



**Farwa Zahid**

## **Investor-Founder Discovery Platform (IFDP)**

**Role:** Product & Research Analyst | **Organization:** Invest2Innovate (i2i)

**Timeline:** March 2024 - June 2025 | **Stage:** Ideation → Launch → Iteration

---

### **Abstract**

The Investor-Founder Discovery Platform (IFDP) was developed to address inefficiencies in Pakistan's startup ecosystem, where founders face difficulty accessing aligned investors and investors lack a transparent, verified channel to discover investable startups. This project aimed to design, build, and evaluate a centralized platform with verification mechanisms and public access. Over 15 months, the project combined iterative prototyping, focus group studies, verification model design, and structured tracking of adoption metrics. The platform successfully onboarded 500+ profiles per category (startups, founders, investors), exceeding targets in two categories, and contributed to policy and ecosystem discussions nationally and internationally.

---

## **Research Problem**

Founders in Pakistan struggle to connect with relevant investors due to fragmented, outdated, or closed networks. Similarly, investors lack a transparent way to discover credible founders or startups.

**Hypothesis:** A public discovery platform with verified directories and clear trust signals would improve outreach efficiency and bridge this matchmaking gap.

---

## **Objectives**

- Launch a pilot platform with searchable directories for startups, founders, and investors.
  - Develop and implement a verification model (tick mark for verified, disclaimer for unverified).
  - Onboard 500+ profiles per category with minimum 100 verified per group by June 2025.
  - Collect and analyze quantitative (onboarding data, verification rates) and qualitative (focus group feedback) insights.
  - Disseminate findings through launch events, ecosystem reports, and quarterly newsletters.
- 

## **Role & Contributions**

- **Discovery & Research:** Conducted focus groups and interviews with founders and ecosystem stakeholders.
- **Platform Execution:** Built pilot version using **SoftR**, migrated to **WordPress** after early testing.
- **Verification Logic:** Designed tick-based trust model and disclaimers; established verification criteria.
- **Evaluation & Iteration:** Tracked onboarding metrics, analyzed feedback, and updated UI/UX accordingly.

- **Dissemination:** Coordinated launch events, reported findings in i2i's *Quarterly Funding Reports* and *Monthly Newsletters*.

## Timeline Snapshot

Phase	Description
Mar–May 2024	Built pilot MVP (Softtr), ran focus groups
Jun–Aug 2024	Migrated to WordPress; structured backend and verification workflows
Sept 2024	Public launch + dissemination events (online + in-person)
Oct 2024 – Jun 2025	Monthly onboarding, feedback studies, verification tracking, UI updates

## Findings

Metric	Result
Platform Launch	✓ Delivered in 6 months
Profiles Onboarded	500 startups, 750 founders, 500 investors
Verification Achieved	100+ verified startups, 100+ verified founders, 30 verified investors
Event Participation	Repeatable workflows for intake, badge logic, and user FAQs
Process Outcome	Established repeatable workflows for intake, verification, FAQs

## Verification Design

### Directory Structure

- **Unverified Listings:** Compiled from i2i databases, public sources, and NIC partnerships.
- **Verified Listings:** Screened using internal credibility and activity criteria.
- **UI Logic:** Tick marks for verified, disclaimers for unverified.

## Verification Targets

Category--+	Goal	Achieved (as of June 2025)
Startups	500 total, 100 verified	500 total, 100+ verified
Founders	500 total, 100 verified	750 total, 100+ verified
Investors	500 total, 30 verified	500 total, 30 verified

## Tracking & Evaluation

- Maintained structured monthly targets using Google Sheets.
- Analyzed onboarding, verification, and engagement data against goals.
- Conducted qualitative user studies on clarity of trust signals and platform usability.

## Feedback → Iteration

### Discovery Activities

- Ran in-person and virtual focus groups with NIC Islamabad and other incubators.
- Collected feedback on profile layout, verified vs. unverified clarity, and navigation.

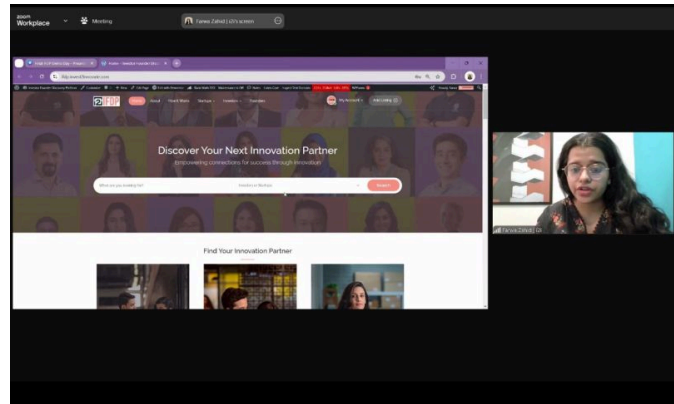
### Actioned Changes (Mar–Jun 2025)

- Updated WordPress layout based on usability feedback.
- Improved categorization and spacing of directories.
- Reworded disclaimers for greater clarity.
- Designed (but deferred) advanced filters for future versions.

## **Dissemination & Outreach**

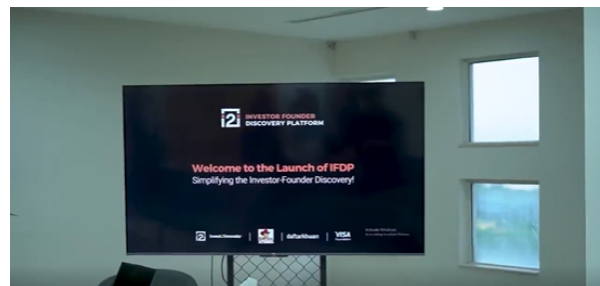
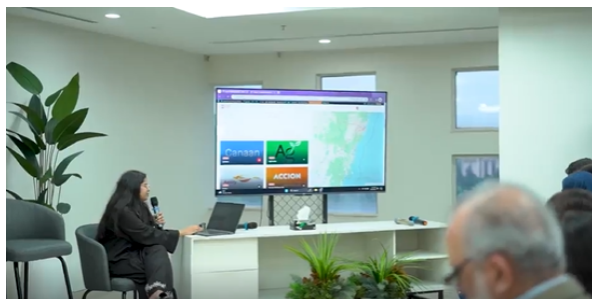
### **Online Launch (Sept 2024)**

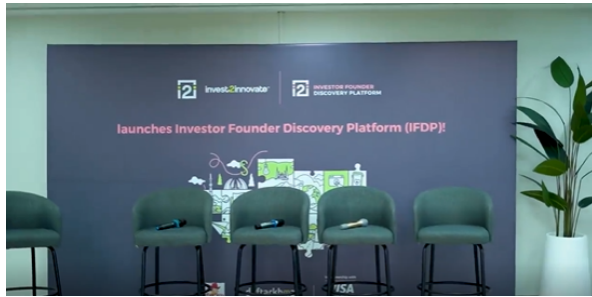
- Platform walkthrough with founders & investors
- Public explanation of verification logic
- Signup funnel integrated into event
- [Linkedin Post](#)



### **In person Event**

- Panel discussion + founder networking
- Real-time profile onboarding & feedback collection
- [Watch Launch Event](#)

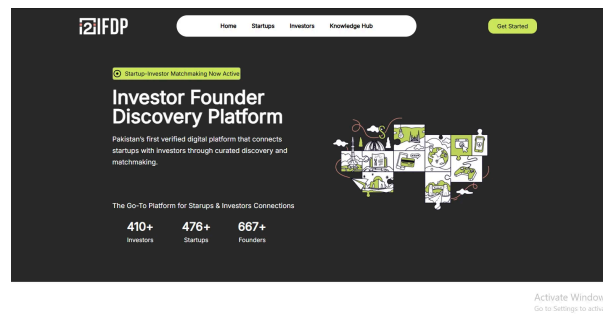
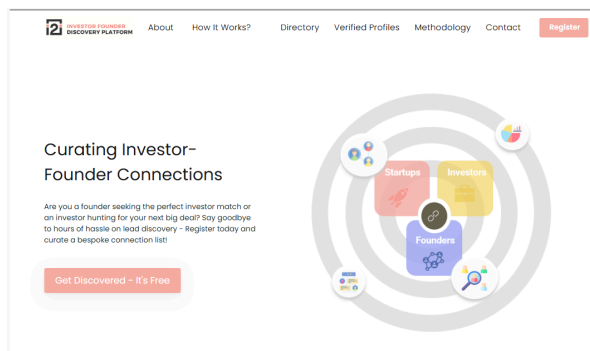




## Tools Used

Purpose	Tool
Data & Analysis	Google Sheet, Tableau
Verification Workflow	Airtable, Google Sheets
Platform Development	Softy (pilot), WordPress (final)
Feedback & Collaboration	Miro, Notion
Content & Design	Canva, Google Docs

## Platform Snapshots



### First version

**Software: Softy**

**Stage: Ideation**

### Current Version

**Software: Wordpress**

**Stage: Launch & Iteration**



<https://ifdp.invest2innovate.com/>

## Conclusion

The IFDP demonstrated that a centralized, partially verified platform can improve transparency and efficiency in early-stage startup ecosystems. Adoption data supported the hypothesis, though investor verification remains a challenge.