Hosting of UNICEF Hub

OPEN-ENDED REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

UNICEF calls on interested member states and/or regional and decentralized authorities to become global innovation champions for children by investing resources towards innovation to build a stronger, more resilient, and healthier new generation and transform children’s worlds together.

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BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Today, children and adolescents are facing unprecedented challenges. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, progress towards most of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was off track. Pre-pandemic, the gap to finance the SDGs stood at US$2.5 trillion; post-pandemic estimates place the current gap at an astounding US$3.7 trillion.

The mounting impact of COVID-19, armed conflict and climate change on children and adolescents is staggering. Child poverty saw a record rise with an additional 100 million children facing deprivations in critical areas. Conflicts in several countries unleashed grave violations of children’s rights and displaced children and their families, driving record humanitarian needs. The war in Ukraine has led to a global cost-of-living crisis, affecting hundreds of millions of already-vulnerable children. Globally, close to 1 billion children – nearly half of the world’s children – live in countries that are at an ‘extremely high risk’ from the impacts of climate change.

To address these overlapping global crises, with each on its own carrying the threat of a devastating impact for tens of millions of children, we need to urgently delineate new partnership and social development business models, promising a radical disruption towards “business as usual”, effecting transformational change and driving impact for children (See Annex I for more details on UNICEF’s vision for transformational change).

UNICEF is committed to reimagining its innovation ambition to meet its role as a global catalyst of innovation for future generations, to realize a world where every child grows, thrives and learns in a safe and sustainable environment.

UNICEF’s Office of Innovation (OOI) is the custodian of UNICEF’s overall innovation journey and leads on ensuring a consistent and disciplined approach in identifying “what works”. UNICEF is establishing a distributed organizational model for innovation anchored by OOI HQ and a network of issue-focused innovation Hubs that work in close partnership with key field locations, supported by deep expertise knowledge nodes. Through its governance and oversight role, OOI HQ ensures a common mindset guides UNICEF’s innovation work and oversees the evaluation of impact and quality assurance.

This new geographically dispersed model of issue-focused innovation Hubs, combined with our presence in over 190 countries and territories, is enabling UNICEF to be closely interconnected with some of the most impactful global ecosystems, attracting and leveraging resources required to scale successful solutions, strengthen ground-truthing, and ensure innovations are designed and tested for, with, and by the end-users.

Unlocking transformational change for children on a global scale requires us to come together with committed, forward-thinking partners to rapidly and significantly expand investment in the development and scale-up of innovations that address the most pressing problems facing children.
CHAMPIONS

In 2021, UNICEF issued a first round of Request for Expression of Interest, seeking committed, visionary partners and champions of innovation to invest in a better future for children and young people by hosting the OOI HQ and issue-focused innovation Hubs.

From the partners who came forward, the following governments have formed the first cohort of innovation champions and hosts: Sweden for the OOI HQ, Finland for global thematic innovation Hubs around Learning and Innovative Finance, and Denmark for the Global Sustainable WASH Innovation Hub. UNICEF is immensely grateful to these partners for leading the way and embarking on this journey of innovation with us.

Following this highly successful first round, the UNICEF is seeking champions to establish, host and fully fund additional Global Innovation Hubs and is therefore launching this open-ended Request for Expressions of Interest.

Seven years in, the aspirations set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are in jeopardy¹ with the world on track to meet almost none of the targets. If we are to achieve the SDGs for children, we must collectively rethink our assumptions about how global progress can be achieved. UNICEF’s Innovation Hubs, hosted and championed by partners who are themselves leaders in innovation, will focus on key priorities where innovation can make the biggest impact on children’s lives.

THEMES OF THE GLOBAL INNOVATION HUBS

Based on analyses of the major challenges to accelerating progress towards the SDGs, UNICEF plans to establish Global Innovation Hubs around the themes of Climate Innovation; Health, Immunization and Nutrition Innovation; Mental Health Innovation; Humanitarian Innovation; Youth Innovation; and Gender Equality Innovation (See Annex II for a detailed vision of each Hub and its relationship to the OOI HQ and UNICEF field presence, as well as further details on the Hub staffing and expertise structure).

These Hubs will beef up UNICEF’s innovation capacity and strive to become global engines focusing on identifying, fast-tracking, and scaling transformational solutions to drive transformative results for women and children globally. The Hubs will bring together novel global expertise to push the boundaries of scalable innovations that have the potential to transform the lives of millions of children across the globe.

Each Hub will be accountable for idea generation and testing of new global solutions, to accelerate the scale-up of a portfolio of promising innovations. Hubs will have a strong cultural emphasis on partnership and co-creation with all relevant partners.

invited to join in innovation creation and iteration. Additional topics and support are at the heart of UNICEF’s Global Innovation Strategy.

**VALUE OF HOSTING/CHAMPIONING A UNICEF INNOVATION HUB**

- **UNICEF will bring its top technical expertise to the Hubs to work with the host countries’ innovation ecosystem on championing innovative solutions to global problems across the six themes** of Climate Innovation; Health, Immunization and Nutrition Innovation; Mental Health Innovation; Humanitarian Innovation; Youth Innovation; and Gender Equality Innovation.
- **Host countries will enjoy global visibility as centres of knowledge and social impact.** Championing the Hubs will solidify the host countries’ standing in the global scene as leading innovation incubators and change makers for the children of the world. The Hubs will also act as high-profile space to convene and leverage relevant industry expertise and leadership in the country where it is based.

**REQUIREMENTS**

Interested governments and/or regional and decentralized authorities are invited to submit a proposal for consideration as a host and champion of one of the new Global thematic Innovation Hubs. **Submissions should clarify the proposed host country’s commitment towards fully funding the Hub including premises, set-up, staffing, operational and running costs etc.** The **minimum envisaged collaboration and funding period is five years.**

UNICEF is equally open to consider proposals from selected government or authorities that already host a UN/UNICEF office to host the Hubs in any of UNICEF’s current country office, regional or headquarters locations, or to co-locate with other relevant innovation hubs. We welcome multi-country and multi-regional options and triangular cooperation opportunities.

Proposals should address the following elements:

**Established innovation ecosystem:**

**Partners should demonstrate interest in and commitment towards financial and non-financial support for innovation for children and youth with activities at a local, regional and global level.** Review of the proposals will focus on the country and/or regional and decentralized authorities’ existing innovation ecosystem as it relates to UNICEF’s global innovation goals and stated intent to help catalyse and coalesce appropriate partnerships, expertise and resources to address global challenges for children. Successful partnerships that are led by impactful leadership for and with children will emphasize a spirit of co-creation in bringing to bear the strengths and capacities of existing local knowledge and ecosystems around innovation to ensure sustainable, innovative and scalable solutions.

**Budget expectations:**
• A five-year commitment of US$6 million per year to support the costs of establishing and operating the Hub location – US$30 million in total.

• The financial source can be a mix of public and private funds. This includes support with human resource costs (such as staff salaries, staff relocation costs, capacity building support etc.); initial build-out costs for office space (including cabling, provision of equipment, furniture etc.); and fully subsidized office space (including annual rent, building administration and maintenance, utilities, telecommunications, internet, safety and security costs).

• The financial support to cover the cost of the Hub should be separate from and not impact the host government core funding the host government’s core funding to UNICEF, including to country office programmes.

Required Office Space

• Class A Office Space for 30 to 50 staff for each Hub (including UNICEF staff, other personnel and partners).

• High-speed information and communication technology (See Annex III for details: Additional Location Requirements - Technology and Infrastructure).

• Security standards meeting the UN’s Minimum Operating Security Standards (See Annex III for details: Additional Location Requirements – Safety and Security).

Talent, infrastructure, accessibility, quality of life, and other key organizational considerations will equally be important elements of final consideration.

UNICEF welcomes proposals on any additional support to UNICEF’s innovation work that the partner might find valuable besides the above.

Please see Annex IV – Questionnaire – for a list of specific questions that all applicants are kindly requested to answer. Arrangements that establish best practices in meeting requirements for immunities and privileges, as well as ensuring quality of life for the Hub teams (for example tax arrangements for UNICEF staff and operations, spousal visas etc.) will be important considerations.

Any additional documents that complement the government or authority’s application (e.g., facility designs, innovation ecosystem, national and global vision for resourcing and support to child-centred innovation initiatives at local and global scale) are welcomed and should be attached to the expression of interest for ease of reference.

In the case of a regional or decentralized authority, we kindly request a letter of support from the national government’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria:
• Commitment to generating, testing and scaling global innovations that address the most pressing issues facing children and youth around the world
• Size of financial and non-financial contribution (e.g., free office space) and impact
• Partnership commitment and support
• Innovation ecosystem
• Cross-country and cross-regional triangular and South-South cooperation
• Innovative models of co-financing the Hubs
• Availability of talent and skills
• Infrastructure and accessibility
• Quality of life offering for Hub teams

TIMELINE

This is an open-ended call. Applications will be accepted until all six thematic Innovation Hubs have found a home.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Responses and inquiries regarding this open-ended call should be provided in electronic format to ooi-reoi@unicef.org.

ANNEXES

Annex I – Transforming Children’s World Together
Annex II – Accelerating Results for Children – a Vision for UNICEF’s Office of Innovation Restructuring Rationale
Annex III – Additional Location Requirements
Annex IV – Questionnaire