



*From left is UoN Vice Chancellor Prof. Peter Mbithi and Chancellor Dr. Vijoo Rattansi exchanging notes during the recent Incubation Strategy formulation forum held in Naivasha.*

After about a year of successful engagement with several relevant stakeholders on innovation, incubation and start-up acceleration practices, C4DLab has decided settling on five main activities, all in a bid to be the global reference point in developing successful IT-based enterprises.

The bold and necessary move follows some of the key recommendations of a recent study carried out on performance of its start-ups. That, among other things, if the lab was to be seen as doing anything as regards successful incubation and innovation, it had to consider the following: start-up acceleration, productive faculty engagement, partnerships, funding as well as branding and positioning.

Hence, for example, if C4DLab initiated the start-up acceleration programme, it stood to benefit from an enabling institutional and national contexts for innovation; wide multi-disciplinarity and strong research capability of the University; huge alumni, student and staff base as potential customers; widely recognised brand name of the University; huge captive market (loyal and committed community) for product testing, and university top management support.

The type of acceleration offered will begin at “Pre-incubation”, “Early-stage acceleration”, and “Growth stage”.



*Some of the Incubation Strategy stakeholders meeting in Naivasha on March 5 to 7 this year.*

Whatever else the lab management must do, the study found, should lead to the establishment of an innovation and enterprise acceleration centre, which has to develop a rich and vibrant pre-incubation community, implement a robust pre-incubation program with partners, institutionalize a methodology (for example Lean Methodology) to guide all programs and start-ups, provide comprehensive and relevant business assistance services, operationalize the organizational structure of C4D Centre of Excellence, enforce the University incubation policy, and appoint diverse and balanced C4DLab Advisory Board.

C4DLab will also engage in research, which should be able to create an environment attracting faculty members to business incubation and acceleration investors; institutionalize product development and start-up creation; review all academic programs to provide leeway for incubation/acceleration.

Private sector, Government and innovation ecosystem partnerships will also be pursued, while ensuring they add value to the lab's operations.

Further, when C4DLab implements a funding programme, it will have to provide appropriate and adequate capital for its start-ups. Finally, the lab will have to develop a compelling C4DLab brand.