ECOWAS REGIONAL BUSINESS INCUBATION PROGRAMME (EBIP)

Call for projects for young people aged 18 to 35 with business ideas

1. Background

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), through its Centre for Youth and Sports Development (CDJS/ECOWAS), is implementing the **ECOWAS Youth and Women's Entrepreneurship Programme (EYWEP)** with the technical and financial support of **AUDA-NEPAD**.

As part of this programme, ECOWAS is deploying the **ECOWAS Regional Business Incubation Programme (EBIP)** as an operational mechanism for identifying, incubating and supporting young people with high-potential business ideas.

The EBIP programme responds to an important need in the community space: many young people have innovative ideas, promising projects or prototypes, but do not have the technical capacity, support or tools to transform these ideas into formal, viable and sustainable businesses.

It is with this in mind that ECOWAS is launching this **call for projects**, in order to identify and select young business idea holders in the following seven pilot countries:

- Benin
- Ivory Coast
- Gambia
- Ghana
- Guinea-Bissau
- Senegal
- Sierra Leone

2. Purpose of the call for projects

The purpose of this call for projects is to select potential young entrepreneurs aged **18 to 35 with** business ideas, innovative concepts or advanced prototypes, in order to support them in a structured incubation process.

The objective is to enable beneficiaries to:

- transform a business idea into a structured project;
- refining their business model;
- strengthen their entrepreneurial and managerial capacities;
- benefit from technical coaching and mentoring;
- prepare the legal creation of their company;
- facilitate the transition from the idea to the formally constituted and operational company.

3. Target Audience

This call is open exclusively:

- young **people aged 18 to 35**;
- nationals or residents of one of the seven pilot countries;
- innovative business idea holders;
- young people with a concept, a prototype, a product in development or an entrepreneurial project in the maturation phase.

The **EBIP program does not primarily target already established companies**, but rather young people who wish to legally create their business and need support to move from idea to formalization.

4. Eligible Domains

Projects must fall within one of the following priority areas:

- pharmaceutical industry;
- information and communication technologies (ICT);
- solar energy and renewable energy;
- agrosilvopastoral activities and agricultural value chains.

5. Program Format

As part of this pilot phase, the programme will concern:

- **12 young people per country**
- in **7 pilot countries**
- a total of **84 young beneficiaries**

The selected beneficiaries will join an incubation program including:

- entrepreneurship training sessions;
- project maturation workshops;
- support for the formalization of the project;
- mentoring and personalized coaching;
- support in the development of the business model and business plan;
- support towards the legal creation of the company;
- Putting them in touch with technical, financial and institutional partners.

NB: At the end of the training, grants may be awarded to the best project ideas from each country within the limit of available funding.

6. Eligibility criteria

To be eligible, the application must:

- be submitted by a young person between the ages of **18 and 35**;

- be a national or resident of one of the seven pilot countries;
- relate to a **business idea**, an innovative concept, a prototype or an entrepreneurial project in the design or pre-launch phase;
- fall under one of the priority sectors;
- be submitted within the required deadlines;
- include a complete file.

7. Selection criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- relevance and clarity of the business idea;
- innovative nature of the proposed solution;
- understanding the problem or need being addressed by the project;
- technical and operational feasibility;
- potential for transformation into a viable business;
- motivation and commitment of the candidate;
- potential for job creation;
- expected socio-economic impact;
- growth potential;
- contribution to sustainable development and regional integration.

8. Program Benefits

The selected young people will benefit in particular:

- a structured incubation programme;
- specialized training;
- personalised technical support;
- mentoring by experts and practitioners;
- support for the legal formalization of their business;
- supervision in the development of the economic model and business plan;
- networking with partners and support institutions;
- increased visibility within the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem.

9. Application file

The application must include:

- an up-to-date Curriculum Vitae (CV);
- a copy of a valid identity document;

- a concept note presenting the business idea or project;
- a description of the problem identified, the proposed solution and the target market;
- any additional document allowing the potential of the project to be assessed;
- if available, a prototype, a mock-up, images, schematics or proofs of concept.

All documents must be consolidated into **a single PDF file**.

10. Selection Process

The selection process will include the following steps:

1. receipt and administrative verification of applications;
2. technical evaluation of applications;
3. pre-selection of the best projects;
4. interviews or presentations, if necessary;
5. final selection of beneficiaries;
6. integration into the incubation program.

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

11. Submission of applications

Complete applications must be sent to the email address corresponding to the candidate's country.

Subject of the email: "Application for the EYWEP/EBIP Incubation Program 2026"

Country	**Email address**
Benin	benin.eywep@cdjscedeao.org
Ivory Coast	cotedivoire.eywep@cdjscedeao.org
Gambia	gambia.eywep@cdjscedeao.org
Ghana	ghana.eywep@cdjscedeao.org
Guinea-Bissau	guineabissau.eywep@cdjscedeao.org
Senegal	senegal.eywep@cdjscedeao.org
Sierra Leone	sierraleone.eywep@cdjscedeao.org

12. Deadline

The deadline for applications is: **16 July at 23:59 GMT**

Any application that is incomplete or submitted after this deadline will not be reviewed.

13. Additional information

- Participation in the program is free of charge.
- Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

- The program aims to support young people from the business idea to the legal creation and structuring of their business.

For any further information, candidates can contact: cdjs@ecowas.int