

ABI

Business Incubator Accreditation

GUIDEBOOK

Global Innovation Institute Accreditation Center

Business Incubator Accreditation Guidebook

Introduction

The **GInI Accreditation Center**, under the direction of the **GInI Accreditation Program**, issues formal **accreditations** to properly-assessed innovation labs, business incubators, accelerator programs, innovation training programs, and innovation education programs, as well as endorsements to properly-verified innovations. Accreditation by GInI assures affected stakeholders that these have each been properly assessed, and that their quality and scope conform to GInI's accreditations standards.

GInI is fully committed to pursuing excellence and continuous improvement in all of the activities relating to its accreditation program. Accordingly, this guidebook sets forth the policies, procedures, and standards used to assess the quality and scope of the entities seeking GInI accreditation.

The Benefits of Business Incubator Accreditation

The world as we know it is changing at an unprecedented pace. The world of today looks very little like the world of yesterday. And quite likely the world of tomorrow will look nothing at all like the world of today. As we move through the Fourth Industrial Revolution, countless new world-changing technologies will be developed and put to use for a broad range of new purposes. In many cases this is changing not only the products and services we consume, but how society operates. For business organizations, this is opening up whole new worlds of opportunity, not only for new offerings, but for entirely new business models that never existed before.

The time is ripe, therefore, for new entrepreneurial ventures to rise up – ventures who are prepared to deliver the new business models and value propositions that stand to move us from the world of yesterday and today to the world of tomorrow. For this to happen, however, the world needs the oases that nurture and support these nascent young ventures as they begin their journeys forward into the world. The world needs Business Incubators capable of giving these ventures the resources and leads they need to start on solid ground.

Yet how does one ensure that a given Business Incubator has the necessary resources and capabilities it needs to get these new ventures off the ground in a robust and effective manner? What indicators are there that a particular Incubator has what it takes to succeed in getting new business ventures launched, operational, and eventually profitable? For this, a credible and reliable accreditation standard is required.

The **GInI Business Incubator Accreditation** is such a credible and reliable accreditation standard – a means by which leaders the world over can develop confidence in the design, operation, and capabilities of their Incubators. Indeed, the GInI Business Incubator Accreditation stands alone as the only such standard in the world, setting the benchmark to which all world-class Incubators aspire.

Accreditation of a Business Incubator by the GInI Accreditation Center thus offers several valuable benefits:

- Affirmation of the operating organization's ongoing commitment to entrepreneurship and the regional impact this offers.
 - Confidence that the design, operation, and capabilities of the Business Incubator are optimized for its intended purposes.
 - Peer recognition for achievement to a globally-recognized benchmark standard.
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GInI Accreditation Eligibility – Compliance Demonstration

In order for a **Business Incubator** to be *eligible* for GInI accreditation, it must be able to demonstrate full compliance to GInI's eligibility requirements, as outlined below.

Compliance to these requirements is demonstrated through an independent third-party assessment process utilizing a GInI **Authorized Innovation Assessor**[®], or **AIInA**[®]. This process is explained below.

GInI Accreditation Eligibility Requirements

In order for a **Business Incubator** to be eligible for GInI accreditation, it must be able to demonstrate full compliance to all of GInI's **Business Incubator Accreditation Eligibility Requirements**.

What this means is that, per the **Business Incubator Accreditation Assessment Tool** used, the Incubator must have all of the requisite resource elements in place, according to the following requirements list.

- **Incubator Management** – 4 assessment questions.
- **People Resources** – 8 assessment questions.
- **Ecosystem / Network Resources** – 8 assessment questions.
- **Community Resources** – 6 assessment questions.
- **Facilities Resources** – 48 assessment questions.

GInI awards three levels of accreditation for Business Incubators. These are:

- Basic
- Advanced
- Premium

Each of these represents an increasing level of **value** the Incubator offers to its **resident business ventures**.

The Accreditation Process for Business Incubators

Basis for Assessment

The GInI Business Incubator Accreditation is an **all-or-nothing assessment-based accreditation**.

This means the determination of whether or not to issue **accreditation** is based not on achieving a certain score, but rather on having in place all of the elements required by GInI. The assessment associated with the accreditation is therefore an overall *binary assessment* – **pass or fail**.

The On Site Assessment

In order to secure accreditation, the operating organization must engage and work through a GInI **Authorized Training & Assessment Provider® (ATAP®)**, who will in turn engage at least one (1) external GInI **Authorized Innovation Assessor® (AIInA®)** to come to the Incubator and conduct an on-site assessment of its management practices, people resources, ecosystem/network resources, community resources, and facilities resources.

Once the Assessor has completed their assessment, they will compile a standardized **report** and submit to GInI. Based on the Assessor's **findings**, GInI will then make the determination of whether or not to issue the Business Incubator Accreditation.

The assessment will be conducted **live** inside the Incubator, such that over the course of working through the assessment questionnaire the Assessor will move throughout the Incubator facility and that of its operating organization – potentially multiple times.

In relation to the four **resource sections**, the Assessor will expect to engage directly with a selection of the **Incubator users**. This serves to ensure appropriate transparency and objectivity in the assessment.

The typical in-Incubator assessment generally requires **one working day** to complete. Thereafter the AIInA® will invest additional time in compiling and submitting their final report to GInI.

Prior to conducting the formal on-site assessment, the ATAP® will provide the operating organization with a copy of the **BlxAAT questionnaire** – so that it can adequately prepare for the assessment ahead of time. This gives the organization an opportunity to prepare clear evidence of its answers to each of the questions posed.

Pre-Assessments

If desired, the operating organization may also engage an AIInA® to conduct a **pre-assessment** of its Incubator prior to the formal assessment – so as to improve its confidence in passing the formal assessment once it occurs. Pre-assessments do not have to be coordinated through an ATAP®, though doing so is recommended.

The GInI Business Incubator Assessment Tool & Questions

The assessment tool associated with GInI Business Incubator Accreditation – known as the **Business Incubator Accreditation Assessment Tool**, or **BlxAAT** – is comprised of **74 assessment questions**.

These are grouped into **eight (8) sections**, namely:

- 1. Profile of the Operating Organization** – 5 informational questions.
- 2. Operating Context** – 7 informational questions.
- 3. Incubator Management** – 4 assessment questions.
- 4. People Resources** – 8 assessment questions.
- 5. Ecosystem / Network Resources** – 8 assessment questions.
- 6. Community Resources** – 6 assessment questions.
- 7. Facilities Resources** – 48 assessment questions.
- 8. Comments** – Assessor notes details on the “No’s” they have entered, explaining them further.

The first two sections – ***Profile of the Operating Organization*** and ***Operating Context*** – are for information only. Their questions do not constitute a part of the assessment. They exist to help establish an appropriate context for the assessment questions that follow in Sections 3 - 7.

Each set of questions in Sections 1 - 6 and the first five subsections of Section 7 must be addressed in their entirety. The questions in the last seven subsections of Section 7 are optional and are reserved for higher levels of accreditation.

GInI awards **three levels** of accreditation for Business Incubators – namely **Basic**, **Advanced**, and **Premium**.

To attain the **Basic level**, the Incubator must be able to answer “YES” to each of the **mandatory questions** in Sections 3, 4, 5, 6, and the first five subsections of Section 7.

To attain the **Advanced level**, the Incubator must – in addition to meeting the requirements for the Basic level – also be able to answer “YES” to an additional set of questions found in Sections 4 and 7.

To attain the **Premium level**, the Incubator must – in addition to meeting the requirements for the Basic and Advanced levels – also be able to answer “YES” to yet another additional set of questions found in Sections 4, 5, 6, and 7.

The GInI Business Incubator Assessment Tool & Questions (cont.)

Given the **binary nature** of the GInI Business Incubator Accreditation, **all** of the mandatory questions for achieving the **Basic level** must be answered in the affirmative in order for the Incubator to qualify for GInI accreditation. Each question will be answered with an understanding of the operating organization and its desired outcomes for the Incubator. For any question to be answered in the affirmative, the organization must provide the Assessor with clear evidence that the answer is, in fact, affirmative.

There are five (5) questions in Sections 3 - 7E that allow for a “not applicable” answer. These are reserved for Incubators pursuing the **Advanced** and **Premium** levels of accreditation. If the Incubator is *not* attempting those levels, these questions will be marked as N-A, meaning they are exempted from the assessment.

If any question cannot be answered in the affirmative, the remainder of the questions will still be addressed, such that the Assessor may issue their final report indicating the full list of elements preventing the Incubator from achieving GInI accreditation, should such be the case.

In either case of passing or failing the assessment, GInI will forward to the operating organization a copy of the Assessor’s final report – known as the **Business Incubator Accreditation Assessment Report**, or **BIAAR**. This report will be received directly from GInI only, and not from the AInA® or ATAP®. If questions arise out of the report however, the operating organization may contact the AInA® to seek clarification.

Conditional Assessor Approval

In certain cases, a Business Incubator that has been assessed but did not fully pass will be granted a temporary conditional approval by the Assessor. What this means is that the Incubator was *close to passing*, but was still deficit in certain areas, and that if the operating organization can submit appropriate documentation to the Assessor within a period of **three (3) months** verifying that these deficit areas have in fact been **rectified**, so that the Assessor can then use it to issue a full ‘pass’ to the Incubator, they will do so.

This implies that the Assessor will not submit their final report to GInI *right away*, but will instead wait upon the operating organization to provide this documented evidence. Once the Assessor has received this evidence and has updated their report accordingly, they will then submit the final report to GInI for review and processing, together with the organization’s Accreditation Application Fee.

If the operating organization fails to submit this documented evidence to the Assessor within this three (3) month period, then the Assessor will consider the assessment to have been a ‘fail’ and will not submit their report to GInI, though they will issue it to the applicant operating organization.

Application Fee / Renewal Process / Maintenance Fee

Application Fee for Initial GInI Business Incubator Accreditation

The **initial fee** for GInI Business Incubator Accreditation is **3,500 USD**.

This is to be remitted to GInI at the same time as the Assessor submits their final assessment report – the BIAAR – to GInI. Upon request, GInI will issue an invoice to the applicant operating organization for this fee.

Biennial Re-Assessment / Re-Accreditation

In order to **maintain** ongoing Business Incubator Accreditation, GInI Accredited Business Incubators must submit to a **biennial** (every two years) **re-assessment** using the same process as the *initial* assessment.

Failure to secure a biennial re-assessment will result in the **expiration** and **suspension** of that Incubator's accreditation, until such time as it submits to a new assessment and becomes **re-accredited**.

Maintenance Fee for Continued GInI Business Incubator Accreditation

The **biennial maintenance fee** to maintain GInI Business Incubator Accreditation is **3,500 USD**, to be paid every two years upon re-assessment.

This is to be remitted to GInI at the same time as the Assessor submits the final re-assessment report – the BIAAR – to GInI. Upon request, GInI will issue an invoice to the applicant operating organization for this fee.

Disclaimer Concerning GInI Accreditation

GInI's accreditation of an organization's **Business Incubator** is not an accreditation of that organization in its entirety.

GInI reserves the right to accredit the Business Incubator of any organization without regard for their competitive status with other organizations whose Business Incubators GInI may have also accredited, or may accredit in the future.

About Global Innovation Institute

Global Innovation Institute (GInI) is the world's leading professional certification, business accreditation, and membership organization in the field of innovation.

The Institute aims to advance individual careers and transform organizational achievements by advancing the profession of innovation leadership. It does this through its globally recognized standards, tools, publications, resources, professional development courses, certifications, applied research, and networking opportunities.

Learn more at: www.gini.org.



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