

10X Digital Startup Accelerator – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What is the mandate of the 10X Digital Startup Accelerator Challenge?

The accelerator aims to address critical challenges that prevent MSMEs particularly women-inclusive enterprises in underserved areas from leveraging digital platforms and high-productivity devices to grow their businesses, access financing, and compete in an increasingly digital economy.

To achieve this, the accelerator focuses on solving three major market constraints: low device ownership, limited adoption of digital platforms, and fragmented ecosystem support.

2. I am interested in the 10X Digital Startup Accelerator. How do I know if I qualify?

To be eligible for the 10X Digital Startup Accelerator, your startup must:

- Be legally registered and operating in Uganda, with at least one year of operation.
- Offer a tech-enabled solution that directly supports MSMEs in areas such as device financing, operational efficiency, access to finance, and market access.
- Be willing to serve or target entrepreneurs in economically disadvantaged regions under the 10X initiative. These include the Elgon, Bukedi, Bugisu, Ankole, Acholi, Tooro, Bunyoro, Karamoja, and Central regions.
- Be at the early stage, i.e., have a minimum viable product on the market but are not yet profitable and have not raised more than \$300,000 in grants, loans, or private equity.
- Be unable to access credit from formal financial institutions to scale your business model and serve economically disadvantaged MSMEs.

3. What are the selection criteria for the 10X Digital Startup Accelerator Challenge?

The selection process for the 10X Digital Startup Accelerator is based on a transparent and weighted evaluation framework that assesses startups across six key criteria. Each category is scored on a scale from 1 to 5, with specific indicators of performance and impact, and weighted accordingly to reflect its importance. The criteria include:

1. Relevance of the Digital Solution (25%):

Startups must demonstrate how effectively their solution addresses the needs of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), particularly in device financing, operational efficiency, access to finance, and market access. Solutions with clear evidence of demand and active usage by MSMEs are highly prioritized.

2. Business Model & Stage of Solution (25%):

The startup should have a viable product or service, a strong value proposition, and a clear monetization strategy. Readiness to scale and the capacity to absorb and repay the interest-free loan are critical considerations.

3. Team Strength & Execution Capability (15%):

A strong, experienced, and committed team with clear leadership and accountability mechanisms is essential. The ability to execute and scale digital solutions is a major focus.

4. Innovation & Scalability (15%):

The uniqueness of the solution, its potential to differentiate in the market, and a clear path to regional or global scalability are key assessment points.

5. Inclusivity & Social Impact (10%):

The accelerator prioritizes solutions that benefit marginalized groups such as women-led businesses, persons with disabilities, and refugee entrepreneurs, especially within the target regions. Solutions that create employment and demonstrate potential to attract further investment score higher.

6. Sustainability (10%):

The long-term viability of the business is assessed based on the presence of a sound revenue model, financial stability, and ability to continue operations beyond the accelerator's support.

Each application is thoroughly reviewed using this rubric to ensure the selected startups have strong potential for impact, growth, and sustainability within the digital economy.

4. How do I apply to be part of the 10X Digital Startup Accelerator Challenge?

Applications are currently open and will close on 30th January 2026. To apply, follow this link: <https://10xdigitalchallenge.outbox.africa/>

5. What kind of tech startups is the accelerator looking for?

The accelerator is looking for startups that offer digital solutions enabling MSMEs to access device financing and distribution services, markets and customers, digital tools for operational efficiency and business financial services

6. What support will select startups receive from the accelerator?

Selected startups will benefit from:

- \$40,000 in refundable grant funding per startup with zero interest
- Six months of technical assistance to scale and refine their solutions

- Mentorship from domain experts
- Partnership facilitation and networking opportunities

7. Who is leading the 10X Digital Startup Accelerator Challenge?

The initiative is led by Outbox, in collaboration with UNCDF, and supported by the Mastercard Foundation. It is part of the broader 10X: Enabling the Growth of MSMEs through the Digital Economy program, led by Outbox in partnership with UNCDF, Women in Technology Uganda (WITU), Refactory, and the Mastercard Foundation.

8. What kind of applicants are eligible for the 10X Digital Startup Accelerator Challenge?

We are looking for committed and capable entrepreneurs who meet the following eligibility criteria:

- You must be 18 years or older at the time of application and fluent in English, as the program will be conducted in English.
- You must be able to commit full-time to your business throughout the duration of the accelerator. If you are currently a student or employed elsewhere, you should be prepared to make your business your primary focus if selected.
- You must be a primary decision-maker in your business, with the authority to shape its strategic direction and growth. This ensures that participants can fully implement learnings and drive change during the program.
- You must be a Ugandan national, or a non-Ugandan currently living and working in Uganda with valid and up-to-date work permits. Non-Ugandan applicants must be running a business that includes a Ugandan in an ownership and decision-making role to be considered.