NITI Aayog

AIM
ATAL INNOVATION MISSION
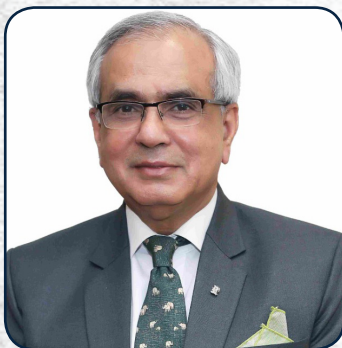
OPERATIONS MANUAL

ATAL COMMUNITY INNOVATION CENTRE

Message from Vice Chairman

As India embarks on an exciting journey of innovation, it is important to encompass the vivid demographic dividend from all parts of the country. Inclusive growth can become a reality when innovation and brewing entrepreneurs come from different regions in the country irrespective of the geographic, social, and cultural barriers. Bridging this gap in India's innovation trajectory would require extending what was offered to urban innovators to their rural counterparts - support, promotion, and incubation. Scaling up the efforts to support entrepreneurship and startup ecosystem in rural India can unveil the potential of youth in creating sustainable solutions and self-employment opportunities for all.

To support this vision of inclusive and sustainable innovations in India, the Government of India under its flagship program - Atal Innovation Mission, launched Atal Community Innovation Centre (ACIC), a novel initiative focussing on supporting young innovators and existing entrepreneurs throughout their innovation expedition. Atal Innovation Mission through Atal Community Innovation Centres is creating a vibrant ecosystem of community incubators across Tier 2 & 3 cities in India. These incubators are dedicated to nurturing not just start-ups but individual innovators with vibrant business ideas in their pursuit to become scalable, sustainable, and global enterprises.

I commend the AIM team for coming up with the Operations Manual highlighting different pillars required to build a successful Community Innovation Centre. This Manual serves as a guide for innovation centres to understand various possibilities they can follow to achieve the objectives of Atal Community Innovation Centre. My heartiest congratulations to the AIM team for coming a long way in this journey and wishing them the best as they continue to work with dedication and positive energy.

Dr. Rajiv Kumar
(Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog)

Message from CEO
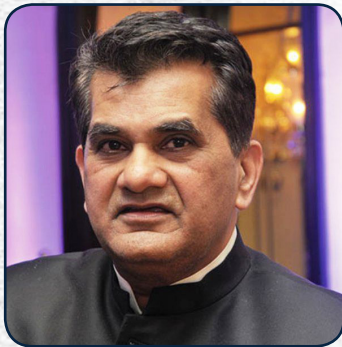
Atal Innovation Mission, the flagship program of NITI Aayog has been establishing Atal Community Innovation Centres (ACICs) across Tier 2 & 3 cities in India. The idea behind creating these ACICs is to promote the benefits of technology-led innovation to the underserved/unserved regions of India. With a target of 50+ ACIC's across India, 11 ACICs have been operationalized till date. The motivation is to provide equitable opportunities to young community innovators through infrastructural, financial, and learning support to ideate and design novel solutions for upliftment and sustainable transformation of their community.

Technology has changed the way that businesses operate today. Today, India has the 3rd largest startup ecosystem with over 60,000 recognized startups and the role of incubators is crucial to promote the startups and entrepreneurial culture across the country by providing opportunities to ideate and innovate. The Atal Community Innovation Centres will provide a robust mechanism to support the innovators in the underserved regions with mentorship, identification, and partnership facilitation, building Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) centric solutions to community problems, and a complete hand-holding process to create a successful business from an ingenious idea.

I appreciate the AIM team for coming up with the Operations Manual as a toolkit for any organisation with a vision to become an ACIC. This manual is a driving step to emulate guidelines helping ACICs to work to their full potential. The emphasis on solving community problems through user-centric innovation and targeting SDGs has been promoted in the manual making it an inclusive and socially conscious initiative. My best wishes to the entire team for their extensive work and contribution in building this manual.

Shri Amitabh Kant
(Chief Executive Officer, NITI Aayog)

Message from Mission Director

Designing the innovation ecosystem that harnesses the creative potential of our communities is key to India's progress in the years to come. A vital component of such an ecosystem is a community innovation centre, one where a community innovator, irrespective of their social, economic, or educational background, will feel welcomed and be empowered. This Operations Manual is meant to mobilize such centres.

In order to promote the benefits of technology, service, and process led innovation across all parts of India irrespective of the physical, social or cultural barriers, Atal Innovation Mission is setting up Atal Community Innovation Centres (ACICs) across underserved/ unserved regions of India. ACIC especially aims to provide scalable solutions to societal problems by targeting Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs). The idea is to bring out innovations by, for with, and in the community through directional infrastructural, financial, and learning support to ideate and design novel solutions for the sustainable transformation of their community.

Operations Manual – a toolkit for innovation centres, is not just developed keeping in mind ACICs but can serve any institution or organisation willing to build a robust community incubation centre. The Manual is developed in a very thoughtfully, keeping in mind the six most essential pillars: Infrastructure, People, Network, Knowledge, Finance, Monitoring and Feedback. Together, they provide a holistic recipe for running a successful and sustainable community innovation centre encompassing the entrepreneurial journey of an innovator as well.

My heartiest congratulations to the ACIC team for making this manual available to the world. I wish that this toolkit renders profound support to aspiring community innovation centres.

Dr. Chintan Vaishnav
(Mission Director, Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog)

Contents

Overview

Innovation plays a key role in the economic development of any nation. Science Technology & Innovation have been responsible for rapid economic growth of developed nations. To promote exponential economic growth in India, Government of India is taking major steps to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. One such initiative is the Atal Innovation Mission, a mission to transform the nation of job seekers to a nation of researchers, innovators, and job creators.
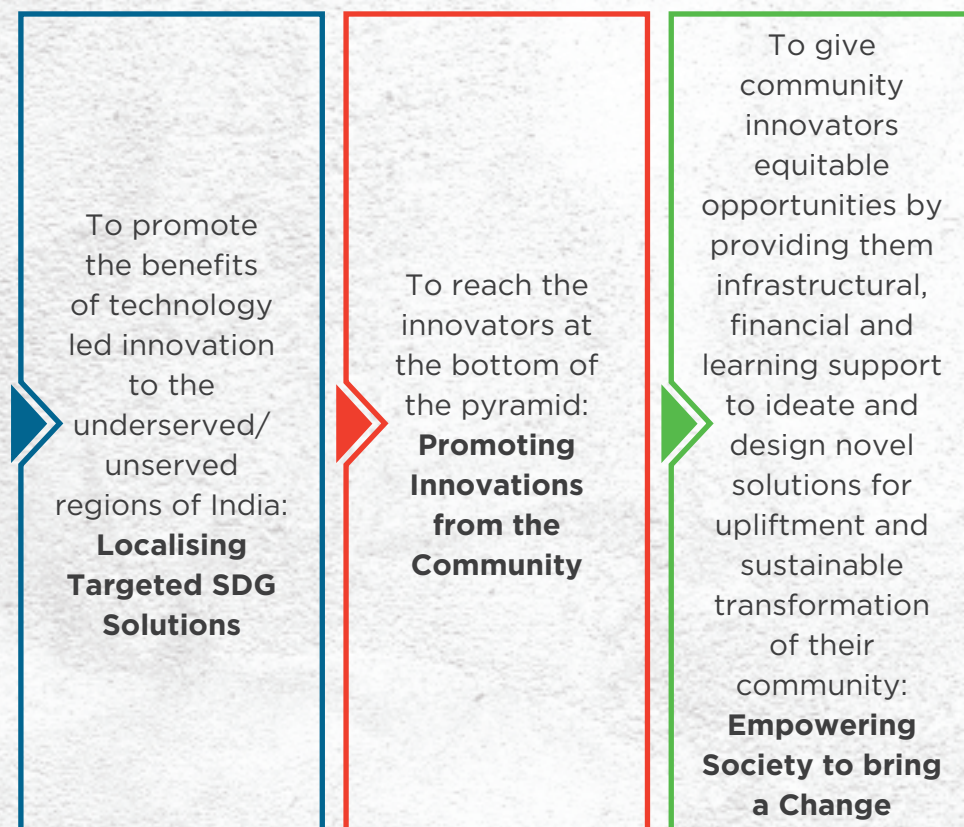
AIM's objective is to develop new programs and policies for fostering innovation in different sectors of the economy, provide platform and collaboration opportunities for different stakeholders, create awareness, and create an umbrella structure to oversee the innovation economy of the country. **Atal Tinkering Labs**, first initiative of AIM, have worked to fortify the future of India by giving the infrastructure to over 9000+ schools; enabling students to have access to and tinker with innovative tools and technologies and thus creating a problem-solving mind set. To support the ecosystem for startups and entrepreneurs, 68 **Atal Incubation Centres (AICs)** have been established till date to foster and nurture world class startups. To create innovations across sectors, **Atal New India Challenges (ANIC)** challenges have been launched to create services and product innovations having national socio-economic impact while **ARISE** has been launched to promote innovation in a phased manner in the MSME/Start-up sector.

While all these initiatives provide more than enough support to the entrepreneurship ecosystem of India, these still do not capture one important demographic strata of India – rural population. To promote the benefits of technology led innovation to the underserved/unserved regions of India, 50+ **Atal Community Innovation Centres** are to be established in the next 2 years via a unique public private partnership. ACIC especially aims to provide scalable solutions to societal problems in underserved areas of India by targeting Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs). The idea is to bring out innovations by, for and in the community by providing infrastructural, financial, and learning support to innovators for ideating and designing novel solutions for upliftment and sustainable transformation of their community.

Following are the objectives of the program:

To promote the benefits of technology led innovation to the underserved/ unserved regions of India: **Localising Targeted SDG Solutions**

To reach the innovators at the bottom of the pyramid: **Promoting Innovations from the Community**

To give community innovators equitable opportunities by providing them infrastructural, financial and learning support to ideate and design novel solutions for upliftment and sustainable transformation of their community: **Empowering Society to bring a Change**

This operational manual is an attempt to provide a **toolkit** to innovation centres to understand various possibilities they can follow to achieve the objectives of ACIC. In no condition should it be considered a mandate except when explicitly mentioned in ACIC guidelines or if it is a directive by the AIM team. Moreover, the activities and events presented in the manual are inexhaustive.

This manual is uniquely designed to capture various **pillars** required to run a successful innovation ecosystem encompassing the whole entrepreneurial journey. This manual starts off by understanding why ACIC was needed and further expounds on various key features which define an ACIC. Then, the manual expands on the pillars for building an innovation ecosystem and then further delves deeper into various activities under the mentioned pillars. In the end, an indicative pre-incubation model for ACIC has been delineated followed by how the journey of an innovator could be celebrated.

This operation manual is a toolkit to identify, perpetuate and disseminate community centric innovations.
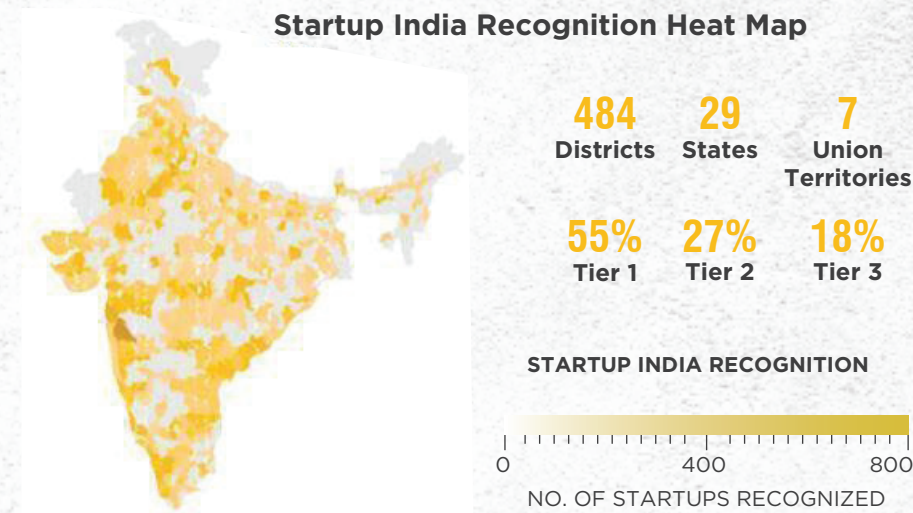
Part 1: Introducing ACIC

1.1 BACKGROUND

The startup culture in India is centric to the metropolitan cities. Populations in these regions get maximum exposure to different business ventures, funding opportunities and mentoring to upscale an idea. As per the State's Start-Up Ranking 2018 report by DPIIT [Fig 2], Tier 1 cities which include the business and industrial hotspots of Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai, constitute almost 55% of the currently recognized start-ups. This clearly shows the skewed startup penetration in India, with the supporting infrastructure for innovation like Incubation Centres rapidly developing in Tier I cities, creating a void in Tier II, Tier III and other less developed regions of the country. Thus, Atal Community Innovation Centre (ACIC) has been conceptualized with the main idea of bringing to focus the **unserved and underserved regions in India** in terms of idea generation, promotion of innovations and innovators at grassroots level. Focus geographies for setting up ACICs have been identified as:

- Tier II and Tier III cities

- North East, J&K and Ladakh region

- Aspirational Districts

- Rural and Tribal Areas

- Smart cities

- Underserved/unserved regions of Tier I cities

Startup India Recognition Heat Map

484	29	7
Districts	**States**	**Union Territories**
55%	27%	18%
Tier 1	**Tier 2**	**Tier 3**

STARTUP INDIA RECOGNITION

0   400   800

NO. OF STARTUPS RECOGNIZED

States' Start-Up Ranking 2018 report by DPIIT[1]

ACICs will drive innovations catering to **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** by specifically harnessing and nurturing novel solutions for upliftment and sustainable transformation of the community. The SDGs in the context of the local region will be the focus areas of the ACIC be it infrastructural needs, water sanitation and hygiene, health etc. The research about the needs of the community with regards to various SDG agendas and consciousness of the history and value system of people and things in the community brings forth the idea of **Localizing SDGs.** This means providing a framework for local development for achievement of the SDGs via the bottom-up approach. Recognizing these areas from where innovations and innovators need to be tapped is

1.   Source: https://www.startupindia.gov.in/content/dam/invest-india/compendium/Startup%20India%20-%20National%20report_Final%20Version_web.pdf

the first step in understanding the features assimilated for an ACIC. This understanding is incomplete without an element of **Social Consciousness** which deals with the awareness and knowledge about the society and its components, creating a more empathetic outlook. These components can be people, environment and objects. ACICs have been set up with a similar motivation to reflect and act upon ways of understanding the community and strive to build a more **inclusive ecosystem**.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

Having knowledge of the community history, values and problems faced by people will support the ACIC in achieving its output and outcomes of creating a local innovation ecosystem. The ACICs would nurture youth-led innovations by providing suitable infrastructure in terms of operating facilities, co-working space and makerspace labs, and financial support through the AIM grant fund of 2.5 crores. ACICs will also provide capacity building support through training, mentoring and learning platforms and networking connections through government, industry and corporate partnerships.

Knowledge of design methods and their integration into industry and government can help people articulate latent needs and find local solutions to these. Ever since the term was first coined around the 1950s, **design thinking** has come a long way in creating products, processes, services and systems that are both functionally relevant and emotionally resonant. India is home to diverse opportunities for focused design-led interventions, especially for the lower-economic classes who otherwise make-do with cheaper copies of items or services originally developed for the international or urban markets.
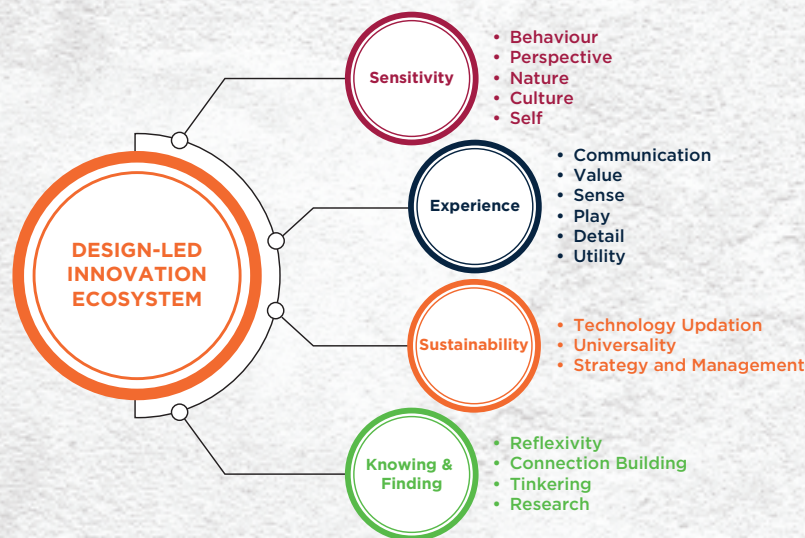
Atal Community Innovation Centres describe the design-led innovation ecosystem by using four key principles listed below:

- **Knowing and Finding:** Connecting the dots between available forms of knowledge aided by active ideation and prototyping

- **Sensitivity:** Empathizing with people, cultures and environment for better insights into contextual behaviors and needs

- **Experience:** Giving attention to social group's usage or conditions for enhanced engagement with form and functionality

- **Sustainability:** Optimizing the use of resources or processes as well as creating for multi-use situations/ suited to larger audience group

Finally, ACICs are encouraged and motivated to build **Public Private Partnership (PPP)** in and around their regions. Utilizing PPPs can eventually lead to encouraging ownership and a willingness to act, leading to more successful entrepreneurial ventures and economies of scale.

Key Principles behind a Design-Led Innovation Ecosystem

1.2 CREATING AN ACIC

The process of creation of an ACIC can be largely broken down into four phases:

1 IDENTIFICATION **2** APPLICATION **3** COMPLIANCE **4** OPERATIONS

Identification Phase

The first step of building a community innovation centre starts at the institution or organisation identifying or envisioning itself as an 'enabler' of the innovation ecosystem in the unserved/underserved regions of the country. Once the motive is established—with a deep understanding of its surrounding region—the enabler must imbibe within itself the values and understanding of social consciousness, SDGs and design led innovation thinking. Using the frameworks of incubation and support of PPPs, the enabler strives to build a sustainable ecosystem that supports budding entrepreneurs and innovators.

Read more about the technical aspects of eligibility to apply for an ACIC (https://aim.gov.in/acic-overview.php)
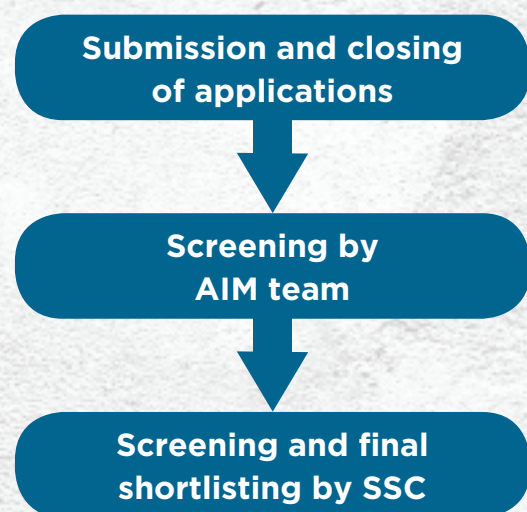
Before transitioning into the application phase, it is important that the enablers have a comprehensive understanding on the 'how' of building a support system for innovators. This has been laid out through the six pillars that form the foundation of an ACIC, detailed in the next section. Applicants are strongly encouraged to read and understand the six pillars before applying for an ACIC. This will not only help in building a strong application for ACIC but also equip the enablers with the right toolkits that can be enhanced and contextualised based on their experience.

Application Phase

The ACIC selection process is a multi-level 360-degree assessment based on various parameters such as location and needs of an applicant, prior experience in entrepreneurship and vision for an ACIC. A snapshot of the process is given below:

```
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│   Submission and closing    │
│      of applications        │
└─────────────────────────────┘
              ↓
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│        Screening by         │
│         AIM team            │
└─────────────────────────────┘
              ↓
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│     Screening and final     │
│    shortlisting by SSC      │
└─────────────────────────────┘
```

The call for applications is updated from time to time on the AIM website. Interested applicants are encouraged to go through ACIC guidelines, uploaded on the AIM website, prior to applying.

Important links:

In case of specific queries, please refer to the FAQ section of the AIM website: https://aim.gov.in/acic-faq.php

Compliance Phase

Post final screening and selection by the SSC, the shortlisted applicants are invited by the AIM Team to submit their documents as per the compliance requirements. An overview of the steps involved in this process is given below:

1. Setting up an SPV

2. Finalising Budget and G&D of the ACIC in consultation with AIM Team (Refer to page 68 and 70 of ACIC Guidelines for Budget and G&D Format, respectively)

3. Submission of all documents related to SPV and Host Institution as per the checklist shared by AIM Team

4. Physical site visit and due diligence by AIM Team

5. Creation of PFMS ID

6. Internal approval and grant disbursal by NITI Aayog

BEST PRACTICES

BE PROACTIVE

Actively reach out to the AIM team SPOC on updates and clarifications.

BE CONSISTENT

Ensure only one SPOC from the host institution is present from the beginning to the end of the compliance process, making it seamless and consistent.

BE PREPARED

Have thorough understanding of all the documents. Take support of experts within your own institution, for example finance team for formulating the Budget and G&D, CA for handling all processes related to SPV formulation and registration etc.

BE FLEXIBLE

As the compliance documents might go through a series of updates based on the review of the AIM team, be open and flexible to changes along this journey.

Operations Phase

An ACIC is operational post the release of the disbursement of the first tranche of the Grant-in-aid. An operational ACIC is expected to meet certain deadlines and targets as per the guidelines and respond to the communications made by the AIM team.

Understanding the utilisation of grant in aid:

The utilisation of Grant- in- aid primarily has 2 components to it - Capital and Operational. The investment on capital is necessary to make each ACIC functional and open to experimenting with new ideas, provide a space for tinkering as well as sector focused, high-end labs. Hence, necessary equipment and infrastructure needs to be available at ACICs for use. While the infrastructure sets up the foundation, it is the day-to-day operations that will drive the growth of the ACIC. These include but are not limited to hiring the core ACIC team, conducting outreach events, trainings, workshops, ideathons and other supporting services for startups/innovators. The direction of expenditure, both for capital as well as operations should be towards strengthening the six pillars of the ACIC.

1.3 PILLARS OF ACIC

The ACIC acts as an **enabler** of an ecosystem that is designed to support and nurture entrepreneurs. Such an ecosystem largely stands on six pillars - Infrastructure, People, Knowledge, Network, Finance and Monitoring & Feedback.

Infrastructure

The physical space of the ACIC provides a gateway for experimentation, engagement and participation. An innovator will spend a large part of his/her time within the ACIC premises—interacting with the ACIC team, building the product, ideating and discussing with other innovators, attending workshops etc. The infrastructure plays a huge role in attracting the right talent as well as connections for the ACIC, hence a lot of aspects in terms of designing the space and procuring the equipment need to be kept in mind.

People

Companies and organisations have long back agreed — getting the right people makes all the difference. For an ACIC, the people are not just limited to the core team of the ACIC but also includes the innovators, startup teams and community members. Nothing lays the groundwork for the future quite like investing in your people.

Knowledge

When we talk about knowledge, it is generally perceived as knowledge building for innovators be it in entrepreneurship or latest technologies and skills. However, continuous knowledge upgradation and research is as important for the ACIC as for the innovators it supports.

Network

Creating a strong and expansive network allows a bounty of resources within the reach of an ACIC. The stakeholders in the network could be knowledge partners, investors, mentors, local bodies, etc. Strengthening this pillar will subsequently support all the other five pillars.

Finance

Revenues and cash flows form an integral part in the sustainability of any organisation. This stands true both for the ACIC and the startups it supports. Without the support of this pillar, no matter how strong the other pillars are —they will not generate enough value in the long run.

Monitoring and Feedback

Monitoring and Feedback is a powerful tool and an essential exercise to check the strength of the remaining 5 pillars. This is in respect to measuring the value an ACIC is generating and understand any upgradations, if required for more impactful outcome.

An enabler (ACIC) must strive to strengthen these six pillars for developing a holistic support system. They must identify their strong pillars and continue to leverage them while narrowing down on their weak pillars and mobilising resources. Once these pillars have been identified, it becomes easier to group various existing interventions under the particular pillars and accordingly, create more directed interventions wherever a gap is felt. While the interventions can vary from one enabler to another, the pillars largely remain the same.

The upcoming sections look at the interventions that the ACIC deploys to nurture each of these six pillars.

Pillar 1

Part 2: Infrastructure

2.1 DESIGNING AN ACIC SPACE

Atal Community Innovation Centre has the responsibility to provide the essential infrastructure and facilities for creating a community-oriented innovation ecosystem. Necessary provisions to make the ACIC space equitable, inclusive, interactive, and safe must be considered while planning the setup of the ACIC. Key provisions to be accounted for are described below:

Internet and Devices

Stable internet connection with a good speed must be available to the aspiring innovators/startups at the ACIC during the working hours. Owing to the nature of operations and target communities of ACIC, provisions for issuing laptops/tablets to aspiring innovators from marginalized communities must be taken into consideration.

Lab Setup and Safety

Well-functioning Makerspace/FabLab and sector specific labs with necessary equipment must be set up within the ACIC. The lab must not be congested, have enough walking space and be well ventilated. All machines and equipment must be labelled with their name, hazard posed, storage instructions, expiry date, source and date of procurement. There should also be proper storage facility like cupboards, lockers etc. for fellows to keep their material as well as for the equipment. Following are the necessary protocols and measures to ensure safety in the labs by staff and innovators:

- There should be book-keeping of all equipment in FabLab by the lab assistants and there should be monitoring of all tools for ensuring proper maintenance, putting safety measures in place periodically.

- There should be 2 fire extinguishers in every FabLab in ACIC. All the people using the lab must be trained to use the same.

- FirstAid kit should be placed inside the lab.

- There should be a proper system of waste disposal.

- All the equipment must be handled with care and kept back at prescribed spots after use.

Co-working space

Furnishings for providing workspace for innovators at ACIC must be created. These workstations should be equipped with tables, chairs, desktops (if needed), and internet connection. The maintenance of the furnishings and space must be assessed and carried out periodically.

Meeting and Training Rooms

Dedicated rooms equipped with round table and chairs, and row seating must be created for conducting meetings and training sessions in the ACIC. At least one room must also have a Video Conferencing facility with proper plug-ins and internet connection.

Inclusive for persons with disabilities

The special needs for mobility of persons with disabilities, for e.g., ramps and tactile walking surface indicators, must be considered to make the ACIC space as equitable and inclusive as possible.

Washrooms

Clean washrooms with running water facilities must be accessible for all staff members and innovators at ACIC. Separate washrooms for men, women, third gender and persons with disabilities must be present.

2.2 PROCURING TOOLS AND MATERIALS

Once an initial design of the ACIC space is ready, the next step is to procure the required equipment, tools and materials.

The following pointers should be kept in mind for the same:

- Due diligence is to be carried out by the centre to ensure quality of equipment. It is recommended that start-ups or individuals using expensive machinery should do so under the supervision of a lab assistant

- Ensure procurement from credible vendors to maintain transparency in transactions.

- Regular book-keeping and accounting are mandatory with specifications of income sources (e.g., grants, production, and retail) and expenditure domains.

- Maintenance and breakage costs must be accounted for in the operational expenses to cover unforeseen contingencies.

- It is recommended that the inventory list be initially created keeping in mind the local expertise and expanded in time depending on the innovator's demands so that the inventory is utilized to its maximum potential.

- Any additional expenditure is advised to be covered using the private sector funding.

- General tools and equipment are accorded priority over task specific tools to ensure best utilization of the grant-in-aid however focus areas should be kept in mind during planning.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- It is important to ensure that at least one person knows how to operate and maintain the machinery before purchasing it.

- Annual internal audit plan may be submitted to AIM authorities

It is important to note that ACICs need to be in complete compliance with General Financial Rules (GFR), 2017 with respect to all its financial expenditures.
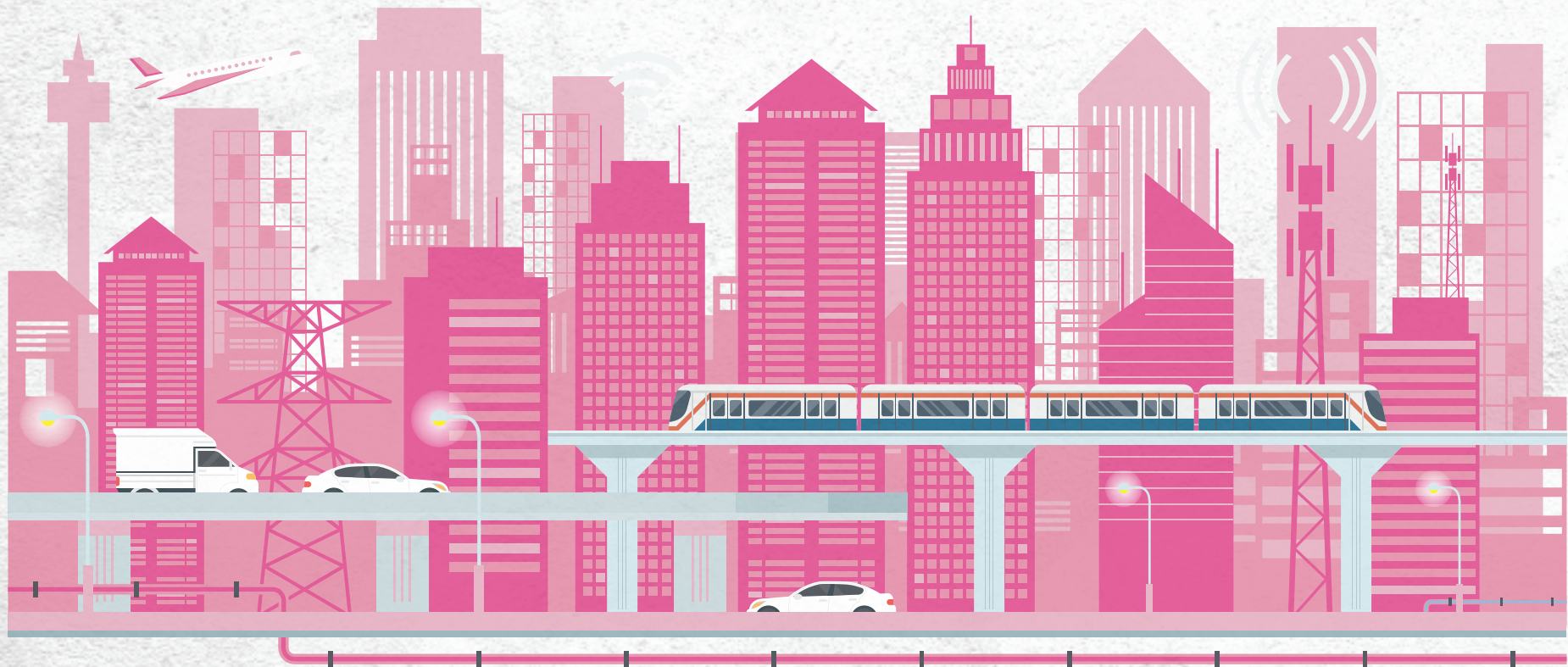
Part 3: People

3.1 ACIC ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

The structural design of the management team and staff at Atal Community Innovation Centre must be lean and flat. The core team members of the ACIC would include full-time employees that execute the operations of the ACIC. The admin and support staff, essential for ACIC operations, may be provided by the host institution. Apart from the core team members, the ACIC can engage interns on a pro-bono basis. Following is a list of members for smooth functioning of an ACIC along with their duties:

Core Team Members

- **Centre-in-charge/CEO:** The Centre-in-charge/CEO will be the head of an ACIC. It will be the responsibility of the Centre-in-charge to ensure the coordination with the AIM team and smooth functioning of operations at ACIC. There can be only 1 Centre-in-charge per ACIC.

- **Young Professionals:** Young Professional will be responsible to support the operations of the ACIC. They will be in-charge for branding, building sector specific partnerships and finding investors for the products and ideas by innovators/startups. A young professional must have at least 1 year of prior work experience.

- **Lab Technical Experts/Assistants:** ACICs can appoint technicians and experts for its Maker-space/FabLabs and sector specific labs to help the aspiring innovator's work with the equipment installed. They must also ensure that everyone visiting the lab follows safety protocols as described in section 2.1.

Support Staff

- **Administration:** The administrative staff such as accountant, sanitation workers and office assistants may be provided by the host institution. These staff members will not form a part of the core team of the ACIC.

3.2 CREATING A HOLISTIC WORKSPACE

Atal Community Innovation Centre is an attempt to create a vibrant ecosystem for innovation that is inclusive, diverse, and, where the values of integrity, objectivity, professional competence, confidentiality, and professional behaviour are held in high regard and are ensured. Certain principles for the code of ethics at an ACIC are described below:

Spirit of Innovation and Entrepreneurship: The primary objective of an ACIC is to build a community-oriented innovation ecosystem. All operations undertaken by an ACIC must revolve around building a robust ecosystem to drive SDG innovations. The aspiring innovators of the community must be encouraged and supported in every way possible.

Transparency and Accountability: The ACIC must ensure that all data reported must be true and correct. The ACIC must also ensure transparency in communications with the fellows and mentors. The ACIC must also understand its accountability in ensuring success of its operations and policies.

Inclusion, Diversity and Anti-Discrimination: ACIC must aim to create an inclusive and diverse ecosystem across socio-economic backgrounds. The cohort of fellowships and aspiring innovators that an ACIC supports must aim to have a proportional representation of people from various socio-economic backgrounds. Based on the region the ACIC operates in, it must consciously work towards inclusion of local communities/groups with sensitization, awareness and affirmative action. AIM promotes inclusion and diversity in the startup and fellowship cohort and strongly encourages participation from people of different diversities, including but not limited to gender, color, caste, creed, race, religion, physical or intellectual disabilities, and impairments.

Protection against Sexual Harassment: ACIC must ensure to protect its employees, mentors and innovators from sexual harassment at workplace.

Promote Safe and Industrious Workspace

ACICs must ensure safety of all innovators/startups under their purview. They must promote a healthy interaction, trust and cooperation among staff and innovators.

Avoid Conflict of Interest

ACICs should take care that personal or financial interests should not overlap with the job responsibilities of staff members as well as innovators. Staff must not use their position, or the knowledge gained for unethical use or for use without intimation to organisation.

Promote Fair Practices

ACIC must condone the activities of staff and fellows who achieve desired results through unfair means or by violation of general codes of ethics and inclusion. This includes any payments for illegal acts, indirect contributions, rebates, and bribery.

Interpersonal Conduct

Any staff or fellow must not indulge in fights with counterparts or the community in general. ACIC must on all grounds prohibit unworthy language conduct, or similar unprofessional activities during working hours.

Mental well-being

Innovators and people from the startups working in the ACIC in terms of developing and shaping their ideas for valuable contributions to the community, need rejuvenation space as well as due attention if they face any kind of problem while working in the respective ACICs. Taking this thought forward,

ACICs must cater to the mental well-being of their fellows as well as other members of ACIC. For the same, ACIC should take the responsibility of collaborating with psychological and counselling experts. These experts will conduct seminars, sessions with fellows relating to various topics ranging from meditation, positive thinking etc. Workshops and interactions such as understanding a positive mindset, open forum discussions about stress, life etc. must be initiated at the ACIC.

Part 4: Knowledge

4.1 RESEARCH

ACICs are envisaged to build a vibrant innovation ecosystem in the community that they operate in. Thus, it is essential that the ACIC management team studies and understands the target community through a collaborative and participatory approach. This will not only help the ACIC team to identify issues for which challenges could be organized but also to plan and customize the outreach initiatives based on the diversity of the community. Following are recommended guideline for an ACIC to embark upon a journey of conducting community outreach and research:

Partnerships

ACIC will establish partnerships with the local NGOs, social enterprises, UNDP office, other partner organisations and local community representatives to support and drive an iterative and participatory model of community research of SDGs at local level.

Localizing SDGs and ACIC Challenges

ACIC should identify gaps in the local innovation ecosystem that could be used as themes for organizing challenges and inviting solutions from the community.

Impact Analysis of Innovations

The impact of the innovations supported by the ACIC must be analysed and included in the annual research report.

It is expected that the ACIC will undertake at least one community research exercise annually.

Before starting out with the planning of the Atal Community Innovation Centre in your region, it is recommended to conduct a feasibility study of the region keeping the following parameters in mind:

- **State and Central Schemes in the region:** Active efforts for promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in the region or skilling programs under state livelihood mission or central schemes like PM Kaushal Vikas Yojna and Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Development Program, can be studied to build relevant partnerships or learn from the gaps in previous efforts at upskilling and entrepreneurship.

- **Local Resource Availability:** A study of the geographical terrain as well as existing production units to determine which materials can be substituted with local counter parts before importing.

- **Local Knowledge Pool:** A demographic study of skilled professionals in local institutions, traditional skills, interest areas and hobbies can help determine sectoral focus.

- **Technological Familiarity:** Quick check into a community's technical knowledge can plan the technological exposure.

- **Social Practices and Belief Systems:** This parameter is key to understanding community preferences to a range

of operations like access hours to planning community engagement.

- **Business Practices:** Understanding the market supply and demand chain or local buying patterns can be few of the many insights here.

This study can be conducted in the form of surveys, focused group discussions or field visits to give a cursory understanding of already existing skillsets, amenities or new technologies or methods suitable to incorporate when starting out and can be expanded in time.
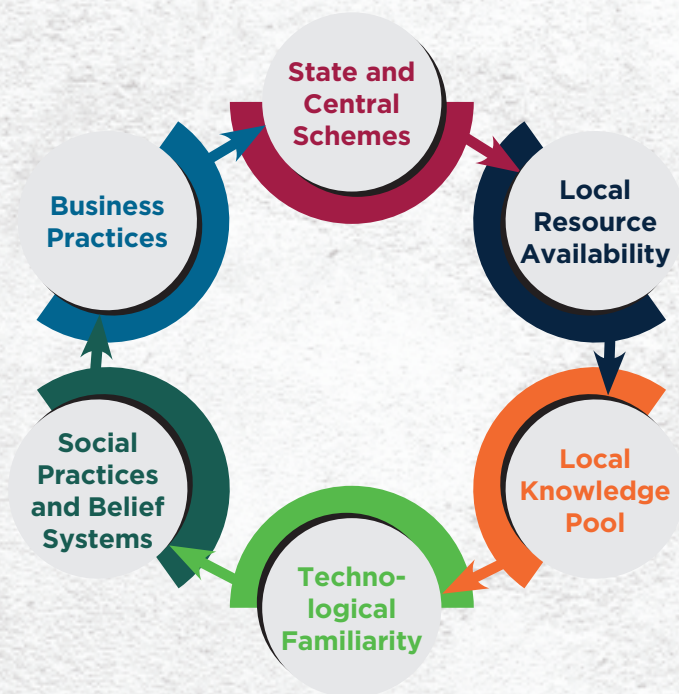
Tools for conducting a feasible study to understand the community problems

4.2 DIGITAL LEARNING PLATFORM FOR COMMUNITY INNOVATOR FELLOWS

Atal Innovation Mission along with UNDP have created an online platform for community innovators to learn and become knowledge enriched in their entrepreneurial journey. Digital Learning Platform (DLP) is an interface for knowledge sharing on thematic areas relevant for youth-led innovation and social entrepreneurship. The aim is to bring together ecosystem enablers and practitioners to share knowledge based on experience and facilitate online collaboration. This network is envisaged to encourage the application of knowledge, experience, and expertise to find immediate and lasting solutions to the challenges faced by young people in the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem, while at the same time allow for other key stakeholders to identify entry points for youth engagement. The platform will provide a snapshot of the discussions, resources, courses, workshops etc. for the professional entrepreneurial development as well as inter-personal development of the fellow. It will allow users to log in to the discussion forum and connect with mentors.

OUR VISION

Building a vibrant knowledge-sharing ecosystem that transcends geographical, educational, and financial barriers, empowering the youth to transform their ideas into innovation

OUR MISSION

To build an inclusive community of young learners, mentors and incubators that strive towards a sustainable innovation ecosystem.

OUR VALUES

Youth Empowerment,
Sustainability,
Holistic Ecosystem

Members of DLP

01 MENTOR

The technical experts for young fellows who will support them in their journey of innovation. The mentors can assign courses to fellows as well as gain deeper understanding themselves by enrolling in various relevant courses. DLP will help them digitally connect with fellows and ACIC staff through 'Discussion Forum' for any kind of communication and support throughout the innovation journey.

02 ACIC

ACICs are incubators setup by Atal innovation Mission, NITI Aayog in the underserved regions of India that acts as a pillar for structural and financial support for innovators. An ACIC strengthens the coordination between mentor and fellow through the DLP. Alongside, they will curate 'Stories of Change' that deal with grassroots innovation in and around the ACIC communities to motivate and instil energy to encourage creative thinking.

03 FELLOW

A vibrant young individual incubated at ACIC with a passion for innovation especially for the community. Fellows can use DLP to explore the repository of courses, workshops, sessions ranging from SDGs, Innovation, Design Thinking etc. There will be a dedicated section of 'Schemes and Policies' which will have all kinds of schemes by state and central government that support different stages of innovation in India along with details to apply. They can also use the platform to discuss and engage in knowledge sharing across different stakeholders (mentors, ACICs) through the community platform on DLP.

Social Media Integration

There will be detailed facilitation of social media integration such as Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn posts from relevant people/hashtags on the DLP. This will further build a link between budding innovators and experienced ones. Curation of work and ideas of learned professionals will be uploaded on the pages to bring strong motivation, desire, and critical thinking amongst innovators.

4.3 MENTORSHIP FOR COMMUNITY INNOVATION

Mentorships allow us to build on the foundation of knowledge and business acumen that successful leaders already possess. This is especially true for entrepreneurs that rely on strategy and relationships to build and grow their business. ACICs are expected to build a strong network of mentors who will invest their time and effort in guiding the innovators and possibly build a strong relationship with them. Creating a formal mentorship model will institutionalise the engagement of the mentor ensuring that maximum benefit can be gained out of this service. A few things to keep in mind while designing the mentorship program are as follows:

1. **Time commitment:** Creating a consistent schedule is crucial to get the mentorship rolling. A minimum time commitment from the mentors (weekly/monthly) will ensure that they are prepared and willing to invest a certain amount of time in supporting the entrepreneur.

2. **Need assessment of the innovators:** Before a mentoring relationship is established, an assessment of the needs of the entrepreneur will give clarity on the mentor to be mapped to him/her. This will also allow the entrepreneur to lay down the objectives and outcomes he/she wishes to achieve through the mentorship.

3. **Incentives:** Apart from financial incentives, due thought and time should be given in designing the value additions for the mentors which could be rewards, recognition, capacity building, networking etc.

4. **Feedback:** Continuous feedback and its incorporation from both the mentor and the mentee will ensure the program stays relevant and impactful.

The mentors could be a mix of business and sector specific experts. Leaders who have a strong background of working in community development and grassroots innovations may be considered as mentors. Additionally, if the mentors are change makers from the nearby region, the local entrepreneurs might find it easier to connect to them and build a meaningful relationship.

Mentor India

Atal Innovation Mission runs a strategic nation building voluntary initiative called 'Mentor India' to engage leaders who can guide and mentor innovators/startups in the newly launched ACICs. Currently, mentors from mentor India support innovators/startups in 68 AIM Incubators across the

nation and students in 9000+ Atal Tinkering Labs. Mentor India will soon extend its network of mentors to the ACICs by opening its applications for professionals interested in mentoring innovators at the ACICs.

Key aspects of the Mentor India program

1. Professionals from corporates (including but not limited to corporations, MSMEs, entrepreneurs, innovators, makerspaces, NGO partners), Government organisations, higher education institutes, academicians (including applicants from research organisations), students from post graduate programs will be eligible to apply and become a part of Mentor India for ACIC.

2. Atal Innovation Mission will be an enabling agency for Mentor India and will work with the ACICs to ensure smooth functioning of the mentor program. AIM shall introduce the Mentors to the ACICs and they shall in turn introduce the Mentors with the innovators/startups. In order to assess the impact of the program and contribute towards its improvement, Atal Innovation Mission will monitor the mentoring activities based on a duly formed criteria and feedback on an ongoing and consolidated basis.

3. Mentor India guidelines, including Terms of Engagement, are subject to periodic review in consultation with concerned stakeholders, and may be modified in future.

Part 5: Network

5.1 BUILDING YOUR ACIC BRAND

As an ACIC, it is vital for your brand to be visible across every ecosystem and to all stakeholders and communities. Branding is a powerful way to communicate your unique story to the world outside.

Benefits of branding

To build sustainability, outreach and motivation, the organisation must look credible, ingenuous and competent. These aspects are predominantly achievable if you present yourself uniquely. Therefore, branding can help an ACIC in identity establishment in the ecosystem and in building a connection with the right audience from the outset.

Branding through website creation, logo, write up and display of the same on various platforms can help ACICs maintain the following in a precise manner:

- **Credibility**
- **Recognition**
- **Ingenuity**

ACICs can undertake further creation of web page, social media handles with their unique logos for better outreach and visibility. Following are the sources where ACICs can post about their developments, write stories of change and establish a connect with public and investors for a long term connection:

5.2 COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Atal Community Innovation Centres are envisaged to serve as a nodal body at a district level for driving SDG innovations in the community. It is essential for an ACIC to establish local partnerships and collaborations with government as well as private organisations and community representatives. SDG goal 17 refers to revitalizing partnerships for sustainable

development and all ACICs must align their vision with the same for attaining defined goals.

Academia

An ACIC can form partnerships with institutions that have sector specific infrastructure facilities for conducting research. Apart from this, these institutions can become knowledge partners for ACIC by helping aspiring innovators/ startups with sector specific understanding.

Corporate

Corporate partnerships can play an important role in sustainability of an ACIC. Corporates can become industrial knowledge and financial partners for ACIC. The industry expertise of corporates can help ACICs become adept in the particular domains while research and consultancy projects can provide the financial support for sustaining ACIC. The Corporate Social Responsibility funds can be tapped by an ACIC for supporting the Community Innovator Fellowships and for ACIC operations.

Government

ACICs are envisioned to become the centre for design and innovation in the region which will not be possible without the collaboration with local bodies. In Indian villages, local bodies present in the Panchayati raj system can become a key player in widespread adoption of Innovation. So, Collaboration with panchayats at three levels – zilla, mandal and gram can be considered. With that, all the local influencers such as representatives of different minorities should also be considered for collaboration for more inclusive growth. With that, ACIC can also tap into the funds of state and district innovation cells where the cells are actively working in the innovation ecosystem.

Voluntary Organisations

Voluntary organisations like NGOs working in the vicinity of an ACIC must be partnered with for undertaking outreach initiatives. These organisations have an informed understanding of the community and its components. Collaborations with such organisations will help the ACIC to customize the initiatives and ideas as per the diversity of the community.

Incubators and Accelerators

Partnerships with other incubators and accelerators can help ACICs share knowledge and operational expertise with each other. It can also help in creating a collaborative incubation ecosystem in the region by supporting each other. Accelerators can especially expedite the growth of the innovators by scaling up their ideas and products.

Mentors

Mentors play a key role in an innovator's journey. Guidance through the process of building innovative solutions to understanding their viability and reach are the most important part in the learning and developing effective sustainable products and services. Mentors or experts from different domains handhold the innovators and startups throughout their journey to help them streamline thoughts and ideas at an early stage of innovation. ACICs must involve experts and researchers with a background in innovative solutions to help the innovators and startups from the stage of ideation to develop sustainable and commercially viable innovations.

Investors

Investors are one of the important entities in the incubation phase for an aspiring innovator. Thus, an ACIC will be expected to form as many investors connect to support the aspiring innovators/startups in commercializing their products and scaling up their ideas.

5.3 COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Atal Community Innovation Centres aim to nurture innovations that have potential positive and transformative impact on the community. They also aim to nurture and support aspiring innovators in the community. Bringing together the ideas and thinking of people in the community can help ACICs in understanding problems and solutions to work on for the sustainability of ACIC and society on the whole. Thus, it is essential that the ACIC conducts regular outreach initiatives in the community to create awareness about the services of the ACIC and also about SDGs and entrepreneurship. Following outreach activities are encouraged for all ACICs:

SUMvaad

People in rural areas are apprehensive of the intentions of outsiders. Thus, ACICs are setup in and around the communities so that members of that ACIC can interact with people about their problems through community outreach with trust building activities such as 'Meet and Greet', 'Grassroots Meets' etc. The main objective of such activities would not just be to listen the issues of people rather exchange ideas and formulation of a forum of knowledge dissemination amongst all people of the community who are facing issues. ACIC members must listen to stories of people as well as leave the forum open for the people themselves to come up with different solutions. Further, innovators can work with the community to streamline those ideas/solutions for building a sustainable local ecosystem. Bi-monthly follow ups with locals and focus on solution-oriented action can improve the trust level of the locals. Also, in some areas, languages might be one of the barriers in effective communication so a mediator can help in building connections.

Ideathons

Brainstorming events for innovators/startups from different educational background, skillset and interest can help in covering wide range of pre-diagnosed problems in community, identify the relevant innovations and ideate the most viable solution. ACIC can host such events which could be a great learning platform to identify innovative ideas to community problems through discussions in an expansive forum of skilful minds for innovators/startups.

Hackathons

Hackathons are time-based events in which groups of innovators along with technical experts can get together to collaborate intensively on finding creative solutions for identified focus areas of ACIC. The aim is to design, build and present the most innovative solution to a problem, and then pitch a final concept, prototype or presentation to the investors. This could be an opportunity for innovators to present the ideas and products and pitch them to various stakeholders.

Movers Workshop

A Movers workshop (coined by UNDP) is a 4-hour interactive workshop on SDG and entrepreneurship awareness. The ACIC staff will be trained on conducting a Movers workshop. The ACIC team must organize the Movers Workshop as one of the outreach initiatives in communities.

Speaker Sessions and Workshops

ACICs may host periodic sessions with eminent speakers who have been working expansively in finding innovative solutions to grassroots problems. This could motivate the innovators to develop 'out of box' thinking and guide them in working ahead. ACICs can also organize or collaborate workshops for the innovators on topics like problem solving techniques, building an innovative mind set etc.

Pillar 5

Part 6: Finance

6.1 SUSTAINABILITY OF AN ACIC

Financial sustainability is one of the main obstacles faced by the incubators globally. Although most of the incubators rely on government-support for the establishment and capital costs of their venture, operational costs and running costs can be borne and explored by public private partnerships, sponsorships from government or philanthropic players and incubation services offered to the startups. ACICs will get AIM grant-in-aid support for the first five years but ACICs are expected to become self-sustainable by the end of 4th year or by the starting of 5th year. Some sources of revenues have been delineated below for ACICs to become self-sustainable:

Corporate tie-ups – Public Private partnerships is one of the key features of ACIC. Half or more than half of even the ACIC setup cost is borne by the host institution or the corporate partners. ACICs can further cement public private partnerships through the following avenues:

- **Research/consultancy projects –** ACICs can conduct specialized and targeted research on the behalf of the client especially, in the focus areas earmarked by the ACICs, thereby, cementing their position as sectoral experts.

- **Innovation Challenges –** ACICs can throw out sector specific challenges in association with corporates to identify solutions important for the region. The corporates can also adopt the winners of these challenges to support the journey of an innovator.

Sponsorships and Grants – ACICs can make use of various grants and sponsorships available locally and nationally. Some major grants sources are present below -

- **Impact investors –** Impact investors are general investors who seek to generate financial returns while also creating a positive social or environmental impact.

- **Schemes and policies –** Schemes and policies from government and other non-profit sources can be used by innovators and startups in their journey.

- **CSR –** Corporate social responsibility can now also be utilized for impact investing. This is one of the areas where ACICs can form a long-term relationship with the corporates, earning a sustainable revenue source while also enjoying the benefits of the corporate partnerships.

Services to Startups - ACICs can keep different incubation models for different services they provide to the startups and innovators. Some of the common incubation models can be:

- **Equity based –** Incubators can take minority stakes in incubated businesses, often in return for fee and low rent periods, enabling future income from dividend payments.

- **Royalty based -** According to this model, revenues earned by the client will legitimate a royalty payment for the incubator. Usually, the royalty is limited in time.

- **Rental based –** Rental charges can be a source of funds. Though incubators need to achieve a significant size before this revenue model becomes a major income source.

6.2 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATORS

ACICs host the innovators on campus to develop creative and innovative solutions through design thinking using different tools and materials in Fab labs. ACICs provide the space and environment to the innovators and startups to process, fabricate and furnish ideas and materials but to scale up these ideas and innovations, startups and innovators must keep a tab of various kinds of funding opportunities available for different stages of incubation. ACICs also have a significant role to play in understanding, facilitating and providing different kinds of funding opportunities to innovators.

ACICs can collaborate with different academic institutions as they provide research grants to innovators at the stage of ideation and design thinking. At the same time, ACICs must associate mentors from different expert areas to deliver streamlined and expansive guidance to innovators. Mentors have a prominent role in helping startups and innovators

in applying for funding opportunities at various stages of innovation. They can help innovators to stay updated on new schemes and policies. Further, innovators must themselves regularly check the DLP to view various schemes and policies initiated by different stakeholders in the ecosystem of innovation. The schemes and policies are divided under various stakeholders in the ecosystem such as:

- Central Ministries & Departments
- State Governments
- Authorities & Associations
- Apex/Independent Offices of GOI
- NGOs/Independent Bodies

For fundraising, ACICs must collaborate and invite investors from vibrant domains and sectors to listen and understand the pitch of each innovator and startup. For further details on these events refer to section Annual Showcase in the manual.

FEEDBACK

Part 7: Monitoring and Feedback

7.1 KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS FOR AN ACIC

ACICs are envisioned to be the nodal body for Design and Innovation pan India. To realize such hefty goals, it becomes imperative to set goals and to track them rigorously. To analyze progress and impact made by ACICs, to promote healthy competition among ACICs and to reward the outperforming ACICs, certain key performance areas in each of the pillars will be assessed:

Infrastructure

The design and setting up of the ACIC space must take place in the stipulated time as per the ACIC guidelines. This includes the labs, co-working space, training and meeting rooms, washrooms.

People

ACIC Staff

The recruitment of the ACIC staff must be completed in the stipulated time as per the ACIC guidelines. Moreover, the professional qualifications and experience of the recruited ACIC staff members must be relevant to their respective roles and responsibilities.

Mental Well Being

The ACICs must ensure mental wellbeing for all its staff members as well as for its fellows and startups . Periodic sessions with a professional counsellor may be organised in this regard.

Diversity and Inclusion

The Fellowship cohort and startups should have proportional representation from the diverse backgrounds of the community population such as women, marginal groups in the region.

Knowledge

Outreach and Research

The community research should be extensive and community outreach must cover as many communities and people as possible.

SDG Transformation

The major focus for an ACIC is to bring about SDG transformation in the community through community centric innovations. ACICs can partner with local government bodies to support them and also may track the changes that are happening in SDGs. Although, visibility of large impact in

SDGs deliverables would take substantial amount of time but the small positive and productive changes can be witnessed in and around the community.

Network

Partnerships

The local partnerships should be diverse and translate into actionable results and outcomes.

Finance

Financial Sustainability is one of the primary objectives of ACIC. The end vision of ACIC can only be realized if it runs for a longer time of at least 10-15 years. ACIC could build on financial sustainability by meticulously undertaking the tasks described in G&D below. So, main goal for all the ACICs should be to achieve self-sustainability by the end of 5 years.

Pre-incubation Model

Startups/Fellows Incubated

The number of Startups/fellows incubated and exited should increase year over year as the expertise and resources of the ACIC increases with time.

Support for Aspiring Innovators

The incubation and forward linkages for aspiring innovators should be provided for as many as possible.

7.2 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

To keep a track of ACIC operations, the ACIC staff will be constantly in touch with the AIM team through various mediums and regular check-ins.

Regular Review Calls

AIM team will conduct a quarterly review call to track progress against the G&D and Budget. The data of the progress of G&D will be filled in the Monitoring and Evaluation Portal which is currently under development.

Monitoring and Evaluation Portal

This portal will help the ACIC staff and the AIM team to analyse the progress of ACIC operations. The Community Innovator Fellows will also get an account on this portal and will have to report their milestones achieved during the phases of the fellowship through this portal. The stipend disbursement for the fellowship will be based on the milestones reported by the fellowship.

the fellows on the portal. This will help the ACIC staff keep a track of the progress of fellows. Some of the key features of this portal will be:

Profile and Infrastructure

The general details of ACIC and the details of the infrastructure facilities will have to be reported in this section.

Financials

The budget planning, expenditure details in actuals, tranche details and income details would be reported in this section.

Goals and Deliverables

There will be 2 aspects to reporting goals and deliverables for an ACIC. One will be the projections made before the start of each year and second would be the actual numbers achieved in each quarter.

Report and Dashboard

The ACIC staff would be able to analyse their progress using this feature which will let the team to slice and dice the data to generate relevant reports.

Bi-Annual Physical visit

AIM team will conduct bi-annual physical visit to assess the work of ACIC in-person and especially meet the surrounding community to know about their thoughts, contentions, and views towards ACIC program. AIM team will also try to conduct a thorough assessment of the prior conducted community research by ACIC through these visits.

7.3 FEEDBACK AND REVIEW MECHANISM

Feedback and Review Mechanism is essential to constantly evolve and improve the services and operations of ACIC. The various stakeholders for an ACIC will provide their feedback on regular intervals and this will be reviewed partly by the ACIC, its stakeholders and AIM team. This feedback will be conducted through our monitoring and evaluation portal where qualitative and quantitative set of questions will be taken on relevant areas.

ACIC staff

The ACIC staff will provide feedback to the mentors, startups, and the community innovator fellows. The feedback shared should also be made available to the respective stakeholders and will be reviewed by the AIM team.

Mentors

The mentors will provide feedback for the ACIC staff and assigned community innovator fellows and startups. This feedback will be made available to the respective stakeholders and will be reviewed by the AIM team.

Community Innovator Fellows

The community innovator fellows will provide feedback for the ACIC staff, assigned mentors and the fellowship program. This feedback will be made available to the respective stakeholders and will be reviewed by the AIM team.

Incubated Startups

The incubated startups at ACIC will provide feedback for the ACIC staff, assigned mentors and the innovation ecosystem. This feedback will be made available to the respective stakeholders and will be reviewed by the AIM team.

Part 8: Journey of an Innovator at ACIC

8.1 PRE-INCUBATION

Pre-incubation is the process to empower aspiring entrepreneurs in building viable products or services for a targeted audience. It mainly focuses on supporting budding innovators at the ideation stage where ideas can be channelized with the help of experienced mentors and experts. Experts could help innovators in transforming their idea into a minimum viable product and validate its technical and market feasibility.

Pre-Incubation is an ideal way to make sure that a startup is prepared and well positioned to meet the challenges ahead. As the ACICs begin their journey of creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem in an unserved region, they can pre-incubate prospective innovators from the grassroots and build robust solutions for the grassroots. This process could reduce the chances of being unsuccessful at an early stage, give aspiring innovators the confidence and space to experiment and slowly, build enough success stories of innovators in the region. To equip the ACICs in building an expansive pre-incubation model, AIM along with UNDP India has designed a year-long fellowship for aspiring community innovators.

8.1.1 Community Innovator Fellowships

UNDP and Atal Innovation Mission signed a Statement of Intent in 2019 with the aim to create an enabling ecosystem to promote youth leadership, innovation, and social entrepreneurship. UNDP India has worked since 1951 in almost all areas of human development, from systems and institutional strengthening to inclusive growth and sustainable livelihoods, as well as sustainable energy, environment, and resilience.

Building on this partnership, ACIC and UNDP have co-created a fellowship for building and supporting aspiring and inspiring community innovators, as part of building a pre-incubation ecosystem in the country.

The Community Innovator Fellowship Program aims to facilitate knowledge building and provide infrastructure support to aspiring community innovators essential for becoming entrepreneurs. This will be a one-year-long intensive program wherein an aspiring community innovator, irrespective of their socio-economic background, can apply to be a fellow. During the course of this fellowship, each fellow

would acquire entrepreneurial skills, life skills, and awareness about SDGs. Also, each fellow would work on her/his own idea as a project and would present it as an investor pitch at the end of the Fellowship.

Phase 1: Month 3
Orientation
Awareness and Cross-Domain Exposure

Phase 3: Month 5-7
Enhancement
Mentorship and Business Modelling

Phase 5: Month 12-14
Showcase

Phase 0: Month 1-2
Launch and Call for Applications

Phase 2: Month 4
Exploration
Self-discovery and reflection, Individual's plan of work, Finalizing Intent

Phase 4: Month 8-11
Springboard
Prototype/POC/MVP Revisiting Business Model

Community Innovator Fellowship Timeline

Community Innovator Fellowships

- SDGs
- Gender Sensitization
- Social Consciousness
- 21st Century Skills
- Entrepreneurial Mindset
- Innovation Basics
- Facilitation Skills
- Community Leadership
- Storytelling
- Community Builder
- Thought to Action
- Skills Building
- Entrepreneur
- Changemaker
- Social Entrepreneurship
- Robust Network

Objective: Nurturing community innovators to build indigenous solutions for local challenges.

the Digital Learning Platform. Phase 0, which is for application and selection, will be entirely done and managed by the specific ACICs, after extensive outreach and engagement in their surrounding regions. Each of the fellow's ideas, needs and progress status might differ and hence the potential outcomes for each of the phases will not hamper accessing knowledge of the subsequent phases. The fellows will be constantly supported by the host ACIC team, mentors and AIM team. More details on the fellowship will be provided in the fellowship brochure and handbook.

8.2 INCUBATION

ACIC is a one-of-a-kind program under the aegis of AIM as it focuses on a complete social innovation cycle right from the ideation stage to commercialization and scaling up stage. Incubation services such as impactful collaboration, and mentoring have been detailed out earlier while other processes are given in brief below.

CIF FEATURES

Knowledge
Curated content on Digital Learning

Infrastructure
Access to all infrastructure of host ACIC

Mentorship
Mentorship to build business acumen and sector expertise

Local Mitra
Local Mitra for on ground, community outreach support with help of local partner

Funding
Milestone based funding (upto Rs. 2 lakh per fellow) and pitching opportunities

Inclusion
Sensitization workshops for encouraging equitable access innovation ecosystem

Journey of an ACIC Fellow:

A fellow is an individual with an entrepreneurial mindset and an idea to solve a community challenge through his/her enterprise. He/She should be between 18-35 years of age with at least a bachelor's/diploma/degree holder in any discipline from a recognized university. The journey of an ACIC fellow has been structured into 6 phases where the content and curriculum for the phases 1-5 will be curated on

Operations Plan

ACICs can detail out an internal 5-year operations plan as per the budget and G&D submitted to the AIM team. The operations plan should be drafted keeping in mind the vision of all the thrust areas of ACIC while specially focusing on achieving sustainability at the end of 5 years. ACIC should keep on revising their plan as per the gain in experience.

Startup Selection

Startup selection is considered to be a make-or-break factor for an ACICs success in the incubation world. Normally, startup selection should be a process based on the idea and the startups/innovators capabilities. However, ACICs should also consider thrust areas of ACICs and the needs of the community while selecting startups. It is advisable for ACICs to clearly map the on-boarded startups with respective SDG targets being addressed through their products or services.

ACICs can consider the following parameters while inducting startups:

- Team
- SDG impact
- Viability of the idea
- Business Plan
- Ability to be Coached

Activities and Programs

ACICs should undertake different activities like 'Capability Mapping' and programs pertaining to building innovative mind sets, community linkages to foster creative solutions etc. These means of interactions and hands- on experiences can help startups to upskill their ideas. Further, projects could be designed within an ACIC for startups to channelize their ideas and R&D for innovations.

Network and Ecosystem Development

Collaborations with different stakeholders in the community is one of the primary sources to upscale the innovative ideas and product designs for commercialization so networking and ecosystem development is one of the building blocks for ACIC.

Branding

ACIC is envisioned to become the nodal body of innovation and design in its occupying area. This can only happen if the ACIC is branded well and especially for all the thrust areas it has been established for. Therefore, it becomes mandatory for ACICs to engage in branding activities to make this vision come true.

IP Generation

One of the mandates of ACIC is to promote and reward traditional creative solutions developed by the community innovators. For this purpose, specific funds have been kept aside for Intellectual Property (IP) awareness and promotion. It is imperative that the indigenous solutions developed by the communities are brought forth and community innovators are properly rewarded for their solutions.
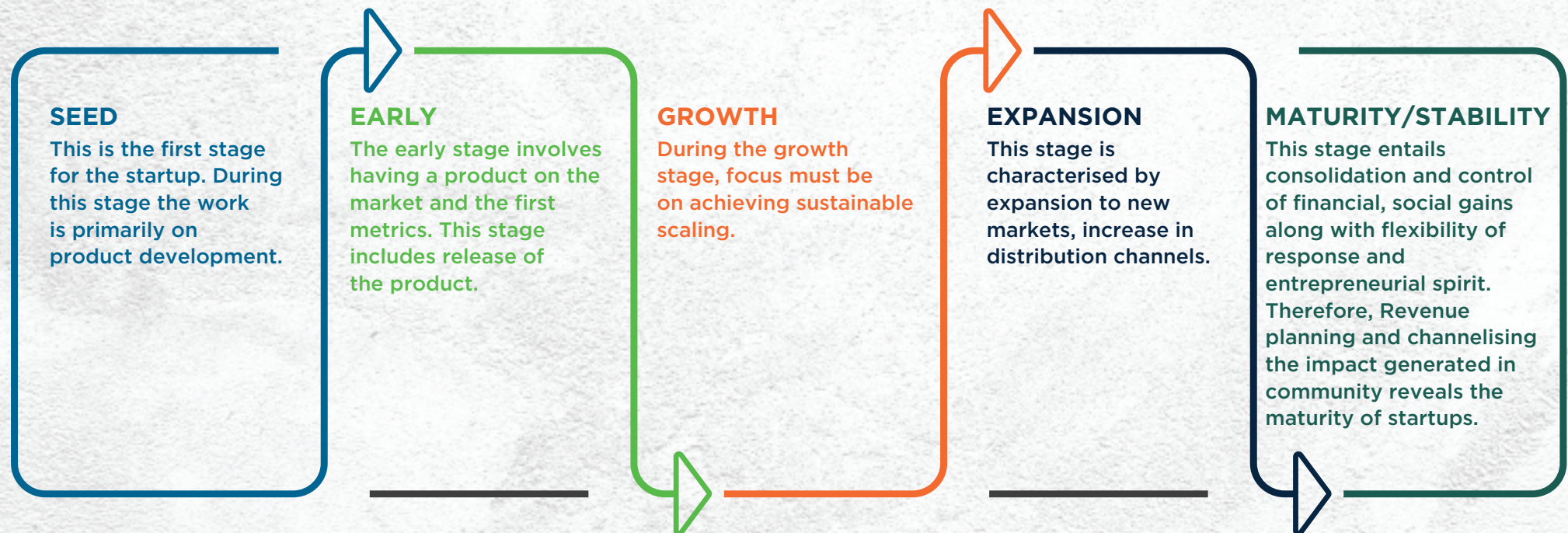
To develop a holistic incubation ecosystem, ACICs need to develop relevant and necessary linkages to support the community innovators post the prototype stage. The ACICs must ensure systematic support to community innovators

for commercialisation and growth for their startups. A community innovator could either get associated with an ACIC for either incubation or pre-incubation. A community innovator that gets associated at the pre-incubation stage would start its journey through the fellowship and would typically reach the incubation stage after successful completion of the fellowship. In order for ACICs to be able to support the community innovators through all stages of their startup, ACICs must establish a network with other existing incubators and accelerators in their respective regions.

The 5 stages of a startup's journey are:

SEED
This is the first stage for the startup. During this stage the work is primarily on product development.

EARLY
The early stage involves having a product on the market and the first metrics. This stage includes release of the product.

GROWTH
During the growth stage, focus must be on achieving sustainable scaling.

EXPANSION
This stage is characterised by expansion to new markets, increase in distribution channels.

MATURITY/STABILITY
This stage entails consolidation and control of financial, social gains along with flexibility of response and entrepreneurial spirit. Therefore, Revenue planning and channelising the impact generated in community reveals the maturity of startups.

Part 9:
Celebrating an Innovator's Journey

9.1 ANNUAL SHOWCASE & RECOGNITIONS

ACICs are a host institution undertaking the responsibility of catering and collaborating with different stakeholders of the community to develop meaningful solutions to real world problems around the areas. The sole purpose of bringing fellows, startups under one roof is to assimilate different ideas/designs and creative solutions with regards to community problems. Therefore, one of the most important responsibility of an ACIC is to provide a platform for fellows to pitch these ideas and products to the investors and other stakeholders in the community. These investors can provide streamlined direction to innovators and budding startups in upscaling, prototyping and commercializing the ideas. Following are few ideas that could be incorporated by ACICs for showcasing the innovations of fellows and startups.

Investors Meet

Investors Meet or 'Pitch and Fund' can be vivid platforms to link the innovations of fellows and guidance of investors can be organized for the fellows to put forth their ideas, designs, or products amongst the distinguished experts for valuable feedback and to upscale the idea or design of the fellow.

Annual Fellows Meet

Apart from the opportunity to pitch ideas to investors, 'Annual Fellows Meet' could be organized within an ACIC.

These meets could be a way to instill confidence amongst fellows and will help them with collaborative feedback from staff and colleagues on progress and creativity of innovative solutions for community problems.

ACICs must boost up the morale of all innovators and startups that are hosted by them. Awards and recognitions instill energy, passion, and further motivation to think out of the box in developing and upskilling innovative solutions. ACICs in 'Annual Fellow Meet', can find innovative ways to appreciate and award the work, effort, and talent of innovators.

ACICs could take the opportunity to become creative and give away awards with different titles to the innovators and startups. They can create categories as follows:

- Best Idea
- Best Prototype
- Promising Startup
- Most Sustainable Innovation

ACICs could also start their annual newsletter wherein they could showcase the achievers and recognize their hard work with writes ups about them. The same can be unveiled and uploaded on ACIC website under the recognition tab along with respective social media pages, media mentions and annual showcase.

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उत्साहो बलवानार्य नास्त्युत्साहात्परं बलम्।
सोत्साहस्य च लोकेषु न किंचिदपि दुर्लभम्॥

Source: Valmiki Ramayana