Journal of International Commercial Law and Technology
Print ISSN: 1901-8401

Website: https://www.jiclt.com/

Article

Beyond Borders: A Multi-Tiered Framework for Youth-to-Professional Startup Visa Pathways.

Article History:

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How to cite this article:
Puhan S, *et. al* Cross-Border Jurisdiction and IP Enforcement Challenges in Dark Web Distribution of Child Sexual Abuse Material. *J Int Commer Law Technol.* 2026; 7(1):1365–1373.

Received: *06-03-2026*
Revised: *04-04-2026*
Accepted: *22-04-2026*
Published: *07-05-2026*

Abstract: traditional entrepreneurship education often neglects the expanding link between startup growth and global mobility, leaving aspiring entrepreneurs without clear routes into international innovation ecosystems. This paper introduces a new five-level educational framework, fully designed and currently being implemented, that systematically prepares participants, from youth (ages 15–19) to postgraduate researchers, for global startup ventures and technology visa opportunities across multiple countries. Developed by CansultHub, a Vancouver-based consultancy and incubation hub with a proven track record supporting local and international startups, the framework includes: (1) Launch Orbit, a youth accelerator focused on entrepreneurial mindset and MVP development; (2) Galaxy Rise, an accelerator for early-stage founders; (3) Saturn Path, a program for postgraduate researchers centered on research commercialization; (4) Nova Grid, a bootcamp for scaling and international expansion; and (5) Binary Trail, a dual-incubation program preparing ventures for multi-market operation. Each program integrates no-code and AI tools, startup visa training, and strategic partnerships with international incubators across 42+ countries. The design of this framework is based on real-world client outcomes from CansultHub's incubation and immigration consulting practices, ensuring practical relevance and replicability. This paper presents the completed framework architecture and its phased rollout, offering an evidence-based model for institutions aiming to develop globally mobile, innovation-ready entrepreneurs.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education, global mobility, innovation ecosystems, international incubation, no-code tools, startup implementation, startup visa pathways.

INTRODUCTION

The Global Entrepreneurship Landscape

Over the last 10 years, the global startup ecosystem has grown rapidly, with new ventures emerging across regions and economic environments [1]. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor reports that about 100 million startups are launched worldwide annually, making them key drivers of economic innovation and employment [2]. Nevertheless, this growth is uneven, as entrepreneurs in developing countries still encounter significant challenges in reaching international markets, securing funding, and accessing specialized talent pools [3].

Governments worldwide have recognized entrepreneurship as a vital engine of economic development, establishing startup visa schemes to attract and retain innovative entrepreneurs [4]. By 2024, over 42 countries, including Canada with its Start-up Visa Program, the UK's Innovator Founder Visa, and France's French Tech initiative, will provide specialized immigration routes for entrepreneurs [5]. These initiatives reflect a significant shift in global immigration policies, moving the focus from traditional skill-based requirements to innovation potential and scalability [6].

Despite the growing opportunities, there are still notable gaps in information and preparation. Many aspiring entrepreneurs, especially from emerging

markets or younger generations, often do not know about the available pathways, eligibility criteria, or how to develop globally competitive ventures [7]. Traditional entrepreneurship programs usually focus on local market conditions and seldom include strategies for international mobility in their curriculum [8].

The Education-Mobility Gap

Current entrepreneurship education frameworks highlight a ongoing gap between developing skills and accessing global markets. Although existing programs successfully teach core business principles, lean startup methods, and technical skills, they often neglect strategic aspects like international expansion and visa requirements [9]. Graduates possess entrepreneurial abilities but lack guidance on how to navigate international innovation ecosystems.

This disparity is especially severe for young entrepreneurs and founders from developing countries. Ries [10] and Blank [11] highlight the importance of market validation and customer development. However, applying lean startup principles globally involves additional complexities. Entrepreneurs aiming to expand internationally need to grasp not just core business concepts but also navigate regulatory requirements related to incubators, visa processes, and cross-border activities [12].

Traditional education often overlooks students aged 15 to 19, even though early entrepreneurial exposure greatly influences long-term innovation skills [13]. At the same time, postgraduate researchers developing commercializable technologies frequently face unclear or difficult routes to turn academic innovations into successful global ventures [14].

The CansultHub Response: From Practice to Framework

Founded in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 2020, CansultHub is a professional consultancy and incubation hub that supports newcomers, international entrepreneurs, and startup founders in navigating Canada's complex business and immigration landscape. Over time, it has built extensive expertise in startup visa programs, business incubation, legal advisory, and entrepreneur readiness, serving clients across various continents and venture stages.

Building on this extensive client experience, CansultHub noticed recurring patterns: founders at various development stages need distinct educational support. However, no existing system covers the entire range, from youth ideation to complex multi-market expansion, in an integrated manner. This insight inspired the creation of CansultHub Venture School, a structured global startup college that systematizes the firm's accumulated expertise into a scalable, multi-level educational framework.

The framework design process is finished. CansultHub is now in the active implementation stage, setting up the operational infrastructure, curriculum delivery systems, and institutional partnerships needed to officially launch the programs. This paper outlines the completed framework architecture, its theoretical basis, and the current phased implementation plan.

Research Objectives and Contributions

This paper introduces CansultHub's comprehensive five-tier educational framework that connects entrepreneurship education with international mobility opportunities, tailored for various participant profiles and venture stages: (1) Launch Orbit: Youth Global Startup Accelerator (ages 15–19, 55 hours); (2) Galaxy Rise: Professional Startup Accelerator (early-stage founders, 80 hours); (3) Saturn Path: Research-to-Venture Accelerator (postgraduate researchers, 85 hours); (4) Nova Grid: Global Expansion Bootcamp (scale-up stage, 90 hours); and (5) Binary Trail: Dual-Incubation Readiness Accelerator (multi-market ventures, 95 hours).

Each tier integrates technical skills development, using no-code and AI tools, with entrepreneurial strategies and startup visa preparation across 42 countries. The framework begins with basic exposure (Launch Orbit) and progresses to professional venture growth (Galaxy Rise, Saturn Path), culminating in advanced international expansion (Nova Grid, Binary Trail). A significant contribution of this research is demonstrating how entrepreneurship education can be systematically restructured to prioritize global mobility as a core competency rather than an optional feature.

Paper Structure

The remaining sections are structured as follows: Section II reviews literature on entrepreneurship education, global mobility frameworks, and startup visa policies. Section III describes the methodology and structure of the five-tier framework. Section IV discusses implementation pathways, design validation, and program results. Section V concludes with recommendations for educational institutions and policymakers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Entrepreneurship Education Frameworks

Entrepreneurship education has shifted from traditional business planning to practical, hands-on approaches. The lean startup framework, introduced

by Ries [10] and further developed by Blank [11], focuses on quick testing, customer feedback, and iterative product development. It has become the leading model in technology-focused entrepreneurship education [15].

Progress in experiential learning theory has continued to influence program development. Kolb's experiential learning cycle [16] serves as a fundamental pedagogical framework for project-based, mentor-led accelerator programs. Neck and Greene [17] champion teaching entrepreneurship as a practical skill set, emphasizing applicable methods over focusing solely on outcomes.

Despite these advances, scholars have noted ongoing limitations. Nabi et al. [18] confirmed that entrepreneurship education boosts entrepreneurial intention, but its effect on actual venture creation varies widely. Martin et al. [19] pointed out that conventional university courses often do not equip students for the realities of starting and expanding businesses. Importantly, most studies focus on local or national levels and pay less attention to international entrepreneurial routes [20], a gap that is increasingly misaligned with the born-global nature of technology startups [21].

Global Mobility and Startup Visa Programs

The growth of startup visa programs marks a notable change in global migration policies. Governments realize that conventional skilled-worker immigration systems often do not draw entrepreneurial talent [22]. Instead, startup visas focus on innovation potential, scalability, and their ability to create jobs [23].

Canada's Start-up Visa Program, launched in 2013 and now closed, was the first to mandate endorsement from designated organizations such as venture capital funds, angel investor groups, or business incubators instead of direct government assessment [24]. This model has been adopted by the UK, France, Germany, Australia, Singapore, and many others, creating a worldwide marketplace for entrepreneurial talent.

Research on the effectiveness of startup visas is still developing. Hunt [25] highlighted positive links between immigrant entrepreneurs and patent activity, while Kerr and Kerr [26] showed that immigrant-founded companies make notable contributions to technology entrepreneurship. Nonetheless, ongoing challenges include administrative complexity, uneven application of innovation standards, and information access barriers that tend to unfairly disadvantage founders from developing countries and younger age groups [27, 28].

Youth Entrepreneurship Education

Research consistently confirms the importance of introducing entrepreneurial ideas early. Huber et al. [29], through randomized field experiments, found that entrepreneurship training for teenagers influences their future career paths and ambitions. Sánchez [30] revealed that youth programs enhance not just business skills but also broader abilities such as problem-solving, creativity, and resilience, which support long-term innovation success.

Youth entrepreneurship programs encounter specific challenges. Developmental psychology shows that adolescents perceive risk and reward differently from adults, which calls for age-appropriate teaching methods [31]. Additionally, legal restrictions in various areas often restrict minors' involvement in formal businesses, prompting the need for innovative program formats that offer genuine entrepreneurial experiences while complying with legal requirements [32].

The link between youth entrepreneurship education and preparing for international mobility is still mostly unexamined in existing research. This framework specifically fills that gap by integrating global readiness into youth programs from the very beginning.

Research Commercialization and Deep Tech Ventures

Translating academic research into commercial ventures demands specialized support systems that tackle the specific challenges of deep technology development. Markman et al. [33] pointed out structural gaps between academic innovation and market-ready products. Meanwhile, Shane [34] noted that academic entrepreneurs frequently lack the business skills essential for successful commercialization.

Deep tech ventures generally demand longer development periods, larger capital investments, and more intricate regulatory processes compared to traditional software startups [35]. Consequently, research commercialization efforts need to incorporate strategies for intellectual property, funding plans, regulatory adherence, and team building, in addition to typical entrepreneurial skills [36]. International mobility introduces additional challenges, since many deep tech startups rely on specialized infrastructure or collaborative ecosystems that are accessible only within certain jurisdictions [37].

No-Code and AI Tools in Entrepreneurship

The rise of no-code platforms and generative AI tools

has significantly reduced the technical barriers to starting a new business. Platforms like Webflow, Bubble, and Glide allow quick MVP prototyping without needing traditional coding skills [38], while tools such as ChatGPT and Claude have revolutionized market research, content creation, and analysis for small founding teams [39].

To effectively integrate these tools, entrepreneurs need more than just technical skills. They must also develop strategic judgment for choosing the right tools, assessing quality, and integrating them into workflows [40]. Educational programs that include these technologies should blend practical technical training with strategic guidance on their use, a core principle reflected throughout the CansultHub framework.

Theoretical Framework

This study relies on three key theoretical foundations. Firstly, experiential learning theory [16] is the main pedagogical framework, organizing each program around hands-on experience, reflection, conceptual understanding, and active testing. Secondly, capability theory [41] treats entrepreneurship as a collection of skills that can be learned and developed, supporting the idea that targeted educational efforts can effectively enhance entrepreneurial preparedness. Thirdly, global mobility scholarship [42] considers international movement not just as an external factor but as a vital part of modern venture creation, acknowledging that startups competing globally must handle multiple regulations, markets, and talent pools from the very beginning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Framework Development Process

1. The five-tier framework was developed over 18 months (January 2023 – June 2024) through a detailed, practice-driven iterative process, leveraging CansultHub's direct experience as both a professional consultancy and a startup incubation hub. Its creation involved five main stages:
2. Environmental Scanning: A comprehensive review of startup visa requirements across 42 countries to identify common eligibility criteria, documentation standards, and incubator expectations.
3. Stakeholder Consultation: Conducted structured interviews with 23 international incubator directors, 15 immigration lawyers, and 31 successful startup founders using startup visa pathways. This process yielded practitioner-validated insights into the essential competencies for acceptance into international incubators.
4. Competency Mapping entails identifying the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities required at each phase of a project and across various visa categories. This approach draws on CansultHub's extensive experience with client cases in immigration, business establishment, and startup incubation.
5. Curriculum Design: Creating modular, hands-on curricula that align with key competencies and follow Kolb's experiential learning principles, ensuring each program provides both theoretical knowledge and practical application.
6. Validation and Refinement: The framework was validated through consultations with program advisors and reviewed to meet incubator and visa program criteria, leading to the finalized version presented here. Implementation is ongoing, with operational infrastructure and partnerships being developed simultaneously.
7. This development process guaranteed that the program content directly aligns with the practical needs for international incubator acceptance, visa eligibility, and readiness at the venture stage.

Program Architecture: The Five-Tier Framework

The framework includes five separate programs, each designed for particular participant profiles and venture stages. The main structural details are shown in Table I.

TABLE I FIVE-TIER FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

Program	Target Audience	Duration	Venture Stage	Primary Focus	Visa Pathways
Launch Orbit	Ages 15–19	55 hrs (10 wks)	Ideation to MVP	Entrepreneurial thinking, AI prototyping	Future readiness
Galaxy Rise	Age 18+, early founders	80 hrs (12 wks)	Concept to MVP	Validation, MVP, pitch deck	Startup visas
Saturn Path	Postgraduate researchers	85 hrs (12 wks)	Research to venture	IP strategy, commercialization	Tech/innovation visas
Nova Grid	Scale-up founders	90 hrs (12 wks)	MVP to international	Market expansion, compliance	Expansion visas
Binary Trail	Multi-market founders	95 hrs (12 wks)	Dual-market operations	Dual incubation, entity structure	Multi-jurisdiction visas

Note: All programs combine synchronous instruction, asynchronous learning, and hands-on project work.

The progression indicates growing venture maturity and operational complexity. Launch Orbit introduces basic entrepreneurial concepts to younger participants with limited experience. Galaxy Rise and Saturn Path focus on different participant groups, professional founders and academic researchers, each needing tailored entry points but sharing core methods. Nova Grid and Binary Trail deal with advanced international expansion issues for ventures that have achieved product-market fit and need structured support for cross-border growth.

Each program centers on three interconnected components: (1) entrepreneurial methodology and core business skills; (2) technical skills through no-code and AI tools; and (3) global mobility strategies, including preparation for startup visa pathways in target countries. This integrated approach sets the CansultHub framework apart from traditional accelerator programs, which usually consider international expansion as a separate, downstream activity rather than part of the curriculum.

Program Descriptions

Launch Orbit: Youth Global Startup Accelerator

Launch Orbit is a 10-week, 55-hour co-incubation program for participants aged 15 to 19, no previous entrepreneurship experience needed. Students develop minimum viable products (MVPs) using no-code and AI tools, explore international startup opportunities, and present a startup pitch to a panel of mentors and global incubator representatives. The program combines 50% in-person sessions and 50% online learning, culminating in a final in-person Global Showcase. To complete the program, participants must attend at least 80% of sessions, submit a working MVP prototype, and deliver a final pitch.

Galaxy Rise: Professional Startup Accelerator

Galaxy Rise is a 12-week, 80-hour accelerator tailored for adult founders (18+) at the concept or early MVP stage. Participants validate their business models through lean startup methods, develop a functional MVP with no-code or AI tools, craft a pitch deck appealing to investors and visa officials, and strategize for international incubator acceptance and startup visa eligibility. The program combines online and in-person sessions, 60% online and 40% workshops, and concludes with a Final Demo Day featuring mentors and a judging panel. To complete the program, participants must attend at least 80% of sessions, submit a final pitch deck and MVP overview, and partake in the showcase.

Saturn Path: Research-to-Venture Accelerator

Saturn Path is a 12-week, 85-hour intensive program designed for postgraduate researchers and

scientists, including Master's, PhD, or Postdoc students, who have a research project or IP concept ready for validation. Participants build expertise in research commercialization strategies, IP and patent frameworks, business model development, funding roadmaps, and investor pitch creation. The program is fully online, combining 70% live sessions and 30% self-paced learning, ending with a formal investor-style commercialization pitch to advisors and funders. To complete the program, participants must submit a commercialization plan and deliver a final investor pitch.

Nova Grid: Global Expansion Bootcamp

Nova Grid is a 12-week, 90-hour global readiness bootcamp designed for growth-stage founders with an active startup at the MVP or revenue stage. Participants learn to craft international market entry strategies, navigate cross-border compliance and legal issues, plan dual visas and residencies, and prepare investor-ready international pitch decks. The program combines online learning with in-person intensive sessions and ends with a Final International Demo Day before an international panel. To complete the program, participants must submit a global expansion roadmap, deliver a final pitch, and participate in the global showcase.

Binary Trail: Dual-Incubation Readiness Accelerator

Binary Trail is a 12-week, 95-hour dual-incubation program designed for international startup founders who have an MVP or revenue-generating venture and aim to operate in two countries or markets simultaneously. Participants craft strategies for dual markets and entity structuring, develop cross-border legal and compliance plans, create visa synchronization roadmaps, and prepare co-incubation pitch decks customized to various visa and incubator requirements. The program combines in-person and online sessions and concludes with a Public Dual Pitch and a Global Milestone Map presentation. To complete the program, participants must attend at least 80% of the sessions, submit all key deliverables, and deliver a final dual-pitch presentation.

Integration of Startup Visa Pathways

A key aspect of the framework is the consistent incorporation of the startup visa strategy into every program level. Instead of viewing immigration planning as an afterthought, each program includes visa readiness as a fundamental part of the curriculum. Participants become acquainted with eligibility criteria, documentation standards, and incubator endorsement requirements specific to their target countries, with content customized to the startup visa environment across 42 countries.

This integration captures a key lesson from CansultHub's consulting approach: founders aware of visa options early on tend to make smarter choices about market entry, company structure, and participation in incubators. The framework applies this lesson as a teaching principle, emphasizing that global mobility should be considered a fundamental design factor rather than an afterthought in every program.

Implementation Pathway

The design phase of the framework has been entirely finalized. CansultHub is now progressing to the implementation stage, which features three simultaneous workstreams: (1) Operational Infrastructure, developing essential administrative, digital, and physical systems to expand each program, such as learning management platforms, client portals, and in-person showcase facilities in Vancouver; (2) Institutional Partnerships, establishing co-incubation agreements with international incubator networks in the target visa regions to enable real-time practitioner input and participant referral pathways; and (3) Faculty and Mentor Recruitment, gathering the specialized expertise needed to execute each program level, including immigration lawyers, startup mentors, no-code and AI specialists, and commercialization advisors.

The phased rollout begins with Launch Orbit and Galaxy Rise as the initial programs, while Saturn Path, Nova Grid, and Binary Trail will be introduced later as infrastructure and partnerships expand. This order aligns with market demand signals and operational preparedness.

DISCUSSION

Grounding in CansultHub's Consulting Practice

A core strength of the CansultHub framework is its direct basis in extensive real-world experience. Unlike purely theoretical models, its five-tier structure developed from CansultHub's practical support for various client groups: new entrepreneurs in Canada's startup visa program, international founders starting businesses in Canada, youth involved in innovation initiatives, and postgraduate researchers investigating commercialization options.

This grounding of the practitioner offers a framework inherently rooted in ecological validity. The competencies outlined across each level mirror real, documented gaps seen in client cases, instead of theoretical learning goals. For instance, the inclusion of startup visa preparation directly addresses the information barriers frequently observed by CansultHub's consulting team among qualified founders who lacked organized guidance on international mobility options.

Stakeholder Validation

Throughout the development of the framework, feedback from 23 international incubator directors, 15 immigration lawyers, and 31 startup founders served as external validation for the framework's design principles and competency structure. Consistent stakeholder input emphasized the importance of providing structured, stage-specific educational support that aligns with global mobility strategies, confirming both the framework's fundamental premise and the order of its five tiers.

Incubator directors, in particular, stressed the importance of pitch readiness, validating business models, and understanding visa documentation, skills that are directly incorporated into Galaxy Rise, Saturn Path, and Binary Trail. Immigration lawyers highlighted the importance of early visa awareness, as demonstrated by the visa-readiness component present across all five programs, including Launch Orbit.

Alignment with International Standards

The framework was benchmarked against the eligibility and evaluation criteria of startup visa programs in 42 countries. This alignment guarantees that the program outcomes are not only academically rigorous but also practically applicable, equipping participants to meet the documented requirements of real incubator endorsement processes and visa adjudication standards.

The integration of no-code and AI tools across all program levels highlights the changing technical standards of international incubators and startup visa programs. These programs now more frequently evaluate founders based on their ability to leverage emerging technologies for rapid validation and market entry.

CONCLUSION

This paper introduces a comprehensive five-tier educational framework currently being implemented that systematically connects entrepreneurship education with global mobility strategies. Created by CansultHub, a Vancouver-based professional consultancy and startup incubation hub with proven experience assisting international entrepreneurs and startup visa applicants, the framework serves as both a theoretical contribution and a practical implementation model.

The CansultHub Venture School framework tackles a well-documented gap in entrepreneurship education: the lack of structured, stage-specific programs that cover startup visa preparation, no-code and AI tool literacy, and international incubator readiness. These programs serve a wide range of entrepreneurs, including youth ideators, postgraduate researchers, and founders operating in multiple markets.

As governments around the world expand startup visa programs and entrepreneurial ventures increasingly operate globally from the start, frameworks that incorporate international mobility as a key educational skill will become vital infrastructure for innovation ecosystems. The CansultHub model provides a replicable framework for institutions aiming to develop this capacity, rooted in practical experience, validated by international stakeholders, and crafted for effective implementation.

Future research should focus on assessing the long-term success of program graduates, comparing how different frameworks perform in various institutional and cultural settings, and investigating how generative AI tools are transforming entrepreneurship education. As the global startup environment evolves, it will be crucial to continuously improve educational frameworks to provide aspiring entrepreneurs worldwide with clear, research-based pathways to international opportunities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors sincerely thank CansultHub and ImmiGlobe for their vital support, providing the foundational practice and institutional resources that shaped this research. We appreciate the international incubator directors, immigration lawyers, and startup founders who dedicated time and expertise during stakeholder consultations, helping to develop

a framework rooted in the realities of international entrepreneurship. We also recognize the participants in CansultHub's consulting and incubation programs, whose ongoing experiences continue to enhance and inform the model presented here.

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