

PROGRAMME BROCHURE

Central Asia+ Accelerator Programme

Unlock Greater Asia's Market & Venture Capital Opportunities

PROGRAMME PERIOD: AUGUST - NOVEMBER 2025

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN



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The Central Asia+ Accelerator is part of the ITFC-ESCAP project which is funded by ITFC's TCCA+

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The **Central Asia+ Accelerator** is a private sector development programme designed to support innovative digital startups and SMEs in scaling up and attracting investment to boost digital service exports. Delivered by GUIDE, an affiliated and independent entity of Gobi Partners, the Accelerator equips selected startups with tailored mentorship and expert-led training on internationalization strategies, market entry, and investor engagement.

This initiative is part of the broader “**Boosting Exports through Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in Central Asia**” project, jointly implemented by the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), with funding from ITFC’s Trade Connect Central Asia+ (TCCA+) programme.



www.guide.works/central-asia-accelerator



Accelerate With Market-Ready Tools & ————— Regional Know-How

The Central Asia+ Accelerator Programme is open to 14 selected early-growth stage startups and SME entrepreneurs based in Central Asia+ including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan — who are running digital or technology-enabled businesses and are looking to:

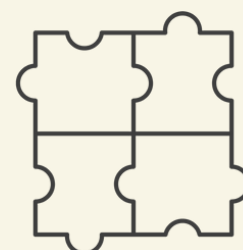
- **Increase their readiness and exposure for securing regional venture capital funding, and**
- **Formulate actionable market expansion strategies with support from experienced partners, practitioner-instructors, and mentors.**

Through this 3-month accelerator programme, you will gain valuable resources to help you scale, including:



Gain Access to Valuable Market Nuances and Capital Insights

Familiarising and priming yourself for the fundraising process that aligns with the investment requirements and style of East Asia and Southeast Asia venture capital firms and investment networks.



Build and Seed Relationship for Future Market Expansion

Develop and formulate a go-to-market strategy with the inputs of operators on the ground across different markets in Asia (East Asia and Southeast Asia) from a bottom-up perspective.



Leverage Our Network & Expertise Across Asia

With decades of economic development experience connecting corporations, government agencies, innovative enterprises, and universities, we are all hands on deck to support your needs to discover new opportunities, navigate them, and grow them with you.

Practical Knowledge & Insights for ————— Immediate Action & Clarity

LEARNING MODE

Language: English

Format: Hybrid. In-person and remote

Duration: 3-month (August - November 2025)

KEY DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

1. Demystify Investment Criteria

Equip innovative digital SMEs with a clear understanding of how investors evaluate potential opportunities.

2. Fundraising Legal Essentials

Introduce the key legal and regulatory components of fundraising, including term sheets, shareholder agreements, and compliance considerations.

3. Build Investor Relationships

Guide participants on maintaining transparent, effective communication with investors—both during the fundraising process and post-investment.

4. Explore Funding Pathways

Provide a broad overview of available financing options such as angel investment, venture capital, crowdfunding, accelerator programs, and other alternative mechanisms.

5. Strengthen Financial Fluency

Enhance financial literacy in key areas like cash flow management, startup valuation, and tracking growth metrics for sustainable scaling.

6. Formulate Market Expansion Strategy

Craft a clear, actionable plan to scale your digital products and services beyond your home market and into the wider region.

PROGRAMME COMPONENTS

2-Day In-Person Bootcamp

Dive into 7 practical, instructor-led modules featuring real-world case studies, a role-playing simulation, and hands-on working sessions.

3-Month Remote Mentorship

Access personalized guidance from a curated pool of 20 mentors—including seasoned entrepreneurs, tech scale-up executives, investment professionals, and international market experts.

Thematic Panels & Workshops

Join 4–5 online panel discussions and workshops hosted by GUIDE and the United Nations ESCAP, focused on market expansion, fundraising, and investor-readiness.

Ongoing Progress Check-ins

Stay on track with regular support and feedback from the programme team to refine your strategy and execution.

Business Delegation to Hong Kong

Selected participants will have the chance to travel to Hong Kong for high-impact networking with investors and ecosystem leaders across East and Southeast Asia.

Action & Practice Integrated Teaching and, ——— Growth Support

Over the course of this 3-month learning and development journey, entrepreneurs will take part in a series of in-person, action-based learning touchpoints—including bootcamps and working sessions with instructors—supported by industry experts and experienced mentors.

These will be complemented by online panel discussions, workshops, and regular check-ins with the programme team. By the end of the programme, you will be equipped to formulate a clear expansion strategy for exporting your digital services and products beyond your local markets, and to assess your own needs and readiness for growth capital.

2 DAYS

14 - 15 AUGUST 2025

Investment Readiness 2-day Bootcamp at SABAH.HUB Innovation Center, Baku

2-day in-person Bootcamp conducted by GUIDE instructors and venture advisors using GUIDE's practitioner-built curriculum and modules.

PRACTITIONER MASTERCLASSES

WORKING SESSION

ACTION LEARNING

4 - 5 SESSIONS

AUGUST - NOVEMBER 2025

Market Nuances And Local Navigation Workshops

A series of 1 - 1.5 hr online workshop showcasing and deep dive into the operating nuances and opportunities of different key local markets across Asia Pacific. List of regions to be featured: ASEAN, East Asia, etc.

MARKET DISCOVERY

MARKET IDENTIFICATION

3-5 DAYS

MARCH/APRIL 2026

Gateway to Greater Bay Area: Join Our Startup Delegation to JUMPSTARTER

High-performing participants from the cohort will be invited to join a sponsored business delegation to Hong Kong, where they will take part in JUMPSTARTER as a startup, explore the local market firsthand, and network directly with regional investors, corporates, and key stakeholders from the Greater Bay Area's digital economy ecosystem.

MARKET IMMERSION

BUSINESS NETWORKING

3 MONTHS

AUGUST - NOVEMBER 2025

Online Mentoring and Monthly Progress Check-In

MENTORSHIP

PROGRESS CHECKPOINT

2 engagements per month for each startup and programme team check in with the entrepreneurs.

8:30AM

30 MINS

EARLY BIRD NETWORKING + WELCOME REMARKS BY ITFC, UNITED NATIONS ESCAP, GOBI PARTNERS, AND GUIDE

9:00AM

60 MINS

Mitigating Venture Risks Using The VANGUARD Framework

Risks in starting, running, and scaling a venture can be mitigated. The VANGUARD Framework provides strategic guidance for venture operators—both entrepreneurs and executives—to navigate challenges, avoid common mistakes, and overcome execution pitfalls. By applying first-principles thinking appraoches, in this lesson we introduce this framework to help current and aspiring venture leaders make informed decisions and build resilient businesses from the get-go keeping in mind seven key aspects.

10:00AM

10 MINS

SHORT BREAK

11:10AM

60 MINS

Growing Enterprise Value And Being Investment Worthy

Privately-held innovative companies can be highly valuable to current owners, loyal and capable staff, incoming shareholders, and even strategic clients. We cover essential topics related to generating shareholder value, equity distribution and management, the dynamics and processes involved in seeking venture capital investment, and the nuances of private capital markets from the perspective of a startup founder or early-stage business owner.

12:10PM

60 MINS

LUNCH BREAK

1:10PM

60 MINS

Investor - Investee Roleplay Game

A group roleplay designed to provide entrepreneurs with hands-on experience in a safe environment to develop core negotiation skills, understand market dynamics, and enhance strategic thinking around equity fundraising. Participants assume roles as either Startups seeking investors or Investors seeking startups, each with specific fundraising goals or investment mandates, working to negotiate favorable terms. The activity concludes with winners determined by a simulated outcome influenced by randomized market or economic factors (e.g., M&A, IPOs, policy changes).

2:10PM

10 MINS

SHORT BREAK

2:20PM

60 MINS

Create a Zero-to-One Flywheel

We introduce product-sales cycles, the lifecycle of business in exposing the natural progression of business challenges and natural market forces that challenges the existence and growth of startups. Together, we introduce some law of market dynamics startups required to resolve in each micro-stages plus execution priorities to conserve resources for maximum revenue yield. We dive into the mechanics of how typical startups fail, conduct self-evaluation, and showcase ways risks can be mitigated in very tactical way in approaching the process of building startups.

Note: The content and scope of the modules may be revised or adjusted after participants are selected to ensure the teaching remains relevant and tailored to their needs.

8:30AM

30 MINS

EARLY NETWORKING + DAY 1 RECAP

9:00AM

60 MINS

Scalable Unit Economics, Cost Levers, And Setting Price

Scalable Unit Economics, Cost Levers, And Setting Price
This lesson focuses on how revenue models and cost levers shape overall business economics, with direct implications for the scalability and sustainability of a business. Participants will explore how to identify and manage critical metrics that drive growth, supported by practical scenarios such as product-sales curves. The session will also cover approaches to pricing strategies, providing guidance on how early-stage entrepreneurs can set prices that align with their business model, value proposition, and market realities such as their target buyers.

10:00AM

10 MINS

SHORT BREAK

11:10AM

60 MINS

Developing My Growth Trajectory

This is a theory-to-application working session where programme instructors act as advisors, supporting founders in applying lessons, frameworks, and working models introduced in previous sessions. Through guided support, founders work toward achieving greater business clarity, making their ventures more attractive to investors.

12:10PM

60 MINS

LUNCH BREAK

Note: The content and scope of the modules may be revised or adjusted after participants are selected to ensure the teaching remains relevant and tailored to their needs.

1:10PM

60 MINS

Pitching Clinic

Learn the fundamentals of entrepreneurial pitching, including how to write effective pitch scripts and create structured pitch decks. The focus will be on developing clear and concise presentations that effectively communicate business ideas to captivate various audience. The session will provide practical tips and techniques for organising content and delivering compelling pitches with different narrative arcs.

2:10PM

10 MINS

SHORT BREAK

2:20PM

60 MINS

Developing Moat and Differentiator

This lesson deconstructs business components into smaller units and moving parts and guides founders to discover and pinpoint their founder-market fit and problem-product fit in order to create a unique edge around the business.

3:20PM

10 MINS

SHORT BREAK

3:30PM

60 MINS

End Bootcamp Self-Assessment

This self-assessment is designed to help participants reflect on their learning, growth, and overall experience at the end of the two-day in-person bootcamp. It provides an opportunity to evaluate key takeaways, areas of confidence, and aspects that may require further development through the 3-month remote mentorship experience along with the series of panel sessions to continue the learning and improvements the participants needed.



Neil Cheong

Lead Instructor, Programme Director
for Central Asia+ Accelerator

GUIDE 

Neil is a seasoned startup operator who transitioned into entrepreneurial development programmes, venture education, and community building—accumulating nearly 10 years of experience supporting entrepreneurship growth and bridging operational knowledge and network gaps across Southeast Asia. As the Founding Managing Director of GUIDE, he oversees learning experience design and materials development across all venture programmes and ecosystem initiatives led by GUIDE and its partners.

Neil has served as a mentor and judge for several innovation programmes, including Malaysia's sovereign wealth fund initiative—the Khazanah Innovation Impact Challenge—for which he led the design of the inaugural programme in 2021. He is also the founder of a regionally based venture studio and one of the creators of the Chief of Staff School. Previously, Neil founded a boutique digital marketing agency and held turnaround leadership roles in two local startups before joining the global entrepreneurial network Endeavor, and subsequently establishing GUIDE.



Alvin Chin

Co-instructor

GUIDE 

A startup operator. Alvin led the finance and strategy function in his previous tenure in GoQuo - B2B travel-tech venture-backed startup GoQuo (backed by Gobi Partners and Monk's Hill Ventures) and engineered an exit for the shareholders.

He spent his early working career with KPMG and PwC in Assurance services involving in various business industries such as hospitality and casino gaming, manufacturing, FMCG and oil and gas clients. Experienced in consumer travel industry, Alvin spent 4 years with Tune Hotels, heading the finance operations before joining GoQuo.

Alvin co-founded SEA-based venture studio Ignition Chamber Academy with Neil in nurturing new startups. He also serves as director and advisor of several companies in Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and the UK. At GUIDE, Alvin leads the venture advisory unit where he bridges business needs with specialised services for venture growth continuity.

About The Partners

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The **International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC)** is a member of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) Group. It was established with the primary objective of advancing trade. With a mission to become a catalyst for trade development for OIC member countries and beyond, the Corporation helps entities in member countries gain better access to trade finance and provides them with trade-related technical assistance programs, which would enable them to have the necessary tools to successfully compete in the global market.

The **Trade Connect Central Asia+ (TCCA+)** is ITFC's flagship regional trade development initiative aimed at fostering inclusive economic growth and regional cooperation among six OIC member countries—Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The program integrates trade development, financing, and investment solutions to enhance value-added exports, improve production quality, facilitate cross-border trade, and strengthen trade-support institutions. TCCA+ supports sustainable development by targeting SME-driven sectors and promoting responsible production, innovation, and international trade competitiveness in the region.

 www.itfc-idb.org

 [TCCA+ Programme](#)



The **Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)** is the most inclusive intergovernmental platform in the Asia-Pacific region. The Commission promotes cooperation among its 53 member States and 9 associate members in pursuit of solutions to sustainable development challenges. ESCAP is one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations.

The ESCAP secretariat supports inclusive, resilient and sustainable development in the region by generating action-oriented knowledge, and by providing technical assistance and capacity-building services in support of national development objectives, regional agreements and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.





Gobi Partners is an Asia-focused venture capital firm with US\$1.6 billion in Assets Under Management (AUM). Headquartered in Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong, the firm supports entrepreneurs from the early to growth stages and focuses on emerging and underserved markets. Founded in 2002, Gobi has raised 21 funds and invested in over 400 startups with 62 operating in the Circular Economy. Gobi has grown to 15 locations across key markets in Bangkok, Beijing, Dhaka, Guangzhou, Ho Chi Minh City, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Karachi, Kuala Lumpur, Lahore, Manila, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Singapore and Tianjin.

As a Participant in the United Nations Global Compact, Gobi Partners is committed to aligning strategies and operations with universal human rights, labour, environment, and anti-corruption principles to ensure long-term value creation and sustainability across its portfolio.

GUIDE

GUIDE is an independent venture support and development entity affiliated with Gobi Partners, focused on designing and delivering impactful capacity-building programs for startups and innovation ecosystems across Asia. Known for its proprietary curriculum, methodology and nurturing approach, GUIDE specializes in venture education, founder training, and capital access strategies.

Through curated bootcamps, investment readiness labs, and regional exposure platforms, GUIDE connects early-stage talent with growth-stage opportunities. Backed by a diverse network across venture capital, innovation, economic development, and impact sectors, GUIDE collaborates with institutional clients, including intergovernmental bodies, government agencies, universities, and investment firms.

At its core, GUIDE believes in the power of development, collaboration, and transformation—driven by shared knowledge and a commitment to strengthening Asia’s innovation and entrepreneurial landscape.



FAQs

This section outlines our eligibility criteria, nomination requirements, and important timeline related to the programme.

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Is there a programme fee to participate?

The programme is offered **free of charge to eligible companies and entrepreneurs** as part of the Trade Connect Central Asia+ (TCCA+) initiative. TCCA+ is an initiative of ITFC, which funds the joint project of ITFC-ESCAP. This programme is part of the "Boosting exports through FDI" project of ITFC-ESCAP.

What are the eligibility and commitment requirements for the programme?

To be considered, applicants must have:

- At least 18 months of active business operations (and not more than 7 years).
- **A revenue-generating business with a clear motivation to export its products or services** and demonstrate fundraising potential in East Asia or Southeast Asia.
- **A product(s) or service(s) that uses digital (software) and/or science-based technology.**
- The **business must be registered and domiciled in one of the Central Asia+ countries:** Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, or Uzbekistan.
- **Founders must be the citizens in one of the Central Asia+ countries (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan).**
- **Majority ownership by the founder(s).**
- Commitment from one founder per company to attend the 2-day BootCamp and able to engage in at least 80% of key activities during the programme period.
- Able to communicate in English.

How we evaluate applicants

Our evaluation focuses on key areas that balance the entrepreneur's potential with their development needs—aiming to enhance their chances of securing synergistic funding and achieving market expansion that aligns with their products and services. We are also committed to inclusive entrepreneurship, valuing diverse backgrounds, sectors, and perspectives that contribute to a more resilient and equitable innovation and digital ecosystem in Central Asia region.

Qualitative and Quantitative Aspects

- **Readiness to Scale:** Assessment of the scalability of the product or solution, including the presence of proprietary technologies or innovations with export potential.
- **Financial Stability and Growth Potential:** Evaluation of revenue size in relation to long-term sustainability and growth prospects.
- **Need and Potential for Growth Capital:** Consideration of the likelihood of accessing equity or debt financing, based on the current funding landscape in Central Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia.

Additional Factors Influencing Final Selection

- The Selection Committee's collective judgment on the applicant's personal motivation, commitment to growth, and openness to learning.
- Commitment to inclusive and responsible business practices will be viewed positively.
- Quality of supporting documentation that strengthens the screening process.
- Strength and relevance of recommendations or nominations included in the application.

Application, Nomination, Screening, and Selection Process

All interested and eligible entrepreneurs are welcome to apply to the Central Asia+ Accelerator Programme.

Applicants are required to submit all necessary information and supporting documents, along with two recommendation or nominations. Nominations are mandatory and must not come from related parties (e.g., co-founders, family members, or employees). Only applications with two valid recommendations will be considered complete and eligible for review.

Key Dates

- Applications Open: **NOW**
- Application Deadline: **July 13, 2025**

The Programme Admission Team will notify you upon receiving a complete application, including both nominations. If you are shortlisted, you will be contacted for an online interview. Successful applicants will then receive an official offer to join the Central Asia+ Accelerator Programme.

Please note that incomplete applications, those lacking nominations, or those with poor-quality supporting documents will not be considered.

How many founders per company can participate?

14 companies will be selected by the Selection Committee, which comprises representatives from ITFC, United Nations ESCAP, and GUIDE. **One entrepreneur slot will be allocated to each of the selected companies.**

The multi-stages process flow:



More Questions? Our Official Communication Channel

All official communications related to your application, shortlisting, and participation in the programme will be conducted exclusively through our official email: **program@guide.works**. Please reach out to us if you have any questions.

Please ensure you check this email address regularly for updates, requests for additional information, and important notifications. We strongly advise applicants to **whitelist this address** or check your spam/junk folders to avoid missing any critical communications. Any communication from other channels or unofficial emails should be disregarded unless otherwise stated on our official website or by a verified team member.

The Nomination System

The Role of Nominations in the Application Process

The nomination process helps us recognize individuals whose potential and developmental needs may have been identified earlier by others. It provides an external and objective perspective that complements our internal review—ensuring we don't overlook qualities or capabilities that may not be immediately evident from the application alone. This allows us to maximize the programme's impact on both the business and the personal growth of the entrepreneur by taking into account individual differences and support networks.

Who is a Nominator?

A Nominator is someone the applicant (you) trusts—an individual who has been supportive during the early stages of your entrepreneurial journey. This could include:

- An investor or grant provider
- A product/solution tester or early adopter
- A customer or client
- An advisor or consultant
- A representative from an entrepreneurship community or incubator you previously participated

We will ask the Nominator about your commitment to building a sustainable and scalable business and any distinctive qualities they have observed. This gives us the opportunity to see your application from the perspective of someone who has worked closely with you.

Nomination Criteria & Instructions

- Each applicant must receive nomination from two individuals.
- Nominators must not be affiliated with each other (e.g., from the same organization or close relation).
- Please choose individuals who can accurately speak to your character, commitment, and journey.
- Ensure your Nominators have accurate details about your application. You may share this programme brochure with them for context.
- Once your application is submitted, we will contact your Nominators via email. You will be notified once their recommendations are received.

Important: Applications without two completed nominations will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed.

Who are the mentors?

There will be a pool of 15 to 20 high calibre and vetted mentors with diverse functional expertise, industry backgrounds, and experience operating in both local and regional markets. Among them are exited and current entrepreneurs from high-growth regional tech scale-ups in East and Southeast Asia, as well as former operators who have transitioned into venture capital fund management. These mentors offer valuable insights into the fundraising process and investor perspectives. A mentor "facebook" profile will be shared prior to the mentorship phase, and GUIDE will recommend mentors for you to connect with based on your business focus and growth needs.

Central Asia+ Accelerator Programme

[APPLY HERE](#)

[NOMINATE SOMEONE](#)

This accelerator supports tech founders and digital SME entrepreneurs in Central Asia, as well as Azerbaijan to scale their businesses, attract growth capital, and expand into international markets across Asia.

For more info and updates, please visit and follow:



www.guide.works/central-asia-accelerator



www.linkedin.com/showcase/central-asia-accelerator

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