



FUNDING NUTRITIOUS FOOD INNOVATIONS

A HOW-TO GUIDE TO APPROACHING FUNDERS

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FOREWORD

This Guide should be seen as a useful starting point that has been primarily designed to provide GAIN and GAIN's partners with a quick, yet effective, overview and introduction to efficiently mobilise funds for nutritious food innovation initiatives.

The Guide is divided into 6 steps outlined below and aims to enhance the user's capacities to secure resources that contribute to GAIN's vision of a “world without malnutrition, in which all people have access to and consume nutritious and safe food. GAIN's mission is to advance nutrition outcomes by improving the consumption of nutritious and safe food for all people, especially the most vulnerable to malnutrition”.¹ As explained throughout the Guide, these steps will not always proceed in a linear fashion. In reality, one may find there could be much back-and-forth along the process or that some of these steps will need to happen simultaneously. So, while the steps below define the key progression points of the process, it is important to remain both opportunistic and flexible in your approach.

Figure 1 – 6 Steps to approaching funder

STEP	1	PREPARATION Establish credibility & promotion	
STEP	2	FUNDER SEARCH Needs assessment & funder mapping	
STEP	3	FUNDER ASSESSMENT Key criteria	
STEP	4	FUNDER OUTREACH Designing & submitting a quality proposal	
STEP	5	SECURING THE FUNDING Negotiating conditions of the partnership	
STEP	6	MAINTAINING PARTNERSHIPS Funder credit & communicating results	

Even if this guide can be used as a general how-to guide to approaching funders, it is designed for and uses examples that focus on nutritious food innovation as it has been appointed by GAIN as a path to increase and secure resource mobilisation to end malnutrition.

¹ <https://www.gainhealth.org/about/vision-and-mission>

General concepts

- **Funder:** the organisation/individual providing financial support. For the purposes of this document, we include investors in the broader definition of “funders” but they do require a somewhat differed approach.
- **Funder Types** (included in this guide and funder database):
 - **Foundation:** charitable organisation typically founded by and receiving the majority of its funding from a single corporation, family or individual. In general, they provide grants.
 - **Multi-lateral organisations:** organisations founded and supported by multiple governments, such as the United Nations or the World Bank.
 - **Bi-lateral organisations:** governmental agencies formed and supported by one government, typically created to finance projects in developing countries.
 - **Impact investor:** investors providing capital supporting businesses that generate positive social and environmental impact while being profitable.
 - **Accelerator/hub:** organisations aimed at supporting start-ups, typically through technical support, venture capital competitions and/or facilities/co-working space where entrepreneurs can network.
- **Food systems (FS)** The food system includes all processes, infrastructure, and actors involved in all aspects of feeding a population. This includes everything from agricultural production, regulations and laws related to food, imports, processing, the inputs needed for food production and processing, distribution, marketing, sale (wholesale, retail, formal and informal markets), consumption, and disposal of food. The food system in all these aspects is what shapes the food environment.²
- **Funding/resource mobilisation:** the process of searching, applying and securing financial resources
- **Funding (Type):**
 - **Grant:** non-repayable financial support.
 - **Debt:** financial support provided as a loan with the intention to be paid back to the provider.
 - **Equity:** financial support provided in exchange for a certain percentage of shares in the recipient company.
 - **Hybrid:** investment form that includes a mix of debt, equity and/or grant investments.
- **Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME):** the definition may vary in different countries, but in general it refers to companies with 1-250 employees and a turnover ≤ € 50 million.
- **Non-governmental organisation (NGO):** a non-profit organization that operates independently of any government, typically one whose purpose is to address a social or environmental issue.

² <https://www.gainhealth.org/media/glossary>

INTRODUCTION

When funds are needed to support your organisation - either as an MSME or NGO - a clear, structured and effective approach is needed. That is the goal of this guide, to help actors involved in securing funding to understand the process and to access tools that can be used during the different stages to secure funding. Different audiences may use this guide in different ways; for example, if you are new to the fundraising world, this document will give you the overview of the logic behind finding funders, applying for funding and/or pitching to impact investors, securing the funding, etc. If you are already familiar with the process, this document will help you with structured checklists and tips to become more effective. An overview of how this guide for funding mobilisation is structured is provided in Table 1 below.

While this guide is relevant to a wide range of individuals and teams within **GAIN and GAIN's partners**, it focusses on **MSMEs and NGOs** sharing GAIN's values of ending malnutrition through **food system innovations**.

For this guide, we have divided the process of fundraising into 6 steps. The steps are sequential and when working for the first time with a specific funder, it is important not to miss out a step in a desire to speed up the solicitation process (even when deadlines are tight!). Over time, the process might become less linear and some steps will become less time consuming depending on the type and maturity of the organisation looking for funding. It might also be that you will find that the process requires you to go back to certain steps, or even to take two steps in parallel. Nevertheless, it is important to continuously pay attention to all the steps to increase the chances of securing funding.

Table 1 – Key learning outcomes

Steps	Key learning outcomes
Step 1- Preparation	Clarity on what funders want to see from an MSME or NGO
Step 2 – Funder search	Greater understanding on how to perform a funder search in an effective way
Step 3 - Assessing funders	Ability to assess which funding opportunities better suit your organisation
Step 4 – Funder outreach	Gain insights on how to write a quality proposal or pitch
Step 5 – Securing funding	Clarity on due diligence and contract negotiation processes
Step 6 – Maintaining the relationship	Learn about the importance of treating your funder as a partner

KEY STEPS FOR FUNDRAISING AND QUICK TIPS

Table 2 – Key phases and steps to successfully approach funders

Phase	Steps	Key Components
Design your funding strategy	Step 1- Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop communication materials • Deliver presentations to funders in written, one-to-one meetings or at events
	Step 2 – Funder search	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map funders, comparative advantage and track records of previous funding
	Step 3 - Assessing funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand funders and verify if they are an acceptable source • Ensure you meet requirements and are a good fit • Early outreach
Deliver your proposal and close the deal	Step 4 – Funder outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funder meetings and key technical meetings • Develop concept note, applications and/or pitch
	Step 5 – Securing funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up steps for clarification and preliminary agreement (questions, interviews, pitch, etc) • Agree to conditions of partnership, including procedures (rules and regulations) on use of funding • Develop and formalize legal agreement
Keep your funders	Step 6 – Maintaining the relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge funder's contribution and regularly report on it • Disseminate results and lessons learned and develop communication material • Keep in touch with funders and foster individual contacts • Consolidate content developed for future application process

Quick TIPS! Dos and Don'ts

Do...

- ✓ Implement **a regular funding scan process** to not miss out on new opportunities.
- ✓ **Benchmark** similar organisations to yours. The best prospects are those who are already interested in your area of work.
- ✓ Create a **“data bank”** where you can easily access general information about your organisation, management structure, policies on gender, environment, anticorruption etc. This will save you valuable time.
- ✓ **Dare to think outside of the box!** Many of the funders just focus on the end – and not the means. Try to think of new ways of connecting your operations to the goal of the funder.
- ✓ Prepare a **one-pager or pitch deck** to easily explain your business or project idea
- ✓ Before applying, check with your colleagues or partners if they are also considering applying.
- ✓ Look for **partnerships** with other organisations. A partnership between SMEs and NGOs to complement expertise is often seen as a strengthening component.

Don't...

- ✗ Apply for everything! Instead, **focus your fundraising efforts** on making fewer, high quality approaches to funders that fit your profile.
- ✗ Forget to **archive past and possible resource partners as well as previous applications**, to avoid unnecessary double work.



Are you a business seeking to approach impact investors? Then we can highly recommend you check out the [Social Finance Academy](#) – a great online platform with detailed tools and training on how to become investment ready and approach impact investors.

SOCIAL FINANCE ACADEMY

STEP 1: PREPARATION

1.1 Establish credibility & promotion

Before approaching funders, recognise that they look for organisations that are aligned with their goals. To ensure this, funders are likely to make an initial check of your organisation by exploring your website and/or social media channels. Therefore, it is important to keep it professional and updated. These are the type of content a funder will scan when visiting your online platforms:

- **Knowledge.** Your organisation needs to show that you have the experience and skills needed to accomplish your goals (and your funders' goals).

- **Share your success and achievements.** If you are an established organisation, it is key to showcase how far you have come! Funders want to know if you have been successful so far. This will create confidence on your organisation by showing the positive track record and likelihood of continued success. If you are just starting your journey, show how far you want to go and how the support you need will make it possible.



If you are an SME, take some time to gather data about the performance of your company, for example how your product is manufactured, how your clients use your products, how your sales have grown or how you are (or planning to) scaling to other markets.

- **Endorsements from others.** Ask for an endorsement from those that you have worked with. This could be a past funder, a partner, or a client/beneficiary. These parties can vouch for your organisation. Having other professionals vouch for your work can boost your credibility.

- **Verifiable information.** When you establish credibility, it becomes easier to obtain the funding you need. Credibility is not easily earned though. Back up your claims with data, facts and images. This will show that you can objectively and honestly run your organisation and interventions.

- **Contact details.** Be real! Provide a professional address, e-mail address linked to your company, and phone number in case any verification needs to be done.

- **Be ready to share.** If you already know what you need funding for, be ready to easily and quickly share a brief presentation of your organisational overview, project and/or investment needs. Typically, a one-pager or a pitch deck is a good starting point.



At this stage, it is also advised to ensure that your **financial information** and **legal documents** are updated and complete. It is not necessary to have these publicly available on your website if you are a business, but a potential funder will most likely ask for these details at a later stage.

**MAKE YOUR
MESSAGE CLEAR**

GOOD (HONEST
AND TRANSPARENT)
COMMUNICATION
GIVES CREDIBILITY
AND SUPPORTS
FUNDING
MOBILISATION

1.2 Needs assessment

Before starting a funder search, it needs to be clear to your organisation what scope of activities you are looking for funding for.

Start by clarifying the following:



- ✓ Are you looking for funding to cover a project or organisational gap?
- ✓ Do you look for funding to implement a specific project or do you need funding to scale-up your operations?
- ✓ Will you be able to provide co-financing? Depending on your needs, different type of funding schemes might be more appropriate, and you need to know beforehand to what extent they are suitable for your purpose.
- ✓ For MSMEs: Are you willing to offer shares in your business in exchange for equity capital?

In considering the above, you should first decide what funding you are open to. Different types of funding have different pros and cons are highlighted in the table below.

Table 3 – Pros and cons from different type of funding

Features	Type of capital			
	Grants and donations	Hybrid	Equity	Debt
Repayment	No	No (if turned into grant)	No	Yes
Annual payment	No	No (maybe share profit)	Yes/No (dividend)	Yes (interest)
Time frame	Short-term	Long-term	Unlimited	Long-term
Entrepreneurial stage	Early	Early	Later	Early
Independency in fund usage	Low	Varying	High	High
Involvement of investor	None	Varying	High	None
Collateral necessary	No	Varying	No	Yes

KEY QUESTIONS

- ✓ Are your webpage and other communication channels up to date?
- ✓ Do you have a 1-2 pages concept note or pitch deck that can be easily shared with funders?
- ✓ Does your website provide an accurate representation of the organisation?
- ✓ Are you investment/funding ready?

STEP 2: FUNDER SEARCH

Identifying funders is an ongoing process. It requires continuous updating, not only of the potential funders but also of the details and requirements of already known funders. A detailed search is important as the basis for an effective funding plan, but it can be an endless, resource-draining effort. For this reason, you also need to know when you have enough information to stop focussing on searching and get the application processes started.

The funding landscape for impactful organisations has evolved considerably over recent years, moving from an aid-centric space where development agencies were providing most of the funding, to a more diverse environment where traditional development funders are no longer the only sources of funding for nutritious food initiatives.

The purpose of the funder search is to find enough information to assess each potential donor against a list of selected criteria that your organisation needs to decide on which funder(s) are high priority and should be approached.

2.1 What to include in a funder search

After assessing the needs of your organisation, it is time to turn the gaze towards the funding landscape and start searching for suitable donors and investors. Searching for, applying to, and negotiating conditions, are time consuming tasks. However, the allocation of sufficient resources (human and capital), planning in advance and the use of digital tools, will help you to optimize this process. Below you will find some useful tips on how to proceed with the search.



Think outside the box. Many impact investors as well as bilateral and multilateral organisations are keen to fund social innovation. When searching, it can be advised to also step away from the food/nutrition lens and look towards investors focusing on impact innovation. For example, consider the nutrition, climate-smart agriculture and women empowerment nexus as an entry point to improve nutritional outcomes for children and reduce chronic malnutrition.

2.2 How to use GAIN's database

GAIN has gathered a wide range of potential funders in the "Nutritious Food Innovation Funder Database", containing both country/region specific and global funders. The database works both as a great source in your funder search, as well as a suitable framework to identify which kind of information can be relevant to collect in your own search for potential funders.

- ✓ In the database you are able to filter on different sets of information (as stated in table 4 below) in a way to find relevant sources depending on your needs.

**KEEP A DIVERSE
DATABASE**

REMEMBER THAT THE
PARTNERSHIP WITH A
DONOR (FUNDING
MODALITY AND
CONDITIONS) CAN
BE AS IMPORTANT AS
THE AMOUNT OF
FUNDING SECURED

- ✓ The scoring logic used as an example in this section, is based on a typical GAIN donor (country specific, grant-makers focusing only on nutrition as showed in table 6) and may not be applicable for your individual case. In that case, it is not recommended to use the same priority filter but rather create your own.
- ✓ The database contains general descriptions of potential funders and their sector and theme focus, not specific calls. Hence, it is recommended to regularly scan these to not miss out on any opportunities.

Table 4 – Information collected to describe potential funders for nutritious food innovation initiatives

Type of funder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation • Impact investor • Multi/Bi-lateral organisations • Accelerator/hub
Funding mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant • Debt • Mixed • Hybrid
Entry point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call for proposal • Open year round • By invite only
Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country-specific • Regional • Global
Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant theme if not Agri/Food specific, such as Gender, Sustainable Development, General Impact Investments, Climate
Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only Agriculture and Food sector • More than one sector (where Agriculture and Food is included) • Multi-sectoral (or any sector)
Other information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Type or organisation funded (start-up, MSME, NGO, etc) • Funding size • Provision of technical/business support • Other special requirements

2.3 Sources of information

On top of GAIN's "Nutritious Food Innovation Funder Database", information on prospects for potential funders of your initiative can come from both external and internal sources.

Active searching

Table 5 – Sources of information for funder mapping

External sources	Internal sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Google searches - Online directories (including free and paid options) - Newsletters/email lists and publications of other organisations operating in the same space as you - Benchmark your partners and similar organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Colleagues or peers that have received funds from a funder before - Your own database. Many organisations map funders or have tried to map potential funders before.


Example of databases:

- [FundsforNGOs](#): A platform providing both useful articles on fundraising as well as announcements of open calls.
- [VC4A](#): A platform connecting high-impact African start-ups to funding and investment opportunities.
- [InclusiveBusiness.Net](#): A knowledge bank including a funder/investor database for those working to deliver sustainable and inclusive business models.
- [Nourishing Africa Hub](#): A platform for entrepreneurs to accelerate their work, that includes funding opportunities in the Food and Agriculture Sector in Africa.


Innovation Hubs/Accelerators A great way not only to receive technical support, but also to find potential collaborative partners and participate in venture capital competitions.

Business Networks and online platforms:

Networking is key to keep yourself updated, to be exposed to potential funding opportunities and to be known by funders. To informally talk to someone at an event (even if it is online) might be the first step to a formal meeting where you get the chance to present your organisation and start your fundraising.

 **Scaling up Nutrition (SUN)** is a global movement engaging governments, civil society, the UN, donors, businesses and scientists to inspire each other to discover new ways of working collectively and invest in priority actions for everyone's right to good nutrition. This is a great space for networking and spotting potential funders.



 After an initial contact with potential funders, maintaining a proactive and agile communication with them is key to show commitment and professionalism. Be ready to follow-up with a one-pager or pitch deck document where you explain in a visual, simple and captivating way your project or business idea.

2.4 Information to identify




The depth of information you collect for each funder can vary depending on how you are planning to use it. You can select as many prioritisation criteria as you wish, but to help you to not be neither too selective nor too flexible, we recommend using three selection criteria. An example of how we have prioritised funders for the GAIN Nutritious Food Innovation Funder Database is summarised in tables 6 and 7 below.

Table 6 – Selection criteria to assess funding opportunities

Criteria	Scoring			
	0	1	2	3
Country* focus	Global	Asia/Africa	GAIN country specific	--
Sector focus	Not specific	Agri-food as one sector of interest	Agri-food as only sector of interest	Nutrition focus
Funding mechanism	Not grants	Grants	--	--

*GAIN's target countries: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Tanzania

Table 7 – Example of prioritisation for funding opportunities

Level of priority	Scoring	Recommendations
High	4-6	  Collect all possible information and start planning Step 4 – Funder outreach
Medium	2-3	
Low	1	 Collect just information that is easily accessible. Use these opportunities if they are accessible in terms of deadline and content. Check if you can “re-use” an already written application.
No	0	Not to include in mapping

In the table below, we recommend different level of detail of information to be collected depending on the points a potential opportunity scored:

Table 8 – Different levels of information collected

Minimum level	Medium level	High level
Funder name Funder website Country/Region focus Sector focus Entry point	Type of funder Type of funding mechanism Type or organisation funded Funding size	Key requirements Provision of technical support Ticket size
Get a light understanding of the funding landscape in your region and sector of interest	Assess if funder/funding opportunity matches your needs	Assess if your organisation meets funder requirements

KEY QUESTIONS

- ✓ *Do you feel comfortable with the number of potential funders you have found? Do you feel like it is becoming difficult to find new funders? Then it might be a good moment to pause the search.*
- ✓ *Have you selected prioritisation criteria and shared them with others in your organisation? Are the criteria relevant and aligned with your organisation's values?*
- ✓ *Is your mapping tool accessible and user friendly so others can use it?*
- ✓ *Have you planned a continuous update of your database?*

STEP 3: ASSESSING FUNDERS

After completing a funder searching exercise, you might have ended with a large list of potential funders. Unless your organisation has endless resources for business development and funding mobilisation, you will not be able to apply to all of them in due time and with high quality proposals. It is time now to assess the funders you have mapped and prioritise them according to your needs and to what you can offer.



Step 3 usually starts in parallel to Step 2, since it is already when searching for potential funders that you begin to understand the relevance (or not) of certain opportunities.

Keep in mind that:

- ✓ Bigger funders are not always better. Competition will be massive for funders that cover all geographies and all sectors. Instead, look for a match that is as narrow as possible in terms of geographic and thematic scope to increase the chances of being selected.
- ✓ See the value in long-term relationships. Many organisations may offer a rather small financial support initially but are willing to provide larger grants/investments further ahead. Scan the organisation thoroughly and research what their funding relationships look like with others.
- ✓ For impact investors: make sure that their webpage is credible and up to date. Do not waste time on funders who are not active. Understand how much an investor might be able to invest and why they are likely to do so. This will help you design a plan that meets their needs and motivations.

BE SELECTIVE

AFTER PRIORITISATION, PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE SELECTION CRITERIA. MAKE GOOD USE OF YOUR TIME AND DO NOT APPLY FOR FUNDING IF YOU DO NOT MEET ALL THE REQUIREMENTS!

3.1 Reviewing eligibility and selection criteria

Competition for funding is fierce. To maximise your chances of success, it is important to find those funders that not only share your vision and have the funding mechanisms you are looking for, but also those that have the eligibility and selection criteria that your organisation can meet.

Firstly, you will need to check the **eligibility criteria** i.e., who is eligible? These eligibility criteria are usually minimum requirements and you will need to fulfil all of them. It is most likely that if you do not meet all the criteria, your proposal will not be considered. Eligibility criteria might be related to location (registration of your organisation or place for implementation), type of entity (MSMEs, NGO, etc.), focus sector (health, energy, etc.), target group (low-income people, women, farmers, etc.). It is also common to find eligibility criteria related to years of establishment, revenue and stage of the idea (concept, pilot, scaling-up, etc.).

Selection criteria, sometimes called assessment/evaluation criteria, are used by funders to evaluate the best ideas to be selected for funding or investment. To increase your chances of raise funding, it is advised to tailor your application documents to these selection criteria since you will be evaluated against them. If you realise that your organisation can be assessed positively against most or all of them, it might be advisable not to apply and keep looking for a better opportunity. Selection criteria varies between funders but are usually related to potential to scale and create impact, own contribution to the budget requested, experience in similar projects, etc.




3.2 Early outreach

Before making your formal approach, reach out to the funders where possible to confirm that your work fits with their mandate and confirm you meet their eligibility criteria. Sharing, for example, a professionally drafted one-page concept note, may allow you to check if you are on the right track or not. And don't be afraid to pick up the phone to give them a call, to make an early contact. Reaching out early to check if you are a good fit could end up saving you, and the funder, valuable time.

KEY QUESTIONS

- ✓ *Do you clearly understand the funding type, timeline, and procedures for submitting a proposal?*
- ✓ *Do you have the resources and competitive advantage needed to apply?*
- ✓ *Do you meet all potential pre-conditions?*

Here is an example of how you might evaluate some donors against others if you were a nutrition-focused food processing business based in Cambodia and looking for a grant.

Funder			
Prioritisation scoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Geographic focus: Asia - Sector focus: Agri/food only - Type of funding: Grant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Geographic focus: Cambodia, Ethiopia, Uganda, Zambia - Sector focus: Energy, WASH, Agri-food - Type of funding: Grants (with co-investment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Geographic focus: Global - Sector focus: None (Innovation for sustainable development) Type of funding: Grant
Other information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entry point: Open Call - Theme: Alternative protein 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entry point: Currently closed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular calls, - Currently nothing related to food innovation open
Action	<p>Proceed with application: YES. Move to step 4 – Funder outreach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proceed with application: NO. Keep and watch out for future calls. - Subscribe to newsletter and social media channel to be informed when a new round is open for applications 	<p>Consider that chance to get this support is low. Is the workload to prepare an application too high? Proceed with the application: NO</p> <p>Do you have an application already developed and can recycle it? Proceed with application: YES. Move to step 4 – Funder outreach</p>

STEP 4: FUNDER OUTREACH

The purpose of this step is to formally apply for funding with the goal to secure funder's commitment to support your innovative nutritious food initiative. You can formally engage with a funder through applying to an open call, by approaching directly, receiving a referral or invite or by pitching to an impact investor.

4.1 Designing a quality proposal

It takes more than good ideas to get funding to support your initiatives!

Different funders require different formats to present your proposal. For example, most development agencies and foundations will have an established format that you must follow in order to not get disqualified during the selection process. For impact investors, it is through pitching or presenting a pitch-deck as an early step.

Regardless of the proposal requirements, it could be from a 1-page concept note to a full business plan, this might be your first "touch-point" with a funder, and it is very important to create a good impression.

BE CONVINCING

MANY IDEAS FAIL TO GET SUPPORT NOT BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT GOOD IDEAS BUT BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT CLEARLY AND CONVINCINGLY PRESENTED



Allocate enough time to gather information about your potential funder to ensure that your offer is aligned with their objectives and identify which parts of your operation you should highlight to meet these objectives. Perhaps they are focusing on certain Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? Spend time matching this with your operations. Just as with a resume or a cover letter, your request benefits from being adjusted according to the receiver.



Looking for investment in your business? Then read more [here](#) if you want to learn "What do impact investors really want".

When writing an application, we recommend that you:

- ✓ Always write having your funder in mind. Make sure your proposal is easy to follow and clear. If your innovation is very technical, try to avoid complicated language that makes your application difficult to understand. In some cases, it will be ok to be technical and you might find reviewers being experts in health, education and/or water and sanitation, but most of the time that might not be the case.
- ✓ Formulate a clear, quantifiable objective that is well connected to the activities you will implement, as well as to the mission/vision of the funder. How these activities lead to outputs, outcomes and finally to impact? (read more about how to develop a theory of change in section 4.3)
- ✓ Make sure your activities and implementing methods are clearly described, understandable and realistic.

- ✓ Be explicit about the relevance of your work to the goals of the funder in general and the objectives of the funding opportunity in particular.
- ✓ Be open to discuss potential risks, limitations and possible problems and how you will deal with them.

4.2 Compiling general information & archiving proposals for recycling

As mentioned before, competition for funding can be fierce. Even if you have a good idea and present a quality proposal, your initiative might not be selected. This does not mean that all your work needs to be wasted.

Once you have made a few applications, there is no need to reinvent the wheel each time you start writing a proposal. There are two practices that can save you time: compiling general information about your organisation and archiving proposals.

Compiled information about your organisation. The core operations and competencies of your organisation do not change that quickly, thus general information can be compiled in an effective and user-friendly manner for reuse. A well-organized template can save valuable time for similar projects. This key information might be institutional information like how your organisation is structured, key projects implemented (main activities, funder, funding size, year), gender policy, environmental policy, etc. This information that might look easy to gather could become time consuming.

Archive applications that failed. But before that, always ask for feedback, why was the proposal not selected? What can be improved? Incorporate the feedback when reusing the same application, especially if you are intending to get support from the same funder. Over the time, you will be able to develop high quality applications in a shorter time.

4.3 Best practices

- **Partnerships.** As mentioned before, partnerships are vital to find new funding opportunities, to strengthen your organisation's capacity and to mobilize funds. Sometimes, partnerships between actors from different areas are even a requirement from funders. These partnerships do not need to be complicated or involve a long-term commitment; it can take the form of a one-time agreement to apply for a specific funding opportunity.

When looking for a partner, consider which capacity you need to incorporate to your offer, for example:

- ✓ NGO (civil society) can act as a trusted link with final beneficiaries/consumers. A well-established NGO probably has good connections with community leaders and early adopters. NGOs are usually familiar with data collection and reporting mechanisms.
- ✓ MSMEs can provide products and services to address a challenge that a community is facing. Businesses are key to develop innovations and to bring them to the market. Partnering with an established business will bring credibility and an operating distribution channel where a new product can be added.

- ✓ Academia, research institutions and accelerators are a good source for R&D, innovation and knowledge transfer. They are an excellent partner if you have a new product or method that needs to be tested.
- ✓ Governmental agencies are essential to develop effective policies needed for the growth and development of a region. Governmental agencies are usually seen as source of funding but through different local agencies, they might be a good partner to provide training and technical support.



Are you a business or an NGO interested in engaging in a partnership, but struggling with the “how”? Then we recommend you check this guide developed by Endeava called [NGO and company partnerships for inclusive business](#).

- Theory of change. Before starting to write a proposal, even if you will not use it as part of the application process, it is especially useful to develop a theory of change (ToC). Even if this concept might sound development-oriented, it is also a good tool for SMEs. An increasing number of funders (including impact investors) are requesting businesses to present a ToC of their interventions as part of their selection processes.



‘Theory of Change (ToC) is a specific type of methodology for planning, participation, and evaluation that is used in companies, philanthropy, not-for-profit and government sectors to promote social change. Theory of Change defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify necessary preconditions (Stanford Social Innovation Review).

Get more tips about how to develop a ToC at the end of this section!



A good tool to visualize a ToC is a results chain. It clarifies the ‘logic’ of the intervention, by showing how activities will lead to outputs, outcomes, and eventually development impact. Learn from the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) how to easily develop a results chain [here](#).



- Use recognised indicators for impact measurement. Either if you are asked to develop a logical framework or need to fill a template facilitated by the funder, you will need to use a set of indicators to measure your progress and impact. We recommend using indicators that are familiar and recognised by funders.



IRIS+ is the generally accepted impact accounting system that leading impact investors use to measure, manage, and optimize their impact. Access [here](#) generally accepted metrics by theme or SDG.



- Time your application process. Writing a quality proposal always takes more time than you think! Especially if there are other partners involved that need to provide additional information to be able to submit the proposal. If that is the case, do not wait to the last minute and start by asking them to already prepare inputs and documents.

- **Choose a good title.** A good proposal starts with an engaging and catchy title. The title should be a one-line overview of the entire proposal. “Proposal to funder XX” as a title is a lost opportunity. For example, if you are business looking for an investor to scale-up your operations to a new emerging market, you could use a persuasive title such as: “*Ensuring access to nutritive and affordable plant-based foods in East Africa*”. Even if the title is the first section in your written proposal, it can be decided at the end of the writing stage. That may even be a better time to title the document as the writing process may inspire you.

- **Use references to other funders or clients.** References are also usually a good idea. If possible, try to use references that the potential funder you are approaching might know or have heard of. This gives you credibility and increases your chances that the funder will trust your organisation.

4.4 Tracking outreach & follow-up

Tracking your efforts, success and failures when approaching to potential funder will help your organisation to become more effective in resource mobilisation over time.

For an effective tracking exercise, we highly recommend you to invest some time structuring it:

- ✓ Document everything.
- ✓ If unsuccessful, follow up with funders to get an understanding of why you didn't get funded. But please note, they are not always willing to share feedback with many applicants.
- ✓ Evaluate the effectiveness. One of the most important parts of the fundraising process is the evaluation of the outreach effort. You (or your management team) do not only want to see that you made a good effort, but rather how it turned out.
- ✓ Focus on quality, not quantity. One way you might use to evaluate the effectiveness of your fundraising efforts is to look at how many applications/opportunities you have found and submitted to. However, you need to be careful with this. What it is really important is how many of this submitted applications were either selected to move to a second round or were finally selected for funding.
- ✓ Use digital platforms to track your efforts.



If you are an NGO looking for top metrics that can help you to track your outreach, check this [list](#) of 15 metrics and find out what could work well for your organisation.



Maintaining the relationship! An important part of successfully securing funding is related to the ability to sustain your relationship with current and potential funders, even if it sometimes takes longer than expected to go from step 4 (outreach) to becoming selected and reaching step 5 (securing funding). If this is the case, it is recommended to not only archive your proposal properly, but also to find ways to

maintain the relationship in order to enable a partnership at a later stage. This could be done through:

- ✓ Attending events of your current and potential funder
- ✓ Inviting them to your events
- ✓ Subscribe to their newsletter and social media channels

4.5 Changing your fundraising strategy

If you are not attracting the funding you need to develop your business concept or project idea, it might be wise to pause for a while and consider to:

- ✓ Learn from your failures. More often than we would like, fundraising opportunities do not materialise. What is failing? Is the idea not relevant or innovative enough? Are you targeting the right audience? Do you need a partner?
- ✓ Consider redesigning your fundraising strategy – perhaps by considering alternative funding sources than the ones you are approaching, or by significantly adjusting your proposals based on feedback you have received.

KEY QUESTIONS

- ✓ *Do you understand all the requirements/expectations from the funder to avoid overpromising a delivery? Contact the funder in advance if you need clarifications.*
- ✓ *Does your organisation meet all the requirements and have all the documents in one place?*
- ✓ *Did you eliminate any risk of internal competition? If you are representing a large-scale organisation, do not forget to ensure that other departments are not applying for the same funding.*
- ✓ *Have you carefully checked your application for grammar, style, and argument?*
- ✓ *Has someone who is not familiar with your work read over your proposal for clarity?*
- ✓ *Have you properly archived all application documents for future use?*
- ✓ *Have you tracked the process? Was it successful or not? Why?*

HOW TO DEVELOP A THEORY OF CHANGE (TOC)

A visual and practical way to design your theory of change (ToC) is to develop a results chain (RC). In a RC you can show in just one page how your activities lead to your expected impact.

To develop a useful RC, we recommend you follow these steps:

1. Discuss the **expected impact**:

- ✓ Start by describing the key elements of the problem you want to solve. Add a reference or source of evidence when possible.
- ✓ State your impact hypothesis using this format:

Format	Example
If my organisation _____ (proposed intervention or solution), then _____ (action or activity that will result). If _____ (action or activity), then _____ (impact that will result).	If my organisation <i>expands its distribution network</i> , then <i>more shops will sell our nutritive food product</i> . If <i>more nutritive products are accessible and sold at an affordable price</i> , then <i>malnutrition will be reduced among low-income men, women, and children</i> .

Why to develop a RC?

Communication: Is a visual tool that helps you to show to donors and impact investors how what you do (activities) lead to direct results (outputs) and to changes in behaviour (outcomes) and finally to impact.

Monitoring and evaluation: if you are receiving funds it is most likely that you will need to report on results achieved. A RC provides the basis for assessing to what extent changes are taking place since it can be easily connected to indicators for measuring progress.

2. Write **key activities** at the bottom of the results chain:

- ✓ Concentrate in key areas rather than writing every single action.
- ✓ Sequence activities and link with arrows if necessary.

Format	Example
State the action that will happen as part of the project. Consolidate key actions.	<u>Do write:</u> - Activity 1: Set up a distribution network for our nutritive food product <u>Don't write:</u> - Activity 1: Contacting potential distributors - Activity 2: Selecting distributor - Activity 3: Signing partnership agreements

3. Starting from the bottom up, discuss the **immediate outputs** of the activities

- ✓ Trace linkages from activities to outputs.
- ✓ Make outputs sufficiently detailed to allow changes to be measured.

Format	Example
Describe the direct concrete result expected after an activity is implemented. It is important, when possible to describe who, how many and to whom.	<u>Do write:</u> - Output 1: 50 stores are operational and selling our product to low-income consumers. <u>Don't write:</u> - Output 1: Shops are operational

4. Connect outputs to **outcomes**. These are the changes in behaviour from various stakeholders that you expect to contribute to.

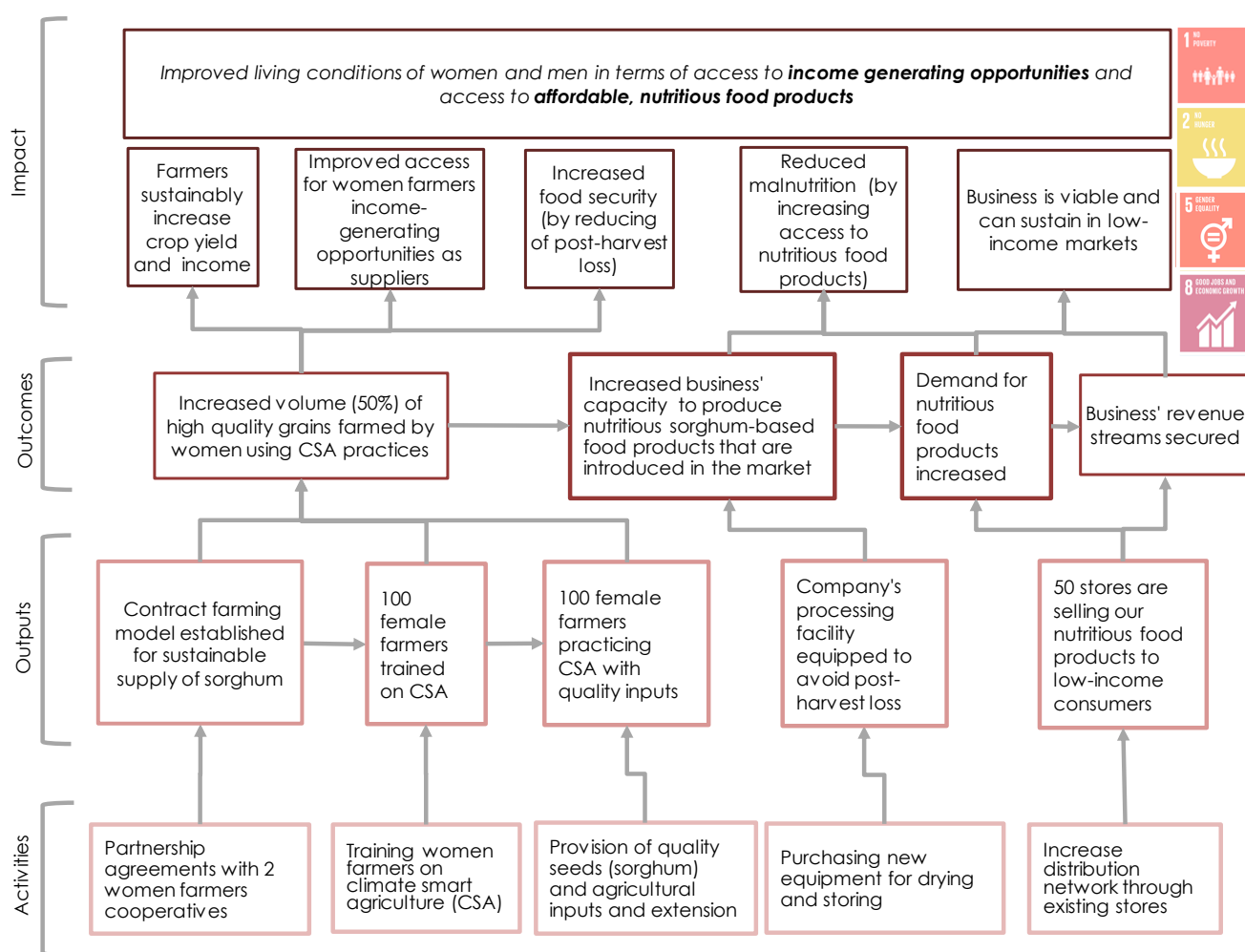
- ✓ Consider that a combination of outputs will contribute to create one outcome.
- ✓ Keep in mind that outcomes usually need a long timeframe to be measured, sometimes even longer than the project timeframe.
- ✓ Connect the outcomes to the final impact.

Format	Example
Describe the behavioural change you expect to happen as a result of your activity.	<u>Do write:</u> - Outcome 1: Low-income consumers incorporate nutritive food products to their diets.

KEY TIPS

- ✓ *Develop RC early and involve all the partners (if relevant): This will allow you to write clear and well-organized application based on the activities you need to implement to achieve your proposed impact. When developing it with your partners, it helps to clarify and define roles and responsibilities.*
- ✓ *Keep it simple: RC should be kept clear and logical so that they are easy to understand (as a rough guide... if you cannot print it in a A4, then it is probably too big!)*
- ✓ *Focus on key changes also around your organisation: the RC must specify expected intermediate changes in the attitudes and behaviour of the ultimate beneficiaries, not just the changes in your organisation.*
- ✓ *Keep RC flexible: same as businesses adapt their business plan over time, the results chain needs to have the flexibility to change activities within the scope of the project objectives. Do you understand all the requirements/expectations from the funder to avoid overpromising a delivery? Contact the funder in advance if you need clarifications.*

Here there is an example of a food company who is seeking funding to scale-up to new markets to be able to reach more low-income consumers that currently do not have access to local, affordable and nutritious food products. To be able to do that, first the company needs to secure the supply of good quality in sufficient quantity of traditional sorghum to increase their current production of wholegrain-based nutritious food products. To secure the supply, the business envisions to partner directly with farmer cooperatives, with an NGO with expertise in providing training and extension services to farmers and with other businesses (stores) that will sell the food products.



STEP 5: SECURING FUNDING

Once you have made it through the first selection process after your approach, the processes going forward can vary significantly. In some cases:

- Funds will be granted immediately after a contract is formed
- Follow-up questions can be asked to clarify outstanding items before funding is granted
- A more formal and details due diligence process will be undertaken

The process could involve various of the formats mentioned above and could require several communications back and forth between you and the funder. However, below, we will guide you full a thorough process involving a few of these elements.

When your organisation has been pre-selected to receive funding, it is likely that the funder will have follow-up questions for you before you go through two more formal processes before the funding is allocated to your initiative and the deal is closed. But do not panic, this just means that you are closer to close a deal! These processes are follow-up questions for clarification, due diligence and contract negotiation, and they can vary depending if you are receiving a grant from a donor or an investment from an impact investor.

5.1. Follow-up questions for clarification

If your business idea or project concept has been pre-selected, it is common that the funder will have questions regarding your request. Depending on the funder, you will have the opportunity to clarify them by providing additional information and documents via e-mail or attending an interview or pitching. If you followed the recommendations in step 1 (preparation), you should be able to answer these questions without delaying the process.

Once you have provided all additional information, a more structured and formal process starts:

Due diligence	Everything goes well?	YES	Contract negotiation	Everything goes well?	YES	Contract signed
		NO	No funding		NO	No funding

5.2 Due diligence

What happens during **due diligence** varies based on the funder's circumstances, relevant national and international laws, political climate, and risk appetite of the parties involved. In the fundraising context, due diligence is mainly used to assess these risks:

- ✓ Organisational risks
- ✓ Legal risks
- ✓ Mission alignment
- ✓ Financial risk
- ✓ Impact risk

READ THE FINE PRINT

BE VERY CLEAR
WHAT YOUR
ORGANISATION IS
BEING ASKED TO
AGREE TO.

In the table below, we illustrate the 3 phases of a due diligence process that are typically conducted by impact investors. But even if you are an NGO or if you are a business receiving a grant, due diligence process is usually structured similarly.

Table 9 – Investors due diligence is a thorough screening process

Phase 1 – Business due diligence	Phase 2- Legal due diligence	Phase 3- Impact due diligence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is a deep analysis of your management team, market potential, products or services competition, target group financial plan and business model. - You will be confronted with many of the questions you were asked when evaluating your investment readiness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Your organisation's main legal documents, policies and frameworks are analysed. - These can be for example with regard to tax laws, counterterrorism laws and regulations, anti-bribery and corruption, anti-money laundering policies, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funders will take a closer look at the drivers, probabilities, and risks of the social impact your organisation is trying to achieve. - The intensity of this screening is a good indicator of the funder's interest in your social impact

Source: [Social Finance Academy](#) – Access to impact investment for social enterprises.

5.3 Negotiating conditions of the partnership and signing

Contract negotiation and closing a deal is the last step in securing funding. It is often a time for a member in a managerial position to get involved to ensure that the conditions included in the contract are realistic, fair and doable and that the documents are properly signed.

Contract should cover everything that needs to happen during the period of time that you are receiving the funding. It usually covers the impact, outcomes and outputs expected by both the funder and your organisation, how progress and success will be measured and reported, how and when payments will be made, and what contingency remedies will be enforced should things not go to plan. Contract negotiation does not end until the contract is **formally signed** by both parties.



While the contract has to meet the funder's requirements, it is also very important that you ensure it protects the interests of your organisation. In this [link](#) you can find very clear and useful information about type of contracts and checklists to consider for contract negotiation.



Funding Centre
Where not-for-profits go for money

KEY QUESTIONS

- ✓ Does your organisation have the right people to handle a contract negotiation successfully?
- ✓ Is there anything included in the contract that your organisation cannot deliver?
- ✓ Have you checked that payment conditions are suitable for your organisations in terms of schedule, international payments, etc.?
- ✓ Have you saved the latest version of the signed contract properly?

STEP 6: MAINTAINING THE RELATIONSHIP

Do you still think that a business or an NGO are just recipients of funder's money? If so, it is time now to start changing your mind-set. Oftentimes, when your organisation receives funds, both the funder and the receiver become true partners and without the partnership neither partner could achieve their goals.

If your organisation has been granted with funding, maintaining a good relationship with the funder is vital during and after implementation. It is much easier to keep an existing funder than to find a new one.



Engage with funders by inviting them to participate in workshops (especially kick-off and planning) and to visit operations in the field. Ask for their feedback and any technical assistance or connections to similar projects. Your success is their success!

6.1 Reporting & Communicating results

Reporting formats and procedures varies from one funder to another, but you will always need to report to inform and justify how the budget is being spent.

There are usually three types of reports you might be asked to provide at different stages of the project implementation:

- ✓ Narrative report also referred as progress, mid-term, or final reports. This report describes the progress made towards completing activities and achieving the results articulated in your proposal.
- ✓ Financial report, this is typically a statement of accounts that details how the grant funds were used. It is usually prepared by the organization's accountant or financial staff. Depending on the funder and type of grant, an audited statement may be required, or specific forms may need to be completed.
- ✓ Additional material, some funders appreciate additional materials, such as impact stories that tell how the project is implemented.



Tips from the [World Bank Small Grants Programme](#): Funders are aware that few projects go exactly as planned. In addition to reporting on your successes, you may want to express the challenges you faced and how you overcame them.

LOOK FOR A LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS WITH DONORS

TREAT YOUR DONOR AS A PARTNER DURING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO YOUR WORK. THIS MIGHT LEAD TO LONGER-TERM SUPPORT.



THE WORLD BANK

Communicating to a wider audience is also a good way to keep your funder interested in your work. By doing this, funders can see how other actors from outside the project reacts to your initiative (and their contribution). Here are FAO's 5 tips on how to write an impact story:

- ✓ What difference did the partnership make?
- ✓ Put a human face on it
- ✓ Put it in context
- ✓ What did the partnership do and how did it do this?
- ✓ Write well and include pictures



Read more here if you want to learn FAO's tips on ["How to Write Success Stories"](#) (page 22)

6.2 Funder credit

Some funders have specific requirements regarding the level of visibility they want to gain when funding a programme or project. These requirements are usually specified in the contract and need to be taken seriously. They can be as simple as including their logos in your communication materials, however in some cases, visibility might be a priority for the donor thus a contractual obligation for you.



For example if you are receiving funding from the European Commission, it is highly recommended that you follow their [10 Golden Rules to ensure visibility of EU funding](#).



KEY QUESTIONS

- ✓ Have you communicated to all partners and colleagues about funder visibility requirements?
- ✓ Are funder's logos and details visible in your website and communication materials?
- ✓ Are you aware of rules and guidelines to ensure funder visibility?
- ✓ Have you reserved time for personal interactions with your funders?

ANNEX I

In this table you can find a selection of funders that currently focus on supporting initiatives contributing to improve nutrition.

Organisation	Market	Sector	Funding Mechanism
Bill & Melinda Gates foundation	Global	Nutrition	Grant
CDC Foundation	Global	Nutrition & Health	Grant
Children's investment fund foundation	Global	Children's Nutrition	Grant
Danida (Ministry of foreign affairs Denmark)	Global	Inclusive, sustainable growth and development (no hunger included)	Grant
GAFSP	Global	Hunger Elimination	Multiple
IFAD	Global	Agri & Nutrition	Grant
The Eleanor Crook Foundation	Global	Children's Nutrition	Grant
The Rockefeller Foundation	Global	Poverty, Health & Nutrition	Grant
The Waterloo Foundation	Global	Nutrition & Health	Grant
UNIT life	Global	Nutrition	TBA
Arla	Global	Food & Nutrition	N/A
Danone Communities	Global	Food & Nutrition	Equity
Unilever	Global	Food & Nutrition	N/A
Livelihoods Funds	Africa &	Impact Investments in Food/Agriculture	Multiple
Rabobank Foundation	Africa &	Agriculture & Technology	Multiple
SUN (Scaling up Nutrition)	Africa &	Nutrition	Grant
Technoserve	Africa &	Agriculture	Grant

Many more potential funders can be found in GAIN's "Nutritious Food Innovation Funder Database".

ANNEX II

Would you like to expand further your knowledge on fundraising? We recommend you check these useful guidebooks that have inspired us:

- ✓ African Women Development Fund: <http://awdf.org/wp-content/uploads/AWDF-Capacity-Building-%E2%80%93-A-Practical-Handbook-on-Techniques-for-Resource-Mobilisation.pdf>
- ✓ UNESCO: https://en.unesco.org/system/files/private_documents/en_unesco_resource_mobilization_guidebook_-_update_25_june_2020.pdf
- ✓ FAO: <http://www.fao.org/3/i2699e/i2699e00.pdf> and <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5027e.pdf> (a quick guide to resource mobilization)

Some of the databases we have used are listed here:

- ✓ InclusiveBusiness.net: <https://www.inclusivebusiness.net/>
- ✓ VC4A: <https://vc4a.com/programs/>
- ✓ International Development Services - DevelopmentAid: <https://www.developmentaid.org/#!/grants/search>
- ✓ FundsforNGOs: <https://www2.fundsforngos.org/>
- ✓ FinDev Gateway: <https://www.findevgateway.org>
- ✓ Nourishing Africa: <https://hub.nourishingafrica.com/funding>

If you are considering to being part of an online community for learning and partnering, these are some tips from us:

- ✓ Add GAIN's online portal for Food Systems Innovations when available
- ✓ The Partnering Initiative: <https://thepartneringinitiative.org/>
- ✓ Sustainable Food Systems (10YFP programme): <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sustainable-food-system>
- ✓ Business Call to Action: <https://www.businesscalltoaction.org/>
- ✓ Business Fights Poverty: <https://businessfightspoverty.org/>