

YOUTH CHALLENGE FUND

An overview of application and selection processes

I. General Background

Youth innovation is one of the key contributors to the growth and development of a country. The creative ideas and entrepreneurial spirit of young individuals contribute to the growth of a country in various ways. This not only creates job opportunities for young innovators themselves but also for other citizens, addressing unemployment challenges. However, access to finance, proper training, and coaching during the concept development and execution has led to low impacts so far.

On the other hand, universities are the right place to provide the right support mainly through knowledge and skills required as part of their mission. Whereas development organizations like Stichting Wageningen Research Ethiopia (SWRE), an international NGO registered in Ethiopia since March 2021 with the FDRE Agency for Civil Society Organizations, as well as the private sector, can offer good opportunities for technical and financial support. The overall impact of such interventions is to enhance food security, employment opportunities, and enhanced income generation.

SWRE is established with the objective of promoting a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food system in Ethiopia. One of the projects implemented by SWRE is Resilient Agriculture for Inclusive and Sustainable Ethiopian Food Systems (RAISE-FS). RAISE-FS project is a four-year research development program with a mission to leverage transformation in Ethiopian food systems covering the continuum from food insecure to better-endowed households and regions in the effort of realizing production surpluses, commodity commercialization, and food and nutritional security in a sustainable manner. The overall impact of such interventions is to introduce innovation that would enhance food security, create employment opportunities, and enhance income generation. RAISE-FS is focusing on the following outcome areas:

- Social and economic empowerment of women and youth in food systems
- Efficient and sustainable production
- Enhanced sector and value chain performance
- Increased availability of safe and nutritious food and
- Enabling environment for system change.

II. About the Call for Innovation Fund

Currently, the RAISE-FS is looking to gear its efforts towards promoting youth entrepreneurship, where the youth with feasible and impactful business concepts would be financed with seed money to start their businesses. The pilot initiative is aimed at young (18-35 years) undergraduate university students graduating this year (2024 G.C.), currently enrolled in their postgraduate (master's or PhD) program. It will also include training and coaching of selected students on business plan development and pitching before the final round of competition. The initiative is expected to encourage youth innovators from academia to go into business aside from looking for hired work as well as boosting business ideas coming from the youth. Four universities (Bahirdar, Mekelle, Hawassa, and Haramaya) were selected for this call based on their long-standing experience in agricultural education, and their ongoing partnership with SWRE, as most of the commodities for this call fall under their focus and experience.

The application process for this call comprises three stages. Firstly, applicants must submit concept notes by June 8, 2024. Those applicants with approved concept notes will progress to the second stage, where they will be invited to submit business proposals. Before advancing to the second stage, selected applicants with the strongest concept notes will receive training and coaching on how to write a business proposal and do pitching. In the third stage, finalists will then be chosen from the applicants with the best proposals and notified to prepare for pitching. All applicants not progressing at any stage will receive appropriate notifications.

III. Eligibility and Minimum Criteria

In this call, innovation refers to a process by which a product or a service is created or renewed and brought up-to-date by applying new processes, introducing new techniques, or establishing successful ideas to create new value. The creation of value is a defining characteristic of innovation. Offering a completely new product or service usually is an innovation. In addition to this, producing the same product or offering the same service in another region in Ethiopia is not an innovation, but bringing in an existing technology/product/service to Ethiopia from another country is considered an innovation.

Applicants

- should be undergraduate university students graduating this year (2024 G.C.), doing their post-graduate (master's or PhD) program, and aged between 18 – 35 years.
- should complete a concept note and business proposal with all its requirements as outlined in the call for application.
- should agree with the terms and conditions outlined in the grant contract.

Business Ideas

- should address challenges in the poultry, pulses, spices, oilseeds, potato, vegetable and fruits, or other agricultural subsectors (except dairy)
- should directly or indirectly benefit farmers, processors, and consumers.
- should contribute to
 - enhancing food and nutrition security
 - improving sector performance
 - women empowerment
 - promoting sustainable production
 - generating income for youths, women, and smallholder farmers
 - promoting exports or substituting imports
 - improving access to market information
 - implementing post-harvest technologies
 - promoting agro-processing
 - introducing new or improved products, services, technologies, business models, and/or service delivery models
- should be a project not being supported or approved for funding by any other donor.
- should be implemented within one year

IV. YCF Application Process

The YCF call for applications will be posted on various social media and websites of the universities. The applicants will send a soft copy of their application through an email created for this purpose.

a) Stages of the YCF

- Submission of concept notes (Stage One): Applicants are required to submit a concept note in line with the template provided. All submitted concept notes which meet the application requirements will be reviewed by an Evaluation Committee based on the criteria. The selected applicants will be notified and invited to participate in the next stage of the competition
- Training and coaching for proposal writing for those who qualify through first-round screening

- Submission of full proposals (Stage Two): Shortlisted applicants will be asked to provide a comprehensive project proposal that includes detailed information on the project's objectives, activities, budget, monitoring and evaluation plan, and sustainability strategy.
 - Proposal evaluation and announcing winners
 - Pitching the finally selected proposals
 - Awarding and contract agreement
- b) Considerations during application
1. Applicants should submit their applications to gebreyohannes.girmay@mu.edu.et and cc: info.raisefsethiopia@gmail.com and info@shayashone.com.
 2. In the email submission, please include the following information:
 - (1) Email Subject Title: YCF Application: [Applicant Name], [University Name]
 - (2) Within the email body, please include the following:
 - (a) Personal contact information (phone number, ID No.)
 - (b) Academic year with department
 3. Application Timeline: Open – 20 May 2024 – 8 June 2024

V. YCF Budget

The allocated budget for YCF ranges from 5000 to 20,000 Euro per winning idea

VI. BDS Support

YCF winning students may be linked with SYS so that they can receive one-to-one tailored support to further strengthen the idea they have proposed and their general business skills to run a scalable business in the sector.

RAISE - FS

Youth Challenge Fund

CONCEPT NOTE APPLICATION FORM



CALL FOR APPLICATION FOR YOUTH CHALLENGE FUND (YCF)

0. GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Please adhere to the form's format provided below, as changes will render the concept note invalid.
- You are requested to fill out every section by at least addressing the lead questions and points of attention.
- After filling out the model, please erase all lead questions and points of attention, only leaving your own text.
- Please note that the completed concept note form, excluding the signature page and annexes, **MUST NOT** exceed 5 pages.
- **Please submit your completed concept note form and annexes via gebreyohannes.girmay@mu.edu.et with cc: info.raisefsethiopia@gmail.com and info@shayashone.com**
- Concept notes can be submitted until June 8, 2024. They will be evaluated on a rolling basis, and applicants whose concept notes are accepted by the Evaluation Committee will be invited to submit project proposals. The selection process will operate on a first-come, first-served basis.

0. FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Date received	Received by	Application No

1. APPLICANT AND PARTNER INFORMATION

Please provide student information in the boxes below. Changes to boxes will render the concept note invalid.

1.1 Project Title

Please provide the title of the project.

1.2 General Information

Yes(✓)

No(✗)

Letter of support from the university (obligatory)

1.3 Applicant Information

Name of the applicant

Date of birth

Name of the university

Field of study

Education level
(Undergraduate/postgraduate)

Graduation year

ID No.

E-mail address

Phone number

2. PROJECT INFORMATION

Please write out your full proposal using the prescribed format below by answering at least the lead questions and points of attention given.

2.1 Innovativeness

How does the project offer new or improved products, services, technology, business models and/or service delivery models to Ethiopia?

Please, limit this to **ONLY ½ pages**. Also, you can refer to the overview document to understand how innovation is interpreted in RAISE-FS YCF.

2.2 Objectives

Please describe the objectives of this project and how it is in agreement with the RAISE-FS YCF objective.

Please, limit this to **ONLY ½ pages**

2.3 Methodological approach and feasibility of the project

Please describe the key approach to be employed during the innovation process and the feasibility (technical as well as financial) of this project.

Please, limit this to **ONLY ½ pages**

2.4 Budget and activity plan

What is the total budget of the proposed project? Indicate the activity plan with a timeline.

Please, limit this to **ONLY ½ pages**.

3. SIGNATURE PAGE

BY SIGNING THIS CONCEPT NOTE FORM, YOU ARE DECLARING THAT **YOU** HAVE CHECKED AND

VERIFIED THE INFORMATION PROVIDED THEREIN TO BE TRUE IN SUBSTANCE AND FORM. SUBSEQUENTLY, ANY INFORMATION FOUND TO BE UNTRUE WILL RENDER THE CONCEPT NOTE NULL AND VOID.

Name of Department Head	
Date	
Signature	

Please note that the concept note cannot be processed without having been duly signed by the University and the University's stamp affixed.

Annex A
Please attach a scanned copy of your ID and letter of support (max two pages ONLY).