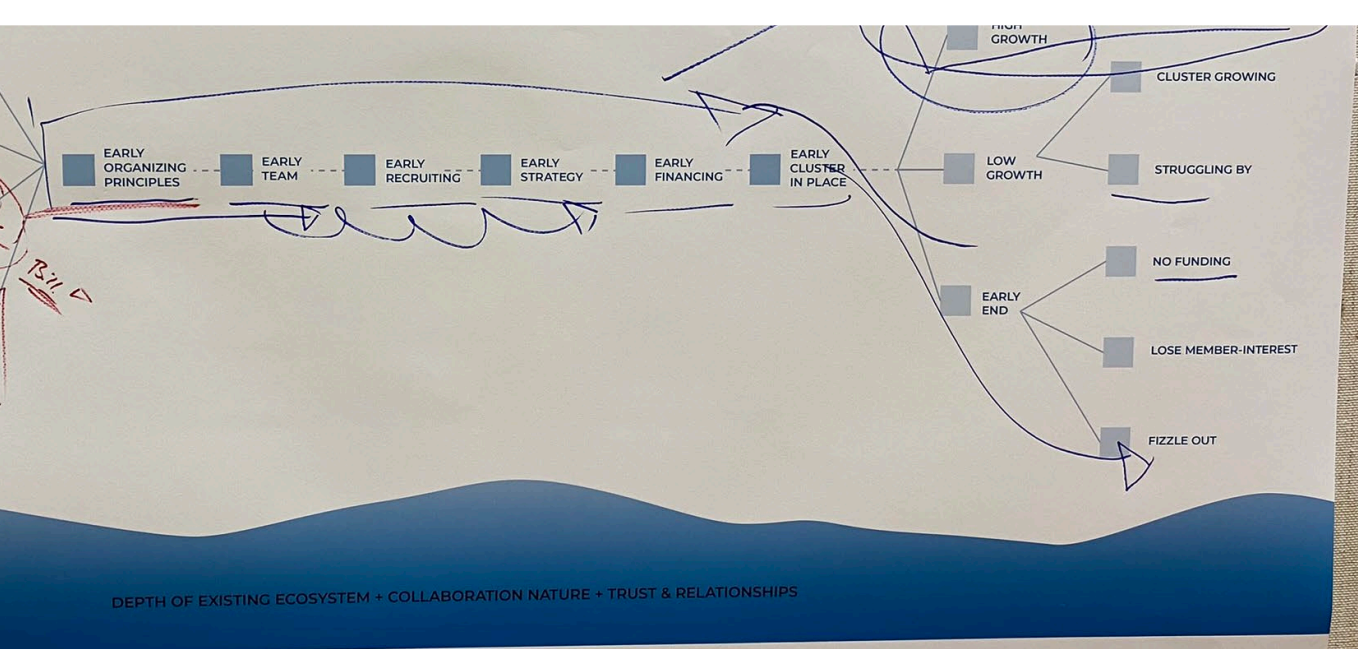


Excellence Clusters

Cluster Development Toolkit

Christian Rangen
April 2026



Cluster development Finland, 2022

Launching a cluster



Christian Rangen

Launching and scaling a successful innovation cluster can be a challenging task. Historically, research looked at clusters as ‘naturally emergent phenomena’, naturally emerging where strong ties existed between economic actors.

Today, we believe clusters can be built, shaped and scaled.

Yes, you need some foundational input factors; but we now know how to build and scale clusters, successfully, over decades.

With 15+ years of experience across 400+ innovation clusters, I have seen firsthand, how great clusters emerge, get built, while others fizzle out or simply never get off the ground.

In the early days, there are three basic principles we have observed.

- 1. Engage wide stakeholders in strategic discussions** (invite, gather, discuss & engage)
- 2. Momentum, progress and great leadership** (it takes a few people to be the champions, move mountains and get the work done)
- 3. Clear “problem-statement” and “Value proposition”, get the right early partners on board** (secure a coalition of partners from across the ecosystem, including time and funding commitment)

In [“Building Innovation Supercluster”](#) (2019) we identify “the lone hero” as one of the four most common starting point for many of today’s successful clusters. It takes, if you will, a superhero effort to get a successful cluster off the ground.

Your Cluster Development Toolkit

The toolkit you are holding in your hand, or more likely reading on your screen, is designed to help you (the hero) in this endeavor.

From Malaysia to Canada, from Mexico to Finland, my team and I have spent 100's and 100's of hours engaging key stakeholders in shaping cluster strategies and growth plans.

From deeptech and research clusters in Germany, to life sciences clusters in Latin America. From fintech clusters in Norway to boat clusters in Finland. From AI & tech clusters in Saudi Arabia to future aviation clusters in the US, we have been fortunate to spend time with global cluster leaders, boards, innovation agencies and policymakers.

Across all these engagement we find one thing; working visually, using visual cluster tools, can 10X a cluster development process.

This is why I am thrilled to share this short cluster development toolkit with you.

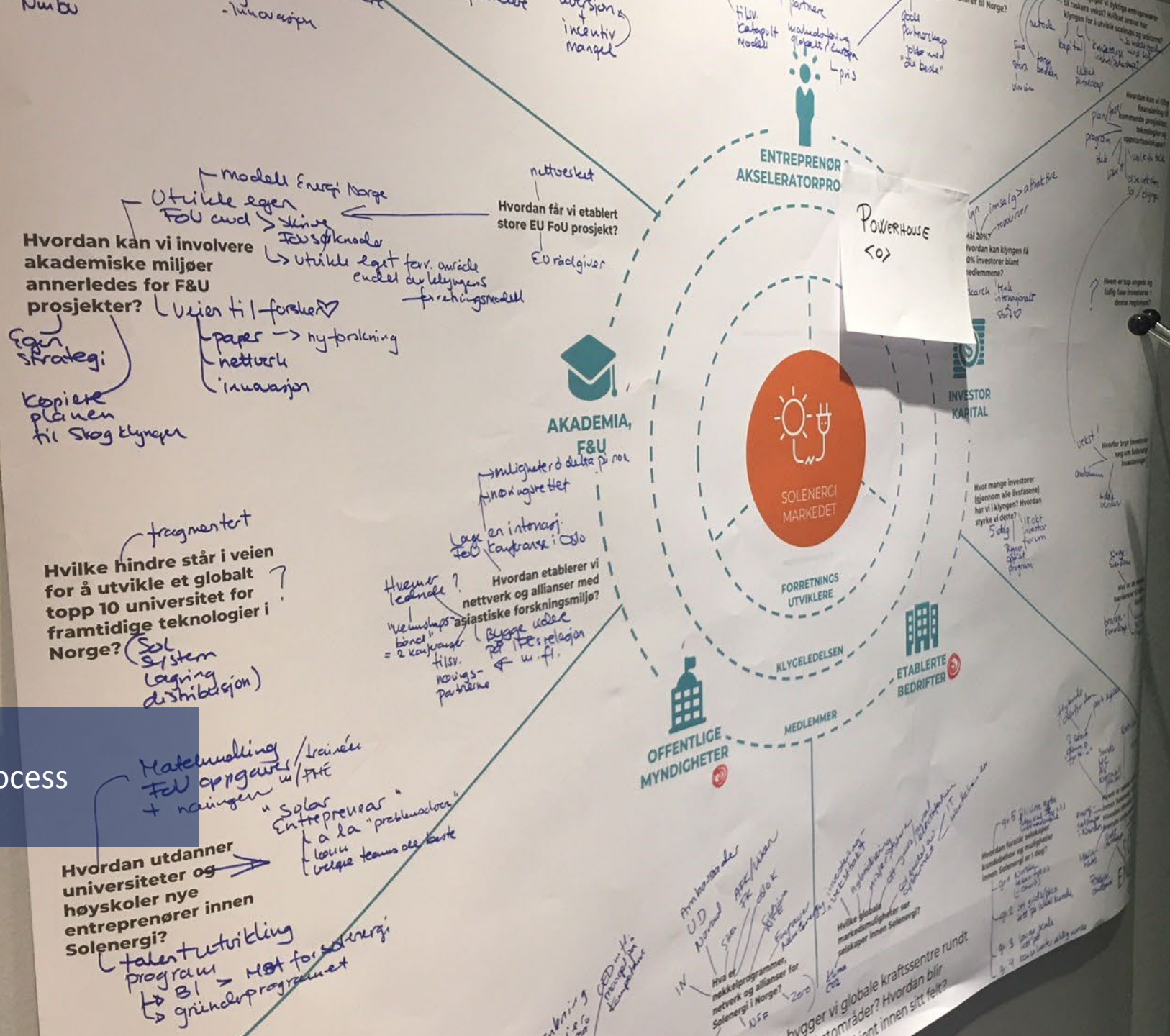
It has been proven in action with clusters leaders around the world. It has helped shape faster cluster strategies, smarter cluster business models and scaled clusters to 1000's of members, by working visually.

These tools are both generic, used worldwide, and a few that are custom development, to best suit the unique features of the Swedish Excellence Cluster Program.

We invite you to apply, to use and to experiment with these tools as you best see fit.

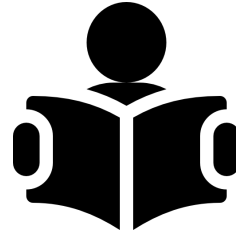
We will cover these in the five Webinar Series; but they are yours and we invite you to apply them in your cluster development efforts.

Cluster Strategy Process Oslo, 2018



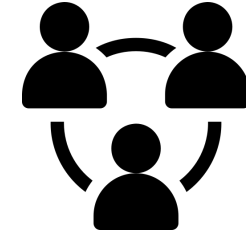
How to work with

Your Cluster Development Toolkit



Personal reflection

Use them to support your own thinking



Project team

Use them to align your core team on key topics



Working with members

Use them in smaller group sessions, workshops with stakeholders and members

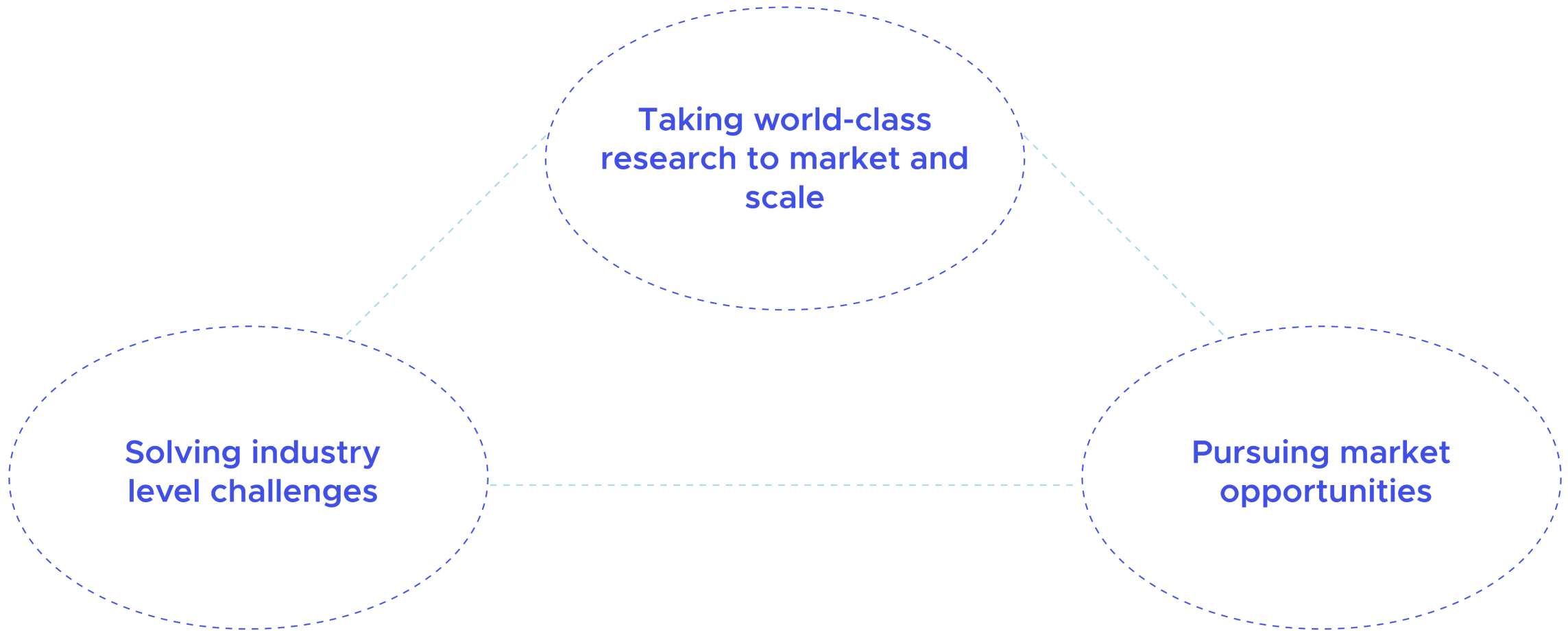


Large-scale sessions

Structure 10 - 300+ people with strategic discussions using these tools



Excellence Clusters
Webinar series
#1 Engaging
stakeholders



Why innovation Clusters Exists



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Getting started

- Check your drive and motivation
- Assemble your initial team
- Learn the basics of innovation clusters
- Understand the 'Research-to-cluster-to-ecosystem' model
- Embrace the quintuple helix
- Engage the ecosystem & stakeholders



Co-creating the outcome

- Lock in your project team and champions
- Set the vision, mission, ambition
- Complete the baseline economic analysis
- Define what success looks like
- Set your outcome metrics
- Chart the strategy
(Research, innovation, ecosystem)



Locking in the next 10 years

- Nail your members' value propositions;
recruit & onboard
- Develop the cluster's business
model & key financials
- Design your leadership team and
governance structure
- Draw up your timeline
- Lock in your detailed two-year activity plans
- Write the application



Excellence Clusters Checklist



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Developing an Excellence Cluster?

I wrote a short guide.
Find the full article [here](#).

Not official advice

This text is mine alone. It does not represent official Vinnova or VR (Research Council) advice or policy. I have spent significant time reading up on the program, but in certain areas, Vinnova or VR might have differing opinions. In those cases, Vinnova and VR will be right. Not me. Having said that, I've been working with clusters for 15+ years, so I have high confidence in the validity of these suggestions.



Stockholm, already a leading innovation ecosystem is pushing for next level with the new Excellence Cluster Program

Developing an Excellence Cluster? Here's your checklist



Christian Rangen Strategic advisor to CEOs, Boards, governments, innovation agencies, startup- and venture ecosystems, Fund-of-funds & innovation cluster...



April 25, 2026

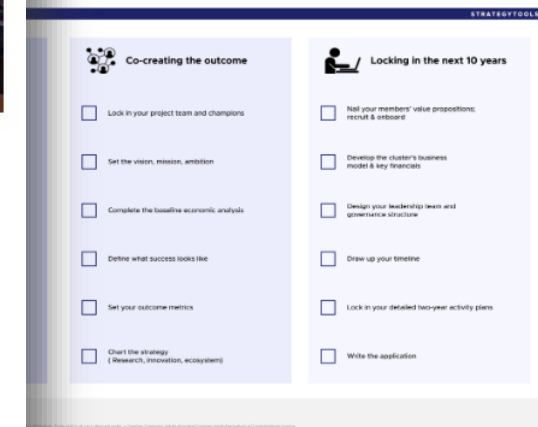
Globally, there are more than 7.000 innovation clusters. From AI & tech in Saudi Arabia to life sciences in Denmark, from seafood in Norway to deep tech in China, clusters make up a core part of national or regional innovation infrastructure, in many places being the #1 engine of innovation in that system.

But how does a cluster get started? How can a small and engaged team get a cluster off the ground?

Well, in light of the ongoing (2026) [call](#) for Excellence Cluster in Sweden, I wrote up a short piece.

Checklist

Each with six key steps to complete. We also brought this in a 'simple-to-use' checklist format.



... loves a good checklist, especially once its done

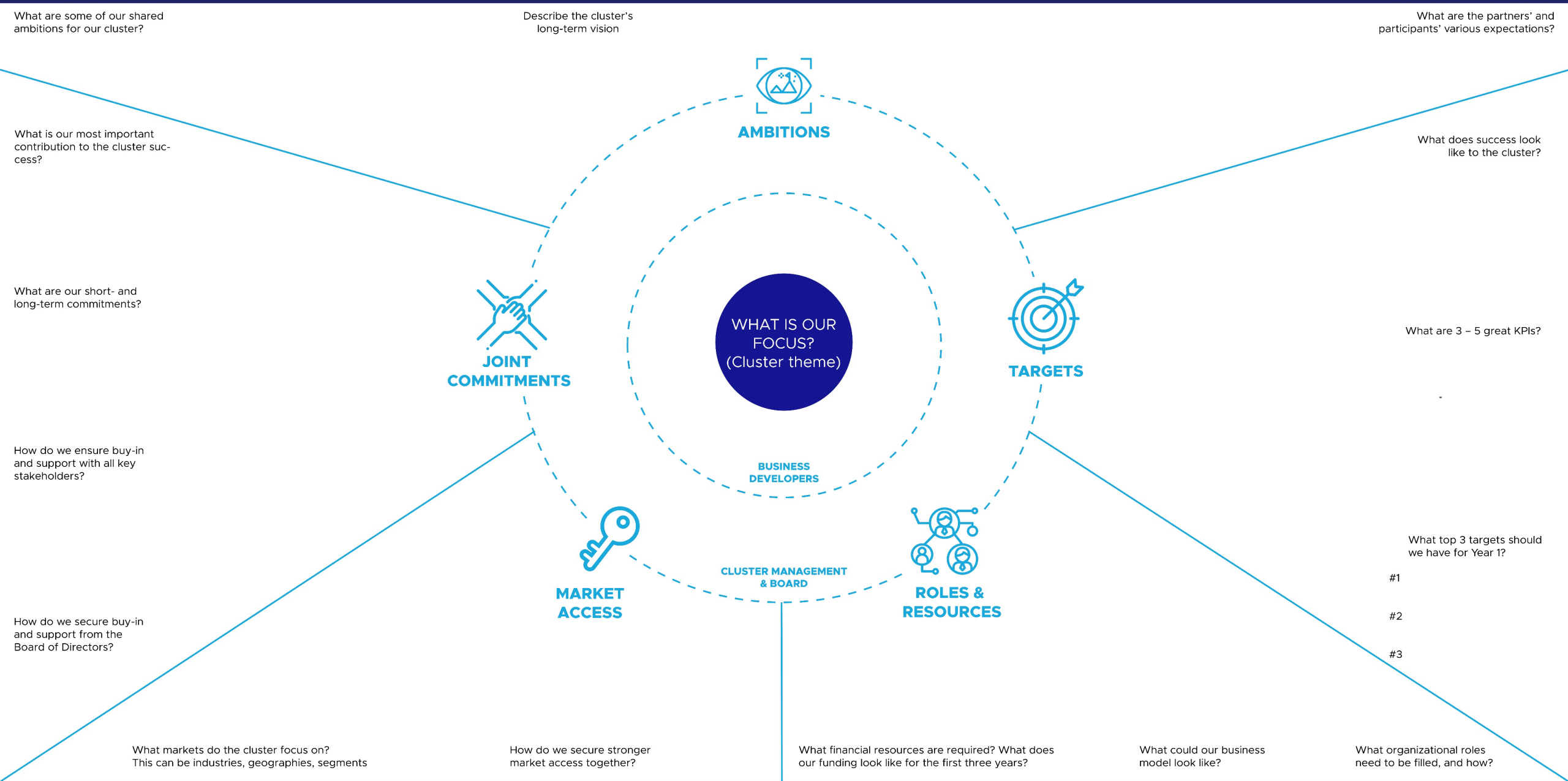
started

... founding steps. In this phase, you are exploring, testing, ... At this stage, any time, you might decide to not pursue

and motivation

... venture capital firm or launching a startup, building a cluster ... over years, possibly decades. If you are the engine, the

champion, 'the lone hero', make sure you have the drive and motivation, the engine and the fuel to carry this through. If you – and your team – is successful, you will be responsible for launch an innovation cluster that could operate,



What are some of our shared ambitions for our cluster?

Describe the cluster's long-term vision

What are the partners' and participants' various expectations?

What is our most important contribution to the cluster success?

What does success look like to the cluster?

What are our short- and long-term commitments?

What are 3 - 5 great KPIs?

How do we ensure buy-in and support with all key stakeholders?

What top 3 targets should we have for Year 1?

How do we secure buy-in and support from the Board of Directors?

- #1
- #2
- #3

What markets do the cluster focus on? This can be industries, geographies, segments

How do we secure stronger market access together?

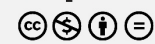
What financial resources are required? What does our funding look like for the first three years?

What could our business model look like?

What organizational roles need to be filled, and how?



Supercluster: Launch



Get yours at www.strategytools.io
 Supercluster: Launch by Christian Rangen is the intellectual property of Strategy Tools and is at your disposal under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

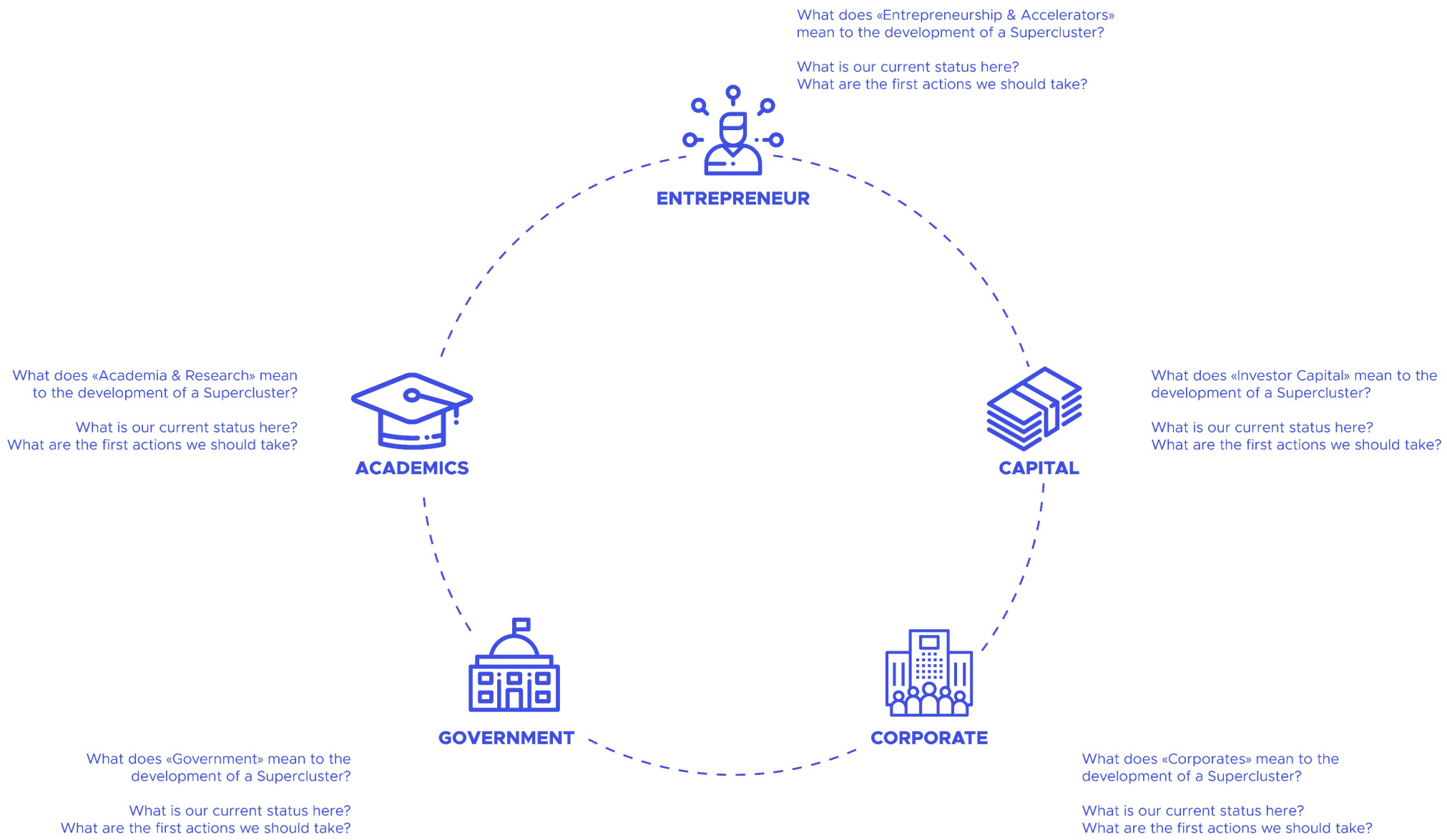
Supercluster: Launch is a strategy tool for groups trying to launch new Innovation Superclusters. Supercluster: Launch gives you a baseline introduction to some of the cornerstones of a new Innovation Supercluster

National cluster program development, Malaysia, 2017





Excellence Clusters
Webinar series
#2 Cluster strategy

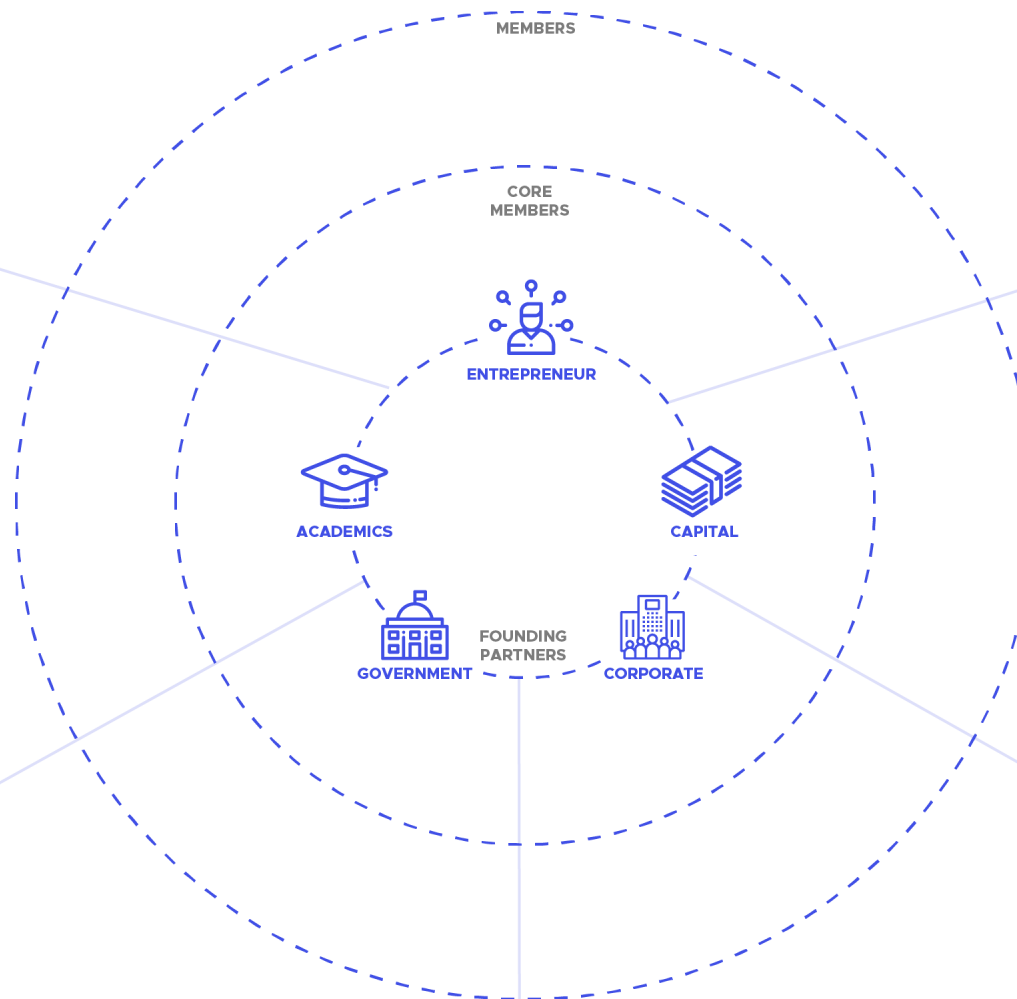


Supercluster: Intro

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Innovation Cluster: Members



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How many startups & scale-ups can the cluster develop in the coming decade?

What are the biggest barriers to great entrepreneurship in our country?

How do we develop more entrepreneurs?

How do we attract new, foreign entrepreneurs?
How can we attract the world's leading accelerators to our country?

How do we enable great entrepreneurs to grow bigger, faster?
Is the cluster responsible for developing scale-ups and unicorns?

What are the leading academic experts and institutions for _____ in our country?

How do we train new talent for _____ solutions?

How can we involve academia differently for R&D projects?



ACADEMICS

How do we connect with Chinese _____ research activities?

What are the barriers to developing a global top 10 research university for future technologies in our country?



GOVERNMENT

How do universities & business schools educate new _____ entrepreneurs for the future?

How can the government do a better job at supporting _____ initiatives and market development in our country?

What's preventing a better _____ strategy at government level?

What are the key programs, networks, & alliances for _____ in our country?

What market opportunities do corporates see in _____ ?

How do corporates understand what is _____ today?

Who are the key corporates to involve in the _____ space in the region?



ENTREPRENEUR

Target: 20%?
How might we achieve 20% investors in our membership base?



CAPITAL

How many investors (across the 7 stages of company lifecycles) do we have in the cluster?
How do we improve this?

How do we provide funding for emerging _____ projects, technologies, & startups?

Who are the top angels and early stage investors in the region?

What do early stage investors care about in _____ investments?

What are the biggest barriers to risk capital?



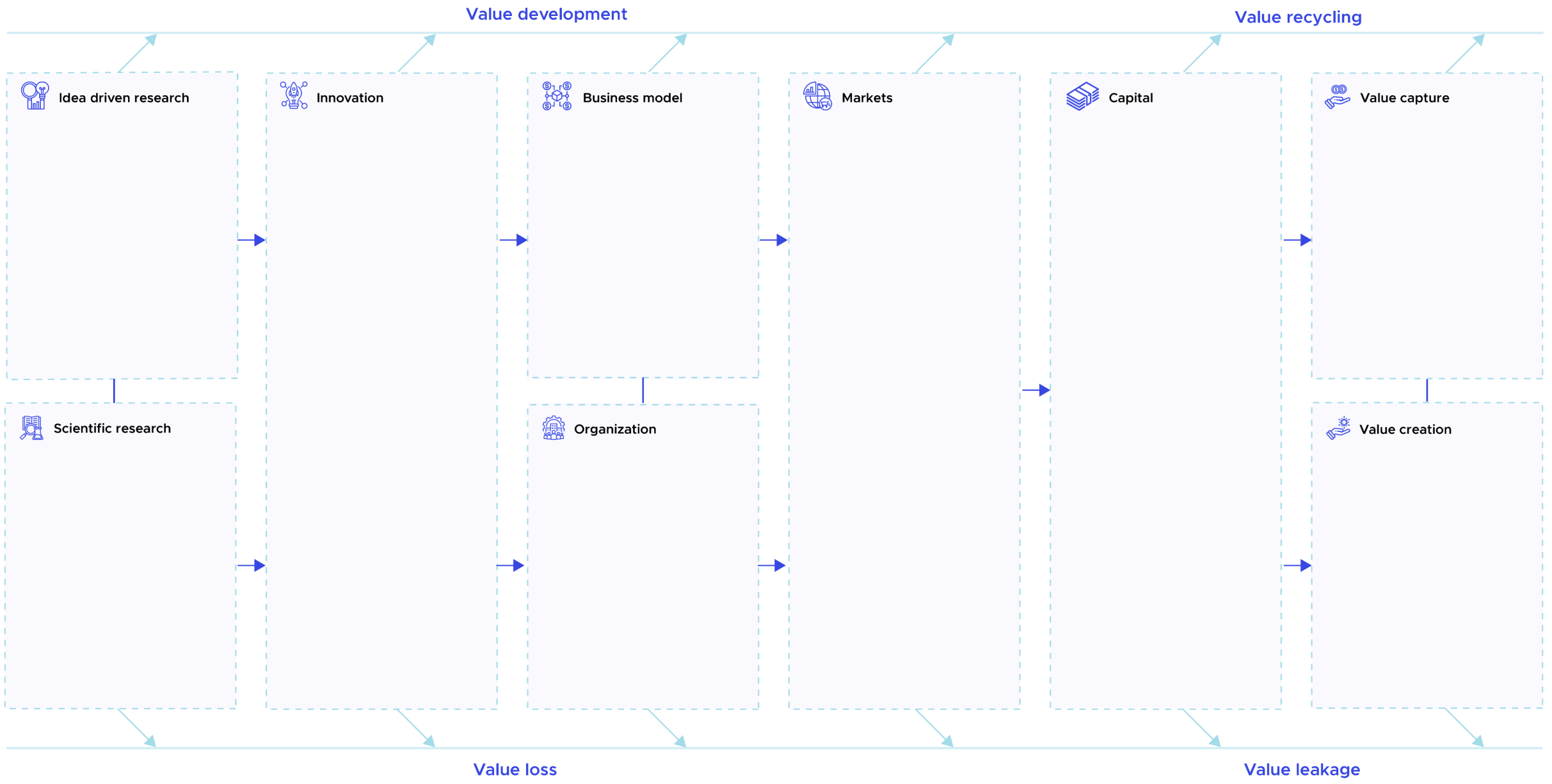
CORPORATE



Supercluster Strategy Map



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Excellence Clusters Strategy Map



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AMBITIONS

What is our Innovation Supercluster's mission and ambitions?

SUPERCLUSTER FOCUS AREA 1

.....

SUPERCLUSTER FOCUS AREA 2

.....

SUPERCLUSTER FOCUS AREA 3

.....

SUPERCLUSTER FOCUS AREA 4

.....

SUPERCLUSTER FOCUS AREA 5

.....

TARGETS

YEAR 1:

YEAR 3:

YEAR 5:

TARGETS

YEAR 1:

YEAR 3:

YEAR 5:

TARGETS

YEAR 1:

YEAR 3:

YEAR 5:

TARGETS

YEAR 1:

YEAR 3:

YEAR 5:

TARGETS

YEAR 1:

YEAR 3:

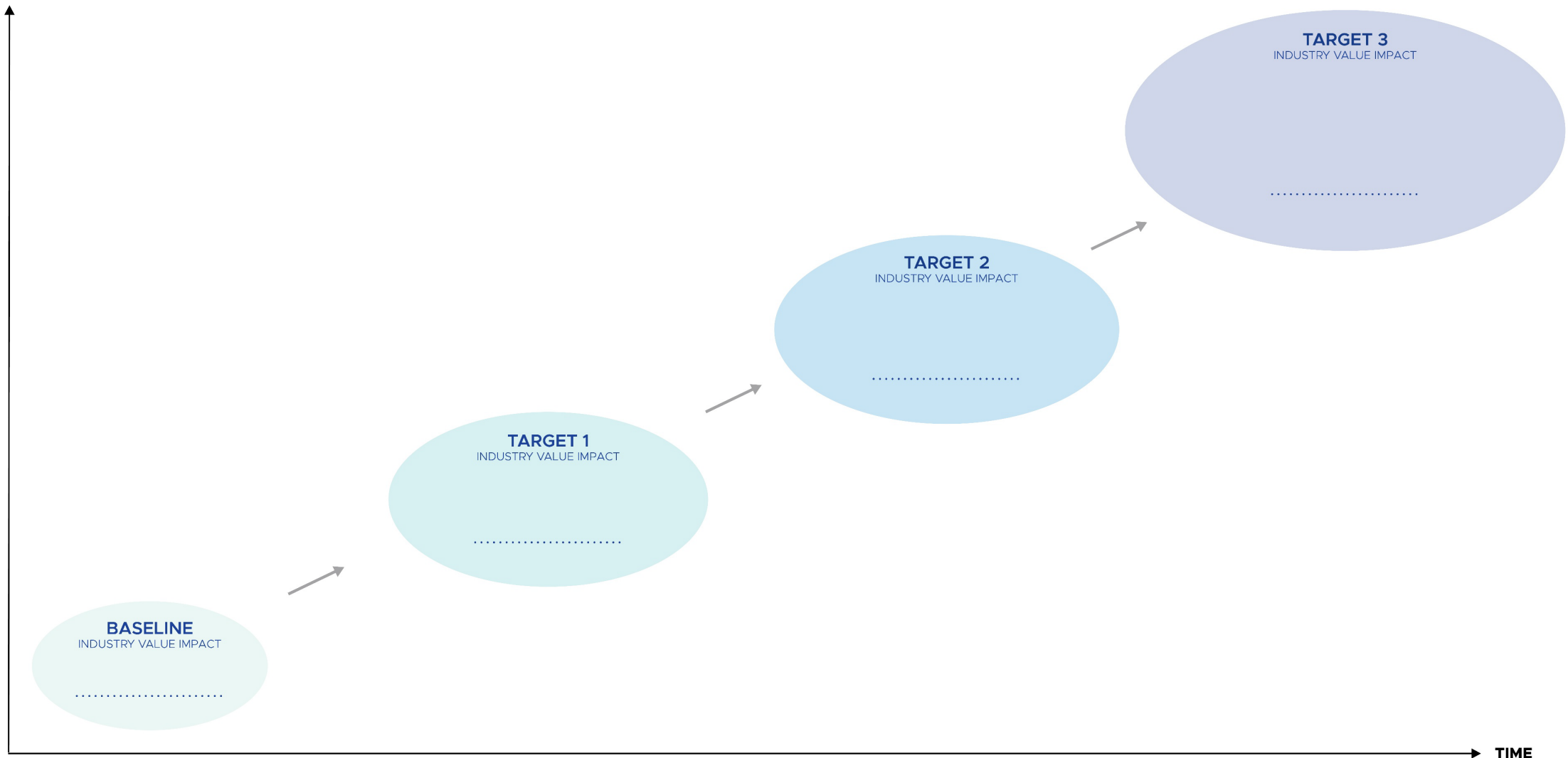
YEAR 5:



CLUSTER:

DATE:

INDUSTRY VALUE IMPACT



YEAR:

YEAR:

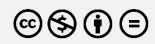
YEAR:

YEAR:

TIME



Cluster Value Impact Roadmap



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Cluster development
Germany, 2019

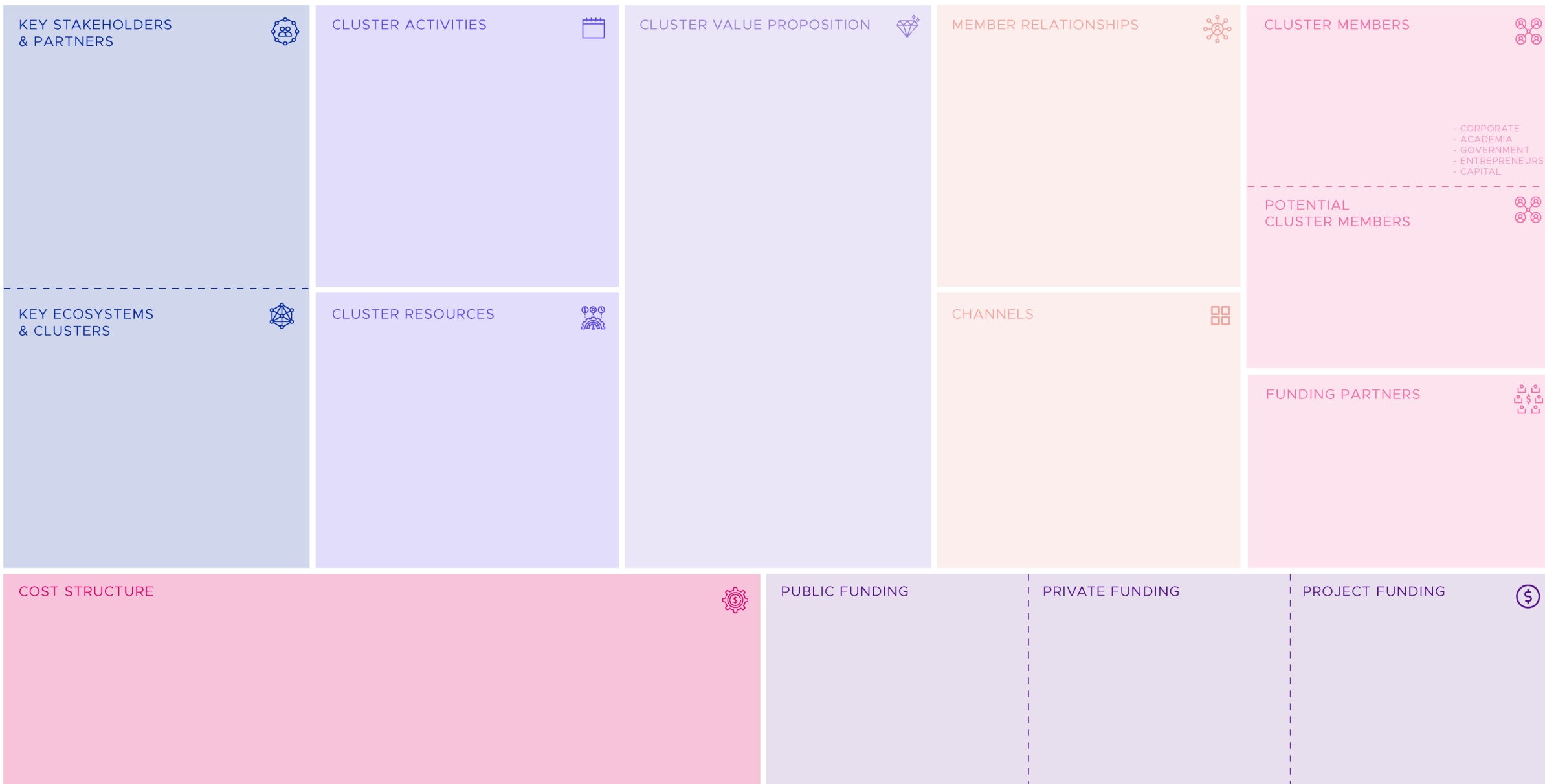
Excellence Clusters

Webinar series

#3 Cluster

business model





Cluster Business Model Canvas



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Based on the original Business Model Canvas by Alex Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur.
www.strategyzer.com

CLUSTER:

FUNDING ROUND:

YEAR:

FINANCING

PRIVATE INDUSTRY

- Founding Partners
- Membership fee
- Programs
- Events & conferences
- Capital raise %
- Venture fund
- Rent (office space, lab space)
- Reports & analysis
- Other

.....

PUBLIC FINANCING

- National Cluster Program
- National government
- National financing programs
- Regional government
- Regional financing programs
- Local government
- Local financing programs
- Other

.....

PROJECT FINANCING

- Industry project financing
- Public project financing
- Other

.....

ooo OTHER

.....

AMOUNT

.....

COST

START UP COSTS (ONE-TIME)

- Advisory services
- Strategy development
- Design & branding
- Communications
- Other

.....

CLUSTER STAFF (FULL-TIME, PART-TIME)

- CEO
- Full-time staff
- Part-time staff
- Board compensation
- Other

.....

CLUSTER OPERATIONS

- Office rent
- Venue rent
- IT infrastructure
- Marketing & Communications
- Travel & lodging
- Programs
- Consulting services
- Other

.....

CLUSTER PROJECTS

- Cluster collaboration projects
- Innovation group projects
- Member-led projects
- Other

.....

AMOUNT

.....



Cluster Financing Model



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THE CLUSTER ACCELERATOR PROGRAM

CLUSTER/ECOSYSTEM: **NCE HARTIME CLEAN TECH** TAGLINE: _____

CURRENT STRENGTHS

- HIGH LEVEL OF TRUST
- LIGHT MODE PROJECT (URBAN WATER SANITATION)
- SOME INT. COOPERAT. (US, SWEDEN)
- SOLID BASE OF CORE MEMBERS (50/100)

CURRENT CHALLENGES

- LACK OF ENTREPRENEUR SPIRIT + MINDSET
- BUSINESS MODELS FOR GREEN SOLUTIONS
- PRIVATE CAPITAL/ INVEST IN
- CONVINCING THE CORE MEMBERS OF THE VALUE

CLUSTER STATUS 2019
Describe your current cluster

30% ROLLING THE ADMIN. DEU FUNDING

CLUSTER

CLUSTER BUSINESS MODEL

CLUSTER BUSINESS MODEL

THE DREAM CLUSTER VISION 2030
Write your future story

KEY STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Medium-term 2023

KEY STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Long-term 2025+

CLUSTERS OF CHANGE

INDUSTRY SHIFTS & TRENDS

-
-
-
-

THE DREAM TEAM

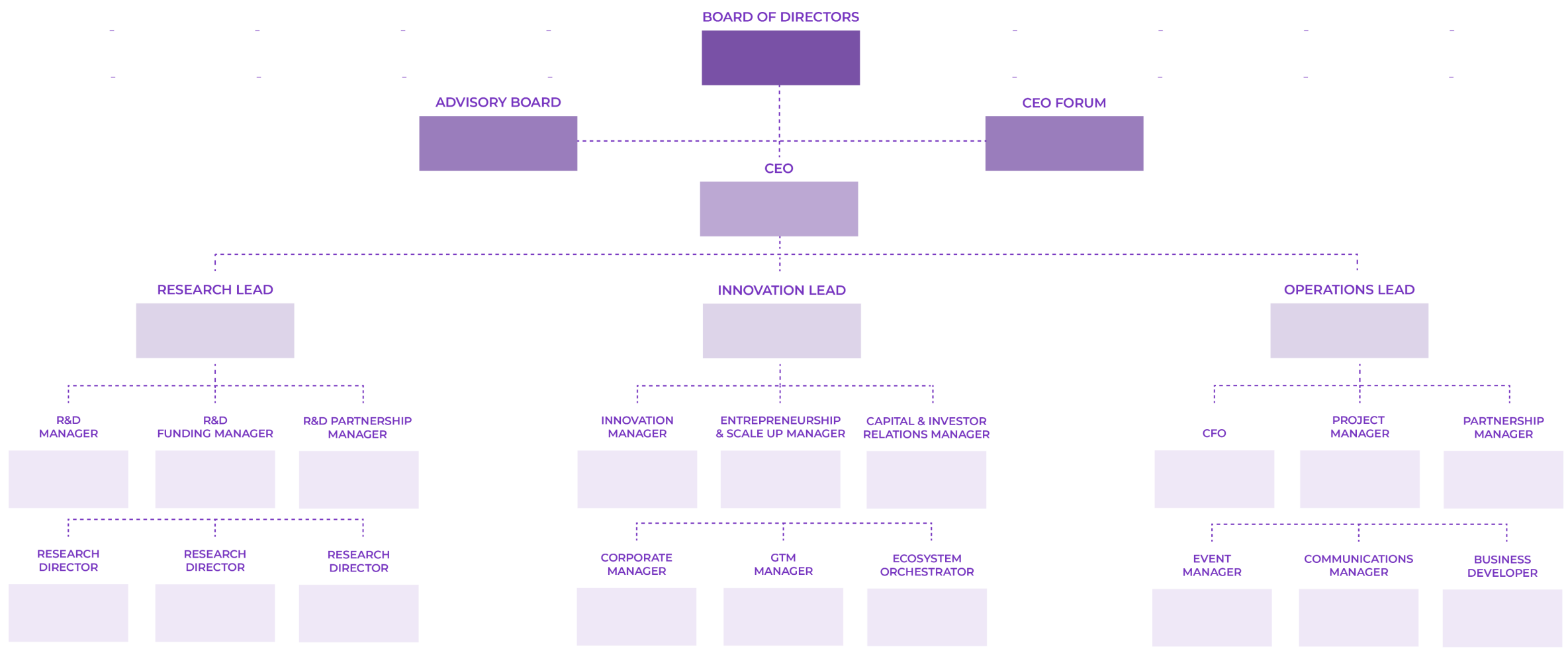
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-
-

Cluster expert development, 2019

CLUST...
What do...
Idea Shoring
Idea Develop.
TERS
For new
os.
ees, Solve,
LLS
- Understand
Timing
Effectively



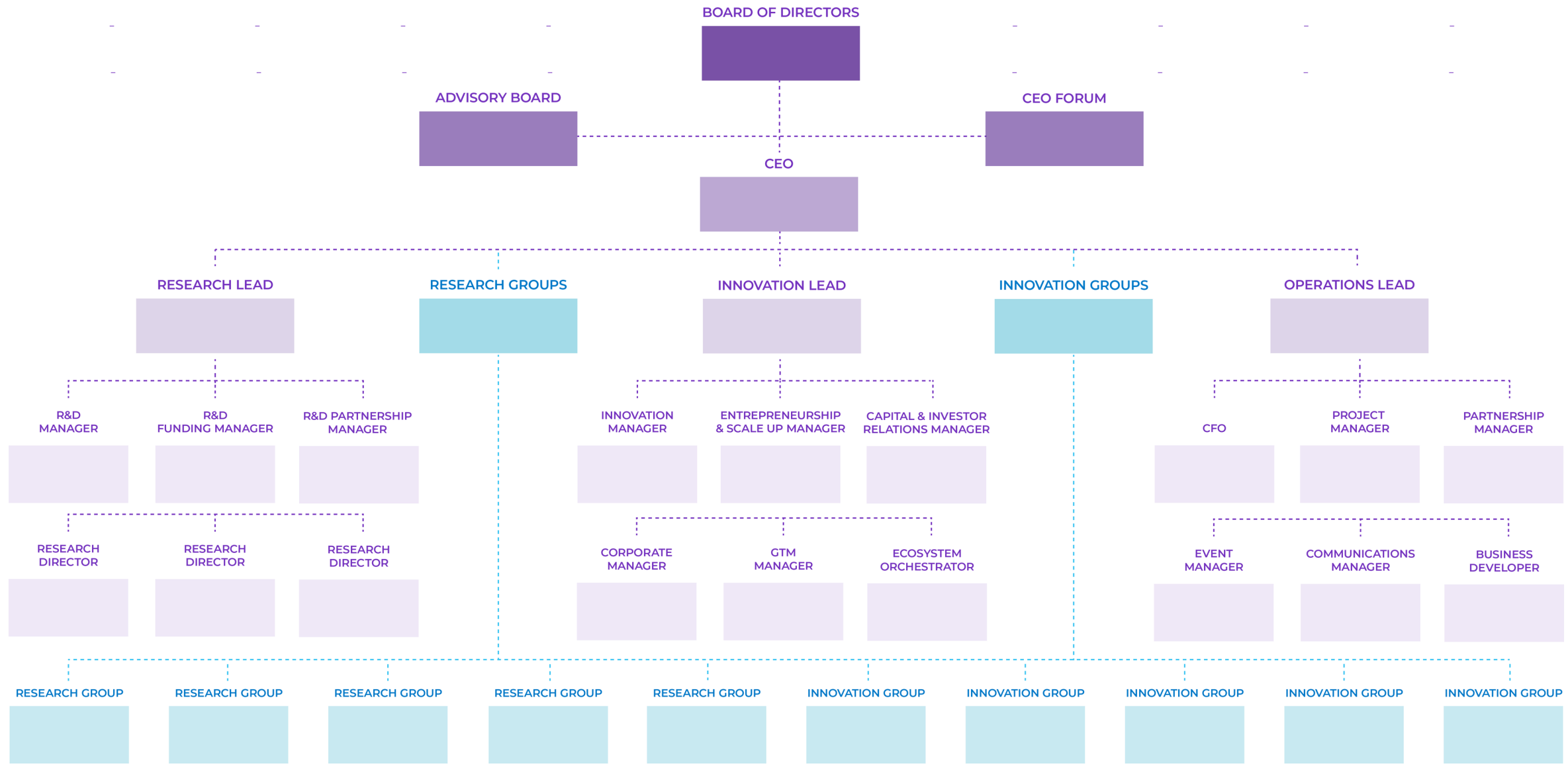
Excellence Clusters
Webinar series
#4 Governance &
leadership



Excellence Cluster Structure



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Excellence Cluster Full Structure



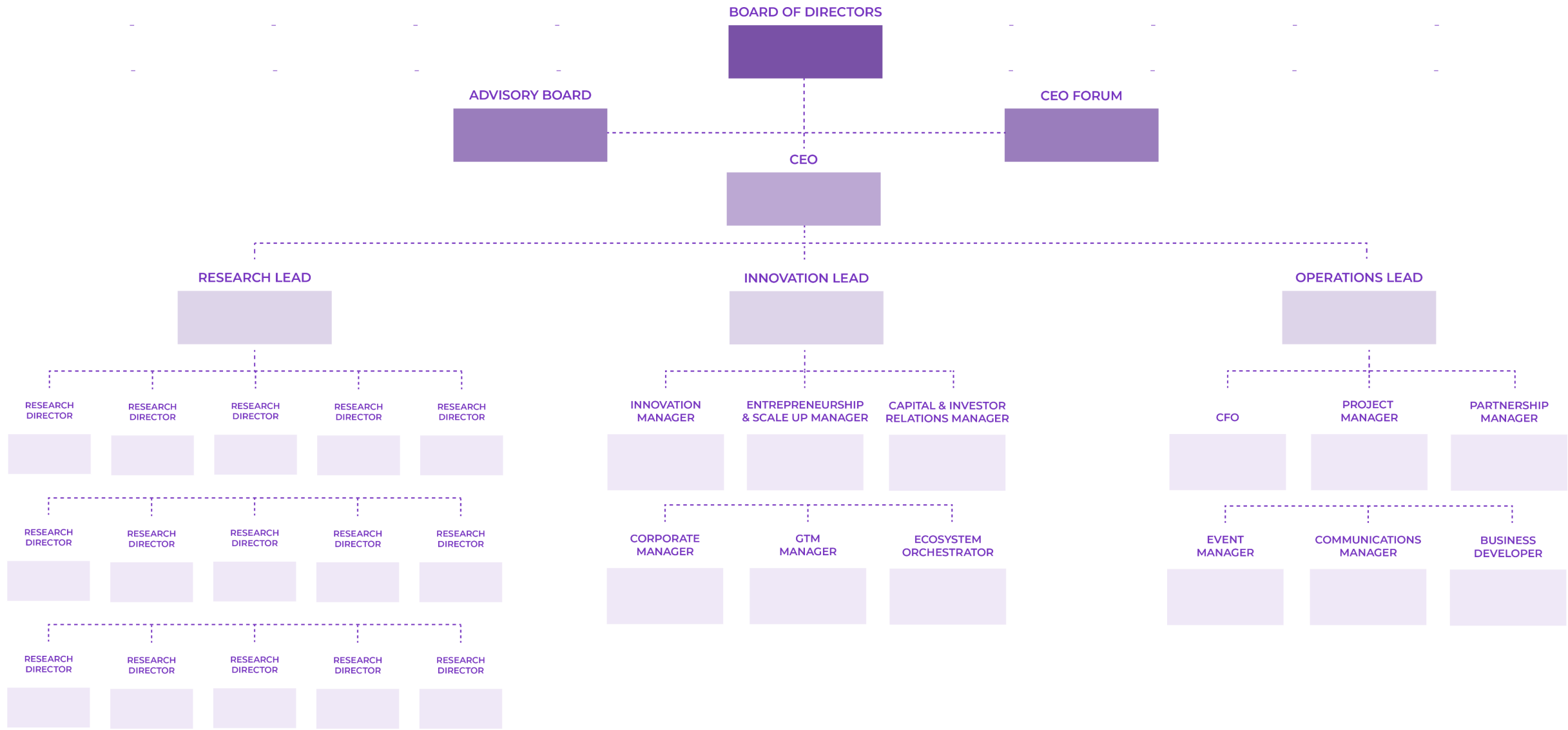
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Building your Cluster Organization

Even more granular structure?

Over the next two pages, we've set up an even more granular view of the possible cluster org. Chart.

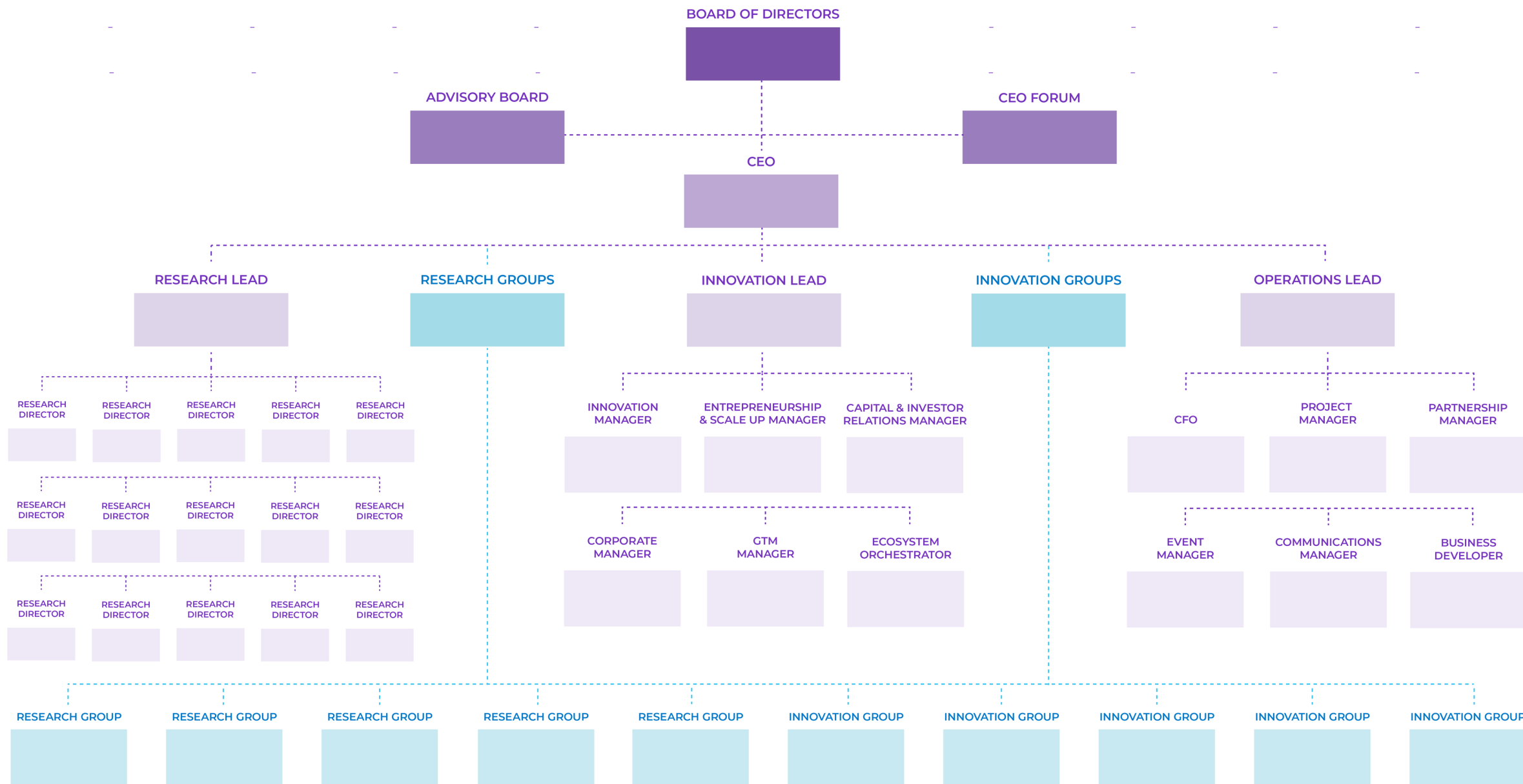
With (up to) 15 researchers, you can now plug in 15 names, straight into the org. chart.



Excellence Cluster Structure



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Excellence Cluster Full Structure



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	☆ WORKING	☆☆ PERFORMING	☆☆☆ HIGH-PERFORMING
 MINDSET	"I represent my company on the board"	"I work on behalf of the wider industry and ecosystem"	"I am responsible for building out a globally recognized innovation cluster"
 EXPECTATIONS	"The cluster benefits from having me on the board"	"I expect to put in some work for the cluster and innovation groups"	"Working with this cluster is a perfect fit with my wider role and how I see my future career"
 TIME	"I attend the board meetings"	"I spend up to 4-6 hours, every week, working with the cluster"	"I spend up to 20-50% of my time working with and for the cluster"
 NETWORK	"I talk about the cluster to my network"	"I am a champion for the cluster in my network"	"I actively engage with key leaders in my network, take lots of 1:1 meetings and work hard to present, position and promote the cluster"
 FINANCE	"We pay regular member fees"	"As board member, we tend to pay a little bit higher member fee or bring more financial support than the average member"	"As board members and key leaders in this cluster, it is only to be expected that we pay higher membership fees and bring more financing into the cluster"
 STRATEGY DISCUSSIONS	"We discuss strategy in board meetings"	"We run extensive and frequent strategy workshops with the board"	"We spend a significant amount of time on cluster strategy, analysis, foresight, strategic alignment and run a great KPI Scorecard"
 ROLE	"I am a board member"	"I am an active champion"	"I try to bring visionary cluster leadership"
 KEY CONTRIBUTION	"I offer expertise and insights into the cluster and board"	"I get complex projects of the ground and get stuff done"	"I close strategic deals and secure key partners, members and financing for the cluster"
 COMPETENCE	"I know a great deal about clusters, ecosystems, collaboration projects"	"I read about clusters, hubs, ecosystems and try to learn what time allows"	"I invest a significant amount of time into studying clusters, cluster theories, read books and reports on clusters. I visit other clusters and subscribe to several cluster newsletters to follow best practices"
 CLUSTER CATEGORIES	"I am aware of the differences between 'Grow', 'Transform' and 'Build'"	"I spend a great amount of time, making sure we are in the right category of 'Grow', 'Transform' or 'Build'"	"I spend a big part of my time helping executives and members understand 'Grow', 'Transform' or 'Build'"



Cluster Board Canvas

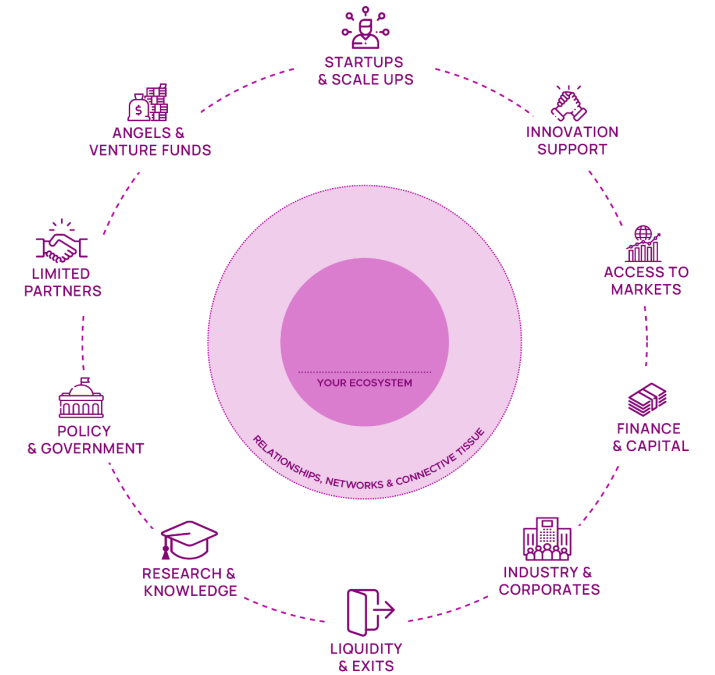
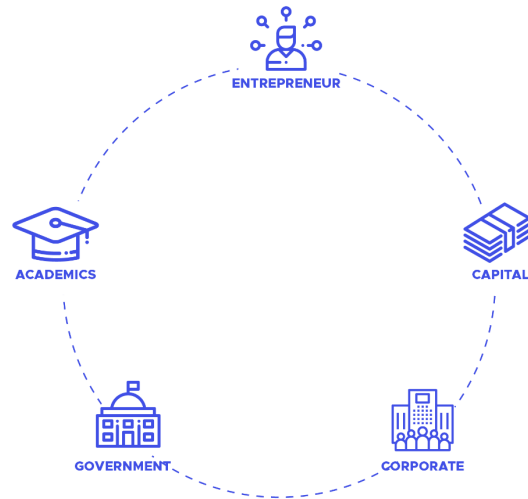


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The background features a dark blue-to-purple gradient with scattered white and blue stars. On the right side, there is a network diagram consisting of white lines connecting several bright, multi-pointed starburst nodes.

Excellence Clusters Webinar series #5 TBD/AMA



What does 'world class research' mean to us?

What does 'world class innovation cluster' mean to us?

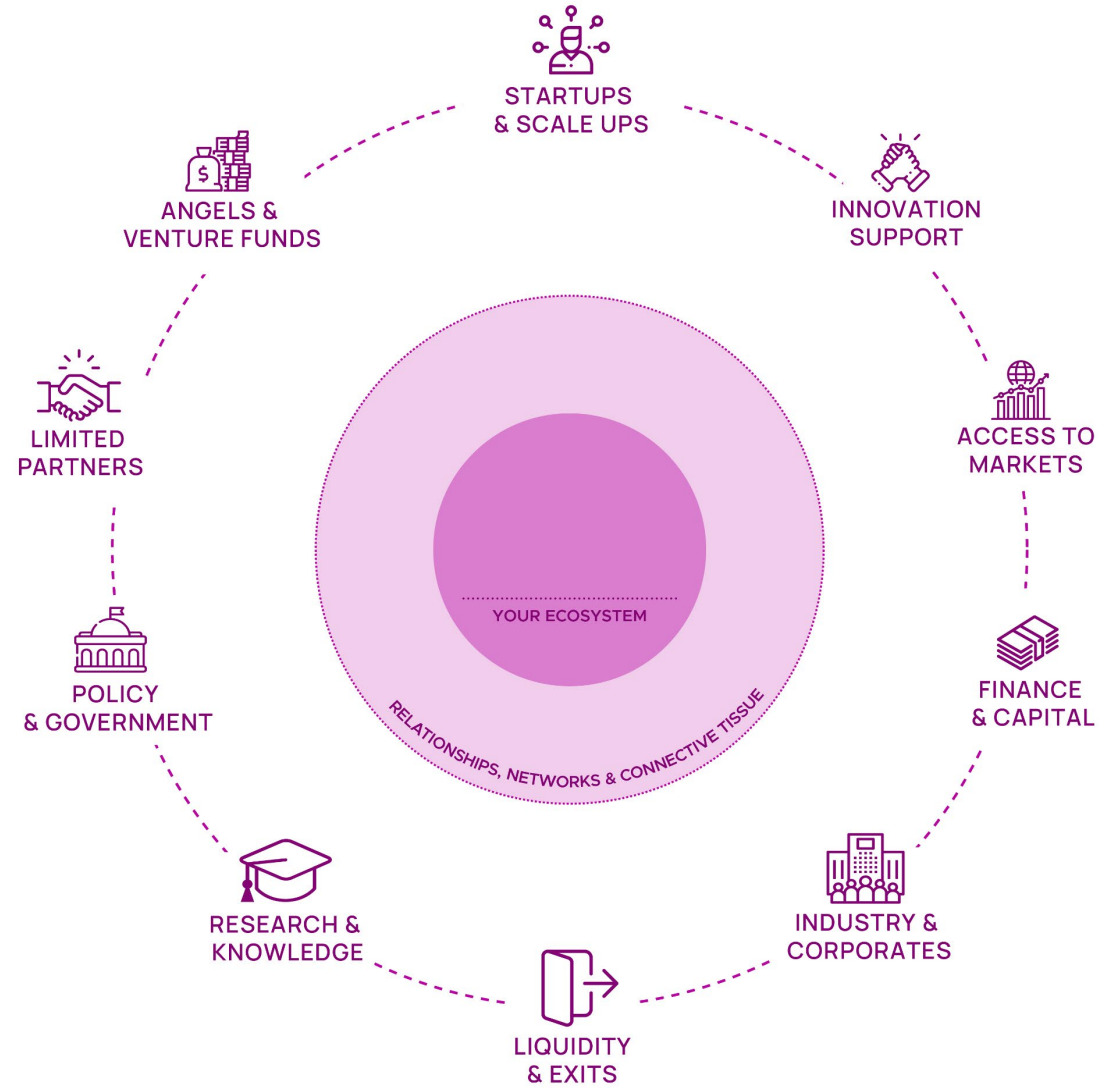
What does 'world class innovation ecosystem' mean to us?



Excellence Clusters Canvas



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New Nordics Ecosystem Scaling Canvas



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Good luck

