Eligibility criteria

Theirworld Education Innovation Awards Cohort 6

Last updated: 14 January 2026

Type of organisation	Legally-registered non-profit organisations i.e. NGOs and charities.
	
	Your organisation must:
	   a) Have a Child Protection Policy
	   b) Have a bank account
	   c) Be able to complete the application form in full, including submitting your latest annual report, bank balances, and audited accounts.
	• We prioritise applications from Community Led Organisations. A Community Led Organisation is:
	   o Registered in the country of activity
	   o Staffed mainly by people who are citizens of, or living in, the country of activity
	   o Governed by a board made up of members who are citizens of, or living in, the country of activity

Type of innovation	Innovations are eligible if they are new products, services or processes that create educational value and have the potential to 'unlock big change' by transforming how education is delivered at a systems level.
Stage & ambition of innovation	1. Your innovation and organisation must have been in existence for at least 18 months on 1 January 2026. 2. The innovation should have reached at least 2,000 learners and/or teachers between 1 January 2025 and 1 January 2026. 3. You should have evidence of impact of your pilot, ideally from an external evaluator (but third-party validation is not required). 4. Your innovation should have been trialled in at least two locations. "Locations" can be different communities within the same country. 5. Your organisation must have enough funding to continue for at least another year at the same level, not including the grant you would receive through this programme.

Objective of the innovation	Your innovation should support United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, inclusive and equitable quality education for all. **In 2026 we especially welcome applications from organisations working digital technology (i.e. standalone technology products, smartphones, online games, data management systems, cloud computing, VR/AR, 3D printing, and big data analytics, etc.) to advance education access and outcomes for marginalised learners. We are looking for organisations who are making a direct impact on learning outcomes, via students, teachers, and/or caregivers.** Your innovation should fit within one of Theirworld's strategic pillars: Best Start in Life; Safe Place to Learn; Skills for the Future. Your innovation should also relate to at least one of our five cross-cutting vital areas: Gender, Climate, Inclusion, Health and Nutrition, and Peace and Security.
People targeted by the innovation	Your innovation should be targeting: 1. Children aged 0-18 AND/OR 2. Their teachers, educators, or caregivers AND 3. In one or more of the following groups: • Living in poverty, defined as being in a situation of denial of rights and opportunities and unable to afford food, clothing or shelter • Part of a minority or underserved population • Refugees and/or Internally Displaced People (IDPs) • People with disabilities or special educational needs. 4. OPTIONAL: While projects can come from any country, we will prioritise applications that have impact in, or intend to scale to, one or more countries where we have existing projects (see map: https://theirworld.org/projects/).
What is our funding for?	This grant is intended to prepare you to scale. Our grants are programme funding. This means they must be used to implement and enhance your project. Evidence generation has been proven as one of the key components of successful scale-up. We therefore recommend that you allocate at least 20% of the grant to external evaluation activities that build evidence that your innovation works. We can suggest high-quality partners if you do not already have one in mind.

	You will be asked to provide a budget breakdown showing how you will spend up to £50,000 on preparing your innovation for scale, and what milestones the funding will enable you to reach. For your budget planning, please be aware that the grant is disbursed in two payments, 50% upon signature of your award, and 50% after six months, subject to providing satisfactory reporting (we will provide a short template) and providing you've spent at least 95% of the first tranche.
Your team	Our accelerator is oriented towards organisational and/or team leadership. Your innovation team (including any partners that work closely with you on the innovation) and monitoring, evaluation and learning team must be available to attend the following sessions: - Three scale-up workshops (in or around October 2026, dates to be confirmed) - Regular (at least quarterly) mentoring and review sessions between October 2026 and September 2027 - One-day presentation and learning event (September 2027). Your CEO or senior leader should also be available to participate in the coaching programme of 6 x one-to-one leadership coaching sessions, between September 2026 and September 2027. Your whole team must be willing to engage with, and learn from, a cohort of other organisations as they also work on scaling up their education projects, and the broader Theirworld partner network of education nonprofits. Full workshop schedules will be provided to the selected teams. Please note, the timeline and number of workshops may change.
Due diligence information and governance structures	If your application is shortlisted, we will ask you to provide a range of information about your organisation and its governance, as part of our standard due diligence process. Below is a list of the key items we usually require. We may ask for more documentation or information if needed. • Certificate of Incorporation (or equivalent) • Register of Directors/Trustees (or equivalent) • Register of Members/Shareholders/Founders (or equivalent) • Register of PSC (Person with Significant Control) or UBO (Ultimate Beneficial Owner) (or equivalent) • Safeguarding Policy • Child Protection Policy • Financial statements, audited accounts, and other financial information as required.