

African Agribusiness Incubation Fund (AAIF) Challenge Call for Applications 2026



1. About the African Agribusiness Incubators Network (AAIN)

The African Agribusiness Incubators Network (AAIN) is a leading continental body dedicated to accelerating agribusiness innovation, enterprise development, and job creation across Africa. Established to strengthen the incubation ecosystem, AAIN works with governments, development partners, incubators, accelerators, universities, and the private sector to support youth, women, and small and medium agribusiness enterprises (SMEs).

AAIN's mandate focuses on building sustainable agribusiness ecosystems through incubation, mentorship, capacity development, access to finance, and market linkages. The organization provides technical support to incubation hubs, designs entrepreneurship programs, conducts ecosystem mapping, and promotes investment-readiness among agripreneurs.

Through its flagship initiatives, such as incubation model development, enterprise acceleration, agribusiness investment summits, and youth employment program AAIN contributes to inclusive growth and the transformation of Africa's agrifood systems. AAIN also convenes the continent's leading annual platforms that bring together policymakers, investors, innovators, and industry leaders to drive forward practical solutions for agricultural development.

By combining evidence-based approaches, partnerships, and strong networks, AAIN continues to champion enterprise development and promote sustainable economic opportunities for young people and communities across Africa.

2. The Sustainable Inclusive Youth Employment Pathways (SIYEP)



The SIYEP program is a five-year initiative (2025- 2030) designed to create inclusive, sustainable employment opportunities for young women including young refugee women and young women with disabilities, in Uganda. The program is implemented by a consortium of seven partners, including AAIN, AgroMax (U) Ltd, Gudie Leisure Farm (GLF), Omia Agribusiness Development Group Ltd, Tropical Institute of Development Innovations (TRIDI), and the Uganda Rural Development and Training Institute (URDT-I). The initiative is led by the Agency for Accelerated Regional Development (AFARD) in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation.

SIYEP aims to build an innovative and inclusive workforce development system that equips young women with market-relevant skills, entrepreneurship capacity, and pathways to meaningful employment. The program fosters opportunities in the agrifood sector and other value chains where young women can grow enterprises, access dignified work, and contribute to community development.

Operating across 45 districts in eight sub-regions of Uganda, West Nile, Acholi, Buganda, Bugisu, Lango, Karamoja, Teso, and South-Western Uganda, SIYEP ensures wide geographic reach and local relevance. Through this extensive coverage, the program catalyzes transformative change by strengthening community systems, building incubator capacity, promoting entrepreneurship, and advancing inclusive economic participation.

SIYEP's multi-partner and multi-regional approach ensures that young women gain not only skills and knowledge, but also access to markets, mentors, networks, and opportunities that support long-term livelihoods and resilience.

In order to accelerate incubation support to the transition of more young women into decent jobs and self-run enterprises, AAIN through the SIYEP program recognizes the need to address the bottlenecks related to access to start up financing for young women entrepreneurs. With young women entrepreneurs largely considered risky by most of the mainstream financing institutions, the AAIN's SIYEP project seeks to promote mechanisms through which the young women entrepreneurs can access affordable financing to scale up their impactful businesses. As such, AAIN has organized African Agribusiness Incubation Fund (AAIF) competition powered by the SIYEP program to provide competitive grants

and business development support to young women running/operating viable and scalable business startups.

3. Overview of the AAIF

The African Agribusiness Incubation Fund (AAIF) is a specialized financing facility established by the African Agribusiness Incubators Network (AAIN) to provide catalytic financial and technical support to agribusiness innovators, startups, SMEs, and incubation hubs across Africa. The Fund aims to bridge early-stage financing gaps, strengthen agribusiness incubation systems, and accelerate the growth of investable enterprises, with a particular focus on youth- and women-led ventures. AAIF combines flexible financing with technical assistance, mentorship, and access to business support services, ensuring enterprises are both investment-ready and sustainable.

4. AAIF Products and Services

1. Business Incubation Capital (BIC)

- o Targeted support for innovators, business prototypes, startups, and SMEs.

2. Support for Business Registration and Certification

- o Assistance in legal registration, licenses, and sector-specific certifications.

3. Business Startup Credit Facility

- o Short-term and medium-term financing for initial operational expenses.

4. Group & Cluster Guaranteeing

- o Risk mitigation for group-based or cluster enterprises to enhance access to finance.

5. Rent-to-Own Credit Facility

- o Financing for acquisition of assets, land, or equipment with structured payments leading to ownership.

6. Business Coaching and Mentorship Services

- o Guidance from experienced agribusiness professionals and technical advisors.

7. Technology Transfer and Access

- o Facilitation of modern agribusiness technologies, mechanization, and digital solutions.

8. Intellectual Property Management for Startups

- o Support in registering, protecting, and leveraging IP assets.

9. Taxation Planning and Management

- o Advisory services for tax compliance and optimization.

10. Access to Transaction Capital & Patient Capital

- o Support to smooth operational cash flow, business expansion, and scaling opportunities.

The Fund is designed to provide flexible financing with reasonable repayment terms to enable enterprises to grow without undue financial strain.

5. Eligibility Requirements

- **Business Idea:** Clear concept or innovative proposal
- **Business Plan:** Maximum 3 pages including financials condensed into a Business Model Canvas (BMC)
- **Identification:** National ID or equivalent
- **Recommendation:** From an incubator or a reputable organization in the enterprise's field (optional but preferred)

6. Objectives the call:

The main objective is to competitively select viable youth owned enterprises (70% female and 30% male owned) and facilitate them with competitive business booster packages to expand their businesses. The specific objectives are:

- To identify and profile (500) (both individual and in groups) viable young women entrepreneurs owned agribusinesses and non-agricultural start-ups within AAIN-SIYEP operational 5 regions (West, East, Central, North and West Nile) in Uganda.
- To identify the business needs of selected best young women entrepreneurs for mentorship and coaching support.
- To support the selected young women entrepreneurs with the required business booster package to move to the next level of business operations.

7. Description

The AAIF competition will see potential and already locked-in young women entrepreneurs compete for grants that they can utilize to expand their ventures or meet additional costs as well as engage in innovative initiatives that provide solutions to outstanding challenges/obstacles faced by businesses. The call targets young entrepreneurs aged 15-35 years with innovative and /or scalable business solutions/models in the agribusiness, digital, small manufacturing, and creative sectors. The fund will offer young women the opportunity to take their business ventures to the next level.

8. Selection process

Eligible young women entrepreneurs will be required to submit a completed application form and a one-page business model canvas to the emails provided. Applications will be evaluated by a selected team of experts. The team will review and evaluate all applications received using a set criterion and shall do this with the highest level of fairness, professionalism and integrity. A total of 500 applicants will be shortlisted and invited to pitch their business ideas at a competitive regional Business Pitch events where 100 youth entrepreneurs per region will be selected for support.

9. Business Pitching:

AAIN will organize a physical regional business pitching competitions.

At the pitching stage, each competitor will be allotted same amount of time to present their businesses to a panel of judges. This will be followed by a question-and-answer session in which judges will seek to further understand the business. The judges will score the businesses against a set criterion in order to select the best 500 for funding at different intervals and in different categories.

10. Business Boot Camp:

All the shortlisted applicants will participate in the boot camp where they will be supported to polish their business ideas, review their business plans, models and be exposed to a range of business development support tailored to the needs identified during evaluation process. The young women will undergo processes and exposure to enhance their capacities and skills to enable them launch into next level of business. The boot camp is planned to be attended in person.

11. AAIF awards categorization

The best youth 500 entrepreneurs will benefit from this grant. This grant shall be both in cash and in-kind in form of equipment and asset support based on the business needs. The winners will as well benefit from tailored business development support, incubation, mentorship and coaching including participation in the business boot camp where young women entrepreneurs will refine their business models for growth. The winners will also be linked to other platforms and networks and other initiatives across the country for learning, networking and business/market opportunities.

12. Eligibility criteria

Applications will be received from youth either as individuals or as joint ventures (investment clubs or groups). Two level criteria will be used to select applicants for pitching.

Young women entrepreneurs targeted in this call must meet the following conditions

- Be aged 15-35 on the date of submission to the competition. Applicants shall be required to present valid National IDs as proof of confirmation.
- Must be a rightful owner or co-founder of the business that is being presented and should be fulltime involved in the management of the day-to-day operations and leadership of the enterprise.
- Must be willing and ready to commit own resources as cost-share to achieve the common goals
- Must be willing to stay clear of partisan political activities during the course of engagement.
- The challenge competition is open to refugees and young women with disabilities.

The Businesses: The AAIF Challenge is seeking to support ventures that meet the following conditions;

- Ventures that have been in existence for at least the last 6 months as at May 15, 2026

- Must be designed and operating as a for-profit business earning revenue from its operations. Youth initiatives that are designed as NGOs, CBOs or other forms of organizations will not be considered.
- Registered or having a registered/reserved business name or owners willing to formally register the business. The business should also have a dedicated bank account or show willingness to open one.
- Have a clear physical address or online presence for digital based businesses, with at least basic business plans or business model canvas and keeping records.
- Must be based in the 5 regions of Uganda (West, East, Central, North and West Nile)
- Operating in targeted value chains of all agribusiness (value addition stage is highly preferred), support services along the value chains such as input services, extension services, waste management or recycling, marketing, food retail, ICT solutions, small manufacturing, creative, distribution or logistics and climate smart agriculture.
- Businesses that demonstrate commercial viability (potential to scale), innovation and great market potential will be highly prioritized
- Demonstrate social inclusion (engaging other youth including females) and environmental impact (environmentally sustainable).

Note: 70% of 500 applicants should be in the agribusiness value chains and 30% in other sectors highlighted above.

How to Apply

Interested and eligible young women entrepreneurs are invited to submit applications and business model canvas to eampumuza@aain.africa and copying phionakatushaba@africaain.org no later than 23:59 hours (Ugandan Time), Tuesday 30th June 2026). Applications submitted after the deadline shall not be considered. Application form can be accessed on this link: www.aain.africa/AAIF-apply

Only young women entrepreneurs are eligible to participate in this call.

For any technical support on the application tool, please contact Rogers rogers@aain.africa /+256701137200

Communicating to unsuccessful applicants

AAIN shall through email notify all unsuccessful applicants as soon as the shortlist for the business pitching session is developed. Applicants who will participate in the business pitch sessions will be informed as soon as the panel of judges determine the best 500 youth entrepreneurs.

Timelines

- June 1st, 2026 sharing the call publicly
- June 1st, 2026 to 30th June, 2026 - Submission of applications responding to the call for applications
- July 1st-30th 2026 – Evaluation committee reviews all applications, considering the set criteria and generates shortlist. Shortlisted applicants notified and invited to the regional business pitching competition for final selection and Winners will be invited to an official award ceremony.