



THE COMPLETE GUIDE

Your application process is losing you great startups.

A complete guide to accelerator application management software — how to fix the bottlenecks slowing down your review, scoring, and communication before the next cohort opens.

4

bottlenecks, named

5

capabilities that
replace your stack

7

questions for every
vendor

14


minutes, cover to
cover

CONTENTS

What's inside.

Five parts. One clear verdict on your current stack. Each section stands alone — jump to whichever matches the problem you're trying to solve this week.

01	The problem Why the accelerator workflow breaks generic tools at every seam	p. 03
02	The four bottlenecks Tracking · Review & scoring · Automation · Communication	p. 04
03	Why generic tools fail CRMs, form builders, spreadsheets — where each one breaks	p. 08
04	What purpose-built software does Five capabilities that replace your stack, not add to it	p. 09
05	How to evaluate your options Seven questions to ask every vendor — print and bring along	p. 10

**WHO THIS IS FOR**

Program managers and operators running accelerators or incubators with 50 to 500+ applications per cohort — and the directors who sign off on the tools they use.

HOW TO READ IT

Left-to-right for the full diagnosis. Or jump to § 05 (p. 10) and work backward if you're already evaluating.

Most accelerators are running a complex operation on tools built for something else.

Spreadsheets. Email chains. A Notion doc someone set up two cohorts ago that nobody fully trusts anymore.

The workflow itself isn't the problem. The tools are.

Startup accelerator application management software exists precisely because the accelerator workflow — intake, review, scoring, selection, communication, reporting — is specific enough that generic tools break down at every seam.

THE FRANKENSTACK

A common operator setup:

● Typeform	Intake
● Google Sheets	Tracking
● Gmail threads	Reviewer scoring
● Mailchimp	Applicant comms
● Notion	"Source of truth"
● Zapier	Holding it together

None of these tools knows what a cohort is. None knows what a rubric is. You're doing the integration work, every week.



IN ONE SENTENCE

Generic tools can approximate parts of the accelerator workflow. They can't handle the whole thing without breaking.

You don't actually know where anyone stands.

When your pipeline lives in a spreadsheet, your pipeline is always out of date.

Every reviewer sees a different version. Every status check requires someone to manually reconcile rows.

At 50 applications it's annoying. At 300 it's a liability — a deadline missed because a status was out of date, a founder ghosted because their row got filtered out, a partner's score lost in a shared-editor conflict.

The cost isn't the tool. It's the hours of reconciliation wrapped around it, every single cohort week.

applications_cohort12_FINAL_v4.xlsx ● Out of sync			
2	Aria Systems	Applied	✓
3	Volta Labs	Review	
4	Northwind	Review	
5	Ferrous	???	!
6	Greenlight	Declined?	?
7	Pivot Medical	Accepted	✓

BY THE NUMBERS

6–8h per cohort week

Program managers at growing accelerators spend this much time just keeping their tracking system current. That's time not spent on applicants.

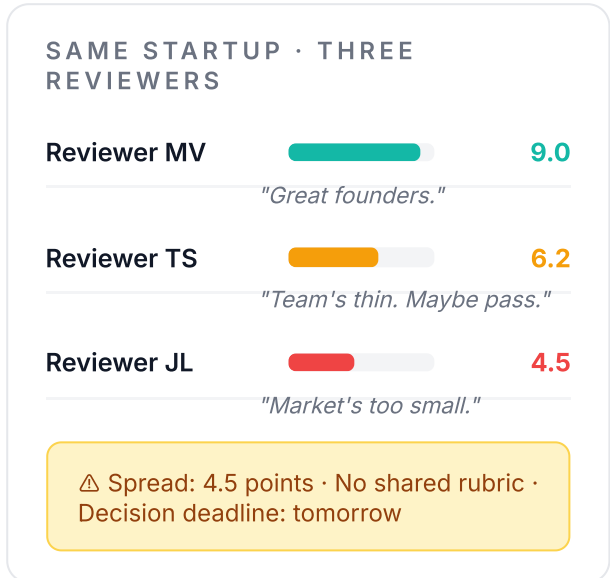
02

Inconsistency that corrupts your decisions.

When reviewers use different mental frameworks, your selection reflects whoever was most opinionated — not which startups were strongest.

Without a standardized rubric, scoring is noise. Without automated reminders, scoring is also slow: chasing evaluations over email adds days you don't have.

The committee walks into selection with a debate instead of data — and the loudest voice wins. That's not a selection process; that's a personality contest with a spreadsheet on top.



BEFORE · AFTER



Moving from ad-hoc email-based review to structured reviewer workflows cuts scoring lag by an order of magnitude.

The hidden tax on your team's time.

Status update emails. Reviewer reassignments. Follow-ups on incomplete applications. Stakeholder reports.

None of it is strategic work — all of it is necessary — and almost all of it is repeatable. That means it can be automated.

The operators running the most efficient programs aren't working harder. They've removed the friction between every decision and its next action.

One-time logic. Ongoing leverage.

TODAY'S AUTOMATION LOG

09:04	Application received ● → Acknowledgment sent
09:04	Incomplete fields detected ● → Reminder scheduled
14:02	Stage advanced ● → Next-round invite triggered
16:30	Review closed ● → Summary generated
18:45	Score below cutoff ● → Kind rejection drafted

CALLOUT

“Every manual touchpoint in your process is a delay waiting to happen.”

The experience that defines your reputation.

Applicants talk. A slow, inconsistent comms experience signals organizational dysfunction. A personalized, timely one signals a program worth joining.

The challenge: you can write a thoughtful rejection for 10 applicants. You can't do it manually for 400.

Templated communication with dynamic fields solves this — every applicant gets a response that feels considered, regardless of volume.

Your comms aren't a footer at the end of your funnel. They are the funnel, from the applicant's side of the screen.

TEMPLATE · REJECTION (CONSIDERED)

Hi `{first_name}`,

Thank you for applying to `{cohort_name}` with `{company_name}`. After full review from `{reviewer_count}` partners, we won't be moving forward this cycle.

Specifically:

`{rubric_weakest_area}`. We thought your work on `{rubric_strongest_area}` was a genuine highlight.

— `{program_director}`

412 recipients · each personalized with rubric-specific feedback






CALLOUT

“Your communication process is part of your brand, whether you designed it that way or not.”

§ 03 — WHY GENERIC TOOLS FAIL

Each tool in your stack was built for somebody else's job.

That's why nothing quite fits — and why you're the glue.

TOOL	BUILT FOR	WHERE IT BREAKS
 Salesforce / HubSpot	Sales pipelines	✗ No reviewer workflows, no scoring rubrics, no cohort model
 Typeform / Google Forms	Application intake	✗ Nothing after submission
 Airtable	Flexible data management	✗ Every team builds differently; none of it scales
 Notion	Internal documentation	✗ No applicant-facing features
 Spreadsheets	Anything, badly	✗ No automation, no real-time sync, no role-based access

THE CORE ISSUE



Accelerator application management is a specific workflow with specific roles, specific stages, and specific outputs. Generic tools can approximate parts of it. They can't handle the whole thing without breaking.

§ 04 WHAT PURPOSE-BUILT SOFTWARE DOES

Five capabilities that replace your stack — not add to it.

This is the job-to-be-done, collapsed to one platform.

01 Live pipeline tracking

Every applicant, every status, every reviewer assignment — visible in real time. No reconciliation. No version conflicts.

02 Structured reviewer workflows

Standardized rubrics. Automated reminders. Consolidated scoring. Your committee walks into selection with data, not a debate.

03 Workflow automation

Application received → acknowledgment sent. Stage advanced → next invite triggered. Review closed → summary generated. You set the logic once.

04 Communication at scale

Templated messages with dynamic fields for every stage — acknowledgments, status updates, rejections, acceptances. Personalized at volume.

05 Reporting that writes itself

Dashboard views for your team. Exportable reports for your funders. Stakeholder update in three clicks, not three hours.

§ 05 — HOW TO EVALUATE YOUR OPTIONS

Seven questions to ask every vendor.

Bring this page to the demo. If you can't get a clean answer to each one in a 30-minute call, keep looking.

01	<input type="checkbox"/>	Is it built natively for accelerators, or adapted from something else?
02	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it replace your current stack, or add another tool to it?
03	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can it handle your volume — this cohort and the next three?
04	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it support multiple programs under one account?
05	<input type="checkbox"/>	What does setup actually require — days or months?
06	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can non-technical staff configure and manage it?
07	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it generate the reports your funders and board need?

BONUS · THE SNIFF TEST

Ask to see the product configured for *your* cohort during the demo — not a generic walkthrough. The answer to "can we see our rubric entered right now?" tells you more than any feature matrix.

RED FLAGS

Setup quoted in months. "Professional services" required for basic changes. Custom-dev needed to adjust a rubric. A reference call with a non-accelerator customer.



SEE IT ON YOUR OWN DATA

See how AcceleratorApp handles your specific program setup.

AcceleratorApp is the only platform built natively for the accelerator and incubator workflow — not adapted from a CRM, form builder, or project management tool. Book a 30-minute demo.

Book a demo →

www.acceleratorapp.co/en/demo/

WHAT THE CALL COVERS

- Your current stack & volume
- Your cohort calendar
- Custom intake & rubric setup
- Reviewer workflow walkthrough
- A quote for your next cohort

WHY OPERATORS SWITCH

72%

Average efficiency gain reported by accelerators after consolidating onto AcceleratorApp. 300+ programs, worldwide.