

# Business Plan Competition Application Guide 2026



**Are you a start-up, established SME or large company in the off-grid solar sector?  
Participate in the ROGEAP business plan competition for innovative solar businesses**

**Join the [Regional Off-Grid Electricity Access Project \(ROGEAP\)](#) in delivering off-grid solutions and achieving universal access to sustainable electricity services by 2030.**

## **ABOUT ROGEAPPFM**

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is setting up a private sector Entrepreneurship Support Facility (ESF) and Financial Support Facility (FSF) under the Regional Off-Grid Electricity Access Project (ROGEAP). ROGEAP is financed by the World Bank, the Clean Technology Fund (CTF) and the Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS) of the Government of the Netherlands. The ROGEAP is implemented by ECOWAS and West African Development Bank (BOAD).

ROGEAP objective is to increase access to sustainable electricity services in the fifteen ECOWAS member countries and four Sahelian countries (namely Cameroon, Chad, Mauritania and Central African Republic). ROGEAP will improve access to sustainable energy by building a regional market for off-grid solar products and supporting the various stakeholders across the value chain.



## ABOUT THE COMPETITION:

Standalone solar SMEs promising and innovating business plans can through the business plan competition gain a one week bootcamp, participation and pitching in the ESEF regional forum and grants of up to \$5000. In the program, in component 1C and 1D stand alone solar SMEs with promising business plan can also gain access to a grant mechanisms with grants up to \$25 000 for start-ups and up to \$250 000 for expansion of existing SMEs.

### Goals of the Business Plan Competition

The overall objective is to stimulate a sustainable off-grid market in the project countries by supporting unique and innovative solar business ideas

The objectives of the Business Plan Competition are:

- To stimulate the development of innovation within the Off-Grid Electrification Sector's Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- Facilitate access to further financial and technical support schemes from ROGEAP or follow-on investment.
- To promote and support sustainable, gender, social and environmental sensitive SMEs in the off grid solar sector.
- Encourage entrepreneurs, startups, and innovators to develop innovative solutions for off-grid electrification that can address the energy needs of remote or underserved communities.
- Identify and showcase promising business ideas and ventures that have the potential to make a significant impact in off-grid electrification, whether through technological innovation, business model innovation, or both.
- Provide participants with bootcamp opportunities for capacity building, mentorship, and networking to strengthen their entrepreneurial skills, refine their business models, and improve their chances of success
- Facilitate collaboration and partnerships between entrepreneurs, investors, policymakers, and other stakeholders in the off-grid electrification ecosystem.
- Attract investment and financing for off-grid electrification projects by showcasing viable investment opportunities and connecting entrepreneurs with potential investors, including venture capitalists, impact investors, and development finance institutions.



## APPLICATION STEPS

- Visit <https://rogeappfm.com/business-plan-competition/> and Check out the process and eligibility conditions.
- Register via the business plan competition application form on the website
- Successful applicants are invited to submit a full proposal and pitch
- Businesses that meet technical and equity requirements will be invited to a bootcamp
- Successful participants will be supported to pitch at ECOWAS Sustainable Energy (ESEF) Regional Forum in Sierra Leone

## FEATURES AND FORMAT OF THE BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION

Table: Implementation guidelines for ROGEAP Business Plan Competition

<p><b>Eligibility criteria</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stage 1 or 2 Standalone solar SME (see annex 2 for stage criteria of SMEs).</li> <li>• Business owner that is a citizen of a ROGEAP country or that has a locally registered business .</li> <li>• Candidates must be entrepreneurs and/or SMEs from eligible ROGEAP countries.</li> <li>• Present a business plan to venture in off grid solar sector.</li> <li>• Locally registered company within the eligible ROGEAP countries.</li> <li>• No direct link to activities of the exclusion list of BOAD (see annex 1)</li> <li>• Must be willing to comply with environmental and social safeguards</li> <li>• Be willing to report performance during ROGEAP project phase period</li> </ul>
<p><b>Award</b></p>	<p>Phase 1: a one-week regional bootcamp            Phase 2: Package of technical assistance            Phase 3: Prizes will be awarded during the Business Plan Competition :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1st Prize: \$5,000</li> <li>• Other Prize: \$2,500 (5 awardees)</li> </ul> <p>Additional Equalisation Award to the best woman lead competitor: \$4,000</p>
<p><b>Selection criteria</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributing to national off grid solar and renewable energy policies, adopting regional quality standards and quality assurance frameworks for Standalone Solar Systems.</li> <li>• Demonstrate gender considerations, impact or mainstreaming.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributing to national off grid solar and renewable energy policies, adopting regional quality standards and quality assurance frameworks for Standalone Solar Systems.</li> <li>• Demonstrate gender considerations, impact or mainstreaming.</li> <li>• Employment creation in challenging markets.</li> <li>• Innovative approach</li> <li>• Clear Market Opportunity</li> <li>• Feasible Business Model</li> <li>• Scalable with realistic Growth Potential</li> <li>• Have a team – not a solopreneur</li> <li>• Business is Financially Viable</li> <li>• Certification compliance</li> <li>• Other considerations such as the balance of the portfolio, geographic, technology, business models, etc. will be considered</li> </ul>
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<b>Disbursement schedule</b>	One single disbursement by bank transfer to a bank account of the grantee SME for phase 3 winners.
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<b>Are multiple awards possible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximum one award per SMEs in ROGEAP</li> <li>• Non-rewarded SMEs can again participate in a next competition.</li> <li>• Winners can participate in other grant, finance and technical support schemes of ROGEAP and are even invited to do so.</li> </ul>
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## ELIGIBLE COUNTRIES

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

## COMPETITION APPLICATION TIMELINE:

7th - 21st March 2026

## WEBINAR DATE:

BP Anglophone orientation webinar, Tuesday 10th March 2026 (10:00 GMT)

BP Francophone orientation webinar, Tuesday 10th March 2026(11:00 GMT)

**APPLY HERE:** <https://rogeappfm.com/business-plan-competition/>

**CONTACT :** [info@rogeappfm.com](mailto:info@rogeappfm.com)



## ELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS

No use conditions are tagged to the received grant, except that it has to be used within the purpose of extending off grid solar market offer. after disbursement, reporting for impact monitoring remains required.

- Inventory (stock to be sold out) or sample products: off-grid solar systems (lanterns & SHS) are products with a capacity of 350 Wp or less and approved VeraSol certification or IEC/TS 62257-9-8 standard adopted by ECOWAS.
- Hardware and small equipment (computers, phones, pay-as-you-go, etc.)
- Software (accounting, pay-as-you-go, etc.)
- Project-related staff salaries and consultants' fees (<30% of the budget)
- Certification, copyright, patents, and other permits
- Consumer awareness communication and marketing, sales, and distribution costs for promoting the technology, product, or service
- Other expenses directly related to the execution of the Project and approved by the IC (<20% of the budget)
- Market entry/feasibility studies, juridical advice on entry, fiscal support

## INELIGIBLE USE OF ROGEAP FUNDS

- Items already financed through another grant, program, or institution
- Bank and currency exchange expenses, losses, fees, and penalties
- Cash payments
- Other World Bank restrictions apply

