

ic ★★★ award 2025



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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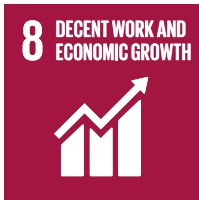
Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

The Swiss International Cooperation Award (IC Award) supports Swiss startups and SMEs that strive to tackle the world's most pressing challenges and make a difference. By highlighting outstanding projects and businesses, the IC Award showcases Switzerland as a leading hub for innovative approaches in international cooperation. It also promotes the involvement of local actors in emerging markets and recognises them as key partners for sustainable solutions, positioning Switzerland and its partner at the forefront of global sustainability.

Call for Applications

Is your startup or business addressing pressing global challenges with bold, innovative approaches?
Are you making a real impact on achieving the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) while staying aligned with environmental and social sustainability?
If you have fresh, innovative solutions that reshape the future, we want to hear from you!





Is your startup or business promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth (SDG 8)? Are you creating better employment opportunities and promoting decent work for all?



Or does your startup or business indirectly contribute to promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth while adding value to one of the following SDG's? If so, we would love to receive your application!

Don't Miss Out

Seize this unique opportunity to make a lasting impact by piloting your innovative solutions in emerging markets and developing contexts. Apply now for the IC Award and win the chance to test your business project in the Global South, and join the global community of changemakers working for a better future and sustainable development for all.

We look forward to receiving your applications and learning more about your innovative solutions. For any questions, please contact icforum@eda.admin.ch. Answers to frequently asked questions will be made available on the platform to all applicants.



Let's get TOGETHER, harness our collective intelligence, and find DIFFERENT solutions to address global challenges!

Why Should You Apply?

PILOT YOUR PROJECT OR BUSINESS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Tap into the Swiss FDFA network and SDC funds to pilot your business project in emerging markets and developing contexts. Demonstrate its economic viability and potential to drive sustainable impact and address critical global challenges.

The scaling pilot will take place in countries selected by the SDC, including Bangladesh, Kenya, North Macedonia, Tunisia and Tanzania, etc.

UNDERSTAND IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Benefit from personal consultations with the SDC and its partner working the field to further refine and implement your innovation. Engaging and sharing your thoughts with local actors will enrich your ideas and increase their impact.

HANDS-ON SUPPORT FROM EXPERTS

Collaborate with technical, industry and local or regional advisers who will help you overcome barriers and provide guidance to accelerate your progress. At the same time, experts from International Cooperation Swit-

zerland will support the further development of your project or business.

BUILD YOUR NETWORK

Tap into the SDC's strong network of public, private, NGO and government partners to accelerate implementation and growth.

GAIN RECOGNITION AS A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT LEADER

As part of the award process, you will have the possibility to meet and engage with other leading impact organisations as well as leaders from the Swiss International Cooperation community, the private sector and politics.

Selection Process and Timeline

By 30/11/2024

Application deadline: online submission with video pitch and application documents

By 15/12/2024

Assessment of all eligibility criteria: applications that do not meet all required criteria will be excluded from the process.

By 13/01/2025

Selection of the Top 10 participants by a Board of International Cooperation specialists:

- Top 10 participants will be invited to present their business project to a large international audience.
- **The 10 selected participants will receive CHF 1,000 in cash** to cover the preparation costs for the event. Travel costs to the International Cooperation Forum will be covered separately according to our budget rules.

January 2025

Preparation: The Top 10 participants will get individual coaching support (5 hours) to adapt their business project narrative to emerging markets and development contexts, and to collaborate with the SDC and other actors.

First half of February 2025

Interviewing the Top 10 participants: the 10 candidates will be invited for a pitch event with a jury of experts from science, finance and economy.

27-28/02/2025

Participation at the International Cooperation Forum Switzerland in Zurich:

- Participants present their projects or business at the Forum marketplace to an international and broad audience
- The IC Award will be presented to the three winners at the Forum

2025-2026

Prices:

1. Cash Prices:

1st Price: CHF 3'000 / 2nd Price: 2'000 / 3rd Price: 1'500

2. In field pilot:

The three winners will pilot their solution in an emerging market or developing country. Associated costs including travel and on-site counselling will be covered by the SDC.

Additionally, experts from International Cooperation Switzerland will support you in further developing your product or engagement.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

If you are a startup or an SME:

- your organisation must be an established legal entity incorporated in Switzerland (e.g. for-profit, non-profit, social business, association, etc.).
- your organisation must be financially self-sustaining¹.
- your organisation must be at least at the "early stage" with a tested and implemented solution or product. Proof-of-concept on real-life cases is required.
- your project or business must address pressing global challenges and contribute to sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth according to the detailed description in the introductory text (contributions to the SDGs mentioned).
- your project or business must offer an innovative approach or solution not yet implemented by others.
- your organisation must align its processes with ESG criteria and strive for zero emissions
- your team must be willing to pilot the project in an emerging market or developing country, working closely with local actors and utilising SDC resources and expertise.
- you should be eager to collaborate with multi-stakeholders like government representatives, international organisations and industry leaders to drive positive change in developing countries.
- your team must be able to attend the International Cooperation Forum in Zurich on the 27 and 28 February 2025.

¹ Self-sustaining means that your organisation can survive without SDC funds

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPLICATION

Every application must comply with the following requirements according to the online application form:

- present your team and motivation;
- provide a short and comprehensive description of your project or business, including your business model;
- demonstrate that your project or business has moved beyond the “early stage” phase and is ready for implementation in a new context and for scaling-up;
- highlight the added value for emerging markets and developing countries;
- demonstrate how your organisation aligns its processes with ESG criteria and strives for zero emissions;
- provide evidence of how your project or business contributes to a sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and serves the SDGs;
- indicate how it supports or complements Swiss International Cooperation interventions and serve the [Swiss International Cooperation Strategy 2025-28](#);
- explain how local actors are included in your innovative proposal

SELECTION PROCESS

Qualification: SDC will assess your submission, according to the following criteria:

- complete application, including video pitch, presented in a comprehensible way;
- submission deadlines met;
- compliance with the eligibility criteria;
- alignment with the [Swiss International Cooperation Strategy 2025-28](#)
- targeting a developing country and including its community

Please note that submissions that do not meet the above criteria will not be considered. All eligible submissions will be handed over to the jury for more detailed assessment in two stages.

STAGE 1 - SHORTLISTING OF THE TOP 10 APPLICANTS:

Experts from Swiss International Cooperation will assess your submission according to the following criteria:

- **Impact & Scalability:** demonstrate a clear vision, target group and the potential to address the posed challenge(s);
- **Traction:** present evidence of feasibility and adoption by customers;
- **Novelty:** show how your solution and business model are innovative while also being technically and socially suitable and viable;
- **Business Model:** demonstrate the viability of your business model, including how you intend to achieve a (self-)sustainable business, pricing, and financial model;
- **Sustainability:** demonstrate how your organisation aligns its processes with ESG criteria and strives for zero emissions
- **Team:** demonstrate that you have an inclusive team this is motivated to tackle the world’s pressing problems through an entrepreneurial mindset;
- **Inclusion:** indicate how you include local actors and markets in your learning and solution approach as well as in the scaling-up. Preference will be given to those who have already gained experience in applying their business project to local partners in developing contexts.

STAGE 2:

A jury of experts from science, finance, business and international cooperation will select the three winners. The Top 10 participants will be invited to a pitch event prior to the IC Forum.

All Top 10 participants will have the opportunity to present their innovations to a large international audience at the IC Forum.