Incubator/Accelerator Facility
For the Wood Sector in Rwanda

Information Manual

Application opens: 10th June 2021, 12:00 pm (noon) Kigali Time
Application closes: 25th June 2021, 12:00 pm (noon) Kigali Time

NIRDA
National Industrial
Research and Development
Agency

I/AF

Supported by*:*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

1   Introduction

The main objective of the twin Incubation/Acceleration Facility (I/AF) is to improve the competitiveness of start-ups and companies in the wood value chain. To attain this objective, the I/AF offers a set of customized services for start-ups, companies and cooperatives from the wood sector including business advice, entrepreneurship and business management training, coaching and mentoring, access to technical infrastructure, technical assistance, market information services, marketing assistance, facilitation of financial and investment linkages as well as facilitation of linkages for technological upgrading.

The incubator program:

This program targets early-stage start-ups with less than 12 months of business operations to increase their competitiveness within the wood processing sector as well as established entrepreneurs who seek to diversify into the wood sector for the first time. The I/AF will help these businesses innovate and equip them with improved technical and business management skills to start and operate a business.

The accelerator program:

This program targets entrepreneurs, business owners, and management teams in more mature micro, small, medium-sized, or large enterprises and cooperatives in the wood sector. It seeks companies with a potential to grow and contribute to the development of the wood sector. The I/AF will provide general and tailored assistance to these businesses to accelerate their growth, technically improve, attract investments, and expand into new national, regional, or international markets.

Enterprises of all sizes are welcome to apply, from individual start-ups to large companies.

The purpose of this manual is to provide a step-by-step guide on how the I/A program is designed including the application process, selection criteria and services provided by the I/AF.

It serves as the main source of information and explains how to apply for the first cycle of the incubation and acceleration program at the I/AF. The first call for application is open from 10th to 25th June 2021 (12:00 pm).

In case of any outstanding queries regarding the application process after reading this document, please feel free to refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section on the I/AF webpage or contact us at iaf.applications@icon-insitute.de or through any of our social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn).

2   Rationale for the I/A Facility

The Rwandan Government, together with the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM) and other relevant institutions, has identified the Rwandan wood sector, in particular the wooden furniture industry, as one of the key sectors to create new jobs and to achieve global competitiveness.

To realize this strategic goal, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH is working closely with the Rwandan Government under the GIZ Economy and Employment Promotion (Eco-Emploi) Project in support of the Rwandan wood sector.

Currently, the Rwandan wood sector is characterized by insufficient market and customer orientation, inadequate sustainable business models, low productivity, and a lack of technical and management competencies. Furthermore, the National Wood Sector Strategic Plan 2019-2022 by MINICOM identifies several other factors hindering the growth of the Rwandan wood sector.

These include poor seed quality (and germplasm in general), poor sylviculture practices, poor sawn timber quality, and low recovery rates all along the wood value chain undermining the competitiveness of local wooden furniture and industrial construction timbers on the markets, lack of kiln drying facilities, woodworking lines specialized in the production of finger joints, panels and beams, CNC (computer numeric control) woodworking units to produce semi-finished elements for furniture and construction, insufficient funding, and industrial plants for the production of engineered wood panels.

In order to tackle the factors hindering the growth of the wood sector in Rwanda, the National Industrial Research and Development Agency (NIRDA) has decided to set up the I/AF through a partnership with GIZ. The latter has commissioned ICON-INSTITUT (ICON) GmbH to set up and implement the I/AF through its international and local consultants. The I/AF will provide tailored advisory services and training to strengthen the growth and competitiveness of start-ups, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and cooperatives in Rwanda.

The I/AF will support all types of companies along the wood value chain. The I/AF runs under the GIZ Eco-Emploi Project which implements different activities within the wood value chain. The Project focuses on the competitiveness of MSMEs and the interplay between different stages of the wood value chain to promote economic growth and new jobs.

NIRDA's mission is to "enable a generation of industrial innovators to become competitive through technology monitoring, acquisition, development and transfer and applied research".

The I/AF supports new and more mature start-ups and MSMEs from the wood value chain – commonly referred to as "operators" – which are seeking to solve the problems faced by the market at different functional stages of the value chain.

The Rwandan wood value chain is composed of six functional stages:

(i) Inputs (tree seeds and nurseries), (ii) Wood production and harvesting, (iii) Primary wood processing, (iv) Secondary wood processing, (v) Tertiary wood processing and (vi) Sales and distribution. The wood production starts from the acquisition of seeds and production of seedlings in the nurseries (i), the seedlings are planted on farms or forestlands, then the trees grow and are harvested to produce round timbers (ii) that are processed in sawn timbers by primary processing operators (iii), these raw sawn timbers with the imported ones are (poorly) dried, seasoned, treated, re-sawn, glued, and planed in a not fully differentiated and specialized secondary processing phase (iv), then reworked and joined with imported engineered wood panels and other elements (such as plastics, glass, metal parts, ironmongery, etc.), and finished to obtain furniture and construction elements by tertiary processing units (V), that are ultimately distributed and sold to the final user on the markets (vi).

At each function in the value chain, value is added, and the related intermediary products are traded.

The value chain stages, operators, and proposed solutions to key bottlenecks are presented in the following table:

.

	Value chain (VC) function	Proposed solutions to the key VC bottlenecks
1	Sales and distribution	Improve access to domestic, regional, and international markets
2	Tertiary processing	Improve product design and quality (furniture, construction, toys, crafts, composite product)
3	Secondary processing	Increase/improve secondary processing units/capacities (improved timber drying practices, timber kiln drying, intermediary products, engineered timber, and panel products)
4	Primary processing (sawn timber, treatment and drying)	Introduce upgraded timber-sawing technologies
		Introduce/improve timber preservation treatments with the use of chemical preservatives, vacuum or pressurised treatment
5	Wood production and harvest	Improve sylviculture and forest logging operations
		Control tree pests and diseases
6	Seed collection and tree nurseries	Produce and distribute quality seeds/clones
	Cross-cutting	Develop specific financial products for investors
		Improve product diversification
		Improve quality of local timber and wood products
		Improve timber recovery rates
		Improve recycling and waste management

The major problems in the VC functions have been identified in seed collection and tree nurseries, wood production and harvesting (sylviculture and forest logging operations), secondary processing, and in the cross-cutting elements. These will be given special attention within the I/A Facility project.

3   The I/A Facility – Why Should You Apply?

The I/AF offers tailored incubation and acceleration services to start-ups, companies, and cooperatives from the wood sector to help them improve the performance of their businesses, access to markets, and ability to compete.

The services offered by the I/AF include:

- ► **Business advice** on a diverse set of business challenges (e.g. financial calculations, market research, sales and marketing, business process management and reengineering, data quality and preservation, copyright issues, research ethics, staff empowerment, EDI (equality, diversity, inclusion) practices, public engagement, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
- ► **Entrepreneurship and business management training** (e.g. on business strategy, marketing, finance, fundraising, operations, and human resource management)
- ► **Coaching and mentoring** to accompany you in building and growing your business based on your individual needs
- ► **Access to technical infrastructure** with modern IT solutions and equipment
- ► **Technical assistance**
- ► **Market information services** (e.g. trends, competitor and customer preferences, etc.)
- ► **Marketing assistance**
- ► **Facilitation of financial and investment linkages**
- ► **Facilitation of linkages for technological upgrading**

The services will be provided through incubation/acceleration programs with a duration of 7 to 8 months.

Other benefits of the I/AF:

- **Access to a wide network of investors and financiers and partner organizations** (e.g. governmental organizations, NGOs, business associations, business development agencies, and universities) in the wood sector
- **Access to state-of-the-art IT solutions** in wood-related disciplines (including CAD and GIS applications) to host projects
- **Peer-to-peer learning and networking** with like-minded entrepreneurs facilitated through face-to-face and online trainings and workshops
- **Advertising for your business** through social media as well as through presentation opportunities at workshops, conferences, and other events (a dedicated wood product marketing web portal will be developed in 2021)

4 The Incubator

4.1 What is an Incubator?

An incubator or Business Incubator is *an organization designed to accelerate the growth and success of entrepreneurial companies through an array of business support resources and services that may include physical space, capital, coaching, common services, and networking connections.*

An incubator is the combination of physical space and a set of services which help entrepreneurs and management teams of very early-stage start-ups address challenges associated with launching new companies.

Incubators allow start-ups to physically base themselves within an incubator for long periods of time (months or even years).

4.2 What is Offered by the Incubator?

The incubation cycle (7 to 8 months) will offer the following services:

- Physical space
- Infrastructure (meeting rooms, furnished office space, high-speed internet, printers, etc.)
- Shared administrative or office services
- Networking activities
- Marketing assistance
- Accounting and financial management services
- Legal services
- Specialised equipment (e.g. CAD equipment, workstations, etc.)
- Comprehensive business and technical training
- Assistance with business basics
- Presentation skills training
- Access to mentors and advisory boards
- E-Commerce assistance
- HR training
- Access to business angels, seed financing, venture capitalists, and grant monies
- Assistance in raising bank finance, grants, seed, angel, and venture capital
- Networking, matchmaking events, and participation in trade fairs

5   The Accelerator

5.1   What is an Accelerator?

Accelerators are organizations that offer a range of support services and funding opportunities for start-ups. They tend to work by enrolling start-ups in months-long programs that offer mentorship, office space and supply chain resources. More importantly, business accelerator programs offer access to capital and investment in return for start-up equity. Start-ups essentially "graduate" from their accelerator program after three or four months — which means that development projects are time-sensitive and very intensive.

An accelerator is generally tailored for more mature start-ups. Accelerators provide focused programs to assist companies to scale up. Accelerators assume that a specific level of business knowledge and capability exists within the company receiving acceleration who can understand and implement recommendations.

In general, accelerators provide a highly focused three-to-four-month program where companies receive mentoring and guidance to build and/or upgrade their companies. After completing successful acceleration, companies are often graduated and promoted to interested investors and venture capital funds (typically post seed funding).

5.2   What is Offered by the Accelerator?

The acceleration cycle (7 to 8 months) will offer the following services:

- ► Self-diagnostic assessments (to assist start-ups and MSMEs with conducting a situation analysis to identify gaps and areas of improvement/support through the I/AF)
- ► Assessment of current situation (to analyse the level of existing operations and highlight the gaps or areas of improvement in terms of management, production, machinery, etc.)
- ► Lectures and workshops (to increase the entrepreneurs' knowledge and skill set)
- ► Building smart partnerships (through networking events, business-to-business collaboration, study tours, etc.)
- ► Business canvas workshops (to optimize the on-going business)
- ► Product strategy workshops (to define important aspects of company products, such as goals and strategic opportunities, which help the teams involved in product development to set a strategic direction for the products and the business as a whole)
- ► Peer-to-peer learning (entrepreneurs enrolled into the I/AF will have an opportunity to learn from and inspire each other; they will be given the tools to design products and services and to brainstorm, research, and innovate)
- ► Provision of tailored guidance and trainings to entrepreneurs and managers (including trainings specifically designed to meet their needs for product and service development or delivery, such as health and safety trainings; improving business processes, e.g. sales and marketing management and marketing to top executives; finance for non-finance professionals, fundraising, etc.)
- ► Networking, matchmaking events, and participation in trade fairs

6   Can You Apply?

6.1   Eligibility Criteria

Applicants will be assessed based on the submitted incubator or accelerator application forms.

Successful applicants must meet the following general eligibility criteria for both the incubator and accelerator program:

- ▶ Must be legally registered and operating in Rwanda
- ▶ Must be either entrepreneurs, companies (legal entities), associations, cooperatives, or consortia
- ▶ If an application is submitted by consortia, associations, or cooperatives, all participants must be separately eligible, unless they have own products or services on sale. In both cases, the applicants need to choose a project lead who will submit the application and engage with the I/AF on their behalf.
- ▶ Must be part of the wood sector (wood value chain)
- ▶ Those with family, business, or financial ties to members of the I/AF team, NIRDA, GIZ, and partnering organizations are NOT eligible to participate in the I/AF. If you feel that a prior relationship with the I/AF and its partners might constitute a conflict of interest, please email to iaf.applications@icon-institute.de for clarification.

Specific incubator program eligibility criteria:

- ▶ Less than 12 months of business operations (including start-ups) OR
- ▶ Businesses that want to diversity their products (can be more than 12 months of business operations as long as they are new to using wood components).

Specific accelerator program eligibility criteria:

- ▶ More than 12 months of business operations
- ▶ Any size of enterprise in the wood sector is welcome to apply

The criteria may be revised at the end of the I/A cycle to accommodate "lessons learnt".

Applicants are only allowed to submit one application.

The activities you plan to carry out with I/AF cannot be duplicated. Synergies with other companies, sources of funding, including other GIZ or NIRDA projects, are encouraged as long as the support is used for complementarity, not overlapping purposes.

6.2 Who Keeps the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)?

The business owner and client of the I/AF will be the sole owner of the results, outcomes, and all associated intellectual property (IP) of the project submitted. However, we expect most proposals to follow an open approach, sharing results and experiences widely with the incubation and acceleration program. We will certainly give priority to those applications that have a well-articulated plan for this.

In addition, the I/AF (or NIRDA through the I/AF) may ask you to present your work as part of their public relations and networking events, in order to showcase the benefits of the I/AF.

6.3 What Happens with the Data?

All applicants need to be clear in the applications about the data that will be collected or generated through the project. A statement of consent has been included in the application forms (both online and hard copies) but due to reasons associated with COVID-19, all applications will need to be completed online via a webpage that will be communicated through the brochures, social media channels, and awareness campaigns.

For the projects (concepts or proposals) in which potential candidates will produce data to help with scientific inquiries, the application needs to include details about the way data will be managed during and after the project, **including – if relevant – any data concerns**. As noted earlier, we will give preference to proposals that are committed to making their data available for reuse, following an open science approach. The I/AF will provide tailored technical, financial, and operational support to successful applicants to do so.

In addition, the I/AF will require businesses or projects funded through the program to collect, manage, and share data with the I/AF team. This may include contributions by applicants as well as anonymized and/or aggregated data on client/applicant participation. Both are needed for the I/AF team to customize their support, toolkit, and resources as well as to help the project in questions related to data quality, motivating participation, client empowerment, diversity/inclusion, public engagement, and impact.

7 How is the I/AF Program Organized?

7.1 Two Cycles

The I/AF will run **two cycles**, one in 2021 and a second one in 2022. **This document refers to the first cycle only.** The second cycle is expected to be launched in February 2022. Both the incubation and acceleration programs' cycle will last about 7 to 8 months and run simultaneously.

As noted earlier, our understanding of the wood sector is inclusive. We are seeking to support ideas that can make a difference at local, national, or international scale, and at either end of the wood value chain, from seed to furniture production.

7.2 Application Process and Period

Submission of applications will be online via a webpage provided by the I/AF through NIRDA. Applicants will be asked specific questions to determine their eligibility to apply for technical support and funding at a later stage as well as their ability to run the business or project.

Only complete applications (and proposals) submitted before the deadline will be considered for review. The application process for both the incubation and acceleration program is open from 10ᵗʰ June until 25ᵗʰ June 2021 (12:00 pm).

All information provided must be in English.

After submission, the applications will be reviewed by the I/AF selection committee. The selection committee will shortlist applicants for further steps including interviews (and field visits for candidates of the accelerator program). Successful candidates will be invited to join the incubator/accelerator for 7 to 8 months, following the application, selection, and enrolment phases.

7.3 How to Apply?

The I/AF will inform interested applicants through various channels including a web portal, social media, and partner networks (e.g. ICPCs, TVET schools, and business associations). The application form also includes a section on the collection, storage, and processing of personal data for which consent is a condition for participation.

1) The starting point for your application is the I/AF webpage. Go to
   https://www.nirda.gov.rw/incubation-acceleration-facility/

2) Read this application guide and the brochure as well as the FAQ and related tutorials available on the I/AF website.
3) Check the online submission platform and start your application in due time.
4) Make sure to answer all questions and upload all relevant documents.
5) Submit before the deadline.

For the incubation program, you will quickly start the application process by completing the self-explanatory application form.

For the acceleration program, we have prepared a short concept note template for the core part of your application.

You need to download it and create your own copy to work on. Note the comments in the template which will help you cover all aspects taken into consideration during the review. **It is very important that you do not change the template in any way** - any attempt to do so, no matter how minor, may result in your application being rejected without a review.

You can upload multiple versions of the documents and make multiple submissions. We will consider only the last version received before the application deadline.

8 What Will be Assessed?

The selection criteria developed are based on entrepreneur characteristics, sector priorities, and national policies.

8.1 Selection Criteria
The following selection criteria are used:

- ▶ **Age** (at least 30% youth)
- ▶ **Gender** (at least 30% women)
- ▶ **Capital** (own contribution, debt)
- ▶ **Phase of development** (ideation, angel, seed, early growth)
- ▶ **Sector** (position in the wood VC)
- ▶ **Potential for job creation** (number of new jobs to be created, current employees: number of posts classified by nationality, gender, age group, qualification, and grade)
- ▶ **Inclusiveness** (number of people with disabilities - PWDs)
- ▶ **Current and potential markets** (number of customers at the local, regional, and international levels, as well as partnerships or business synergies the business is involved in)
- ▶ **New product market fit** (example of products include beams, semi-finished, panel products, joinery (finger joints), and furniture; example of production and processes include clonal technology, drying, and improving recovery rates; wood products or services of interconnected sectors will also be given priority, for example, ironmongery and composite materials, such as wood, steel, glass, etc.)
- ▶ **Value proposition** (how products benefit, feature, and experience respond to the customers' needs, wants and concerns),

- ▶ **Impact** (product or service on the market and staff readiness to spread this impact. Business impact is achieved through a combination of customer satisfaction, employee engagement and operational performance)
- ▶ **Team credentials** (right skills and experience required to run the business)
- ▶ **Innovation and creativity** (difference from current projects/business solutions, including audacious ideas that disrupt the status quo, such as innovative approaches and production processes)
- ▶ **Scalability** (ability to benefit from economies of scale and quickly ramp up production)
- ▶ **Financial viability** (ability to generate sufficient income to meet operating payments, debt commitments, and, where applicable, to allow growth while maintaining service levels.
- ▶ **Sustainability** (focuses on meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This is composed of three pillars: economic, environmental, and social - also known informally as profits, planet, and people.

  This covers a wide variety of actions including, for example, conserving biodiversity, promote the protection, restoration, and conservation of natural forests, using reduced impact logging techniques, ensuring good health and safety practices, respecting local communities, and fostering economic development).

8.2   How Are Applicants Selected for the Incubator?

Stage 1 – Eligibility Checks

I/AF checks if eligibility criteria are met. Applications considered not eligible will not proceed to the next stage. Refer to point 6.1 above and to the frequently asked questions (in annex) for more details on this.

Stage 2 – Reviews and Shortlist

Eligible candidates will be evaluated by at least three reviewers against the selection criteria as listed above that include items such as:

- ▶ Sector
- ▶ Impact
- ▶ Financial viability

Reviewers will be asked to provide an overall score along with a recommendation to shortlist the applicants. The criteria which will be followed are detailed in point 8.1 above. Please consider them when answering the questions in the application form or short concept note.

Stage 3 – Onboarding and Interviews

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an onboarding (orientation session) whereby the first rudiments of business planning will be given and interviews conducted with an expert panel. The interview will consist of a short pitch of the application followed by questions.

A monitoring and evaluation (M & E) system will be used to make sure that the activities produce good results in the end.

At this stage, candidates will also be interviewed by looking at the personal entrepreneurial characteristics (PECs).

To give candidates quick access to technical services and funding, the expert panel will operate on a very tight schedule. Unfortunately, the expert panel will not be able to negotiate the onboarding and interview dates as well as related conditions with the applicants and may not answer any queries on the subject. If an applicant is not able to attend the onboarding and the interview, the application will be rejected.

Applicants who were not shortlisted will be informed at this stage.

Stage 4 – Training, Competition and Final Selection

After the onboarding, interviews, and business plan training, the expert panel will decide whether to accept the applicant into the I/A program. The panel will provide feedback to applicants to improve their project or business. Unfortunately, due to the high number of applications anticipated, the panel will not be able to reply to any queries on unsuccessful applications. Decisions will be final and cannot be contested. However, unsuccessful applicants are welcome to reapply for the next cycle in 2022.

8.3 How Are Applicants Selected for the Accelerator?

Applicants who reach this stage of the process are formally accepted into the 7 to 8 months accelerator, with the first cycle running from 10th June 2021 and up to 20th February 2022.

8.4 Selection Criteria Specific to the Accelerator

In addition to the general selection criteria, the following additional criteria will be considered for applicants interested in the accelerator program:

▶ **Profitability** (increase in annual profits using real figures; the profit is revealed after all costs of production, administration, and financing have been deducted from sales, and all income taxes have been applied),

▶ **Relevance of the project** (products and services that answer to customer problems and requirements; proposals focusing on technological upgrades of secondary processing, forest management, and logging operations as well as vegetative multiplications of tree clones will be strongly considered),

▶ **Design and management of the project** (the individual or company's experience and ability to work with the I/A services),

▶ **Effectiveness and feasibility of the action** (team strength and business pitch using the NABC [Need, Approach, Benefit, Costs]-framework[1]: what is the important customer and market NEED? What is the unique APPROACH for addressing this need? What are the specific BENEFITS per costs that result from this approach? How are the benefits per COSTS superior to the Competitors' and the alternatives?

▶ **Budget and cost-effectiveness** (built financial model that highlights expenditure and profitability)

▶ **Capacity to transform the wood sector** (applicant's ability to contribute to the overall improvement and competitiveness of the wood sector)

---

[1] The NABC-framework is further explained at https://www.unibz.it/assets/Documents/Faculty-Economics/unibz-Econ-Entrepreneurship-NABC-Intro.pdf.

9   Who Will Be Assessing Your Applications?

A selection committee, composed of judges or experts from NIRDA (2), ICON (2), and GIZ (2) will evaluate the applications / proposals received based on the mentioned selection criteria to select the best candidates for the I/AF. With regard to the selection of candidates for the accelerator program, one (1) additional international expert will be mobilized by ICON to complement areas of investment and capacity building.

10   Screening Process

The screening will start with automatically generated reports from the online application system, then completed with inputs from the selection committee (related to the items listed in the selection criteria).

10.1   Incubator Screening

- ▶ Checking applications received. At least 100 applications are expected per cycle from which 40 to 60 will be selected (as the best concepts).

- ▶ Onboarding (orientation and participation in information sessions, concept development, etc.). By the end of the onboarding session, the candidates will have their own business concept notes and summaries of business plans. A selection of 30-40 candidates will proceed to the next phase.

- ▶ Pitching (concept presentation). Candidates will answer questions from members of the selection committee regarding their business ventures. Then, 15-20 will be selected for the next phase.

- ▶ Business planning sessions for semi-finalists. This will involve training in different business courses leading to the development of detailed business plans. Participants will be evaluated and up to 12 candidates will be selected for the business plan competitions.

- ▶ Graduation. 5 finalists with the best business plans will sign commitment letters and be promoted into the accelerator program.

10.2   Accelerator Screening

Screening applicants into the accelerator program will involve the following activities:

- ▶ Checking applications received. At least 100 applications are expected per cycle.

- ▶ Screening and selecting eligible applicants of which 40-60 will be pre-selected.

- ▶ Grouping accelerators into "Category A - Newly Established" and "Category B - Advanced Businesses", the latter group for a leading role in acceleration (ready for expansion or technological upgrading; tap into new, national, and international markets).

- ▶ Onboarding workshop whereby the I/AF team will organize and conduct a 2-days start-up accelerator workshop. It is expected that between 30-50 candidates will complete the workshop.

- ▶ Evaluating action plans and selecting the most innovative ones. 25-30 impactful and promising projects will be selected per cycle.

- ▶ Concluding and signing commitment letters with 25-30 entrepreneurs per cycle.

- ▶ Organizing and conducting the accelerator program for the 25-30 participants per cycle.

11 Scoring System

Throughout the selection process, candidates will be evaluated following the scoring elements set in the criteria. Further, marks will be awarded according to the scheme prepared for that purpose. A table with scores will then be built summarizing all the marks (weighted scores) per candidate. Subsequently, a report duly signed by all members of the selection committee will be prepared. The scoring criteria has been prepared by considering, among other things, elements such as the results of the project and the candidates' business value and performance.

12 Additional Information

To ensure the success of the incubator and accelerator program, a match-making process will be observed between the two programs, so that graduates from the incubator can easily learn from and qualify for the participation in the accelerator.

The I/AF will also focus on building linkages with local and international funders and financiers who will support the clients of the Facility through loans, grants, donations, partnerships, etc.

To that end, the I/AF will aim to:

1) Align the ecosystem at larger scales and shared visions, goals, and initiatives, such as Rwanda's Vision 2050, the Africa We Want (Agenda 2063), the African Continental Free Trade Area, the Generation Unlimited, the Sustainable Development Goals, the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1), the National Forestry Policy, the Made in Rwanda Policy, the National Tree Reproductive Materials Strategy, the Forest Investment Program for Rwanda, the National Employment Policy (NEP), the Strategic Plan of Rwanda Wood Value Chain Association, etc.

2) Ensure holistic coordination and collaboration of participants into the I/A Facility programs.

3) The I/AF will listen to the entrepreneurs to understand their needs and challenges, thus, being able to address their funding needs, and later help responding to those needs by facilitating access to local and international donors and investors.

4) Increase partnerships to ensure incoming international donors and investors to work with the participants.

5) Be proactively involved in the refinement of public programs and policies that affect the entrepreneurs and the economy.

6) The I/AF will support timber companies, businesses associations, and organizations to implement a Wood Innovation Cluster. The aim of this concept is to create an innovative cluster of industrial units to support the entire value chain of the wood sector and with a green and sustainable development approach, promoting 'Made in Rwanda' circular production processes with limited to no waste throughout the entire wood value chain.

7) Develop an operational strategy and a communication plan that support participants' projects.

8) Develop and facilitate partnerships and networks on behalf of the supported businesses (entrepreneurs) through calls, conferences, open day meetings, exhibitions, etc.

9) Increase and diversify collaboration with investors and angels at local, regional, and international level, especially in areas of identified gaps by the entrepreneurs. A database of investors and financiers will be continuously updated and networks established to ensure funding for successful businesses and their projects.

10) Review existing reports about the Rwandan entrepreneurship ecosystem, its limitations and opportunities to collaborate with stakeholders and ultimately facilitate the entrepreneurs to establish global linkages that help secure funds from business investors and/or angels whose contact lists are built, maintained, and updated periodically.

11) Continuously research and learn from other incubators/accelerators while facilitating networks and exchange programs for participants at national, regional, and international levels.

13 Annexes

13.1 Incubator application form

Introduction

Dear applicant,

Thank you for showing interest in the Incubator/Accelerator (I/A Facility for the wood sector) activities of NIRDA supported by GIZ Rwanda through its Eco-Emploi program. This facility aims at improving business competitiveness of cooperatives and MSMEs, including self-employed workers in the wood value chain. For more information, please visit the following link: https://www.nirda.gov.rw/incubation-acceleration-facility/

Is your company/start-up developing a product or service in the wood sector?

Do you already have a wood related product or a service you are offering?

If your answer is YES to both or any of the questions above, send us the details requested below about your company/start-up (maximum one year in operation).

Start-ups will be selected considering the following elements:

- ▶ **Age** (at least 30% youth)
- ▶ **Gender** (at least 30% women)
- ▶ **Capital** (own contribution, debt)
- ▶ **Phase of development** (ideation, angel, seed, early growth)
- ▶ **Sector** (position in the wood VC)
- ▶ **Potential for job creation** (number of new jobs to be created, current employees: number of posts classified by nationality, gender, age group, qualification, and grade).
- ▶ **Inclusiveness** (number of people with disabilities - PWDs).
- ▶ **Current and potential markets** (number of customers at the local, regional, and international levels, as well as partnerships or business synergies the business is involved in).
- ▶ **New product market fit** (example of products include beams, semi-finished, panel products, joinery (finger joints), and furniture; example of production and processes include clonal technology, drying, and improving recovery rates; wood products or services of interconnected sectors will also be given priority, for example, ironmongery and composite materials, such as wood, steel, glass, etc.).
- ▶ **Value proposition** (how products benefit, feature, and experience meet the customers' needs, wants, and answer their concerns).
- ▶ **Impact** (product or service on the market and staff readiness to spread this impact. Impact is achieved through a combination of customer satisfaction, employee engagement and operational performance).
- ▶ **Team credentials** (right skills and experience required to run the business)
- ▶ **Innovation and creativity** (difference from current projects/business solutions, including audacious ideas that disrupt the status quo, such as innovative approaches and production processes)**.**

- ▶ **Scalability** (ability to benefit from economies of scale and quickly ramp up production)
- ▶ **Financial viability** (ability to generate sufficient income to meet operating payments, debt commitments, and, where applicable, to allow growth while maintaining service levels).
- ▶ **Sustainability** (focuses on meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This is composed of three pillars: economic, environmental, and social - also known informally as profits, planet, and people. This covers a wide variety of actions including, for example, conserving biodiversity, promote the protection, restoration, and conservation of natural forests, using reduced impact, logging techniques, ensuring good health and safety practices, respecting local communities, and fostering economic development).

Names*

…………………………………..

Gender* (Male/Female)   Age: Between 16 and 30 ☐   Above 30 ☐

………………………………… …………………… ……………………………………………………………………..

Phone Number*

………………………………… …………………………………………………………………………………..

Company Name

………………………………… …………………………………………………………………………………..

Email Address*

………………………………… …………………………………………………………………………………..

Do you have any disability? *
Yes…………………….No…………………………………………………………………………………………

City / District & Province where your Start-up is located

 ………

1. Brief Description of your idea and what your Company does, in a few words.
   ……..
   ……..
   ……

2. Describe your Team (Past experiences of each Founder, relevant skills, education). Is your team-dedicated full time to the project? Who is working on part-time basis?………………………………………………………………………………………………..
   ……..
   ……

3. Describe your product: what are the needs that your product is responding to? What is the status of the product as of today?

   ……
   ……
   ……

4. Who is your Customer? Describe your target market.

   ……
   ……
   ……

……
……..

5. Who are your Competitors? How is your Product different from the one of your Competitors?

……
……
……..

6. Do you have any copyright for your product/service?

……
……

7. What is the competitive advantage of your Product or Service?

……
……
……
……
……..

8. How much turnover did you make in the last two years?
(2019) ………………………………………….. 		(2020)…………………………………………………..

9. How much profit did you make in the last two years?
(2019) ………………………………………….. 		(2020)…………………………………………………..

10. Have you already raised funding for your project? If yes, how much and what type (bank, seed, venture, other)?

……
……

11. Have you created or will you create any jobs? If yes, how many?
Created……………………………………….To be created……………………………………………………….

12. Please add anything more you want to tell us

…………………………………………………………………….. ……………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………….. ……………………………………………………………..

13. Files attached

…………………………………………………………………….. ……………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………….. ……………………………………………………………..

☐ I declare that I have read the information for the processing of personal data by the I/A Facility. I hereby give my consent to the processing of my personal data by the I/A Facility for the purposes and for the period of time specified at the bottom of the form.

13.2 Incubator selection criteria – onboarding

Selection Criteria for I/A Facility - Incubator	
1. Age	Youth below 30 years of age and older (people with more than 30 years of age). Young people are encouraged to apply.
2. Gender	Women are encouraged to apply.
3. Inclusiveness	Number of people with disabilities (PWDs)
4. Product market fit	Does the wood product/service offered directly address the problem or market need identified? Does it fit in the wood value chain? (wood products and services of interconnected sectors likely to answer customer problems, e.g.: ironmongery - composite materials such as wood and steel, glass, etc.). Also add details such as drawings, 3D designs...).
5. Capital	The candidate should indicate their own contribution in the capital, and the proportions of equity and debt should be clear.
6. Development phase	Ideation, angel, seed, early growth
7. Sector (VC function)	Position in the Wood Value Chain
8. Potential for new job creation	Number of new jobs to be created, current employees: number of posts classified by nationality, gender, age group, qualification, and grade
9. Current and/or potential markets	Number of current and/or potential customers and partners.
10. Value proposition	Is there a clear and compelling reason for customers to purchase the wooden product/service? Sound strategy and plan for a wood product/service development and delivery. The ability or possibility of supply meeting the customers' demand
11. Potential for growing impact	We look for impact both in terms of how impactful the core product or service is. Impact is achieved through a combination of customer satisfaction, employee engagement and operational performance.
12. Team credentials	Does the founding/management team have the right skills and experience required to run the business? Team's practical skills, including problem-solving, strategic, and organizational abilities (including professional networking); as well as future skills, digital prototyping, CNC operation, international data transfer, rendering and promotion skills.
13. Innovation and Creativity	How is your solution to a problem different from current solutions? Difference from current solutions, audacious ideas that disrupt the status quo, green innovation, environmental practices; e.g: energy saving, smart labeling, ….
14. Scalability	Is the business scalable? Potential for solving the identified problem at scale -local, national or international
15. Financial viability	Is there a path to financial sustainability? Are financial forecasts based on sound assumptions? Business potential for profits, increasing cash flows.
16. Sustainability	Are sustainability issues included in the business? Sustainability focuses on meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This is composed of three pillars: economic, environmental, and social - also known informally as profits, planet, and people.

13.3 Accelerator Concept Note Submission Form

Concept/Proposal title……

Applicant's names………………………….…Gender (Male/Female)…………………………………..

Tel. No…………………………………………..District/Province……………………………………………..

Age (tick in the box) : ☐ Between 16 and 30 years   ☐ Above 30 years

1. Idea

1.1 Strength and novelty of the idea	
Describe the core idea of your application in one sentence.	
What is new or different about it? Has it been tried before?	
1.2 Relevance to the Incubator/Accelerator program	
What wood-related issues does your idea address?	
What are your typical activities?	
Which provinces/districts will the solution cover? Be specific – if international, note countries and if regional regions, cities etc.	
Will your activities involve the youth, women, and people with disabilities?	
1.3 Open approach, innovation, and competitiveness	
Which products/services do you intend to produce?	
Which other outputs will the business have?	
Will the project introduce any new innovation (i.e., New products and process improvement)?	

How will your innovation improve the specialization of your products, increase quality, volumes and profit	
Describe how the project will lead to improvements in competitiveness (e.g., improvements in productivity, quality and/or efficiency)	

2. Impact

2.1 Value proposition	
What problem does your business address and how?	
What are the end-benefits of your business? How will things be different at the end of the eight-month pilot? How about in a year, or five, or a decade?	
Who are the key stakeholders? Who will be (positively or negatively) impacted by the business and how?	
2.2 Opportunity and timing	
How long is your planning for this project and why?	
Is your project an extension of an existing line of business? If yes, what are the main outcomes?	
2.3 Growth and sustainability	
How much sales/revenues did you make in the last two years (2019 and 2020)?	
How much profit did you make in the last two years (2019 and 2020)?	
How will you manage the growth of the business during the eight months of the accelerator? Please provide a rough timeline.	

How will you ensure the financial sustainability of the work beyond the end of the funding? Please indicate any additional sources of funding/support you may need and how you plan to secure it.	

3. Technology

3.1 Specify details of the technology (equipment/tools) needed.

Type of equipment/Tool	Specifications (Model, Capacity, power consumption etc.)	Supplier	Cost/Price

How will this equipment be maintained and repaired?

……

3.2 Team

Who are the core members of your team? What are their relevant skills and experience?	
What expertise do you think you're missing? How could the I/A Facility help?	
Job creation: Number of women employed: Number of people with disabilities employed: Number of new jobs to be created:	

3.3 How much is your budget plan?

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Personnel			

Travel			
Equipment			
Machinery			
Inventory			
Other goods and services			
Utilities (water & electricity)			
Software			
Certification			
Subcontracting			
Other expenses (list them):			
Grand total in Rwf.			
Explain the main cost items briefly.			

3.4. Impact on the environment

Describe any anticipated impacts this project will have on the environment (positive or negative).

Also describe your strategies for reducing the negative impacts if any.

……
……
………………………………………………………………….

☐ I declare that I have read the information for the processing of personal data by the I/A Facility. I hereby give my consent to the processing of my personal data by the I/A Facility for the purposes and for the period of time specified at the bottom of the form.

13.4 Accelerator Selection Criteria

The following table shows marks and weights of criterion into the overall rating of the candidate. The first 4 items are for information purposes only (i,e; don't contribute to the score weighting). Details of how to use the table are explained at the end of it.

The weights have been distributed taking into consideration the solutions needed for the value chain functions (refer to page 5 for details).

1. Age	Youth below 30 years of age and older (people with more than 30 years of age). Young people are encouraged to apply.
2. Gender	Women are encouraged to apply.
3. Inclusiveness	Number of people with disabilities (PWDs)
4. Product market fit	Does the wood product/service offered directly address the problem or market need identified? Does it fit in the wood value chain? (wood products and services of interconnected sectors likely to answer customer problems. Example products include beams, semi-finished, panel products, joinery (finger joints), and furniture; example of production and processes include clonal technology, drying, and improving recovery rates; wood products or services of interconnected sectors will also be given priority, for example, ironmongery and composite materials, such as wood, steel, glass, etc.)
5. Capital	The candidate should indicate their own contribution in the capital, and the proportions of equity and debt should be clear.
6. Phase of development	Ideation, angel, seed, early growth
7. Sector (VC function)	Position in the Wood Value Chain
8. Potential for new job creation	Number of new jobs to be created, current employees: number of posts classified by nationality, gender, age group, qualification, and grade
9. Current and/or potential markets	Number of current and/or potential customers and partners.
10. Value proposition	Is there a clear and compelling reason for customers to purchase the wooden product/service? Sound strategy and plan for a wood product/service development and delivery. The ability or possibility of supply meeting the customers' demand
11. Potential for growing impact	We look for impact both in terms of how impactful the core product or service is, and how employees are engaged to spread this impact, customer satisfaction and operational performance
12. Team credentials	Does the founding/management team have the right skills and experience required to run the business? Team's practical skills, including problem-solving, strategic, and organizational abilities (including professional networking); as well as future skills, digital prototyping, CNC operation, international data transfer, rendering and promotion skills.

13. Innovation and Creativity	What is the difference with the proposed business project to existing current projects/business solutions? Does your project include audacious ideas that disrupt the status quo, such as innovative approaches and production processes?
14. Scalability	Is the business scalable? Business potential and the ability to benefit from economies of scale and quickly ramp up production
15. Financial viability	Is there a path to financial sustainability? Are financial forecasts based on sound assumptions? Business Potential for profits, increasing cash flows The ability to generate sufficient income to meet operating payments, debt commitments, and, where applicable, to allow growth while maintaining service levels
16. Sustainability	Are sustainability issues included in the business? Sustainability focuses on meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This is composed of three pillars: economic, environmental, and social - also known informally as profits, planet, and people.
17. NABC business pitch	Effectiveness and feasibility of the action. The commercial interest, financial outlook and potential of the business/start-up. Analysis according to the 'Need, Approach, Benefit, and Costs' (NABC). NABC [Need, Approach, Benefit, Costs] framework includes the following elements: what is the important customer and market NEED? What is the unique APPROACH for addressing this need? What are the specific BENEFITS per costs that result from this approach? How are the benefits per costs superior to the COMPETITION's and the alternatives
18. Budget and cost-effectiveness	Does the applicant have a built financial model that highlights expenditure and profitability?
19. Capacity to transform the wood sector in Rwanda	Is the applicant (entrepreneur or company) able to contribute in the improvement and advancement of the wood sector in general?

13.5 Accelerator Application Form

Applicant Reference Number…………

Project Application Form

Introduction

Dear applicant,

Thank you for showing interest in the Incubator/Accelerator (I/A Facility for wood sector) activities of NIRDA supported by GIZ Rwanda through its Eco-Emploi program. This facility aims at improving business competitiveness of cooperatives and MSMEs, including self-employed workers in the Wood Value Chain.

If you already have a business plan, pictures or other documentation material, you can attach files using the space provided at the bottom of this form. Don't forget: the more information you can provide, the higher the chances to be selected! Confidentiality is assured.

Your application form is part of the selection process. If your project is among the XY preselected applications (you will be informed at latest two weeks after the submission deadline), we will organise a visit to your site and have an in-depth interview with you before any final decision will be taken. We wish you good luck!

For more information, please visit the following link:

https://www.nirda.gov.rw/incubation-acceleration-facility/

DATE

Date of submission…….

APPLICANT………..……....

Name of the firm or organisation responsible for the proposed project

CONTACT DETAILS

Contact person:
Names……..

Position: (Position in the company)
………...

Telephone Number:
………

Email:
…….……………

Gender* (Male/Female)   Age: Below 30 ☐   Between 30 and 35 ☐   Above 35 ☐
…………………………………….. ………………….. ……………………………………………………………………………

Do you have any disability?   Yes ☐   No ☐

 ……………………………………….. …………………….

TITLE
Title of Proposed Project
……

SECTOR, SUB-SECTOR OR VALUE CHAIN

Indicate the industry sector, sub-sector or value chain the project would operate within.

……

APPLICANT BUSINESS DETAILS: MAIN BUSINESS ACTIVITY

Provide a description of the Applicant main business activity.

....

....

YEARS OF OPERATION

Number of years the Applicant business has been operating.

....

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

Number of full-time equivalent employees

....

OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE

Applicant's business structure (company, partnership, sole proprietor)

....

....

NUMBER OF DIRECTORS/PARTNERS

Number of full-time equivalent employees

....

....

PROPOSED PROJECT: PROJECT DESCRIPTION (Maximum 500 words)

Provide a description of the proposed project: project activities.

....

....

DESCRIBE TECHNOLOGY INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

Indicate the specific focus on the technology involved: Technology acquisition, development, transfer, and commercialization

....

....

DESCRIBE ANY INNOVATIONS THE PROJECT WILL INTRODUCE

Will the project introduce any new innovations to the business (i.e., innovation of business products, services, process, business models)?

....

....

IMPACT ON WOMEN AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Describe any anticipated impacts this project will have on the economic and social opportunities for women or girls and people with disabilities.

....

....

PROJECT ANNUAL TURNOVER FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS (2019 & 2020)

State your annual turnover or sales.

………
……

PROJECT ANNUAL PROFIT FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS (2019 & 2020)

State your annual profit.

………
……

DECLARATION BY THE APPLICANT

The Applicant, represented by the undersigned, being the Authorised signatory of the Applicant, and in the context of the present application, representing any partners in the proposed project, hereby declares that:

The Applicant understands and accepts the conditions of this Open Call process.

All details presented in this application are true and correct.

The budget presented in this application is realistic and contributions from other sources (where indicated) have been confirmed.

The Applicant is directly responsible for the preparation, management, and implementation of the project with its Project Partners, if any, and is not acting as an intermediary.

The Applicant and each Project Partner (if any) are eligible in accordance with the criteria set out in the Guidelines for Applicants.

Name	
Position	
Signature	
Date	

CHECKLIST OF ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED WITH PROJECT APPLICATION

1) CVs of all relevant personnel
2) Applicant Business Plan and Registration Certificate
3) Applicant Financial Statements (last two years, certified)
4) Signed letters of support from 3 Project Partners, including financial commitments (where relevant)
5) Quotations for major equipment purchases

☐ I declare that I have read the information for the processing of personal data by the I/A Facility. I hereby give my consent to the processing of my personal data by the I/A Facility for the purposes and for the period of time specified at the bottom of the form.

13.6 Data Protection Statement

Data Privacy Information: Incubation/Acceleration Facility

Data protection statement for applicants to the Incubation/Acceleration facility project for wood sector on storage and use of personal data by ICON and GIZ in Rwanda.

GIZ takes the protection of personal data very seriously. This declaration explains what personal data is stored and what it is used for.

Data processing is the responsibility of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and its project implementation partner, ICON INSTITUT GmbH.

Registered partner office:

ICON-INSTITUT **GmbH & Co. KG Consulting Gruppe**
Von-Groote-Str. 28, 50968 Cologne
Focal person: Holger Thoma
Email: Holger.Thoma@icon-institute.de

- ▶ The personal data specified in the application process through the application form (names, phone number, e-mail address, age, gender) that is required for the purpose of contacting you and processing your application within ICON will be stored on ICON servers and is used for coordinating of capacities.

- ▶ The data will be used solely for the purpose of processing your application and contacting you for follow-ups regarding the Incubation/Acceleration Facility project.
- ▶ The legal basis for processing is the consent to this statement.

- ▶ The data will be used exclusively for the purposes described in the statement. Any other use will always be subject to further consent. Your data will not be used for advertising purposes. ICON uses appropriate technical and organisational measures to secure data against unintentional or intentional falsification, destruction, loss, or access by unauthorised persons.

Access to your personal data is restricted to ICON staff who need to process it for the above-mentioned purpose(s), and who will handle the information you provide in a proper and confidential manner.

Rights of data subjects

You are entitled to enquire about your personal data, have the data corrected if necessary, and ask for processing to be restricted or data to be erased. The data will then be removed from our system. The consent given to use personal data can also be revoked at any time. This does not affect the lawfulness of processing up to the time of revocation.

In the case of revocation, it is not possible to participate in the Incubation/Acceleration Facility project.

To revoke consent, please send an email to IAF.applications@icon-institute.de.

Should you have any questions or complaints relating to this statement or the processing, you can contact the ICON data protection officer at the following email address: Holger.Thoma@icon-institute.de

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an Incubator?

An incubator is the combination of physical space and a set of services which help entrepreneurs and management teams of very early-stage start-ups address challenges associated with launching new companies. Incubators allow start-ups to physically base themselves within an incubator for long periods of time (months or even years).

What is Offered by the I/AF Incubator?

- ▶ Physical space
- ▶ Infrastructure (meeting rooms, furnished office space, high-speed internet, printers, etc.)
- ▶ Shared administrative or office services
- ▶ Networking activities
- ▶ Marketing assistance
- ▶ Accounting and financial management services
- ▶ Legal services
- ▶ Specialised equipment (e.g. CAD equipment, workstations, etc.)
- ▶ Comprehensive business and technical training
- ▶ Assistance with business basics
- ▶ Presentation skills training
- ▶ Access to mentors and advisory boards
- ▶ E-Commerce assistance
- ▶ HR training
- ▶ Access to business angels, seed financing, venture capitalists, grant monies
- ▶ Assistance in raising bank finance, grants, seed, angel, and venture capital
- ▶ Networking, matchmaking events, and participation in trade fairs

What is an Accelerator?

An accelerator is generally tailored for more mature start-ups. Accelerators provide focused programs to assist companies to scale up. Accelerators assume that a specific level of business knowledge and capability exists within the company receiving acceleration who can understand and implement recommendations.

In general, accelerators provide a highly focused three-to-four-month program where companies receive mentoring and guidance to build and/or upgrade their companies. After completing successful acceleration, companies are often graduated and promoted to interested investors and venture capital funds (typically post seed funding).

Which organizations are partners of I/A Facility?

The I/AF is funded by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in partnership with National Industrial Research and Development Agency (NIRDA). The project is

implemented by ICON-INSTITUT GmbH through its staff and experts both local (Rwandans) and international.

Who is eligible to apply?

Successful applicants must meet the following general eligibility criteria for both the incubator and accelerator program:

- ▶ Must be legally registered and operating in Rwanda
- ▶ Must be either entrepreneurs, companies (legal entities), associations, cooperatives, or consortia
- ▶ If an application is submitted by consortia, associations, or cooperatives, all participants must be separately eligible, unless they have own products or services on sale. In both cases, the applicants need to choose a project lead who will submit the application and engage with the I/AF on their behalf.
- ▶ Must be part of the wood sector (wood value chain)
- ▶ Those with family, business, or financial ties to members of the I/AF team, NIRDA, GIZ and partnering organizations are NOT eligible to participate in the I/AF. If you feel that a prior relationship with the I/AF and its partners might constitute a conflict of interest, please email to iaf.applications@icon-institute.de for clarification.

Specific incubator program eligibility criteria:

- ▶ Less than 12 months of business operations (including start-ups) OR
- ▶ Businesses that want to diversity their products (can be more than 12 months of business operations as long as they are new to using wood components)

Specific accelerator program eligibility criteria:

- ▶ More than 12 months of business operations
- ▶ Any size of enterprise in the wood sector is welcome to apply

How many calls for applications will you have?

IAF will run **two cycles**, one in 2021 and a second one in 2022. **This document refers to the first action call only.** The second call is expected to launch around February 2022.

When does the first call open?

10th June at 2021 12:00 PM Kigali time.

When does the first call close?

25th June 2021 at 12:00 PM Kigali time.

How many projects will be supported until the end of the cycle?

A total of 5 projects for the incubator and 25 for the accelerator, for each cycle.

How do I apply?

Follow the instructions from the webpage:

https://www.nirda.gov.rw/incubation-acceleration-facility/

Can individuals apply to the I/A Facility?

Yes, if you are affiliated within a legal entity, you are eligible to apply. I/AF will ask you to confirm your affiliation through a letter signed by the legal representative of your organization, association, cooperative or consortium.

Can consortia apply to the I/A Facility?

The I/A Facility services are available to **legal entities**, cooperatives, associations, and **consortia** established in Rwanda. For consortia, all participants must be eligible. In this case, the participants also need to choose a project lead, who will submit the application and engage with the I/A Facility on behalf of the consortium.

Submission

Can I submit more than one application for the same call?

You can participate in one application only, either on your own or as part of a cooperative, association or consortium. Only the last submission will be considered.

Can I apply if I am already receiving funds or technical support from another public program?

The activities you plan to carry out with the IA Facility cannot receive double funding. Synergies with other sources of funding, including projects supported by NIRDA or GIZ, are encouraged as long as the grants are used for complementarity, not overlapping activities.

Can I submit documents that are not in English?

No. All documents submitted to the IA Facility must be in English. We are unable to accept any documents in other languages.

Who keeps the IP (Intellectual Property)?

You will be the sole owner of the results and outcomes of your project, and all associated IP. However, we expect most concepts to follow an open approach, sharing results and experiences widely with the I/A Facility. In addition, IAF may ask you to present your work as part of our public relations and networking events, to showcase the benefits of the program.

Evaluation

How do you select applications?

We follow a four-step process:

1) Eligibility checks: IAF checks if eligibility criteria are met. Concepts or proposals considered not eligible will not proceed to step 2 of the evaluation process.
2) Reviews and shortlist: Eligible applications will be evaluated by at least three reviewers from the selection committee.
3) Interviews and Field visits: Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an interview with an expert panel (physical or remote). For the Accelerator candidates, at least three reviewers will visit the candidates to ensure consistency of the information provided.
4) Decisions: After the interviews (and the field visits for Acceleration), the panel will decide whether to accept the applicant into the program.

Is participation free of charge or I must pay money to qualify?

There is no payment required to participate in these two cycles of the I/A Facility program for the wood sector in Rwanda.

When will I know if I am shortlisted?

Shortlisted candidates for the first cycle will be notified by July 5th, 2021.

What will the interview consist of?

The interview will consist of a short pitch of the application, followed by questions. Either face to face or remotely.

How many people can participate in the interview?

There is no limit to the size of the team as long as the participants add to the discussions and still follow the health restrictions with regards to Covid-19.

Will I receive feedback?

Applicants will receive comments from the reviewers for almost all sections of their application.

Can I reschedule the interview?

Unfortunately, we will not be able to negotiate interview dates and related conditions with the applicants and may not answer any queries on the subject. If an applicant is not able to attend the interview, we will have to reject that application.

When will I know if my application was approved/rejected?

July 5th, 2021 for the first cycle or call.

All applicants will be notified in the end of July 2021 whether they've been invited to onboarding and interviews or not.

Can I change my application once submitted?

You can update your application and resubmit as many times as you wish. We will consider the last submission made before the call deadline.

Can I apply for both cycles?

If your application was not successful in the first call of 2021, you will be able to apply for the 2022 call. Successful applicants from the 2021 call will not be able to apply for a second time.