



# Upskilling for Startup Success in the Regions

*Regional Delivery Partner Case Study: 6 Degrees, Coffs Harbour*

# STARTUP ONRAMP REGIONAL DELIVERY PARTNER CASE STUDY

## 6 Degrees, Coffs Harbour

### QUICK STATS

*Number of cohorts: 2*

*Number of graduates: 16*

### THE CHALLENGE

While Coffs Harbour is an extremely liveable city, the opportunities for startup founders to launch and scale are restricted by a lack of access to training, mentoring and community. The team from 6 Degrees recognised the need to bring a structured program to the region to offer the same opportunities as startup founders in the big cities.

With fast NBN and as many entrepreneurs per capita as the metropolitan cities, working with Startup Onramp offered Coffs-based regional startup founders the opportunity to learn how to build successful, global businesses.

### THE SOLUTION

The Startup Onramp program was championed by Fiona Barden of Industry and Destination Development within the Coffs Harbour City Council, who received funding from JobsNSW to roll out an innovation network. After seeing the program in action at River City Labs in Brisbane, the Startup Onramp program was chosen because:

- The emphasis is on training local facilitators, who could bring their expertise back to the regions while also calling on the support of a central network of facilitators and the Startup Onramp team.
- Startup Onramp founder, Colin Kinner, is one of Australia's leading experts in startup methodology, having worked with several hundred startups and founders for over 20 years. Colin's expertise made it easy to convince the local community of the credibility of the program.
- The program focusses on building a community, both locally and nationally, providing participants with the opportunity to get out of their home offices and into an environment where connections are made.
- The Startup Onramp program has been developed over 12 months and represents the industry standard for startup education. This high level of depth and coverage meant 6 Degrees was able to ensure the legitimacy of the training.

### THE RESULTS

6 Degrees have run two rounds of the Startup Onramp program, with 16 founders participating. Of these, two of the startup founders have received investment into their businesses and the others continue to work towards growth and global expansion.

Startup Onramp extended 6 Degrees the opportunity to offer a formalised program. Previously, education at the startup hub had focussed on more ad hoc activities and Startup Onramp provided the opportunity to add structure and rigor to this approach.

Within the region, there is now a deeper understanding of the true definition of a startup and what is required to succeed. Founders have learned to test their ideas, identify real problems and go through a process to build a successful startup.

According to Fiona, the greatest lesson for the students was a focus on market research and validating their idea. 6 Degrees recognised this was a sticking point for a number of program participants and were able to emphasise this content for their second cohort, demonstrating the adaptability of the Startup Onramp program.

In delivering the Startup Onramp program, Six Degrees have seen a significant mindset change for the participants, who now have a much deeper understanding of the importance of validating their ideas. According to Fiona, startup founders in the regions are more likely to hold tight to their business concepts and can be afraid to pivot, and the Startup Onramp program redirected several founders to potentially more profitable and successful ideas. Fiona says, "Startup Onramp has allowed people to understand you can still be successful if you need to change your mind."

The goal for Six Degrees is to continue to cement their place as a hub for startup founders and help them take the next steps in scaling their businesses beyond launch phase.

## **NOTEABLE GRADUATES**

TripaSista came to Startup Onramp with the goal of redefining how women travel, born out of the founders' own frustrations. While living in Scotland and scouring the internet for travel advice, Kim Burgess and Susan Ferguson were unable to find recommendations and advice targeted to female travellers, despite their research showing a 600% increase in searches for travel opportunities within this segment. The result was TripaSista, an online travel directory that curates and showcases female focussed tourism operators, providing a way for women travellers and the business that cater to them to find each other.

The founders of TripaSista are based in Yamba and prior to learning about the program, the business had a website and basic directory, and had conducted some initial surveys of tourism providers to see if they would be interested in a more comprehensive solution targeting women. Kim and Susan acknowledge their understanding of what it takes to grow a startup was extremely limited before Startup Onramp, and that the biggest benefit of undertaking the course was a mindset shift – their aspirations are now to scale globally. The TripaSista team also benefited from the introduction to startup culture they gained through Startup Onramp and are now part of networks that allow them to connect with other founders.

Since completing the Startup Onramp program and launching in September 2018, the TripaSista team have been panellists at Women Changing The World Through Travel, started their search for a tech founder, pivoted their idea to include a comprehensive booking platform and have started to explore white labelling opportunities. They have also grown their current customer base to almost 100 tour providers with a database of 2000 more.

Launched in September last year.

For Kim and Susan, regional programs like Startup Onramp are vital for keeping young people in the regions. Kim says, "there's fishing, sugar cane and tourism, and you leave if you don't fit into those three buckets. Startup Onramp provides a great opportunity for anyone to develop their ideas, get mentoring support, seek funding and still live regionally, bringing stability and growth in regional areas."





**Fiona Barden**

Coffs Harbour City Council

"The Startup Onramp program was very relevant for our regional founders - it allowed them to grow and develop their ideas without overwhelming them too much. We are really impressed with the content and the program."



**Sara Bowen**

Startup Onramp Facilitator, Coffs Harbour

"The Startup Onramp program has been fabulous for our local entrepreneurs. It's given them access to the wisdom and experience of founders who have been through the startup cycle. Our group of founders came up with cracking business ideas, and we're looking forward to watching them grow!"

Want to learn more about delivering the Startup Onramp program in your regional startup hub? Visit [www.startuponramp.com/partnerships](http://www.startuponramp.com/partnerships) to find out more today.