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## **The Startup Spotlight: Chronicles of Innovation (2016-2023)**

Dawn Hightree

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# The Startup Spotlight: Chronicles of Innovation (2016-2023)

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## Table of Contents

<b>Author Note.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Agency and Community Description.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Agency.....	6
<b>Problem Model Background and Literature Review.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Problem Statement.....	8
Figure 1: Problem Model.....	9
<b>Contributing Factors.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Entrepreneurs need Capital, Resources, and Support.....	10
Limited Staffing.....	11
Funding Dependence.....	12
<b>Consequences.....</b>	<b>13</b>
Reputation Damage.....	13
Reduced Program Impact.....	14
Missed Opportunities.....	15
<b>Project Description and Implementation Process.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Project Description.....	15
Project Justification.....	16
Benefits.....	17
<b>Expected Outcomes &amp; Assessment Plan.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Implementation Process.....	19
Project Results.....	21
Analysis.....	22
<b>Conclusion &amp; Recommendations.....</b>	<b>22</b>
Conclusion.....	22
Recommendation.....	24
<b>References.....</b>	<b>26</b>
Appendix A.....	29
Appendix B.....	30
Appendix C.....	30
Project Implementation Plan.....	31
<b>Appendix D.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Definition of iiED Quantitative Chart.....</b>	<b>32</b>

## Abstract

The Institute for Innovation and Economic Development (iiED) is a nonprofit organization that has been pivotal in supporting entrepreneurial success in the Monterey Bay Region. The iiED's programs and services are effective at helping to solve the problem that **Too many entrepreneurs lack resources, support, and innovation to effectively start a business in Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito Counties**. Nonprofit organizations need to provide adequate proof to all stakeholders of mission fulfillment. Limited staffing, funding dependencies, and entrepreneurs needing substantial business services to meet the companies are contributing factors that can lead to missed opportunities, failed program deliveries, and reputation damage of nonprofit organizations. **The Startup Spotlight: Chronicles of Innovation and Clarification (2016-2023)** project aims to showcase the iiED's impact on startup success through interviews with past participants. By highlighting success stories, the project aims to demonstrate the iiED's effectiveness in supporting entrepreneurship and economic development in the region. As a way to provide evidence to all stakeholders of iiED's mission accomplishment, a thematic analysis, *Unveiling Success: A Case Study Analysis of Six Startup Champions (2016-2023)*, was conducted from transcripts of six startup Challenge winners (2016-2023) interviews. Conclusively results demonstrate iiED's capability in meeting expectations of entrepreneurs seeking funding assistance, business connections, and guidance. Moving forward, recommendations include continuing and expanding the scope of the project.

*Keywords: iiED, entrepreneurship, economic development, Monterey Bay Region, startup support, analysis*

## **Agency and Community Description**

### **Agency**

The Institute for Innovation and Economic Development (iiED) is housed within the Business and Information Technology Building (BIT) at California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB). The iiED was established in 2010 as a valuable branch of the CSUMB College of Business, which is dedicated to fostering a community where students and regional entrepreneurs achieve financial and personal success through entrepreneurship (Barbeau & Kuan, 2023). With the vision of a commitment to “creating a community in which students and regional community entrepreneurs achieve financial and personal success through entrepreneurship” (Institute for Innovation and Economic Development, 2024, para. 2), The iiED offers startup accelerator programs, training events, and services to support entrepreneurs in Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz County.

The mission is stated as “The iiED prepares highly motivated students and community members for success as entrepreneurs. We educate, incubate, and launch new enterprises. We seek out and serve underserved communities and actively promote inclusion and diversity” (Institute for Innovation and Economic Development, 2024, para. 3). Through initiatives like the Startup Factory, Startup Challenge Monterey Bay, Startup Connections, and others iiED has assisted over 1,100 companies, raised millions in funding, and provided valuable resources to support entrepreneurial endeavors in the region as noted in the iiED annual report (Barbeau & Kuan, 2023).

### **Community Served**

The agency serves a diverse population, including college students and small business owners, with a focus on underserved communities. “The California State University, Monterey

Bay's (CSUMB) Institute for Innovation & Economic Development (iiED) promotes and supports entrepreneurship, serving the university and the Tri-County Region of Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz Counties" (Barbeau & Kuan, 2023, para. 2). The race and ethnicity, number of people below the poverty line, and population of the community served in the tri-counties can be studied in the table in Appendix A. Approximately 774,420 people make up the tri-county area (US Census Bureau, n.d.). Hispanics make up the largest percentage at approximately 51% in all the tri-counties. Whites follow next making up approximately 39% (US Census Bureau, n.d.). The iiED seeks to assist regardless of one's race or ethnicity. All populations receive equal assistance. As per the mission, iiED seeks out the underserved such as those who live in poverty, another aspect of the community iiED serves. Monterey has a 12% poverty rate. Santa Cruz has 10.9%. San Benito has a 7.7% poverty rate as found in the U.S Census. (United States Census Bureau, n.d.). Data can be viewed at Appendix B.

The iiED supports students by offering internships and free student entry into the challenge and accelerator programs, as well as the connect hub meetings that for the general population require a small fee. Student support at CSUMB and in the surrounding area is highly important to the mission of iiED. Demonstrated in Figure 1 in Appendix A, the college student populations in the tri-counties which iiED serves are a total of 82,301 students (US Census Bureau, n.d.).

The needs of the clientele who seek services in addition to college students are mainly small business owners with very little funding. The number of small businesses in 2022 according to the US Census in Monterey County was 8,883, Santa Cruz County was 6,985, and San Benito County the number was 1,034 (US Census Bureau, n.d.). Due to the fact that iiED is integrated into the Business Department at CSUMB, entrepreneurs seek iiED services and



support to know how to get venture capital. The iiED is relatively successful at assessing funds to help winners of the program competitions. The startup statistics from Founder Jar state that, “Less than 1% of startups get venture capital investment” (Belyh, 2023, para. 3). This seems shockingly low and demonstrates the importance of iiED who has generated millions in funding. iiED’s ability to raise millions of dollars in a difficult financial environment provides evidence of iiED’s success.

## Problem Model Background and Literature Review

### Problem Statement

Entrepreneurs play a vital role growing the Monterey Bay regional economy. Supporting the local economy helps the tri counties thrive and revive. Entrepreneurs struggle to get started due to the need of capital, resources, and support (Roberts, 2019). Providing a platform that potentially can scale their business, provide investment opportunities, and build on the interconnectedness with iiED gives startup entrepreneurs added support on their business path.

**Too many entrepreneurs lack resources, support, and innovation to effectively start a business in Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito Counties.** . In order to start a business successfully, entrepreneurs need to be able to pay for operations, office setup, licensing, and marketing (Trimi & Berbegal-Mirabent, 2012). However, limited staffing and dependence on external funding sources pose significant risks to the sustainability and impact of iiED's initiatives. Failure to address these challenges can result in reputation damage, ineffective programs, and missed opportunities for entrepreneurial growth.

Companies need to prove that the program funding that has been received was used

effectively (Fu et al., 2023). The tri-county area has a high cost of living. This creates more pressure on iiED to focus services on those in need to prove – for accreditation purposes – that iiED’s results are consistent with the mission statement.

There are approximately 207, 544 people between the ages of 18-64 who are latent and total early-stage entrepreneurs (TEA) in the tri-county region. This underscores the importance of supporting entrepreneurship and fostering an environment conducive to new business development in the region, a focus area for the Institute for Innovation and Economic Development (iiED). (See appendix A).

A demonstration of the problem model can be viewed in Figure 1. Contributing factors can cause detrimental consequences to iiED demonstrating program effectiveness in the tri-county area. Limited staffing, funding dependence, and the expensive region that iiED serves are considerations for determining the factors that aggravate the problem.

*Figure 1: Problem Model*

<b>CONTRIBUTING FACTORS</b>	<b>PROBLEM</b>	<b>CONSEQUENCES</b>
Entrepreneurs need capital, resources, and support	Too many entrepreneurs lack resources, support, and innovation to effectively start a business in Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito Counties.	Reputation damage
Limited Staffing		Ineffective Programs and Services
Funding Dependence		Missed Opportunities

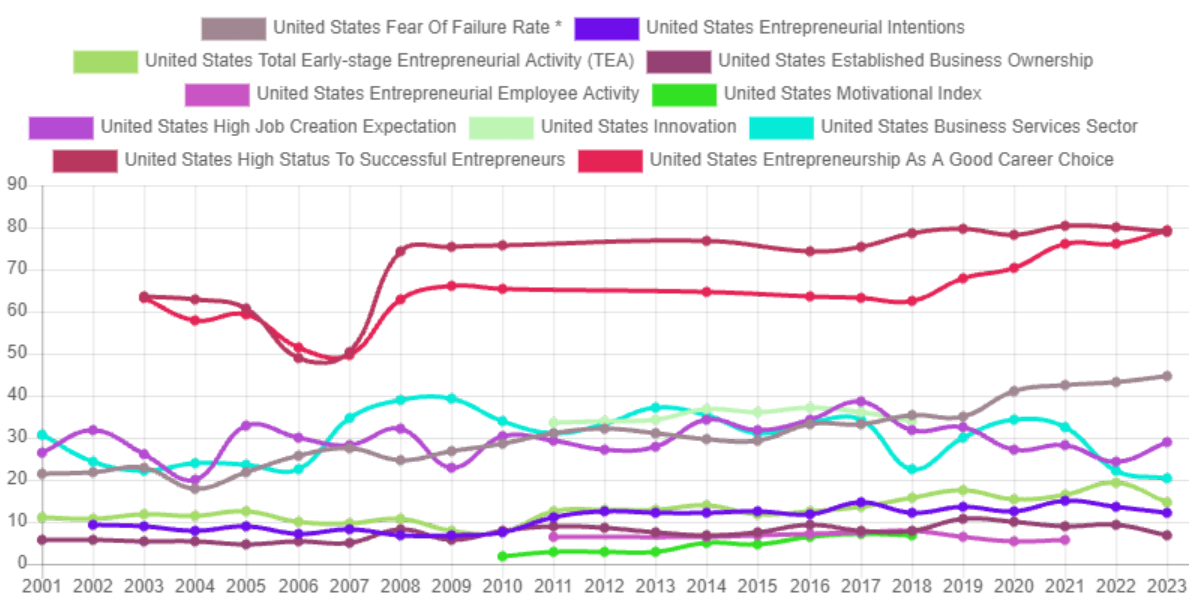
## Contributing Factors

### *Entrepreneurs need Capital, Resources, and Support*

Essential resources and support provide confidence and security to overcome barriers to startup success (Pan et al., 2022). A study drawing on social-cognitive theory contends having access to resources in the venture development stage provides a path to entrepreneur confidence that brings success (Marshall, 2020). High living costs in the tri-county area further compound the challenges faced by entrepreneurs, making it essential for iiED to provide targeted assistance and resources to support entrepreneurial endeavors effectively. It is iiED’s responsibility to support innovation and economic development in the region with the resources it acquires (Institute for Innovation and Economic Development, 2024).

Figure 2 provides a United States Entrepreneurial landscape to review. This data is resourced from 2000 adults in the United States pertaining to entrepreneurial data. This figure gives a general background.

**Figure 2-United States Entrepreneur Data Chart**



(Global Entrepreneurship Model (GEM), 2024)

### ***Limited Staffing***

Limited staffing within iiED poses challenges in delivering comprehensive support to entrepreneurs. The iiED is undergoing major staffing changes and lost one of the entrepreneur support services called *Get Virtual*. *Get virtual* was a multimedia development entrepreneur support service provided free by iiED (Barbeau & Kuan, 2023). This service included social media marketing support, website services, software and data support. In the 2022 iiED budget *Get Virtual* assisted 45 companies by helping them move their businesses online, This service has been ended due to limited staff. Dan Ripke helped with the *Get Virtual* program, wrote grants for iiED, and supported events. Dan Ripke's contract was not renewed for 2024.

Brad Barbeau, who is a major player in creating funding opportunities, connecting students to the program in his CSUMB classes, speaking and leading Startup challenge events, and fundraising, is retiring. These structural changes will have some kind of operational impact. The aspects of staffing on operational outcomes has been researched and found that strategic management perspectives emphasize the importance of adequate staffing in nonprofit organizations to ensure operational efficiency and program success (Mosley & Smith, 2023). If not effectively managed, this change can compound the organization's future stability. High turnover and inability to meet organizational goals is directly related to being able to maintain adequate staffing in a study defining the differences between nonprofit and for profit businesses. (Gee et al., 2023).

In Arbogust's study, regarding why nonprofit's go out of business, staffing shifts were concluded to affect organizational success rates (2020). The iiED is preparing for the risk. Jennifer Kuan will be replacing Brad and becoming the executive director, however, Mary Jo

Zenk is changing her role to part-time to focus on financial management. Mary Jo and Brad have been the faces of Startup challenge and Startup Connect in the region since its beginning in 2012.

During the analysis, whenever a participant mentioned either of them, there was praise, excitement, and a feeling of awe at how effectively Brad and Mary Jo were creating partnerships, providing excellent business support, and business services. Brad is a dynamic speaker at Startup Connect, Startup Challenge, and other important events. And where there is Brad, there is Mary Jo who has close relationships with many businesses, investors, and community partners. Change can create a feeling of fear for the future. The business community who attend Startup Connect could lose faith in iiED's ability to fulfill iiED's mission. It can be concluded that the absence of these effective leaders assisting in programs, events, and services at iiED could negatively impact the organization if not effectively managed.

### ***Funding Dependence***

The Institute for Innovation and Economic Development (iiED) faces significant challenges in securing sustainable funding streams to support its mission. As outlined in the iiED Annual Report 2022-2023 (Barbeau & Kuan, 2023), the institute's revenue primarily stems from grants and contracts, donations, contributions, and support from the College of Business. Financial streams determine if a nonprofit's doors will remain open. The type of financial dependency has different risks for business stability.

Studies suggest that nonprofits must diversify their revenue streams to mitigate such risks and ensure financial resilience. Nonprofit organizations are not financially sustainable when dependent on funding sources that are mostly outside the organization (Sontag-Padilla et al., 2012). The iiED receives some revenue from program fees, but its heavy reliance on government grants and donations underscores the importance of effective program implementation and

accountability to maintain support from stakeholders and the community (Barbeau & Kuan, 2023).

Theoretical frameworks, including ecological theory, market theory, resource dependency theory, and institutional theory, offer insights into nonprofit organizations' viability and effectiveness (Arbogust, 2020). Some funding is ending because iiED is a continuing business and is expected to fund itself (Barbeau & Kuan, 2023). Research indicates that nonprofits facing declines in governmental and private donations may experience operational challenges, potentially leading to mission drift—deviation from their core mission (Arbogust, 2020). Revenue concentration emerges as a key variable influencing organizational survival, underscoring the importance of maintaining equity to navigate revenue difficulties effectively.

## **Consequences**

### ***Reputation Damage***

As a nonprofit whose mission is to impact entrepreneurship the iiED faces the challenge of demonstrating the effectiveness of its programs and services in supporting entrepreneurship in the high-cost region of Monterey Bay. Failure to demonstrate program effectiveness and impact can result in reputation damage for iiED. Nonprofits relying on external funding sources risk losing credibility and support if they cannot showcase the outcomes and effectiveness of their programs (Sontag-Padilla et al., 2012). Stakeholders' trust and confidence in iiED may diminish, affecting the agency's ability to secure future funding and support. Providing evidence of organizational listening to client's and inhouse staff *building community members' trust* which is important for accomplishing their social missions. it then the business creates a bad name for itself (Fu et al., 2023). Failure to maximize program impact can diminish iiED's ability to

support entrepreneurship and economic development effectively. When programs aren't effective or shown to be effective, nonprofits who rely on outstanding funding sources risk reputation damage (Fu et al., 2023). iiED seems to be effectively managing programs and financial dependencies thus far. The staff includes professors of nonprofit management and financial management which gives the staff of iiED substantial knowledge to mitigate risks effectively.

### ***Reduced Program Impact***

Effective nonprofit management of programs involves transparency and accountability of where the money was spent and measuring the outcomes. Research provided from studying 240 articles related to NGOs performance measurement systems in non-profit organizations concluded the social impact of organizations are important in measuring the success or NPO's. Nonprofit organizations like iiED must effectively manage program funding to support their mission and ensure continued support from stakeholders (Treinta et al., 2020). Demonstrating mission effectiveness ensures that an organization keeps their 501c3 charitable tax exemption in order to receive certain grants and funding resources to execute programs (Mosley & Smith, 2023). The iiED relies heavily on external funding sources, including government grants and local donors, to sustain its programs (Barbeau & Kuan, 2023).

The programs at iiED are extremely successful. Although there are potential risks that are important to be aware of that affects nonprofit organizations which can lead to reduced program impact, currently iiED appears to be effectively managing all business operational systems that potentially can cause reduced program impact.

### ***Missed Opportunities***

Ineffective programs and limited resources can lead to missed opportunities for entrepreneurial growth and economic development in the region. iiED is currently struggling with acquiring federal funding in part because of limited staffing. The prospect of not acquiring matching funds in order to acquire federal grants for project funding is a threat to iiED's operational stability (Barbeau & Kuan, 2023). Nonprofits like iiED must demonstrate program effectiveness to maintain support and credibility (Fu et al., 2023). Failure to address these challenges can result in reputation damage, reduced program impact, and missed opportunities for entrepreneurial growth (Sontag-Padilla et al., 2012; Pan et al., 2022). Providing financial support to client's is part of iiED's service.

Financial needs have to be met in order to successfully launch. iiED provides financial support and prize money for winners. The outcome of ineffectively managed financial flows leads to diminished outcomes. Entrepreneurs may fail to capitalize on available resources and support, hindering their ability to scale their businesses and contribute to the local economy effectively (Pan et al., 2022). Therefore addressing missed opportunities is crucial for iiED to fulfill its mission and maximize its impact on the community. This shortcoming potentially can affect funding resources.

## **Project Description and Implementation Process**

### **Project Description**

The Startup Spotlight: Chronicles of Innovation (2016-2023) project aims to showcase the success stories of startup entrepreneurs supported by iiED. Through interviews with startup challenge participants, the video series will highlight the impact of iiED's programs and services



on entrepreneurial success in the Monterey Bay region. The project involves developing interview questions, conducting interviews via Zoom, and producing written articles for publication on iiED's website and newsletter. Maximizing the information from open-ended questions leading to an abundance of information, thematic analysis of the explicit data will conform to concrete evidenced program effectiveness.

### ***Project Justification***

The videos and articles provide exponential support to entrepreneurs on their business path and demonstrate iiED's effective Startup Programs. The Startup Video Series serves as a powerful tool for promoting iiED's effectiveness in supporting entrepreneurship and economic development. By sharing success stories and testimonials from startup entrepreneurs, the project enhances iiED's credibility, fosters community engagement, and attracts potential investors and partners. Moreover, the project aligns with iiED's mission of promoting innovation and economic growth in the region. Entrepreneurs play a vital role in growing the Monterey Bay regional economy. Thematic analysis provides scientific research evidence to all stakeholders including the accreditation process of how iiED fulfills the institute's mission and vision.

The iiED relies on creating meaningful relationships with all stakeholders. Interviewing clients demonstrates good listening practices. In a study to determine how organizational listening enhances outcomes, Fu et al. (2023) explains that, "Organizational listening (OL) is a best practice which can create organizational and social value when practiced properly" (p.4). Building meaningful stakeholder relationships increases support (Fu et al., 2023). These interviews exemplify iiED's program accountability while having access to understanding the needs of stakeholders and how to address them. Furthermore, the video series provides the

opportunity to display the client's positive view of the iiED startup challenge that will support accreditation requirements and the community.

Supporting the local economy helps the tri-counties thrive. Entrepreneurs struggle to get started due to the need for capital, resources, and support. Providing a platform that can scale their business, provide investment opportunities, and build on the interconnectedness with iiED gives startup entrepreneurs added support on their business path. The iiED serves entrepreneurs who need services but can't afford to pay for them. Appendix B gives an economic overview of the area served.

### **Benefits**

The project benefits iiED by showcasing its impact on startup success and fostering community engagement. Success stories shared through the video series inspire other entrepreneurs, attract funding and support, and contribute to the overall mission of iiED in promoting economic development in the Monterey Bay region. Nonprofit organizations in Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz County serve diverse community needs (Barbeau & Kuan, 2023). Demonstrating successful programs that align with their mission statements is essential for ensuring community impact and continued support (Barbeau & Kuan, 2023). Showcasing Startup Challenge participants' successful use of iiED's services and programs not only benefits the winners but also contributes to the overall mission of iiED in promoting innovation and economic development in the region.

### **Expected Outcomes & Assessment Plan**

The study intends to uncover common themes and patterns in the experiences of entrepreneurs to shed light on the pivotal role played by institutional support in fostering entrepreneurial growth. The Institute for Innovation and Economic Development (iiED) operates

as a catalyst for entrepreneurship and economic development within the Monterey Bay region.

This research intervention proposal aimed to investigate and comprehend the role of the Institute for Innovation and Economic Development (iiED) at Cal State University Monterey Bay in fostering entrepreneurial success within the Monterey Bay region and exemplifying its role at the CSUMB College of Business.

Strengthened connections between iiED and the entrepreneurial ecosystem responses were recorded during the interviews and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Coding and analysis of responses were completed after the 3rd interview by myself. The analysis phase concluded upon achieving saturation—when no new significant information surfaces from the interviews.

The project deliverable consisted of a multimedia package, including online newsletter articles that provide in-depth insights into the journeys and achievements of these entrepreneurs and performance reports and data analytics to measure the success of the project. The culmination of these deliverables was a resource that iiED could use to showcase its work, inspire future entrepreneurs, and foster a sense of community within the Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito County entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The thematic analysis was the qualitative method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes showing the iiED program's effectiveness to all stakeholders. The analysis answers the question How does iiED help startup challenge participants? The proposed research intervention employs a qualitative approach, utilizing structured interviews conducted via Zoom or similar platforms. The interviews were designed to extract in-depth insights from a diverse pool of past participants in iiED's programs, particularly the Startup Challenge winners. A phenomenological interview orientation was executed. The questions were open-ended. This allowed the participants to reflect and describe their experiences in detail. This method ensured consistency in

exploring participants' experiences and allowed for in-depth discussions, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the influence of iiED's support.

The six step analysis demonstrates recurring themes within interview questions, assigns color-coded themes, applies entrepreneur identity theory, self-determination theory, and diffusion innovation theory, and development of a conceptual model. A chart is created by creating a quantitative scoring system. The scoring system tallies points based on answers of yes or no to relevant questions pertaining to the identified theme. A final percentage score will be used to identify the overall effectiveness of iiED in the community. The chart can be found in the thematic analysis report. The conceptual model provides the research findings qualitatively. The quantitative process can be reviewed at Appendix D.

The anticipated outcome is that Mary Jo Zenk finds the thematic analysis and interviews to be useful and contribute to the enhancement of iiED's programs, fostering an ecosystem conducive to entrepreneurial growth and economic development within the region. The dissemination of interview insights will serve as evidence of iiED's fulfillment of its mission within the community. All the startup challenge participants exude adoration, gratefulness, and equivocal support of iiED. High percentage scoring will be assured. The representation of program effectiveness provides enhanced reputation of iiED as a catalyst for innovation and economic development. Due to the interpersonal aspect of personal interviews entrepreneurs will feel inspired and fuel support for startups through the success stories. Providing a platform for these entrepreneurs provides the potential for growth in the number of startup challenge participants in the future.

### ***Implementation Process***

The Startup Spotlight: Chronicles of Innovation (2016-2023) was a compilation of Startup

finalists and winners of the Startup Challenge showcasing the path to their success along with the partnership, resources, and support from iiED. The project commenced its implementation phase in October 2023, to wrap up by May 2024. The implementation plan is found in Appendix C. The series will be available on the iiED website and other media channels. The participants will be asked engaging questions focused on the background of their business ideas and future goals including the impact that iiED has had on them. This project provides an opportunity to share with the community and inform the community of the exponential services that the institute provides.

The primary goal is to highlight the achievements of these entrepreneurs and their businesses while emphasizing the value of iiED's services. The newsletters provide accurate backgrounds of the businesses accomplishments and future goals while demonstrating iiED's vision. Accurate notes will be taken for a write-up of an article that includes background information and the impact that iiED has had on the entrepreneurs for the website and other marketing channels.

Communication with the Startup Challenge participants to set up times and share questions before the set interview will be conducted by Dawn Hightree with approvals by Mary Jo Zenk. The engaging interviews will be conducted on Zoom and recorded. The compilations will be reviewed, saved, and analyzed for newsletter content. Newsletters will be written by Dawn. Mary Jo and the iiED marketing team will edit, then publish to multimedia outlets. A thematic analysis report will be created January 2024-May 2024 for Mary Jo to review, evaluate, and publish. An engaging Capstone presentation will be delivered in May 2024.

## **Project Results**

The Startup Spotlight: Chronicles of Innovation (2016-2023) resulting in three additional Zoom interviews with Startup Challenge 2023 winners, three additional newsletter articles published in the iiED newsletter spotlighting the clients, and a thorough thematic analysis report from six winners from (2016-2023). The interviews were conducted with open-ended questions by myself and Sarah Vickers Webb, an iiED consultant hired to create media for marketing purposes. The thematic analysis used in this study was formulated using the process as instructed in the article written by Naeem, et al., (2023) titled A Step-by-Step Process of Thematic Analysis to Develop a Conceptual Model in Qualitative Research.

A thorough thematic analysis was conducted from Startup Challenge winners interviews and other client data. The scope of this analysis was a small subject group of six startup challenge winners selected from the Monterey Bay Startup Challenge program from 2016-2023. A report and chart were generated from the results. Along with published Startup challenge interviews, the analysis report substantially showcases iiED's impact. The conceptual model explains how iiED effectively creates life changing success for the client's. The scoring system tallies points based on the presence of relevant themes that pertain to iiED mission fulfillment, providing an evaluation based on the completeness of responses about the identified themes.

I analyzed, wrote, and completed the thematic analysis of explicit interview data called [Unveiling Success: A Case Study Analysis of Six Startup Champions \(2016-2023\)](#). An evaluation survey was created for Mary Jo Zenk, program manager and intern mentor at the iED. The survey is used to evaluate the thematic analysis. The evaluation was filled out by Mary Jo Zenk and can be found here: <file:///C:/Users/corpt/Downloads/Mary%20Jo%20response.pdf>. The evaluation results demonstrate high marks and positive results. Mary Jo indicated that the

report is helpful for iiED. This report has the capacity to fulfill the objective, to provide evidence to all stakeholders of the institute's mission fulfillment.

The thematic analysis provided a wealth of information. iiED's programs and services transform client's entrepreneurial dreams into life changing realities demonstrating highly impactful programs and services which was an expected outcome. The report provides a conceptual model that clarifies the client's positive outcomes from the iiED. The chart generated barely scratches the service of information in the report. Time constraints didn't allow for more intensive chart generation effectively demonstrating the abundance of information extracted besides the one assessed at [appendix D](#). However, the information in the report called Unveiling Success: A Case Study Analysis of Six Startup Champions (2016-2023) will be available for continued use to generate additional charts and tables for result clarification purposes. There is a possibility of having the report peer reviewed and published.

### *Analysis*

:[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kBGgodyoiL9W-xDuMJBZfZdutIXqYbxxB9\\_rSaqMgSs/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kBGgodyoiL9W-xDuMJBZfZdutIXqYbxxB9_rSaqMgSs/edit?usp=sharing))

## **Conclusion & Recommendations**

### *Conclusion*

The Startup Spotlight: Chronicles of Innovation (2016-2023) is a box office hit as a parallelism to the entertainment world. When attending the recent startup events, entertainment and excitement fills the room, so the statement meets the moment. The chronological result following the exciting, somewhat stressful, and invigorating event; then conducting open-ended style interviews, and concluding with Unveiling Success: A Case Study Analysis of Six Startup

Champions (2016-2023) which is a thematic analysis study that I conducted, remains clear, the startup challenge culminates in being life transforming for the participants' entrepreneurial journey. The thematic analysis revealed several important impacts of iiED and the motivations to participate in the iiED programs which details the origin of the event excitement and tension derives from as well as provides a window into the research question How is iiED helping startup challenge participants? How iiED helps startup challenge participants is answered within the thematic analysis process, summarized with applied relevant theories, and maintained by proposing a conceptual model.

The conceptual model was designed by disseminating the explicit data using relevant theories. Participants gain a sense of entrepreneurial identity from the impact of the programs. There were many keywords and phrases that were powerful and connected to the value the participants hold dear regarding Startup Challenge, Startup Launch, and Startup Connect. The overall sense that was observed was the gratitude for the services that iiED provides. The connections, growth, and networking were common key words from every participant's perceived impact with strong motivations mirroring the same along with financial support and connections being key motivators.

A revelation, unobtrusively obtained, demonstrates that the participants have absolutely no negative criticism of iiED's program and services in any part of the process of the analysis, although protocol provided ample space for participants to provide it. Not only did the participants have exalted positive views of the iiED experience, the thematic analysis report answers the question of how.

The conceptual model and explicit data in the report demonstrates iiED's Monterey Bay Startup Challenge program executes the guarantee of offering substantial entrepreneurial support



services for each of the participants. There is a clear representation of clarity from the participants defining the program impact the Institute for Innovation and Economic Development has had on the client's business and personal development. Furthermore, Mary Jo Zenk confirmed in the survey evaluation that the analysis will be useful for accreditation and scored a 9 for scaling questions. Potentially the results effectively maintain the reputation of iiED's effectiveness and organizational stability to all stakeholders to continue to attract support and not missing opportunities while fostering entrepreneurship in the tri-county region.

### ***Recommendation***

My recommendation supports the expansion of the 2023-2024 Startup Challenge research project with an increase in scope. A more thorough determinant of iiED's organizational structural effectiveness would require data collection from participants that did not win. Six participants of non winning participants would be considered substantial.

Finally, in addition to research expansion, risk management due to staffing changes require immediate attention. Mary Jo and Brad's unique abilities and personality along with long term involvement as the faces of the program since the beginning, requires a transfer of the face of the program with a special event for all stakeholders. This recommendation is a result of personal observations, and the findings from most of the participants highlighting the positive impact of Mary Jo Zenk and Brad Barbeau's support for business development success. Since Mary Jo and Brad will no longer be the face of iiED programs or service support, this staffing shift could greatly diminish organizational stability.

Assuring all stakeholders of effective management of organizational instability, a passing of the baton to Jennifer Kaun can be an opportunity to insure to stakeholders of continued organizational stability while creating a spotlight on the vision of iiED and the shared success.

The result could alleviate failing community support due to losing faith in trust in iiED's mission. Extensive description of recommendations are found in the [report](#).

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## Appendix A

### *Tri County Race, Poverty, Entrepreneur, and college measures*

	<b>Monterey County, California</b>	<b>Santa Cruz County, California</b>	<b>San Benito County, California</b>	<b>Total</b>	
<b>Total Population</b>	438,953	272,138	63,329	774,420	
<b>Hispanic</b>	261,961	92,641	38,544	393,146	50.77%
<b>White alone</b>	126,356	152,771	204,77	299,604	38.69%
<b>Black or African American alone</b>	10,124	2,269	555	12,948	1.67%
<b>American Indian and Alaska Native alone</b>	686	209	192	1,087	0.14%
<b>Asian alone</b>	24,534	12,883	1,775	39,192	5.06%
<b>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone</b>	1,794	334	103	2,231	0.29%
<b>Some other race alone</b>	1,020	1,133	48	2,201	0.28%
<b>Some College</b>	32,279	39,428	10,594	82,301	
<b>Poverty Line</b>	12.2%	10.9%	7.7%		
<b>Total Early State (TEA) Entrepreneur Activity</b>	14.71%				113, 917
<b>Latent Entrepreneur</b>	12.09%				93,627
<b>Total possible Entrepreneurs</b>					207,544

(US Census, 2023) and (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2024)

## Appendix B

### Income & Poverty

County	Monterey	Santa Cruz	San Benito
Median household income (in 2021 dollars), 2017-2021	\$82,013	\$96,093	\$95,606
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2021 dollars), 2017-2021	\$33,786	\$47,619	\$37,238
Persons in poverty, percent	12.1%	10.6%	8.9%

(United States Census Bureau, n.d.)

## Appendix C

### Project Implementation Plan

Tasks	Timeline/ Deadlines	Parties Involved	Materials/ Services Needed	Deliverables
Identify and contact Startup winners	October 2023	Dawn and Startup winners	Communication channels	Committed time for interview
Schedule and Conduct Zoom Interviews	October-February 2023-2024	Dawn, Mary Jo, and startup challenge winners	Computer	Recorded Interviews
Develop and Edit online newsletter articles	October-February 2023-2024	Dawn, iiED Marketing staff, and Mary Jo	Computer, marketing department	iiED Newsletter
Publish and promote content through various media	October-February 2023-2024	Mary Jo and iiED marketing staff	Computer, Management approval	Published iiED Newsletter
Assess project performance and finalize deliverables	January-May 2024	Dawn	Computer, printing	Performance Reports and analysis
Capstone Presentation	May 2024	Dawn and CHHS 401 class	Computer	Successful completion of Capstone Project



## Appendix D

### Definition of iiED Quantitative Chart

#### iiED CHART

- Theme: Motivations for Engagement (yellow)
  - Scoring: Yes (3)-Was iiED direct involvement inspired motivation?
  - Scoring: Yes(2)-Was iiED's marketing including word of mouth?
- Theme: Perceived Impact (Blue)
  - Scoring: Yes (3)-Was iiED directly viewed as providing business improvements?
  - Scoring: Yes(2)-Was iiED a positive influence on the entrepreneurial process?
- Theme: Innovation (orange)
  - Scoring: Yes (3)--Was iiED viewed as supporting an innovation from the seed up?
  - Scoring: Yes(2)-Defined as innovation businesses or have new ideas and are supported by iiED?
- Theme: Social Impact (red)
  - Scoring: Yes (3)--Was iiED viewed as supporting a company that creates social impact?
  - Scoring: Yes(2)-Was iiED viewed as supporting a company who helps social causes or longs to?

#### Scoring Summary:

- Total Possible Points: 18 points per theme
- Total Points Earned: 18 points
- Percent:  $(\text{Total Points Earned} / \text{Total Possible Points}) \times 100$

Evaluation: Total average of all percentages

