



MZUZU UNIVERSITY

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION:

**COMMUNITY ACTION RESEARCH PROJECTS FOR ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT
(CARP-E)- INCUBATION**

BY

**AFRICAN CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN NEGLECTED AND UNDERUTILISED
BIODIVERSITY**

WITH FUNDING FROM THE WORLD BANK

UNDER THE

**EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA HIGHER EDUCATION CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE
PROJECT ADDITIONAL FINANCING (ACE II AF)**

ACE II

**Eastern and Southern Africa
Higher Education Centers of Excellence Project**



WORLD BANK GROUP

Background Information

With funding from the World Bank Africa Centres of Excellence in Agriculture (ACEs) II AF, Eastern and Southern Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence Project, Mzuzu University established an African Centre of Excellence in Neglected and Underutilised Biodiversity (ACENUB). ACENUB aims to **strengthen linkages with local, regional and international universities, agriculture knowledge institutions and agro-based industry in agri-food system skills development**. ACENUB seek to establish an innovative incubation platform to recruit individuals, support start-ups, and accelerate the growth of enterprises in agri-food systems, value addition, and sustainable business development. This initiative will focus on mentoring, business planning, access to seed capital, and collaboration with industry partners.

Project Objective:

The objective of ACENUB's incubation is to support initiatives by individuals that provide solutions to value chain constraints and catalyse applicantship and business development from ideation, incubation and spinoff. The ACENUB's incubation specifically seeks to:

1. Identify and incubate business ideas in agri-food and nutrition systems.
2. Support spinoff of businesses focused on underutilized biodiversity and its products on the market.
3. Provide targeted business development services to accelerate innovation and market readiness.

Call Priority areas

ACENUB has mapped strategic thematic areas in the neglected and underutilised biodiversity value chains where significant constraints are experienced and where market opportunities can act as platform for valorisation, business and value creation in the economy. Hence the call is on the following thematic areas:

Thematic Area 1: Agrifood Systems Innovations, Challenges and Solutions

Potential projects under this thematic area include: digital agriculture; climate-smart agriculture; agricultural mechanization and technology; value chain development and market access; digital extension services; development of innovative solutions for precision farming; machine learning

model; farm-to-table supply chain challenge; blockchain-based solution for tracking and tracing the movement of produce from farm to table; converting agricultural waste into energy; development of an innovative drone-based solution for agriculture; harvesting and handling of agricultural products; agricultural products processing and marketing; packaging ; storage and preservation of products in a controlled environment.

Thematic Area 2: Unlocking market opportunities for underutilized biodiversity

Potential projects under this thematic area include those focusing on market research and analysis, market segmentation and targeting, branding and marketing strategies, and access to finance and investment.

Thematic Area 3: Sustainable management of underutilized biodiversity products

Potential projects under this thematic area will focus on: sustainable agriculture practices; post-harvest handling and management; supply chain mapping and analysis; logistics and transportation management; technology transfer as well as adoption; innovation and applicantship.

Choice of Thematic area

Applicants are encouraged to select and apply for one thematic area. However, applications with multidisciplinary will have an added advantage.

Participation Benefits

By participating in ACENUB's incubation successful participants will have the opportunity to:

- Access *moderate financial resources and support* of up to USD2,000 to help individuals to develop business idea or solution.
- Collaboration with industry experts, mentors, and fellow entrepreneur.
- Contribute to the development of innovative solutions to address needs and constraints in the Neglected and Underutilised Biodiversity value chains.
- Develop skills and knowledge in applicantship, innovation, enterprise management and community engagement.
- Be part of a dynamic and inclusive community of practice that values diversity and social inclusion of Neglected and Underutilised Biodiversity.

Who should apply

We are seeking applicants within the following groups:

- Individuals
- Consumers and community members with business idea.
- Business owners with an interest in community engagement and social impact.
- Mzuzu University members of staff and postgraduate students.
- Women are encouraged to apply.

Participation Requirements

To participate in ACENUB's incubation, the applicants must have:

- Business ideas or existing start-ups ready for incubation.
- Verifiable products or services with market potential
- Established and functional enterprises.
- Committed time and effort to the project (approximately 2-3 hours per week for 6 months).
- Willingness to share experiences, knowledge, and ideas with the project team and other participants.

How to Apply

To apply for participation in this incubation, please submit the following:

- A 3-paged proposal (Times New Roman, Font 12, Spacing 1.5) that will help to trigger or facilitate small enterprises to improve. The proposal must show a summary of the applicant and business idea, well identified bottlenecks in the full value chain and how the incubation process will strengthen the business.
- A completed application form.
- A brief statement outlining your interests, motivations, and expectations for participating in the ACENUB's Incubation.
- A copy of your CV or organisation profile.
- Submissions can be either email or hard copies through the following channels
 - i. Email: acenub@mzuni.ac.mw
 - ii. Hand delivered to:

The University Registrar
Mzuzu University
Private Bag 201
Luwinga, Mzuzu 2

Attention: The Director for ACENUB

Evaluation criteria

The applications will be published, evaluated and marked on an online platform such as google forms. The application responses will be evaluated by a minimum of 3 judges through a weighting system out of 100 to ensure transparency. The application questions have been designed to evaluate how well the applicant understands the problem they are trying to solve, whether they have clarity on the solution, market, business model and if they have carried out validation on their hypotheses as shown in the following table:

Area	Definition	Score (%)
Problem definition, objectives and approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the problem clearly defined? • Outline the result of scoping for areas of intervention and potential or existing enterprises to address bottlenecks • Clear definition of the innovation challenge • Clear evidence of the demand for the service/product by end-users (demand-driven) • Are the objectives clear for improving the research/innovation/ enterprises (whether products/services/processes)? Outline the proposed approach to achieve the objectives 	35
Potential impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential of the proposed intervention to deliver innovations • Potential to create profitable and sustainable/verifiable enterprises (considering the time you have) • Increased employment and contribution to national growth • Improved efficiency and productivity of value chain • Leading to reduction of hunger & food insecurity and poverty alleviation, taking into account Environmental impact and inclusivity 	25
Partnership suitability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of engagement with the key client groups (farmers/entrepreneurs/other group) in designing interventions • Detail the partners that have engaged in the formulation of the project • Detail partners that will provide key input to the CARP-E and preparing the enterprises to be successful • Provide understanding of other partners that will be important in facilitating a supportive ecosystem. How likely is the partnership to evolve into a 	15

	sustainable partnership to strengthen innovation and commercialization in the longer term?	
Profile of applicant and other partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience in and capacity of leading multi-stakeholder partnerships • Experience by identified members of one or more of the partners in: • The specific intervention area; business management, product development, finance, marketing etc. as well as enterprise registration and scaling out • Division of roles and responsibilities between researchers and non-researchers to keep a focus on their needs Etc. 	10
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check that the budget is not a welfare budget (workshops, conferences, travels, per diems, staff time) often not more than 25% cost • Check is the budget focused on delivering results and where is it posted to be expended and when? = budget to activity sequencing • Check is budget allowing functional resource flows to participants • Check for budget Casting errors - often unintentional but 75% intentional 	15
Total		100

Deadline for Applications

The deadline for applications is 21st April, 2025. Late applications will not be accepted.

Contact Information

For more information about ACENUB's incubation please contact:

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