



**Open Call for Applications:  
Nurturing Entrepreneurship Support Organisations  
and Start-ups for AI-driven Climate Action  
Salesforce 2025**

This document outlines the application process for a capacity development programme for Entrepreneurship Support Organisations (ESOs) and start-ups based in Ireland. *This is not an accelerator, but a capability-building programme focused on AI and climate solutions in the Irish land and agri-food sector.* While applicants with a base or strong connections to Dublin (where the sponsor is located) are preferred, the call is open to any Irish ESO or start-up.

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Deadline: 17 April 2025 (12.00 CET)

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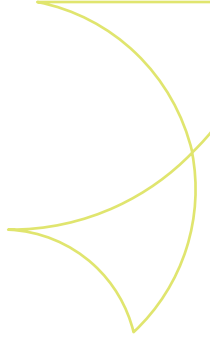
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## Overview

### Project Background

Climate KIC is Europe's leading climate innovation agency and community, creating climate-resilient communities and fighting climate breakdown by mobilising systems change in countries, regions, cities, and businesses. Together with partners across the globe, Climate KIC orchestrates solutions and facilitates learning to bridge the gap between climate commitments and current reality, driving faster and more ambitious action.

Climate KIC emphasises bridging the gap between climate innovation supply and demand, transforming the **Entrepreneurship Support Organizations (ESOs) and start-ups** support landscape to embed climate action in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. With 15 years of experience, Climate KIC connects climate ventures with governments, corporates, and investors, fostering collaborative ecosystems that scale innovation. Climate KIC's mission includes upskilling ESOs, fostering stakeholder collaboration, and creating demand-driven challenges for climate solutions.



## Key Focus Areas

Below are some of the areas of importance we have identified, (though the scope is open):

- **Vision 2050:** Re-imagining Ireland's land and agri-food system
- **Circular Bioeconomy:** Solutions at regional or multiple value chain levels
- **Carbon Farming & Payments for Ecosystem Services:** Incentivising sustainable land management and food production
- **Dairy Sustainability & Emissions Reductions:** Supporting climate-positive farming

By embedding the Salesforce Dublin Program within the **Irish Deep Demonstration**, we are strengthening the existing ecosystem—offering start-ups and ESOs an opportunity to engage with industry leaders, leverage AI for sustainability, and contribute to systemic change in Ireland's land and agri-food sectors.

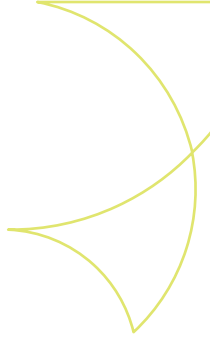
## Project Structure

The **Nurturing Entrepreneurship Support Organisations and Start-ups for AI-driven Climate Action** programme is designed to equip 5 ESOs and 10 start-ups with the tools, mindsets, and networks to help them to increase their focus on key innovations that bridge the gap between climate and AI. The initiative will follow a three-step approach:

1. **Map and identify challenge areas and partners:** In early 2025, Climate KIC will identify relevant organisations and understand entry points for climate solutions. This includes engaging with key stakeholders to align innovation efforts with local climate priorities.
2. **Challenge co-creation and capacity building:** Climate-KIC will deliver a series of workshops to participating ESOs and start-ups as a foundation for the programme. These include: a session on navigating climate and AI regulation, a workshop on building inclusive, climate-aligned business models and a practical session on understanding and communicating the climate impact potential of start-ups, delivered by Climate-KIC experts.

Following this, Climate-KIC will facilitate co-creation sessions with 3–5 entrepreneurial support organisations (ESOs) and selected start-ups to define priority innovation challenges linked to Ireland's land and agri-food systems. These sessions will align ESOs and start-ups around demand-driven innovation areas where climate impact is most needed. While the ESOs will lead the implementation of these challenges, Climate-KIC will provide support in shaping them—drawing on its in-depth sector knowledge and extensive stakeholder engagement to ensure challenges are meaningful and accelerator-ready.

3. **Wider community engagement, insights generation & learning:** For nearly a decade, Climate-KIC has mobilised a global community of ESOs and start-ups. This year, it will host a sensemaking event in London to foster collaboration and explore climate solutions linked to AI. Dublin participants will join, facilitating cross-city knowledge sharing. Programme insights and success stories will be documented to further expand ecosystem engagement.



## Scope of the Call

### Programme Activities

Over a nine-month period, Climate KIC will work on four different components:

#### *Component 1: Technical Support for ESOs and Start-ups*

This component will consist of three (3) virtual workshops that will cover the following topics:

1. **Regulatory Guidance**, where participants will navigate the complexities of evolving regulations in both climate and AI, with practical guidance on applying the latest tendencies to real-world scenarios. The workshop will feature contributions from:
  - Jonatan Pinkse: Professor of Sustainable Business and the Director of the Centre for Sustainable Business at King's College London Business School.
  - René Bohnsack: Professor of Strategy Innovation, holding the Galp Chair for Innovation and Systemic Impact. He also serves as the Academic Director of the Católica Lisbon School of Business and Economics.
2. **Building DEI and Climate-driven Business Models**, where selected ESOs and start-ups will receive guidance to design sustainable, inclusive and commercially viable business models. The cohort will learn different tools to align their models with climate and DEI goals. The workshop will be led by:
  - Wallis Grant: Entrepreneurship Programme Manager at Climate KIC, where she leads the Social and Inclusion Delivery initiatives.
3. **Scaling and Market Access** will offer the cohort the opportunity to learn strategies to expand into new markets and help them in identifying and securing funding for growth through venture capital and impact investors. The workshop will be facilitated by:
  - Alessandra Caggiano: Investment Executive at Green Angel Ventures and climate venture capitalist. Associate Lecturer in Managing for Sustainable and Corporate Responsibility at the European School of Economics.

#### *Component 2: Challenge Co-Creation with ESOs and Start-ups*

3-5 ESOs and 10 start-ups will be invited to participate in a challenge co-creation session, engaging with pre-existing climate challenges identified through prior work, including insights from the Deep Demonstration. **The resulting challenges will be designed for ESOs to implement within their own existing or planned accelerator programmes.**

This session will:

- Bring ESOs, start-ups, and agri-food sector experts together to identify challenges—grounded in the needs of start-ups and the agri-food sector—that can be run by the ESOs within their own existing or planned accelerators, with Climate-KIC contributing insights from extensive stakeholder engagement through the Irish Deep Demonstration.
- **Connect ESOs and start-ups** to the broader Irish climate innovation landscape, ensuring alignment with national priorities.
- **Explore where technology driven, including AI powered solutions could fit within these challenges**



### *Component 3: Impact Shift Services for Start-ups*

During this period, Climate KIC will support 10 start-ups from the 3-5 participating ESOs with targeted impact forecasting and measurement methodologies. Using its in-house impact assessment services, Climate KIC will provide access to training on a self-assessment tool and will offer external validation to verify the start-up's potential impact.

### *Component 4: Communications & Knowledge Dissemination*

Climate KIC believes that effective communication is key for sharing best practices, lessons learned, and valuable resources within the ESO and entrepreneurial community. During the programme implementation, Climate KIC will produce an insights report featuring case studies on matching climate innovation supply with demand and our most prominent learnings in that intersection

## Review Process of Applicants

This call will follow an evaluation process with each application being assessed for:

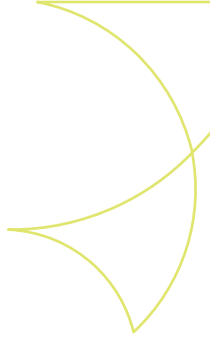
- **Eligibility** – where applications are assessed to ensure they meet the basic eligibility criteria (see next section) and were submitted on time (before the call deadline).
- **Screening (shortlisting)** – where two (2) Climate KIC evaluators will review the responses in the application form and provide a score (of 0-5) against the call assessment criteria.
- All submissions will be assessed fairly and transparently within the scope of the objectives, eligibility and assessment criteria outlined in this call document.
- Conflicts of interest between evaluators and applicants are mitigated through a disclosure process. If a conflict is identified, Climate KIC staff will assess how it may affect the evaluator's judgement and act accordingly.

## Eligibility Criteria for Applicants

Eligibility criteria are used to ensure applications submitted under the call meet the desired requirements. Eligibility criteria are assessed on a pass/fail basis whereby applications must pass on all the below criteria. If applications do not satisfy the criteria, they will not be able to proceed to the next stage of the process and therefore may be rejected from the call outright.

*The eligibility criteria for ESOs are:*

1. Applicants with a base or strong connections to Dublin, where the sponsor is located, are preferred. However, the call remains open to any Irish ESO or start-up with a significant presence in Ireland.
2. The applicant must be an Entrepreneurship Support Organisation, which includes incubators, accelerators, start-up associations, chambers of commerce, entrepreneurship or business creation units at universities or research institutes, or any other organisation with a core focus on supporting early to mid-stage ventures develop business ideas.



3. Experience in the climate innovation sector is preferred, including any background or interest in AI and climate topics.
4. The ESO must demonstrate commitment to the programme and operational capacity to ensure effective delivery of the planned activities.
5. Availability to participate in 3 online workshops and one in-person challenge co-creation workshop in May in Dublin. The commitment period is from April to October 2025 to complete the programme.

*The eligibility criteria for **Start-ups** are:*

1. Applicants with a base or strong connections to Dublin, where the sponsor is located, are preferred. However, the call remains open to any Irish ESO or start-up with a significant presence in Ireland.
2. **Maturity level:** formally registered company. Has a minimum viable product (MVP), service/or business model, exponential technology or solution with substantial climate impact with potential intersection of AI.
3. Availability to participate in 3 online workshops and one in-person challenge co-creation workshop in May in Dublin. The commitment period is from April to October 2025 to complete the programme.

## Eligibility Criteria Checklist

Applications must comply with the full set of the eligibility criteria if they are to proceed to the assessment stage. The pass/fail criteria for this call are the following:

#	Eligibility criteria	How is demonstrated on Application Form
1.	Organisation is registered legal entity in Dublin. (Other areas of Ireland will be considered)	Self-declaration
2.	Company meets organisational eligibility (is an ESO or Start-up).	Self-declaration
3.	Has demonstrated commitment to programme and operational capacity.	Self-declaration

## Scoring System

The following score system will be used to assess applicants for the screening:

Score	Description
0	Application fails to address the criterion or cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information.
1	Poor. The criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
2	Fair. The application broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses.
3	Good. The application addresses the criterion well, but several shortcomings are present.

4	Very good. The application addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present.
5	Excellent. The application successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

## Assessment Criteria

The following assessment criteria (see table below) are scored using the above scoring system. The assessment criteria will be applied in the review phases of the programme. For the screening, reviewers will score each of the criteria areas listed below using the 0-5 score system. Climate KIC team will combine the individual reviewer scores to produce an aggregate score and create a ranked list of applicants. The assessment criteria for this call are:

### For ESOs

Criteria Areas	Criteria Weight & Description	Examples of related questions in the Application Form
<b>Organisation Eligibility (35%)</b>	<p><b>0 to 5:</b> The applicant must be an ESO (incubator, accelerator, university-based entrepreneurship unit, or research institute).</p> <p>Applicants with a base or strong connections to Dublin, where the sponsor is located, are preferred. However, the call remains open to any Irish ESO or start-up with a significant presence in Ireland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe your organisation's structure.</li> <li>• Provide official registration and more details about your organisation.</li> </ul>
<b>Experience in Climate innovation &amp; AI (25%)</b>	<p><b>0 to 5:</b> Preferred experience in the climate innovation sector, particularly at the intersection of AI, climate-related technologies, and the Irish land and agri-food system</p> <p>Demonstrate success in supporting climate-focused or AI-driven ventures.</p> <p>Ability to integrate exponential technologies into entrepreneurship support activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please describe your organisation's experience in climate &amp; AI innovations.</li> <li>• If you have previously worked with climate &amp; AI start-ups solutions, please provide some examples.</li> <li>• If possible, explain how your organisation integrates technology and AI into its programmes.</li> </ul>
<b>Operational Capacity (25%)</b>	<p><b>0 to 5:</b> Must have a clear organisational structure with sustainable operations.</p> <p>Ability to sustain entrepreneurship support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please attach in the forms a brief presentation outlining the organisation's structure, and activities.</li> </ul>

	mechanism through reliable financial models.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please provide information about the organisation's current operations.</li> </ul>
<b>Programme Participation (15%)</b>	<b>0 to 5:</b> The organisation must be available to participate in 3 online workshops and in the in-person co-creation event in May 2025.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please specify your organisation's availability to participate in the programme activities.</li> </ul>

### For Start-ups

Criteria Areas	Criteria Weight & Description	Examples of related questions in the Application Form
<b>Company Eligibility &amp; Structure (35%)</b>	<p><b>0 to 5:</b> Applicants with a base or strong connections to Dublin, where the sponsor is located, are preferred. However, the call remains open to any Irish ESO or start-up with a significant presence in Ireland.</p> <p>The company preferably needs to be actively engaged in agri-climate &amp; AI related solutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please provide information about your company legal incorporation.</li> <li>• Please provide more information about your organisation's mission and vision.</li> </ul>
<b>Experience in Climate innovation &amp; AI (40%)</b>	<p><b>0 to 5:</b> The start-up must have a Minimum Viable Product (MVP), service, business model or exponential technology with significant climate impact.</p> <p>The organisation must demonstrate the potential for scaling solutions that contribute to environmental sustainability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please provide more information about your product.</li> <li>• Please attach a brief presentation outlining your product, structure, business model.</li> </ul>
<b>Programme Participation &amp; (25%)</b>	<b>0 to 5:</b> The organisation must be available to participate in virtual workshops and in the in-person co-creation event in May 2025.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please specify your organisation's availability to participate in the programme activities.</li> </ul>

## Call Timeline

Climate KIC has set the following indicative timeline for this call:

Date / Time (CET)	Item	Link (if applicable)
18 March 2025	Release of call documents	See call and application information on our Open Call page.
17 April 2025 (12:00 CET, midnight)	Deadline to submit applications	N/A
18 – 22 April 2025	Screening – evaluation of application forms for shortlisting	N/A
23 April 2025	Communication of results	N/A



28 –30 April 2025	ESOs and start-ups onboarding with a Kick off call	N/A
5-8 May 2025	Expected start days for planned activities	N/A

## How to Apply

Please read the eligibility and assessment criteria within this document carefully. These will be used by Climate KIC and our evaluators to assess your application.

### Submission

- To apply to this call, please submit your applications through the following form. Before submitting your application, you should ensure that you have read this document carefully and to double check that:
- You meet the eligibility criteria.
- Your application falls in line with the objectives of the initiative Nurturing Entrepreneurship Support Organisations and Start-ups for AI-driven Climate Action.
- You have provided sufficient response to all required questions in the application form (without the availability of the relevant information, your application may not be progressed).

### Submission deadline

All applications must be submitted by the date specified in the call timeline section of this document. Please note that late proposals will not be accepted.

## Notification

### Decision communication

Climate KIC International Foundation will communicate the outcome of the submissions as follows:

- Cohort selection – **23 April 2025**.

## Use of Data

All applicants agree to accept Stichting Climate KIC International Foundation [Privacy Policy](#), [Cookie Policy](#) and [Ethical Standards for Contractual Counterparties](#), warrant and represent that they have the authority to agree and accept these on behalf of the named organisation. Personal data provided may be processed, including sharing with other organisations, by Stichting Climate KIC International Foundation and certain sensitive data elements will be visible to other partners or potential partners of Stichting Climate KIC International Foundation. The named partner organisation or potential partner of Stichting Climate KIC International Foundation warrants and represents that in providing personal data in connection with the application, the data subjects have consented to the provision of this personal data and the processing of it by Stichting Climate KIC International Foundation in the manner indicated in accordance with our Privacy Policy, and that the partner organisation or potential partner of Stichting Climate KIC International Foundation provides the personal data in accordance with applicable law.

Personal data provided may be processed and shared with other organisations by Stichting Climate KIC International Foundation. The applicant warrants and represents that in providing personal data in connection with the application, the data subjects have consented to the provision of this personal data and the processing of it by Stichting Climate KIC International Foundation in the manner indicated in accordance with our Privacy Policy, and that the organisation provides the personal data in accordance with applicable law.

## **Confidentiality**

Stichting Climate KIC International Foundation will treat all applications confidentially, as well as any related information, data and documents received in accordance with Climate KIC's Privacy Policy or as otherwise indicated throughout the application form (i.e. organisation name, project title, summary description), subject to the Data section in this document.