THE ESO PERFORMANCE-BASED GRANT – APPLICATION GUIDELINES

These comprehensive guidelines aim to guide the applicant through a meticulous application process. Each applicant should ensure that they read and adhere to these guidelines meticulously to ensure the application aligns with the program's requirements.

GRANT WINDOWS OVERVIEW:

Description	Window 1: ESO Capability Enhancement Grant	Window 2: ESO Expansion Incentive Grant	Window 3: Ecosystem Collaboration Grant
Purpose of the grant	To enhance capabilities of Rwandan ESOs supporting high-growth startups to address critical gaps in their existing service offerings.	To empower the strategic growth of Rwandan ESOs, with established foundation and demonstrated significant traction, by providing incentives for expansion and internationalization.	Promoting collaboration between ESOs at a local, national or regional level, fostering an interconnected entrepreneurial ecosystem for enhanced services for high- growth startups. This funding will specifically be allocated for initiatives that contribute to the overall growth and development of the entire entrepreneurial ecosystem.
Grant size	Up to **USD 225,000** per application	Up to **USD 500,000** per application	Up to **USD 85,000** per application
Targeted activities to be funded	• Strengthening the skills and knowledge of staff and management to enhance support for startups. • Introduction of new, data-driven or technology-enabled methods for program delivery. • Strengthening the network of mentors or sponsors to	• Creating new innovative programs that attract and support diverse startups, creating cohorts with diverse international representation. • Supporting startups to present innovative solutions and scale up outside of Rwanda.	• Joint ESO workshops and trainings to share expertise, best practices, and insights to enhance collective knowledge. • Ecosystem-wide networking events that bring together ESOs, startups, investors and other stakeholders to foster networking, knowledge exchange and collaboration.

Description	Window 1: ESO Capability Enhancement Grant	Window 2: ESO Expansion Incentive Grant	Window 3: Ecosystem Collaboration Grant
	• provide enhanced support to startups. • Integration of adaptive methodologies to enhance overall program effectiveness. • Enriching existing services through introduction of other value-add offerings. • Development of a sustainable business model based on strengthening the capabilities and expertise of ESOs that leads to increase revenue generation, long-term viability and self-sufficiency in the delivery of enhanced service offerings. • General administrative expenses such as office rent and routine operational costs unrelated to capacity building will not be eligible for funding under this window. • Expenses that are prohibited by the RDAP	• Creating initiatives that facilitate cross-border collaboration among startups. • Forging partnerships with global industry experts, international ESOs, incubators, or accelerators for strategic growth initiatives. • Developing specialized services for specific groups or sectors. • Undertaking diverse growth initiatives, for strategic growth.	• Establishment of hubs, networks, or associations. • Outsourcing experts to facilitate ecosystem knowledge sharing events or trainings. • Provision of technical assistance on data collection and analysis for knowledge and networking platforms. • Other coordinating or collaborative activities that support collective growth of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. • General administrative expenses such as office rent and routine operational costs unrelated to ecosystem collaboration activities will not be eligible for funding under this window. • Expenses that are prohibited by the RDAP Financing Agreement and other project documents will not be eligible for funding under this grant program.

Description	Window 1: ESO Capability Enhancement Grant	Window 2: ESO Expansion Incentive Grant	Window 3: Ecosystem Collaboration Grant
	Financing Agreement and other project documents will not be eligible for funding under this grant program.		
% of matching requirement from ESO	The grant covers 100% of the cost for the approved eligible activities.	The grant covers up to 70% of the cost of the approved eligible activities. The remaining amount will be covered by the ESO.	The grant covers 100% of the cost of the approved eligible activities.
Geographical coverage	Rwandan registered ESOs.	Rwandan registered ESO as lead applicant; partnership(s) with local and international ESOs is encouraged.	Rwandan registered ESO as lead applicant; partnership with local and international ESOs
Description of target beneficiary	Rwandan registered ESOs with average annual revenues of less than USD 600,000 for the last three years, seeking to elevate their existing capabilities.	ESOs with established foundations and average annual revenues of USD 600,000 and above for the last three years, with a keen interest in expansion and internationalization to cater to evolving needs of high-growth startups in a scale-up phase.	Rwandan ESOs, member-based organizations, associations or similar organizations with focused efforts to enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem through intentional collaboration and ecosystem coordination initiatives.
Number of years in operation	At least three years of operation.	At least five years of operation.	At least three years of operation.
Types of startups supported by ESO	High-growth innovation-driven startups	High-growth innovation-driven startups	High-growth innovation-driven startups

Description	Window 1: ESO Capability Enhancement Grant	Window 2: ESO Expansion Incentive Grant	Window 3: Ecosystem Collaboration Grant
Number of ESO's permanent staff	Minimum 5	Minimum 8	Minimum 5
Type of application	Single applicant. Implementing entity should be the one applying. Subcontracting is not allowed.	Sole applicant or partnership.	Partnership of a minimum of 3 ESOs with at least two partners being a Rwandan ESO.

Detailed description of the Grant windows

1. ESO Capability Enhancement Grant:

Objective: To enhance capabilities of Rwandan ESOs supporting high-growth startups to address critical gaps in their existing service offerings.

Eligibility: Rwandan registered ESOs with a minimum of 5 permanent staff and an average annual revenue not exceeding USD 600,000 for the last three years, that have some level of traction supporting high-growth startups.

Targeted activities to be funded:
- Strengthening the skills and knowledge of staff and management to enhance support for startups.
- Introduction of new, data-driven or technology-enabled methods for program delivery.
- Strengthening the network of mentors or sponsors to provide enhanced support to startups.
- Integration of adaptive methodologies to enhance overall program effectiveness.
- Enriching existing services through introduction of other value-add offerings.
- Development of a sustainable business model based on strengthening the capabilities and expertise of ESOs that leads to increase revenue generation, long-term viability and self-sufficiency in the delivery of enhanced service offerings.
- General administrative expenses such as office rent and routine operational costs unrelated to capacity building will not be eligible for funding under this window.
- Expenses that are prohibited by the Rwanda Digital Acceleration Project (RDAP) Financing Agreement and other project documents will not be eligible for funding under this grant program.

Grant Size:
- Up to USD 225,000 per application, covering 100% of approved eligible activities. The grant sizes within this window will be contingent upon the funding requirements associated with the proposed activities that ESOs aim to undertake.
- The disbursement of the grants will be performance-based, based on the delivery of the defined milestones and in line with the disbursement schedules as outlined in the grant agreement.

Type of application:
- Single applicant. Implementing entity should be the one applying. Subcontracting is not allowed.
- Only one application per ESO is allowed within the context of specific call for proposals/cut off dates (applicants cannot be selected for several windows or for the same window twice in the same timeframe (same set of calls for proposal)). Applicants submitting or participating in multiple applications for one call for proposal will be disqualified.

Evaluation Criteria: Excellence (30 points), Impact (40 points), Quality & Efficiency of Implementation (30 points).

2. ESO Expansion Incentive Grant:

Objective: To empower the strategic growth of Rwandan ESOs, with established foundation and demonstrated significant traction, by providing incentives for expansion and internationalization.

Eligibility: Rwandan registered ESOs with established foundations, a minimum of 8 permanent staff and average annual revenues of USD 600,000 and above for the last three years, with a keen interest in expansion and internationalization to cater to evolving needs of high-growth startups in a scale-up phase. The ESOs should have been in operation for at least five years.

Targeted activities to be funded:
- Creating new innovative programs that attract and support diverse startups, creating cohorts with diverse international representation.
- Supporting startups to present innovative solutions and scale up outside of Rwanda.
- Creating initiatives that facilitate cross-border collaboration among startups.
- Forging partnerships with global industry experts, international ESOs, incubators, or accelerators for strategic growth initiatives.
- Developing specialized services for specific groups or sectors.
- Undertaking diverse growth initiatives, for strategic growth.
- Operational costs related to expansion and internationalization initiatives may be eligible for funding under this grant window based on case by case assessment.
- Expenses that are prohibited by the RDAP Financing Agreement and other project documents will not be eligible for funding under this grant program.

Grant Size:
- Up to USD 500,000 per applicant, covering up to 70% of the cost of the approved eligible activities. The remaining amount will be covered by the ESO. The grant sizes within this window will be contingent upon the funding requirements associated with the expansion or internationalization activities that ESOs aim to undertake.
- The disbursement of the grants will be performance-based, based on the delivery of the defined milestones and in line with the disbursement schedules as outlined in the grant agreement.

Type of application:
- Sole applicant or partnership. Rwandan registered ESO as lead applicant; partnership(s) with local and international ESOs is encouraged.
- Only one application per applicant is allowed within the context of specific call for proposals/cut off dates (applicants cannot be selected for several windows or for the same window twice in the same timeframe (same set of calls for proposal)). Applicants submitting or participating in multiple applications for one call for proposal will be disqualified.

Evaluation Criteria: Excellence (30 points), Impact (40 points), Quality & Efficiency of Implementation (30 points).

3. Ecosystem Collaboration Grant:

Objective: Promoting collaboration between ESOs at a local, national or regional level, fostering an interconnected entrepreneurial ecosystem for enhanced services for high- growth startups.

This funding will specifically be allocated for initiatives that contribute to the overall growth and development of the entire entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Eligibility: Rwandan registered ESOs, member-based organizations, associations or similar organizations with focused efforts to enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem through intentional collaboration and ecosystem coordination initiatives.

Type of application:
- Partnership of a minimum of 3 eligible organizations with at least two partners being Rwandan registered entities.
- Only one application per organization is allowed within the context of specific call for proposals/cut off dates (applicants cannot be selected for several windows or for the same window twice in the same timeframe (same set of calls for proposal)). Applicants submitting or participating in multiple applications for one call for proposal will be disqualified.

Targeted activities to be funded:
- Joint ESO workshops and trainings to share expertise, best practices, and insights to enhance collective knowledge.
- Ecosystem-wide networking events that bring together ESOs, startups, investors and other stakeholders to foster networking, knowledge exchange and collaboration.
- Establishment of hubs, networks, or associations.
- Outsourcing experts to facilitate ecosystem knowledge sharing events or trainings.
- Provision of technical assistance on data collection and analysis for knowledge and networking platforms.
- Other coordinating or collaborative activities that support collective growth of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- General administrative expenses such as office rent and routine operational costs unrelated to ecosystem collaboration activities will not be eligible for funding under this window.
- Expenses that are prohibited by the RDAP Financing Agreement and other project documents will not be eligible for funding under this grant program.

Grant Size:
- Up to USD 85,000 per application, covering 100% of approved eligible activities. The grant sizes within this window will be contingent upon the funding requirements associated with the proposed collaboration activities.
- The disbursement of the grants will be performance-based, based on the delivery of the defined milestones and in line with the disbursement schedules as outlined in the grant agreement.

Evaluation Criteria: Excellence (30 points), Impact (40 points), Quality & Efficiency of Implementation (30 points).

APPLICATION PROCESS:
1. Review Guidelines:

Thoroughly review the application guidelines including the eligibility criteria, objectives, and evaluation criteria.

2. The ESO Assessment Tool

All applicants are required to complete a self-evaluation within ESO Assessment Tool (ESO Assessment Tool link) as part of the application. The self-assessment report will be extracted from the ESO Assessment Tool and submitted by ESOs as part of the grant application process. The areas covered by the tool include, but are not limited to:

1. Organization information
2. Capabilities
3. Experience
4. Ecosystem results
5. Internal Organizational Dynamics

3. Prepare Required Documents:

Compile necessary documents, including legal entity certificate(s) of registration, valid tax clearance certificates, self-assessment report extracted from the ESO Assessment Tool, references from at least five startups, and financial statements for the last three years. For applicants applying for the ESO Expansion Incentive Grant, the following will be required: audited financial statements for the last three years; proof of ability to provide the required percentage of financial contribution by the applicant(s), and references from at least five startups that have been participated in the ESO(s)'s programs and received fundraising support from the ESO(s).

4. Develop Detailed Proposal:

- Utilize the provided application template to structure your proposal, addressing each section comprehensively.
- Clearly articulate objectives, proposed activities, and expected outcomes.
- Present tangible evidence of past successes in supporting high-growth startups.
- Emphasize how proposed activities contribute to the overall growth of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Clearly outline your team's composition, roles, and expertise.
- Highlight existing gaps and articulate plans for addressing them.
- Provide a meticulous breakdown of the budget per activity, indicating how funds will be allocated.
- Clearly define measurable, feasible, and relevant KPIs and milestones.
- Align the KPIs and milestones strategically with the overall success of the proposed initiatives.
- Develop a comprehensive sustainability plan, outlining how your organization will operate and sustain the proposed activities beyond the grant support, including development of a sustainable business model.

5. Submit Application:

Submit your completed application and required documents through the designated email address: eso.grants@risa.gov.rw

6. Important Dates:
Grant Application Opening: 08 January 2024
Application Deadline: 22 February 2024 at 17:00 CAT

7. Contact Information:
All information and resources regarding the ESO Performance-Based Grant Program will be posted on www.innovaterwanda.rw/resources

For any inquiries or assistance, contact eso.grants@risa.gov.rw