



## CALL FOR PROPOSALS: OPEN INNOVATION CHALLENGE

### TITLE: SOMALIA WOMEN'S MARKET ACCESS OPEN INNOVATION CHALLENGE

#### Background and Context

The Open Innovation Challenge is a pivotal initiative designed to enhance agricultural innovation and empower entrepreneurs in Somalia to bring ideas to solve the challenges Somali women face in accessing markets. Women in rural Somalia play a crucial role in agriculture but face significant barriers to market access due to inadequate infrastructure, limited financial resources, limited access to agricultural land, systemic challenges, and cultural constraints. These challenges restrict their economic participation, limiting opportunities for women-led agribusinesses to scale and thrive. Additionally, women entrepreneurs struggle with access to financing, business development services, and digital financial tools, further widening the gender gap in economic empowerment.

To address these challenges, the Rural Livelihoods Resilience Programme (RLRP) and the Somalia Food Systems Resilience Project (S-FSRP), implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MoAI) with support respectively from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and World Bank Group, are committed to strengthening women's economic participation through entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, and innovative solutions. This includes improving access to credit, enhancing market linkages, and providing capacity-building initiatives to equip women with the skills needed to grow their businesses and adapt to market demands. The program also leverages digital financial services to increase financial accessibility for women, even those without internet access, while fostering community engagement and policy advocacy to create an inclusive economic environment.

The Center of Innovation and Agropreneurship Development (CIAD) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MoAI), in collaboration with RLRP and S-FSRP, is launching the **Somalia Women's Market Access Open Innovation Challenge 2025**. The goal is to identify, support, and scale innovative market access solutions that empower women agropreneurs.

#### Challenge Objective

The **Somalia Women's Market Access Open Innovation Challenge** seeks **entrepreneurs and businesses** that can:

- Develop scalable solutions to enhance women's access to agricultural markets.
- Improve the competitiveness of women-led agribusinesses across different value chains.
- Leverage technology and innovation to create sustainable market linkages.
- Promote financial inclusion and investment readiness for women agropreneurs

## Innovation Approach & Key Principles

This challenge applies IFAD's Innovation Model for Innovation Challenges, incorporating the following:

- **Women-Centered Design** – Solutions must be specifically designed for women agropreneurs, addressing their unique challenges, needs, and barriers to market access through inclusive, user-driven approaches. They should also enhance access to better knowledge, skills, markets, and financing, particularly in rural areas
- **Lean Canvas Approach** – Applicants must submit a simple, one-page plan outlining the problem they aim to solve, their proposed solution, key success indicators (metrics), and the unique value of their idea. This structured approach ensures a clear and flexible process for refining and validating innovative solutions.
- **Iterative Prototyping & Validation** – Solutions should undergo progressive testing and refinement through stage-gate validation, ensuring feasibility, effectiveness, and adaptability before scaling.
- **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)** – Proposals led by women entrepreneurs or benefiting at least 50% female participants will receive priority consideration, promoting gender equity and inclusive economic growth.
- **Partnerships & Scalability** – Solutions should demonstrate strong collaboration potential with local organizations, financial institutions, and technology hubs to enhance impact, sustainability, and scalability.

## Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- **Organizational Structure** – Applicants must be legally registered women-led business or at least have 30% women in the leadership team. Individual applications will not be considered. Registration of at least six months or more will be considered an added advantage during the selection process. Please note that no administrative or start-up financing will be provided under this challenge. Therefore, businesses should already have a basic operational structure and a demonstrated understanding of key business functions.
- **Gender Inclusion** – Women-led enterprises and/or enterprises with at least 30% women in the leadership team will be considered, promoting gender diversity and inclusive economic participation.
- **Geographic Focus** – Applicants can be based anywhere in Somalia but must have operational experience in Southwest State and Jubaland. The proposed solutions should be tested and scaled up in the five indicated districts across Jubaland State (Kismayo & Bardhere) and Southwest State (Afgoye, Celbarde and Baidoa).
- **Technology Readiness & Prototype Validation** – Applicants must have a validated prototype or functioning model at Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 4 or higher. TRL 4 indicates that the proof-of-concept technology has been developed, and multiple component pieces have been tested together. Higher TRL levels are also accepted and advantageous, with anything above TRL 4 receiving extra points.
- **Commitment to Scaling** – Applicants must demonstrate a clear plan and capacity to scale their solution within 12-24 months, ensuring long-term impact and sustainability.

# Proposal Requirements

Applicants should submit a detailed proposal including:

## 1. Project Overview

- Problem Statement (Max. 300 words)
- Solution & Unique Value Proposition (Max. 450 words)
- Target Beneficiaries (Max. 50 words)

## 2. Business Model & Implementation

- A structured, one-page plan outlining:
  - Existing Alternatives. List how this problem is addressed today.
  - Key metrics. List the key numbers that tell you how your initiative is doing.
  - Stakeholder segment. List your target beneficiaries and users.
  - Channels: List your path to users/beneficiaries (inbound or outbound)
- Scalability & Impact (Max. 250 words)
- Challenges & Risks (Max. 150 words)
- DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion) Commitment (Max. 50 words)

## 3. Team Composition

- Number of women in leadership: Is the business led by female leaders?
- Team expertise, gender & role distribution

## 4. Financials & Resources

- Cost Estimate (USD)
- Revenue Model & Investment Readiness. List sources of funding

## 5. Supporting Materials

- 3-5 slide Pitch Deck
- Video Pitch (Max. 3 minutes)

## 6. Business documents

- Business registration and license
- Business Profile
- Tax Compliance Certificate

## Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- **Problem Statement (35%)**

The proposal should clearly define the problem it seeks to address, demonstrating a deep understanding of the issue and its significance. A strong problem statement will highlight the gap in the market or industry and justify why the proposed solution is necessary.

- **Feasibility & Sustainability (20%)**

The proposal must demonstrate a realistic implementation plan, considering available resources, technical viability, and financial sustainability. The solution should be practical to execute and designed for long-term success, with clear strategies for maintaining impact over time.

- **Inclusivity & Women's Empowerment (20%)**

Projects should actively promote gender inclusivity by ensuring women's participation in leadership, workforce, or beneficiary groups. Priority will be given to initiatives that contribute to women's economic empowerment and equitable market access.

- **Innovation & Scalability (15%)**

The proposed solution should be innovative, offering a unique approach to addressing the identified problem. It should also have the potential for replication and expansion beyond the initial implementation, ensuring broader impact and long-term growth.

- **Organizational Capacity (5%)**

The team should have the necessary expertise, experience, and resources to successfully execute the project. This includes strong leadership, well-defined roles, and a proven track record of managing similar initiatives.

- **Alignment with RLRP Goals (5%)**

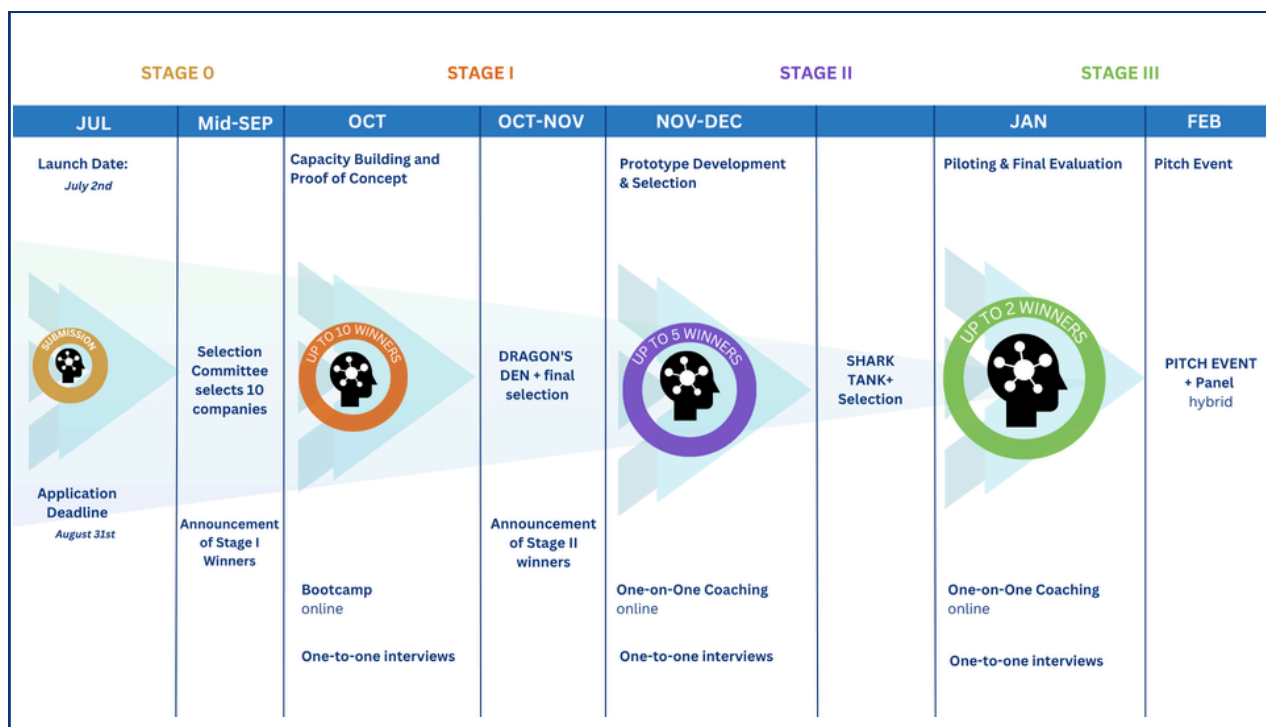
The proposal should align with the objectives of the RLRP program, specifically in enhancing women's market access and driving economic empowerment. Projects that directly support these goals will be given preference.

## Benefits for Selected Entrepreneurs

Participants selected for the Open Innovation Challenge will receive:

- **Tailored business coaching** – Including Lean Startup methodology and Agile Risk Management.
- **Mentorship** – Guidance from industry leaders in agriculture and entrepreneurship.
- **Seed funding** – Seed financing to support product development.
- **Market access facilitation** – Support in establishing connections and business opportunities.
- **Visibility** – Through the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, CIAD, RLRP, FSRP, and IFAD platforms.

## Timeline Innovation Challenge



## Governance & Compliance

Participants must adhere to the highest ethical standards, including integrity, transparency, and respect. All proposed solutions must align with inclusive, gender-sensitive, climate-resilient, sustainable, and scalable business principles

## Submission Details

The Center for Innovation and Agropreneurship Development (CIAD) invites you to submit your application through the designated form using the link below:

**<https://ciad.moa.gov.so/e/apply>**

**or scan this QR Code:**



The deadline for submission is **August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025, at 5:00 PM Mogadishu time.**

***Late or incomplete submissions will not be considered.***

For any inquiries regarding this call, you may contact CIAD, Agribusiness Department or RLRP at:

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✉ [agrobusinessdept@moa.gov.so](mailto:agrobusinessdept@moa.gov.so)

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