



SUPPORTING ECOPRENEURS BEYOND INCUBATION: DEVELOPING AN EXIT STRATEGY

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The Restoration Factory (RF), led by UNEP and regional partners, supports early-stage, environmentally focused businesses, ecopreneurs, across Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam, and Bhutan. These businesses are tackling climate adaptation by restoring degraded ecosystems through agroforestry, non-timber forest products, and sustainable land use. Over a six-month incubation period, RF provides technical training, business development support, and mentoring to strengthen these enterprises and set them on a path to commercial viability.

However, while the program builds foundational capacity, many ecopreneurs remain unable to secure follow-on financing. Most are too early-stage, too small, or considered too risky for traditional investors. They face a financing gap due to high upfront costs, long development timelines, and a lack of access to enabling markets and policy environments. As a result, they often exit the program better prepared - but not yet investment-ready.

To bridge this gap, the RF and its partners are now focusing on developing a tailored Exit Strategy, an essential post-incubation roadmap that supports continued business growth and access to finance. This strategy is key to achieving the RF's core goals: helping businesses become commercially viable, building a pipeline of investment-ready enterprises, and scaling nature-based solutions that restore ecosystems.

The Exit Strategy emphasizes three areas of ongoing support:

- Tapping into enabling policy and financial frameworks, including government engagement and incentives.
- Business ecosystem development, such as improved access to markets and value chains.
- Connecting to appropriate financing, including grants, concessional loans, and patient impact capital.

Symmetry, in partnership with RF, is helping define this Exit Strategy by identifying specific post-incubation needs, mapping suitable financing pathways, and clarifying the roles of public and private actors in supporting ecopreneurs. This requires further assessments to better understand the current situation in the country (country level) and the market within which the company is functioning (value chain/market level), as well as the current readiness and financial health of the company (company profile).

By continuing to nurture these restoration businesses beyond incubation, the RF aims to ensure that early-stage enterprises can scale their impact and deliver long-term environmental and economic value.