Application Guidelines - Innovation Challenge 2025

Last updated: 14 July 2025

1. Programme overview

The GovTech Innovation Challenge is a pilot programme connecting government partners with innovative technology companies to address critical public sector challenges. This initiative mobilises startups and SMEs to develop practical solutions that enhance government efficiency, transparency, and citizen services through digital transformation.

This inaugural challenge partners the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) with global technology firms to develop solutions for tax administration challenges in Ghana. Three selected companies will participate in a development programme designed to in functional prototypes and potential implementation pathways.

The Innovation Challenge is a joint initiative of the World Bank, Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and Trust Valley (operated by EPFL Innovation Park Foundation). This programme is supported by the World Bank Trust Fund "Governance & Institutions Umbrella Program".

Programme management

The Innovation Challenge is managed by the Trust Valley on behalf of the World Bank. The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this programme are entirely those of the Trust Valley and do not necessarily represent the views of the World Bank Group, its Executive Directors, or the governments it represents.

2. Application requirements and process

2.1. Eligibility criteria

The Innovation Challenge is exclusively open to early-stage startups, scale-ups, and small to medium enterprises (SMEs) at the international level.
Large corporations, multinational enterprises and subsidiaries of major corporations are not eligible to participate.

To qualify for participation, applicant companies must satisfy all of the following mandatory criteria:
- Have fewer than 75 employees at the time of application
- Have annual revenue below $5 million USD (or equivalent value in local currency) for the most recent financial year
- Demonstrate proven team capability and relevant industry experience applicable to the challenge domain
- Commit to active participation in pilot programme implementation and agree to comprehensive data sharing requirements with programme partners
- Align organisational mission and proposed solutions with governmental technology advancement and measurable social impact objectives

2.2. Timeline

- Call for Proposals launch: 18 July 2025
- Information sessions with GRA (Q&A format): August 18 - September 12
- Application deadline: September 12, 23:59 CET
- Proposal presentations (on request): September 8-26
- Selected proposals announcement: October 3
- Proposal Proof of Concept implementation: October 6 - November 21
- Bootcamp: 11-14 November
- GovTech Conference: December 2, 2025

2.3.   Application process

To participate in the Innovation Challenge, companies must submit comprehensive proposals for GRA's Challenge Statements through the official application portal. Companies are welcome to submit proposals for both challenges but must submit separate applications for each. Proposals must tackle one or all of the challenge areas identified in the challenge statements (see document below).

Challenge statements
The challenge statements, which serve as the basis for all proposal submissions, can be accessed at:

Informal Sector Income Tax Identification and Registration
E-commerce VAT Identification and Compliance

Application portal
All proposals must be submitted via the official application portal at
https://govtech.trustvalley.swiss/challenge/

Application components
In addition to completing the mandatory form questions, proposal teams are invited to include a comprehensive technical proposal document (PDF, max 10MB) following the below structure:

- Executive summary
- Technical solution
- Implementation plan
- Innovation & differentiation aspect
- Risk management
- Team & expertise
- Success metrics & impacts
- Additional resources

2.4.　Information sessions

Information sessions in Q&A format will be organised between August 12 to September 12 to help interested teams better understand the challenges, specific requirements, and their context.

These sessions will provide opportunities to clarify technical requirements, discuss implementation approaches and gain deeper insights into the government partner's prior experience and lessons learned.

Attendance is strongly recommended but not mandatory for application eligibility.

The dates, time and registration details for those sessions will be made available at: https//govtech.trustvalley.swiss/challenge

2.5.　Selection process

Applications will undergo a 2-step evaluation process including initial screening and presentation on request to an expert panel comprising representatives from Trust Valley, SECO, the World Bank, the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) and other relevant ad-hoc organisations.

Proposals will be assessed against established criteria including innovation potential, technical feasibility, scalability potential, and depth of understanding of government digital transformation challenges. Three proposals demonstrating the highest potential for impact will be selected to advance to the Proposal Proof of Concept implementation phase.

2.6.　Support provided

Selected proposals will receive comprehensive support to develop their proposals into functional Proof of Concept (PoC) prototypes through a structured development programme. This includes technical consultations with government partner teams, participation in an intensive bootcamp in Switzerland focused on public-private collaboration, and presentation opportunities at the GovTech Conference for feedback and visibility among international stakeholders.

2.6.1. Technical and development consultations

Selected innovation companies will receive comprehensive technical support, including assistance with documenting detailed technical requirements, detailed online consultations with GRA technical teams on implementation requirements, and pre-bootcamp preparation through online sessions and support.

2.6.2. Bootcamp in Switzerland

The 4-day intensive bootcamp in Switzerland will provide selected startups with:
- Specialised workshops on startup and public sector collaboration
- Government Partner Sessions: Direct meet-the-team sessions with Ghana Revenue Authority staff and other government representatives
- Hands-on working sessions for prototype demos and development
- Access to technical mentors and industry experts
- Opportunities to connect with other participants, government officials, and international development stakeholders

The bootcamp is expected to happen from 11 to 14 November 2025 (subject to change)

2.6.3. GovTech Conference

Each selected company will present their developed proposal and prototype at the Programme's closing conference, held alongside the Trust Valley Day event at the CCIG in Geneva, Switzerland.

This flagship event provides opportunities for feedback, visibility, and potential implementation pathway discussions, bringing together government representatives, proposal teams, and stakeholders for Q&A sessions with representatives from the World Bank, Trust Valley, SECO, and the Ghana Revenue Authority.

2.7. Post-programme implementation

Selected companies may have opportunities for implementation facilitated by the World Bank beyond the programme scope, though no guarantees are provided regarding future implementation, funding, or financial commitments.

Any potential implementation would require participation in separate requests for proposal and may involve consortium arrangements with external organisations, all subject to independent approval processes outside the Programme's control.

3. Terms & conditions

Participation in the Innovation Challenge Programme is subject to terms and conditions that govern all aspects of the application process, programme participation, intellectual property rights, and other obligations.

The Terms and Conditions are available at https://govtech.trustvalley.swiss and must be accepted during the application submission process.

All applicants must review and accept these terms before submitting their proposals.

4. Contact information

For any questions regarding the Innovation Challenge Programme, challenge statements, or application process, please use the contact form at the official application portal.

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