



Report & Recommendations to Nurture & Grow the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

PREPARED BY



SOLUTION FOCUSED™
A Social Impact Agency

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Executive Summary

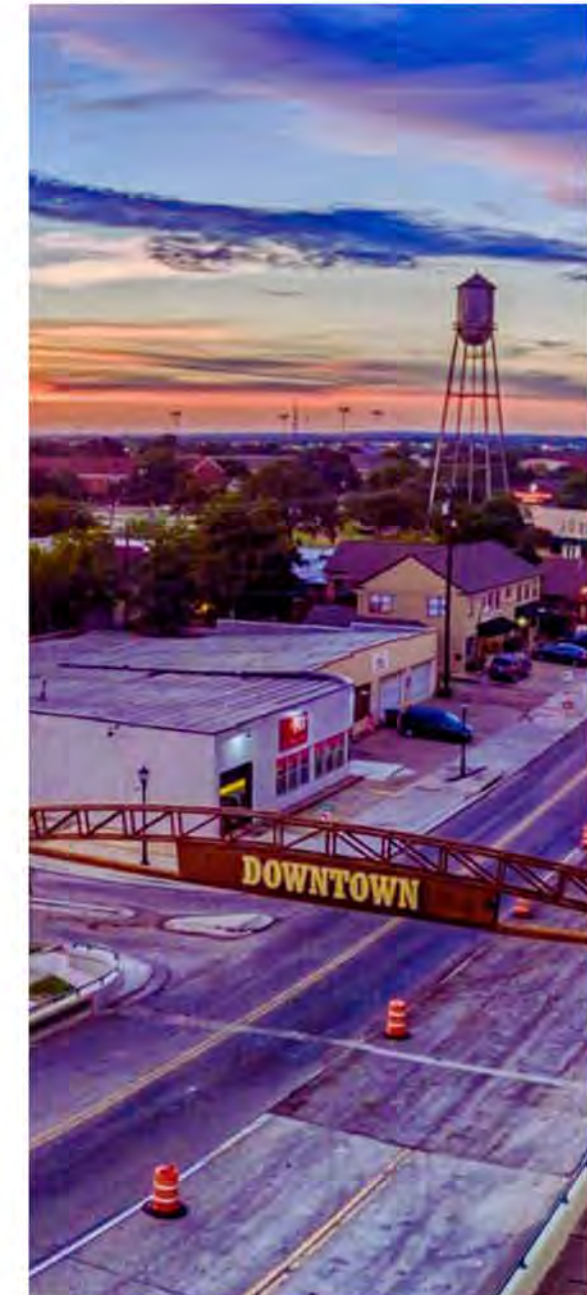
Strengths

We determined the Round Rock ecosystem possesses several strengths, including a lower cost of living than Austin, a strong community, and a growing support system.

According to our research, **Round Rock** ranks **#2** in the Austin Cluster for startup ecosystem health, as detailed in the assessment to follow. The cluster includes Austin, Leander, San Marcos, and Cedar Park for reporting and comparison purposes.

Challenges

However, it faces challenges such as a resource gap (including co-working space, incubators & accelerators) compared to Austin, limited mentorship due to a lack of scaleups, not enough niche events for targeted, high-growth industry sub-sectors, missing infrastructure (notably space) to support community engagement, difficulty attracting seed funding due to poor promotion, and a need to establish a distinct identity... but those are all things we can fix!



Assessment of Current Ecosystem & Identification of Target Industries



Project Overview



Round Rock, Texas, is a vibrant community with a growing economy and a diverse business landscape. Recognizing the importance of fostering entrepreneurship, in August of 2024 the Round Rock Chamber embarked on a comprehensive study to determine the best strategies to support innovative startups and small business owners in order to ensure sustained economic growth and prosperity in the area.

Mission

To develop an actionable plan for nurturing and developing a robust entrepreneurship ecosystem within the Round Rock community.

The goal of this initiative is to support startups and small businesses, fostering innovation, economic growth, and job creation within our region.

2. Assessment of Current Ecosystem

- Overview: Assessment & Ranking
- Health Check (Quantitative Analysis)
- Identification of Target Industries
- SWOT (Qualitative Analysis)

Ecosystem Overview: Top Benefits



Tax Advantages

Round Rock, Texas, offers a pro-business environment with no corporate or personal income tax, low property taxes, and extensive local and state incentives such as grants, tax credits, and expedited permitting.



Strong Economic Growth & Job Market

It is a rapidly growing economic hub with a thriving job market and diverse industries, including defense innovation, software development, manufacturing, and technology.



Strategic Location

It is strategically located near Austin in the Texas Triangle and offers easy access to major markets. The city boasts a skilled workforce supported by top educational institutions and hosts major companies like Dell, fostering a growing tech and innovation ecosystem.

Ecosystem Ranking

Ranking highlights of Round Rock based on data collection & analysis started in September of 2024 and completed in January of 2025.

The cluster includes **Austin, Leander, San Marcos, and Cedar Park** for reporting and comparison purposes. Additional nearby cities in the cluster (Buda, Dripping Springs, and Georgetown) were not ranked due to insufficient data.

#2 – In the Austin Cluster (Overall)

#2 – In sample size of startups in Austin Cluster

#168 – In the United States of America

#365 – In the World, according to Startup Blink



*These rankings are based on data in the StartupBlink database comparing **3,675** cities, self-reported data from survey respondents, and findings from the Solution Focused team.*

Ecosystem Health Check

The Health Check in this section analyzes Round Rock's performance based on the Global Startup Ecosystem Index algorithm developed by StartupBlink, using algorithm from the 2024 edition and data updated as of January 2025. It is important to note that accuracy is dependent on startups self-reporting and responding to surveys and interview requests in addition to publicly available data. With more responses, the accuracy increases. The analysis is done in the following subsections:

1. Macro-level Analysis

2. Industry & Sub Industry Analysis

3. Analysis of Quantity and Quality Score

4. Peer Analysis

5. Subscore Analysis

6. Simulations

Macro-level Analysis

City, Country	Global Rank	National Rank	Quantity Score	Quality Score	Business Score	Total Score	Cluster Rank
Austin, United States	20	7	6.985	37.411	3.701	48.097	1
Round Rock, United States	365	168	0.109	1.058	1.950	3.117	2
Leander, United States	683	324	0.030	0.460	0.819	1.309	3
San Marcos, United States	765	363	0.093	0.320	0.690	1.103	4
Cedar Park, United States	1004	456	0.094	0.177	0.453	0.725	5

365th globally, 168th nationally, and 2nd in the Austin cluster (compared to Austin, Leander, San Marcos, and Cedar Park). Only city in the Austin cluster ranked in the top 400

Additional nearby cities in the cluster (Buda, Dripping Springs, and Georgetown) were not ranked due to insufficient data.

Quantity: 2nd place, reflecting a strong number of startups

Quality: 2nd place, indicating that it is ahead of its peers but significantly lower compared to Austin's **37.411**, showing a need for improvement in areas like **funding, traction, and global visibility**.

Round Rock's Ecosystem Stage



Startup Ecosystem Stages (Based on StartupBlink)

- Global Hub - 1st to 30th globally.
- Regional Hub - 31st to 120th globally.
- Established startup ecosystem - 121st to 350th globally.
- Developing startup ecosystem - 351st to 800th globally.
- Seed startup ecosystem - 801st to 1000th+ globally.



The Round Rock Startup Ecosystem

- Round Rock is between **Established** (Stage 3) and **Developing** (Stage 4).
- Healthy Ecosystems at Round Rock's stage would focus mostly on Quantity score factors (# startups, accelerators, coworking) and promotion

Important Areas of Focus at Round Rock's stage

- **Focus on Quantity Factors:** Increase startups, accelerators, and coworking spaces.
- **Prioritize Promotion:** Actively market the ecosystem to attract talent and stakeholders.

Quantity Score Analysis

Parameter	Parameter Global Rank
Total Score	365
A. Quantity Score	890-903
1. Sample size of startups	863-903
2. Sample size of accelerators	872-3675
3. Sample size of coworking spaces	1080-1492
4. Community score	326-1196

Higher **Quantity Score** (890-9031) but a lower ranking compared to its total due to limited **coworking spaces** and **no accelerators**

Areas of Underperformance:

- Not enough industry specific events, casual meetups, lack of accelerators, and limited coworking spaces.



Key Recommendations:

- Partner with accelerators.
- Increase coworking facilities
- Enhance community engagement by offering space for meetups, industry specific events, etc..

Quality Score Analysis

Parameter	Parameter Global Rank
Total Score	365
B. Quality Score	889
5. Traction (percentile of average top-20 startup rank)	2725
7. Number of strategic branches	177-3675
8. Number of Y Combinator startups	311-3675
9. Amount of funding (million)	1386
10. Amount of exits under \$1b (million)	431-3675
12. Impact of global startup events	43-3675
13. Impact of unicorns (Bronze, Silver, Gold)	253-3675
14. Impact of exits (>\$1b) (Bronze, Silver, Gold)	185-3675
15. Impact of pantheons (Bronze, Silver, Gold)	42-59
16. Impact of global startup leaders (Bronze, Silver, Gold)	62-3675
17. Number of startups with traction score (up to 20)	808-860



Ranked 889th, indicating a significant gap in ecosystem quality

Overperforming Parameters:

- Impact of Pantheons: the strongest parameter for Round Rock, showcasing a notable global impact in this category as well as the significance of Dell in the ecosystem

Key Areas for Improvement:

- Enhance market reach and scaling strategies for startups.
- Increase funding opportunities to support growth by sharing success stories to attract investors, etc

Opportunity Assessment



Underperforming:

- Traction Rank: Signals needed for better market positioning and scaling strategies - more recognition of Round Rock through internet search.
- Funding: Moderate investor interest, but insufficient to drive broad growth.

Parameter	Parameter Global Rank
Total Score	365
B. Quality Score	889
5. Traction/Traffic (percentile of average top-20 startup rank)	2725
7. Number of strategic branches	177-3675
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Recommendations



Key Areas for Improvement:

- Enhance market reach and scaling strategies for startups.
- Increase investor interest in the region by sharing success stories to attract investors and promoting Round Rock.

Parameter	Parameter Global Rank
Total Score	365
B. Quality Score	889
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Other Considerations

	Score without Dell	Score with Dell
Score	0.771	3.117
Global rank	927	365
Rank change due to Dell	n/a	+562



Dell's impact in the ecosystem: The inclusion of Dell as a Round Rock company boosted the rankings by 562 spots

Key Contributions of Dell:

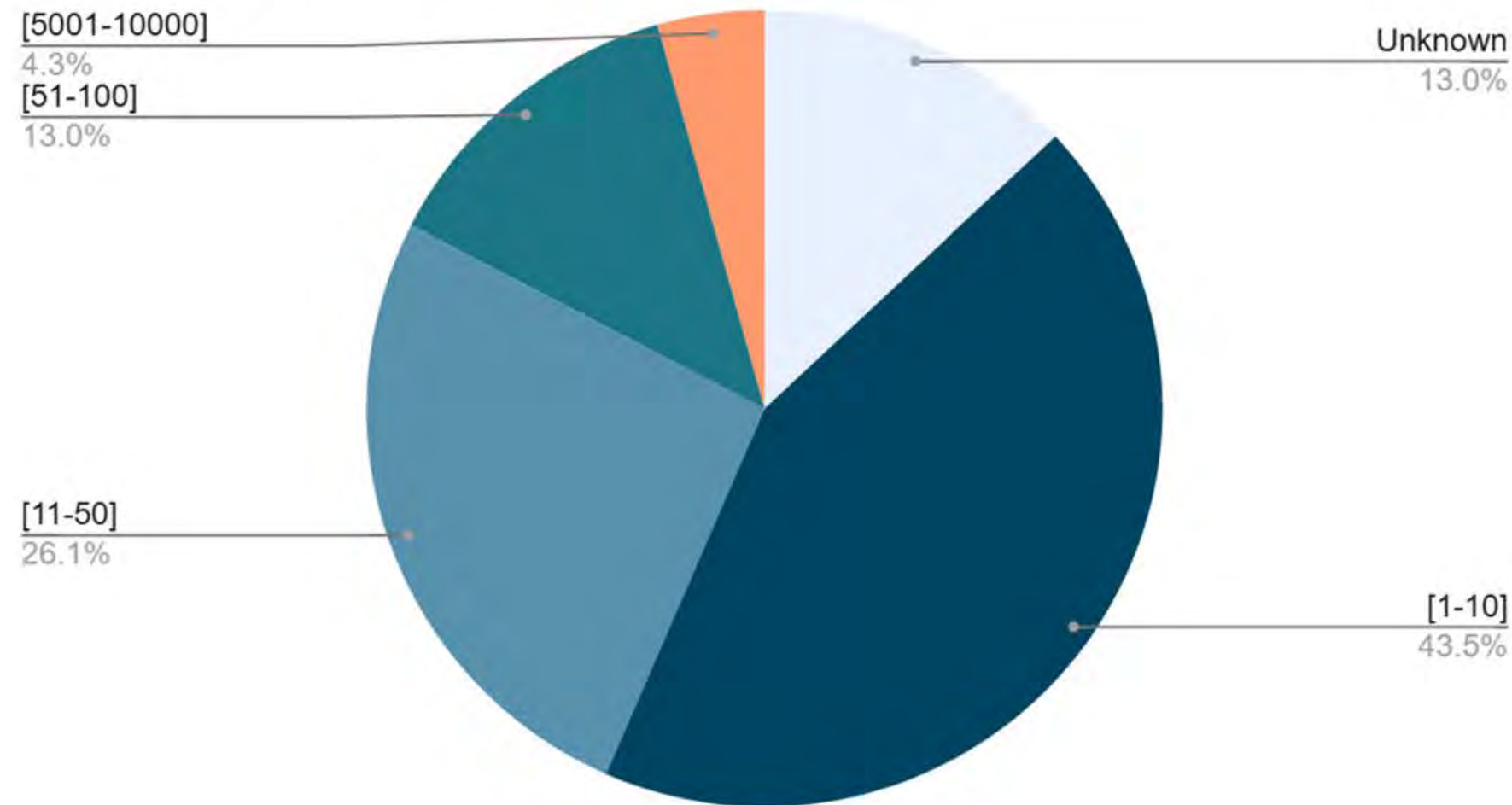
- Boosts market visibility for Round Rock
- Attracts high-quality talent to the ecosystem

Strategic Recommendation:

- Leverage Dell's presence in marketing and promotion
- Emphasize Dell's role to enhance global perception and competitiveness of Round Rock's ecosystem

Startups vs Scale-ups by # Employees

Employee Range of Startups



Indicates a strong **early-stage startup scene** with 43.48% of companies employing 1-10 employees while 26.09% of companies have 11-50 employees.

Lack of mid-sized companies (101-5,000 employees) highlights a **gap in the scale-up phase**.

Round Rock should **focus on attracting and nurturing scale-ups** to foster a more balanced ecosystem and provide mentorship for early-stage startups.

Subscore Analysis: Round Rock

	Quantity	Quality	Business	Total
January 2025 Rank	889	345	348	365
January 2025 Score	0.109	1.058	1.950	3.117
% of Total Score	3.49%	33.95%	62.56%	100.00%



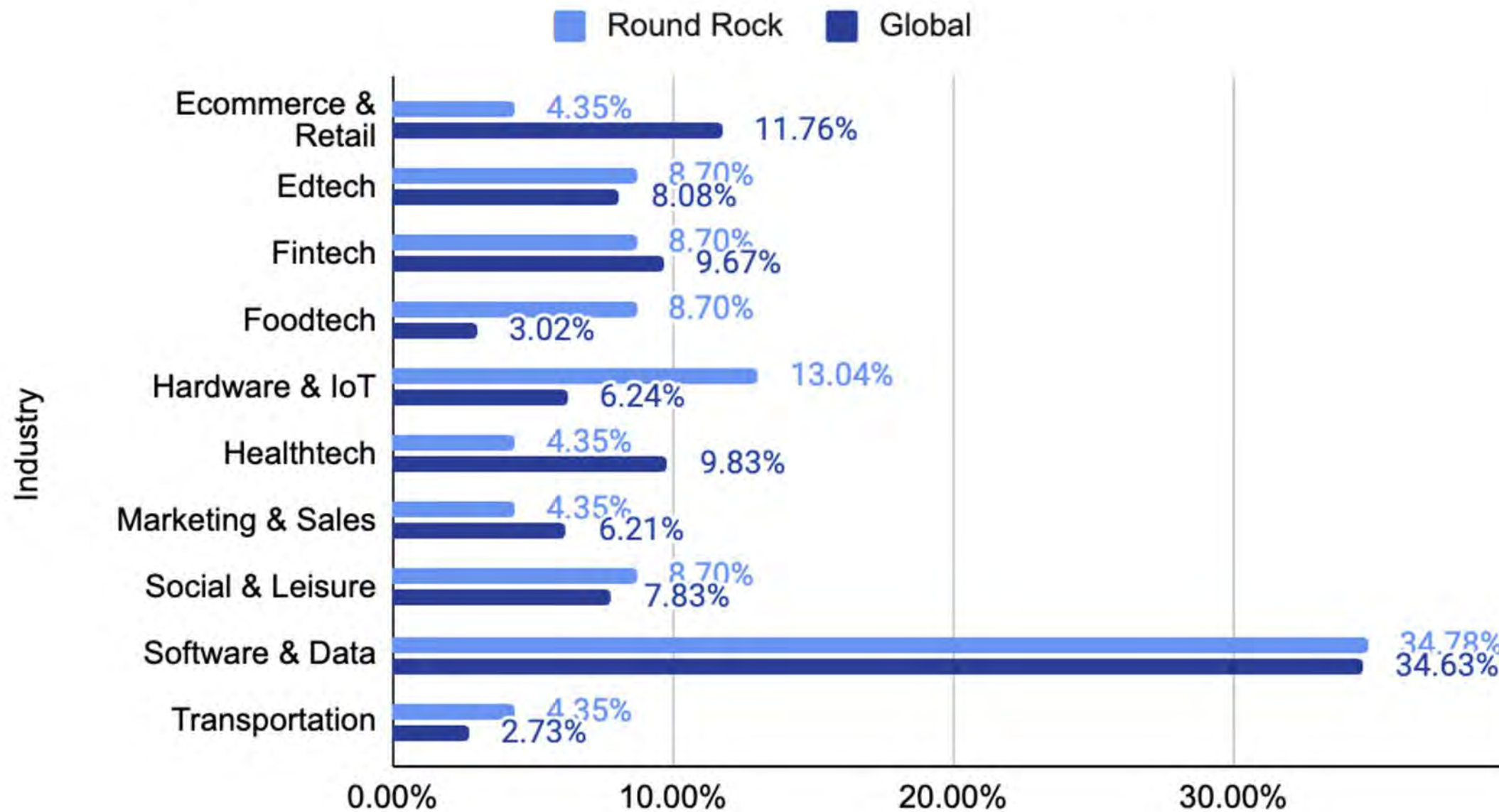
Business Score: Contributes the most at **62.56%**, highlighting the ecosystem's reliance on national-level parameters, particularly the strength of the U.S. economy.

Quality Score: Contributes **33.95%**, showing significant impact to the score.

Quantity Score: Contributes **3.49%**, reflecting minimal impact on the ecosystem's ranking

Industry Analysis

Industry Distribution in Round Rock and Globally



Startups in **10 out of 11 tracked industries**; no presence in Energy & Environment.

Top Industries in Round Rock:

Software & Data: 34.8% (dominant sector) and **Hardware & IoT:** 13% (second-largest sector) Likely influenced by Dell's headquarters presence.

Other Significant Sectors: Foodtech / CPG, Edtech, Fintech, Social & Leisure

Important Note: Startup Blink does not track "Defense or Dual-Use Technologies" as a separate & distinct global industry sub-sector but we see overlap in these areas in Round Rock among the startups.

Defense / Dual-Use Industry



Although StartupBlink doesn't categorize "Defense" as an Industry, Round Rock has a **notable strength** in this area.

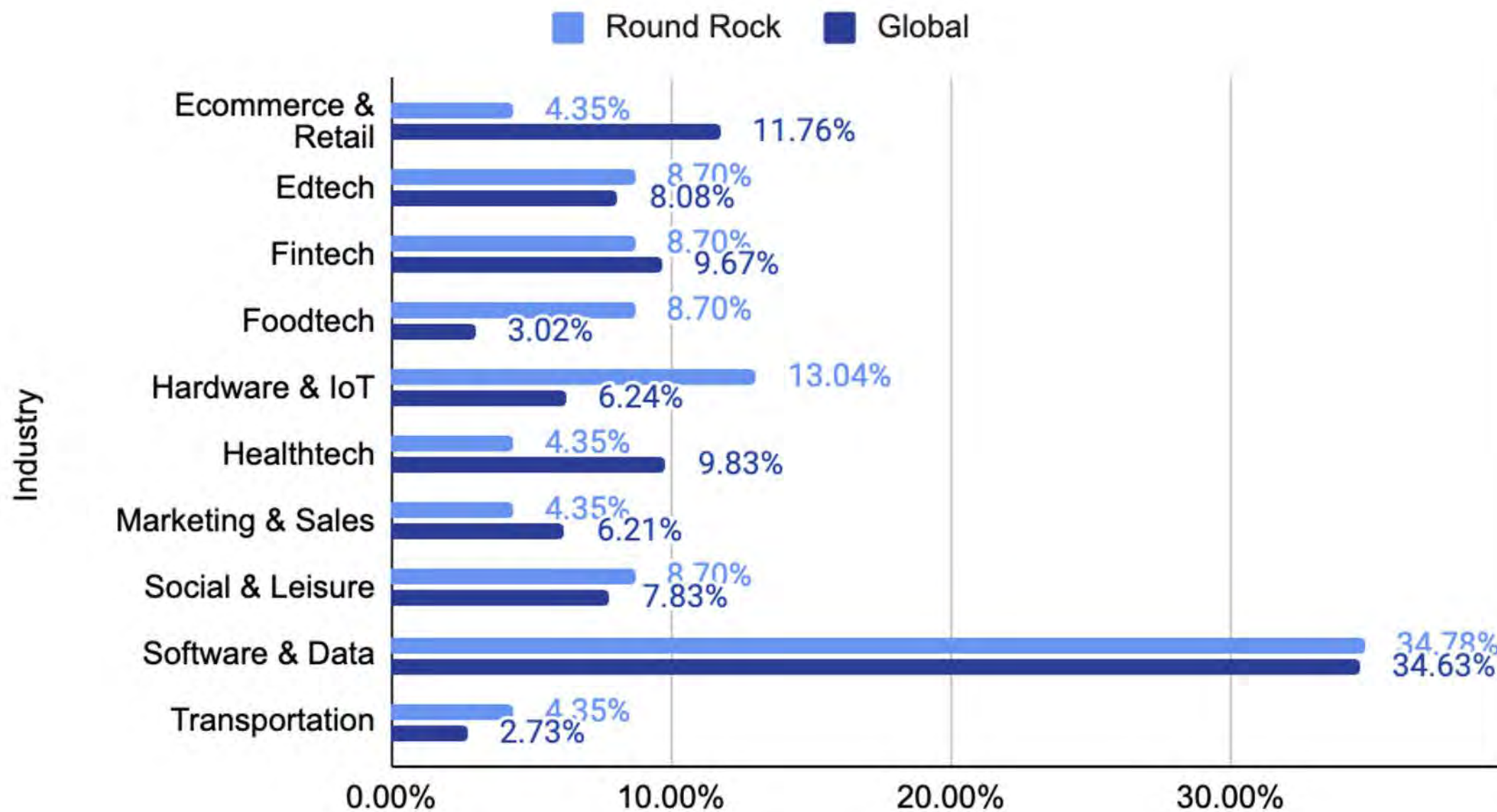
17.4% of the mapped startups on the StartupBlink database are in the **Defense/Dual-Use** sector.

If included in StartupBlink's structure, **Defense / Dual-Use** would be Round Rock's strongest sub-industry, representing a key area for continued development, especially given its growing global importance.



Industry Comparison

Industry Distribution in Round Rock and Globally



Comparison to Global Trends:

Software & Data is the leading sector both locally and globally.

Hardware & IoT and **Foodtech** show greater representation compared to global averages.

Again, we believe that **"Defense & Dual-Use Technologies"** are represented within those categories even though we cannot pull out as a sub-set for global comparison.

The relatively **low global competition for Foodtech** - inclusive of manufacturing and packaging of Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) - **suggests potential** for Round Rock to establish a niche industry hub as part of its five (5) year plan for growth.

StartupBlink Industry Structure

Hardware & IoT	Software & Data	Foodtech
3D Printing	Apps	Agtech
Consumer Electronics	Artificial Intelligence	Food Manufacturing
Hardware	Cloud	Food and Beverage
Internet of Things	Comtech	Online Food Ordering
Manufacturing	Cybersecurity	
Nanotechnology	Data Analytics	
Robotics	Enterprise Technology	
Smart Cities	SaaS	
Smart Home	Software	
	VR/AR	
	Web Development	

The table shows the **list of all sub industries** within Round Rock's key industries: Hardware & IoT, Software & Data, and Foodtech.

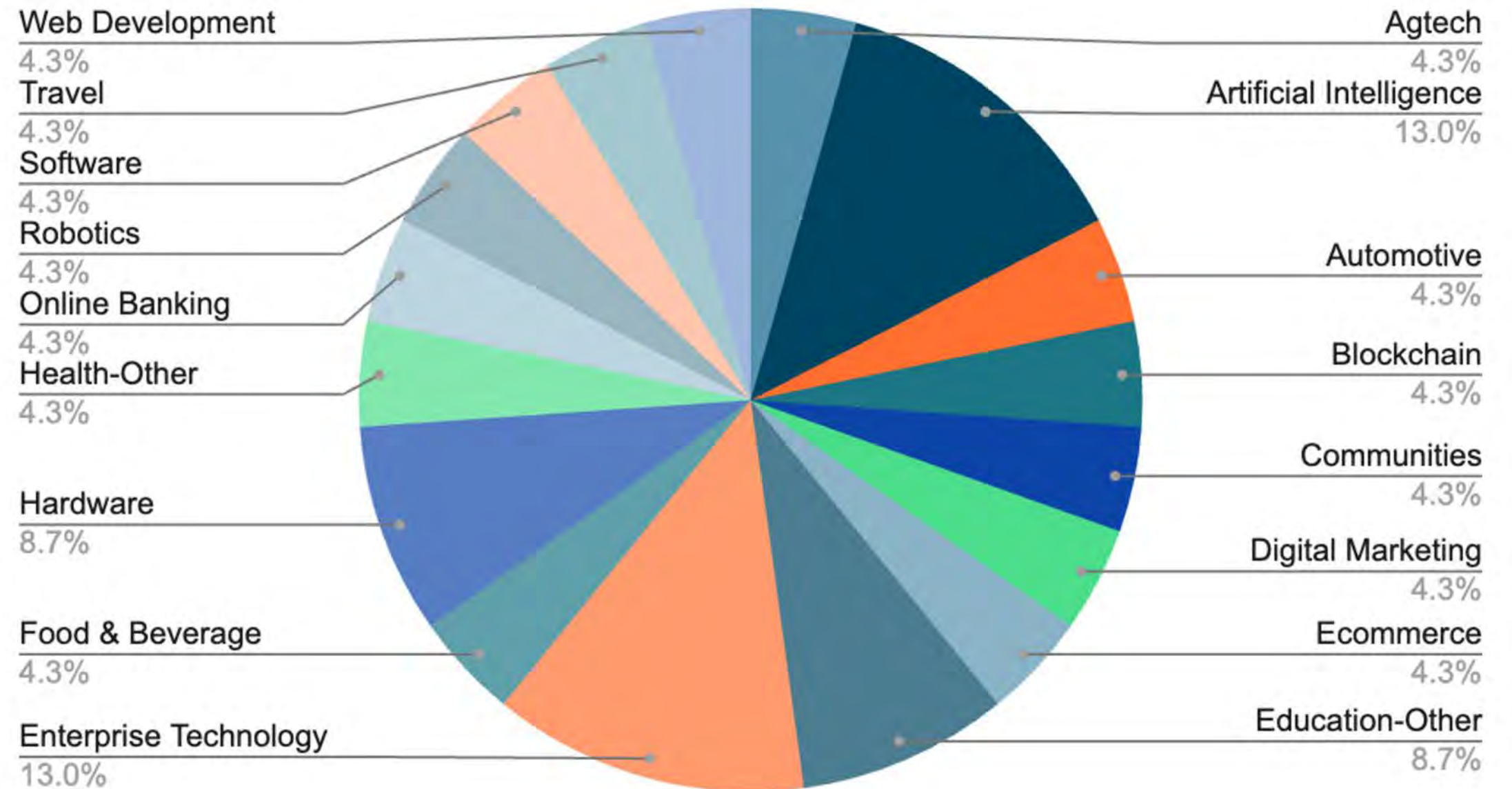
Sub Industry Analysis

Key Sub Industries:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Enterprise Technology have the highest distribution, consistent with overall industry trends.

Future focus on **Agtech** and **Food & Beverage / CPG** can position Round Rock as a burgeoning Foodtech Hub.

Distribution of Startup Subindustries



But what about life sciences?

Life science startups need lab space to conduct experiments, develop products, and validate their hypotheses, which is crucial for their research and development activities and ultimately, their success. Without space to do business, it's not surprising there is a lack of startups and scale-ups in the life sciences subindustry currently. It is certainly an opportunity for growth in the area!



SWOT Analysis

This SWOT Analysis was created through the thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews of entrepreneurship ecosystem stakeholders, conducted by Solution Focused & StartupBlink.

The Round Rock ecosystem possesses several strengths, including a lower cost of living than Austin, a strong community, and a growing support system. However, it faces challenges such as a resource gap compared to Austin, limited mentorship and niche events, difficulty attracting seed funding, and a need to establish a distinct identity.

Strengths

Proximity to Austin, allowing easy access to resources and startup events.

The Headquarters of Dell has created wealth and a technological foundation in Round Rock.

Affordable cost of living and favorable tax conditions.

Emerging support organizations, including the Round Rock Chamber, 1 Million Cups, and initiatives from Texas State University, which has a campus in the city.

Existence of a fund (Defense Innovation Fund) that aims to attract and provide financial support to defense-related startups.

Minimal regulation on business licensing facilitates easier startup formation.

Weaknesses

There is no clear distinction between small businesses and startups in initiatives.

Startup events and mentors often have a general focus thereby lacking the industry-specific focus seen in larger cities, which can hinder targeted networking opportunities.

Limited availability of community meetup, coworking, event venues, and office spaces.

There are more small businesses than startups in the ecosystem, or there isn't a distinction in the events, so it's harder to meet actual fellow startup founders.

There is a difficulty in accessing information, especially on the website, related to startup ecosystem initiatives which makes building a cohesive community difficult.

Challenges in attracting significant investment and seed-stage funding.

Opportunities

Creating storytelling platforms (e.g., podcasts) to share success stories.

Developing more informal networking events - or offering space for members to host their own! - could help connect entrepreneurs and foster collaboration.

Creating specialized programs catering to specific sectors and needs.

Utilizing the university's research and talent pool for internships and employment.

Creating a centralized community space for stakeholders to convene for easier networking and to be aware of opportunities in the city

Threats

Startups may be drawn to Austin for its more robust ecosystem, risking talent being diverted from Round Rock.

A prevailing culture that stigmatizes failure - emphasizing leaders & success but not talking about failures and building resilience - can deter potential entrepreneurs.

Continued difficulty in attracting investment could hinder growth.

The absence of digital promotions, highlighted success stories & opportunities online, makes it difficult to inspire entrepreneurship and attract new startups.

Stakeholder Engagement



COMMUNITY BUY-IN

We launched Round Rock's first ever "State of Entrepreneurship" Town Hall and a subsequent "Community Listening Tour" to engage directly with local stakeholders.

The Town Hall participants were open, honest, and generous with their feedback and eagerly shared their challenges, aspirations, and needs for the community, giving us a clear and direct view of the priorities that matter most to them.

After the Town Hall, the Solution Focused team followed up with individuals who indicated they would be interested in continuing the conversation. This helped us capture a more detailed, on-the-ground view of Round Rock's unique needs and strengths through the eyes of existing ecosystem members. We also launched a "Community Survey", too.



Led to great press! See KXAN



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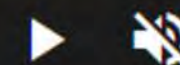
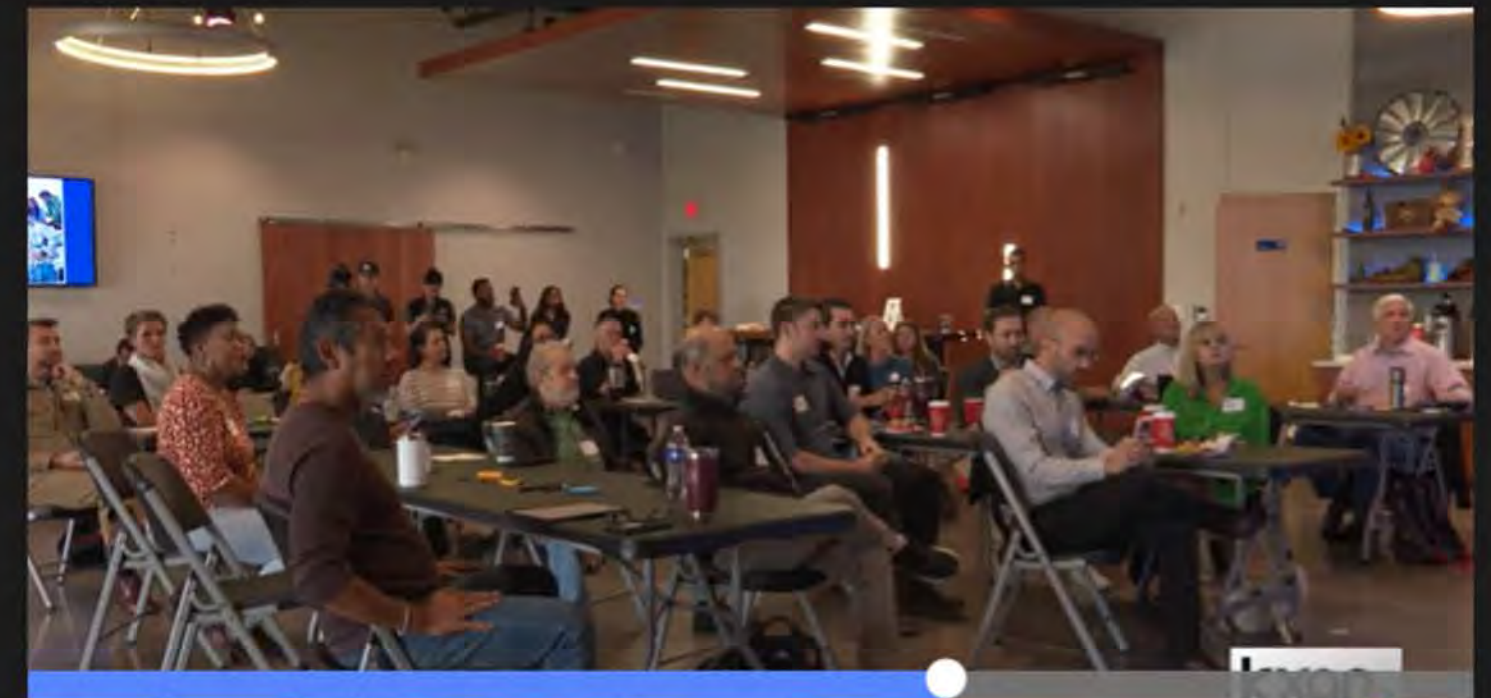
ROUND ROCK

Round Rock turns to business community to help attract start-ups

by: [Dylan McKim](#)

Posted: Oct 21, 2024 / 07:19 AM CDT

Updated: Oct 21, 2024 / 07:19 AM CDT



1:16 / 2:01



Determining the Right Model & Mapping the Ecosystem

Who are we serving?

In order to determine the best model and framework for success, we had first to identify who are the constituents to be served by the ecosystem? Based on stakeholder engagement, community listening & surveys:

- Startups
- Scale-Ups
- Small Businesses
- Service Providers



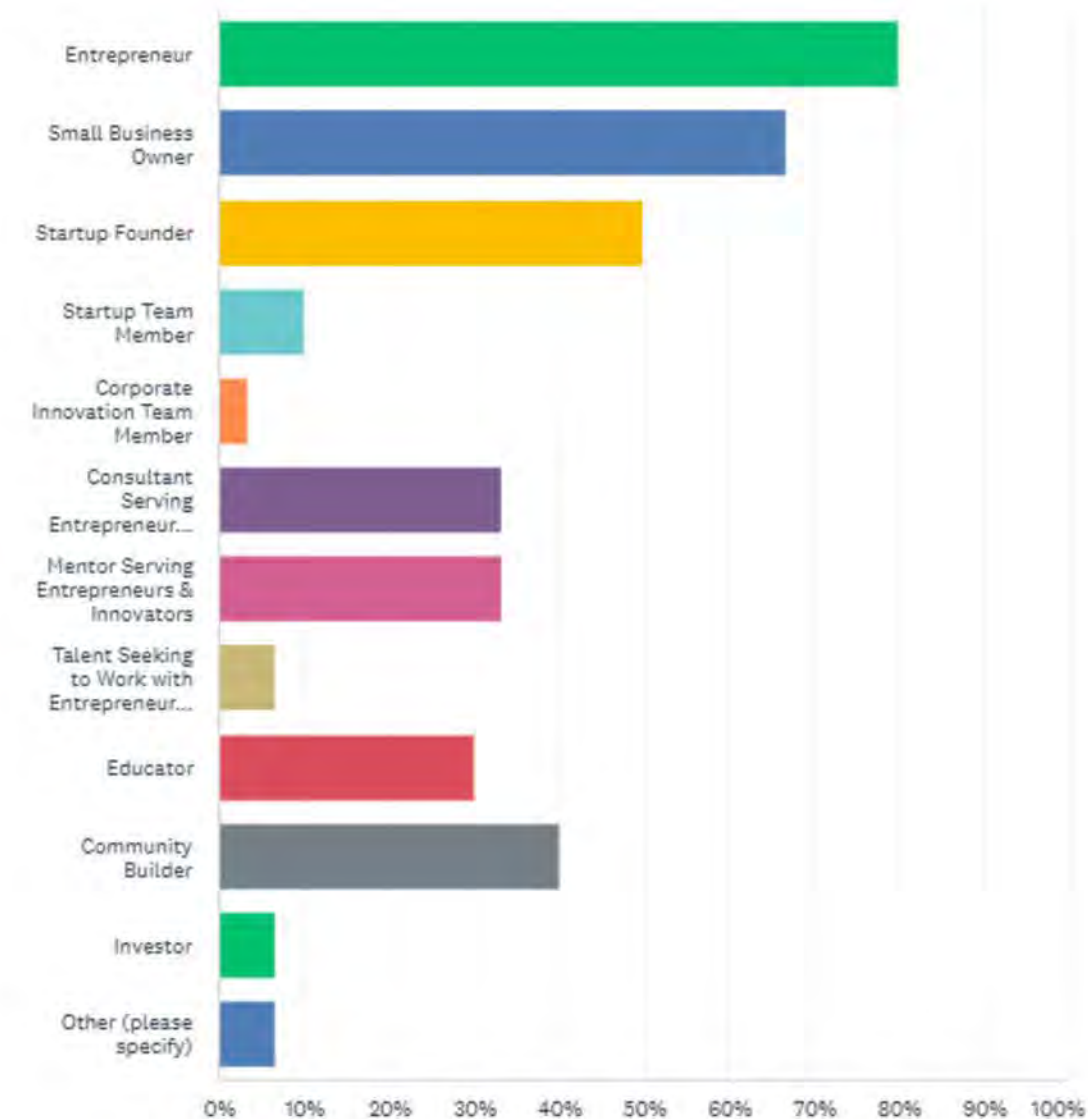
Results from the Community Survey

Thanks to everyone who participated in the community survey we launched in October, we now know the following about our entrepreneurial audience:

Almost 70% of respondents identified as small business owners, 50% identified as startup founders, and 30% identified as some kind of service provider. This helps us to rank our audiences with small businesses leading as the first priority.

Do you identify as any of the following? Please select all that apply.

Answered: 30 Skipped: 0



What do you mean by “startup”...?



There is usually some confusion over what constitutes a “startup” as people often use the term to refer to the early or launch phase of business development. For the purposes of economic development, though, we need to be more specific in order to better serve these founders, owners, and operators. Broadly speaking:

A newly founded company is not necessarily a startup. The term startup is reserved for companies that are innovative or that make use of new technologies in order to grow quickly and disrupt markets with new products or services.

**Startups disrupt
markets with *new*
products or services**

Startups vs Scaleups vs Small Businesses

Small businesses deliver existing or known products or services

In contrast, **small businesses** deliver **existing or known products and services** to new markets and typically focus on maintaining themselves and building long-term relationships with customers to grow over time.

A **scale-up** is a **startup** that has **grown**, that has changed scale. To move to this next stage, the startup must have succeeded in stabilizing its business model and industrializing its offer. It has therefore proven its viability.



Service Providers

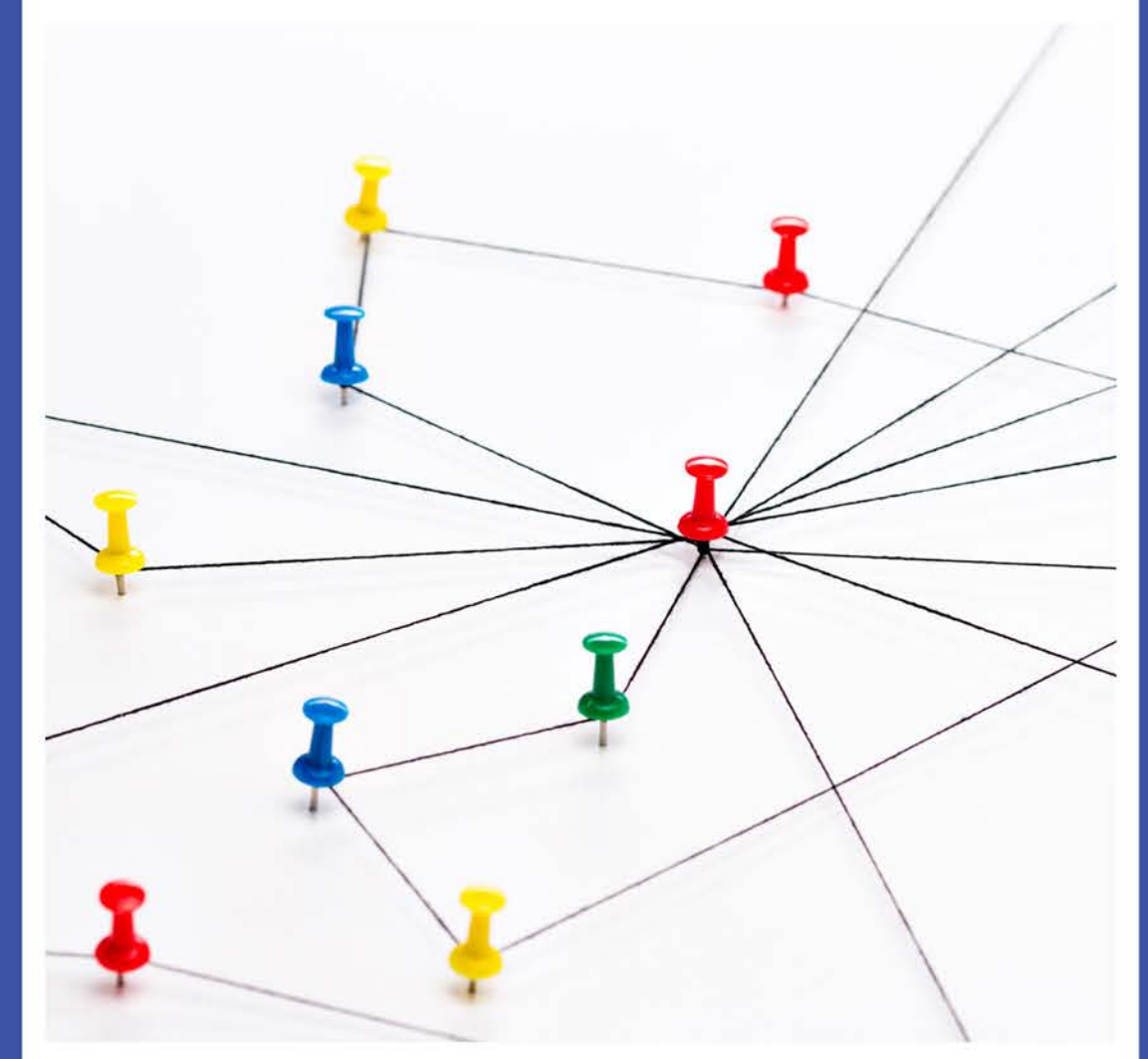
Service providers is the other key constituent group currently engaging with the Chamber and participating in entrepreneurship events and activities. These include but are not limited to: business coaches & consultants, marketing firms, lawyers, accountants, banks & credit unions, as well as educators & educational institutions.

What kind of ecosystem do they need?

Based on the constituents in Round Rock, what kind of ecosystem do we have currently and what do we want to grow into:

1. Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (Today - Year 5)
2. Startup Ecosystem (Years 2-5)

We recommend this move start with specific industry sectors to offer tailored support for startups emerging in key clusters, like defense & life sciences.



What's the difference?

An "**entrepreneurial ecosystem**" refers to the network of individuals, institutions, and resources that support the creation and growth of new businesses within a specific region, while a "**startup ecosystem**" is a more focused term specifically referring to the network that supports the development and success of innovative early-stage, high-growth companies, essentially a subset of the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem. Both aim to foster economic growth by providing access to capital, talent, mentorship, and other essential elements for entrepreneurs to thrive.



Key Difference: Scope

Scope: An entrepreneurial ecosystem encompasses a wider range of businesses - **all four (4)** of our identified audiences - including small businesses, scale-ups, service providers as well as startups. It can also include established companies that may support new and early stage businesses through mentorship or investment, while a startup ecosystem primarily focuses on innovative new ventures in their early stages.

Key Difference: Growth

Focus on Growth: While an entrepreneurial ecosystem supports and should galvanize the overall entrepreneurial spirit in a region, a startup ecosystem specifically emphasizes rapid growth and scaling of ventures creating new products and services. This is typically associated with tech-enabled startups and relies heavily on access to venture capital, universities and partners who can help fund & drive research and development, technology transfer, and commercialization.

The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Model

This model outlines six primary domains that interact with one another to create a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurship:

Daniel Isenberg developed the "Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Model," which helps identify the components necessary for fostering a thriving environment for entrepreneurs. His model has been widely adopted and discussed by policymakers, entrepreneurs, and researchers alike.

The members of the Round Rock Entrepreneurship Council (EC) are contributing to a detailed model for us!



Mapping the Ecosystem

From a Model to a Map: One of several key elements for a flourishing startup ecosystem is open access to the knowledge and resources for everyone, whether it is an entrepreneur or supporting player, like an accelerator, coworking space, government or startup organization. Hence, the popularity of startup ecosystem mapping is increasing as more players around the world understand the benefits of a transparent startup ecosystem and the visibility of the resources available in a particular location.

By putting everything on an interactive, constantly updated and dynamic map maintained by Startup Blink, the entrepreneurial community in Round Rock can find and connect with one another, network, and share ideas with the people who are burning with excitement to create something revolutionary too.

Add Your Startup to the New Dynamic Ecosystem Map!

The screenshot displays the StartupBlink website interface. The top navigation bar includes links for Startup Map, Ecosystem Rankings, About, Services, Reports, Blog, and Contact, along with Account and Schedule a Call buttons. The main content area features a sidebar on the left with a 'Sort by' dropdown set to 'SB Score' and a 'Filters' section indicating '60 startups in representative sample'. Below the filters is a search bar and a list of startups. The 'Add your startup' button is circled in red, with a red arrow pointing to it from the top left. The main map area shows a dynamic ecosystem map of the Austin area, with various locations marked by blue dots and labels like Leander, Cedar Park, Round Rock, Pflugerville, and Taylor. The map includes a Google logo and map data attribution.

StartupBlink Startup Map Ecosystem Rankings About Services Reports Blog Contact Account Schedule a Call

Startups Ecosystems Startups Unicorns Exits Coworking spaces Accelerators Influencers Organizations

Sort by
SB Score

Filters
60 startups in representative sample

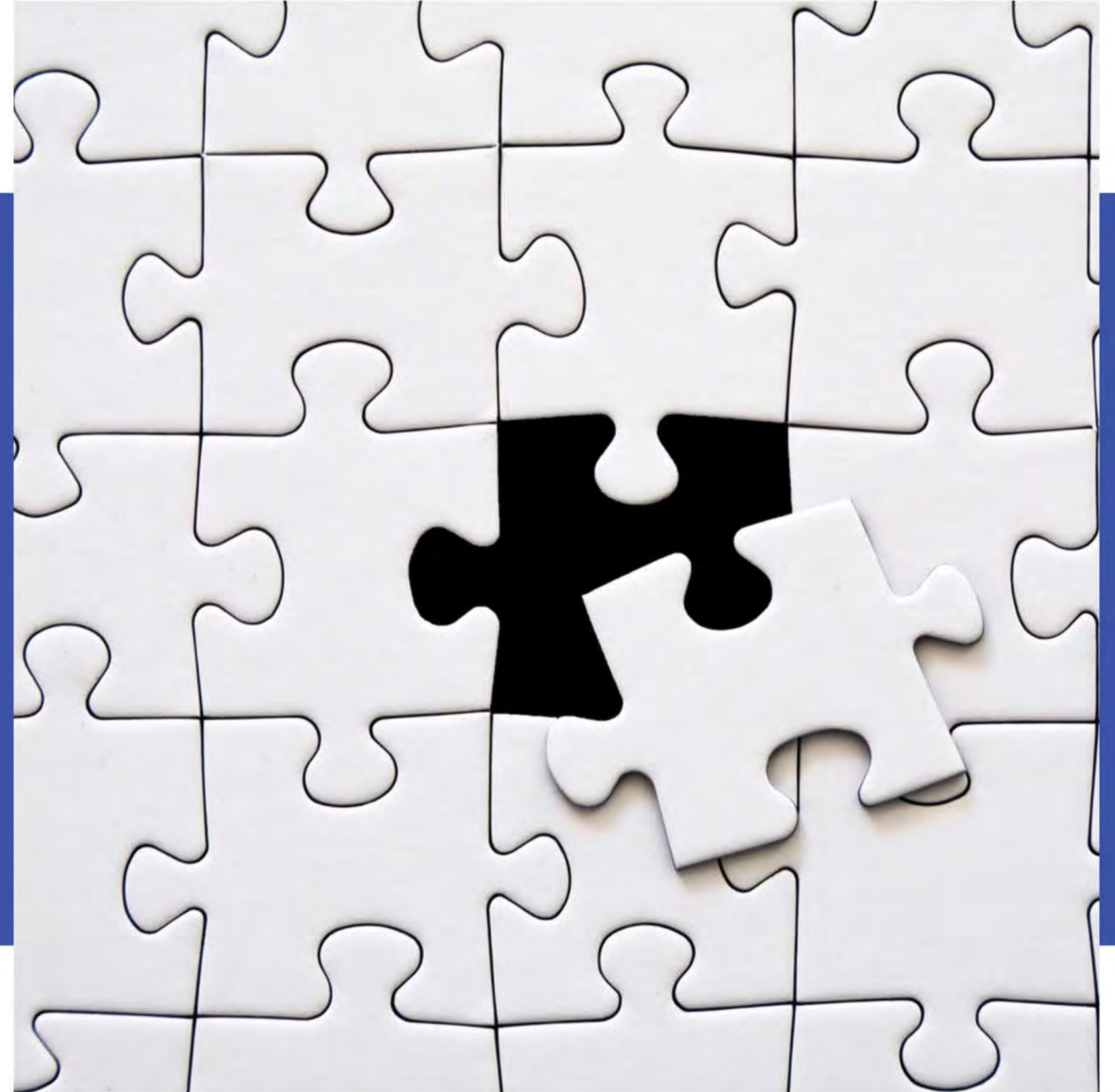
☐ Description keywords search
Search startups

Firefly Space Systems
Leander, United States
Hardware & IoT | Hardware
SB Score: 559

Infinitum
Round Rock, United States
SB Score: 451

Google Map data ©2025 Google Terms Report a map error

Best Practices



FOR SMALLER CITIES

To foster thriving entrepreneurship ecosystems, successful communities focus on creating a supportive environment that includes access to resources, mentorship, and funding, while also promoting a culture of innovation and collaboration.

For smaller cities, like Round Rock, Provo, UT and Wilmington, NC - who we assessed as comparison cities, see the in-depth narrative report and playbook for more! - this is best put into practice by developing strong partnerships.

A check-list to evaluate opportunities includes:



Do These Partners Provide Access to Resources and Support?

☐ **Access to Funding:**

Ensure entrepreneurs have access to various funding sources, including venture capital, grants, and loans.

☐ **Mentorship and Support Networks:**

Establish mentorship programs that connect experienced entrepreneurs with aspiring ones, and create networks that facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing.

☐ **Incubators and Co-working Spaces:**

Provide physical spaces where entrepreneurs can work, collaborate, and access support services like legal and accounting assistance.

☐ **Simplify Regulatory Frameworks:**

Streamline business licensing and permitting processes to make it easier for entrepreneurs to start and operate businesses.

Do These Partners Help Us Foster a Culture of Entrepreneurship?

- ☐ **Promote Entrepreneurship Education:**

Integrate or expand entrepreneurship education programs into existing offerings, equipping individuals with the necessary skills and mindset.

- ☐ **Encourage Risk-Taking and Innovation:**

Create a culture where failure is seen as a learning opportunity and where entrepreneurs are encouraged to take risks and explore new ideas.

- ☐ **Celebrate Success:**

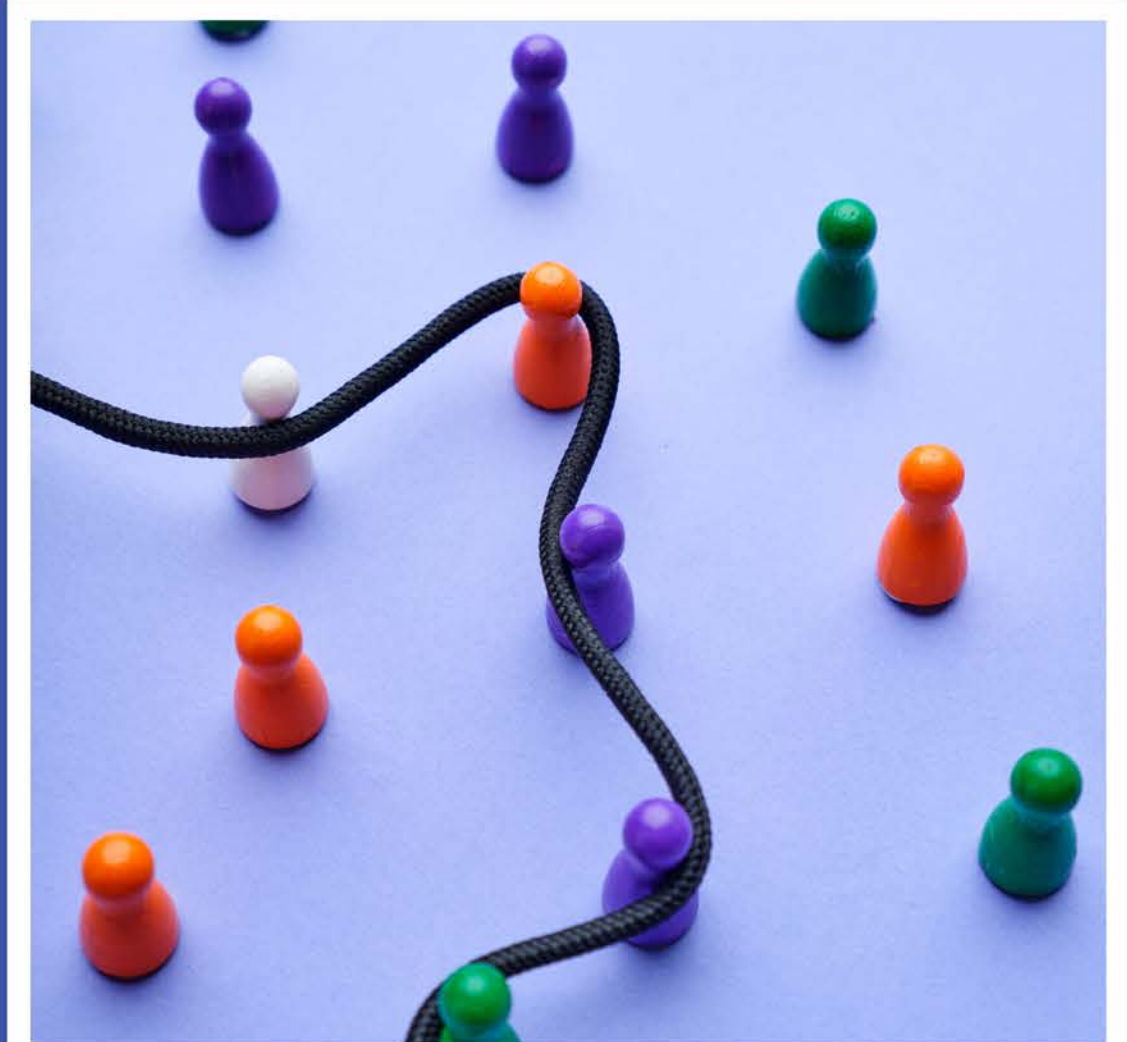
Publicly acknowledge and celebrate entrepreneurial successes to inspire others and create a positive image of entrepreneurship.

Next Steps:

Strategy & Recommendations

MAKE STRATEGIC CHOICES

In the full narrative report and accompanying playbook, we provide detailed recommendations and ideas for short-term & long-term goals over 5 years, objectives, and the tactics to achieve them, and support the growth and sustainability of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Round Rock.



Objectives for the chamber

How will the Chamber help drive these efforts across the region? As a reminder from the report, we suggest focusing on the following opportunities and objectives:

- Limited coworking spaces, accelerators, and community space for meetups should be addressed to foster growth and stability in the ecosystem.
- Despite being the highest rank compared to peers, Round Rock lags in funding and lacks scale-ups, highlighting the need for better marketing & promotion and programming initiatives that attract investors and support mature startups.

KEY TACTICS

Increasing Marketing & Promotions

Hosting & Attending Events

Creating or Securing Space

Forging Programming Partnerships

Top Priorities



Partnerships

Focus on increasing the startup output and early-stage funding through **partnerships** with programming and resource providers - starting with incubators & accelerators.



Spaces

Activate entrepreneurial-minded people and grow a more connected local community that helps each other by providing more **space** for convening. We recommend exploring use of The Griffith Building.



Marketing

Enhance market reach and scaling strategies for startups by sharing more success stories through press, media & marketing efforts. This will help attract investors and contribute to the success of the growing businesses in Round Rock!



**See the Playbook
for more details on
each area of
growth!**



Special Thanks To The Team



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Action**works**

