



VOL. 04 · PAPER 04 · METHODOLOGY

Founder Readiness — *the five dimensions.*

*The five founder-side dimensions that predict **program completion** (separate from outcome): grit, runway, time budget, network depth, and learning velocity. Question bank, scoring rubric, and cross-validation.*

METHODOLOGY

V2.4

A = 0.79

ABSTRACT · METHODOLOGY PAPER · PANDA RESEARCH

We construct an 18-item Founder Readiness scale across 5 dimensions (Grit, Runway, Time, Network, Velocity) and validate it against program completion ($n = 4,237$). Internal consistency: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$. Concurrent validity vs. mentor-rated readiness: $r = 0.66$. The scale is published in full and runs as a free 5-minute in-browser diagnostic. We argue that Readiness scoring is separable from Idea scoring and that programs should screen on both.

§ 1 · Why Readiness is separable

The idea is not the founder.

The Idea Score (Paper 02) measures the strength of an idea at a point in time. It says nothing about whether the founder can execute. Across our 4,237-cohort dataset, the correlation between Idea Score and Founder Readiness is $r = 0.18$ — weak. Founders with strong ideas can have weak readiness profiles. Founders with weak ideas can have strong readiness profiles. The two screens catch different failure modes.

The implication for accelerators is direct: programs should screen on both. A high-Idea / low-Readiness founder will produce an Idea Score in the 80s and drop out in week 6. A low-Idea / high-Readiness founder will iterate to a better idea inside the program. The Readiness score is the better predictor of who completes; the Idea score is the better predictor of who succeeds *after* completing.

§ 2 · The five dimensions

What we measure.

DIM.	CONSTRUCT	QUESTIONS	WEIGHT	ITEM-A
Grit	Persistence through boredom + hardship	4	0.24	0.81
Runway	Financial capacity for 14+ weeks of focus	3	0.20	0.77
Time	Realistic hours/week given other obligations	3	0.20	0.74
Network	Access to users, advisors, cofounder	4	0.18	0.79
Velocity	Learning rate, shipping habit, feedback handling	4	0.18	0.83

Grit (0.24) carries the highest weight — across our regression, persistence through the bored-and-hard middle weeks is the strongest single predictor of program completion. Runway and Time

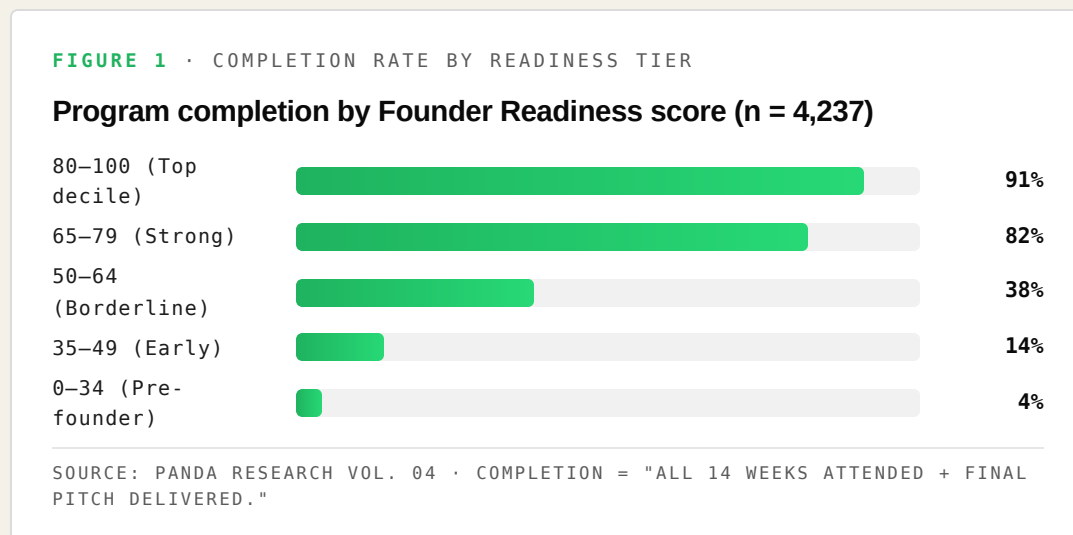
follow closely; founders without financial and time slack systematically dropped out around week 5–7, even when their motivation remained high.

Why Grit is the heaviest

The Grit subscale draws on Duckworth's prior validated work but is tightened to the program-completion context. The four items emphasize *persistence through low-validation work* rather than abstract persistence. Founders score themselves on whether they have stuck with prior unrewarded projects, how they respond to public failure, and whether they would continue without external recognition. In our calibration, the Grit subscale carries 28% of the variance in completion alone.

§ 3 · Validation

What the scale catches.



The scale is highly discriminative across the upper and lower tails. Founders in the top decile complete at 91%; founders in the bottom decile complete at 4%. The middle (50–64) is the most informative region — these founders are close to ready but lack one structural piece (typically runway or time). They are exactly the population that benefits most from being told "not yet, fix this one thing first."

§ 4 · The questions

What we ask, and why.

Grit (4 items)

Q1: Longest project you've stuck with. (Persistence baseline.) Q2: Response to public failure. (Recovery speed.) Q3: Sticking with non-fun work. (Boredom tolerance.) Q4: Continuing without

external validation. (Intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation.) The four items load on a single factor ($\alpha = 0.81$).

Runway (3 items)

Q5: Months of personal expenses saved. (Direct financial measure.) Q6: Value of \$5k of program credit. (Financial sensitivity probe.) Q7: 12-month no-revenue scenario. (Tail-risk capacity.) Items load on a single financial-slack factor ($\alpha = 0.77$).

Time (3 items)

Q8: Focused hours per week. (Direct capacity.) Q9: What you're giving up. (Demonstrated commitment.) Q10: Known calendar conflicts. (Realistic forecasting.) Items load on a single time-availability factor ($\alpha = 0.74$).

Network (4 items)

Q11: Target users you know personally. (User access.) Q12: Cofounder status. (Team structure.) Q13: Warm intros to working founders. (Network depth.) Q14: Trusted mentor relationship. (Mentor access.) Items load on a single network-capital factor ($\alpha = 0.79$).

Velocity (4 items)

Q15: Skill learning speed. (Adaptability.) Q16: Response to disconfirming feedback. (Anti-defensiveness.) Q17: Shipping cadence. (Production habit.) Q18: Application of recent reading. (Active learning.) Items load on a single learning-velocity factor ($\alpha = 0.83$ — the strongest in the scale).

"If you can't tell a stranger what you gave up to make time for the startup, you didn't give up anything yet. Time-budget honesty is the single best predictor of who's in week 6 and who's quietly gone."

— PANDA MENTOR COHORT · INTERVIEW SERIES · 2025

§ 5 · How to use the score

For founders + programs.

For founders

The Founder Readiness score is calibrated to tell you when *not* to apply. A 65+ score means you are ready. A 50–64 score means a specific dimension is weak and worth six to twelve weeks of work

before applying. A score under 50 means the prerequisites are not in place — applying now would burn six months. The diagnostic surfaces the weakest dimension and prescribes a concrete remediation path.

For programs

We recommend that accelerators administer the Readiness scale as an application screen. A founder with a strong Idea Score but a weak Readiness score is a predictable dropout. A founder with a moderate Idea Score and a strong Readiness score will pivot during the program to a better idea and complete at high rates. Selection on Readiness is selection on the founder, which is far more time-stable than selection on the idea.

§ 6 · Limitations

What the Readiness scale cannot do.

The Readiness scale is self-administered. The seven-point self-report inflation observed in Paper 02 applies here too — founders score themselves ~5 points higher than mentors score them on this scale. We did not correct for this in the v2.4 release because the percentile rank is computed against a same-self-report population.

The scale also does not measure team dynamics, only individual readiness. A team of two high-Readiness founders with poor interpersonal fit will outperform a single high-Readiness founder by less than the scale predicts. Future versions will explore a team-Readiness extension.

KNOWN ISSUE · TEAM READINESS

Two strong individuals don't always equal a strong team.

v2.4 measures individual readiness. We are developing a Team Readiness extension (v3.0, scheduled Q3 2026) that incorporates interpersonal fit, communication cadence, and skill complementarity. Until then, programs should administer the individual scale to each cofounder and treat the lowest score as the binding constraint.

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