

Idea/Entry & Selection and Exit & Graduation

The process of U.S. and International Market Entry or Expansion - consumes resources and time. As such, we must carefully select which companies are accepted as “SMART Soft-Landing Participants”. We select companies that will benefit from SMART soft-landing services, as well as meet requirements and criteria. We refer to selected companies as ‘participants’.

As our **soft-landing program is about guiding management teams from the entry/idea stage to the graduation stage**, we select each participant with clear intent, understanding and belief that their business will grow and flourish as a result of SMART soft-landing program and ultimately graduate from the program. Company profiles may vary significantly according to our selection criteria, but successful graduation is always our common goal. Therefore, it is important to define an initial road map towards successful graduation and to select those companies willing and able, with our support, to reach this goal. The soft-landing process is tailor-made for each participant, taking into account the different sectors and markets in which these companies operate, since companies in different areas of business are likely to have different growth rates.

Post-soft-landing services should also be considered, in order to provide the opportunity for successful companies to remain affiliated with the SMART Community Exchange (SCE) international community that nurtured their growth. Providing post-soft-landing services also allows undergraduate companies to interact with experienced and successful firms, in the same or similar industries. Figure below illustrates the process of SMART soft-landing program, with an emphasis on Entry and Graduation, as the beginning and end points of the ***Soft-Landing process:**



It is important to note that the idea/entry & selection, soft-landing in your Region and USA, and exit & graduation process above applies to our unique process. After graduation in the U.S., participants can decide, if they want to continue the post-soft-landing services, and/or as a SMART Community Exchange (SCE) partner organization.

Outreach and Virtual Services

We combine traditional soft-landing business services with outreach and virtual services. This permits more individuals/companies to take advantage of the services while also enabling us to control costs by not charging companies for on-site offices/ employees etc. during the soft-landing process. Where soft-landing/ entrepreneurial activity is high, outreach and virtual services can be particularly effective. Outreach and virtual services provide participants with an

opportunity to benefit from SMART soft-landing support at a minimal cost. The participants can benefit from access to interim U.S. or international management teams, virtual offices, and other business support services and strategic information exchange. Participants can also benefit from the networking activities that take place through the soft-landing and post-soft-landing process. Virtual services are the most effective way of communicating between participants in Your Region and USA.

Nevertheless, virtual services can never replace the benefits obtained from person-to-person interaction. Participants receive one-on-one mentoring, advisory services, and invites to SMART Summits, during the soft-landing program both in Your Region and USA. We respond effectively and in real-time to the participant’s needs. Participants also benefit from the networking and strategic knowledge exchange from social interactions with other soft-landing and business professionals at SMART Summits, Trade Missions, and Business Roundtables.

Connections

We rely upon the connections all participants can establish, as the connections can result in new revenue streams, partnerships, or ideas that may prove financially successful. We make an effort to connect participants with individuals such as: **Other public and private business service providers**, such as lawyers, accountants, finance, technology, experts etc. these individuals may be able to provide services to our clients. **Universities, technical centers and research institutions** – These organizations can offer services, access to intellectual capital, and new technologies. Matching these organizations with participants can result in new business ventures and partnerships. **Government agencies** – These agencies are in a position to support participants and help improve the soft-landing environment through funding. Funds can be donated, offered as subsidies, or granted as a consequence of the regional/national policy. These agencies can also become potential clients of SCE participants. **Financiers, including angel investors, banks and venture capitalists** – These organizations and individuals are vital to all participants. For most companies, there is a time in their existence when an injection of capital will be required, and being on good terms with financiers and investors will assist in overcoming that obstacle. **Local service providers** – We forge strong bonds with local service providers, our Preferred Service Providers (PSP). These service providers can fill gaps in services that SCE cannot offer. In many cases, these firms can be persuaded to offer group discounts to participants, if a critical mass is reached. **Private sector mentors, including entrepreneurs, multinational firms, and others** – Mentors will provide participants with additional networks and guidance regarding aspects such as operations, markets, and expansion, among others. Mentors can also be matched with participants operating in similar industries or sectors. Mentors may be able to offer specialist advice or support that SCE is not prepared to provide.



Access to Finance

In most cases, capital is a critical issue for participants. Therefore, we must address this issue by providing access to sources of finance. Some banks and financial institutions are risk averse and unwilling to provide venture capital or loans. SCE, therefore, need to serve as the link between participants and potential sources of capital. Given the difficulty that participants may face in trying to secure funding, SCE may reach out to our sources to locate and secure appropriate funding for participants. SCE may facilitate access to finance for participants.

Business Support

SCE Preferred Service Providers (PSP) provide key business support services to participants, which help the participants to focus their efforts on developing a competitive advantage within the market. The support services we offer may go beyond generic business support services towards specialty services and access to industry specific networks. Efficient and effective delivery of business support services enhances the chances of participants' success. This is the rationale for our existence. Therefore, we will tailor our services to fit the participants' needs, offering the services at below market rates to reduce the cost of the soft-landing program for participants. If we cannot offer all the services participants may require at a given time, then we will develop relationships and partnerships with regional and local service providers that are able to meet these needs. SCE regional management teams in Your Region and USA continuously assess and meet the individual needs of participants, as this is crucial to the success of the SMART soft-landing process.

An Enabling Environment

SMART Community Exchange (SCE) serves as a business enabling environment within the international business community by helping participants overcome obstacles and become successful, as well as by positively influencing stakeholder groups and policy makers who can bring about appropriate changes to the business environment.

The following are some of the ways the SCE can establish an enabling environment that assists participants as well as relevant stakeholder groups and policy makers: **Helping to change the local culture, increasing entrepreneurial and economic growth by promoting local business growth and producing successful role models.** We can bring a new SMART way of thinking to communities by providing role models for entrepreneurial success in the form of successful businesses and entrepreneurs. The SCE also offers businesses/entrepreneurs the tools they need to succeed. **Improving social capital, trust and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship**, by creating cross sector linkages and Public-Private Partnership arrangements. The SCE brings companies and individuals together through networking. Connecting professionals from different sectors and regions can establish trust between different firms and create innovative thinking by exploring fresh perspectives. The SCE also facilitates cooperation between participants

and public entities, with the aim of securing public funds as well as support for the participants. Participants whose work is closely aligned with the government's priorities, such as those in Positive Development (PD) and S.M.A.R.T (Sustainable, Measurable, Achievable, Resilient, Technology) based companies, are usually in a better position to receive support. **Providing a dynamic learning environment to foster innovation, entrepreneurship and technology transfer.** The SCE has the flexibility and opportunities to position participants at the forefront of innovation, entrepreneurship, and technology transfer. From our experience and that of our participants, we can apply the lessons learned to become even better enabling environments. **Reducing costs by joint procurement.** We are able to aggregate orders and hence procure goods and services at a lower cost for participants. Discounts will help companies who have limited financial resources to support their early phases of product or service development. **Assisting our clients to navigate through regulatory environments**, thereby reducing their compliance costs and the lengthy time requirement. The SCE can provide information to participants on achieving regulatory compliance. In this regard, we can help participants develop good relationships with government officials, ensuring that all administrative and bureaucratic requirements are met and hence freeing up time for participants to concentrate on developing their SMART businesses, communities, projects, and initiatives.

Stakeholder Groups

Serving as a test bed for stakeholders and policymakers interested in new ways of growing, regulating and/or supporting businesses. In this capacity, we provide policymakers with the chance to experiment with new ideas and incentives. Successfully tested programs can later be duplicated to enable more companies to benefit through new mechanisms of support. **Acting as effective advocates for increased awareness of business and regulatory change, as well as lobbying for the lowering of barriers to business.** SCE in Your Region and USA closely follow both the successes and failures of companies. This close relationship between our teams and businesses gives SCE a unique vantage point. As such, we can provide accurate, fact-based accounts of the difficulties participants encounter, make proposals and raise specific issues which could be impeding participants development to policymakers, in order to foster business growth. This close relationship will be extremely useful to overcome barriers that participants face such as, for example, a lack of local funding and complex bureaucratic processes hindering soft-landing or other business activity. In summary, an enabling environment for SCE stakeholders can: **Serve as a test bed for stakeholders and policymakers interested in new ways of growing, regulating, and/or supporting businesses;** and **Act as an effective means of advocacy for increased awareness of business, technology, education, workforce training & development, and regulatory change**, as well as allow SCE to contribute and raise specific issues which are impeding business growth with policymakers.