



***Do you want to contribute to change and innovation at IFAD? Then now is your chance!***

In 2019, the Change, Delivery and Innovation Unit (CDI) launched the first ever IFAD Innovation Challenge. The challenge, which was open to the entire workforce, sought to find ideas to solve some of IFAD's most pressing corporate needs. In 2019 this was to "enhance results and efficiency".

Fifty proposals were received. Based on the inputs of a cross-functional selection panel and a staff vote, 10 proposals were given funding to develop proofs of concept. Of the 10 proposals, 9 moved into prototyping.

The challenge concluded in December 2020 and the outcome was evaluated using tools from the UN Innovation Toolkit (see [here](#)). Challenge winners *GeoScan* and *GeoTech4Tenure* have since been funded by the Innovation Challenge to scale up; and the Pathfinder project ended up forming the basis of the *TRACE Blockchain by IFAD project*. A lessons learned report was prepared by CDI, presented to the Operations Management Committee (OMC) in March 2021, and published on the Innovation Challenge website (see [here](#)). Overall, the challenge succeeded in contributing to idea generation, testing and fostering a culture that promotes innovation within the Fund. This point was reflected in the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) Corporate Level-Evaluation on IFAD's Support to Innovations for Inclusive and Sustainable Smallholder Agriculture (see [here](#)).

In September 2021, Management confirmed that IFAD would benefit from a new innovation challenge.

**Areas of focus:** The challenge supports ideas that bring innovations into our operations or business practices. The challenge has been broken down in to 5 areas or "tracks". We want you to identify and define clearly one (or more) problems and then propose a potential solution(s) under one or more tracks, if it applies.

*Have you noticed a problem under the following tracks and do you have a solution you'd like to suggest?*

- **TRACK 1: Innovative finance.**  
What's it about? Ideas that help IFAD identify innovative finance products and services to address the challenges and needs of IFAD's target groups and member countries' linked to disruption (e.g. accelerated digital transformation, effects of COVID-19) or transition to different stages of development.
- **TRACK 2: Data innovation.**  
What's it about? Ideas and use cases that contribute to IFAD's mandate and enhance IFAD's scientific methods, processes, and algorithms to extract knowledge and insights. IFAD will make the relevant tools available, as feasible, on the Enterprise Azure platform and cloud storage, as well as provide a number of Microsoft Power Business Intelligence (BI) licences to enable this track.

- **TRACK 3: Innovations to eliminate “sludge”<sup>1</sup>.**  
What’s it about? Ideas (both technological and/or non) that contribute to a human-centred, results-oriented approach and that help to flatten the organization and establish inter-generational and inter-departmental collaboration and trust.
- **TRACK 4: Innovations for culture change.**  
What’s it about? Ideas that promote a safe working environment and address culture change areas such as leadership and inclusive work environments, and promoting anti-sexual harassment practices. Promising ideas submitted under this track are encouraged to participate in the UN Culture Change Innovation Challenge<sup>2</sup> that IFAD is co-leading with other UN partners.
- **TRACK 5: Other innovations**  
What’s it about? “Wild card” ideas addressing problems clearly defined by your team, unit or division. Applications from colleagues in IFAD’s Country Offices are particularly encouraged under this track.

**Timeline.** The challenge will be divided in the following stages and dates.

<b>Stage 0</b>
<b>Call for problems</b>
7 December 2021 to 31 January 2022
<b>Selection process</b>
February 2022
<b>Announcement of winners</b>
March 2022
<b>Stage I</b>
<b>Proofs of concept and prototyping<sup>3</sup></b>
March – April 2022
Teams to deliver lean canvas <sup>4</sup> at the end of Stage I.
<b>Stage gate assessment results and online pitch-event to IFAD staff and OMC</b>
May 2022
<b>Announcement of Stage I winners</b>
June 2022
<b>Stage II</b>
<b>Product design and prototyping</b>
June – November 2022
<b>Stage gate assessment results and Dragon’s Den</b>
November 2022
<b>Stage III</b>
<b>Pilot to scale</b>
December 2022 – May 2023. Subject to funding in 2023

### Funding\*

- (1) Stage 0. No funding provided to enter the competition.
- (2) Stage I. At the beginning of stage I, a maximum of 6 ideas will be awarded up to US\$10,000 each.
- (3) Stage II. At the beginning of stage II, a maximum of 3-4 ideas will be awarded up to US\$100,000 each.
- (4) Stage III. At the beginning of stage III, a maximum of 2-3 ideas will be awarded funding depending on IFAD Management approval.

\* Funding is set aside for winners at each stage; however, the exact allocation is at the discretion of Senior Management.

<sup>1</sup> In behavioural science, while nudges make desirable behaviour easier, a sludge does the opposite: It makes a process more difficult. Examples of sludges include product rebates that require difficult procedures or subscription cancellations that can only be done with a phone call. In addition, when a sludge is associated with a beneficial behaviour, costs (like difficulty in acquiring information, unnecessary amounts of time spent, or *psychological* detriments, such as frustration) can be excessive.

<sup>2</sup> Winning ideas of the UN Challenge will have the opportunity to participate in the WFP Innovation Accelerator bootcamp in April 2022. Teams who participate in the bootcamp must be available, and authorized by their supervisors to do so, for the full 5 days from 25 to 29 April 2022.

<sup>3</sup> “Prototyping” (not a typo!) is a set of tools, techniques, and tactics designed to help you validate any idea for a new product quickly, objectively, and accurately. “**Make sure that you are building The Right It before you build It right**”. See <https://www.pretotyping.org/>.

<sup>4</sup> The Lean Canvas replaces elaborate business plans with a single page business model.

**Eligibility.** The online application forms must be submitted by an IFAD staff member with the approval of their Director or higher; however, team members can be any member of IFAD's workforce or IFAD's partners in the field. Applications from IFAD's country offices are particularly encouraged!

In addition:

- Your project must address one of the five tracks (see above) of the challenge.
- The challenge is aimed at scouting for early stage ideas.
- Management approval (divisional director or higher) is required to participate.
- All projects must have a team that is dedicated and committed to completing all stages of the challenge. (If interns and short-term members of the IFAD workforce are included in project teams, teams must submit a continuity plan outlining how the plan will proceed should these staff leave the Fund.)

**Selection criteria.** Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria.

- Level of innovation.
- Potential impact.
- Level of alignment to IFAD's mandate and priorities.
- Feasibility and viability of implementation.

Bonus points will be given to those ideas that:

- (i) Propose the use of innovative approaches such as behavioural sciences and/or frontier technologies; and
- (ii) Involve collaborative internal and external partnerships.

**Governance and moving from one stage to the next.** Applications to the 2021-2022 IFAD Innovation Challenge are reviewed by CDI in collaboration with an inter-departmental jury and the Office of the President and Vice-President (OPV).

At the end of Stage I and Stage II there will be a "stage gate assessment" which, in addition to votes by the Jury, the OMC, and IFAD's workforce through an online pitch-event, will determine the winners of each stage who will then move onto the next Stage. Final decisions will be conditional on the final vote of a selected group of members of IFAD's Senior Management and the availability of funding.