

# Kenya Cold Chain Accelerator

## Guidance for Applicants



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# 1. Overview

## 1.1 About the Kenya Cold Chain Accelerator

The Kenya Cold Chain Accelerator (KCCA) is a project under the Low Energy Inclusive Appliances (LEIA) programme, an innovative, research, development and demonstration programme, funded by UK aid, from the UK government, via the Transforming Energy Access Platform and the IKEA Foundation. The programme seeks to improve the efficiency, performance, availability, and affordability of a range of household, community, and productive use electrical appliances and solar-powered technologies, with more information found on the Efficiency for Access [website](#).

Kenya is one of the leading countries in sub-Saharan Africa to test off-grid cold chain technologies in rural areas and a focus country for the LEIA programme. The KCCA project aims to support the testing and scale-up of business models for effective, commercially viable agricultural cold chain technologies in Kenya by enhancing the performance of innovators and their access to commercial finance, while also strengthening cross-sectoral dialogue. The project aims to develop a replicable model that can be scaled through larger scale, government-led programmes both nationally and internationally.

It will take an ecosystem approach in achieving its objectives. It will include:

- **Financial support for cold chain companies:** grant funding, between £50,000-£150,000, through a call for proposals for cold chain companies to enable business model testing and scaling, enhance commercial performance and development impact.
- Optional additional support to companies in the form of **technical assistance, research or workforce & skills initiatives**. Companies can propose for research or workforce & skills development initiatives to be implemented through additional 'top-up' grants of up to £25,000 for research, and up to £50,000 for workforce & skills initiatives.
- **Cross-sector dialogue to create an enabling environment** to build government awareness of the cold chain technologies, business models, market barriers and solutions needed - and directly inform policy development and program design.

## 1.2 About the call for proposals

Energy Saving Trust, co-secretariat of Efficiency for Access, invites organisations meeting the criteria outlined in section 3 to apply to the KCCA.

Applying for support under this call for proposals will involve completing a registration form on the Efficiency for Access website, confirming compliance with the core eligibility requirements listed in this document. Only companies meeting the criteria will be sent an application form to provide a comprehensive breakdown of their KCCA project. Full due diligence will be conducted on successful applicants, which may involve an interview, and an in-person visit. The successful applicants will then be notified, and the project milestones and funding agreements will be finalised.

**We encourage all potential applicants to read this Guidance for Applicants document in full before proceeding with the registration.**

## 2. Background

Agriculture is central to Kenya's economy and development strategy, accounting for 31.5% of GDP and employing 38% of the population. About 40% of food produced is wasted due to post-harvest losses and limited access to ready markets. Food insecurity remains an issue in Kenya, with four million people facing food shortages during the 2022 drought. With a growing population driving increased food demand, unstable global food supply chains and challenges posed by climate change, Kenya may face extreme food shortages in future - especially among low-income households and in drought-prone areas, a set of challenges that can be applicable across sub-Saharan Africa. Sustainable cold chain infrastructure could help to mitigate many of these challenges.

Today, end-to-end cold chains are only in place for a limited number of high-value export crops. With technology costs coming down, and businesses innovating to overcome high upfront costs through consumer financing, there is an opportunity to build off-grid, sustainable cold chain infrastructure in four main agricultural value chains:

1. Horticulture
2. Dairy
3. Fish
4. Meat

A wide range of technology solutions are needed to build end-to-end cold chains across these different agricultural value chains. The KCCA is focused on supporting interventions in the rural, off- and weak grid segments where cold chains are largely absent. Technologies including cold rooms, milk chillers, pre-cooling solutions, icemakers, freezers, and temperature-controlled transport (using tricycles, vans, and lorries), that will primarily impact and benefit smallholder farmers, small-scale fishers and value addition activities such as processing within the agricultural value chains

Solar-powered cold chains serving both domestic, regional and global markets have the potential for profound development impact. Cold chains serving domestic markets can help to reduce food loss and waste, whilst boosting nutrition and food security in-country. Solar-powered cold chains serving export markets reduce demand for imported fossil fuels whilst boosting exports, improving the balance of payments and contributing to economic growth. Both models can enhance productivity and increase incomes for value chain actors such as smallholder farmers and small-scale fishers, whilst creating jobs — especially if farmers are organised into cooperatives that create a platform for demand/supply aggregation, access to finance, professionalisation and mechanisation.

While innovation and technology are key drivers for the development of effective agricultural cold chain solutions, testing and scaling innovative business models is essential to achieving the commercial viability of market-based cold chains in the hardest-to-reach areas in Kenya. The KCCA is seeking proposals that address the challenges to advance commercial scale of sustainable cold chains in agricultural value chains.

## 3. Company Eligibility and Project Scope

To be eligible for this call, applicants must be operating beyond the pilot or proof of concept stage. Projects must not involve any technologies that are at an early-stage of development — prototyping and testing technology viability are not eligible. Applicants should be able to demonstrate proven performance of their technology, as well as commercial demand with a clear case of a viable underlying business model.

**Applicants must:**

- Be fully headquartered in sub-Saharan Africa with majority ownership by citizens of these countries/region<sup>1</sup>, legally registered and physically established in Kenya, with a minimum one year of commercial operation in Kenya
- NOT have raised Series A financing<sup>2</sup>, since this call is intended to assist companies that are close to being able to raise commercial financing at scale to do so
- Demonstrate sufficient match funding (as outlined in section 5)
- Be compliant with fundamental in-country and international human rights, labour standards, and environmental management laws. Applicants must not be involved in any act of terrorism or support terrorist activities
- Be prepared to undergo due diligence prior to contract award, and upon request during the project

## If applicable:

- Applicants may apply in partnership, for example with other businesses, academic institutions or farmer/fisher cooperatives. However, the lead partner will assume responsibility for their partners' activities and will be the recipient of the grant funding

**Projects must:**

- Provide infrastructure, equipment and/or services for agricultural cold chains in off- and/or weak grid locations in Kenya. Companies that extend beyond the conventional retail and distribution business model of electrical goods — particularly those offering cold chain solutions — are being actively identified and considered
- Support the applicant's efforts to: a) improve commercial performance and strengthen investment-readiness; AND b) increase development impact by more directly serving off-grid communities and/or smallholder farmers. While projects may target domestic or export agricultural value chains, priority is given to those focused on domestic markets due to their potential to reduce food loss and waste and enhance food security.
- Demonstrate outcomes linked to the LEIA programme's overall objectives of accelerating the availability, affordability, efficiency and performance of a range of low energy inclusive appliances particularly suited to developing country contexts
- Clearly outline the specific challenges companies are facing and propose solutions, specifying what role the company and/or other stakeholders need to play in delivering the solutions

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<sup>1</sup> We define local organisations as those “fully headquartered in African countries (and which only operate in these regions/countries) and at least 51% owned/founded by citizens of these regions/countries” (taken and adapted Transforming Energy Access Local Partnership and Inclusion definition).

<sup>2</sup> The Series A stage typically occurs when a start-up has developed an MVP and gained sufficient market traction with a viable plan to obtain long-term profit. The funds are typically acquired to scale the business, expand operations, invest in equipment and machinery, hire more employees, and increase its customer base. Series A funding is usually obtained from venture capital firms, super angel investors, or institutional investors. ([A guide to equity funding stages for your business | British Business Bank](#))

## Projects must cont'd

- Demonstrate commercial viability, development impact, inclusivity, technology-readiness and sustainability
  - By commercial viability, we mean the potential for a product or service to be profitable and sustainable over its lifecycle. Key factors include demonstrating an understanding of the market and its demand such as willingness to pay, competition, financial stability and operational efficiency
  - By 'inclusivity' we mean technologies and business models targeted towards at one or more of the following vulnerable and disadvantaged groups:
    - Gender (women and girls)
    - Persons with physical disability and/or identify as neurodivergent
    - Other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including older people, children, stateless and displaced persons, and people in slums or informal settlements
  - By 'technology-readiness', we mean technologies that have met a minimum maturity threshold. Using the Technology Readiness Level framework, technologies to be deployed under this project should be at least TRL 7<sup>3</sup>
  - By 'sustainability' we mean for example, minimisation of emissions throughout the lifecycle of the cold chain hardware, use of low global warming potential (GWP) refrigerants, innovative solutions to extend product lifespan such as a modular technology facilitating component replacement or offering repair services

Efficiency for Access has published [research](#) in these areas to inform your proposed project. We also encourage projects that involve close collaboration with farmer/fisher cooperatives or local organisations, to consider encouraging the adoption of regenerative agriculture approaches, and have a focus on improving local livelihoods.

## 4. The Application Process

Following the launch of the call for proposals the process of applying will be as follows:

### Step 1 - Registration:

- Applicants will be invited to register their interest to apply on the Efficiency for Access website by [completing this form](#). As part of the registration, applicants will need to provide evidence for compliance with the eligibility criteria of the call for proposals (as outlined in section 3 above). Only companies that are deemed to meet the eligibility criteria will continue to the application stage. This ensures applicants have clarity on eligibility before investing time in full proposal development

### Step 2 - Pre-Submission Support:

- Applicants will have the opportunity to submit a draft application for review and feedback.
  - Please note that we will provide a basic review (requiring a maximum of 1 hour of EforA staff time) and the comments provided by the reviewer may differ from the ultimate judgement of the application assessors. If you wish to have your draft application reviewed, you must contact us at [EforAgrants@est.org.uk](mailto:EforAgrants@est.org.uk) and make a request for assistance by 6 October 2025. We will endeavour to review your application within three working days.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/councils/stfc/guidance-for-applicants/check-if-youre-eligible-for-funding/eligibility-of-technology-readiness-levels-trl/>

**Step 3 - Proposal Submission:**

- Companies will submit a written project proposal, accompanied with their project budget spreadsheet by 10:00am EAT on 13 October 2025

**Step 4 - Assessment:**

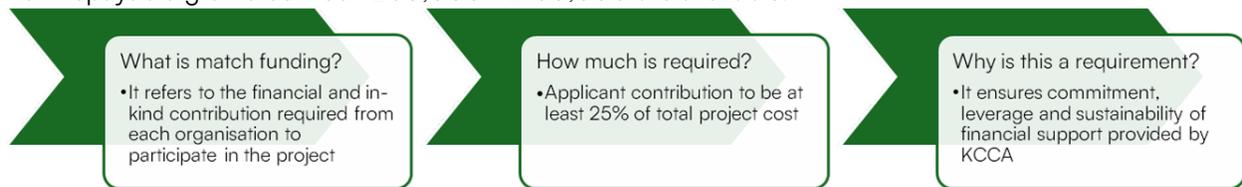
- Applications will be assessed by two reviewers based on the assessment criteria in section 8

**Step 5 - Contract Negotiation:**

- Energy Saving Trust will then enter contract negotiations and due diligence with the preferred companies - with funding offered either on an unconditional basis or pending resolution of issues identified during proposal review. This will be an opportunity to fine tune project designs and discuss in more detail how best to meet companies' additional support needs. All contracts are subject to successful completion of due diligence.

## 5. Match funding and eligible expenditure

Non-repayable grants between £50,000 - £150,000 are available.



Each organisation is required to provide a pre-agreed percentage of 25% match funding in contribution towards the proposed project.

Examples of eligible and non-eligible project costs include, but are not limited to:

Eligible project costs	Ineligible project costs
Personnel costs	Profit
Services	Bonuses
Direct overheads	Dividend payment
Travel costs — direct	Currency exchange
Equipment and materials	Recoverable VAT/local taxes
Indirect overheads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General office costs</li> <li>• Admin support</li> <li>• IT/HR/support function</li> </ul>	Loss of income/opportunity cost
Training of personnel	Patent costs

You will need to provide a budget detailing your project costs in your application form for each project milestone, which will include the amount of grant funding you require and the amount of match funding you will provide. Please note that value for money is one of the main categories by which your application will be scored. Additionally, VAT will only be reimbursed where you can demonstrate that you cannot reclaim it, so all costs must exclude reclaimable VAT.

When specifying personnel costs in your budget, a maximum overhead rate of 25% may be claimed as project costs. Please be aware, however, that we may ask for evidence of how your overhead rate has been calculated, so please ensure you are able to provide this on request. Additionally, if you are claiming an overhead rate of 25%, you may not charge separately for items that would normally be included in overheads, such as general office costs, etc.

## 6. Additional Support

Applicants are encouraged to request additional support to enhance project outcomes in three areas a) technical assistance, b) workforce & skills development and c) research (further detail below). This support will be a top-up to the awarded project grant. The proposals for additional support will need to have clear links with the project proposal for the main grant, particularly on the enhancement of the project's outcomes.

As mentioned, applicants may request additional support across a range of areas. For reference, the table below describes examples of the type of activities we envision for each support area, however this does not limit the proposals to these.

Support Area	Description
Technical assistance	Support to enhance business performance through business-to-business matchmaking, investment readiness, capital raising, bookkeeping and/or account auditing.
Workforce & skills development	Support to develop in-house HR functions, training and internships programs, strengthening recruitment processes, developing retention packages and career development pathways.
Research	Independent research to understand end-user perspectives, market demand and affordability, technology or business model options, or policy impacts (e.g., tax exemption advocacy).

Additional support is optional. Companies will complete a single narrative and financial proposal form, covering both their core grant request as well as their additional support requests (if any). The companies' core grant funding proposals will be evaluated first, with a shortlist identified. For shortlisted companies, the additional support requests will also be evaluated and scored. The selection processes for core proposals and additional support requests will be separate, but synergies between the core proposals and the additional support requests will be considered when scoring the additional support requests.

Technical assistance should be complementary to the financial support received through the call for proposals and support companies to achieve greatest impact in their target value chains. Support will help to improve the commercial viability of companies. It can cover areas such as business-to-business matchmaking, data systems and impact monitoring support, investment readiness, capital raising, bookkeeping and/or account auditing. Other areas can be proposed if the need is demonstrated clearly.

Research activities should be closely aligned with core grant funding proposals, with the aim of generating insights that not only benefit the company and their project but also wider cold chain sector development. Preference will be given to proposals that demonstrate potential to shape markets and benefit the wider ecosystem, not solely the individual company which is the role of the TA component. Companies can propose research topics such as gathering end-user perspectives, comparing technology options or business model options, assessing the impact of policy interventions, evaluating emission reduction

pathways, or others. Research outputs will be published to support sector-wide learning, following consultation with the company to ensure sensitive data and findings remains confidential.

Workforce & skills initiatives should focus on ensuring that companies have the personnel, with the right skills, that they need to deliver on their core grant funding proposal, improving commercial performance, enhancing investment-readiness and maximising impact. Companies could propose training initiatives in areas such as site assessment, system sizing, installation, O&M or repair for their engineers, or customer identification, sales, marketing and credit risk assessment for their salesforce. These could be delivered in-house or through sponsoring staff members to gain professional qualifications. They could also propose financial, risk management or HR training, mentoring or coaching for their management teams. They could request financial support to share the cost of hiring a new staff member or request third-party support to help find high quality applicants to new positions, or advise on reviewing job descriptions, improving recruitment processes, or developing HR policies and procedures. Workforce & skills initiatives should be sustainable with the aim of building long-term in-house capacity to deliver beyond the life of the project.

## 7. Key Dates

### Stage 1

- 28 August 2025 — Registration and call for proposals opens
- 23 September 2025 — Deadline for registration

### Stage 2

- 06 October 2025 - Review of draft applications deadline
- 13 October 2025 10:00 EAT — Deadline for final applications

### Award & Project timelines

- November 2025 — Successful applicants that pass due diligence are notified
- 30 November 2025 — Projects must start by this date
- 31 October 2026 — Projects must end by this date

## 8. Proposal Evaluation

Applications will undergo an assessment by a minimum of two Efficiency for Access assessors and independent technical experts, selected from an assessment panel. The assessment criteria are below.

	Evaluation criteria	Description	Key assessment considerations	Weighting
<b>Part I: About your Business</b>				
1	Customers and commercial performance	Who are your customers and how does your value proposition solve their challenges? How does this impact commercial outcomes?	The assessment will be based on the quality and depth of information provided about customers and/or end-users, including demographics (e.g. age, gender), income levels and patterns (e.g. predictability, seasonality), geographic location (rural or urban), and any other relevant characteristics. This information should be clearly	10%

			linked to available sales data, well-defined customer segmentation, and customer default rates (if applicable), to support a comprehensive understanding of commercial performance.	
2	Investment-readiness	How far is the company on their journey to investment readiness?	<p>Companies are expected to have some of the following in place: management accounts, audited financials, certificate of incorporation, organisational chart, proposed business model cost analysis and unit economic analysis.</p> <p>The evaluation will also take into consideration the nature of the products/services sold, sales volumes; revenues; cost of goods; cost of sales/overheads; gross &amp; net profit, unit economics on main products/services, if known.</p>	20%
3	Development impact	What is the estimated direct impact of the company in terms of its work force and customer base?	The development impact assessment will evaluate the extent to which the project contributes to job creation, inclusivity, and sustainability, as well as improvements in customers' livelihoods, nutrition and health, resilience, food security, and other relevant outcomes. The assessment will also consider the credibility of the proposed pathway to investment. Particular emphasis will be placed on the clarity, relevance, and level of detail provided across all areas.	20%

<b>Part II: About your Project</b>				
4	Project credibility	What is the problem statement and how does your company address this through the project?	Project credibility is assessed based on the ability of the applicant to propose an innovative approach that should add value compared to current practice and to provide a clearly articulated and credible argument for how the project will address the problem and its root causes, with assumptions explained and justified.	20%
5	Project impact	How impactful is the project proposal?	Assessment of the project's impact on projected improvements in commercial performance, its contribution to investment-readiness, and alignment with development impact criteria. Additional weight is assigned to projects that demonstrate a clear strategy and actionable plans for ensuring inclusivity.	20%
6	Project budget / value for money	How does your project offer value for money in terms of impact relative to cost?	Please describe the project budget in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Match funding and funding sources — what sources of funds will be used to cover the rest of the costs (including whether these funds are secured or not).</li> </ul> Value for money — how the budget gets the maximum benefit for the resources expended, considering cost, quality and achievement of desired outcomes.	10%
Total				100%

Note: each category will be scored individually from 0 to 5, prior to the weighting being applied. Once every application has been assessed, the assessment panel will meet to determine the applications to be funded based on the assessment scores and potentially applying a 'portfolio' approach. A 'portfolio' approach may be used to ensure funding is spread across multiple scope areas, project costs, and levels of project risk. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified of the outcome of the assessment and may request feedback.

**Due Diligence and Award**

The successful applicants will undergo technical due diligence, which may involve requests for further information and data, interviews, and a site visit. Applicants that pass technical due diligence will undergo financial due diligence, involving the checking of audited accounts, and must complete a due diligence

and safeguarding questionnaire. Please note that we understand that some organisations may not be able to answer some due diligence questions affirmatively. Should this be the case for your organisation, please do not let this deter you from applying as we may seek to mitigate these risks in other ways.

Successful applicants that pass due diligence will be notified that they are to be awarded a grant. Discussions will take place with the successful applicant to confirm the start date, project milestones reporting obligations, and other project and applicant details, before finalising a grant agreement. Energy 4 Impact, supported by the Efficiency for Access monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team will also work with the applicant to develop an M&E plan using the Efficiency for Access M&E framework, which must be approved before commencing the project.

## **Implementation**

Once the project commences, awardees will be required to submit a milestone report and supporting documentation, along with a milestone expenditure form, at the end of each milestone before grant funding is disbursed for that milestone. The first milestone must include a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan, which will be approved by the Efficiency for Access M&E team. For the final milestone, awardees must complete a final report, which must be reviewed and approved before the final milestone grant disbursement is made. Efficiency for Access will also conduct project verification visits as needed.

## **9. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)**

Only successful applicants will be required to describe a proposal for an M&E plan, including their methodology, and outcome and impact metrics they will use to evaluate the success of their project.

The awarded grantees will need to help create several cross-cutting KPIs. In addition, each project is also encouraged to propose individual, project-specific KPIs. For example, these project-specific KPIs could measure progress and success of the particular business model being implemented by the applicant. Such indicators are intended to also support collecting data that will support applicants to demonstrate to investors commercial viability and potential for scale.

At the beginning of the project, there will be a baseline site visits to companies to undertake needs assessment. The purpose of these site visits will be to discuss and agree technical assistance needs and the plan to address them, as well as to discuss and agree company M&E plans, including end-user data collection methodology (tracking both number of beneficiaries as well as the ways in which they benefit).

At the end of the project, an impact evaluation will evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the funding and support provided to participating companies, as well as the cross-sector dialogue activities. Project progress will be reviewed against the agreed KPI targets at the start of the project and interviews will be conducted with companies to understand and learn from the reasons for success and failure.

## Contact

For more information, email us at [EforAgrants@est.org.uk](mailto:EforAgrants@est.org.uk)

