

Terms of reference

Mid-term evaluation of START Fellowship

1. Introduction

Background on funding partner

Fondation Botnar is a charitable organisation founded in 2003 in Basel, Switzerland, to carry on the philanthropic work of Marcela and Octav Botnar. We work with and for young people of all backgrounds to contribute to a world that is supportive of their wellbeing and respects, protects and fulfils their rights.

We want to make a meaningful difference in young people's lives by addressing challenges and opportunities for their wellbeing in the urban and digital spaces. Our decision to focus on these two spaces reflects the recognition that urbanisation and digitalisation are significant trends of the 21st century, presenting opportunities and threats to young people. To address challenges and opportunities in these two spaces, **we focus on four thematic areas**: 1) **Liveable and sustainable city systems**; 2) **Human rights-based digital transformation**; 3) **Mental health**; 4) **Quality public education**.

Our philanthropic work and partnerships are guided by a set of **working principles**. They express our approach to how we can best contribute to creating the conditions for young people's wellbeing. The working principles guide our decision-making processes and ensure that our actions are aligned both with our strategic direction as well as our core beliefs and values. They also provide strategic coherence across all themes. The principles cover: a) the use of a **relational wellbeing** approach, b) adopting a **systems view and practice** that encompasses a complex non-linear view of change, c) a commitment to flexible, **long-term commitment and trusted partnerships**, d) emphasising the importance of **evidence and collective learning**, e) commitment to a **human rights-based approach**, and f) promoting and enabling **meaningful youth participation**.

Background on implementing partner

START Global is a student-run non-profit organisation that aims to empower young entrepreneurs worldwide by providing them with the necessary resources to enter entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Since its foundation in 1996 at the University of St. Gallen, START Global has built a network of 17 local chapters and over 1,000 alumni across Europe, Latin America, and Africa. Through

four different projects, each focusing on a different target group, START Global enables the next generation of entrepreneurs to turn their ideas into reality.

The organization annually hosts Europe's largest student-run startup conference (START Summit) and most entrepreneurial hackathon (START Hack). START Sphere is designed to connect and engage the startup ecosystem throughout the year and coordinates the network of local chapters. More information is available here: <https://www.startglobal.org/>.

Programme description

START Fellowship is a pre-seed/seed acceleration programme of START Global. Its goal is to empower young entrepreneurs from LMICs who aspire to tackle societal issues and change their communities for the better.

START Fellowship is a practice-oriented educational and acceleration programme that includes academic courses, workshops, mentoring by entrepreneurs and networking events. The offer aims to equip aspiring entrepreneurs not only with theoretical knowledge about entrepreneurship but with practical skill sets, fostered through hands-on workshops. Fellows are introduced to the vibrant Swiss entrepreneurial ecosystem and are supported in establishing an exceptional network of investors, founders and students. In addition, by enabling and empowering young entrepreneurs, START Fellowship strives to support the development of local ecosystems in the targeted countries to contribute to the reduction of inequalities in entrepreneurial ecosystems.

START Fellowship was founded in 2020 and is working in closer collaboration with Fondation Botnar since 2021. Over the years, the programme has evolved, and strategic changes made. While "Batch 1" was a mixture of Colombian and Romanian participants, Batch 2 and 3 fully focused on Latin America (Batch 2: Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico; Batch 3: Colombia, Argentina, Peru, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador and Mexico). Batch 4 welcomed three African participants for the first time (out of 37 in total in Batch 4) and START Fellowship is now also active in Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Ghana and Tanzania.

Based on strategic learnings and prior internal evaluations, the design and content of the programme have also been adapted to enhance its value and impact. The accelerator programme targets young founders from LMICs between 18-25 that are enrolled at a partner university and already have a minimum viable product (MVP). During their 3.5-month stay in Switzerland (4 months in Batches 1-4) START Fellowship helps them to take their Startup to the next level and secure their first or next investment. As the accelerator programme has higher cost implications and is aimed at a very specific target group, START Fellowship began implementing an incubator programme in 2022. The incubator programme is online and helps ideation-stage student founders reach their first MVP. As the requirements are more flexible and student founders from LMICs between 14-28 are not required to be enrolled at a partner university or travel to Switzerland, START Fellowship can expand its reach to more young entrepreneurs.

Current state of implementation

Since implementation, the programme and structure have been optimized, leading to a

stronger and more individual support of participants. START Fellowship has grown into a go-to opportunity for young student founders and a well-known and respected player in the Latin American ecosystem. Through an incubator programme on a larger scale and local chapters, START Fellowship is able to provide a greater platform, impacting young founders beyond their stay in Switzerland.

Since its launch in 2020, START Fellowship supported 126 fellows through the accelerator programme and 325 through the incubator programme. The expansion to Africa was successful so far, resulting in a 55% (Africa) to 45% (Latin America) split in the applications for Batch 5. START Fellowship is currently active in 20 countries and engaging a network of over 200 partners and 475 people in the alumni community (consisting of alumni, former team members, mentors, and coaches).

2. Evaluation purpose, objectives and questions

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide an independent mid-term assessment of the START Fellowship to support its development and improve its design to attract funding beyond Fondation Botnar. It will also provide insights into how well the Fellowship is able to achieve impact and determine its key achievements so far.

The evaluation will pursue the following objectives:

- Assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and sustainability of the START Fellowship in empowering entrepreneurs from LMIC and strengthening entrepreneurial ecosystems in their local context.
- Assess the extent to which iterations of START Fellowship have integrated learnings from previous cohorts.
- Identify and document good practices and key lessons learned to improve the implementation of the Fellowship and also broaden its funding sources and support.
- Provide a set of forward-looking, actionable, and results-oriented recommendations to strengthen START Fellowship's design and implementation.

Indicative evaluation questions

The evaluation is expected to respond to the following questions. Please note that **evaluators are encouraged to further refine the evaluation questions and/or undergo a prioritisation process**, following initial desk review and consultations with key stakeholders during the inception period:

Relevance

1. To what extent does START Fellowship address the current and emerging needs of young people in the target countries?
 - 1.1. How have the needs of young people been identified? To what extent does the programme include underserved groups?
 - 1.2. What similar initiatives are offered in target countries? What is START Fellowship's

unique offer?

2. To what extent are the accelerator and incubator programmes meeting the needs of the fellows?
 - 2.1. To what extent do they align with participants' specific industry stage, geography etc.?

Coherence

3. To what extent is the Fellowship aligned with Fondation Botnar's Philanthropy strategy¹, including its working principles?

Effectiveness

4. To what extent have the initial objectives of START Fellowship been achieved? What are the key achievements?
5. How have the fellows benefitted as a result of START Fellowship?
 - 5.1. To what extent has participation in START Fellowship contributed to the professional and personal development of the fellows?
 - 5.2. To what extent have the fellows' ventures experienced measurable growth (e.g., revenue, customer base, team size) since joining START Fellowship?
 - 5.3. What specific skills or knowledge have fellows gained from the programme?
6. To what extent has the incubator programme achieved its objectives, from the ideation stage to the first prototype/MVP? What can be improved?
 - 6.1. To what extent has participation in the incubator programme contributed to the professional and personal development of the participants?
 - 6.2. Do accelerator participants with previous incubator experience show different outcomes compared to those without incubator experience?
 - 6.3. Is the incubator model scalable to accommodate more startups or expand into new regions?
7. What has been the added value of the local chapters in advancing the achievement of the programme's objectives?
8. Are there any early indications of START Fellowship contributing tangible outcomes for young people's wellbeing beyond the Fellowship²? Please highlight examples, where possible.
 - 8.1. Are there any indications that the programme contributed to systemic effects in

¹ Please note that while this question is referring to the current strategy and working principles, the fellowship was developed before the current strategy refinement process.

² Some examples could include jobs created, role of alumni as mentors, products of services offered, scaling up.

academia, private sector, civil society, and public administration of the target countries?

- 8.2. How and to what extent is START Fellowship influencing the development of the local startup ecosystem?

Sustainability

9. Is there any evidence of potential longer-term sustainability? What are the key opportunities and barriers?

- 9.1. Is there any evidence that other funders are ready to support this programme in total, apart from just sponsoring stipends? What are the reasons for other funders to come in or to decide not to fund?

Learning and adaptation

10. How well has START Fellowship been able to generate lessons from ongoing Fellowships and adapt their programme accordingly? What improvements can be made?

11. Have the iterations of START Fellowship integrated learnings from previous cohorts? To what extent have these changes, if any, contributed to better outcomes?

Cross-cutting

12. What are the lessons for Fondation Botnar, as a funding partner, for supporting START Fellowship?

- 12.1. How has the Fondation's way of working enabled or hindered the success of the programme? What can be improved?

Scope

The evaluation will cover the period November 2020 to the end of data collection in 2025. In-country primary data collection will take place in two countries with the longest involvement in the programme (Colombia and Argentina). Remote interviews will be carried out with stakeholders in 4-8 countries. Document review is expected in all programme sites. A sampling strategy will be developed by evaluators, during inception, in consultation with key stakeholders.

Audiences

Primary

- Grant Managers for START Fellowship
- Fondation Botnar's Strategic Learning and Evaluation Circle (SLE-C)
- START Global

Secondary

- START Fellows
- Fondation Botnar Philanthropic Committee and Board

- Fondation Botnar Management Office

3. Methodology

Approach

Fondation Botnar welcomes the use of diverse and innovative evaluation approaches and methods. We encourage the use of mixed methods. However, we do not anticipate an experimental design but one that is grounded in participatory and utilisation-focused approaches.

Regardless of the approach chosen by the evaluation team, the evaluators are expected to foster participation at key moments of the evaluation, seeking START Global and Fondation Botnar's advice and support. As such, the evaluation team will be expected to refine the methodology and final evaluation questions following initial desk review and consultations with key stakeholders during the inception period. The external evaluation team is required to document the evaluation process and include lessons learnt and recommendations.

Role of the external evaluator

The external evaluation team is expected to work in collaboration with the Grant Manager at Fondation Botnar and START Global to maximise the transparency and utility of the evaluation process and products. Fondation Botnar's Evaluation Function lead will be the point of contact for this evaluation. The contracted evaluator is expected to collaborate closely with START Global and Fondation Botnar to:

- Reach a shared understanding of the evaluation objectives and questions, and further develop the evaluation approach, methods and tools accordingly.
- Where appropriate, utilise the data from the START's impact management system and triangulate with other data sources.
- Facilitate a validation workshop to discuss initial findings as well as a workshop to co-create recommendations with START Global and Fondation Botnar.

Deliverables

The deliverables expected from the evaluation are as follows:

- Inception report of maximum 15 pages (plus annexes) including:
 - Understanding of the evaluation purpose and scope;
 - Proposed adjustments to evaluation objectives and questions as appropriate;
 - Sampling strategy;
 - Data collection and analysis plan(s) including sampling strategy, data collection and analysis instruments, to be developed in consultation with START Global and Fondation Botnar;
 - Evaluation matrix
 - Work-plan and schedule for the overall evaluation process, specifying

- involved stakeholders' roles and moments for communication between the specific stakeholders;
- Draft outline of the evaluation report.
- Validation workshop involving key stakeholders (see below)
- Full draft evaluation report of approximately 40 pages including a max five-page executive summary (anticipating one round of feedback).
- Co-creation of recommendations workshop (see below).
- Final evaluation report.
- Slide deck of key findings, conclusions and lessons to be shared with secondary audiences.

Inception consultation, validation and co-creation workshops

The evaluator/s will facilitate three consultation sessions with START Global and representatives of Fondation Botnar. The minimum set of activities are specified below (in addition to KIIIs with these stakeholders):

- Inception consultation with START Global and Fondation Botnar, preferably in-person.
- Validation workshop with START Global and Fondation Botnar to verify and deepen findings.
- Co-creation workshop with START Global and Fondation Botnar to reflect on future steps and gather inputs for recommendations.

4. Ethical considerations

The evaluator/s are expected to comply with evaluation standards, including ethics, throughout the evaluation process, as set out in the UN Evaluation Group UNEG: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866>. Proposals are expected to outline how adherence to evaluation ethical norms and standards is ensured.

5. Other requirements and logistics

Proposed timeline

Evaluation activities will start upon the execution of the consultancy contract and the Final Report including the respective slide deck should be submitted no later than 27 June 2025. **We welcome proposals that demonstrate strong project management strategies to prevent any delays or setbacks.**

Key deliverables and activities	Responsible	Time/deadline
Circulate ToR for EOI	Evaluation Function	w/c 4 November 2024
EOI submission deadline	Evaluators	29 November 2024
Short-list EOI submission	Fondation Botnar	w/c 2 December 2024
Invitation to proposal submission	Fondation Botnar	w/c 9 December 2024
Deadline for clarification questions	Fondation Botnar	16 December 2024
Proposal submission deadline	Evaluators	16 January 2024
Selection of evaluator	Fondation Botnar/Partner	w/c 27 January 2025
Kick-off/inception meeting	Evaluators	10 February 2025
Submission of draft Inception Report	Evaluator	7 March 2025
QA of Inception Report	Evaluation Function	14 March 2025
Feedback on Inception Report	Fondation Botnar/Partner	14 March 2025
Submit final Inception Report	Evaluator	21 March 2025
Data collection and analysis	Evaluator	End March – Early May 2025
Validation workshop	Evaluator	w/c 12 May 2025
Submission of draft evaluation report	Evaluator	30 May 2025
Co-creation workshop	Evaluator	Early June 2025
QA of draft Evaluation Report	Evaluation Function	w/c 2 June 2025
Feedback on draft evaluation report	Fondation Botnar/Partner	13 June 2025
Submission of Final Report	Evaluator	27 June 2025
Slide deck to be shared with secondary audiences	Evaluator	27 June 2025

Field trips

There is a preference for in-person engagement with the START Global team during Inception. In addition, while field trips to one or two countries where past fellows reside are an option (Colombia and Argentina), **there is a preference for collaboration with in-country evaluators to engage in local data collection and are also part of the core team.** We anticipate the remaining interviews can take place remotely.

Budget

We anticipate a budget of CHF 100,000, including expenses.

6. Evaluator requirements

It is envisioned that the evaluation is conducted by more than one evaluator. The level of involvement of each team member must be specified in the proposal.

Experience and skills required

- **Evaluation design:** The team should consist of members with demonstrated skills and expertise required to design, plan and conduct mixed methods evaluations and participatory evaluations.
- **Data collection and analysis:** The team must have demonstrable skills in quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. In addition, team members must have experience conducting interviews with a wide range of stakeholders.
- **Relevant subject matter knowledge and experience:** It is desirable that team members have knowledge and experience in one or more fields relevant to this evaluation (Fellowship programmes, incubation and/or acceleration, entrepreneurship development, participatory evaluations, and systems thinking).
- **Geographic:** It is preferable that members of the team are based in Colombia and Argentina or in the region, with the ability to conduct in-person visits in selected locations in these countries.
- **Equitable partnerships:** Where proposals involve an evaluation firm or lead evaluator that is not based in Colombia and/or Argentina, the evaluation team must demonstrate equitable partnerships between global and in-country evaluators through balanced resourcing and level of effort.
- **Language:** Excellent written and spoken English; Fluency in Spanish.
- **Conflict of interest:** Evaluator is a neutral party, has no conflict of interest with Fondation Botnar, START Global, or any other involved stakeholder.

References

Applicants are requested to include at least three hyperlinks as examples of evaluations that are broadly representative of the evaluation team's capability in the experience and skills required.

7. EOI and deadline

Evaluators are required to submit a letter of interest outlining their understanding of the

evaluation subject and/or context. The letter should also include an outline of the team composition and location, accompanied by brief profiles of team members, highlighting relevant skills and experience (**max 1.5 page**). Please be aware that submissions exceeding the page limit are not guaranteed to be reviewed. However, evaluators can include their CV (maximum 2 pages) and a summary of relevant evaluations undertaken in the Annex.

Selected evaluators that best meet the qualifications and experience requirements will be informed by w/c 9 December. **Please note that only selected applicants will be contacted and invited to submit proposals.**

EOI should be submitted no later than 29 November 2024 at 12pm CET in pdf format to evaluation@fondationbotnar.org clearly mentioning in the subject line START Fellowship evaluation.

Please note that **a full proposal is not required** at this stage.