Frequently Asked Questions

Who are we?

The WFP Innovation Accelerator, launched in 2015, is a pioneering model in the United Nations system dedicated to source, support and scale high-impact innovations to end hunger and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Based in Munich, Germany, it provides WFP employees, entrepreneurs, and startups with funding, hands-on technical assistance, and access to WFP's global operations and network. Through the Accelerator, WFP is leveraging unprecedented advances in technology and new business models to transform the way it serves vulnerable communities across the world. In 2023, the innovations supported by the WFP Innovation Accelerator and WFP innovation network reached 60.7 million people across 70 countries and territories.

Aligned with WFP's commitment to the Global Agenda for Sustainable Development, the SDGx Acceleration unit was created in 2019 to respond to an increasing demand from humanitarian and development actors to adopt more innovative approaches. SDGx works in co-creation with startups, organizations, and coalitions to discover and scale innovations in a sustainable way.

Our calls for applications are an opportunity for us to source the most promising and daring solutions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), from startups across the world.

What is the Humanitarian Innovation Accelerator?

In its 2nd edition, the Humanitarian Innovation Accelerator aims to support technology-powered solutions addressing pressing global challenges faced in the humanitarian space. The platform will select ventures and solution providers who will receive financial, technical, and methodological support from the WFP Innovation Accelerator, and other partners. Together with the best and brightest minds globally, we will be able to ultimately improve the lives of vulnerable communities.

What type of support do ventures receive?

During the first phase support, or the Catalyze phase, ventures receive tailored support to refine and progress on their pathway to scale. Participants will join a virtual applied learning experience and be introduced to innovation techniques such as human-centered design and the lean start-up method in order to improve in key innovation areas, including their solution, team, impact, financials, and more. Participants also have the opportunity to join a high visibility in-person Pitch Event —an opportunity for teams to network and share their solutions with an audience of investors and industry leaders who can help scale their innovations.

Ventures can also apply for equity-free funding and additional support to implement a project during the Acceleration Phase, which lasts up to 12 months. Ventures who are invited to the Acceleration Phase will receive funding, coaching and support from the HIA platform's network of innovation experts, mentors, collaborators and partners.

Am I eligible to participate? Who can submit applications?

We welcome applications from any registered legal entity including startups, NGO, academic institutions stationed anywhere in the world, that fulfill the HIA's eligibility criteria, which can be found here.

Preference will be given to solutions operating in target geographies: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Chad, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Iraq, Laos, Libya, Lebanon, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar Niger, Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen.

Applications outside these regions will still be considered if they demonstrate alignment with the call for applications and eligibility criteria.

Do I need to have a team?

Yes, your project should have a dedicated team that will manage its overall execution of your application to the WFP Sprint Programme is successful. Please refer to the HIA website for the full eligibility criteria.

What are the types of innovations we support?

HIA supports innovations with specific functional and maturity criteria. For this second cohort, we are seeking innovations that bridge information gaps, enable financial inclusion, strengthen essential infrastructure, and enhance humanitarian response through data and technology. We also welcome cutting-edge technologies that currently operate in other

sectors but have strong potential to be adapted for humanitarian and emergency settings. Refer to the Call for Innovation to read more about the challenge areas here.

Maturity Criteria:

- Have already attained technology feasibility and are undergoing further optimizations according to the market interests.
- Have established users in one or more countries of the geographies of interest or a demonstrated proof of concept in a relevant context.
- Are generating revenue.
- Have identified or implemented functional distribution models and enablers that can help them attain replicability in a viable manner.

What are our selection/scoring criteria?

- Solutions that are transformative, novel, or innovative.
- Solutions that can have a strong impact on the identified challenge(s) and are scalable, particularly in the target countries/geographies.
- Solutions that can prove traction and match the profile with the maturity criteria.
- Solutions with a financially viable business model and growth strategy.
- Solutions that are carried by a strong team with the relevant expertise and strengths to scale the solution.

How will the winners be selected?

Applications will be scored according to the above list of criteria. Final decisions on successful applicants are made by the WFP Innovation Accelerator, with the support of an Innovation Committee consisting of WFP representatives along with HIA's sponsors and subject matter experts.

What will we not fund?

- Proposals not presenting clear innovation; innovative ideas that repeat conventional approaches without novel application.
- Proposals that are out of scope of this call. This includes solutions not being relevant to humanitarian action, or not adhering to the sought functional criteria.
- Proposals for which the required maturity level cannot be demonstrated.
- Proposals for which impact is not quantified and proved.

- Proposals that do not clearly consider the current context of available financial systems and infrastructure in relevant geographies.

How do I submit my application?

To submit your solution, visit the HIA website and fill out the Application form. Please be sure to check your eligibility and that you have answered all required questions to the best of your ability. You will not be able to go back and edit it once the application has been submitted. Answering these questions will take you around 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Will my idea be published?

No, all applications are confidential. Applicants will be contacted before any submitted information is shared externally.

Can I apply more than once?

Yes, you are welcome to submit as many applications as you want, as long as they are independent solutions or problems.

What is the closing date?

Applications will be accepted until April 27, 11:59 pm (CEST).

If my application is unsuccessful, am I able to receive feedback?

Due to the highly competitive application process and the high number of applications, not all applications are successful. We value all applications. However, we are only able to contact shortlisted applicants. For all other enquiries, please contact global.innovation@wfp.org.