



AcceleratorApp
Software for Accelerator & Incubators

2026 EDITION

The Startup Community Builder's Guide

From community to structured programs, on one platform

A practical guide for ecosystem builders running competitions, mentorship, and events, and growing into structured programs without switching tools.

Community builders run on a patchwork of disconnected tools.

The community lives in Slack or a Facebook group. The competition runs on a Google Form. Mentors are coordinated by email. Events go through Eventbrite. The annual impact report is built in a spreadsheet. None of it connects, and the community builder is the connective tissue.

This guide covers running an ecosystem with structure, and growing from community into structured programs without buying a new tool every time.

“None of it connects, and the community builder is the connective tissue.”

WHAT THIS COVERS

Competition design, mentor coordination, event management, community engagement, growing into structured programs, and outcome tracking. Each section pairs the principle with a short checklist you can act on right away.

HOW TO READ THIS GUIDE

The sections follow how a community usually grows: a first competition, then mentorship, then events, then the community itself, and eventually structured programs on top of all of it. Read it in order if you are early, or jump to the section for whatever you are setting up next.

A startup competition is the most common entry point into structured programming.

A competition is where most communities first feel the limits of free tools. It works for the first cohort, then the spreadsheet of applicants gets unwieldy, judging emails pile up, and results go out by hand. Structuring it from the start is what lets the next competition be bigger, not harder.

COMPETITION CHECKLIST

- ☐ Build a structured intake form with a public URL
- ☐ Set eligibility criteria that screen automatically
- ☐ Configure judging with a scoring rubric
- ☐ Communicate results through the platform

STRUCTURED INTAKE SCALES

A competition managed through a Google Form and a spreadsheet hits a ceiling fast. Structured intake scales. The same setup that runs your first 30 applicants runs your next 300 without the manual sorting that breaks at volume.

JUDGING THAT FOUNDERS TRUST

A scoring rubric does two things: it makes judging consistent across reviewers, and it gives you a defensible answer when a founder asks why they did not advance. Communicating results through the platform keeps that fair and timely, instead of leaving applicants waiting on an email someone forgot to send.

Mentor coordination is where community goodwill meets operational reality.

Mentors volunteer their time because they believe in the community. The fastest way to lose them is to make every session a chain of scheduling emails. Letting mentors and members coordinate directly keeps that goodwill intact and takes the community builder out of the middle.

MENTOR CHECKLIST

- ☐ Build a mentor pool with expertise tags and availability
- ☐ Let members request sessions directly
- ☐ Automate confirmations and reminders
- ☐ Capture session notes in the platform

STEP OUT OF THE MIDDLE

When mentors set their own availability and members book directly, the community builder stops being the scheduling intermediary. Your time goes back into growing the community instead of arranging calendars one message at a time.

KEEP THE KNOWLEDGE

Session notes captured in the platform mean the value of a mentor conversation does not vanish the moment it ends. The next mentor can see what was already covered, and you can see which members are engaged and which mentors are carrying the load, all from the same record.

Events are the heartbeat of a community. They should connect to everything else.

Workshops, pitch nights, and hackathons are where a community comes to life. But when the attendance data sits in a separate events tool, it stays just a headcount. Connected to member profiles, it becomes a signal of who is engaged and ready for what comes next.

EVENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Create and manage workshops, pitch nights, and hackathons in the platform
- ☐ Send invitations and track RSVPs and attendance
- ☐ Connect event attendance to member profiles
- ☐ Plan follow-up from event engagement

KEEP ATTENDANCE CONNECTED

Event attendance data that lives in Eventbrite, disconnected from your startup records, is a missed signal. Keep it connected. A founder who shows up to three workshops in a month is telling you they are ready for more.

FROM ATTENDANCE TO FOLLOW-UP

The value of an event is often in what happens after it. When attendance flows into member profiles, follow-up becomes deliberate: an invitation to the next competition, a mentor match, a nudge toward a program. The event stops being a one-off and becomes a step in a relationship.

The community itself is an asset worth managing intentionally.

A chat channel is not a community strategy. The connections between members, the introductions that lead to co-founders and customers, the alumni who come back to mentor: these are the real value, and they grow faster when you support them on purpose rather than hoping they happen.

COMMUNITY CHECKLIST

- ☐ Give members a space to connect and share resources
- ☐ Facilitate peer introductions
- ☐ Keep alumni connected to active members
- ☐ Surface engaged members for program opportunities

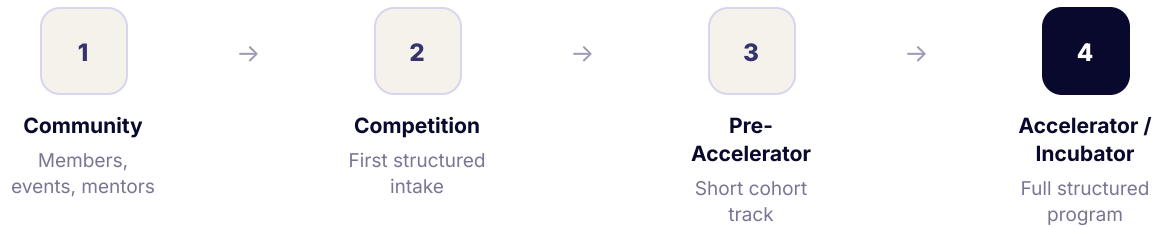
PEER CONNECTION IS THE DRAW

Peer connection is one of the most cited reasons founders value a community. Support it intentionally, not just through a chat channel. Deliberate introductions and an active alumni network are what turn members into advocates.

ENGAGEMENT IS YOUR PIPELINE

The members who show up, post resources, and help others are your next program participants and your future mentors. Surfacing them means you can offer the right opportunity at the right moment, instead of broadcasting to everyone and hoping the right person notices.

The transition from community to structured program should not require a new tool.



GROWTH CHECKLIST

- ☐ Start with a competition or mentorship track
- ☐ Add a pre-accelerator when the community is ready
- ☐ Layer a full accelerator or incubator as you grow
- ☐ Keep members and history in one place across all of it

ADD A CONFIG, NOT A PLATFORM

When your community is ready for its first accelerator, you should add a program configuration, not migrate to a new platform. The members, the mentors, and the history carry forward, so each new program starts with everything the community already built.

Funders and partners want to know what the ecosystem produced.

Your funding, your partnerships, and your next grant all rest on being able to show impact. The data exists already in everything you run, but if it is scattered across five tools, the annual report becomes a reconstruction project instead of a report.

OUTCOME CHECKLIST

- ☐ Track companies supported, mentor hours, and events run
- ☐ Track startup outcomes (funding, revenue, growth) over time
- ☐ Report to funders and partners from the dashboard

THE REPORT IS A DASHBOARD

The data exists across your activity. Keeping it in one platform means the annual impact report is a dashboard, not a reconstruction. When a funder asks what the ecosystem produced, you open a view rather than starting a week of data gathering.

WHAT ECOSYSTEM BUILDERS REPORT

Companies supported

Mentor hours delivered

Events run

Members active

Funding raised by alumni

Jobs created

Revenue growth over time

Every new tool is a new silo. Consolidation is the lever.

Each tool you add to run a new activity comes with its own login, its own data, and its own disconnect from everything else. The cost is rarely the subscription. It is the hours spent moving data between tools and the signals lost in the gaps between them.

CONSOLIDATION CHECKLIST

- ☐ Run competitions, mentorship, events, and community on one platform
- ☐ Avoid per-applicant pricing that punishes growth
- ☐ Keep program data and community data connected

THE HIDDEN TAX

Tool sprawl is the hidden tax on a growing community. One platform that grows with you removes it. The connective work you do by hand today is work a single connected system does for you.

WATCH THE PRICING MODEL

Per-applicant pricing turns success into a penalty: the more your community grows, the more a bigger competition costs you. A flat model lets you run the largest program you can attract without the budget pushing back against your own growth.

Configure once. Add programs as you grow.

The setup you build for your community is not a one-time cost you pay again with each new activity. The mentor pool, the event templates, the community structure all carry forward, and new programs layer on top of what is already there.

WHAT TO SAVE AND REUSE

- ☐ Save community structure, mentor pool, and event templates
- ☐ Add new program types as configurations
- ☐ Keep all data and history in one place

SETUP GROWS WITH YOU

The setup grows with your ambitions instead of restarting with each new program. The community you built becomes the foundation every future program stands on, rather than something you rebuild each time you expand.

ONE RECORD, MANY PROGRAMS

Because members and history live in one place, a founder who entered through a competition, attended your events, and worked with a mentor arrives at your accelerator with all of that context intact. You are never starting from a blank profile for someone the community already knows.

AcceleratorApp is a program management platform trusted by 200+ organizations across 6 continents, including Start It @KBC and MBC Africa.

It runs community programs and structured programs on one platform: competition intake, mentor coordination, event management, community engagement, AI application scoring, AI applicant coaching, AI reporting, and outcome tracking.

HIGHLIGHTS

700,000+ applications processed

ISO 27001 certified

GDPR compliant

Live in 1 to 2 weeks

Full migration included

From \$499 per month

No per-applicant fees

GET STARTED

Book a demo: acceleratorapp.co/en/demo

See pricing: acceleratorapp.co/en/pricing

Contact: support@acceleratorapp.co

ONE PLATFORM, EVERY STAGE

- Competition intake with structured forms and auto-screening
- Mentor pools with direct booking and session notes
- Event management connected to member profiles
- Community space with peer introductions and alumni
- Structured programs added as configurations, not migrations
- AI application scoring, applicant coaching, and reporting
- Outcome tracking for funder and partner reporting
- Flat pricing with no per-applicant fees

From a first competition to a full accelerator, your community and your programs run on one platform, so you stop being the connective tissue between disconnected tools.



AcceleratorApp
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Ready to run your community and your programs on one platform?

A 30-minute demo tailored to your community,
your competitions, and where you want to grow.

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