



CALL FOR APPLICATION

A CALL FOR APPLICATION FOR THE INCUBATION AND ACCELERATION OF 30 BUSINESSES (START-UPS AND SMES)

UNDER THE SIERRA LEONE ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION PROJECT

The Government of Sierra Leone and the World Bank are implementing the Sierra Leone Economic Diversification Project (SLEDP). The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to increase investment and growth of small and medium enterprises in non-mining productive sectors. The project will do so by strengthening the business enabling environment, facilitating strategic public investments to improve competitiveness and investments, supporting SMEs and entrepreneurs, and building capacity of public institutions and private sector operators.

Component 2 of the SLEDP aims to facilitate SME growth and stimulate entrepreneurship in high-growth productive sectors by addressing critical firm-level and sector-level constraints including (i) low access to information (ii) poor last mile infrastructure (ii) limited access to finance, (iii) weak capacity to scale businesses. Specific activities in this component to address these challenges include: public goods investment, SME and start-up acceleration, and early stage financing. In line with its PDO, the Project recognised that business incubation and acceleration programs are critical services needed in supporting the growth process of start-ups and SMEs and studies show that the survival rate for incubated companies is higher than that of other companies. Incubation and acceleration of business have proven to maximise the innovation potential of SMEs and start-ups and help them build the needed connections and collaborations to thrive.

In this context, the Project is starting its support to improving the SME ecosystem and support business resilience in Sierra Leone by launching this call for application by Innovation SL on behalf of the project for SMEs/Start-ups in Light Manufacturing, Circular economy and Renewable for its first cohort of business to be incubated and accelerated in the programme

A total of approximately 30 business applications from SMEs and start-ups in the sectors highlighted earlier are to be supported through the program across the country.

Aim of the Call for Application

The aim of this call for application is to help develop the capacities of selected SMEs and start-ups with technical expertise and grant financing that supports their growth, expansion and ability to create jobs that contributes to the project's development objectives. It will also focus on building resilience of companies to overcome challenges like the covid-19 crisis. Knowing the impact of COVID-19 on SMEs and Startups, this first cohort is expected to involve SMEs and Startups seriously affected by the Covid-19 crisis and those that have managed to develop innovative solutions that help boost their business growth during the crisis period. SMEs and Startups that report serious Covid-19 impact will be assessed during the diagnosis phase by Innovation SL to determine the type of support that helps them grow and flourish.



Innovation SL
Creating the Future Today



The program will be implemented in two -phases:

- A first phase (6 months) will focus on formalization, business model development, customer traction and investment readiness through BDS training, coaching, mentoring, peer learning, networking, and linkage building.
- A second phase (6 months) of matching-grant competition, award, and implementation (with a phased, performance based, disbursement)

Innovation SL on behalf of the Government of Sierra Leone and World Bank is calling for applications for incubation of 20 Start-ups, and acceleration of 10 SMEs under the Sierra Leone Economic Diversification project which aims to diversify the Sierra Leone economy through the incubation/acceleration/ business development.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Individuals with a viable or proven business idea that needs support (incubation) to become a competitive company that can sell its products and services.

This can include Start-ups, companies recently established (less than 2 years old).

They should be registered in Sierra Leone with no judicial outstanding issues and financially sound.

The Eligible Sectors

This direct support will be available to 20 Start-ups and 10 SMES in the non-mining sector; the selected sub-sectors are highlighted below:

1. Circular Economy
2. Light/Small scale manufacturing.

The Key selection criteria for Start-ups include:

Key selection criteria for Start-Ups will be based on a modified set of evaluation criteria in recognition of their early development stage. Accordingly, these criteria will include:

- (a) Technical and financial viability of the business model;
- (b) Good evaluation risks
- (c) Potential for growth
- (d) Value addition
- (e) Job creation

The Key selection criteria for SMES include:



Innovation SL
Creating the Future Today



THE WORLD BANK

The exact criteria to select a participating SMEs will be based on verifiable market opportunity, successful track record, growth potential, entrepreneurial potential assessment scores, and personal interviews. Accordingly, these criteria will include:

- (a) SMEs' current operational, financial, and market positions;
- (b) potential demand for their products, considering pre-identified priority market segments;
- (c) market competitiveness based on differentiation, cost, and/or focus;
- (d) viability of technical interventions for advancing the growth of the business; and
- (e) the financial and technical viability of the business

Exclusions

Technical Assistance and the Matching Grant will not extend grants in support of activities that support the production of the following:

- Production of Alcoholic beverages
- Weapons
- Tobacco
- Gambling
- All World Bank funded projects.

NOTE:

- Innovation SL together with the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency and Project Coordinating Unit will undertake a visit to 100% of all applicants that meet the minimum requirement to verify application information.
- Women owned and managed businesses are particularly encouraged to apply

To submit your application form:

Visit www.sledp.innosl.com to apply online or download, fill out the application form (physical/hard-copy) and submit at our office located at 11 Bolling Street - Kingtom, Freetown.

Deadline for submission of application: **12th November 2021 - 3rd December 2021**

Send your enquiries to mail.sledp@innosl.com Or call us on +232 (0) 73 620 339 or +232 (0) 33 719 243