

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **ChicoSTART Accelerating the Next Generation of Young Entrepreneurs in the North State**



**Chico, CA - January 14, 2026: ChicoSTART**, a leader in empowering entrepreneurs, startups and small businesses in the North State, is proud to announce **Next Gen Incubator**. ChicoSTART **Next Gen Incubator** encourages founders aged **18+** to accelerate innovative ideas into reality, providing the essential tools and mentorship needed to **START, GROW, and THRIVE**.

Next Gen participants will explore all of the steps to creating a startup equipping them with the mindset, tools, and confidence to turn ideas into action. Through interactive sessions, mentorship from local entrepreneurs and advisors, and real-world problem solving, participants explore the fundamentals of entrepreneurship—including ideation, customer discovery, teamwork, and telling their startup story.

As a nonprofit, ChicoSTART is committed to expanding access to entrepreneurial education and creating early pathways to opportunity. The Next Gen program intends to also strengthen the North State entrepreneurial ecosystem by empowering young entrepreneurs to think

outside the box, build entrepreneurial skills early, and connect with ChicoSTART's regional Accelerate CA Inclusive Innovation Hub.

"The Next Gen Incubator is about meeting young innovators where they are and giving them the tools to move from idea to action. If we want stronger rural economies, we must invest earlier in the people who will build them—helping young founders develop confidence, practical skills, and a sense that they belong in the entrepreneurial ecosystem right here in the North State," said Eva Shepherd-Nicoll, Executive Director of ChicoSTART.

Research shows that students exposed to entrepreneurship education are up to 30% more likely to start a business later in life, underscoring the long-term value of early entrepreneurial education.

The Next Gen Innovator Lab is a selective program, with participants accepted through an application process held twice annually. Those interested can email [info@chicostart.com](mailto:info@chicostart.com) for more information.

For all press inquiries, please contact [eva@chicostart.com](mailto:eva@chicostart.com). ###

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**ChicoSTART**'s mission is to empower - entrepreneurs, startups and businesses with resources, training and community support needed to start, grow and thrive throughout Northern California. ChicoSTART is 1 of 13 designated iHubs awarded the statewide Accelerate CA Inclusive Innovation Hub (iHUB2) grant from CalOSBA. ChicoSTART's iHUB2 designation covers over 20+ counties in Northern California, focusing on building the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem for equitable access to entrepreneurial resources with inclusive ecosystem expansion into our **rural** and **diverse** communities.

