

Original Article

Social Incubation and Entrepreneurial Strengthening: Innovation, Profile, Formative Trajectory and Performance of Entrepreneurs at the Porto Sul Social Incubator

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Received Date: 28 August 2026

Revised Date: 18 September 2026

Accepted Date: 23 September 2026

Published Date: 26 September 2026

Abstract: *This article analyses the profile, formative trajectory and performance outcomes of entrepreneurs supported by the Porto Sul Social Incubator (ISPS) in Ilhéus, Bahia. The study aims to understand how participants' characteristics, territorial embeddedness and participation in formative activities relate to development observed during pre-incubation and incubation. This applied, descriptive and analytical research combined qualitative and quantitative approaches through case study and documentary research. The study analyzed institutional reports, dashboards, advisory records and monitoring instruments produced between 2023 and the first semester of 2026. Results indicate that ISPS supported entrepreneurs from nine communities and different economic sectors, with female predominance. The formative trajectory showed an average performance increase from 58% to 79% by the end of pre-incubation. Best results concentrated on customers, promotion and products, whereas costs, suppliers and market positioning required greater support. During incubation, 78% of records were at consolidated or advanced levels. It is concluded that social incubation constitutes a process of competence development, productive inclusion and territorial articulation, though aggregated data limit causal claims about participation-performance relationships.*

Keywords: *Entrepreneurial Learning, Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Performance, Social Incubation, Territorial Development.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Social incubators have acquired relevance as instruments for supporting enterprises situated in contexts of economic, social and territorial vulnerability. Although they share with traditional incubators the provision of training, advisory support and monitoring, their activity incorporates broader objectives related to productive inclusion, community strengthening, job and income generation and the promotion of territorial development. In this sense, a social incubator's performance should not be assessed solely by the number of supported enterprises or their economic survival, but also by its capacity to strengthen competences, expand opportunities and produce positive effects in the territories served.

The literature on incubators recognizes these organizations as intermediary structures that can articulate knowledge, resources, institutional relationships and development opportunities. Mian (1996), Hackett and Dilts (2004), and Grimaldi and Grandi (2005) highlight that incubation involves creating favorable conditions for the emergence and consolidation of new ventures. In more recent perspectives, incubators are also understood as elements of innovation ecosystems, connecting universities, entrepreneurs, public organizations, companies and communities. In social incubators, this function takes on specific characteristics, as the focus includes democratizing access to knowledge, strengthening local capacities and building economic alternatives linked to community needs.

The Porto Sul Social Incubator (ISPS) constitutes a relevant experience in this field. Linked to the Entrepreneurship Support Program, its activities relate to the socio-environmental programs of the Porto Sul enterprise and focus primarily on communities in the Surrounding Area of the Enterprise and the Direct Influence Area, in the municipality of Ilhéus, Bahia. The incubator develops mobilization, selection, pre-incubation and incubation actions, articulating training, individual and collective advisory support, complementary activities and evaluation instruments. ISPS is also part of an institutional network involving the State University of Santa Cruz (UESC), the UESC Technology Innovation Nucleus, the UESC Biotechnology Incubator and the Ilhéus Technology-Based Business Incubator, bringing this experience closer to discussions on the third university mission.

The general objective of this study is to analyze the profile, formative trajectory and performance of entrepreneurs supported by the Porto Sul Social Incubator; identify patterns of participation, development and retention in the incubation process; and discuss how participant characteristics and formative trajectory elements relate to observed development levels



during pre-incubation and incubation. The research is justified by the need to expand empirical evidence on social incubation in the Brazilian context, particularly regarding how incubators serve heterogeneous groups in territories marked by social vulnerability. While international literature has advanced in conceptualizing social incubators and their functions, a gap remains in systematic analyses that connect participant profiles, formative trajectories and performance outcomes in specific territorial contexts.

The ISPS case offers rich empirical material for addressing this gap, as it has produced extensive documentation on participant characteristics, advisory activities, program content and performance evaluations between 2023 and the first semester of 2026. Furthermore, the study contributes to debates on the role of university social incubators in territorial development, productive inclusion and entrepreneurial learning, offering insights that may inform similar initiatives in other regions. By examining how a social incubator operates in practice, what results it produces and what challenges it faces, this research provides evidence that can support both academic discussions and practical decisions by incubator managers, policymakers and development practitioners.

This article is structured into six sections. Following this introduction, the theoretical framework presents key concepts on social incubation, entrepreneurial learning and competences, and territorial development, drawing on national and international literature. The method section outlines the research design, data sources, units of analysis and procedures for data collection and treatment. The results and discussion section presents findings on participant profiles, territorial and economic characteristics, participation patterns, performance evolution, thematic competences and retention dynamics, interpreting these results in light of the theoretical framework. The discussion synthesizes key insights on heterogeneity, learning processes, the role of advisory support and territorial contributions. Finally, the conclusion summarises main findings, acknowledges limitations and suggests directions for future research on social incubation and entrepreneurial development in vulnerable territories.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A) Social Incubation and Entrepreneurship

Business incubators can be understood as intermediary organizations offering technical, managerial, institutional and relational support to enterprises at different stages of development. Their function is not limited to infrastructure provision; it also involves monitoring, knowledge transfer, network building and capacity development. Mian (1996) argues that incubators emerged as organizational mechanisms oriented towards strengthening new enterprises, especially those associated with knowledge generation and application. For the author, the incubator is an intermediary structure that brings innovative ideas closer to the conditions needed for their insertion into economic activity.

Similarly, Hackett and Dilts (2004) understand incubators as organizations whose central purpose is to support the development of enterprises in the initial stage. The authors highlight that incubation should be understood as a structured organizational process oriented toward expanding the possibilities for the survival and growth of new businesses. From this perspective, the incubator is not defined by the resources it offers, but by its capacity to create favorable conditions for business development. Aernoudt (2004) argues that incubators cannot be understood only as instruments of support to individual enterprises. According to the author, they constitute mechanisms of economic and regional development that act simultaneously on entrepreneurs, institutions and territories. This interpretation expands the traditional concept by recognizing that incubation effects transcend the limits of supported enterprises and reach the economic environment in which they are embedded.

Similarly, Siegel, Westhead and Wright (2003) associate incubators with knowledge transfer and innovation processes. For these authors, the incubator occupies a strategic position between knowledge production and its economic application, functioning as an institutional mechanism that reduces barriers between research, innovation and the market. Lockett and Wright (2005) argue that incubators should be understood as environments that favor interaction between individuals, organizations and knowledge. Rather than being interpreted exclusively as business support structures, incubators are conceived as convergence spaces that stimulate learning, cooperation and the creation of entrepreneurial opportunities.

Grimaldi and Grandi (2005) define incubators as mechanisms that promote articulation between knowledge, technology and economic resources. For the authors, the essence of incubation lies in the capacity to integrate different assets and competences to create new enterprises. Hausberg and Korreck (2020), in one of the most comprehensive systematic reviews on the topic, observe that, despite the numerous existing definitions, a common element runs through the literature: institutional commitment to creating and developing new businesses. According to the authors, incubators can take different organizational forms and operate in distinct contexts, but they share the objective of supporting entrepreneurs as they build and consolidate their enterprises.

In the Brazilian context, Fiates (2014) understands incubators as strategic mechanisms for promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, emphasizing their capacity to connect different actors in innovation systems. For the author, incubators play a

relevant role in transforming knowledge into economic and social value, contributing to the construction of environments favorable to innovation. Plonski (2005) argues that incubators are institutional spaces oriented towards articulating knowledge, entrepreneurship and development. According to the author, their relevance stems from the capacity to bring together different competences and resources around common objectives, favoring the generation of innovative initiatives and the dissemination of knowledge produced in scientific and technological environments.

Santos (2001) adds an important dimension to this debate by highlighting incubators' role in promoting entrepreneurial culture. For the author, these organizations not only support the creation of new businesses, but also contribute to the development of entrepreneurial competences and the formation of environments conducive to innovation. Batista and Cruz (2023) observe that incubators in Brazil's Northeast Region play a fundamental role in turning promising ideas into enterprises capable of generating economic and social impacts. The authors highlight that incubators create environments that foster innovative businesses by connecting knowledge, entrepreneurship and innovation, contributing to both strengthening enterprises and developing the ecosystems in which they operate.

Social incubators emerge as an evolution of traditional incubation models, incorporating objectives that transcend economic results and include the promotion of social inclusion, territorial development, social innovation and the transformation of living conditions for groups and communities. Dees (2001) understands social entrepreneurship as a form of social value creation oriented towards transforming collective problems. From this perspective, social incubators can be understood as environments that support individuals and organizations committed to solving social problems through entrepreneurial approaches. Nicholls (2006) argues that social entrepreneurship is an innovative response to challenges that the market or the State often fails to solve satisfactorily. In this context, social incubators play a key role in creating favorable environments for developing initiatives capable of producing significant social change.

Mair and Martí (2006) define social entrepreneurship as a process oriented towards creating social value through the innovative combination of resources. This interpretation allows social incubators to be understood as spaces that favor the mobilization of knowledge, competences and relationships to solve social problems. Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern (2006) highlight that social organizations and impact enterprises operate in contexts characterized by resource limitations, requiring elevated capacity for articulation and innovation. In this context, social incubators strengthen enterprises in management, planning, resource mobilization and the development of strategic partnerships.

Yunus (2010), in developing the concept of social business, expands the understanding of social incubators. According to the author, entrepreneurial initiatives can be structured not only to maximize profits, but also to solve problems related to poverty, exclusion, health, education and environmental sustainability. From this perspective, social incubators become support mechanisms for creating and consolidating organizations oriented around social missions. Etzkowitz (2003), in his Triple Helix Theory, argues that innovation development depends on the interaction between universities, government and the productive sector. In the case of social incubators, this articulation expands to include civil society organizations and community groups.

Fiates (2014) highlights that innovation environments need to be understood broadly, incorporating not only economic objectives, but also social and territorial dimensions. For the author, social incubators are important mechanisms for democratizing innovation, allowing different social groups to access knowledge, resources and opportunities that can improve their living conditions. Batista and Cruz (2023) highlight incubators' role in promoting regional development and building environments favorable to entrepreneurship. The authors observe that these organizations play a strategic function in strengthening organizational capacities, promoting institutional connections and stimulating learning processes.

B) Entrepreneurial Learning and Competences

Entrepreneurial learning occurs through the articulation between formal content, practical experiences, interaction with other entrepreneurs and reflection on concrete business problems. Cope (2005) argues that entrepreneurial learning is a dynamic and complex process that involves not only knowledge acquisition but also the transformation of mental models, the development of practical skills, and the construction of entrepreneurial identity. For the author, learning occurs through critical events, moments of rupture that challenge existing assumptions and prompt reflection on entrepreneurial practice.

Rae (2005) proposes that entrepreneurial learning is a social, situated process embedded in specific contexts and mediated by relationships with other actors. According to the author, entrepreneurs learn not only through formal education, but also through participation in communities of practice, interaction with mentors, observation of other entrepreneurs and engagement in practical activities. Politis (2005) examines the relationship between entrepreneurial experience and learning, arguing that prior experience influences how entrepreneurs interpret new information and apply knowledge to their businesses. According to the author, experienced entrepreneurs tend to have more developed cognitive frameworks, which allow them to identify opportunities, evaluate risks and make decisions more effectively.

Man, Lau and Chan (2002) categorize entrepreneurial competences into three dimensions: opportunity competences, which involve identifying and exploiting business opportunities; relationship competences, which relate to building and maintaining networks with stakeholders; and conceptual competences, which concern strategic thinking, planning and decision-making. The authors argue that these competences are interrelated and mutually reinforcing and that developing them requires a combination of formal training, practical experience and reflective learning. Mitchelmore and Rowley (2010) identify key competences in areas such as self-management, business management, networking, innovation and opportunity recognition. The authors emphasize that these competences are not static, but evolve as entrepreneurs gain experience and respond to changing circumstances.

Naffziger, Hornsby and Kuratko (1994) examine the factors that influence entrepreneurial success, arguing that a combination of personal characteristics, environmental conditions and strategic actions determines venture outcomes. The authors identify key success factors in areas such as opportunity recognition, resource acquisition, team building, strategic planning and market orientation. Story (1994) argues that business support programs are most effective when they are tailored to the specific needs of individual enterprises, rather than applying a one-size-fits-all approach. The author argues that customized support enables more targeted interventions that address specific weaknesses and build on existing strengths.

Kolb (1984) proposes that experiential learning occurs through a cyclical process involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. This model suggests that social incubators should give participants opportunities to engage in hands-on activities, reflect on their experiences, develop conceptual understanding and apply new knowledge to their businesses. St-Jean and Audet (2009) argue that mentoring relationships can provide entrepreneurs with emotional support, practical guidance and access to valuable networks. They argue that mentors can help entrepreneurs build self-confidence, clarify goals, identify resources and overcome obstacles.

Liñán and Fayolle (2015) argue that digital literacy is now a fundamental entrepreneurial competence, enabling entrepreneurs to access information, connect with customers and stakeholders, and manage their businesses more efficiently. The authors argue that entrepreneurial education and training programs should integrate digital competences to ensure participants develop the skills needed to operate effectively in a digital economy. This perspective is particularly relevant for social incubators serving entrepreneurs in underserved communities, who may have limited access to digital technologies and require targeted support to develop digital competences.

C) Territorial Development

Territorial development involves expanding the economic, social, institutional and cultural capacities of a given space. This approach goes beyond viewing development as simple economic growth and considers the importance of local actors, networks, community knowledge and existing opportunities in the territory. Ray (2001) argues that territorial development should be understood as a multidimensional process that involves not only economic growth, but also social inclusion, cultural vitality and environmental stewardship. The author argues that territories are not merely passive containers of economic activity, but active agents in their own development, shaped by the interactions between local actors, institutions and resources.

Boschma and Capello (2010) examine the role of innovation in territorial development, arguing that innovation is not evenly distributed across space, but tends to cluster in specific locations where favorable conditions exist. The authors identify key factors that contribute to territorial innovation, including research institutions, skilled labour, supportive policies and collaborative networks. Vázquez Barquero (2005) emphasizes mobilizing local resources, capacities and knowledge as the foundation for sustainable growth. The author argues that territories should not depend solely on external investments or imports of technology, but should build on their own assets, including human capital, social networks, cultural heritage and natural resources.

Putnam (1993) argues that social capital refers to the networks, norms and trust that enable individuals and groups to work together effectively for mutual benefit. The author argues that territories with high levels of social capital are better able to coordinate actions, share resources and solve collective problems. North (1990) argues that institutions are the rules of the game in a society, including formal rules (laws, regulations) and informal constraints (norms, customs) that shape human interaction. The author argues that effective institutions are essential for economic development, as they provide stability, reduce uncertainty and facilitate cooperation.

The Brundtland Commission (1987) defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition emphasizes the intergenerational dimension of development and the need to consider long-term impacts of current actions. Cooke (2001) argues that territorial innovation systems are networks of public and private institutions that interact to generate, diffuse and apply knowledge within a specific territory. The author argues that these systems are characterized by close interactions between universities, research centers, businesses, government and civil society, which collaborate to identify opportunities, solve problems and develop innovative solutions.

Pike, Rodríguez-Pose and Tomaney (2010) argue that local economic development involves strategies to stimulate economic activity, create jobs and improve living standards at the local level. The authors argue that effective local economic development requires a combination of bottom-up initiatives driven by local actors and top-down support provided by government and external agencies. Clark (1998) argues that entrepreneurial universities are characterized by their ability to mobilize resources, build partnerships and respond to external opportunities. The author argues that universities can contribute to territorial development by transferring knowledge, supporting spin-off companies, providing training and engaging in community outreach.

In the case of ISPS, the diversity of served communities and economic sectors shows that the incubator does not serve a homogeneous public. Enterprises are associated with different productive vocations, including crafts, food, services, agriculture, culture and commerce. This diversity requires a methodology that balances common content with targeted monitoring. The incubator's territorial embeddedness is expressed not only in the geographic distribution of participants, but also in aligning support activities with local needs, resources and opportunities. By focusing on underserved communities and marginalized groups, social incubators can help reduce territorial inequalities and promote more inclusive development.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A) Entrepreneur Profile

The pre-incubation stage gathered 14 entrepreneurs and 14 enterprises distributed across nine communities. The territorial composition evidences ISPS's capillarity and the presence of initiatives linked to different local realities. The identified communities were Assentamento Nova Vitória, Urucutuca, Joia do Atlântico, Lava-pês, Itariri, Castelo Novo, Retiro, Vila Juerana and Juerana. The presence of participants from nine localities shows that the incubation process was not concentrated in a single community but reached a territorially diverse set.

Regarding gender, we identified eight women and six men. Women corresponded to 57.1% of participants, while men represented 42.9%. This result indicates the relevance of female entrepreneurship in the public served by ISPS. The age distribution shows a predominance of adult participants. The following were identified:

Table 1: Number of participants

Age range	Number of participants
Up to 29 years	2
30–39 years	5
40–49 years	4
50–59 years	2
60 years or more	1
Total	14

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the ISPS Consolidated Report (2026).

Participants aged 30 to 49 totaled nine people, the largest group. The presence of entrepreneurs from different age groups indicates that the incubator serves both people in the consolidation phase of their professional trajectory and younger participants or those in productive reinsertion processes. Regarding schooling, three participants had primary education, six had secondary education, two had technical training, two had higher education, and one had postgraduate studies. Educational diversity reinforces the need for leveling strategies, especially when content involves financial planning, market analysis, positioning and digital tools.

The educational profile also demonstrates that social incubation is not directed exclusively to entrepreneurs with low schooling. At the same time, the presence of participants with distinct educational levels requires the methodology to avoid assuming homogeneous repertoires and to use accessible language, practical examples and differentiated monitoring.

B) Territorial and Economic Profile

The supported enterprises spanned different sectors and economic vocations. The recorded distribution was:

Table 2: Number of enterprises

Economic sector	Number of enterprises
Crafts	5
Food	3
Services	2
Agriculture	2
Commerce	1
Culture	1
Total	14

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the ISPS Consolidated Report (2026).

Crafts was the most frequent segment, followed by food. The authors also identified initiatives in services, agriculture, commerce and culture. This composition demonstrates that ISPS does not operate as an incubator specialized in a single sector, but as a social support structure for diversified productive activities.

Sectoral diversity produces two methodological consequences. First, it requires content general enough to apply to different enterprises. Second, it demands advisory support that can translate management concepts into concrete situations. Cost calculation, for example, assumes distinct forms in a food enterprise, a craft activity or a service.

Business existence time also varied. The institutional dashboard also categorized enterprises by age: two with less than one year, three between one and three years, and three between three and five years, in addition to other categories. Because the dashboard's graphical categorization must be preserved exactly in the article's final version, verify the original legend before publication to avoid overlapping or inconsistent ranges.

The coexistence of recent businesses and more established enterprises reinforces group heterogeneity. This characteristic explains the need to combine diagnosis, common training, individual monitoring and leveling actions.

C) Participation and Formative Trajectory

The participation trajectory showed steady growth in advisory activities. In 2023, seven advisory sessions and 14 participations were registered. In 2024, the team conducted nine advisory sessions and 27 participations. In 2025, the process reached 22 advisory sessions and 129 participations.

Table 3: Advisory sessions

Year	Advisory sessions	Participations
2023	7	14
2024	9	27
2025	22	129

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the ISPS Consolidated Report (2026).

The increase in advisory sessions indicates a higher density of the pre-incubation stage over time. In 2023, activities focused on entry, completion of the Business Map, and candidate preparation. In 2024, they concentrated on infrastructure presentation, group integration and initial content. In 2025, the process began to include 18 topics and a deeper development of the Development Plan.

The formative stage was organized around two main axes: the Business Map and the Development Plan. The former fulfilled a diagnostic function, allowing identification of characteristics, customers, products, channels and general enterprise conditions. The latter expanded the focus to planning and strategic structuring.

In addition to regular advisory sessions, we conducted complementary activities, such as technical visits, Entrepreneurial Guidelines, the Inspire Yourself! action, the visit to Broto/UESC and the Connections and Achievements Workshop. These activities expanded learning beyond formal content and brought participants closer to practical experiences. Leveling actions were especially important given group recomposition. New participants entering at different points in the cycle could create learning inequalities individual monitoring and in loco guidelines compensated for these differences.

D) Performance Evolution

Continuous evaluation of pre-incubation registered growth in the group's average performance. Available data indicate the following trajectory:

Table 4: Average performance

Moment	Average performance
Beginning of cycle	58%
Module 1 completed	72%
Module 2 in progress	76%
Completion	79%

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the ISPS Consolidated Report (2026).

Between the beginning and completion, the percentage increased by 21 percentage points. In relative terms, this growth corresponds to approximately 36.2% in relation to initial performance:

$$\frac{79 - 58}{58} \times 100 \approx 36.2\%$$

The result evidences collective evolution throughout the formative process. However, it should not be interpreted as proof of causality. The observed improvement may relate to several factors, including participation in advisory sessions, business maturation, accumulated experience, complementary activities, informal learning and changes in the evaluation form itself. The most appropriate interpretation is that the group presented average evolution during the ISPS monitoring period. This formulation preserves the result's importance without attributing to the incubator a causality that the documentary design does not allow it to demonstrate.

Evolution also suggests that content structured in sequence can contribute to learning progression. The Business Map provided a diagnostic basis, while the Development Plan deepened strategic and organizational aspects.

E) Performance by Topic

Thematic analysis revealed important differences between evaluated content. The best results were observed in the following topics:

Table 5: Performance A

Topic	Performance
Customers	93%
Business promotion	93%
Products	86%
Target audience	86%
Competitive differentials	79%

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the ISPS Consolidated Report (2026).

These results indicate greater relative mastery of content directly related to market identification, enterprise communication and offer definition. These topics are immediately relevant to entrepreneurs' daily experience and are easier to recognize in commercial practice. On the other hand, the lowest results were concentrated in content of greater managerial and financial complexity:

Table 6: Performance B

Topic	Performance
Product costs	50%
Suppliers	57%
SWOT/FOFA	57%
Market positioning	64%
Average sales volume	64%

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the ISPS Consolidated Report (2026).

The difference between the best and lowest results suggests that learning does not occur homogeneously among competences. Participants demonstrated greater mastery of aspects related to visibility and customer identification, but faced greater difficulties in content requiring systematic records, financial analysis, strategic interpretation and information organization. This pattern has implications for ISPS's methodology. Initial training can cover content related to customers, products and promotion, but should reserve additional time for costs, suppliers, sales, cash flow, strategic analysis and positioning.

Results also help validate the proposition that individualized monitoring actions are relevant for addressing heterogeneity. Content with lower performance may require greater adaptation, specific examples and monitoring applied to each enterprise's daily life.

F) Active Portfolio in 2026

In the first semester of 2026, ISPS maintained six active participants, distributed across five communities and three economic categories. The active portfolio composition was predominantly female: five women and one man.

Table 7: Active portfolio

Characteristic	Result
Active participants	6
Women	5
Men	1
Communities	5
Businesses up to 1 year	3
Businesses between 1 and 2 years	1

Businesses over 3 years	2
Complete higher education	3
Complete secondary education	1
Incomplete secondary education	2

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the ISPS Consolidated Report (2026).

The sectors registered in the active portfolio were food/artisanal production, fashion/clothing and crafts. Female predominance is even more accentuated in the active portfolio than in the pre-incubation set, rising from 57.1% to approximately 83.3%. This configuration suggests that female entrepreneurship plays a central role in the ISPS experience.

However, based on the available data, we cannot conclude that gender determined retention. For this analysis, it would be necessary to relate gender, frequency, performance, withdrawal reasons and each participant's final situation individually. The active portfolio also gathers enterprises at different maturity stages. The presence of three businesses with up to one year of existence indicates the entry of recent initiatives, while businesses with more than three years demonstrate the continuity of already established enterprises. This mix still requires differentiated monitoring strategies.

G) Performance in Incubation

During the first semester of 2026, 36 performance monitoring records were registered in the incubation stage. The distribution was:

Table 8: Performance local A

Performance level	Records	Percentage
Consolidated	24	67%
In development	8	22%
Advanced	4	11%
Total	36	100%

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the ISPS Consolidated Report (2026).

The sum of consolidated and advanced records corresponds to 28 occurrences, or 78% of the total. This result shows a predominance of positive content appropriation levels, although a group is still in development and requires monitoring. Reading by axis reveals differences between Growth Strategy and Digital Inclusion:

Table 9: Performance by local B

Axis	Initial	Consolidated	Advanced
Growth Strategy	21%	71%	8%
Digital Inclusion	23%	64%	13%

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the ISPS Consolidated Report (2026).

In the Growth Strategy axis, 79% of records were at consolidated or advanced levels. In Digital Inclusion, this percentage reached 77%. The distribution is similar, but the digital axis presents a slightly higher proportion of advanced performances.

Digital inclusion became an important incubation dimension in 2026. Content on Word, artificial intelligence, Canva and Excel was developed, including using spreadsheets to calculate product unit price. The provision of computers through the Citizen Revenue initiative, in partnership with BAMIN and UESC, expanded possibilities for practical appropriation of these tools. The introduction of this axis demonstrates that ISPS's methodology adapted to needs identified during monitoring. Digital inclusion does not appear only as an instrumental skill, but as a capacity related to communication, organization, calculation, promotion and enterprise management.

H) Retention and Withdrawals

Participants' trajectories were marked by group recomposition and different withdrawal situations. Registered reasons included a change of city, maternity, formalization of the employment relationship, health issues, transportation difficulties, schedule incompatibility and business closure. Formal withdrawals initiated by participants were also registered. The incubator team maintained contact with part of this group, preserving the possibility of future return.

These occurrences demonstrate that retention does not depend exclusively on training quality. External conditions also influence it, such as work, family, health, mobility and time availability. In necessity entrepreneurship contexts, participants may combine the business with other income sources and responsibilities, which affects activity participation. For this reason, results analysis should not consider only participants who completed the stages. Withdrawals also constitute relevant information for understanding the limits and operating conditions of social incubation.

IV. DISCUSSION

The results allow discussion of four central aspects: heterogeneity, learning, monitoring and territory.

A) Participant Heterogeneity

ISPS serves a diverse group in terms of age, schooling, community, sector and business existence time. This heterogeneity should not be considered only an operational difficulty. It is also a characteristic of social incubation, which works with diverse initiatives and seeks to expand access to entrepreneurial knowledge. Diversity, however, requires a flexible methodology. Excessively standardized content may not respond to the needs of businesses at different stages. ISPS's experience demonstrates that leveling, in loco guidelines and individual monitoring are important mechanisms for maintaining group integration.

B) Progressive Learning

The shift from 58% to 79% reflects a collective development trajectory. Growth was not abrupt but progressive, passing through 72% and 76% before reaching the final result. This pattern is compatible with learning constructed in stages. Initially, participants identify and describe their businesses. Subsequently, they begin to organize information, plan actions and reflect on customers, products, costs, suppliers and strategies. Results by topic also show that different competences require distinct learning times. Aspects related to customers and promotion presented high performance, while costs, suppliers and strategic analysis required greater monitoring.

C) Role of Advisory Support

Advisory sessions served as spaces for applying content. The shift from seven advisory sessions in 2023 to 22 in 2025 indicates increased monitoring intensity. The quantitative increase was accompanied by qualitative change. Initial activities concentrated on entry and diagnosis, while later ones advanced to planning, financial organization, growth strategy and digital inclusion.

Still, aggregated data do not allow us to claim that the greater number of advisory sessions produced performance gains. It is possible to state that advisory intensification occurred in the same period in which average performance evolution was observed, but not that one variable caused the other. To test this relationship, it would be necessary to construct an individual database with the following variables:

Table 10: Advisory support

Entrepreneur	Participations	Advisory sessions	Initial performance	Final performance	Evolution
E1	—	—	—	—	—
E2	—	—	—	—	—

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the ISPS Consolidated Report (2026).

With this database, correlations, individual differences and associations between profile, retention and performance could be examined. In the current documentary set, analysis must remain at the descriptive and collective level.

D) Inclusion and Territorial Development

The presence of nine communities in pre-incubation and five communities in the 2026 active portfolio confirms the territorial dimension of ISPS. The incubator reaches initiatives distributed in different localities and segments, incorporating diverse economic vocations. Female predominance also suggests a contribution to women's productive inclusion. However, inclusion cannot be measured only by public composition. It is necessary to monitor retention, autonomy, use of acquired competences, management improvement and enterprise continuity capacity.

Social incubation contributes to territorial development when it strengthens subjects and initiatives that remain linked to their own territory. The expected result is not only the improvement of an isolated business, but the expansion of local capacities for production, organization, cooperation and income circulation.

V. CONCLUSION

This article analyzed the profile, formative trajectory and performance of entrepreneurs supported by the Porto Sul Social Incubator between 2023 and the first semester of 2026. Results show that ISPS serves a territorially diversified public, composed of entrepreneurs from nine communities and different economic sectors, with female predominance, varied age groups and schooling levels. The formative trajectory was marked by increased advisory intensity and the incorporation of complementary actions, which were particularly important for addressing group recomposition and differences in participants' experience and maturity.

Pre-incubation evaluation showed average performance growth from 58% to 79%, an increase of 21 percentage points. The best results were observed in content related to customers, promotion, products and target audience, while topics associated with costs, suppliers, SWOT/FOFA, market positioning and sales volume showed lower performance and required closer

monitoring. In the incubation stage, 78% of records were at consolidated or advanced levels, with similar results across both the Growth Strategy and Digital Inclusion axes, indicating progressive appropriation of competences related to management, commercialization and the use of digital tools.

Evidence supports the proposition that the group evolved collectively during the formative trajectory and that leveling and individualized monitoring are important in heterogeneous groups. However, the data do not allow testing the individual relationship between participation and performance, as the available database is predominantly aggregated. The proposition that more participative entrepreneurs present greater development remains, therefore, as a hypothesis to be investigated through access to the participants' individual database.

The article's main contribution is to show that social incubator evaluation can go beyond business quantity indicators and incorporate a broader analytical sequence profile, participation, training, competence development, performance, retention and territorial effects. This perspective allows us to understand social incubation as a formative and territorial process, not only as a business support mechanism. In the case of ISPS, results suggest capacity building related to customer identification, promotion, planning, business organization, growth strategy and digital inclusion.

Limitations include the use of secondary data, the predominance of aggregated information, the absence of a comparison group, and the fact that the incubation stage was still in progress during the analyzed period. It was also not possible to establish causal relationships between participation and performance or measure long-term economic effects. For future studies, it is recommended to access the individual database that originated the dashboards, monitor each entrepreneur's performance over time, relate participation and advisory sessions to profile and retention, systematically analyze withdrawal reasons, monitor enterprises after graduation, incorporate income and formalization indicators, and evaluate incubation effects on communities of origin.

Based on available data, ISPS can be understood as a university social incubation experience that articulates entrepreneurial training, technical monitoring, productive inclusion and territorial development. Its results are promising, but should be interpreted as evidence of observed evolution and not as isolated proof of causal impact. The experience shows that social incubation, when properly structured and territorially embedded, can strengthen entrepreneurial capacities, promote productive inclusion and foster local development in vulnerable communities.

VI. REFERENCES

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