



## Expression of Interest

### Circular Economy & Social Inclusion Programme for Entrepreneurship Support Organisations

**Project:** Circular Economy Innovation Cluster 2026-2027

**Location:** Bengaluru, India & Nairobi, Kenya

**Duration:** March 2026 – February 2027

#### 1. Overview

The Circular Economy Innovation Cluster (CEIC) invites Entrepreneurship Support Organisations (ESOs) to apply for a specialised capacity-building and grant programme. This initiative aims to solidify engagements between ESOs using the [circular venture blueprint](#), a framework launched in 2025 to help stakeholders understand the specific needs of circular ventures.

This initiative consists of two core components:

- **Circular Economy & Social Inclusion Masterclasses:** A curriculum of masterclasses and peer-learning sessions to upskill circular economy capacity with a special focus on social inclusion of informal workers. The learning modules draw on Climate KIC's technical expertise and three years of hands-on experience supporting circular ventures in both ecosystems between 2023 and 2025.
- **Circular Economy & Social Inclusion Grant:** Eligible ESOs from the Circular Economy & Social Inclusion Masterclasses can subsequently apply for a **€50,000 grant** (per ecosystem) to run a 6-month entrepreneurship support programme.

This Expression of Interest focuses on the first component, looking for applicants for the **Circular Economy & Social Inclusion Masterclasses**.

The selected organisations for the Circular Economy & Social Inclusion Masterclasses are eligible to apply for the grant programme upon successful completion of the masterclasses.

#### 2. Draft Curriculum & Modules

Eight to twelve ESOs per ecosystem will be selected for the Circular Economy & Social Inclusion Masterclasses consisting of masterclasses, peer-learning and knowledge sharing from the Circular Economy Innovation Cluster project (2023-2025). The draft curriculum is structured along three modules that will be delivered between April and July 2026:





### Module 1: Develop tailored circular economy capacities

- Masterclass: Circular Economy 101
- Masterclass: Introduction to impact measurement

### Module 2: Build real ecosystem connections

- Masterclass: Inclusive programme design: case studies from Nairobi & Bengaluru on informal sector engagement
- Peer-to-peer exchange: Leverage existing knowledge
- Masterclass: Investor engagement and fundraising for ESO

### Module 3: Turn monitoring into support

- Masterclass: Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning (MEL) for ESOs
- Info session on grant programme for ESOs

\*Modules will mainly be delivered online, bringing the selected organisations from Kenya and India together, fostering cross-ecosystem knowledge exchange. The final curriculum and respective dates will be announced at the kick-off in April.

## 3. The Grant Opportunity

Selected ESOs participating in the Circular Economy & Social Inclusion Masterclasses can work in parallel on a project proposal for a grant opportunity.

- **Funding:** Up to €50,000 per geography.
- **Timeline:** The grant-funded programme will run from September 2026 to February 2027.
- **Scope:** Selected ESOs will support circular ventures, pilot circular support models and showcase results at a final Demo Day.

## 4. Eligibility & Selection

### Circular Economy & Social Inclusion Masterclasses

Eligible ESOs for the Circular Economy & Social Inclusion Masterclasses are non-profits, for-profits and foundations, including:

- **Accelerators:** Organisations that provide time-limited, cohort-based programmes to help startups scale rapidly.
- **Incubators:** Entities offering early-stage startups access to workspace, mentorship, and resources to develop their business ideas.
- **Innovation Hubs:** Centres that facilitate collaboration between startups, researchers, investors, and corporates to drive innovation.
- **University-Linked Entrepreneurship Centres:** Institutions that support student and faculty entrepreneurs through education, mentorship, and research.



- **Climate-Focused Business Support Networks:** Organisations dedicated to advancing entrepreneurship in climate innovation and sustainability.

The Circular Economy & Social Inclusion Masterclasses focus on ESOs supporting ventures in Bengaluru and Nairobi, with certain flexibility to accept organisations supporting startups in other regions in India and Kenya.

ESOs from all experience backgrounds are eligible to apply for the Circular Economy & Social Inclusion Masterclasses. The curriculum emphasises peer learning and cross-ecosystem knowledge sharing between the two ecosystems, Nairobi, Kenya, and Bengaluru, India.

## Circular Economy & Social Impact Grant

- **Circular economy focus:** Open to ESOs interested in strengthening circular economy focused programmes and supporting circular ventures with a focus on social inclusion of informal workers
- **Geography:** ESOs applying for the grant programme must have a presence and/or entrepreneurship support activities in **Bengaluru or Nairobi**. ESOs need to also demonstrate a clear and feasible implementation plan for activities in Bengaluru or Nairobi.
- **Consortia:** Preference is given to **consortium-based proposals** (2 or more ESOs) to foster collaboration, particularly those that include regional ESOs from other parts of India or Kenya partnering with organisations based in Bengaluru or Nairobi.
- **Social inclusion:** Proposals must include a strong strategy for improving income opportunities for informal workers in the value chain of the supported circular start-ups.
- **Sustainability:** Preference is given to programmes that offer continuous support to ventures beyond the grant period.
- **Ventures:** Supported start-ups **cannot** have been supported by the Circular Economy Innovation Cluster (2023-2025)

## 5. Key Timeline

- **Launch of EOI:** 10 March 2026
- **Application deadline:** 15 April (23:59 CET) 2026
- **Selection of ESOs:** 15 April – 30 April 2026
- **Final cohort announced:** 30 April 2026
- **Remote kick-off session:** First or second week of May 2026 (date to be confirmed)
- **Circular Economy & Social Inclusion Masterclasses:** May 2026-July 2026
- **Grant proposal submission:** 13 July – 26 July 2026
- **Grant selection & preparation:** August 2026
- **Grant programme implementation:** September 2026 – February 2027





Link to application form: <https://jq7xm1iv5h5.typeform.com/to/vL5HIAcX>

