

Frequently Asked Questions

UNICEF REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (REOI) FOR OPEN SOURCE TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS FOR CHILDREN

This document contains FAQ's about the UNICEF Innovation Fund, covering the whole application process from Request for Expressions of Interest (first phase) to Request for Proposal (final phase).

Who can submit an Expression of Interest to the UNICEF Innovation Fund?

Projects are assessed by UNICEF Innovation Fund team and recommended for funding to the internal board. Companies need to fulfill the following mandatory requirements to be considered for funding:

- Registered as a private company
- Registered in a UNICEF programme country ([see list here](#))
- Working on open source technology solutions (or willing to be open source) under the following licenses or their equivalent:
 - (i) for software, a BSD license,
 - (ii) for hardware, a CERN license and
 - (iii) for design or content, a CC-BY license
- An existing prototype of the open source solution with promising results from initial pilots
- Solution has the potential to positively impact the lives of the most vulnerable children
- Generating publicly exposed real-time data that is measurable

How will Expressions of Interest be assessed?

The following criteria will be used:

- Relevance of solution for children and young people, problem-solution fit and potential for application at global scale
- Novelty of project and alignment with [Innovation Principles](#)
- Suitability of the team and key personnel to implement the project
- Project budget and financing

How does the process work?

REOI

Interested companies are required to complete and submit the EOI Response form and provide the information and supporting documents indicated in the form. EOIs Response forms must be submitted through www.unicefinnovationfund.org/#/submit.

A REOI does not constitute a solicitation. UNICEF does not require bids or proposals at the REOI stage; rather UNICEF merely seeks an expression of interest in participating in the subsequent Request for Proposals.

A response to this Request for Expression of Interest does not automatically ensure that the submitting company will be selected to participate in the future Request for Proposals.

UNICEF reserves the right to change or cancel the requirement at any time during the REOI and/or solicitation process. UNICEF also reserves the right to require compliance with additional conditions as and when issuing the final tender/RFPS document.

How do I submit an expression of interest?

Fill in the form at www.unicefinnovationfund.org/#/submit (submissions by startups). You may also add links to additional documents to support your expression of interest.

Where can I submit any other questions I have about the REOI?

If you have any additional question about this REOI, please submit questions through [THIS FORM](#). Answers to all questions submitted will be shared publicly.

Can I submit an expression of interest from anywhere in the world?

UNICEF Innovation Fund only accepts submissions from companies registered in UNICEF programme countries. See the list of countries [here](#).

Can a university submit an expression of interest for the fund?

No. Only private companies are eligible.

Can I submit an expression of interest for funding for a school/university project if I'm a student?

Individuals cannot submit expressions of interest. The entity submitting an expression of interest needs to be a legally registered company. If the funding is awarded, the university is accountable for all the contractual responsibilities with UNICEF.

Do I have to have a degree or a university qualification to qualify?

No. UNICEF will assess the suitability of the team and key personnel to implement the project. The team members' formation and experience in similar projects will be an asset for the expression of interest.

What if the business does not have a certificate of incorporation? What if my company is not registered? Can I still submit an expression of interest?

Only a registered company can submit an expression of interest. We recommend approaching a start-up incubator or accelerator in your region. Often times they will be able to help you with the incorporation process.

Is it mandatory to submit the expression of interest in English?

Yes. We recommend that you use translating tools such as Google Translate if you're unable to complete the Expression of Interest in English.

How will I know if I have been accepted for funding?

Only selected companies will be contacted with information about the outcome and next steps.

What are the UNICEF Innovation Principles? Does my project have to meet all the principles to get investment?

You can find UNICEF Innovation Principles [here](#). Principle 6 (use open data, open standards, open source and open innovation) is a mandatory requirement to be considered for funding. Alignment with the Principles needs to be demonstrated in the Expression of Interest. UNICEF will prioritize projects that demonstrate alignment with all of the Innovation Principles.

How do I determine if my venture is at startup phase?

You have an active prototype - it works. You are in a stage where you need a small amount of money to get it to the stage where you can prove it works to other people. Maybe you need to hire another developer or two, or get design help to communicate what your project can do. Maybe you need some server space. Refactoring something into a new language because what you first wrote it in won't scale. Testing it in a new area. Getting some data points. These are not huge financial investments, but they are what the Innovation Fund can help with, to accelerate your work.

What kind of ideas / companies will the Innovation Fund support?

- i) Project is developing new technology
- ii) Project is expanding/improving existing technology/ platform (i.e. it will be in a place where the technology is being used but will involve new tech being built)
- iii) Project is a new application/ piloting new use case for existing technology (i.e little or no new technology will be built and it will be used in the same place)

See www.unicefinnovationfund.org for an overview of all past and current investments.

If my company is located in an industrialized country and if my solution is to be used in an emerging economy, can the company submit an expression of interest?

The company that submits the expression of interest needs to be registered in a UNICEF programme country. If the company is partnered with companies in the countries where the product or service will be used, it is recommended that the expression of interest be submitted by the partner company registered in the UNICEF Programme Country. If selected, the company that participated will enter into a contractual agreement with UNICEF.

If my product does not have a direct impact on children, is my company eligible for funding?

Solutions need to have a direct impact on children and young people. Expressions of Interest will be assessed (among others) against this criterion: Relevance of solution for children and young people, problem-solution fit and potential for application at global scale.

We invest in solutions that can positively impact the lives of the most vulnerable children. We find these solutions clustered around \$100billion industries. The Fund invests in solutions in the following spaces: blockchain, UAVs, virtual and augmented reality, 3D printing, machine learning, quantum computing, genetic engineering, Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, nano-satellites and human dynamics. However, if the project is based on something else and it's awesome....don't worry if it's not on the list, this can still be considered.

Do I need to have a bank account?

Yes.

If I am a non-profit/NGO can I submit an expression of interest for the fund?

NGOs or CSOs are not eligible to submit an expression of interest for funding through this investment vehicle. If you are a NGO or CSO working on a great prototype, we suggest you to approach [UNICEF country office in your country](#) to learn about other funding and partnership opportunities available.

Is it possible for NGOs to apply in collaboration with companies?

In this case the company should be the entity submitting the REOI. The companies submitting the REOI are

asked to list partners and advisors and it is possible to list an NGO as partner. UNICEF will issue Institutional Corporate Contracts to the successful applicants and it is the company that bears all the contractual responsibilities vis a vis UNICEF.

Can a firm submit multiple proposals?

An eligible company can submit more than one expression of interest for different projects. Each will be assessed independently based on the criteria. The funding cap will be applied to each application.

What do you mean under "working prototype"? Should the whole solution be ready at the moment of application?

You are eligible to apply when you have an active prototype. We consider an active prototype one that works and has generated some initial data to confirm this. You can expand or improve the prototype on the basis of data generated during the period of investment.

My project is currently not open source but I'm willing to open source it. What do I need to do to be able to be considered for funding?

In the Expression of Interest form, the company will be asked about the licensing of the technology. We invest in open source technology solutions (or willing to be open source) under the following licenses or their equivalent:

- (i) for software, a BSD license,
- (ii) for hardware, a CERN license and
- (iii) for design or content, a CC-BY license

Please provide a timeline for going open source. It is recommended that you supply as much information as possible to motivate how your idea will be open source.

Do all components of the technology used or proposed to be developed need to be open source? Can projects that use a combination of technology products - some open source and some one closed licenses - qualify to receive grants from the Innovation Fund?

To qualify for our investment, the solution you hope to get funded by us has to be open source or you need to indicate you are willing to place it on an open source license.

We don't require your whole company or all the technologies you develop to be open source, but the solution that receives our investment has to have an open source license by month six of our year-long investment period. The UNICEF team has an advisor that can help the startups part of our portfolio in choosing the most appropriate open source license.

Please note that solutions that meet all the criteria and are entirely open source (from end-to-end; server to app; hardware to software etc) will be given priority in the selection process.

Using specific examples:

If there is a specific product, such as control software for a rover - that is open source, it will meet the criteria. If this product connects to a larger ecosystem that is fully open-source, then that is the best possible scenario.

If it connects to proprietary hardware the assessment will look at how independent the open-source component is. i.e. what kind of applicability it could have if applied to other scenarios. If the dependencies are too great on a single and proprietary hardware element, it will get less traction.

For example: [U-Report](#) is a full (server to app) opens-source environment. It runs on ‘proprietary’ hardware (i.e. mobile phones) but it runs on any phone, because it uses SMS. In this case, a market assessment and tech evaluation was done and a merging of proprietary and open source tools still made global application possible. Same could be true for UAV software (i.e. image analysis): the Innovation Fund could invest in a piece of software created that could work on images from any drone. The hardware would still be proprietary, but the tool we are investing in (and that we will put in the public domain) is open.

The same applies to a mobile app. If an open source app connects ONLY to a proprietary server-side backend then the app would not qualify for investment. We wouldn’t be able to reuse it. In this case, the investment can be only for very specific open-source pieces of code and environment. This is more likely to be successful than a bundle, as we can assess their viability more easily.

How can we remain financially sustainable and make a profit with an open source solution?

There are a number of sustainable business models built around open source solutions. Open source licenses do not necessarily compromise the sustainability of your business. Please visit www.unicefstories.org to see examples of profitable open source companies. If you are willing to open source your technology, you can still apply and indicate this in the submission.

Is there a maximum number of people I can have on the team?

No.

Can I outsource the technical expertise in my project/ venture?

Yes, but if the core team does not have the necessary technical expertise, the company should explain in their expression of interest in the relevant questions what type of technical expertise their partners or advisors are able to provide.

If my company gets selected for funding, what is the company’s legal status vis-a-vis UNICEF?

UNICEF will issue Institutional Corporate Contracts to the successful applicants. The participating entity - a private company- needs to be legal entities, meaning registered companies in order for UNICEF to have a contractual relationship with them. The companies that are selected for funding will [need to register as a vendor/supplier with UNICEF](#).

Are there any restrictions for what the funds invested are used for?

The invested funds should be used for what the company details in their proposal.

If a company receives investment, what requirements will the company have to submit?

The company will need to provide some type of real-time data that can be accessed through the internet. The companies selected for funding will sign an institutional contract with UNICEF. The Institutional Contract will be subject to the same UNICEF terms and conditions that will be detailed in the RFP, which includes requirements related to open source licensing of the solution.

What return does the fund look for from the investments it has made?

The UNICEF Innovation Fund does not seek a financial return nor does it take equity - the open source code or hardware the company develops and tests is UNICEF’s “equity”.

Why does each company need to provide real-time data about its project?

Eligible companies must be generating publically exposed real-time data that can be / is measured. Where real-time data is currently not being measured, this requirement will be assessed based on the plan to set up, collect, display and analyse real-time data during project implementation. This plan must be articulated in the expression of interest.

If the investment request involves support for development of new technology, real-time data will need to be provided to track this process. If the project requests support for application or piloting of the solution, the real-time data should show progress in this area.

This data will support sharing of the company's progress and experiences with UNICEF and other companies working in the same space. The data will be displayed on the real-time reporting website on www.unicefinnovationfund.org which is publicly accessible and shows the performance of the Fund, each portfolio and information about each company or project that has received investment in. It also presents stories about each project.

How do I collect real-time data where I have limited connectivity?

The real time data you provide could be for example number of users, database queries, transactions, missions run, ping times, etc. With limited connectivity an option could be to construct a SMS-based reporting of some of this data, or to find another mechanism to send secondary reporting data to the online tracking system.

If the company receives funding, does UNICEF own the product or idea?

The company will be requested to open source the IP of your product or idea. The company will be the open source license holder. In addition, the real-time data collected will be shared publicly. All other intellectual property is owned by the company.