

Google offers new programmes to bolster African innovation and female entrepreneurship

Google has renewed its commitment to growing Africa's startup ecosystem with the announcement of a new Google for Startups Accelerator (GFSA) Africa class, the launch and opening of applications for a new \$3m Black Founders Fund (BFF) Africa programme, and a Google.org-backed \$3m grant to the Tony Elumelu Foundation to support female entrepreneurs on the continent.



Applications for [GFSA Africa](#) opened earlier this year making way for 15 startups, from across the continent, to join the 6th class of the programme starting on 21 June 2021. The three-month online programme, which includes virtual training boot camps, mentorship and Google product support, is designed to support these nascent businesses through their early growth phases.

In a further show of support for innovation on the continent, a new \$3m Google for Startups Black Founders Fund Africa is launching as part of Google's global commitment to support underserved communities. This fund, which is part of the company's racial equity commitments announced in June 2020, will provide cash awards and hands-on support to 50 Black-led startups in Africa and (unlike most startup investments) it does not require founders to give up any equity in exchange for funding. Google will be working with the Co-Creation Hub, a Google for Startups partner and leading tech community hub with a presence in Nigeria, Kenya and Rwanda, to distribute the funding to the selected companies across Africa.

Applications are now open for access to funding, as well as technical and business support, for 50 early-stage startups across the continent in 2021. BFF Africa is open to all startups (in Botswana, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe) that meet the eligibility [criteria](#).

Applications will close on 7 July 2021.

A boost for the startup ecosystem in Africa

"It's encouraging to see Google's continued dedication to strengthening and elevating the startup ecosystem in Africa. Google was one of the early believers in tech entrepreneurs on the continent and this support over the last 10 years reflects a thoughtful commitment. This programme is extremely timely and will not only empower founders across the continent but also deepen the pipeline and unlock follow-on funding from both local and foreign investors," says Bosun Tijani, co-founder and CEO at Co-Creation Hub.

"Google understands that the growth and success of one player in the startup space lays the path for others. This is what drives the commitment to empowering entrepreneurs and startups, and effectively driving employment and enabling both economic and social development on the continent. We are determined to help black founders grow their businesses, not just through access to capital but also through access to the best of Google's resources," says Nitin Gajria, managing director of Google Sub-Saharan Africa.

Female empowerment

Furthermore, Google.org's \$3m grant to the [Tony Elumelu Foundation](#) will go towards providing entrepreneurship training, mentorship and coaching to at least 5,000 women with low digital skills, who come from rural areas and currently operate in an informal sector. Seed capital in the form of one-time cash grants will also be provided to 500 African women aspiring entrepreneurs in Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and select Francophone countries. This will prepare women founders, who otherwise wouldn't have access to opportunity, to navigate their businesses through the startup journey.

"We are dedicated to building a world where all women can thrive. According to data collected by the World Bank in 10 African countries, male-owned enterprises have six times more capital than female-owned enterprises. This huge capital gap is not stopping the rise of female entrepreneurs, but it slows them down and makes their journeys that much more challenging. We hope that the grant to The Elumelu Foundation will help accelerate the growth of women techmakers and entrepreneurs in Africa," adds Gajria.

"There is no better time to invest in women's economic participation on the continent than now. Through this grant funding, women will drive growth for local economies and enable better living conditions for their communities. We are delighted to receive the Google.org grant for our work across Sub-Saharan Africa and we believe this will be instrumental in building much-needed businesses and resilient economies," concludes Ifeyinwa Ugochukwu, CEO at Tony Elumelu Foundation.

Those interested in applying for the Google for Startups, Black Founders Fund Africa may find more information at goo.gle/BFFAfrica.

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