

 **GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS**

2025 RISE URBAN INNOVATION CHALLENGE

Application deadline: 11 April 2025



**GLOBAL
RESILIENCE
PARTNERSHIP**

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BACKGROUND

Currently only [1.2% of urban climate investments](#) flow to climate change adaptation and resilience solutions. Increasing investment flows requires diversifying and strengthening the solution pipeline across different models – for-profit, not-for-profit, private-sector-led and private–public partnerships, as well as nurturing an enabling environment – policy, finance, measurement and evidence-building – for these solutions to scale.

Vulnerability to climate risks is [extremely skewed across urban populations](#), with informal workers, residents in urban slums and informal settlements, migrants and displaced people, as well as young and elderly people, facing the triple challenge of higher exposure to climate change hazards, higher susceptibility to damages caused by climate change and a lesser financial ability to cope and recover from shocks. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for innovative solutions that build resilience to climate risks.

The Global Resilience Partnership (GRP) is launching the Resilience Innovation through Scaling Entrepreneurship (RISE) Urban Challenge to convert idea- and concept-level innovative ideas that are meeting resilience needs in urban informality contexts and scale them to sustainable ideas. The RISE Urban Challenge provides customised support to maximise each initiative's potential for impact and aligns potential funders to these initiatives and drive attention to the urgent need for urban systems transformation.

We are looking for innovative entrepreneurs, who can design impactful solutions addressing these unique urban informality challenges. Winners will be connected with potential funders/donors, receive a tailored mentoring programme, communications support, and capacity-building opportunities, alongside access to a network of regional and global experts. The challenge encourages bold and transformative ideas that promote resilience, preserve ecosystems, and create sustainable economic opportunities for urban communities. Subject matter experts will facilitate a leadership academy for the winning entrants. Winners will receive a cash prize for up to US\$50,000, to further develop and scale their solutions over a period of 12 months.

About GRP

The [Global Resilience Partnership](#) (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 90+ organisations that have joined forces to work towards this vision. Learn more about GRP on the GRP [website](#) or follow GRP on our social media channels.



RISE Urban Challenge

We are calling for proposals from both non- and for-profit organisations, local entrepreneurs, and innovators - who are ready to bring forward innovative solutions. Both experienced implementers as well as emerging entrepreneurs implementing in [ODA-eligible countries](#) are encouraged to apply. Although the challenge is designed as a competition, the long-term purpose is not to pick winners, but to develop many scalable solutions and initiatives to address the critical challenges faced by urban informal settlements.

The RISE Urban Challenge seeks to convert idea- and concept-level innovative ideas that are meeting resilience needs in urban informality contexts and scale them to sustainable ideas. Proposals should focus on enhancing resilience to those most vulnerable to climate shocks and stresses, promoting gender equity, and preserving biodiversity, while driving sustainable livelihoods and economic growth. This initiative prioritises locally led innovations that build the resilience of women and youth.

The Innovation Challenge will launch on **5 March 2025** with an open call for proposals via GRP's website and social media. Applicants must submit their proposals by **23:59 GMT on 11 April 2025**. The shortlisted Challenge winners will be contacted in **June 2025**, and successful candidates will receive tailored funding, mentorship, and support to scale their solutions. We will rigorously assess all entries to the Challenge based on criteria including viability, innovativeness, scale of impact and equity. Final Winners will be selected and announced in November/December 2025 and receive a cash prize for up to US\$50,000 for 12 months of implementation. More details on eligibility, selection criteria, and timelines can be found in the Challenge FAQs (see Annex).

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 programme 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 GRP networks.

Mentoring and incubation

The finalists of the RISE Urban Challenge will receive tailored mentoring support up to September 2025, provided by GRP. This mentoring phase will focus on refining their projects and ensuring they are well-prepared for successful implementation. Winners will be awarded prizes up to US\$50,000, which will support their scaling and implementation over 12 months up to December 2026. The projects will continue to receive mentoring support, through December 2026, and will be required to report progress to GRP.

The awarding of funding will be contingent upon the successful completion of the virtual Leadership Academy and Due Diligence process. GRP draws on a pool of experts and consultants to provide the support required. Throughout the incubation process, we use a framework that takes the projects through a Value Chain Driven Viability Analysis and a Resilience and Scaling assessment, and then work with the initiative to concurrently develop and deliver a work plan and an action plan.



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. These proven frameworks are used 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

The RISE Urban Challenge places a strong emphasis on leadership development as a key factor in ensuring the successful implementation of the proposed solutions. Winners will participate in a virtual Leadership Academy designed to help both individuals and groups navigate the complexities of their projects, as well as their personal and professional lives. This Academy will be based on executive management development practices from leading business schools, focusing on both conscious and subconscious dynamics that affect leadership. Through case studies, exercises, and real-life examples drawn from the participants themselves, the Academy will offer a unique learning experience that sharpens critical thinking, fosters teamwork under pressure, and develops the resilience needed for effective leadership in uncertain environments.

Resource/Investment Mobilisation

Part of the support package offered to winners is the facilitation of resources / investment mobilisation through ongoing networking activities with potential partners and investors. GRP will help finalists prepare for a pitching event where they can present their ideas to potential funders, either in person or virtually. Throughout the challenge, participants will receive support aimed at improving the viability of their projects, with a particular focus on understanding the core problems they aim to solve and refining the strategies to address these challenges. This preparation ensures that winners are well-equipped to present their projects and attract the necessary resources for scaling.

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. Winners will also have access to communications support. Winners will be supported to promote their achievement through a 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.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) support

Monitoring, evaluation and learning support will be provided, including direct support through an online helpdesk. Throughout the mentoring process the assigned mentors and sector experts will fill in Mentoring memos. The learning distilled informs the mentoring process and 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 proposal template. When you have completed it, submit it before the deadline. Please make sure you read and respond to all the questions, and that you understand the eligibility and assessment criteria. At this time, we are only accepting applications submitted in English.

2. What are the competition timelines?

- The Challenge opens on **5 March 2025**.
- The deadline for submissions is **11 April 2025 at 23:59 hrs GMT**. The Challenge will close at this time and we will not be able to accept submissions past the deadline.
- Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be contacted in June 2025.
- Successful applicants will be provided support to further develop their projects during June to September 2025.
- Winners will be announced and contracted in November-December 2025.
- Mentoring, communications and MEL support will be provided during 2025 and 2026.
- The virtual Leadership Academy will take place in September 2025.

3. What are the eligibility criteria?

To be eligible an application must meet the following criteria:

- ✓ The solution must address resilience needs in urban informality contexts.
- ✓ The Challenge is open to both nonprofit and for-profit registered organisations.
- ✓ Be located in low- and middle-income countries (eligible for Official Development Assistance as defined by the [OECD-DAC](#)).
- ✓ The team has proven experience implementing innovative solutions for resilience.
- ✓ Gender, equity and human rights considerations are included.
- ✓ The solution does no harm (i.e., has no negative impacts on communities 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 partners better suited for supporting them).

4. What are eligible countries?

Projects based in low- and middle-income countries (eligible for Official Development Assistance as defined by the [OECD-DAC](#)) are eligible for the RISE Urban Challenge.

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 up to 10-15 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 neighbouring 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 development? Does it show potential for long term impact? Either by itself 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 resilience efforts with high potential for social impact (15)
- Medium resilience efforts and potential for social impact (10)
- Some potential for resilience and wider social impact (5)
- No potential for resilience or social benefits (0)

Equity (0-15)

How does the project specifically address improving gender, equity and human rights? Is special consideration given to excluded groups and communities (women, girls, indigenous groups, people with disabilities, etc.) or low-income populations. Outline how women, children and other vulnerable groups will benefit. Scoring as per below (continuous scale from 0-15):

- Gender transformative. Very strong benefits and involvement of marginalised groups (15)
- Gender sensitive. Attention to equity and integration of gender considerations (10)
- Some benefits for and involvement of excluded groups (5)
- No consideration for excluded and marginalised 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)

Profitability and Sustainability (0-15)

Is the project considered profitable or otherwise sustainable? 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? Scoring as per below (continuous scale from 0-15.):

- High sustainability / profitability potential for supporting the viable development of the sector (15)
- Good sustainability / profitability potential for supporting the viable development of the sector (10)
- Challenging sustainability / profitability potential for supporting the viable development of the sector (5)
- No sustainability / profitability potential for supporting the viable development of the sector (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 resilience (15)
- Medium resilience building experience (10)
- Low resilience building experience (5)
- No resilience 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 up to 10-15 submissions will be selected as winners, at the discretion of the selection committee.

We encourage applicants to put forward authentic, thoughtful applications that genuinely reflect their experiences, ideas, and motivations. While AI tools can be useful for refining and structuring ideas, we strongly discourage the use of AI-generated generic responses. If you

choose to use AI, ensure that it enhances your unique perspective rather than replacing it. Applications that appear overly generic or lack personal authenticity may not be considered.

7. What will the winners win?

The Challenge winners will receive a programme of tailored mentoring, communications and MEL support and will be connected to potential partners and/or investors. In addition to this there will be prizes up to US\$50,000 (likely ranging between US\$ 10,000-30,000 for this first year of implementation) for winning projects to further develop and scale their solutions. This will be awarded at the end of 2025 after the initial mentoring period and a Leadership Academy, to be used for implementation and scaling over the following 12 months (January to December 2026).

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

We recognise that no one knows your innovation better than you do. Our mentors and subject matter experts are highly experienced in mentoring and coaching and are trained to help you further develop your idea. Each mentor has years of experience in this field and comes from diverse backgrounds, ranging from successful entrepreneurs with a proven track record of innovating and scaling, to academics and researchers. The mentors will work together in a structured approach to deliver optimal support to each winner, combining their global and regional insights to enhance your project's success.

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 by sending a message to challenge@globalresiliencepartnership.org (including RISE Urban Challenge in the subject line).

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

You can send a message to challenge@globalresiliencepartnership.org to ask questions in advance. Additionally, we will be hosting a webinar to provide guidance and support, ensuring a smoother application process for all applicants.

11. Who do I contact for more information?

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

12. What solutions will we consider?

We are specifically looking for solutions that target urban informal contexts. Nearly 1 billion people – one in four urban dwellers – live in urban slums and informal settlements, making them particularly vulnerable to the consequences of (climate) shocks and stresses. While formal settlements have seen improved standards of construction to increase safety, quality, and resilience, the same cannot be said for those living informally. Instead, the void between the two has widened dramatically, exacerbated by increasing uncertainty.

Solutions should help urban communities cope with, recover from, and thrive in the face of uncertainty. Vulnerability to climate risks is extremely skewed across urban populations, with informal workers, residents in informal settlements, migrants and displaced people, as well as young and elderly people facing the triple challenge of higher exposure to climate change

hazards, higher susceptibility to damages caused by climate change, and a lesser financial ability to cope and recover from shocks. Eligible initiatives can focus on solutions addressing the following themes, though we welcome wider solutions as well - surprise us:

- **Climate risk action:** Evidence shows that the top five hazards faced by cities are flash/surface flooding, heat waves, rain storms, extreme hot days and droughts. We are looking for innovative solutions that build resilience to such climate risks.
- **Resilience Retrofit:** We seek solutions that play a critical role in developing innovative climate resilient housing retrofits in informal settlements through better design, product and service development, as well as construction and assembly methods.
- **Water security:** Progress towards resilient water systems can be accelerated by learning from climate mitigation approaches and from innovative investment mechanisms developed by the private sector. Investments in urban water solutions can generate consistent and sustainable returns, unlocking additional financing, while making progress on water resilience goals.
- **Urban migration and displacement:** The increasing effects of climate change are posing major consequences on human mobility. We are looking for innovative solutions to ensure that migrants have access to safe and affordable services and opportunities to rebuild their lives and livelihoods.

