UNICEF StartUp Lab

Applicant Information Brochure

Cohort 2024 (April - September)

unicef for every child

Are you working to...?

- Achieve **social impact** through your startup?

- Is your solution **tech-driven**?

- Has your startup has been operational for 1+ year?

- Is your startup a registered business in Ghana? (no NGOs, foundations, or individuals)

What's UNICEF StartUp Lab and why is it unique for social impact startups?

UNICEF StartUp Lab, is a six-month accelerator empowering entrepreneurs dedicated to social impact and tech-driven solutions. The programme is led by UNICEF in Ghana, supported by KOICA and implemented by MEST Africa.

Launched in 2019, the Lab has supported over 50 startups in building a product, developing and strengthening business operations and strategy, communicating and growing relationships with users, partners and funders, as well as provided prototyping funding. The Lab has played a pivotal role in the successful discovery and development of 4 Digital Public Goods in Ghana.

UNICEF StartUp Lab provides a unique product by integrating business incubation and wide-reaching technical expertise and systems knowledge in the social sector, amplified by the reach of UNICEF's and KOICA's partnerships. While participating in the programme you will find and connect with UNICEF programmes including Health, Education, WASH, and Social Protection.

By participating in the UNICEF StartUp Lab you benefit from aligning your impact-focused business with existing development needs and gain access to networks that can support your work.

Why should I apply?
What are the practical benefits?

Funding:
Each selected startup receives up to GHS 32,000
of prototyping funding

Investment:
Networking and investment opportunities for participants and alumni,
not limited to the UNICEF Venture Fund

Partnerships and Engagement:
Opportunity to connect and collaborate with UNICEF programmes
including Health, Education, WASH, and Social Protection

Growth:
Intense, hands-on business acceleration

Knowledge:
Access to UNICEF, KOICA, and MEST resources

Resources:
Technology perks

Impact:
Opportunity to refine your product-social impact fit, and become a
UN-recognized Digital Public Good

Also, it's fun!

What's the curriculum?

Over the course of 6-months, participating startups will be taken through the following key modules:

Month 1
Diligence - Market and user research, design thinking, prototype development

Month 3
Business - Business modelling, sales

Month 5
Marketing and Communications

Month 2
Product - Product development and feature additions

Month 4
Finance and Unit Economics

Month 6
Investor Readiness - Resources and tools to prepare your business for funding

In addition you will benefit from guidance and resources on:

- How to become a UN-recognized Digital Public Good
- UN System support tools for tech-driven entrepreneurs
- Interacting with government policymakers and why it's important

Additional benefits you'll get

We provide many benefits outside of the curriculum. Some of the benefits and perks (not all!) include:

- Up to GHS 32,000 of prototyping funding to scale your product
- Technology Perks from: Amazon Web Services, Paystack, etc.
- Opportunity to present at UNICEF events
- Dedicated support to apply for a Digital Public Good status
- Opportunity to apply for the $100K equity-free UNICEF Venture Fund
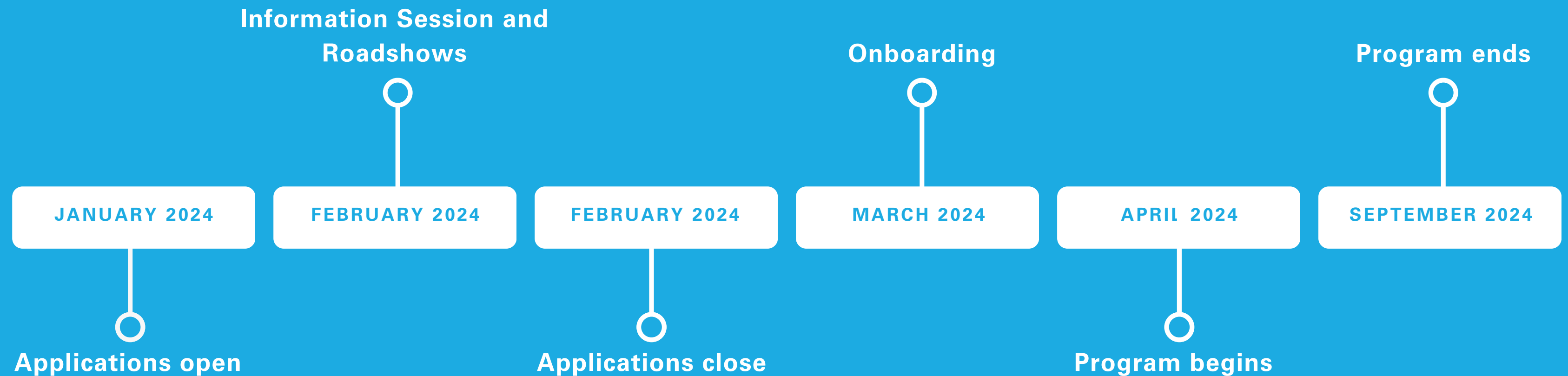
It sounds great. Am I eligible?

If your startup meets the following eligibility criteria you should apply:

- Your startup has been operational for 1+ year
- Your startup is a registered business in Ghana (no NGOs, foundations, or individuals)
- Your startup has technology as the core enabler of the business
- Your startup has a business model with a social impact that addresses at least one of the Sustainable Development Goals
- Open-source solutions, or startups that are willing to open-source their solutions, are particularly encouraged to apply
- Startups with female founders/co-founders are encouraged to apply
- The program is designed to include startups from all regions of Ghana

What are the key dates?

Information Session and Roadshows

Onboarding

Program ends

| JANUARY 2024 | FEBRUARY 2024 | FEBRUARY 2024 | MARCH 2024 | APRIL 2024 | SEPTEMBER 2024 |

Applications open

Applications close

Program begins

How long is the selection process?
(Hint: it's quick)

① **Application form**
29 Jan - 29 Feb

② **Stage I interviews**
12 Feb - 29 Feb

③ **Stage II interviews**
4 Mar - 15 Mar

Startup founders are invited to fill out the application form.
Ensure you submit your complete application before the deadline.

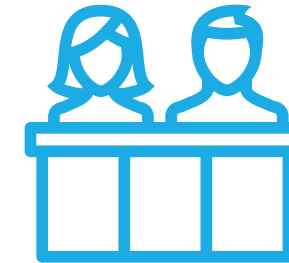Applications are assessed on a rolling basis until the deadline. Within this period, startups that submit a complete application will be shortlisted and invited for a virtual interview with MEST.

Startups that make it to the final stage of the process will have a final virtual interview in front of a panel of representatives from UNICEF, KOICA and MEST.

Start my application

Have additional questions? Here are some FAQs.

What is the time commitment for the program?

Participants are expected to attend all bootcamp Work Weeks. Bootcamps take place in Accra in the first week of each month from Monday - Friday. Participants on returning to their bases of operation after the Work Week spend between 5 - 10 hours participating in virtual sessions and field work (where applicable) for the three subsequent weeks in any given month, known as Key Weeks.

Will the program be virtual or in person?

Work Weeks (first week of every month) are in-person and Key Weeks (remaining 3 weeks of each month) are virtual.

Who covers the costs of Work Weeks in Accra?

UNICEF StartUp Lab covers the costs of transportation and accommodation for the Accra Work Weeks.

Does every founder need to participate in the program?
Every founder is expected to participate in the virtual onboarding in March 2024 and the first Work Week in April 2024. Other team members may represent the participating startup in subsequent modules as it relates to their role within the startup. e.g. CTO at Product module, CFO at Unit Economics module.

How many companies will be selected for the program?
25 startups will be admitted into this cohort of the program.

What is meant by "prototyping funding"?
Prototyping funding is used to support startups with the development of their product. The process involves testing new ideas and developing them in an iterative approach. Sometimes prototyping funding is used to simply accelerate the development of your product.

Will companies receive the prototyping funding during or after the program?
Companies will receive prototyping funding during the program so as to maximize the combination of financial and technical assistance provided in the program.

We are looking forward to receiving your application.

Good luck!

Click Here to Apply

Deadline for applications: February 29th, 2024

KOICA-UNICEF Accelerating Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Ghana Project

The KOICA-UNICEF "Accelerating Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Ghana Project" contributes to the efforts of the Government of Ghana to support young entrepreneurs and make further progress towards the SDG Agenda.

Through this project, KOICA will provide funding to the UNICEF StartUp Lab programme in the years 2022-2026. The project is expected to increase the knowledge and capacity of social impact startups to develop tech-driven solutions that can succeed in the marketplace. UNICEF and KOICA will resource and empower startups that address social and economic deprivations and improve efficiencies in the social sectors, especially in the areas affecting youth.

The initiative will support entrepreneurship and innovation in Ghana, especially for ICT-enabled solutions with significant societal impact potential, in line with the digitalization efforts of the Government of Ghana. The initiative will also link to the GK-IMPACT, the new Ghana-Korea Centre of Excellence for ICT-based Startups and Asian Research to be constructed and inaugurated at the premises of the University of Ghana by 2026.

About KOICA

The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) was established in 1991 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea as a governmental organization to implement the Korean government's grant aid and technical cooperation programs. KOICA Ghana Office has been supporting and implementing developmental programs in Ghana in four key sectoral areas - Public Health, Agricultural, Rural Development, Education, and Governance. Ongoing flagship initiatives include the Implementation of the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) in Ghana, CHIPS + project with the Ghana Health Service, Rice Value Chain Improvement Project in Central Region, and Girls STEM Project with Ghana Education Service.

About UNICEF

UNICEF is a United Nations agency which works to uphold the rights and well-being of all children in 190 countries. Operating in Ghana for 40 years, UNICEF's current mandate focuses on health, nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene, education, protection, and social policy sectors, as well as adolescent and youth empowerment and social behavior change.