Foundiro

Methodology guide | Optional reading for universities and delivery partners

Foundiro

Modernizing Entrepreneurship Education for the AI Generation

The framework in detail: why entrepreneurship education has to change, the founder loop, the journey, the six ideas that carry the method, what a university receives and how a delivery runs.

Methodology guide
November 2026
Designed and led by Kalle Sarraj

The programme in brief

Foundiro connects entrepreneurship learning, practical venture building, AI-assisted research and human mentoring in one guided journey: from an idea to an evidence-informed business.

Foundiro is a complete entrepreneurship programme for universities and the institutions that serve aspiring founders. Students work individually or in teams of two or three on a venture of their own. They may start by solving a problem, improving something that exists or creating something new. Every lesson is applied to that venture, tested against the real world and reviewed by a person.

What students do. They learn a method in short lessons with worked examples, apply it to their venture, investigate real customers and sources, discuss what they find with their team and facilitator, make a written decision against criteria they set beforehand, and act on it with a low-cost real-world test. The result feeds the next lesson.

What students leave with. An evidence-backed venture record: the people they serve and the need, improvement or new possibility they investigated, what those people do and spend today, a value proposition and business model with every key number labelled as evidence or assumption, the tests they ran and what they decided, a launch plan, and a workflow they redesigned around AI and defended without AI help. Students who decide, on evidence, not to continue leave with the same record and full learning credit.

What is different. Evidence comes before opinion. AI is taught as a working partner with clear limits, not as a plan generator. Every formal decision about a venture is made by a named person who records what they checked. Learning, venture evidence and commercial results are kept as three separate records, and no one is reduced to a single score.

How it is delivered. A complete classroom system (84 lessons, teaching slides, worksheets, facilitator guides with model answers, a fieldbook and 32 forms) that runs on paper, so a university can start without new software, and a hosted digital workspace with the same 84 lessons, in which students read, practise, complete worksheets and receive facilitator feedback, use their own AI assistant under the programme's rules or none at all, and move to the next lesson when a facilitator continues them. The core programme (68 lessons) is planned over about 30 teaching weeks. First deliveries are led by Kalle Sarraj with university staff alongside, so that staff can take over with confidence.

Why entrepreneurship education has to change

AI has made building cheap. A student can now produce a website, a brand, a pitch deck and a business plan in a weekend, and most of it will look finished. That changes what a founder has to learn.

Knowing what is worth building is now the scarce skill. When output is cheap, the value moves to judgement: which need is real, who has it, what they do about it today, what they would give up for something better, and how to find out quickly and honestly. A programme that rewards polished output rewards the part AI already does.

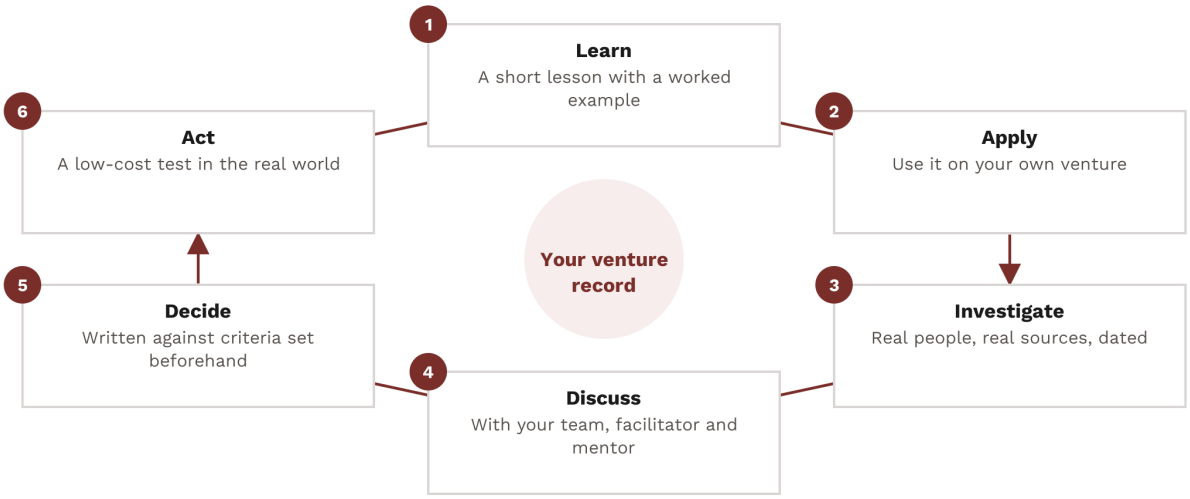
Plausible is not the same as true. An AI assistant will write a convincing customer persona, a market size and a set of interview answers on request. None of it is evidence about real customers. Students need a method that tells the difference, and a habit of checking.

AI is also changing the businesses themselves. Costs, distribution, competition and customer support change when AI does part of the work. Founders need to design businesses for that world, and to decide where AI should act and where a person must approve.

Students still need people. Teaching creates momentum; facilitators and mentors bring context and judgement that no assistant has; customers can only be understood by talking to them. Foundiro keeps human teaching and review at the centre and puts AI to work around them.

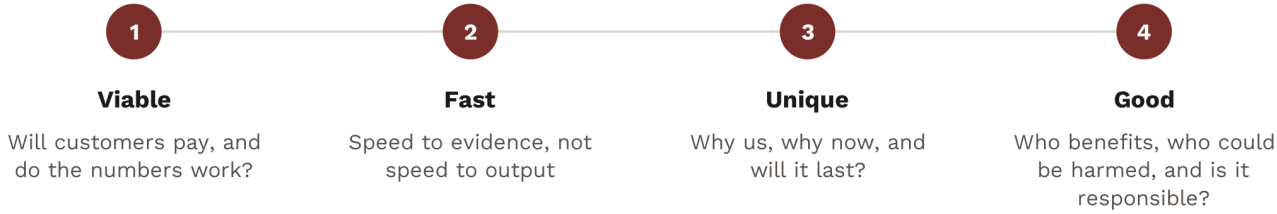
The founder loop

Every stage of Foundiro runs the same loop. Lessons and tools earn their place by helping a founder reach a better real-world decision or action.



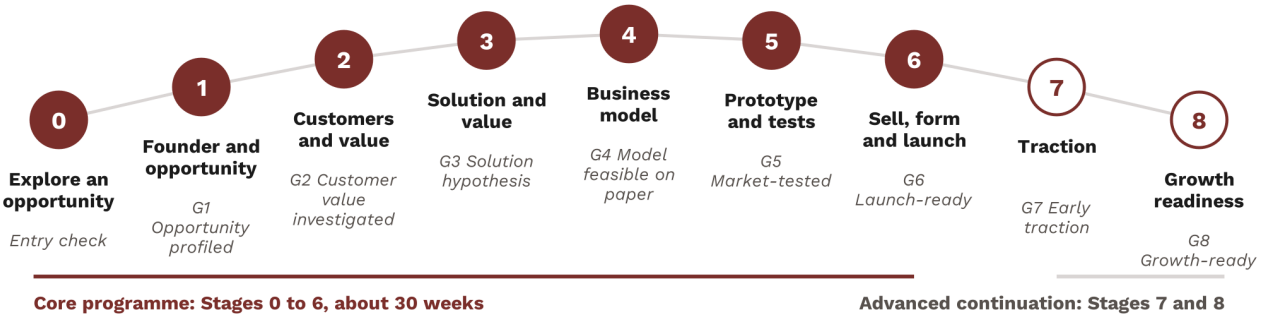
The founder loop. Each step updates the same venture record, so nothing is retyped and nothing is lost between stages.

Four qualities guide every stage. They are the questions a facilitator keeps asking.



The journey

Nine stages take a founder from a first opportunity to a business ready to grow. The core programme covers Stages 0 to 6 (68 lessons), ending with a launch decision and a defended AI workflow. Stages 7 and 8 (16 lessons) are an advanced continuation for ventures that are trading, because they need months of real operating data.



The Foundiro journey and the human review at the end of each stage.

Stage	The question it answers	Review at the end
0 Explore an opportunity	What need, improvement or new possibility is worth my next few weeks, and why me?	Entry check: ready or not yet
1 Founder and opportunity	What am I trying to do, with what means, and what do I believe that could be wrong?	G1 Opportunity profiled
2 Customers and value	Does a defined group really have this need or want this outcome, and what do they do and spend about it today?	G2 Customer value investigated
3 Solution and value	Which solution creates value that is clearly different, and how will we test it?	G3 Solution hypothesis defined
4 Business model	Can this become a viable, responsible business on paper, and which assumption could sink it?	G4 Model feasible on paper
5 Prototype and tests	Will real people act: sign up, use, pay?	G5 Market-tested
6 Sell, form and launch	What does it take to sell, operate and launch responsibly, and can I design an AI workflow I can defend?	G6 Launch-ready
7 Traction (advanced)	Can we attract, serve and keep customers month after month?	G7 Early traction
8 Growth readiness (advanced)	What limits sustainable growth, layer by layer?	G8 Growth-ready

The framework

Foundiro is a method, written down as a rulebook and taught through the curriculum. Six ideas carry it.

1. Claims and criteria come before the data

A founder writes what they believe as claims that could turn out to be wrong: a real need or desired outcome exists for a named group (C1), it matters enough to act on (C2), people already spend money, time or effort on a workaround or on reaching the outcome (C3), and later that they would switch, want this offer, pay for it, and that it can be delivered, made viable, run responsibly and keep its customers (C4 to C10). For each claim they write, before collecting anything, what result would count as support and what would count against. A criterion written after seeing the data is marked as such. A venture that improves an existing experience or creates a new possibility is investigated the same way: the founder looks for a valued outcome and what people do today to get it, without manufacturing a painful problem.

2. Evidence is judged by commitment, relevance and source

Every piece of evidence is recorded against a specific claim, with where it came from (observed, reported, a document, a third party) and how much commitment it shows. A compliment and a payment are not the same kind of evidence.

E5	**Money or repeat behaviour**	*A student paid; a customer came back three times*
E4	**Costly participation**	*Gave real time, data or documents*
E3	**Specific past behaviour**	*"Last Tuesday my lunch leaked into my bag"*
E2	**Stated intent**	*"I would buy that"*
E1	**Opinion or compliment**	*"Great idea"*
E0	**Synthetic**	*AI personas and simulated interviews: never evidence*

The commitment ladder. The level describes the item; it never decides on its own whether a claim is supported.

3. Research respects the people who take part

Every source carries five separate permissions, each recorded as yes, no or pending with its scope and date: research notes, recording, AI transcription, external AI analysis and public quotation. Permission to record is not permission to send a recording to an AI service. Where a permission is missing, the founder uses the permitted manual route.

4. A named person reviews every stage

At the end of each stage a reviewer examines a fixed submission, the exact versions the founder handed in, in four steps.

1. **Integrity**
   Consent, permissions, honesty of sources. Checked first, pass or hold.
2. **Stage test**
   Does the evidence meet what this stage must establish, against criteria set in advance?
3. **Venture status**
   GO, CONDITIONAL, NOT YET or NOT SUPPORTED: PIVOT OR STOP, granted by a named mentor with what was checked.
4. **Learning result**
   Recorded per founder, separately. An honest, evidenced stop earns full learning credit.

The statuses are earned by evidence, not by effort. A CONDITIONAL comes with a specific action and a date. A well-run stage that shows the idea does not hold is a legitimate and valuable outcome. Weekly worksheet feedback inside a stage (continue or revise) is learning feedback from the facilitator; it is separate from, and never replaces, the formal review at the end of the stage.

5. Three records, never one score

What you learned

Learning result: Distinction, Pass or Revise. Granted by an assessor.

What your evidence shows

Venture stage: GO, CONDITIONAL, NOT YET, NOT SUPPORTED. Granted by a mentor, with how it was checked.

What happened commercially

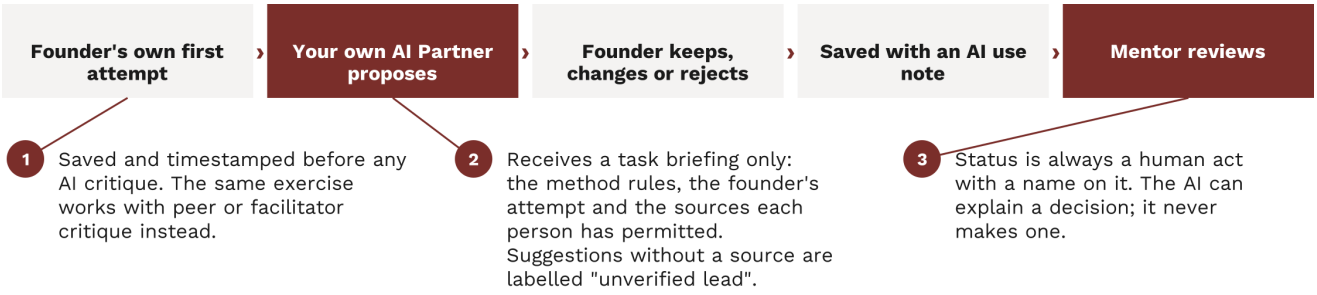
Facts only: customers, revenue, retention, "tested, not supported". Recorded from artifacts.

Three records. Never one score.

Specific ratings remain where they help (review dimensions, comparison of options, financial figures). What Foundiro never produces is an overall learner, venture, readiness or investment score.

6. Your AI Partner: useful, bounded, accountable

Your AI Partner is the assistant a founder already uses. Foundiro does not run an AI of its own: for each exercise it prepares a task briefing (the task, the method rules, the founder's own saved attempt and only the sources whose owners permitted AI analysis) that the founder copies into their assistant, and a return format that brings the answer back as proposals, field by field, which the founder accepts or rejects one by one. The rules are the same from Stage 1 onward: attempt first, then ask; the AI proposes and the founder decides; every piece of work carries a short AI use note. The founder's reflection, decision criterion and conclusion are never written by the AI. Synthetic people, interviews and market figures are never evidence. Every exercise has an equal route that needs no AI, with peer or facilitator critique instead, so no student is disadvantaged by access or by an institution's AI policy.



What Foundiro does differently

The table states what Foundiro is designed to do. It describes common patterns in entrepreneurship teaching, not every programme, and it is not a claim that no one else does any of these things.

A common pattern in entrepreneurship teaching	The Foundiro practice
Lectures on canvases and frameworks; the final output is a pitch deck	Every lesson changes a real decision about the student's own venture; the output is an evidence-backed venture record
Ideas judged by how well they are presented	Ventures judged by what people did, committed and paid, with the source of each item shown
AI ignored, banned, or used to generate business plans	The student's own AI assistant used under clear rules, disclosed in an AI use note, with an equal no-AI route, and AI taught as a force that reshapes business models; the core AI competency is designing a workflow with human approval points and defending it unaided
One path built around software startups	Branches for service, physical product, food and regulated, marketplace, B2B and impact ventures, each with its own tests and launch requirements
The programme ends at a demo day	The core runs to a launch decision; an advanced continuation covers traction and growth readiness with real operating data
Success means continuing	An honest, evidenced decision to change direction or stop is a full learning outcome
A single grade or ranking	Three separate records, with every formal decision made and signed by a person
Generic global content, or only local content	One global standard, plus a country addendum for local rules on research, selling, data and licensing

Why it fits founders of the AI generation

Speed to evidence, not speed to output. Students use AI to move faster from a question to real evidence: drafting interview guides, checking them for bias, organising permitted notes, comparing sources and preparing tests. The measure is how quickly they learn something true, not how much they produce.

AI in both directions. Students build with AI, and they design businesses for an economy that AI is changing: models, costs, distribution, defensibility and governance. In Stage 6 each founder redesigns one real workflow in their venture around AI, decides where the AI acts and where a person approves, and defends it without AI help.

Research connected to decisions. AI-assisted research in Foundiro always ends in a decision and a cheap real-world test. Search trends, marketplace listings and reviews can shape a hypothesis; they cannot replace talking to the people who would buy.

Judgement that employers recognise. Most graduates will not run their venture long term. Every graduate still leaves able to research customers without fooling themselves, read a business model, sell honestly, and use AI with judgement and accountability.

Where the method comes from

Foundiro is designed and led by Kalle Sarraj. It brings together his own frameworks (the 5R Opportunity Framework, the Growth Operating System and the Digital Growth Playbook) with established methods that are credited where they are used, including customer development (Steve Blank), Disciplined Entrepreneurship (Bill Aulet), Value Proposition Design and assumption mapping (Strategyzer), the customer-conversation principles popularised by Rob Fitzpatrick, pretotyping (Alberto Savoia), design-thinking interview practice (Stanford d.school), effectuation and Blue Ocean strategy. Established frameworks keep their names and their authors' credit; Foundiro adds the evidence rules, the review procedure, the AI rules and the connected journey that tie them together.

What a university receives

Component	What it contains
Teaching system	84 lessons across Stages 0 to 8 (68 in the core programme, 16 in the advanced continuation), each with a reading, a worked example, guided practice with a model answer, knowledge checks, an application to the student's own venture, and AI support with its limits
Teaching slides	Editable session slides per stage with print versions
Worksheets and forms	Practice worksheets for every stage with writing space and continuation pages; 32 blank forms; shared records for evidence, decisions and AI use
Fieldbook	The Foundiro Methodology and Fieldbook: the method in one book, with fictional worked cases
Facilitator materials	Session plans, model answers, common failure modes, review rules and worked review decisions
Institutional documents	Programme overview, 30-week calendar, delivery record, delivery agreement schedule, certificate wording template, sources and distribution note
Country addendum	A reusable local note (UAE and Dubai first) separating rules found in official sources, dated, from the points the university must confirm with its own advisers
Digital workspace	A hosted Foundiro workspace with all 84 lessons: readable lessons in short sections, private practice and knowledge checks with explanations that open after the student's own attempt, typed worksheets with a preserved first attempt, a task briefing for the student's own AI assistant and a reviewed return, the same exercises without AI, findings recorded with five permissions, a venture record with its changes of direction, facilitator feedback, a review queue, cohort rosters with private invitation codes, and guided progression in which a facilitator's continue opens the next lesson. Invitation-only; no AI model runs inside it; no email is sent by it

Paper first. Everything runs without software. A participant without a laptop, an institution that limits external AI, or a source that may not leave the room can all complete the programme.

How a delivery runs

The core programme (68 lessons) is planned over about 30 teaching weeks in two blocks of fifteen, with a human review at the end of each stage and a completion week. The advanced continuation (16 lessons) is scheduled separately for ventures that are trading. Hours are planning estimates calculated lesson by lesson, about 300 to 325 student hours for the core in a team or 335 to 355 working alone, of which about 117 to 131 are contact, review and lab hours; they have not yet been measured with a cohort, so the first cohorts keep time diaries and the calendar is adjusted from measured experience. A shorter engagement, such as one stage or the Stage 2 customer evidence sprint inside an existing course, is agreed with the institution.

First deliveries are led by Kalle Sarraj with university staff teaching alongside. Staff earn facilitator recognition through observed teaching and review, and independent delivery follows under an agreed licence. Before any field research or selling, the university completes a short delivery record: timetable, reviewers, research ethics and permissions, approved AI services, data storage, and the local questions in the country addendum.

Where things stand. The classroom package and the digital workspace exist and have been reviewed and tested with fictional data; the workspace is hosted and in use for demonstrations. No cohort has yet been taught, so there are no measured workload figures or learning outcomes to quote; the first deliveries will produce them in the same three records the method uses. A detailed quality review of the materials in November 2026 found the teaching sound and the production unfinished in places; corrections are under way and the status of each file is stated in the package manifest.

What we do not claim. Completing Foundiro does not guarantee a launch, revenue or investment. No external accreditation or academic credit is implied; credit is a matter for each university. No outcome statistics are quoted, because none have yet been measured.