

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM

PROJECT SUMMARY

1. **Country:** The project will initially be implemented in Chile and Colombia and will then be extended to other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.
2. **Project number:** RG-T4574
3. **Name of Project:** Diverse Ecosystem: Boosting The Ecosystem Of Entrepreneurs With Disabilities In Lac
4. **Executing Agency and borrower:** 2Gether-International, Inc.
5. **IDB División:** Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) – IDB Lab

6. Financing amounts

| | IDB US\$ | Local US\$ | Total US\$ |
|--|----------|------------|------------|
| Non-Reimbursable Technical Cooperation | 1000.000 | 1.000.000 | 2.000.000 |

7. Objective and purpose of the project:

The objective of the project is to promote an inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem in LAC by supporting founders with disabilities and neurodiverse, as well as non-disabled and neurotypical entrepreneurs with startups focused on populations with disabilities, strengthening their skills, as well as incubating and accelerating their businesses.

This ecosystem is an innovative initiative focused on including people with disabilities (PwD). Unlike other initiatives, it aims to create spaces tailored to their needs. The project will be led by a unique partner, the Executing Agency, which has nearly 10 years of experience in the USA working with global entrepreneurs. They are now expanding their impact to Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) thanks to strong regional connections and partners. Their model has proven effective, with over 50% of participants in their US accelerator program successfully continuing their ventures.

Building an ecosystem plays a crucial role in this project by fostering sustainable solutions through collaboration among various stakeholders, including governments, the private sector, and academia. The Executing Agency will facilitate the creation of a strong ecosystem focused on inclusion. By partnering with influential organizations across sectors, they will ensure that the needs and perspectives of people with disabilities (PWD) are integrated into decision-making processes. This collaborative approach aims to make the inclusion of PWD a core element of policies and practices, rather than an afterthought. Through these efforts, the Executing Agency and its partners seek to drive meaningful change that benefits everyone, leading to more equitable and sustainable outcomes.

8. Project Components:

Component I: Research, data collection and awareness on entrepreneurship and people with disabilities in the LAC Region. The objective of this component is to create a comprehensive understanding of the landscape of entrepreneurship and people with disabilities in the LAC region, leading to increased awareness, support, and opportunities for this important segment of the population.

The expected activities for this component include: (i) research and data collection, incorporating a poverty perspective, on (a) challenges and opportunities for entrepreneurs with disabilities in LAC, and (b) barriers to accessing financing for entrepreneurs with disabilities and PwD, (c) research and development of a practical handbook, with a poverty perspective, on how to make programs more accessible, and a database of disability-inclusive startups in LAC, and (d) a policy recommendation paper, incorporating a poverty and vulnerability perspective, for public sector stakeholders in LAC to promote diverse entrepreneurship ecosystems and the inclusion of PwD.

The initial phase will involve research and data collection, incorporating a relation between poverty and disabilities on the challenges, opportunities, and barriers for accessing financing for entrepreneurs with disabilities. This research will encompass ESOs, companies (with a high prioritization on technology), governments, academics, and other identified entities.

A comprehensive understanding of the current state of entrepreneurship among people with disabilities in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) will be crucial. This will involve identifying the prevalence of disability-owned businesses, the sectors in which they operate, the challenges they encounter, and their successes. Additionally, existing resources and support systems will be identified by mapping out the current landscape of organizations, programs, and initiatives that assist entrepreneurship for people with disabilities in the region.

The analysis of barriers and opportunities will be another key aspect of this initiative. It will include uncovering specific challenges faced by entrepreneurs with disabilities in LAC—such as access to funding, training, mentorship, and market opportunities—while also identifying potential areas for growth and innovation.

A comprehensive study will be conducted, focusing on the research and development of a practical handbook. This handbook will include a poverty perspective, detailing strategies to make programs more accessible and establishing a database of disability-inclusive startups in LAC. A subsequent evaluation, based on the initial baseline study, will be carried out to assess changes and identify emerging opportunities for enhancing the ecosystem.

Utilizing findings from this study will be paramount to developing evidence-based recommendations for policy and program development, thereby informing future initiatives. These findings will guide the creation of new policies that support entrepreneurship for people with disabilities in LAC. Identifying collaboration and partnership opportunities will facilitate alliances between government agencies, NGOs, businesses, and other stakeholders, thus creating a more supportive ecosystem for these entrepreneurs.

The expected products are: one (1) study that will be conducted focusing on the challenges and opportunities for entrepreneurs with disabilities and for PwD in LAC, as well as the barriers and opportunities in accessing financing for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities and for PwD. One (1) research study conducted for developing a practical handbook on 'how to make programs more accessible' and a database of disability-inclusive startups in LAC. Lastly, one (1) policy recommendation paper developed for public sector stakeholders in LAC to promote diverse entrepreneurship ecosystems and enhance the inclusion of people with disabilities. These studies will also consider key questions to understand the status of the ecosystem in the region, as well as the integration of perspectives from poor and vulnerable populations.

Component II: Strengthen capacities and skills of founders through venture incubation and acceleration, including connections to funding opportunities. The objective of this component is to equip entrepreneurs with disabilities and neurodiverse, as well as non-disabled and neurotypical entrepreneurs focused on PwD with the skills, resources and funding, and connections they need to launch, grow, and scale their businesses, ultimately contributing to their economic empowerment and social inclusion.

The expected activities for this component include: (i) developing content related to strengthening the capacities and skills of entrepreneurs during the incubation and acceleration phases, (ii) ensuring all content is translated and adapted to meet the needs of all entrepreneurs, (iii) supporting selected entrepreneurs with seed funding, and (iv) offering mentorship and coaching to entrepreneurs. These activities will be implemented and carried out by the Executing Agency.

To develop content, the project will focus on enhancing entrepreneurial skills and capacities by providing virtual targeted training and workshops where they ultimately obtain a 2GI certificate. These programs will address the unique challenges faced by entrepreneurs and the market needs and opportunities of PwD, covering essential topics such as marketing, sales, operations, finance, and growth. Specific training areas will include customer relationship management, go-to-market strategies, financial modeling, investor pitching, marketing strategies, and lean financial approaches.

The inclusive innovative approach of this project includes that all content (currently in English) will be translated into Spanish and Portuguese and will be designed to be inclusive and accessible for entrepreneurs with disabilities, setting them apart from standard accelerators. The Executing Agency offers a range of accommodations to meet diverse accessibility needs, ensuring all participants can engage fully and equally. This includes accessible formats for learning materials (such as screen reader-compatible documents, captioned videos, and sign language interpreters), flexible communication methods, and personalized mentorship that accounts for different physical, sensory, and cognitive challenges. The goal is to foster a supportive environment where each entrepreneur, regardless of their disability, is empowered to thrive and scale their business with dignity and full engaging with the Project.

Furthermore, mentorship and coaching programs will connect entrepreneurs with experienced mentors who can provide advice and industry expertise. Facilitating peer-to-peer learning and networking opportunities will enable entrepreneurs with disabilities to connect, share experiences, and learn from one another.

The Executing Agency through this project will deploy their Venture Lab and Acceleration Program modules (validated within the US market) to LAC region, offering access to shared workspaces and resources, aiding entrepreneurs in developing and scaling their businesses. A unique aspect of this project is its strong linkage between entrepreneurs and investors, with active facilitation to ensure that participants gain the financial backing necessary to scale their ventures.

Through Venture Labs, selected entrepreneurs receive specialized support to strength their business models and prepare themselves for growth. Technical assistance and business development support will be provided, covering areas such as product development, marketing strategies, customer acquisition, and operational efficiency. By connecting entrepreneurs with industry experts and

partners, valuable introductions to investors, customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders will be facilitated.

In the LAC Acceleration Program, the focus will be on business expansion, strategic communications and diverse funding opportunities. The creation of an Integral Support Network further addresses the distinctive challenges faced by disabled entrepreneurs, which is informed by real-world insights and practical considerations.

Additionally, the initiative will focus on facilitating access to funding opportunities. This will include providing training on fundraising strategies and pitch development, equipping entrepreneurs to effectively present their business ideas to potential investors. By connecting entrepreneurs with angel investors, venture capitals (including for example, ALLVP, IGINA (Mexico), Monashees (Brazil), Magma Partners (Chile), Polymath Ventures (Colombia), Kaszek Ventures (LAC) and NeSsT), and other funding sources like companies (for example, JP Morgan, Amazon, Google.org). Outstanding entrepreneurs from each cohort per year will have the opportunity to present their business pitches to these potential investors to access seed funding.

In conjunction with these efforts, the Executing Agency has partnered with Google.org to enhance this initiative by introducing a pioneering apprenticeship program specifically for all types of disabled startup executives. In the context of this program the Executing Agency will co-develop a curriculum focusing on leadership, business management, and technical skills, while providing mentorship opportunities from established leaders in the startup ecosystem. Google.org will contribute financial support for implementation, including stipends and training resources, while the Executing Agency will manage program operations and participant placements, creating a scalable model that empowers disabled individuals to thrive in executive roles.

The expected results are: (i) Get2Gether Platform translated into 2 languages, Spanish and Portuguese, (ii) 320 entrepreneurs will be trained on the Get 2Gether platform, (iii) 60% being individuals with disabilities or neurodiverse, fostering greater representation of the program (iv) 8 incubation workshops to provide essential guidance and mentorship, (v) 100 entrepreneurs will participate in the Venture Labs Incubator, receiving tailored support to thrive in competitive markets, (vi) \$90,000 in seed funding will be disbursed annually to build capacities in crucial areas, (vii) 12 acceleration workshops aimed at businesses looking to scale, providing advanced training and resources, (viii) 60% of the entrepreneurs will participate in the Accelerator program, receiving comprehensive support for high-growth businesses, and (ix) 20% of the entrepreneurs will focus on or directly impact the poorest and most vulnerable segment of the population with disabilities.

9. Project Beneficiaries:

Empowering individuals with disabilities to create products and services not only amplifies their voices but also bridges societal gaps by fostering inclusivity and innovation. Initiatives like "Wheel the World" exemplify this transformational impact. Founded by Álvaro Silberstein and 13 Active members are those who attend more than two-thirds of the events.

Camilo Navarro, "Wheel the World" seeks to inspire individuals with disabilities to embrace their potential and pursue their passions regardless of physical limitations. By advocating for disability friendly tourism in remote locations like Torres del Paine, Álvaro and Camilo have paved the way for a more inclusive travel industry, encouraging destinations worldwide to enhance accessibility and inclusivity. Similarly, endeavors by non-disabled individuals to develop products and services for people with disabilities significantly contribute to societal integration and opportunity expansion.

A prime example is Includeme.com, founded by Gabriel Marcolongo. Inspired by personal experiences with his father's employment struggles due to disability, Gabriel launched this initiative to transform the employment landscape for people with disabilities. Through Includeme.com, Gabriel and his team are not only addressing employment barriers but are also fostering a more empathetic society that acknowledges and celebrates the contributions of disabled individuals.

Together, these stories highlight the immense value and opportunity in uniting diverse abilities to create a more inclusive market opportunity.

In terms of direct beneficiaries, 320 entrepreneurs will benefit from the project. The initiative aims to support at least 60% of founders with disabilities and neurodiverse conditions. Non-disabled and neurotypical entrepreneurs will also be included, provided their products and services have a positive impact on the living conditions of people with disabilities (PwD). The direct beneficiaries could be based in one or more of the 26 IDB member countries in LAC or based outside the LAC region with business and impact in LAC.

Indirectly, PwD will benefit for three main reasons. Firstly, the project is designed to encourage, support, and maximize the potential of entrepreneurs with disabilities or neurodiverse conditions. Secondly, it will create a wide range of new products and services tailored to PwD. Lastly, it will contribute to the development of an ecosystem that promotes research, raises awareness, supports inclusion, and advocates for policies that enhance the rights of PwD.

Venture capital and financing institutions involved in the project will also be indirect beneficiaries, as they will gain access to valuable ideas from the under-supported market of people with disabilities—an untapped niche with great potential for innovation.

Government institutions will benefit from a deeper understanding of how to effectively support entrepreneurs with disabilities, recognizing the significant economic contributions they can make to the regional economies of Latin America and the Caribbean. This program seeks to shift the existing paradigm from paternalistic approaches, which often perpetuate poverty within the disabled community, to empowering strategies that integrate and elevate entrepreneurs with disabilities into the mainstream economy, as well as the generation of better policies that guarantee opportunities into the workforce.

10. Expected results and capture of benefits:

Over the course of this 3-year project, it is anticipated that all supported entrepreneurial ventures will either have a founder or board member who is disabled or neurodiverse, or a non-disabled and neurotypical founder who is focused on developing products and services for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, 50% of these entrepreneurs are anticipated to continue operating for at least 12 months after completing the accelerator program.

An integral part of this initiative is the creation and strengthening of the Executing Agency ecosystem, incorporating Entrepreneurial Support Organizations (ESOs), Academia, the Private Sector, Local Governments, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The project aims to grow this ecosystem to 20 members in the first year, 40 members in the second year, and 60 members in the third year. The growth of the ecosystem will be measured through Annual Reports tracking key indicators such as active members¹³, strategic events, connections created, and opportunities created.

The percentage of Accelerated Startups Receiving External Financing, 10% achievers for second year, and 15% for the third year, will reflect the effectiveness of the acceleration program in empowering entrepreneurs to secure funding post-acceleration. This outcome measures and indicates how many startups successfully accessed external financing after benefiting from comprehensive technical support and networking opportunities provided during the program.

Data supporting these outcomes will come from various sources including program registration forms, participant surveys, self-reporting by founders, post-accelerator follow-up surveys, company status checks via public records such as websites and social media, internal tracking systems, program enrollment data, and analytics from the Get 2Gether platform.