



Inclusive Entrepreneurship Request for Proposals (RFP)

GENERAL INFORMATION

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Beaconhouse National University (BNU), Pakistan's first not-for-profit Liberal Arts University, and DigitalOcean LLC (DO), a cloud infrastructure company based in the U.S., are launching a philanthropic signature initiative to drive inclusive entrepreneurship. The signature initiative will work to build access and opportunities for underrepresented entrepreneurs, with a focus on women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. In Pakistan, [only](#) 1% of entrepreneurs are women. The program is aimed at supporting programs that are helping women in Pakistan to start, grow and build their businesses.

Not everyone has an equal opportunity to transform their ideas into a business. According to the [OECD](#), "inclusive entrepreneurship" ensures that all people, regardless of their personal characteristics and background, can have an opportunity to start and run their own businesses. Women, youth, immigrants, seniors and the unemployed are often underrepresented as entrepreneurs due to difficulties accessing finance, skills gaps, under-developed networks and institutional & cultural barriers. COVID further exacerbated these gaps in entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship can create positive economic outcomes for the individuals, communities and economies. For example, closing the gender gap in entrepreneurship would [increase global GDP](#) by \$2.5 to \$5 trillion.

DO and BNU will deploy a variety of investments for this signature initiative in Pakistan over the course of two years (2024-2025). This includes deploying small grants to support partnerships with non-profit civil society organizations that serve women entrepreneurs to reach even more. DO will also deploy free technology and education, as well as access to employee mentors and volunteers to support women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. The goals for this initiative include, but are not limited to:

- DO, BNU in partnership with non-profit civil society partners to reach at least 3,000 women entrepreneurs in Pakistan through this initiative.
- DO to support at least 500 women entrepreneurs with free donated cloud infrastructure services to support digital transformation in Pakistan through this initiative
- DO, BNU and civil society partners to share compelling stories from the initiative that inspire companies, civil society, and others to invest in women entrepreneurs in Pakistan through this initiative
- DO, BNU and civil society partners to report positive economic impact of programs, e.g., in driving business growth of women entrepreneurs

BNU will serve as the anchor partner for this initiative, and will provide oversight, management and local support for the initiative. DO will serve as the sponsor for this initiative, and will provide funding, technology and access to employee volunteers.

If selected, potential grantees will receive the following resources from BNU & DO:

- **Cash grants** of USD 20,000 (equivalent in PKR, inclusive of taxes) to support programmatic activities
- **Free infrastructure credits** from DigitalOcean, valued at \$2,500 USD (equivalent in PKR), to support cloud infrastructure needs for grantee organizations and/or their women entrepreneurs,
- **Access to tutorials and education** from DigitalOcean on building a business, from raising funding to marketing your product.
- **Access to employee mentors & volunteers** from DigitalOcean to support women entrepreneurs in Pakistan.
- **Marketing and storytelling support** from BNU to collect compelling stories of impact as the project progress
- **Access to oversight & project management support** from BNU to effectively operationalize the projects
- **Access to impact measurement support** from BNU to understand the impact of the projects

STATEMENT OF WORK

PURPOSE

The purpose of this request for proposals is to invite non-profit civil society organizations to submit their proposals for inclusive entrepreneurship projects/programs, focused on women in Pakistan.

SCOPE

BNU is seeking civil society (nonprofit) partners based in Pakistan who are working to drive women entrepreneurs in the following ways:

- **Access to finance & capital:** Organizations that are working to direct funding to start-ups, small businesses, microfinance designed for people who face barriers in Pakistan, especially women.
- **Access to business skills & education:** Organizations that are working to support women entrepreneurs with financial literacy, digital skills and business acumen.
- **Access to mentorship & tailored support:** Organizations that are working to provide women entrepreneurs with mentorship, coaching and networking. This also includes organizations that are providing support such as access to banking, child care and other structural support for women entrepreneurs.

The programs of the civil society partners can be in any sector/area of work and do not necessarily have to be centered on information technology, but they must be seeking to use technology as a force multiplier to further the objectives of their program.

RFP SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

We are asking interested civil society (nonprofit) organizations to submit a short proposal (no more than 5 pages) that include responses to the following:

- Background of the organization, including previous experience working with women entrepreneurs
- Proposed program, including geographical area of focus, goals, activities and outcomes
- Scalability and sustainability potential
- Ideas for storytelling based on program activities and outcomes
- Timeline and key milestones
- Detailed budget for a 12-month program, include both financial and non-financial resources, and any cost-sharing by the organization. No grantee will be allowed to charge more than 10% overhead costs.

Proposals will be accepted in English and Urdu.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All proposals will be evaluated systematically. The purpose of this section is to identify non-profit civil society partners with the interest, capabilities and financial stability to provide services as defined in the scope of work.

The following is a list of our key evaluation criteria. Other criteria may be added as required:

1. **Legal Entity:** The applying organization must be a legally registered non-profit, non- government entity according to the laws of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.
2. **Demonstrated Impact:** The organization must have experience and a history of demonstrated impact with serving women entrepreneurs in Pakistan.
3. **Technology Capacity:** The organization must have experience with supporting women entrepreneurs who are engaging with the digital economy in Pakistan.
4. **Growth Potential:** The organization must have plans for or experience in scaling up the impact and reach of their programs.
5. **Sustainability:** The organization must have plans on how to build a sustainable program that builds community and/or system capacity beyond the grant period.
6. **Comfort with Storytelling:** The organization must be experienced in impact storytelling through communications and awareness activities for their programs (e.g., media articles, written, video, social media, etc.)

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Communications shall not be effective, unless a specified procurement executive who is responsible for managing the RFP process formally confirms these communications in writing. In no case shall verbal communication govern over written communications.

- Please mail your proposal at orip@bnu.edu.pk and babar.jamil@bnu.edu.pk with the subject **BNU/DO (project name)RFP** by **September 29, 2024, 5pm** at the latest.
- Please ensure that all relevant documents are attached and you share your RFP in one mail to both addresses, before the mentioned deadline.
- RFPs submitted after the deadline will not be considered.
- If you have any questions related to this RFP, contact before September 13, 2024:
 - **Email:** orip@bnu.edu.pk & babar.jamil@bnu.edu.pk
 - **Tel:** +92 42 38100156 (Ext. 430)

TERMS OF SERVICE

The awarded grants will be for a period of 12 months.

SHORTLIST SELECTION

Civil society partners who have demonstrated their capacity to meet the RFP's needs will be contacted via email to be notified of their selection. Grant applicants who have not been selected will not be contacted.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Proposing civil society (nonprofit) partners are asked to certify that they have no conflicts of interest in administering the grants and working with BNU and DO.

RFP RECEPTION

By responding to this RFP, the agency agrees to be responsible for fully understanding the requirements or other details of the RFP and will ask any questions to ensure understanding is gained. BNU retains the right to disqualify organizations that do not demonstrate a clear understanding of the project's needs. Furthermore, the right to disqualify an agency extends past the contract award period, and BNU will be at no fault, cost or liability.

GOOD FAITH STATEMENT

All information provided by BNU is offered in good faith. Specific items are subject to change at any time based on needs. BNU does not guarantee that any particular item is without error. BNU will not be held responsible or liable for use of this information or for any claims asserted therefrom.

ESTIMATED BUDGET

This grant of USD 20,000 (equivalent in PKR, inclusive of taxes) will be administered to selected applicants. All grantees must provide a breakdown of costs related to the services provided. Budget should include, program operating costs (personnel, non-personnel), reporting, comms, and other relevant items.

1. Proposals (RFPs) shared in BNU-DO's first call for proposals (dated November 2023) may be resubmitted for consideration and will be subject to a new evaluation process.
2. Not-for-Profits from Balochistan, Gilgit Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are encouraged to apply.

