

33RD UN/IAF WORKSHOP · PANEL 4 · PATHWAYS TO SCALE UP

Identifying practical pathways to scale up within emerging nations

A PUBLIC–PRIVATE MODEL FOR SPACE STARTUPS

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STARTING POINT

THE CONSTRAINT WAS NEVER THE DATA

A national satellite operator, but no downstream space startups.



Freely available

Copernicus, Landsat and other open EO archives. Free, global, for anyone.



Missing

A local route from open data to a product, and to someone who pays for it.



What was built

Space literacy, then a national hackathon and incubation, run by Azercosmos with IDDA* and SABAH.HUB.

Emerging space economies don't lack satellite data.
They lack a route from data to revenue.

* IDDA: Innovation and Digital Development Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan

SABAH.HUB IN THE PARTNERSHIP

HOW THE PARTNERSHIP WORKS

Azercosmos leads the programme. SABAH.HUB supports the business track and ecosystem activities, helping turn EO capability into something an investor can underwrite.



Two-layer partnership

Azercosmos implements; IDDA and SABAH.HUB bring ecosystem, community and investor links.



Sustained mentorship

100+ hours, business and technical, from local and international mentors.



Business before build

Customer discovery and unit economics before any MVP code.

WHY AN ECOSYSTEM PARTNER

WHAT WE BROUGHT TO THE TABLE

Not space expertise. Early-stage method, a local market we know, and channels already running.



BUILD SUPPORT

Cohort design, pitch gates and demo-day format, from 19 SABAH.lab programmes



CAPITAL ACCESS

Introductions to SABAH.angels (150+ investors) and SABAH.fund (\$25M VC fund)

We connect; investors decide.



MARKET ACCESS

Baku ID: doors to partners and buyers, 300+ startups, 25+ countries

SABAH.city: innovation district, 0% corporate tax

What transfers: customer discovery, unit economics, pitch gates, local buyers.
What doesn't: EO technical depth. That is Azercosmos's side of the partnership.

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE · HACKATHON REACH

Pre-incubation · completed July 2026

Ideation · validation · EO
fundamentals · business models ·
prototyping · pitching · Mid-Demo
Day

Intensive development · ongoing July–November 2026

MVP development · beta and
alpha testing · go-to-market ·
investor meetups · weekly
mentorship

Graduation · planned December 2026

Final Demo Day and Graduation
Day · market-ready products ·
reselling via agency commercial
channel

- 125,000+** impressions across digital platforms
- 5,600+** visits to the hackathon website
- 3,500+** opened the application form
- 150** team applications submitted
- 10** universities represented

Sources: National Space Hackathon (December 2025) and National Space Incubation Program, Azercosmos, with IDDA and SABAH.HUB as ecosystem partners.

THE FUNNEL

FROM 150 APPLICATIONS TO 7 TEAMS BUILDING

150 applications
15 teams at hackathon
8 entered pre-incubation
7 passed Mid-Demo Day

8 teams to pre-incubation, 3 of them prize winners*
 6,500 AZN hackathon prize pool



National Space Hackathon • Dec 2025

First in Azerbaijan • 24 hours
 70+ participants • 10 universities

* Hackathon prizes: Millennium 3,000 AZN (≈ \$1,765) • SITE 2,000 AZN (≈ \$1,176) • Astryx 1,500 AZN (≈ \$882) • Total 6,500 AZN (≈ \$3,824) • 1 USD = 1.70 AZN (CBAR, Sept 2026)

WHERE IT BREAKS

THREE RECURRING FAILURE PATTERNS

Seen in pre-incubation pitches. The biggest drop-off comes earlier: 15 teams → 8 willing to build.



Decorative EO data

Remove the satellite layer and it still works. Not a space company.



No paying customer

Strong tech, but no named buyer with a budget line.



Competes with free data

If an open portal already answers it, nobody pays.

Attrition after a hackathon is the filter working.
Cheaper at the gate than six months in.

MID-DEMO DAY · END OF PRE-INCUBATION, JULY 2026

MID-DEMO DAY: A GATE, NOT A CEREMONY

7 of 8 teams passed Mid-Demo Day,
the gate from pre-incubation to
incubation.

2 months of pre-incubation before it:
validation, EO basics, business
models, pitching.



| A team that cannot name a customer and a business model does not pass the gate.

WHAT THE TEAMS BUILT

SEVEN VENTURES, ALL CHASING PAYING CUSTOMERS

- Property valuation & compliance (GIS)
- Soil fertility & irrigation monitoring
- Natural-disaster risk assessment
- Change detection & auto-reporting
- Food-service site selection
- Fishing-ground identification (GIS + AI)
- Environmental monitoring

Target buyers are commercial and domestic.
Not donor-funded.

MID-PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

TEN MONTHS FROM A FIRST HACKATHON TO INVESTOR ROOMS

5

teams got exhibition booths at Baku ID*, with direct access to investors.

1

team in Microsoft for Startups Investor Network via IDDA: Azure credits, AI infra, monthly mentorship.



The programme did not build investor access.
It routed teams into channels that already existed nationally.

* Baku ID: regional innovation and investment event, 13,000+ participants, 300+ startups, 25+ countries.

TRANSFERABLE LESSONS

WHAT ANOTHER EMERGING NATION CAN COPY

01 Test the buyer before the build

Customer discovery and unit economics before MVP.

02 Make attrition early and cheap

A hackathon and a pitch gate filter cheaply.

03 Route into existing infrastructure

Angels, VC, events, incentives already existed.

04 Split agency and ecosystem roles

Agency: credibility. Partners: talent and capital.

05 Sell domestically first

Local buyers pay. Donor pilots compound only when a local budget owner takes over.

06 Keep the gate at graduation

No named customer, no next stage.

THANK YOU · LET'S CONNECT

Questions, partnerships, pilots:

**LET'S BUILD
SPACE STARTUPS
TOGETHER**

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