



Resilient Agriculture Innovations for Nature (RAIN) Challenge Guidelines for Applicants

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BACKGROUND

Although the agricultural sector is rapidly becoming more susceptible to the harsh impacts of climate change, it is ripe with innovation and transformation potential. Supporting agricultural entrepreneurs' resilient solutions is essential to adapt to climate change, build resilient food systems and enhance biodiversity. The United Nations at the UN Food System Summit (UNFSS) and through the UN Climate Change Conferences has also called for a transformative response to agricultural development from the private sector. However, private capital is only available if resilience investments can show that they can potentially generate acceptable risk-adjusted returns.

In response, the [Global Resilience Partnership \(GRP\)](#) and [Munich Re Foundation](#) are partnering on the **Resilient Agriculture Innovations for Nature (RAIN)** challenge. RAIN aims to convert seed-level innovative agricultural ideas that are meeting resilience needs in **East Africa** and scale them to sustainable business ideas of interest to private investors and funders. The aim is to identify new innovative agricultural initiatives and provide customized support to maximize each initiative's potential for impact. The challenge will align potential funders to these initiatives and drive attention to the urgent need for agricultural systems transformation.

Winners will be connected with potential funders/donors, receive a tailored mentoring program, and communications support. In addition, winners will be invited to an investor forum and pitching session in-person or virtually. Subject matter experts will facilitate a leadership academy for the winning entrants. Winners will also receive a cash prize after the initial mentoring period and after the leadership academy.

About GRP and Munich Re Foundation

GRP advances resilience through identifying and scaling on the ground innovation, generating and sharing knowledge, and shaping policy. Resilience underpins sustainable development in an increasingly unpredictable world. We envisage an inclusive world in harmony with nature, that is better prepared to cope with shocks, adapt to change, and transform – all within planetary boundaries. GRP is made up of 80+ organisations that have joined forces to work together towards this vision.

Look out for more Information on the GRP website or follow GRP on our social media channels.

Munich Re Foundation stimulates ideas and creates perspectives with a specific focus on countries of the global south. MRF recognizes the need to address the increasing risks resulting from population development, environmental and climate change. Complex technical systems and infrastructure are additional risk factors. To read more, click [here](#).

RESILIENT AGRICULTURE INNOVATIONS FOR NATURE (RAIN) CHALLENGE

We are calling for proposals from not-for-profit organizations across public, local civil society, international NGOs and academia. Both experienced implementers as well as start-ups, hubs and accelerators in **East Africa** (Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda) are encouraged to apply. Although the challenge is designed as a competition, the long-term purpose is not to pick winners, but to start a race between many different types of solutions and initiatives.

We are looking for innovative and scalable nature positive solutions that drive investment in ecosystems and increase resilience while resulting in a stronger and better context for nature positive agriculture to flourish. The initiatives must build resilience for the most vulnerable, include a focus on gender, equity and human rights, and protect biodiversity. The RAIN Innovation Challenge is also dedicated to advancing inclusivity and highly encourages organisations led by women and youth to be catalysts in this agricultural revolution, contributing to a more resilient and sustainable future for East Africa.

The innovation challenge will launch on 10 December 2023 with an open and competitive call for proposals. Applicants must complete and submit the application form available on the GRP website via email by 23:59 GMT on 31 January 2024. More details on eligibility, selection criteria, benefits for winners and the Challenge's process and timelines can be found in our FAQs (see Annex).

We will rigorously assess all entries to the Challenge based on criteria including viability, innovativeness, scale of impact and equity. Winners will be selected and announced in October 2024.

Challenge Implementation

Selected projects will receive customised support to maximise their potential for impact, scalability and further funding. The Challenge's winners will benefit from a program of tailored mentoring, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), communications and leadership support to make their project more scalable and impactful. They will also be connected to potential investors and partners from across the GRP network.

Mentoring and incubation

The finalists will receive up to 24 hours of mentoring support (8 hours per month) over three months from GRP. Winning projects that graduate from the Challenge and meet pre-agreed criteria will be awarded next stage funding after the initial three-four month mentoring period and after attending the Leadership Academy, to be used for implementation and scaling over the following 12 months.

GRP draws on a pool of experts and consultants to provide the support required. We use a framework that takes the projects through a Value Chain Driven Viability Analysis

and a Resilience and Scaling assessment,¹ and then work with the initiative to concurrently develop and deliver a workplan and an action plan.

GRP uses a proven four-step framework to analyse and develop the relevant prescription for any given initiative. This framework has been distilled from several existing and overlapping business tools and models for mapping context, testing viability, customer appropriateness, and soundness of an idea. Throughout this process, there is a learning focus, examining what has been suboptimal in analysis, planning as well as execution.

Leadership Academy

At the core of the work with the winners is a focus on the people implementing the ideas proposed. The complexity of factors leading to successful implementation requires people who both think independently and work together, often under pressure and in uncertainty. A Leadership Academy will be held to help both individuals and groups to navigate their personal and professional lives. The Academy will explore conscious and subconscious processes and dynamics based on executive management development practices from top business schools. Many of these sessions draw on case studies, examples surfaced through exercises and examples from the participants.

Resource Mobilization

As part of the support given to the winners there is an ongoing networking activity between winners and potential partners. The general thrust of the support given to the winners is focused on viability testing and improving strategies, getting a better understanding of the underlying problems to be addressed, and on the people implementing. One of the outcomes of this support is a set of winners that are better prepared and equipped to present and pitch their ideas and to write proposals.

There will be a pitching event, where winners are given the opportunity to pitch their ideas live or over video link to potential partners and funders.

Communications support

A promotional campaign will be developed to support the Challenge and its objectives, using key communications channels and platforms likely to reach potential participants in the private sector, civil society and academia. There will also be communications support tailored to the winners. Winners will be supported to promote their achievement through a customised social media toolkit that they themselves can deploy through their own channels. Over the time that the Innovation Challenge winners receive support, their stories and journeys will be integrated into overall GRP communications.

¹ The Value Chain Driven Viability Analysis looks at the existing and potential viability of the solution within the frame of context, problem addressed and internal functions. The Resilience and Scaling assessment looks at what the potential for building resilience is as well as how scalable that model is.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) support

Monitoring, evaluation and learning support will be provided, including direct support through an online helpdesk and one-on-one calls. Throughout the mentoring process the assigned mentors and sector experts will fill in Mentoring memos. The learning distilled from the mentoring process will feed back into direct support to winners.

ANNEX: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

1. How do I apply?

Go to www.globalresiliencepartnership.org and fill in the google form template. When you have completed it submit it [before the deadline](#). Make sure you read and respond to all the questions, and that you understand the eligibility and assessment criteria.

2. What are the competition timelines?

- ✓ The Challenge opens on 10 December 2023.
- ✓ The deadline for submissions is **30 January 2024 at 23:59hrs (CET)**. The Challenge will close at this time.
- ✓ Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be contacted by mid-March 2024.
- ✓ Winners will be announced by October 2024.
- ✓ Mentoring, communications and MEL support will be provided from March to October 2024.
- ✓ Workshops and the Leadership Academy will take place in July/August 2024.

3. What are the eligibility criteria?

To be eligible an application must meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Be a nature positive solution, that builds resilience in the most vulnerable communities and places in East Africa.
- ✓ The Challenge is open to not for profit organizations across public, private, civil society and grassroots organizations as well as academia.
- ✓ Innovative and scalable initiatives that change the risk perceptions of investing in agriculture.
- ✓ Be located in East Africa (Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda).
- ✓ The team has proven conservation and business experience.
- ✓ Gender, equity, human rights and biodiversity considerations are included.
- ✓ The solution does no harm (i.e., has no negative impacts on communities or ecosystems it is designed to build resilience in).

GRP will notify all applicants about the results of the assessment phase. Non-selected ideas may still be considered for alternative promotion within the GRP network (e.g., matchmaking with other partner initiatives better suited for supporting them).

4. What are eligible countries?

Eligible countries are included in the box below.

Eligible countries: Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda

5. What are the assessment criteria?

Eligible concept notes will be assessed by two assessors according to a set of marking criteria, with justifications provided where necessary. Out of these between 5 and 8 submissions will be selected as finalists, depending on the number and quality of the applications. Eligible submissions will be evaluated across these evaluation criteria (the maximum score is 100):

Evaluation criteria

Innovativeness (0-15)

How innovative is the proposed innovation? Innovation, for the purposes of this call, is defined as ideas that address an existing challenge in a manner that adds value, is sustainable and is practically implementable.

Scoring as per below (continuous scale from 0-15):

- ✓ The innovation is completely new and new to the sector – unheard of until this submission (15)
- ✓ The innovation is new on the continent and new to the sector on the continent – it exists elsewhere but has not been tested on the continent or context it is proposed for (10)
- ✓ The innovation is new in the country – it exists in other places and neighboring countries, but not in the proposed country or context (5)
- ✓ It is not innovative by the above metrics (0)

Potential for impact (0-15)

Does the proposed solution show potential for improving the resilience of the most vulnerable people and places? How will the solution contribute to the transformation to resilient and sustainable agriculture? Does it show potential for long term impact? Either by its own or as part of something? Is the route to impact clearly described and realistic?

Scoring as per below (continuous scale from 0-15):

- ✓ Very strong conservation efforts backed by science and high potential for social impact (15)
- ✓ Medium conservation efforts and potential for social impact (10)
- ✓ Some potential for environmental conservation and social impact (5)
- ✓ No potential for environmental or social benefits (0)

Equity (0-15)

How does the project specifically address improving gender, equity, youth and human rights? Is special consideration given to young people, vulnerable groups, and communities (women, girls, indigenous groups, people with disabilities, etc.) or low-income populations? Are the beneficiaries, partners, and end-users predominantly youth or women? Outline how women, children, youth, and other vulnerable groups will benefit.

Scoring as per below (continuous scale from 0-15):

- ✓ Gender and youth transformative. Strong women or youth leadership, and benefits centring marginalized groups with specific focus on youth and women (15)
- ✓ Gender sensitive and inclusive. Attention to equity and integrates gender and youth considerations, contributing to a more equitable and inclusive approach (10)
- ✓ Some benefits for and involvement of excluded groups (5)
- ✓ No consideration for excluded and marginalized groups (0)

Scalability (0-15)

Is the project considered scalable? Does it have a potentially scalable model? Is the product or service in question likely to attract sufficient interest and demand among stakeholders?

Scoring as per below (continuous scale from 0-15.):

- ✓ Easily scalable and replicable (15)
- ✓ Potentially scalable and replicable (10)
- ✓ Low scalability and replicability (5)

- ✓ No scalability and replicability (0)

Viability and Sustainability (0-15)

Is the project considered viable? Does it have a clear path to becoming a sustainable solution and support for the sector? Does it have a clear exit strategy, can it connect with funders, what is the scope for policy engagement?

- ✓ High sustainability and potential for supporting the viable development of the sector towards nature positive agriculture (15)
- ✓ Good sustainability and potential for supporting the viable development of the sector towards nature positive agriculture (10)
- ✓ Challenging sustainability and potential for supporting the viable development of the sector towards nature positive agriculture (5)
- ✓ No sustainability and potential for supporting the viable development of the sector towards nature positive agriculture (0)

Team Composition / Organisation (0-15)

Is the team composition relevant for developing the idea further? Do they have relevant experience, skill sets and in-depth knowledge? Do they have the right networks? Is there a clear ownership of the idea? Note: It is not necessary to have a full team envisaged for implementation at time of applying.

Scoring as per below (continuous scale from 0-15):

- ✓ Strong and relevant experience in conservation (agriculture, climate and resilience) experience (15)
- ✓ Medium conservation and business experience (10)
- ✓ Low conservation or business experience (5)
- ✓ No conservation or business experience (0)

Risk (0-10)

What are the risks, both long and short term, to successful project implementation? How are these analysed and how will these be mitigated? Any project with a high risk of doing harm (environmental / social) is ineligible.

(NB: Inverse scoring: 10 = low risk, 0 = high risk):

- ✓ Low risk (10)
- ✓ Medium risk (5)
- ✓ High risk (0)

6. How does the selection process work?

First, all applications are screened for eligibility. All eligible applications are then reviewed and assessed. Each eligible application is reviewed by two separate reviewers, one of which is a reference marker. The reference marker reviews all applications. If there is a difference in total marks on any eligible application between any two reviewers of 25 points or more that application is flagged for review and discussed by the assessors. The outcome of that review determines the final score of that application. The assessment review is evaluated against the assessment criteria, with a maximum of 100 points awarded. All applications with a score above 60 will be shortlisted. Out of these between 3 and 5 submissions will be selected as winners, at the discretion of the selection committee. The selection committee is comprised of GRP Secretariat staff and partners.

7. What will the winners win?

The Challenge winners will receive a program of tailored mentoring, communications and MEL support and will be connected to potential partners and/or investors. In addition to this there will be next-stage funding for winning projects that graduate from the Challenge and meet pre-agreed criteria. This will be awarded after the initial mentoring period and a Leadership Academy, to be used for implementation and scaling over the following 12 months.

8. Who is providing the mentoring and subject matter expertise?

We recognise that no one knows your innovation as well as you do. The mentors and subject matter experts have extensive experience in mentoring and coaching and are trained in supporting you to develop your idea further. Each mentor has at least 10 years of experience in providing this kind of support. The mentors come from a wide range of backgrounds and include entrepreneurs with a proven track record of innovating and scaling, through to academics and researchers. The mentors will work together in a structured way to provide optimal support to each winner.

9. What do we expect from you?

If you are selected as a winner and receive support, we expect you to fully engage with the process and the mentors assigned to you. If you have any questions or concerns, you can bring these up with the GRP [RAIN Challenge Fund Manager](#) or GRP [Head of Innovation](#).

10. Will there be a chance to ask clarification questions?

You can send a message to challenge@globalresiliencepartnership.org to ask questions in advance. Your question and the answer will be made public on the GRP website.

11. Who do I contact for more information?

If you have further questions on the Challenge please contact us at: gdauid@globalresiliencepartnership.org - we will do our best to respond to all inquiries within three working days.

12. What is a Nature Positive solution?

A nature positive solution considers conservation of biodiversity, management of biodiversity and natural resources to provide ecosystem services, avoids further degradation and restores nature when necessary. It also means solutions for managing waste better, and it nurtures a circular economy.

Nature positive means that the solutions don't just do no harm, are climate smart and build resilience (building the ability to cope with, recover from, and prosper in the face of uncertainty), but actually provide benefits in terms of conservation, biodiversity gains, CO2 capture, etc. Examples include financial innovations to invest in forests, community conservation, regenerative agriculture, improved rangelands management, etc.