This is an application packet for the Pamoja Founders Project competition. It explains the competition and offers instructions on how to draft and submit an application.

Applications are due Monday, November 6, 2023.

Questions? Email pfp@irex.org. Good luck!
Overview

With the seed funding from the PepsiCo Foundation - Sub-Saharan Africa, IREX has partnered with PepsiCo and D-Prize to launch a catalytic leadership development program for entrepreneurs working at the intersection of food security, sustainable supply chains, and resilient food systems Africa.

Across the globe, lack of equitable access to opportunity - especially for women, youth, and those from underrepresented communities – means that promising solutions to some of the world’s most pressing problems are never brought to fruition. The Pamoja Founders Project is a pilot program that will holistically support young leaders to become successful entrepreneurs who build businesses that help to address their communities’ greatest challenges.

The Pamoja Founders Project is open to entrepreneurs leading new ventures working at the intersection of food security, sustainable supply chains, and resilient food systems in one of six countries: Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Nigeria, and Mozambique.

More Info + Eligibility to Compete

- Pamoja Founders Project will provide holistic support to entrepreneurs to help identify and mitigate common barriers they encounter in bringing their enterprises to scale.
- The program is open to IREX fellowship alumni who completed their fellowship between 2014 and 2023.
- Participants are selected through a competitive, merit-based, and intentionally inclusive application process.
- The focus of the enterprise should work in food security, sustainable supply chains, post-consumer waste management, and/or resilient food systems.
- Participants should be under 35 years, and they must be citizens of and currently based in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, or Nigeria.
- Pamoja Founders Project will work with an initial cohort of 12 early-stage enterprises; the top six enterprises will win a seed grant to accelerate their ability to scale.
- The project provides a 9-month tailored course, mentoring and professional networking.

Goals

The Pamoja Founders Project will support our impact goal of contributing to a more sustainable food system and more stable supply chains in Africa, specifically Kenya, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda by:

- Identifying, empowering, and investing in diverse social entrepreneurs who are confronting food security challenges in their home communities.
- Developing and piloting a holistic approach that combines leadership and enterprise development training with seed funding.
- Identifying crucial elements that will help solve the stumbling blocks that early-stage entrepreneurs hit when they attempt to bring their enterprises to scale.
● Providing training, coaching, professional networking and seed funding to the most promising enterprises.

Submission Policies

● Applications must follow the instructions in this packet.
● Extra materials outside of the application will not be considered.
● Revisions to applications after submission will also not be considered.
● Only one application per enterprise will be considered.
● Applications must be written in English.
● The program is open to IREX fellowship alumni who completed their fellowship between 2014 and 2023.
● The focus of the enterprise should work in food security, sustainable supply chains, post-consumer waste management, and/or resilient food systems.
● Participants should be under 35 years, and they must be citizens of and currently based in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, or Nigeria.

Pamoja Founders Project Process & Important Dates

First Round
First Round Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until 11:59 pm (EDT) on Monday, November 6, 2023.

Feedback and advancement decisions will be sent in Early December.

Leadership Development Program
Up to 12 teams will be selected to participate in a six-month leadership and enterprise development program run by IREX.

If selected, you will receive training to gain knowledge and practical skills needed to bring your enterprise to scale, including training in how to pitch and raise money through grants, loans, financing, and attracting investors. You will also learn leadership skills needed to go to scale. The curriculum will be delivered in a hybrid format of live virtual sessions, group work, and through applying the learnings to your business.

Pitch Competition
Participants in the leadership and enterprise development program will be invited to deliver their grant funding pitch at a multi-day in-person convening. Up to six enterprises will be selected to receive grant funding of up to $15,000 each. D-Prize will deploy the grant funding and will communicate with the team about reporting requirements.
Judging Criteria

Judging Process
All applications will receive an initial screen from the D-Prize judging panel, which is composed of members from the D-Prize community with professional experience in developing world entrepreneurship and social enterprise.

Those serving as judges are not personally involved in the ideas being judged, nor do they have any immediate family involved.

Judging Criteria
Contestants are evaluated based on:
- Demonstrated leadership success, as evident by academic and professional background, relevant skills, and demonstrated passion.
- Early evidence of impact in poverty alleviation through work in food security, sustainable supply chains, post-consumer waste management solutions, and/or resilient food systems.
- Potential for scalable success of their venture, based on the concept note of the application. By scale, we mean the potential to cover a large geography and serve many people.
- Demonstrated commitment to the problem they are addressing and willingness to stick to it for the long haul

Application Tips
- Be succinct. Successful candidates are objective, focused, and clear. These attributes should come across in your writing. Orient your application towards an educated judge who is relatively knowledgeable with the key issues.

- Scale, impact, cost-effectiveness. Successful applicants will build a plausible case that their intervention is highly scalable, impactful, and cost-effective

- Keep within scope. The most successful startups are explicit about their focus, and avoid spending resources on too wide or too many areas. A well-focused, tightly scoped idea will perform best in this competition.
First Round Application Components

First Round Applications consist of a concept note and resume(s).

Part 1: Concept Note
Please prepare a concept note which responds to the following prompt. Concept notes are limited to two pages. We do not read anything submitted that is longer than two pages.

*How does your organization or venture measurably alleviate poverty through food security, sustainable supply chains, post-consumer waste management solutions, and/or resilient food systems.*

We recommend writing:

2-3 sentences summarizing the main activities of your organization. Walk us through step-by-step how your work measurably alleviates poverty.

Bullet points to further explain:

- How does your work relate to food security, sustainable supply chains, post-consumer waste management solutions, or resilient food systems?
- What are the main barriers that currently prevent people from accessing your poverty solution, specific to your pilot region? For example, one common barrier to accessing a high-impact product, like seed and fertilizer, might be a high upfront cost.
- How does your model specifically overcome these barriers?

Note: Our team is already familiar with, or can research, many of the macro statistics related to poverty, so don’t waste a whole page explaining the problem you hope to solve. Focus your concept note on describing how your venture already works to solve it.

*What is the current impact of your work?* We recommend writing:

1-2 sentences summarizing your results so far. Please focus on marginal impact (ie, the impact you will make compared to the status quo) at a high level, and at an individual or household level. For example, your work might increase harvests by X% for the average farmer, which results in an increase in household income by X%.

*Outcome table:* Over the next 1 year, and 2 years, and 3 years, how many people do you plan to reach with your work? And how many people will you directly help? We recommend sharing this as a simple table.

*What do you hope to learn from a leadership development program?* We recommend writing:
2-3 sentences on how you would benefit from a six-month entrepreneurial leadership development program. Please be as specific as possible when discussing the gaps in your personal skills as a leader as well as the most important needs or gaps in your organization. For example, if you struggle with fundraising, please explain how you struggle with fundraising and how you hope to improve.

*What is your vision for the future, and how might you deploy funding to advance this vision?*

2-3 sentences summarizing how you might deploy a $15,000 award, and what the 3-5 major expenses are expected to be.

1 sentence summarizing your long-term vision for your organization.

*Who is your leadership team?* We recommend writing:

Team table that lists:

- All of the people on your leadership team; their job title; their responsibilities
- Where each person resides (city, country)
- Any other professional or educational commitments they have

**Part 2: Resumes / CVs**

Please include a resume for each person on your team, limited to one page per person. Resumes should highlight the most relevant past leadership roles, trainings, and accomplishments. These could be professional and/or educational. If you use LinkedIn professionally, we strongly encourage you to put it on your CV.

**Ready to Apply?**

**Application Instructions**

- Prepare your concept note and resume, and clearly name your files. Documents must be saved as a PDF and are limited to 4MB each.
- Input your contact details and upload your documents following [this link](https://www.irex.org/project/pamoja-founders-project-accelerating-african-entrepreneurs-impact), which can also be found at [https://www.irex.org/project/pamoja-founders-project-accelerating-african-entrepreneurs-impact](https://www.irex.org/project/pamoja-founders-project-accelerating-african-entrepreneurs-impact).

**Questions?**

Email [pfp@irex.org](mailto:pfp@irex.org).