



Guidelines

Moldova Sandbox Innovation Challenge

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

The Moldova Sandbox Innovation Challenge will be launched in August 2026 by UNDP Moldova targeting innovators based in Republic of Moldova or demonstrate a clear intention to deploy their solution or project here. The Moldova Sandbox Innovation Challenge is supported and funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

We are looking for innovative solutions that align with at least one of the following areas of work:

- **Collective Self-Consumption and Energy Communities** - solutions to promote shared production and local use of electric energy, regulatory frameworks, grid integration, and others.
- **Electromobility** – infrastructure development for electric vehicles, smart charging solutions, and vehicle-to-grid integration to optimize energy consumption and support the transition to clean transportation, and others.
- **Flexibility and balancing services** – innovations that improve grid stability through demand response mechanism, battery storage solutions, real-time energy trading, and others.
- **Integration of renewable energy sources, and biogas & biomethane production** – converting agricultural waste into biogas, expansion of renewable energy capacities in solar, wind, and others.
- **Smart Grids** - infrastructure development, modernization, Integration of renewables, balancing solutions, and others.

Selected winners will have also to be approved by the Commission for innovative testing spaces in the field of energy regulation and by the Government of Moldova for being implemented within the Sandbox mechanism. If the selected project fails to be approved by the Government, the contract will be awarded to the next placed projects within evaluation.

1. Objective

Moldova Sandbox Innovation Challenge is designed to identify, deploy, and scale innovative energy efficiency and renewable related projects with a potential to be implemented within Moldova Energy Sandbox environment.

2. Innovation Challenge Thematic Focus

Moldova Sandbox Innovation Challenge will focus on the following key domains:

- **Collective Self-Consumption and Energy Communities** - solutions to promote shared production and local use of electric energy, regulatory frameworks, grid integration, and others.
- **Electromobility** – infrastructure development for electric vehicles, smart charging solutions, and vehicle-to-grid integration to optimize energy consumption and support the transition to clean transportation, and others.
- **Flexibility and balancing services** – innovations that improve grid stability through demand response mechanism, battery storage solutions, real-time energy trading, and others.
- **Integration of renewable energy sources, and biogas & biomethane production** – converting agricultural waste into biogas, expansion of renewable energy capacities in solar, wind, and others.
- **Smart Grids** - infrastructure development, modernization, Integration of renewables, balancing solutions, and others.

Moldova Sandbox Innovation Challenge will support startups, private or state-owned enterprises, individuals, non-profits, and/or academic institutions.

3. Sustainable Development Goals

The Moldova Sandbox Innovation Challenge will have particular focus on delivering progress around the following SDGs:

- **SDG 7:** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- **SDG 9:** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- **SDG 11:** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- **SDG 13:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

For more information about the SDGs, please visit: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

2. The Moldova Sandbox Innovation Challenge

1. Eligible Applicants

At the stage of applying, and regardless of organization type, the applicants must present an innovation addressing the call's defined development challenge. The

innovation should have a potential for financial sustainability and scaling. Furthermore, the applicants should engage users, partners, and stakeholder in the development of their innovation, ensuring viability in its specific context.

Type of applicant: registered startups, private or state-owned enterprises, non-profits, academic institutions and associations (in each case duly registered legal entities), as well as individuals. The contract awarded will be the UNDP Model Innovation Challenge Agreement (Company) or the UNDP Model Innovation Challenge Agreement (Individual), depending on the type of applicant.

Stage: Applicants with a prototype, Minimum Viable Product (MVP)* or further developed solutions are encouraged to apply.

Geographical area of operations: applicants must be based in the Republic of Moldova or demonstrate a clear intention to deploy their solution or project in the Republic of Moldova.

Language: English. All answers in the application form and all supporting documents must be submitted in English.

Application: complete and duly submitted, in English, through the UNDP Quantum Platform and before the communicated deadline, including all documents listed under "Documents to be submitted by the applicant" below.

Thematic area: the solution or project must correspond to at least one of the thematic domains listed under section 1.2 above.

Acceptance of conditions: the applicant shall confirm that all terms and conditions under the UNDP General Terms and Conditions and Special Conditions, and the terms of the applicable Model Innovation Challenge Agreement, have been accepted without any deviation or reservation.

Proposal validity: proposals shall remain valid for 90 (ninety) calendar days from the submission deadline.

Documents to be submitted by the applicant

The following documents must be uploaded with the application through the UNDP Quantum Platform. They are used to verify the minimum qualification criteria above; an application missing any mandatory document may be rejected at screening stage. Applicants must also be registered in the UNDP Quantum supplier portal.

A. Required from all applicants (legal entities and individuals):

1. Completed Application Form (Annex 5), in English.
2. Completed Budget Template (Annex 2), in USD, exclusive of VAT and other indirect taxes, with a total not exceeding US\$ 40,000.

3. Project proposal / implementation plan, including work plan, timeline, expected results and indicators.
4. Signed statement confirming acceptance, without deviation or reservation, of the UNDP General Terms and Conditions, the Special Conditions and the terms of the applicable Model Innovation Challenge Agreement.
5. Signed declaration listing any engagement with UNDP Moldova during the 2023-2027 period (Low Value Grants, Responsible Party Agreements, works/service contracts or others, completed and active), including the amounts received.
6. CVs of the key personnel proposed, showing the relevant technical and business domain experience.
7. Evidence of any co-financing claimed (letter of commitment, board decision, bank statement or equivalent), where the application relies on co-financing.

B. Additionally required from legal entities:

8. Certificate of registration / extract from the State Register of Legal Entities, and the statute for non-profits and associations.
9. Document evidencing the authority of the person signing the application and the agreement (extract from the register, power of attorney or board decision).
10. Annual financial statements for the last completed financial year, where available.

C. Additionally required from individual applicants:

11. Signed curriculum vitae of the applicant.
 12. Evidence of registration as an entrepreneur / self-employed person, where the applicable law requires it for the proposed activity.
- UNDP may request clarification or additional supporting documentation at any stage of the process. Documents issued in a language other than English must be accompanied by a translation into English.

2. Innovation Prizes

Moldova Sandbox Innovation Challenge will provide a maximum of 2 (two) prizes of up to US\$ 40,000 each to develop, pilot, deploy and scale innovative energy solutions. UNDP reserves the right to award fewer than two prizes, or none at all, if no application reaches the minimum technical qualifying score.

The monetary value of a single prize is up to US\$ 40,000. Up to 2 (two) organizations will receive prizes, amounting to a total of maximum US\$ 80,000. The prizes are to be distributed by UNDP in the following format, based on Project Proposal evaluated according to the above evaluation criteria. The contract will be signed only after the selected project will be approved by the Commission for innovative testing spaces in the field of energy regulation and by the Government of Moldova for being

implemented within the Sandbox mechanism. If the selected project fails to be approved by the Government, the contract will be awarded to the next placed technically eligible projects within evaluation.

Prizes are intended to enable scaling of the innovation. Typical items that can be covered by the prize might include, but are not limited to:

- Salaries of project staff
- Technology, design, business development and other consultancy services
- Small equipment and supplies
- Training and workshop expenses
- Costs including travel connected to the implementation and scaling of the innovation.

The Moldova Sandbox Innovation Challenge does not take any equity in the organizations it supports.

3. APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Application form

Organizations must submit their applications through the UNDP Quantum Platform which is linked from the UNDP Website, and UNDP Procurement Notices.

The applications should be submitted by 10 September 2026, Moldova Local Time (GMT +3), 16:30.

Note: The applicant should list in the application form any type of engagement (Low Value Grants, Responsible Party Agreement, works/service contracts or others) with UNDP Moldova during the 2023-2027 period (completed and active ones), including details on the received budget.

2. General rules

- I. An organization may only submit one application, presenting a single innovation. Only one innovation per organization can be selected as the basis for the organization's selection to receive a monetary prize.
- II. Re-submission of modified applications is not allowed.
- III. The deadline for application is to be strictly respected.
- IV. In the evaluation process, only complete applications will be considered. A complete application includes all required sections/annexes filled, all documents listed under "Documents to be submitted by the applicant" in

section 2.2 attached, the completed Budget Template, and submission made in English via the UNDP Quantum Platform before the deadline.

- V. Currency of the proposal: USD (US Dollars), VAT and other applicable indirect taxes exclusive. UNDP will provide VAT/Customs exemption letters if applicable. In case of contract award to a local company, payments will be made in Moldovan Leu based on UN Operational Rate of Exchange valid on the date of money transfer.
- VI. Answers in the submission form and any documents attached must be in the English language.
- VII. UNDP shall examine the proposal to confirm that all terms and conditions under the UNDP General Terms and Conditions and Special Conditions have been accepted by the applicant without any deviation or reservation.

4. SELECTION PROCESS

1. Minimum eligibility criteria

After the submission deadline, all applications are reviewed by the Project Team - consisting of members from UNDP - against the eligibility criteria, known as the screening stage. Eligible applicants proceed to the following stage. Non-eligible applicants receive a regret notice by email. For these applicants, the selection process is finished. Applicants who consider that they have been unfairly treated may request a debriefing and may submit a complaint in accordance with UNDP's procurement complaint procedure; the decision of UNDP on the technical merits of the evaluation is final.

2. Technical evaluation

All applications that pass the minimum eligibility criteria are evaluated by the Evaluation Panel appointed in accordance with the Procurement Strategy. Longlisted applications are evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. **Innovative scale of the proposed project (20%):** potential to make an important contribution to the development of the field of energy, accordingly, production, transport, distribution, storage of energy from renewable sources, supply and consumption of energy, but without limiting to the use of renewable energy sources, its storage or to advanced alternative solutions for supply, distribution or consumption of electricity, thermal energy and natural gas.
2. **Justification for the request for approval of exemptions from legislative or regulatory provisions (20%)** that prevent or hinder substantially the implementation of the innovative testing project. Exemptions

from the regulatory framework requested for the implementation of the innovative testing project do not contravene the international obligations assumed by the Republic of Moldova.

3. **Impact Potential (20%):** Anticipated ability to contribute to the improvement of regulatory rules and process of learning in the regulatory field. Anticipated social, environmental, and economic benefits; measurable outcomes and key performance indicators; alignment with the challenge's objectives.
4. **Feasibility and Scalability (20%):** Clarity of objectives and implementation plan; resource availability and realistic timelines; technological and operational feasibility. Potential for co-financing. Potential for expansion and growth beyond the current scope; ability to adapt to changing market conditions; strategies for scaling without compromising quality or impact.
5. **Management (20%):** Competence and experience of the management team; clear roles and responsibilities within the team; demonstrated capacity for effective project execution, including technical experts with relevant experience as part of the team.

Each of criteria 1-5 carries a maximum weighted score of 20%, for a total of 100%. Minimum technical qualifying score: 70% of the total weighted score. Applications scoring below 70% are not technically qualified and are not eligible for award.

Award: the two highest-ranked applications reaching the minimum technical qualifying score are recommended for award of up to US\$ 40,000 each. In the event of equal total scores, the application with the higher score under criterion 1 (Innovative scale) ranks first.

UNDP reserves the right to award fewer than two prizes, or none, and to award to the next-ranked qualifying application where a selected project is not approved by the Commission for innovative testing spaces in the field of energy regulation or by the Government of Moldova. An email is sent directly to all selected participants. Announcements of winners are also published on the UNDP Website after the selection is completed.

Non-selected applicants receive a regret notice by email from UNDP. For these applicants, the selection process is finished. Non-selected applicants may request a debriefing within 10 (ten) working days of the notice and may submit a complaint in accordance with UNDP's procurement complaint procedure.

3. Awarding of prizes

All eligible applications that pass minimum qualification criteria will be evaluated by an Evaluation Panel, composed in accordance with UNDP POPP and named in the

approved Procurement Strategy. Evaluation and decision of awards is based on the same criteria set above.

Following the award decision, the selected organization will be offered to sign the Award Agreement (see Contract Template in annex). The Award Agreement contains the Project Proposal and Project Budget, which should be resubmitted by the organization in case of any adjustments from the initial applications.

Prior to contract signature, UNDP and the awarded organization will agree on specific deliverables and timelines for implementation of the innovation. Before signing the Award Agreement, the Applicant must submit all required documentation to UNDP.

The contract will be signed only after the selected projects are approved by the Commission for innovative testing spaces in the field of energy regulation and by the Government of Moldova for being implemented within the Sandbox mechanism. If the selected project fails to be approved by the Government, the contract will be awarded to the next placed projects within evaluation.

Awarding is done under the general provisions of the Award Agreement, and the payment is done based on UNDP rules.

5. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE INNOVATIONS

1. Implementation and duration

The Awardee should carry out the Project carefully and efficiently in accordance with the Project Plan and Project Budget, respecting the provisions of the Award Agreement between UNDP and the Awardee.

The overall implementation of the innovation will be managed through the 'Partnership Project'. Any significant deviation from the Project Plan (e.g. changes of agreed deliverables or timelines) requires prior written consent by UNDP.

The maximum contract length for the project is 12 months.

2. Disbursements

Disbursement of funds will be made upon verification of the deliverables specified in section 3.4 of the Innovation Challenge Agreement signed by UNDP and the

Awardee. No advance payment shall be made. Each payment shall be made within 30 days of UNDP's acceptance of the invoice and of the corresponding evidence of achievement of the milestone.

The Awardee is allowed up to ten percent (10%) expenses variations from the total Project Budget within any of the major budget categories. Should the expenses variations related to any major budget category be expected to exceed ten percent, a written request for funds reallocation must be submitted for UNDP's approval.

In the event that the Awardee fails to perform any of its obligations under the Award Agreement, the UNDP shall be under no obligation to issue any further payments, as per the terms of the agreement.

3. Monitoring, evaluation, and learning

The purpose of the monitoring is: i) to assess the progress of Project implementation in terms of activities envisaged and the achievement of Project goals, and ii) to assure that financial expenditures are in accordance with the Project Budget for the given period. Methods of monitoring include review of submitted progress reports.

The Awardee must deliver a final report, including key information required for tracking progress against the 'Partnership Project' targets and for uses of impact evaluation, learnings and knowledge management.

The UNDP Moldova should be informed regularly (at least quarterly) about the progress of the Partnership Project and may, if possible, provide expertise to support the on-site monitoring of the Project implementation.

Information collected and analyzed will be used to measure the success of both the 'Partnership Project' and aggregated for the Moldova Sandbox Innovation Challenge. Success will be measured against the set 'Partnership Project' indicators. Learnings, impact measured, and actionable intelligence around the defined development challenge will be documented, analyzed, and disseminated widely.