Innovate
Moreton Bay

Impact Report 2025

Laying the Foundations for a Top 10 Innovation Hub

CITY OF MORETON BAY

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Jinibara, Kabi Kabi, and Turrbal peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands, seas, skies, and waterways of the Moreton Bay area. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging, and recognise their enduring connection to Country, culture, and community.

We recognise that this area has always been a place of deep cultural, spiritual, social, and economic significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and that this connection remains strong today. We also acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters from across the nation, and extend our respect to Elders and communities across those Countries.

We acknowledge that these lands have been places of innovation, knowledge-sharing, and enterprise for tens of thousands of years. We honour the enduring contributions of First Nations peoples and recognise that their knowledge systems, resilience, and custodianship continue to shape this place today.

As we work to support founders, entrepreneurs, and emerging ideas, we commit to doing so with respect for Country, in the spirit of inclusion, and with the understanding that a thriving future is built through shared responsibility, learning, and care for place.



Innovate Moreton Bay

Impact Report 2025

About This Report

This report provides a structured account of program delivery, measurable outcomes, and ecosystem progress achieved during the 2025 calendar year.

It captures the program's contribution to founder capability, capital activation, cross-sector collaboration, and City of Moreton Bay's ambition to become one of Australia's top 10 innovation hubs.

The report draws on program data, event outcomes, participant feedback, and partner engagement to ensure transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

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Strategic Partners 2025

Creative HQ Your place of innovation · Queensland Government · UniSC · City of Moreton Bay

Innovate Moreton Bay (IMB) is powered by partners who share a commitment to long-term ecosystem growth.

We proudly acknowledge City of Moreton Bay as the principal funding partner, providing leadership and sustained investment in knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurship.

We recognise the Queensland Government, Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, for strategic alignment with state innovation priorities.

We also thank the University of the Sunshine Coast for connecting research, talent and enterprise to accelerate commercial outcomes.

Reporting Period

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Enquiries

For further information regarding this report, please contact: **info@creativehq.co.nz**

Executive Summary

IMB, funded by City of Moreton Bay and delivered by Creative HQ, is a multi-year initiative growing high-value startups and strengthening the city's innovation capability.

In 2025, the program focused on building the foundations required to accelerate City of Moreton Bay's ambition to become one of Australia's top 10 innovation hubs. Structured support improved founder capability, strengthened access to capital, and reduced barriers to growth.

The result is a more connected and investable founder community driving measurable economic momentum.

2025 Focus: Laying the Foundations

In its first year delivered by Creative HQ, IMB focused on building the foundations for sustained ecosystem growth by strengthening trust, mapping founder demand, activating networks, and embedding consistent delivery rhythms to enable deeper commercial and investment outcomes in the years ahead.

2025 Impact by the Numbers

Founders

- **64** ventures
- **100** coaching hours
- **100+** validations

Capital

- **20+** investors
- **$200K** co-investment
- **Global** VC exposure

Visibility

- **600+** event attendees
- **104K** digital impressions

Ecosystem

- **200+** strategic connections
- **15** programs delivered

From Moreton Bay to Silicon Valley

Through the Startup World Cup Queensland Final, high-potential founders gained direct access to global venture capital networks. The Queensland winner advanced to the Silicon Valley Grand Final to compete for a USD $1 million investment prize - elevating Moreton Bay's visibility and unlocking international capital pathways.



City of Moreton Bay's Investment in Innovation

City of Moreton Bay is an established destination for entrepreneurial endeavours, with Council prioritising investment attraction in key industries and facilitating innovative business development across a range of programs, to grow its economy to $40 billion in 2041.
By funding a diverse range of business development programs, Council is uplifting the economic competitiveness of the city and facilitating coordinated support across food and agribusiness, advanced manufacturing, tourism and knowledge-intensive industries.

Beyond Innovate Moreton Bay, we have delivered innovation programs for the city including the Ultimate HQ competition, the Digital Leap and Create Your Future Job programs, as well as the Mayor's Telstra Innovation awards which supports the city's young people to engage in entrepreneurship before they leave high school.
Driving innovation across communities and industry sectors is critical for the city to become a top 10 innovation hub that provides uplift opportunities for more than 33,000 local businesses, directly supporting Council's research-based directives to create more high-value local jobs for greater economic outcomes for the city.

City of Moreton Bay is proud of the impact of Innovate Moreton Bay. From its humble beginnings in 2016, alongside our partners we have built an energy-filled annual calendar of initiatives that inspires and encourages our talented local founders to think bigger by accessing critical support to grow their startups. By partnering with Creative HQ, the Queensland Government and UniSC, this impact is continuing to expand and lead us towards a $40 billion economy where innovative businesses will be at the forefront of economic competitiveness.



Peter Flannery
Mayor City of Moreton Bay

Partner Perspectives



"The Queensland Government Innovation Division is proud to have been part of the Innovate Moreton Bay journey from inception through the Advancing Regional Innovation Program. It quickly became a cornerstone for building the capability of the local innovation ecosystem, and with the Creative HQ refresh in 2025, it's been incredible to see the real difference this work makes - empowering local founders, sparking innovation, and creating lasting impact for Queensland."

Gillian Gardiner, Executive Director
Dept of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation, Queensland Government.

"UniSC is proud to partner with City of Moreton Bay and Creative HQ for the Innovate Moreton Bay program, delivering local initiatives out of our Moreton Bay and Caboolture campuses, connecting local founders with the physical spaces to connect and thrive. Collaborating across the private and research sector only strengthens the city's identity as an innovation hub, and we look forward to continuing this partnership in 2026 and beyond."



Alex Elibank Murray, Pro Vice-Chancellor Global and Engagement, UniSC

Message from Creative HQ

CREATIVE HQ Your place of innovation

It is with genuine appreciation and pride that we reflect on our foundational year running the Innovate Moreton Bay program. We knew from the beginning that our program would need to be grounded in a Founder First approach and the spirit of #teammoretonbay, we are deeply gratified to see how our collective efforts have translated into tangible impact.

Our primary goal for 2025 - to establish a strong foundation for the city's innovation acceleration - was a significant undertaking. The success of this inaugural year is a direct testament to the strategic vision of City of Moreton Bay and the incredible collaborative energy from all of the ecosystem stakeholders. From meeting with over 60 key partners in the early program launch to executing 15 programs and engaging 60 separate startups and scaleups, the momentum generated is phenomenal.

We are particularly grateful for the energy and commitment of the local entrepreneurial community. The success of major events like the pilot Startup World Cup and the Innovation Showcase on Mobility, Access & Inclusion, as well as the immediate progress driven by the Startup Sprint, demonstrates the city's readiness to embrace innovation. Our commitment to agility and extending support is reflected in over 200+ introductions and referrals facilitated, deepening crucial connections.

Creative HQ is profoundly appreciative of the opportunity to deliver this program with City of Moreton Bay. We thank every partner, mentor, founder, and supporter who has contributed their time, knowledge, and trust. Together, we are not just building programs; we are cultivating a vibrant, connected, and resilient ecosystem that is well on its way to achieving the goal of becoming one of Australia's top 10 innovation hubs.

Brett Holland
Chief Innovation Officer,
Creative HQ

> Together, we are not just building programs - we are cultivating a vibrant, connected, and resilient ecosystem that is well on its way to becoming one of Australia's top 10 innovation hubs.



From Ambition to Action: Shaping a Bigger, Bolder, Brighter Innovation Future

From Foundation to Future

The IMB program was created to build a stronger, more connected innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem across Moreton Bay.

Over time, it has supported hundreds of founders and built a visible, investable ecosystem.

2016

Established through the Queensland Government's ARIP program.

Delivered by Moreton Bay Region Industry & Tourism to seed local innovation capability.

2022

When ARIP funding concluded, **City of Moreton Bay committed to continuing support for the ecosystem.**

2023

50 events | 1,500+ attendees | 584 connections

8 innovation case studies and 24 monthly social catch-ups activated and connected the ecosystem.

29 events | 800+ attendees

Founder-focused initiatives including Innovations Day and Sustainability Demo Day accelerated ecosystem momentum.

2024

Creative HQ appointed as delivery partner following competitive tender.

Structured capability building and ecosystem connection now position the city for long-term growth, jobs and investment.

2025

IMB progresses the City's Economic Strategy and is embedded within the Knowledge, Innovation and Entrepreneurship pillar. The program supports founders through applied innovation to strengthen the local economy and position the city as a credible, connected, and investable location for innovation, contributing to the ambition of becoming one of Australia's top 10 innovation hubs.

Delivering the City's Economic Vision

Innovate Moreton Bay strengthens the city's economic future by strengthening the pipeline of credible, investable businesses. Through structured capability development and cross-sector collaboration, the program supports job creation, attracts capital, and advances innovation-led competitiveness.

Built to Last: Four Pillars of Ecosystem Impact

IMB delivers ecosystem impact through four pillars, each designed to move founders from idea to investment-ready venture.

CONNECT

Unlock access to capital, customers and capability.
200+ strategic introductions and referrals in 2025.

EMPOWER

Build disciplined, investment-ready founders.
Structured programs including Startup Sprint and expert-led intensives.

CREATE

Turn validated ideas into viable, market-ready solutions.
City-aligned challenges and applied innovation showcases delivered.

GROW

Scale high-potential ventures and attract capital.
20+ investors engaged through flagship events.

The City's Goals by 2041



$40 billion economy



100,000 new jobs



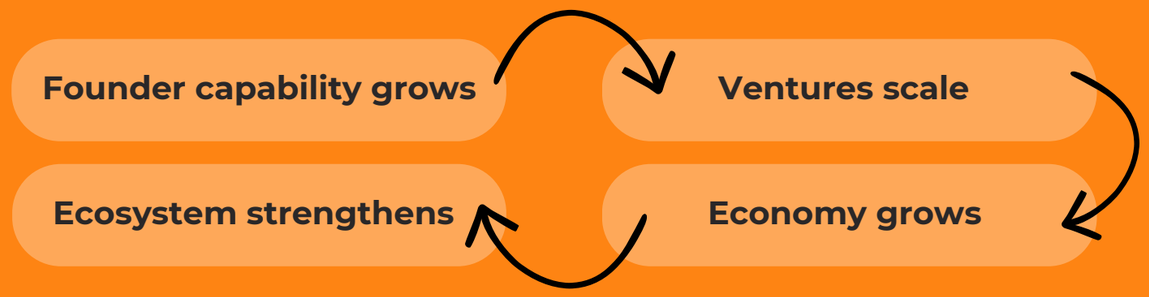
Top 10 Innovation Hub

Innovate Moreton Bay: Where Innovation Takes Shape



How Impact Happens

Innovate Moreton Bay uses a clear impact model to connect what we do today with long-term outcomes we are working towards. It guides decision-making, program design, delivery, and measurement, and evolves as the ecosystem grows.



In the short term, we:

- Build founder capability through innovation tools and practical support.
- Strengthen connections across the ecosystem to unlock collaboration and opportunity.

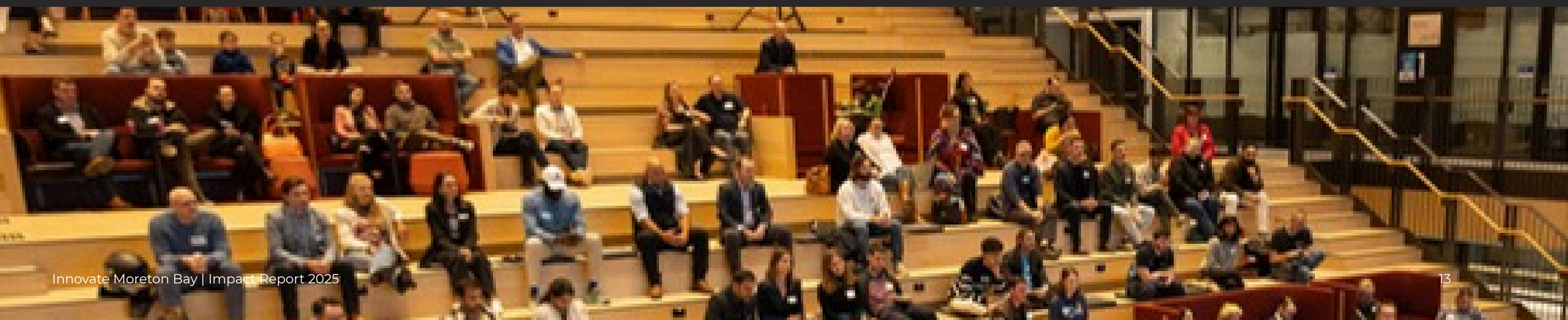
Over time, this:

- Drives innovation-led growth and job creation across the city.
- Builds a strong reputation that attracts capital, talent, and long-term partnerships.



Impact Model

What we do	Create these changes	Which Leads to	Resulting in	Impact
Showcase Innovation: We make innovation visible and credible.	Our showcase activities lead to greater awareness and visibility of innovation-led organisations and opportunities.	More people and organisations recognise the economic and community value of startups and innovation.	Innovation-led growth is embedded as a core driver of prosperity across City of Moreton Bay. Including: • Priority sector strengths mature in advanced manufacturing, food and agritourism, digital and civic services. • Startups build sustainable business models that create lasting economic and community value. • Enduring connections with national and global innovation networks. • A sustained culture of innovation across government, industry, research, and community.	City of Moreton Bay is recognised as a thriving, innovation-driven economy that attracts capital, talent, and long-term partnerships.
Build innovation capability: We grow the skills and confidence needed to test, validate, and scale ideas.	Our capability programs and founder support increased the ability of individuals to use innovation tools and mindsets.	More founders and organisations apply innovation tools to commercial and scalable solutions.		
Connect and Orchestrate the ecosystem: We strengthen the ecosystem by creating the conditions for collaboration.	Our convening and coordination activities create more collaboration opportunities.	A business environment that enables purposeful innovation partnerships.		
Grow: We increase deal-flow and open commercial pathways.	Our investment-readiness and deal-flow activities improve access to capital tools and networks.	Greater capital and commercial pathways available to more startups.		



From Foundations to Scale

2025

Goal:

Establish the Foundations

Activities:

Onboarded CHQ and strengthened key partnerships.

15 programs delivered
60+ startups engaged
200+ concierge introductions
Flagship events including Startup World Cup and Innovation Showcase.

Outcome: Established the capability and connections required for scale.

2026

Goal:

Deepen and Focus

Activities:

Launch a 9-month Incubator Model for outcomes-driven founder support. Target priority key verticals to seed innovation clusters.

Continue with flagship initiatives as the leading investor gateway.

Outcome: Transition from broad activation to focused cluster development.

2027

Goal:

Anchor and Scale

Activities:

Build on the Incubator Model by expanding partnerships and delivering targeted programming that anchors the Innovation clusters.

Outcome: Embed innovation as a sustained driver of economic growth.

Purposeful Connection That Moves Founders Forward



PILLAR 01: CONNECT

Building meaningful access to the people, networks, and opportunities founders need to move forward.

11

Connection events delivered

Founders reported reduced isolation and stronger peer connections across events.

200+

Strategic introductions and connections facilitated

60+

Founders participating

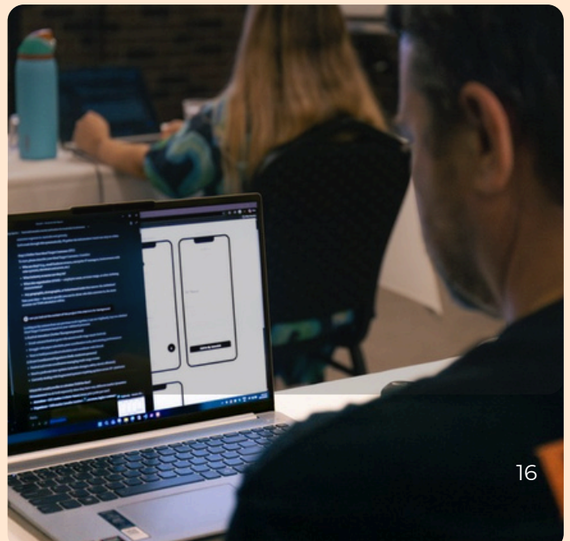
What we delivered

Through flagship events, tailored introductions, and curated connections, IMB created practical pathways for founders to access capital, customers, mentors, and partners across the ecosystem.

What founders experienced

Founders consistently reported reduced isolation and increased confidence through peer connection.

> I've been able to contribute and learn from others who are just starting out or further along, which has given me valuable perspective on my own path. Having that community support has been important because the process can feel quite isolating, especially as a solo entrepreneur.
>
> -Rod Lunt, Founder and Entrepreneur



> *Connection at IMB is purposeful, not passive.*

CONNECT IN ACTION

Cadent

Cadent: From Community to Credibility

When James Gauci joined Innovate Moreton Bay, he was seeking more than introductions - he needed credible relationships within a serious innovation ecosystem. Through structured access to founders, policymakers, academics, and industry leaders aligned to the Responsible AI agenda, Cadent gained direct access to decision-makers and early adopters.

These relationships accelerated validation and positioned Cadent as a credible contributor in a complex and emerging sector. As James reflects,

“It gave me community, credibility, and a way to grow my company with purpose.”

Introductions facilitated within the network led to collaboration, policy engagement, and real-world traction. What began as purposeful access translated into momentum and national relevance.

Today, Cadent has moved from local engagement to broader impact, supported by a network that continues to open doors as the company scales.

Why this matters

Early-stage founders often operate in isolation, which limits access to the people and insight required to progress. Structured connection pathways reduce that isolation and build confidence at critical stages of the founder journey.

Over time, this strengthens the entire ecosystem - enabling earlier collaboration, greater trust, increased knowledge flow, and stronger conditions for investment and long-term growth across the city.

> The community IMB provides is what changed everything - it’s genuine, it’s energising and it’s collaborative.
>
> -James Gauci, Founder and CEO Cadent





Building Capability That Turns Ideas into Action

PILLAR 02: EMPOWER

Building the skills, confidence, and practical capability founders need to test, validate, and scale their ideas.

4

Structured capability-building programs delivered in 2025

Designed to help founders move from idea to validation, commercial readiness, early traction and pitching.

45

Founders built capability through Empower programs.

100
hours

Coaching delivered across 2025

Through structured coaching and practical application, Innovate Moreton Bay founders moved from uncertainty to evidence-led decision-making and commercial readiness.

What we delivered

Through targeted education, expert coaching, and hands-on application, Innovate Moreton Bay supported founders to replace uncertainty with evidence. Programs were designed to strengthen decision-making, reduce early-stage risk, and help founders progress ideas toward commercially viable solutions.

Rather than focusing on theory alone, these programs empower founders by providing practical tools and real-world testing, enabling founders to validate assumptions, engage customers earlier, and move forward with greater clarity and confidence.

What founders experienced

Founders reported increased confidence, improved decision-making, and a clearer understanding of how to validate and commercialise their ideas.

> *“Founders leave more capable than they arrived.”*



EMPOWER IN ACTION

Startup Sprint: Confidence Built on Evidence

The Moreton Bay Startup Sprint gave early-stage founders a structured pathway from idea to validation. Rather than theory, the program focused on practical application: testing assumptions, engaging real customers, and building confidence grounded in evidence.

Founders worked through intensive discovery, validation, and storytelling workshops, supported by facilitation and peer learning. Every participant completed discovery and validation interviews. More than half took concrete next steps within 60 days.

The Sprint demystified entrepreneurship, reduced early-stage risk, and created clearer pathways toward incubators, investment readiness, business improvement and commercialisation.

Results at a Glance

Key Numbers	What Changed
15 companies supported	Shift from assumption-led to evidence-led decision-making
19 participants across priority sectors	Early prototypes and market tests developed
All participants reported an increased confidence	Clear prioritisation of features and next steps
100% completed discovery and validation interviews	Strong peer connections established across sectors
> 50% teams took concrete next steps within 60 days	Teams progressed toward incubators, grants, and procurement pathways





Startup Sprint: From Ideas to Evidence

Empower: How We Build Founder Capability

Empowerment at Innovate Moreton Bay is delivered through a mix of structured programs, targeted workshops, and high-touch coaching, ensuring founders receive the right support at the right stage of their journey.

Three ways Empower built founder capability in 2025:

- Startup Sprint: A focused, early-stage capability program supporting founders to move from ideas to evidence, customer validation, and commercial readiness.
- Startup World Cup Workshops: Targeted training for Startup World Cup participants and other City of Moreton Bay founders, building critical skills in pitch development and capital strategy.
- Bespoke Founder Coaching: High-touch support to IMB program participants and local founders, strengthening confidence and capability to engage with investors and industry at a national and global level.

Together, these programs moved founders from learning to action, building a more capable and commercially ready founder community across City of Moreton Bay.

Why this matters

Early-stage uncertainty stalls even strong ideas. The Empower pillar equips founders with practical tools and evidence-led decision-making to break through that uncertainty and act.

As founders move from assumption to evidence, the quality of ventures emerging from the ecosystem improves. Over time, this leads to greater commercial readiness, stronger investment outcomes, and a more consistent pipeline of scalable businesses across the City of Moreton Bay.



EMPOWER IN ACTION

> What changed for me was the shift from uncertainty to clarity. I stopped guessing and started learning directly from my potential clients. A turning point was when we mapped our risks, assumptions, and value in a clear, focused way. Brett and Amanda created a supportive space to explore ideas and challenges, and allowed us to speed up some of our research using AI tools.

-Julia Lewis, Director - Margarita Media





> The Startup Sprint changed the way I approach a new business idea. It has given me a set of tools to use to validate or invalidate an idea quickly and helped me to optimise my existing business practices. Cannot recommend it highly enough.

-Peter Hosking, Managing Director - Campaign Surge

Creating the Conditions for Collaboration at Scale



PILLAR 03: CREATE

Innovate Moreton Bay creates the conditions for collaboration between founders, industry, government, and partners to solve shared challenges and generate outcomes that individual connections alone cannot achieve.

660+

participants engaged across founders, industry, academia, government, and community

50+

organisations involved, spanning public, private, and research sectors

1

challenge-led, pre-procurement innovation model delivered, aligning problem owners with solution providers

2

co-investment pilots established, creating a pathway from collaboration to implementation

What we delivered

Through curated showcases, challenge-led initiatives, and partner-led engagement, Innovate Moreton Bay brought together decision-makers, practitioners, and innovators around shared priorities.

These interventions were designed to align people, problems, and resources, reducing fragmentation across the ecosystem and unlocking collaboration pathways that are typically difficult to access, particularly for early-stage founders.

> *“IMB creates the conditions for collaboration that wouldn’t happen otherwise.”*

Founder voice:



“Sharing your journey with others on a similar path or who have experience is key to starting any business. IMB provides that chance for local startups to connect. This year's Startup Sprint and fireside chats were highlights for me.”

-Craig Rowe, Founder - RenovateRight.app



“Innovate Moreton Bay transformed how I view the regional business landscape. Previously, high-growth pathways felt opaque, but the program provided a clear roadmap to the opportunities available right now. It unlocked access to a calibre of partners and investors I previously thought were out of reach. We now possess the momentum and network backing required to look outward and compete globally, rather than just locally.”

-Wes Pearson, Director - Artefact Group

Turning Innovation into Economic Outcomes

CREATE IN ACTION

As City of Moreton Bay grows, inclusion, accessibility, and mobility are not social considerations alone, they are economic imperatives. The Private Sector Pathways Innovation Showcase positioned the city as a national leader in inclusive innovation, aligning with the lead-up to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

What happened

150+
Leaders convened
across government, industry, and academia

10
Exhibitors

5
Finalists

2
Winners
(Cerge and Briometrix)

$200,000
Pilot investment

1
Cross-government model

Impact and Legacy

The Showcase demonstrated how challenge-led collaboration can move beyond ideas to action:

- Accessibility and inclusion treated as economic priorities, not social add-ons.
- Two funded pilots progressed from challenge to implementation, with direct community benefit.
- Opened conversations with procurement and policy teams across two levels of government.
- Established a replicable model for challenge-led inclusive innovation ahead of the 2032 Games.

Why this matters

The Showcase proved that government, industry, and founders can quickly move from problem statement to funded pilot. That speed and coordination matters. It signals to procurement teams, policy makers, and other government agencies that challenge-led innovation is not just aspirational. It is replicable, and directly relevant to the 2032 Games legacy agenda.



Innovation Showcase: Government Partnering with Industry to Solve Complex Challenges

PILLAR 04: GROW

Grow converts innovation into investment-ready ventures by scaling high-potential startups and connecting them to capital, markets, and global opportunity.

20+

Investor and capital partners engaged

Startup World Cup Queensland Final (2025):

33
applications received

10
finalists selected

150+
attendees,
including investors, government, and ecosystem leaders

Winner GravityFit

> *IMB is building a credible pipeline to capital.*

What we delivered

A visible pipeline of investment-ready ventures presented to investors and capital partners. Flagship pathways such as Startup World Cup and Innovation Showcase strengthened founder readiness, normalised capital engagement, and signalled quality to the market.

GROW IN ACTION

Founder voice:

> The Startup World Cup created real momentum for GravityFit. **It gave us visibility, focus, and access to connections that have materially shifted our business trajectory.** Representing Queensland on a global stage, as well as being an incredible experience, helped us raise our ambition and sharpen how we communicate about our products and future plans. The coaching and support prepared us to engage investors and partners with confidence and we continue to build on outcomes that originated from the program

-Kirsty Richardson, Co-Founder, GravityFit | Winner, Startup World Cup QLD Final



Startup World Cup Queensland Final: From Local Momentum to Global Opportunity

Delivered through the Innovate Moreton Bay program, the Startup World Cup Queensland Final positioned the city as a credible launch point for scalable ventures. The pathway connected founders with investors and global networks through a high-profile, competitive platform - building confidence, sharpening ambition, and unlocking international opportunity

Realised through strategic collaboration with Pegasus Tech Ventures, the Queensland Government, and the University of the Sunshine Coast - aligning local innovation with global opportunity.



FOUNDER CASE STUDY

Outcome

GravityFit claimed the Queensland title and advanced to the Global Grand Final in Silicon Valley, competing for a USD $1 million investment. **Hailo Solutions** was recognised with the People's Choice Award, signalling strong market resonance.

Beyond the prize, the pathway delivered validation, exposure, and momentum, supporting founders to engage confidently with investors and progress toward scale.



Kirsty Richardson, Co-Founder of GravityFit, pitching at the Startup World Cup Grand Finale 2025 in Silicon Valley



Why this matters

Economic impact is realised when high-potential ventures can access capital, markets, and scale pathways. The Grow pillar builds a visible, credible pipeline of investment-ready startups, supporting job creation, capital attraction, and long-term economic growth for City of Moreton Bay.

By connecting ambitious founders with opportunity, Innovate Moreton Bay helps ensure the city's most promising ventures are not only created - but grown.

Plans for 2026

Accelerating the Vision

With strong foundations established in 2025, Innovate Moreton Bay enters a new phase of focused growth. The strategy shifts from broad activation to deliberate cluster development, concentrating capability, capital, and collaboration to accelerate high-potential ventures toward scale.

Deep, Outcomes-Driven Support

Moreton Bay Startup Lab, the nine-month Incubator Model, replaces surface-level engagement with structured coaching, accountability, and ecosystem mobilisation. Founders move from discovery and validation to measurable traction within a disciplined, evidence-led pathway to growth.

Cluster Development

Priority industry verticals including Civictech, Food and Agritech, Healthtech, and Tourism, Sports and Events will form the city's first innovation clusters. These clusters concentrate effort in areas of competitive strength and create stronger pathways from capability building to market opportunity.

Connecting to Capital

Pillar 4: Grow will strengthen direct pathways to capital, markets, and scale. Structured programming will continue to attract investors and elevate ventures to national and global visibility.

The Result

A connected, investment-ready pipeline of ventures that accelerates job creation, attracts capital, and advances the city's ambition to be recognised as one of Australia's leading innovation hubs.



Innovate
Moreton Bay

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