



Australia Vietnam
Policy Institute

AVPI FELLOWS PROGRAM

Bridging Innovation: A Founder's Playbook for the Vietnam–Australia Corridor

Author: Mr Huynh Cong Thang EMBA, Chairman & CEO of InnoLab Asia



Bridging Innovation: A Founder's Playbook for the Vietnam–Australia Corridor

After more than a decade of building startup ecosystems across the Asia-Pacific, I see a pivotal moment unfolding. Vietnam and Australia are no longer just trade partners; they are on the cusp of forming a powerful, cross-border innovation corridor. However, true corridors aren't built by policy papers—they are forged by founders.

At InnoLab Asia, this founder-first principle drives everything we do, from our **Go Global** program to the **Vietnam Innovation Summit (VIS 2025)**. We're moving beyond talk and building the infrastructure for real deals to happen.

1. The Outbound Engine: Vietnam → Australia

The potential is immense, but so is the gap. Vietnam's dynamic ecosystem boasts over **3,800 startups**, according to the 2025 VPCA Innovation Report. Yet, the majority face significant hurdles in their final, most critical step: international expansion.

This is where Australia—and specifically Western Australia—emerges as a strategic launchpad.

- **A Welcoming Ecosystem:** Perth alone has over **50 startup hubs**, and Australia saw **\$7.4 billion AUD in VC funding** deployed in 2023.
- **Targeted Government Support:** Initiatives like the Austrade Landing Pad, with its focus on Fintech, Agtech, and Smart Cities, provide structured entry points.

In December 2025, our **Go Global** cohort will land at **West Tech Fest**, Australia's premier innovation festival. This isn't a tour; it's a mission. They will:

- Pitch directly to investors and corporate partners.
- Engage with leading incubators like Spacecubed.
- Forge partnerships in high-demand sectors like green energy, logistics, and e-commerce.

Critically, this is a two-way street. Australian startups at these events are actively seeking SEA market entry, making them ideal partners for our Vietnamese pioneers.

2. The Inbound Gateway: Australia → Vietnam

For too long, the innovation highway has felt like a one-way street. While we've welcomed Australian student delegations and exploratory visits (like UQ Ventures' excellent program), the flow of Australian startups establishing a serious presence in Vietnam remains fragmented.

The Vietnam Innovation Summit (VIS 2025) is engineered to reverse this trend.

Scheduled for **November 6–7, 2025, in Ho Chi Minh City**, VIS will convene over 2,000 attendees, including 100+ investors and 200+ corporations from across Asia and beyond.

For Australian founders, our tailored **Immersion Program (Nov 1–7)** provides the deep-dive they need:

- High-level meetings at NIC, FPT, and HCMC High-Tech Park.
- Curated 1-on-1 business matching with vetted partners.
- An immersive tour of the Hanoi – Da Nang – Ho Chi Minh City tech triangle.

Let me be clear: this isn't conference tourism. It is a high-touch, sector-specific soft-landing program designed for one purpose: market entry.

3. The Unseen Infrastructure: Trust

Policy opens the door. Trust is what closes the deal. This holds true in both Vietnamese and Australian business culture, where personal relationships are the bedrock of successful partnerships. Formal agreements are important, but they are the result of trust, not the cause of it.

That's why our programs are intentionally designed to build this social capital through:

- Shared meals and informal networking events where real conversations happen.
- Peer-to-peer mentoring circles and active alumni communication channels.
- Continuous support from our team, long after the official program ends.

A telling example: after VIS 2023, an introduction made over dinner led to a significant partnership between a European tech firm and a local Vietnamese distributor—a deal that formal channels had failed to produce.

4. Our Strategic Analysis: Gaps & Opportunities

Our July 2025 mapping of the Vietnam–Australia corridor reveals critical gaps that are also major opportunities:

- **Initiatives are Government-Led and Sector-Limited:** Most programs focus narrowly on defense, green economy, or deeptech, leaving vast commercial sectors like consumer tech, e-commerce, and SME SaaS underserved.

- **The Missing Commercial Bridge:** There is no independent, commercially-driven player on the ground in Australia consistently connecting the two ecosystems for a broader range of industries.
- **An Unbalanced Flow:** The inbound flow of Australian interest to Vietnam is stronger than the outbound flow of Vietnamese startups successfully entering Australia.

Our Strategic Recommendations:

1. Establish a dedicated **InnoLab Asia presence in Australia**, supported by local partners and government, to act as a permanent, commercially-driven bridge.
2. Create **Go Global extensions** specifically targeting Australian industries currently overlooked by government programs.
3. Formalize **inbound “landing pad” programs** for Vietnamese startups through key hubs like Perth and Melbourne

Final Thought: Founders Build Bridges, Not Companies

The time for pilot programs and press releases is over. We need traction. Real traction happens only when two things are true:

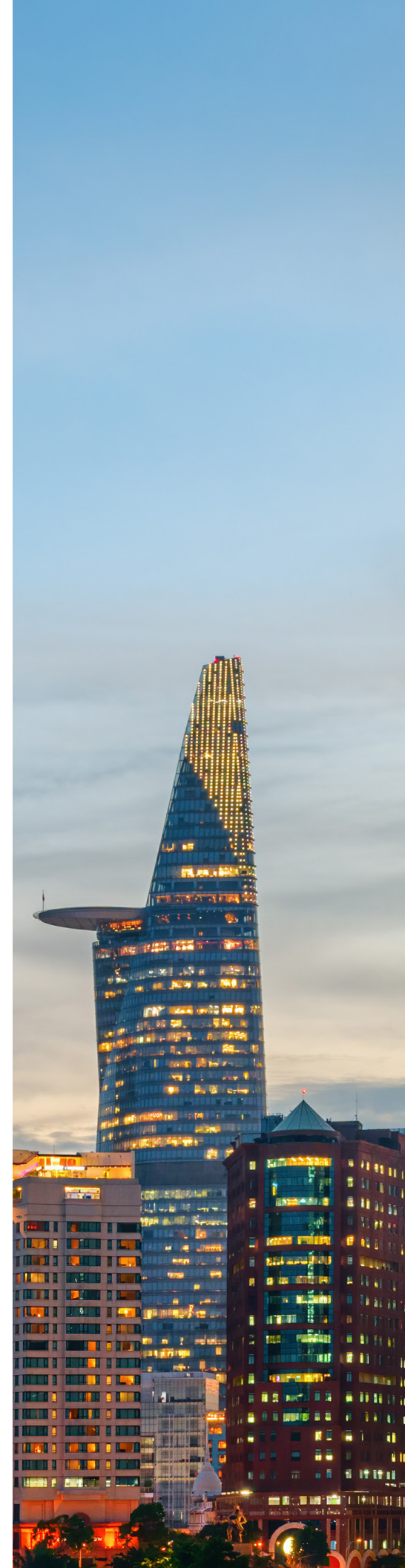
1. Vietnamese founders see global expansion not as a dream, but as a necessary next step.
2. Australian founders view Vietnam not as “emerging,” but as a **strategic imperative**.

At InnoLab Asia, our commitment is simple: founder to founder, market to market. We are here to build

Be Part of the Bridge We’re Building

- Vietnamese Startups ready for Australia: Learn more about the [Go Global Program](#).
- Australian Startups targeting Vietnam: Apply for [VIS 2025 + The Immersion Program](#).

Let’s build an ASEAN–Australia innovation corridor defined by mutual success, not just memorandums.



Thang is the Chairman and CEO of InnoLab Asia. His leadership has been pivotal in crafting an innovation ecosystem that empowers organizations to foster internal capabilities and launch groundbreaking initiatives. Innolab has become the go-to implementation partner for the Open Innovation Vietnam initiative, dedicated to stimulating a culture of success and collaboration across various sectors.

Serving as a Board Member of the Swiss–Viet Economic Forum, the Global Advisory Committee of the Daejeon Center for Creative Economy

& Innovation, and Fellow of Australia Vietnam Policy Institute, he’s played a key role in bridging Swiss, Korean & Australian and Vietnamese enterprises towards sustainable growth and innovation. With a strong command of creative ideation, problem-solving, and effective communication, his focus is on building a vibrant platform for knowledge exchange and mutual support in the Asian region.



AVPI Fellow

Mr. Huynh Cong Thang, EMBA
Chairman & CEO of InnoLab Asia

