processes

[25] The case of the Energy Living Lab: A platform for supporting energy transition through citizen engagement and co-creation

# 11 Annex VI: Training Material for #6 Successful Presentation and Pitch Creation for Attracting Investment

# Successful Presentation and Pitch Creation for Attracting Investment

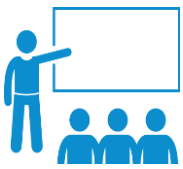
## What is an Investment Pitch

An **investment pitch** is a structured presentation designed to persuade investors to fund your business or project. Its purpose is to communicate the value proposition, business model, and growth potential to secure funding.

## Why Business Pitches Are Important

Business pitches are crucial for advancing work goals and career growth for employees, entrepreneurs, and organization leaders. Effective communication and the ability to sell ideas through pitches can mean the difference between achieving these goals and remaining stagnant. By mastering the art of pitching, individuals can effectively communicate their ideas, gain support, and drive their careers and businesses forward.

## 4 Types of Pitches

| | |
|---|---|
|  | **Sales Pitch:**<br>Purpose: Persuade a client to purchase a product or service.<br>Content: Outlines the costs and benefits.<br>*Example: Door-to-door salesperson or retailer explaining the value of their offering* |
|  | **Business Pitch:**<br>Purpose: Secure investment capital or fundraising.<br>Content: Detailed business plan of a startup or existing business.<br>*Example: An app developer seeking funds to design a new dating app, or a trucking business owner needing investment to buy more trucks and expand* |
|  | **Idea Pitch:**<br>Purpose: Sell a big-picture idea rather than a specific product or service.<br>Content: Benefits and implementation strategies of the idea.<br>*Example: Convincing a marketing team to explore a new social media platform* |
|  | **Elevator Pitch:**<br>Purpose: Spark interest in a very short time frame, typically about a minute.<br>Content: Brief overview to pique interest without telling the whole story.<br>*Example: A quick summary to grab someone's attention during an elevator ride* |

## Key Components of an Investment Pitch

### Executive Summary

A concise summary of your business, including mission, vision, and key highlights

### Problem Statement

Clearly define the problem your business addresses

Explain why this problem is significant and worth solving

### Solution

Explain how your product/service solves the problem

Unique Selling Proposition (USP): Highlight what makes your solution unique or superior

### Market Opportunity

Provide data on the total addressable market (TAM), serviceable available market (SAM), and serviceable obtainable market (SOM)

Show trends and forecasts indicating market growth

### Business Model

Explain revenue streams

Detail your pricing model and rationale

### Go-to-Market Strategy

Outline your strategy for reaching and acquiring customers

Describe your sales process and channels

### Traction and Milestones

Achievements: Highlight key milestones achieved (e.g., product launches, partnerships)

Metrics: Provide relevant metrics (e.g., user growth, revenue, customer retention)

### Competitive Analysis

Identify key competitors and their strengths/weaknesses

Explain how you differentiate from competitors

### Financial Projections

Provide 3-5-year financial projections, including revenue, expenses, and profit

Clearly state the assumptions behind your projections

### Team

Founders and Key Team Members - highlight the experience and expertise of your team

Mention any notable advisors or mentors

### Funding Ask

Amount - state the amount of funding you are seeking

Use of Funds - explain how you will use the investment to achieve your goals

### Closing and Call to Action

Recap key points and reiterate the value proposition

Clearly state what you want from the investors (e.g., a meeting, a commitment)

## Tips for a Successful Investment Pitch

- ✓ **Effective Storytelling:** Craft a narrative that connects emotionally with investors. Highlight personal anecdotes, customer success stories, or the founding journey to make the pitch memorable.
- ✓ **Understanding the Investor's Perspective:** Research potential investors to understand their interests and past investments. Tailor your pitch to align with their investment goals and values.

- ✓ **Designing Visually Appealing Presentations:** Use professional design tools to create clean, visually appealing slides. Ensure that graphics, charts, and images enhance understanding and engagement.
- ✓ **Preparing for Q&A:** Anticipate potential questions and prepare detailed, confident responses. This demonstrates thorough preparation and a deep understanding of your business.
- ✓ **Networking and Follow-up:** Engage with investors beyond the pitch. Build relationships through networking events and follow up with personalized messages and updates on your progress.

## Presentation Tips

- ✓ **Be Concise and Clear**: aim for 10-15 minutes, and use simple and clear language
- ✓ **Visuals and Storytelling**: use slides with visuals, and tell a compelling story to engage the audience
- ✓ **Practice and Rehearse**: Practice your pitch multiple times and seek feedback from mentors to refine your pitch
- ✓ **Confidence and Body Language**: Maintain eye contact, use natural gestures, and stand confidently

## Common Pitfalls

- \+ **Overloading Information**: Avoid excessive details that can overwhelm investors
- \+ **Ignoring Questions**: Be prepared to answer questions and address concerns
- \+ **Unrealistic Projections**: Ensure your financial projections are realistic and justifiable

## For more detailed guides and examples, refer to the following resources:

[26] 21 Startup Pitch Deck Examples
[27] How To Write a Pitch in 5 Steps
[28] How to pitch ideas: 8 tips to captivate any audience
[29] Business pitch: What is it and what kinds exist?
[30] 5 types of business pitches and must-have slides