



## **GLOBAL INNOVATION CHALLENGE – FOOD SECURITY SUMMARY & FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

*Last Updated: 22 February 2023*

### **BACKGROUND**

The Citi Foundation is launching its first ever global innovation challenge (“Challenge”) to identify and provide philanthropic support to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) developing innovative solutions to social and economic challenges facing low-income communities. Challenges will be administered via global requests for proposals (RFPs) with specific eligibility criteria. The first of these global innovation challenges will focus on food security, an issue of significant importance in communities across Citi’s global footprint. Addressing food insecurity will strengthen the financial health of families, which directly aligns with the Citi Foundation’s mission of catalyzing economic opportunity in underserved and marginalized communities around the world.

In recent years, food insecurity has become a growing challenge, disproportionately impacting low-income and marginalized communities across the globe. The second Sustainable Development Goal (SDG2) established by the United Nations in 2015 is to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture” worldwide by 2030. However, global conflict, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and economic downturns have slowed progress towards achieving SDG2 in recent years.

The magnitude of the food crisis and the need in communities across the world requires the public, private, civic, and philanthropic sectors to collaborate in new ways and build momentum to effect meaningful change at more intensive speeds than ever before. This new philanthropic initiative is one of several ways that Citi and the Citi Foundation are working to bring our resources as a global financial institution to address hunger and food insecurity, and we are interested in supporting NGOs with innovative, evidence-based ideas that can move the needle on what has become a crisis of unprecedented proportions.

### **FUNDING OVERVIEW**

The Citi Foundation is focused on the role that NGOs play in addressing food insecurity in communities around the world. This is a purposefully broad question intended to surface locally relevant and potentially game-changing ideas. In this first Challenge, Foundation support will include:

- Grants of \$500,000, to be used over a 24-month period, to 50 finalists in select communities where Citi has a presence.



- Grants are meant to be catalytic in nature, supporting the piloting or expansion of ideas and projects in the field of food security. In addition, the Citi Foundation will offer post-funding support by connecting grantees to Citi subject matter experts and employee volunteers as well as hosting learning opportunities to promote shared lessons and best practices on the topic of food security.

#### **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

- Applicant organizations must be registered as nonprofit entities under local law. For example, for U.S. entities, applicants need to be tax-exempt public charities as per Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.
- Applicant organizations must be able to submit at least one year of externally audited financial statements, covering all or part of calendar year 2021.
- Applicant's proposed program must align with the Foundation's mission of supporting low-income communities as defined by local standards and definitions.
- Applicant's proposed program covers one or more of the target geographies (see Q5).

#### **FUNDING & SELECTION PRIORITIES**

For this RFP, the Citi Foundation will prioritize projects in four areas: Access, Affordability, Availability, and Resilience, with the end goal of investing in programs that aim to improve access to food for low-income communities, reduce the financial burden to vulnerable families, and increase community resilience. In addition, the Foundation seeks to support a diverse portfolio of grantees that are committed to inclusion and sustainability as defined by their local contexts.

##### **1. Enabling Food Access:**

Across the world, nonprofit organizations are on the front lines working to meet the needs of a growing number of individuals and families experiencing food insecurity and the economic strain of overall household expenses. The Challenge seeks to support community-based NGOs to improve or scale direct access to food. Programs could include (but not be limited to):

- Providing technical assistance to strengthen existing food initiatives operated by community-based organizations, including support for new partnerships or coalitions to improve food access



- Innovative programming to leverage existing small, local grocery stores and/or neighborhood-based farmers' markets to improve low-income communities' access to food
- Supporting the creation of toolkits, courses, and educational resources to embed food initiatives into existing programs already reaching low-income communities, such as housing, financial inclusion, workforce, educational, and health programming

**2. Addressing Food Affordability:** With record food prices and soaring energy costs, people globally face high costs, which make it difficult to afford food. This is particularly true in low-income countries where people spend almost half of their income on food.<sup>1</sup> The Challenge seeks to support community finance efforts that enable low-income individuals and communities to address the affordability of food, thereby reducing their financial burden. Programs could include (but not be limited to):

- Pilots involving community financing to raise income opportunities (e.g., direct cash assistance, microloans, debt management and reduction, household and food budgeting)
- Providing technical and financial assistance to food retailers and food enterprises working in low-income communities to offer affordable and nutritious food
- Improving awareness of and streamlining enrollment into government support programs

**3. Improving Food Availability.** One of the six key strategies to address food insecurity in the 2022 UN State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report is to reinvent the supply chain to lower the cost of food, particularly by shortening supply chains in urban areas so that residents can access fresh food. The Challenge seeks to support innovative solutions or pilots that could address challenges in the food supply chain while also catalyzing positive community benefits, such as spurring the creation of new jobs and businesses. Programs could include (but not be limited to):

- Providing resources and capacity building to community-based food delivery organizations
- Providing access to storage solutions to prevent food waste
- Developing mobile applications, open data sources, interactive maps, and other technologies to enhance the efficiency of local food supply chains

---

<sup>1</sup> IMF. *Response to High Food, Energy Prices Should Focus on Most Vulnerable* (June 2022)



**4. Supporting Community Resilience.** The growing frequency and intensity of natural disasters and conflict, along with an increasingly volatile world, is jeopardizing the entire global food system. The potential harm to lives, livelihoods, and quality of life can be reduced by implementing strategies to manage disaster-related risks. The Challenge seeks to support communities to more effectively prepare for and respond to crises that disrupt food security, ensure a secure food supply for the future, and make communities more resilient to food-related external shocks. Programs could include (but not be limited to):

- Supporting new or expanded collaborations for preparedness and planning, including coordination of rapid-response efforts
- Developing tools and/or resources that help communities improve their resilience by setting priorities and allocating resources to manage risks for their prevailing hazards

#### **TIMELINE**

Step 1 - Register to apply: Organizations must register to confirm they meet the eligibility requirements and gain access to the Citi Foundation's online grantmaking portal. Registrations may take up to three business days to process. The deadline to register to apply is 4pm Eastern Daylight Time on March 22, 2023.

Step 2 - Submit your completed application: Applicant organizations must submit their completed application through the Citi Foundation's portal. The deadline to submit a completed application is 4pm Eastern Daylight Time on April 5, 2023.

Step 3 - Respond to any inquiries during the application review phase: After your application is completed, the Foundation will review your materials. Applications from organizations based outside the U.S. will also be reviewed by the Foundation's grantmaking partner, Charities Aid Foundation America (CAFA). The Foundation or CAFA may require additional information or documentation during this review phase. You may also receive an email requesting that you fill out a questionnaire and provide registration and other organizational information. Please respond to any inquiries from Citi, Citi Foundation, or CAFA in a timely manner.

Review and decision timeframe: All applicant organizations, including those selected for funding, will be informed of the funding decision no later than September 2023.



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **1. What are the specific food security solutions or innovations that the Citi Foundation seeks to support through this RFP?**

Through this 25-million-U.S.-Dollar global RFP, Citi Foundation will award grants to 50 nonprofit organizations that are addressing food insecurity. We will prioritize projects in four areas: Access, Affordability, Availability, and Resilience, with the end goal of investing in programs that aim to reduce the financial burden of food for low-income families and communities and increase community resilience. For more details, see selection priorities above.

### **2. Which organizations are eligible to apply?**

- Applicant organizations must be registered as nonprofit entities under local law. For example, for U.S. entities, applicants need to be tax-exempt public charities as per Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.
- Applicant organizations must be able to submit at least one year of externally audited financial statements, covering all or part of calendar year 2021.
- Applicant's proposed program must align with the Foundation's mission of supporting low-income communities.
- Applicant's proposed program covers one or more of the target geographies (see Q5).

### **3. What if my organization is not incorporated as an NGO and/or doesn't have at least one year of audited financial statements covering all or part of calendar year 2021?**

Only organizations that are NGO entities under local law will be considered for funding. In addition, only organizations that have at least one year of externally audited financial statements (covering all or part of calendar year 2021) will be considered for funding. A complete set of externally audited financial documents will include an auditor's letter with a signature, complete financial statements, and auditor's notes.

### **4. Can my organization apply through a fiscal sponsor?**

No. For this specific grant program, organizations working with fiscal sponsors are not eligible to apply. Note: The Citi Foundation works with Charities Aid Foundation America (CAFA) to support philanthropic initiatives outside the United States. All grants to organizations based outside the U.S. will be funded through CAFA, and CAFA will make the final approval decision for those grants and have oversight responsibility throughout the grant term.



**5. Does my program have to primarily impact one or more of Citi Foundation's target geographies to be eligible? And what are the target geographies?**

Yes, your proposed program idea should primarily impact one or more of the target geographies to be considered for this RFP. The Citi Foundation deploys a “more than philanthropy” approach and focuses on funding programs and solutions in select communities where Citi has a presence. As such, to be eligible for this RFP, your organization’s proposed program needs to primarily impact one or more of the target geographies noted below:

**Africa**

Algeria, Cameroon, Côte D’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zambia

**Asia Pacific**

Australia, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam

**Europe**

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Jersey Islands, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, and United Kingdom

**Middle East**

Bahrain, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates

**Latin America & the Caribbean**

Argentina, Bahamas, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad & Tobago, and Uruguay

**North America**

Canada, Mexico and select U.S. states and territories:

California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, South Dakota, Virginia, and Washington DC



**6. Does my organization have to be headquartered in one of the geographies listed above (Q5) to be eligible to apply?**

No, but your organization's proposed program needs to primarily impact one or more of the geographies noted above to be eligible.

**7. If my organization has an active grant with the Citi Foundation, is my organization eligible to apply for the global innovation challenge?**

Yes. Any organization that meets the criteria for the RFP can apply.

**8. Is there a deadline to apply?**

Yes. Applicant organizations must register to confirm they meet the eligibility requirements and gain access to the Citi Foundation's grantmaking platform. Registrations must be received by 4pm Eastern Daylight Time on March 22, 2023 and may take up to three business days to process.

As a second step, applicant organizations must submit their completed applications through the Citi Foundation's online grantmaking portal by 4pm Eastern Daylight Time on April 5, 2023.

**9. How will applications be reviewed?**

All complete applications will be reviewed against the eligibility criteria and selection priorities noted in this document. Ultimately, 50 nonprofit organizations will be selected for a grant award of 500,000 U.S. Dollars.

**10. Can my organization submit multiple applications?**

No. The Citi Foundation asks that nonprofit organizations eligible to apply submit only one application to the RFP. Local affiliates of global NGOs that meet the eligibility requirements would be considered a separate organization and may apply directly for funding. Note that separate organizations should not submit applications for the same program.

**11. How will grant amounts be determined?**

Through this RFP, the Citi Foundation has standardized the grant size to 500,000 U.S. Dollars, which can be utilized by the selected organizations for a period of 24 months. Applicants will be required to submit a detailed program budget that equals 500,000 U.S. Dollars.

**12. What can be included in the required 500,000 U.S. Dollars program budget?**

The grants that will be awarded through this RFP are restricted. Funds could cover a range of items, including but not limited to, salaries, technology, program materials, trainings, events, research, communications, marketing, evaluation, convenings, and overhead. Further guidance is provided in the grant application.

**13. Is there a minimum or maximum organizational budget size that is required for an organization to apply?**

No. However, before applying, organizations should consider how a grant of 500,000 U.S. Dollars would impact their legal and/or operational status.

**14. Can my organization work in partnership with another organization to submit a proposal?**

Yes. Organizations interested in working on a solution together should determine the lead organization and work together to submit one application. Please note that only the lead organization, if selected, would be awarded the grant and would be fiscally responsible for the full grant award and deliverables and for ensuring their partners' compliance with the Foundation's terms of award.

**15. What type of organizations and projects will not be considered for funding?**

The types of organizations and projects that will not be considered for funding include, but are not limited to:

- Private foundations
- Religious or fraternal organizations (unless they are engaged in a project benefiting an entire community)
- Organizations that discriminate on the basis of race, sex, gender identity or expression, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, veteran's status, or other legally protected personal characteristic or status





- Individuals
- Lobbying, political causes, campaigns, or candidates
- Advertising, special events, dinners, telethons, benefits, or fundraising activities
- Memorials
- Gift matching
- Organizations that do not meet the eligibility criteria as per this document

**16. Can my organization submit an application in a language other than English?**

No. The Citi Foundation asks that all applications be submitted in English, unless otherwise noted. For instance, certain required documents (i.e., externally audited financial statements, annual reports, governing documents, and registration documents) can be submitted in a language other than English. See Q17.

**17. Can my organization submit required documents in a language other than English?**

Yes. Certain required documents, including audited financial statements, annual reports, governing documents, and registration documents may be submitted in a language other than English. Please note that the required documents differ if your organization is registered outside the U.S. Refer directly to the application form for further details.

**18. Can a national, regional, or global organization apply for a program that would be delivered by its local affiliate organizations?**

Yes, an organization that is working at the national, regional, or global level can apply for a grant that would entail funding for a program delivered by its local affiliate(s). However, only one application per project will be accepted. For instance, if a regional or global organization submitted an application on behalf of a local affiliate organization, that local organization shouldn't submit another application for the same project. If organizations are collaborating on a project, the partners should determine the lead organization and work together to submit one application for consideration.

**19. What are the grant terms and what are the reporting requirements?**

The Citi Foundation seeks to disburse grant payments in late 2023, and the grant period is 24 months from the date the grant is awarded.

The grants awarded through this RFP will be restricted, and parameters that all grantees will need to adhere to include that grant funds cannot be used for political or lobbying purposes, including without limitation, independent expenditures.



The Citi Foundation works with Charities Aid Foundation America (CAFA) to support philanthropic initiatives outside the United States. If applicable, CAFA may require additional information and documentation from an applicant once the Citi Foundation has recommended the grant to them. CAFA will make the final approval decision for the grant and will have oversight responsibility throughout the grant term.

Selected organizations will be required to submit interim and final reports via the Citi Foundation's online grant portal. We encourage all applicants to carefully read all the terms noted in the application form.

**20. Will every organization that responds to the RFP be contacted?**

Once you submit your application, you will receive an automated email receipt of your submission. The Foundation may contact you as part of the review process, but, ultimately, we intend to notify all organizations that apply of the outcome by September 2023.

**21. If my organization isn't selected, will the Foundation provide us with individual feedback upon request?**

Given the high volume of applications likely to be submitted, the Citi Foundation will not be in the position to provide feedback to individual applicants.

**22. Where can I find more information about this funding opportunity?**

In addition to this document, we have recorded a [webinar](#) for applicants that covers many of the points noted above. If you have questions not addressed in this document or the recorded webinar, please don't hesitate to email [citifoundationRFP@citi.com](mailto:citifoundationRFP@citi.com).

**23. Can I provide feedback to the Foundation on this RFP?**

Of course, and we welcome your thoughts. Please submit your feedback directly to [citifoundationRFP@citi.com](mailto:citifoundationRFP@citi.com). As this is Citi Foundation's first global RFP, the Foundation team hopes to learn from applicants and stakeholders and use those lessons to continue to iterate and improve our approach for the future.