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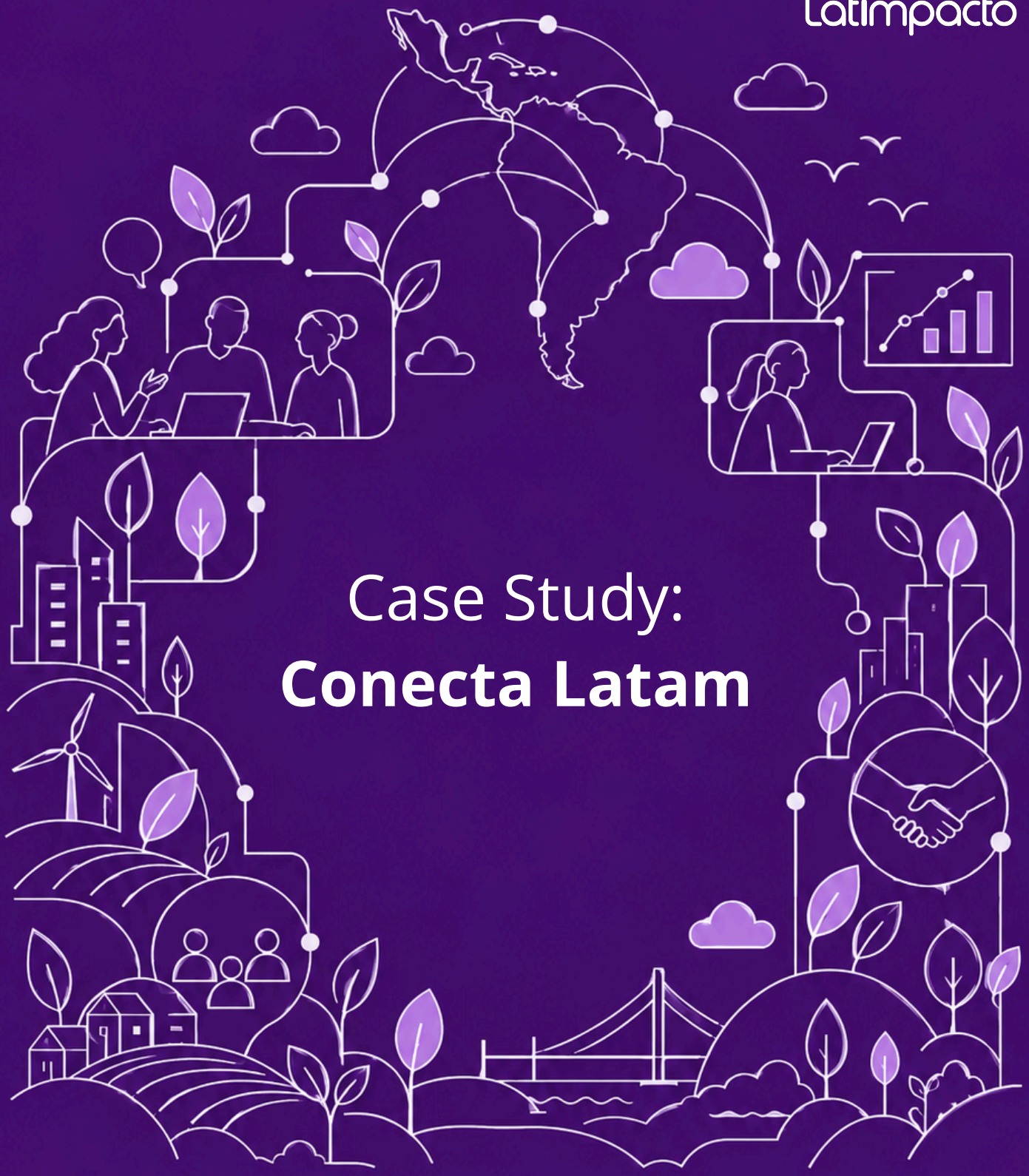

Case Study:
Conecta Latam

Bridge for Billions

BridgeforBillions
connecting growth

1. About the Organization

Bridge for Billions is a global social enterprise specializing in the design and implementation of incubation programs and solutions to strengthen early-stage entrepreneurial ecosystems. Our model combines technology, structured incubation methodologies, and personalized support to improve the quality, scope, and effectiveness of support for entrepreneurs.

For over a decade, we have worked with public, private, and international cooperation actors to bridge gaps in access to entrepreneurship tools, particularly in contexts facing socioeconomic challenges. To date, we have supported more than 7,000 entrepreneurs in over 100 countries, with proven results in terms of business survival, job creation, and access to financing.

In addition to directly implementing programs, Bridge for Billions' experience supporting entrepreneurs has shown that many of the challenges they face—such as unequal access to opportunities, a lack of continuity in support, or poor coordination among stakeholders—are not merely programmatic but structural. These ecosystem-level challenges require a more in-depth, medium- to long-term approach.

In response, Bridge for Billions promotes initiatives such as Conecta, aimed at strengthening the capacities of entrepreneurship support organizations (ESOs), improving coordination among key stakeholders, and consolidating more efficient, sustainable, and scalable incubation models at the local and regional levels. In this way, we are moving beyond the implementation of programs toward strengthening the institutions and systems that enable the sustained impact of entrepreneurship and systemic change.

2. The Case Study

Project Name	Conecta Latam
Sector	Entrepreneurship and economic development (ecosystem strengthening)
Location	Latin America (Colombia, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean)
Duration	Since 2023 (active model with annual cohorts)
Partners	BID Lab, Argidius Foundation, local organizations supporting entrepreneurship
Financial Instrument	Donation
Mobilized Capital	

SDG Adressed	ODS 8: Trabajo decente y crecimiento económico ODS 9: Industria, innovación e infraestructura ODS 17: Alianzas para lograr los objetivos

This case study analyzes Conecta LATAM, an initiative launched by Bridge for Billions that emerged after more than 10 years of experience directly supporting entrepreneurs through incubation programs. This journey revealed that many of the main challenges facing entrepreneurship in the region are not limited to the individual level but stem from structural weaknesses in the ecosystem, such as poor coordination among stakeholders, the limited institutional capacity of support organizations, and the lack of program sustainability.

Based on these insights, Bridge decided to take a step further to scale its impact, adopting an approach centered on collaboration and ecosystem strengthening. This led to the creation of Conecta LATAM, an initiative aimed at supporting those who support entrepreneurs by strengthening the capacities of entrepreneurship support organizations (ESOs) and helping to build more coordinated, efficient, and sustainable ecosystems in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa.

Conecta LATAM's primary objective is to improve the quality, sustainability, and coordination of ESOs, enabling them to implement more effective incubation programs, forge strategic partnerships, and expand their impact on early-stage entrepreneurs. To this end, the model combines three key components: (i) organizational strengthening through Conecta Academy, (ii) co-creation and implementation of incubation programs, and (iii) building a regional community that promotes collaboration and peer learning.

Conecta seeks to transform the infrastructure of the entrepreneurial ecosystem by addressing structural challenges such as institutional fragmentation, low operational capacity of organizations, and limited coordination among key stakeholders. Through this systemic approach, the foundations for more effective and sustainable support are strengthened, thereby benefiting entrepreneurs.

3. The Problem Addressed

In Latin America, entrepreneurship ecosystems face a structural gap that limits the development and sustainability of early-stage startups. Although the availability of capital and programs aimed at entrepreneurs has increased in recent years, the quality, coordination, and sustainability of the organizations providing this support remain uneven and, in many cases, insufficient.

One of the main challenges lies in the fact that entrepreneurship ecosystems have historically been designed with an entrepreneur-centered approach, without proportional investment in the capacities of the organizations that support them. This has resulted in programs with inconsistent methodologies, limited scalability, and an inability to generate sustainable results over time. Furthermore, there is evidence of duplication of efforts among entrepreneurship support organizations (ESOs) and weak coordination among the various actors in the ecosystem.

This fragmentation, coupled with the absence of shared methodologies and constraints on structural funding, hinders the consistent development of high-quality programs. In turn, it reinforces the need to move toward greater coordination, recognizing that collaborative work yields far more robust and sustainable results than isolated efforts.

In this context, strengthening OAEs not only improves the quality of support provided to entrepreneurs but also fosters more coordinated, efficient, and resilient ecosystems. However, such interventions remain underfunded and underprioritized within traditional economic development strategies, despite their critical role as the foundation for generating systemic impact.

4. The Solution

To address structural gaps in Latin America's entrepreneurship ecosystems, Bridge for Billions designed and implemented Conecta Latam, an initiative aimed at strengthening the capacities of entrepreneurship support organizations as key actors in generating sustainable impact for early-stage entrepreneurs.

Why?

Conecta emerged in response to the need to go beyond direct support for entrepreneurs and strengthen the ecosystem's infrastructure, recognizing that the quality, scope, and sustainability of entrepreneurship depend largely on the capabilities of the organizations that support it.

When?

Conecta launched in 2022 in Central America with support from IDB Lab, as part of a commitment to strengthening ecosystems through local organizations. After demonstrating positive results in this first phase, the model expanded to Colombia and Mexico with support from the Argidius Foundation, then to the Caribbean with support from IDB Lab, and to Africa thanks to support from the Coca-Cola Foundation, establishing itself as a regional initiative with a presence in multiple territories.

How?

The Conecta model combines three interrelated components that enable a comprehensive approach to the ecosystem:

1. ***Organizational Strengthening (Conecta Academy):*** Organizations gain access to diagnostic processes, training, and personalized support to improve their capabilities in key areas such as program design, impact measurement, and financial sustainability.
2. ***Co-creation and Implementation of Incubation Programs:*** Through the Bridge for Billions platform, organizations design and implement incubation programs tailored to their contexts, incorporating structured methodologies, personalized mentoring, and digital tools that standardize the quality of support and impact measurement.

3. ***Community building and ecosystem coordination:*** Conecta promotes collaboration among organizations through opportunities for exchange, the formation of strategic alliances, and participation in regional initiatives, thereby strengthening the cohesion and efficiency of the ecosystem.

This approach not only improves the quality of incubation programs but also multiplies their impact by strengthening multiple organizations, which, in turn, support a greater number of entrepreneurs using validated methodologies

Who participates?

The Conecta model is based on collaboration among multiple stakeholders:

- ***Bridge for Billions:*** Designs the methodology, provides the technology platform, leads implementation, and offers technical support to participating organizations.
- ***Entrepreneurship Support Organizations (ESOs):*** They act as local implementers, adapting the programs to their contexts and leading direct support for entrepreneurs.
- ***Strategic partners:***
    - IDB Lab: Funding and initial launch of the model in Central America and regional expansion in the Caribbean
    - Argidius Foundation: Support for scaling the model in Colombia and Mexico.

5. Results

Impact on Entrepreneurs

Through incubation programs co-created with partner organizations, Conecta has significantly expanded access to tools, mentorship, and structured training for entrepreneurs in the region. To date, more than 1,600 entrepreneurs have been supported, driving the creation and strengthening of more than 1,300 businesses. This process has been supported by nearly 1,000 mentors across 54 cohorts, demonstrating the model's ability to scale without sacrificing quality or personalized support.

Beyond its reach, the results reflect substantial improvements in the sustainability and growth of early-stage businesses. 93% of the companies remain active six months after the incubation program ends, 85% after one year, and 60% after two years, demonstrating the strength of the support processes. Additionally, 25% of entrepreneurs secure financing after completing the Conecta program, raising on average 1.2 times more funds than they did previously.

In terms of economic impact, the startups have generated at least 1,537 jobs, based on follow-up data from 352 participants. In line with this, the businesses currently employ 1.7 times more people than before the incubation program, and 80% of graduates generate average annual revenue of $41,596, doubling their initial revenue.

The program also stands out for its focus on inclusion and equity. Sixty-four percent of the founders are women, reflecting strong female leadership. Additionally, decentralization is promoted, with 16% of entrepreneurs located outside the capital cities. Conecta significantly reaches populations facing structural barriers: 57% of the

participants have incomes below $10,000, 30% do not have a college degree, 34% are young people under 30, and 7% are part of the migrant population. In addition, 57% have children, and 68% had not received any prior support before participating in the program, positioning Conecta as a key first point of access for entrepreneurial development.

Taken together, these results demonstrate not only the direct impact on entrepreneurs but also the model's ability to create more equitable opportunities and strengthen sustainable entrepreneurial trajectories in diverse contexts.

Strengthening Organizations

One of Conecta's main achievements has been the strengthening of more than 50 organizations that support entrepreneurship in the region, significantly improving their capacity to design, implement, and scale high-quality incubation programs. Through Conecta Academy and co-creation processes, these organizations have made progress in standardizing their methodologies, strengthening their impact monitoring and measurement systems, and developing more robust sustainability strategies. Additionally, participation in the community has fostered the formation of partnerships and the exchange of best practices, contributing to greater coordination within the ecosystem.

These advances are reflected in concrete results. Eighty-six percent of participating organizations report having strengthened their key capabilities in program design and management. Within this group, half emphasize that the adoption of structured methodologies has improved their ability to manage incubation cycles, while the other half note that they have achieved a level of autonomy that allows them to design and implement programs independently and with higher quality. Likewise, 43% of the organizations have managed to scale their impact, expanding their geographic reach and connecting with entrepreneurs in previously underserved areas.

The high level of satisfaction among the organizations reinforces the strength of the model. 100% of the OAEs state that they would recommend the program (NPS of 100%, with an average score of 9.6 out of 10), while the support provided by the management team was rated with an average score of 4.6 out of 5.

Taken together, these results demonstrate not only the individual strengthening of the organizations but also their growing capacity to operate more autonomously, sustainably, and in a coordinated manner within their ecosystems.

Impact on the Ecosystem

Beyond individual results, Conecta has helped strengthen the coordination and efficiency of entrepreneurial ecosystems in Latin America. Through an active regional community, the program

has connected organizations that traditionally operated in isolation, fostering collaboration, shared learning, and greater strategic alignment.

This approach has enabled progress toward a more systemic approach, where organizations not only improve their capabilities but also their ability to network. As a result, 70% have formed new partnerships, demonstrating greater connectivity among stakeholders and a reduction in ecosystem fragmentation.

Taken together, these results position Conecta as a catalyst for more coordinated, collaborative ecosystems focused on generating sustainable impact in the region.

6. Conclusions and Lessons Learned

The implementation of Conecta has identified key lessons for strengthening organizations that support entrepreneurship.

First, the quality of entrepreneur recruitment is just as important as scale. Defining clear selection criteria is essential to ensuring the effectiveness of incubation processes, preventing overly broad calls for applications from diluting the impact and reducing the quality of support.

Second, the model has highlighted the need to balance ambition with financial accessibility. As Conecta's value proposition has evolved, so have its costs; however, entrepreneurship support organizations (ESOs) have clear payment limits based on their context and capabilities, underscoring the importance of designing financially sustainable models that are tailored to local realities.

A third key lesson is that personalized and consultative approaches generate greater value than standardized solutions. The OAEs prioritize joint diagnostic processes and support tailored to their needs, reinforcing the importance of flexible, user-centered models. In this regard, the combination of a methodological framework with opportunities for co-creation has been crucial for achieving adoption.

Furthermore, it has been identified that the incorporation of tools and methodologies requires a balance between standardization and local ownership. While some organizations show initial resistance to predefined methodologies, there is openness toward solutions that improve operational efficiency, expand coverage, and strengthen impact measurement.

Furthermore, the OAEs have indicated that access to additional financial resources would be allocated primarily to automation and management tools, which highlights the need to strengthen operational capacities to enable a more strategic approach.

Finally, one of the most important lessons learned has been that the model's scalability depends on a shift in approach—moving from transactional relationships to co-creation partnerships. Treating OAEs as strategic partners, rather than merely as beneficiaries or clients, has been key to fostering greater engagement, sustainability, and growth potential within the ecosystem.