

INTRODUCTION

Version 1 of the Incubator Program ran during the third business quarter, from July 1 to September 30, 2022. The program had seven team members and accepted four projects to incubate. The v1 plan for the program can be [found here](#). This report reflects back on lessons learned and prescribes recommendations for v2 of the PeopleDAO Incubator.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Depart from a restrictive program duration, accommodating project timelines that span seasons.
2. Embrace variation in project development and adopt the programmatic schedule as a guideline rather than strict plan.
3. Bind steward term limits to the completion or failure of their project. Additionally, each other PeopleDAO team gets a guaranteed seat on the Incubator Team to ensure its stability.
4. Hire incubation team members on a project-by-project basis, assuring stewards fully opt-in to their project.
5. Ask for more discretionary funds because stewarding has unexpected costs.
6. Use Bip.so because it's a better platform for displaying Incubator information and managing the application process.
7. Require all Incubator applicants to be fully prepared and fully conceptualized, creating less risk for PeopleDAO.
8. Clearly delineate steward scope of work and project team expectations, balancing the relationship.
9. Disperse Incubator funding in phases, aligning incentives between program and project.

LESSONS AND PRESCRIPTIONS

LESSON 1 – Initially, the program sought to complete all its incubations across the span of a season. But this arbitrary constraint does not accommodate the diversity of project timelines or the possibility of unexpected delays occurring during development. None of the four incubatees completed their incubation before the end of the season.

- Prescription: We assume that some project timelines may extend beyond the season and allow this flexibility. What is most important is that projects hit their milestones as initially estimated in their proposal.

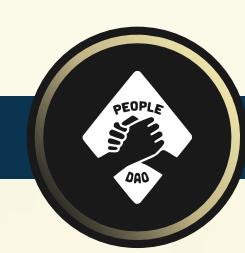
LESSON 2 – The first version of the incubator was designed to be structured, with all projects moving through programmatic phases; conception, design, and launch. We expected the cohort would generally move through the phases at the same time, although anticipated some variation. In practice, the variation was higher than expected, with projects entering incubation at different points in their life cycle, and development happening at drastically differing speeds.

- Prescription: We discard our attachment to the cohort moving through the program schedule at the same time. The design of the program should remain as a useful blueprint for how stewards can guide incubation of projects.

LESSON 3 – In v1 the term limits of team members coincided with the beginning and end of the season. The purpose of this policy was to make participation in the team accessible to other members of the community, and avoid over-concentrations of power. But some project timelines extend over the boundaries of seasons, resulting in project managers leaving mid-incubation and wasting their experiences and relationships.

- Prescription: The new policy should prioritize incubation completion and product development. Term limits for stewards should match the cycle of the product, ending in completion or failure of the incubatee. To ensure a level of stability, the Incubator reserves a spot on its team for each other Team lead or an assigned representative. This also facilitates Incubator access to the full breadth of DAO resources.





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LESSON 4 – Under the v1 model, stewards were elected first before they knew what projects were available to manage. This created a mismatch, because stewards opted in to the team but not the pool of projects. The less a steward is interested in a project, the less motivated they are to manage the project optimally.

- Prescription – Rather than apply to the Incubator Team, prospective members apply to steward a particular project.

LESSON 5 – During the first season the Incubator Team asked for 45,000 PEOPLE in discretionary funds. This compares to the average amount other teams asked for, 65,000 PEOPLE. Due to the nature of the team, with unexpected development and project costs, the Team should have some more reserves in case it's needed.

- Prescription – The Incubator should ask for more discretionary funding, 65,000 PEOPLE.

LESSON 6 – During Season 2, we used a combination of Discord and Google Docs to house information about the program, and operate the application process. This policy fractured the information and activity across platforms and channels.

- Prescription – We use the tool Bip.so to house our information and operate the application process. Bip.so provides a clear way of displaying program information and follows the Github pull request model, conducive to making suggestions to proposals.

LESSON 7 – This Season we accepted some projects which were early in their development process and conceptualization. This created more risk for the DAO and put undue pressure on the Incubator team.

- Prescription – Revise Incubator project application requirements to only approve projects that are well-prepared and fully conceptualized. Projects should be required to submit a Gantt chart or equivalent timeline.

LESSON 8 – During the first season of operation stewards sometimes drifted outside their role of adviser and supporter and became significantly involved in the implementation of the project. This not only stretched staff capacity thin, but created too much of a one-sided relationship between the incubator and incubatee.

- Prescription – Write a scope of work for the Steward delineating between that role and the project team. Be upfront about expectations in the Incubator application documentation.

LESSON 9 – Dispersing all funds on the frontend of the program increases the risk of misappropriation of funds by the incubatee. It creates misaligned incentives, paying the project team for work not yet completed.

- Prescription – Instead we should use a tiered approach, dispersing the funds out in phases corresponding to the phases of project development. This will produce the added benefit of requiring teams to plan their development more thoroughly. To ensure responsiveness, an Incubator Team multisig should act as a pass-through for incubatee funds.

