

FAQ: Trust by Design Fintech Challenge

1. Who should apply?

We welcome market-tested, post-revenue organizations with solutions that reduce consumer harm and strengthen trust in the delivery of financial products and services — especially for women.

Eligible applicants may include:

- Financial service providers (banks, MFIs, fintechs, insurance providers, PSPs, MNO/mobile money, etc.)
- Solution providers that enable safer finance, such as:
 - identity/KYC and verification tools
 - fraud/scam prevention and risk controls
 - complaints/grievance and customer support systems
 - transparency/consent and privacy-responsible data tools
 - credit decisioning and responsible lending/collections solutions
 - regtech/suptech or consumer protection infrastructure
 - agent/channel accountability tools

2. What types of solutions are eligible?

Solutions that:

- Generate revenue
- Are live in-market (not concept-only)
- Demonstrate measurable outcomes related to safety, trust, consumer protection, or harm reduction
- Collect and use gender-disaggregated data (GDD) (or have a credible plan and capability to do so)
- Are digitally enabled across at least part of the customer journey

Not eligible: Early-stage concepts and pre-revenue pilots.

3. Are pilots eligible?

Pilots are eligible only if they meet all the following: the solution is live in market with real customers, revenue is being generated, and there is measurable outcomes data. Early-stage concepts and pre-revenue pilots are not eligible regardless of deployment stage.

4. We are deployed and operational but not yet generating revenue. Are we eligible?

Revenue generation is an assumed attribute for a solution deployed in a real market environment by customers or financial institutions. However, we recognize that revenue timing varies by business model — particularly for B2B, infrastructure, and platform providers whose path to invoicing may lag behind deployment.

If your solution is live, has demonstrable traction with real customers, and you have a clear and credible path to revenue, we encourage you to contact us at trustbydesign-ext@accion.org before submitting your application. We are happy to advise on eligibility before you invest time in applying.

5. Can a corporate, nonprofit, consortium, or other entity apply?

Yes. Eligible applicants may include startups, corporates, nonprofits, or other corporate entity types (or subsidiaries thereof), provided there is a clear accountable lead entity that can apply, contract, receive funds, and deliver the proposed solution and evidence.

6. What geographies are eligible?

This is a global call for applicants. Organizations must operate in or have credible plans to expand into emerging markets. For this program, we define eligible geographies as countries classified as Emerging Market and Developing Economies by the IMF ([see full country list here](#)). Applicants must also be legally authorized to contract and receive the cash prize from the United States to the jurisdiction where the funds would be remitted.

Organizations incorporated or operating in a comprehensively sanctioned jurisdiction or associated with specially designated nationals or similarly restricted parties (e.g., through management, ownership, control or similar mechanisms) are not eligible.

7. Do applicants need to operate exclusively in emerging markets?

Applicants must operate in or have credible expansion plans into emerging markets. Details available in the application guidelines.

8. Is this only for women-focused businesses?

No. Organizations do not need to exclusively serve women to apply. However, applicants must demonstrate how their solution improves safety, trust, or outcomes for women customers. We are particularly interested in providers that use gender-disaggregated data to understand women's experiences and to inform safer, more inclusive product design.

9. Do we need to use gender-disaggregated data?

Yes. And simply reporting a gender breakdown of your user base is not sufficient. We are looking for evidence that gender data actively informs decisions — about product design, risk, servicing, pricing, or safeguards.

Preference will be given to applicants that:

- Currently collect and use GDD in decision-making, or
- Have completed a validated pilot and are scaling its use

If you are collecting gender data but not yet using it to inform decisions, we encourage you to apply in a future cycle once that practice is in place.

10. What makes a strong application?

Strong applications clearly demonstrate a market-tested solution that advances consumer protection and harm reduction, particularly for women, and provide credible evidence that the model can be replicated or adopted across the financial services ecosystem.

High-scoring applications typically:

- Show real traction

- Provide clear evidence that the solution is live and used. Relevant indicators may include active users, repeat usage, retention or repayment rates, transaction volumes, complaint volumes and resolution, fraud rates, or other performance metrics
- Demonstrate measurable outcomes
- Quantify improvements in safety, trust, transparency, or customer outcomes—even if early—and explain the mechanism behind the change
- Use gender-disaggregated data meaningfully
- Explain what gender data is collected, how it is analyzed, and how it has directly informed product, policy, or operational decisions
- Indicate commercial viability
- Where possible, include metrics such as reported MRR (or equivalent recurring revenue) that suggest a sustainable and scalable business model

Applications without measurable traction are unlikely to advance.

11. How does the selection process work?

The Challenge has two rounds:

- Stage 1: Application review — eligibility and pre-selection screening. Pre-selection criteria are focused on traction, evidence, and orientation toward gender and harm reduction.
- Stage 2: Finalist evaluation — pre-selected applicants will be asked to join a brief follow-up interview to clarify solution details and supporting evidence. Requests will be made between June 15 — June 26, 2026. Thereafter, finalists will be evaluated by a panel of judges, based on the application and interviews. Final selection criteria are focused on innovation and impact.

Finalists and the Grand Prize winner are selected after Round 2 during the week of July 13, 2026.

12. How many winners will be selected and what are the award terms?

One Grand Prize winner will receive a \$50,000 award. Three finalists will each receive \$10,000 awards. Awards are cash awards intended to support your continued work on trust-centered financial solutions for women customers. Grand Prize winner and finalists will receive entrance, accommodation, and travel costs related to the Fintech for Inclusion Global Summit in London on September 2, 2026.

Winners will be asked to participate in a brief follow-up conversation approximately six months after the award to share progress and encouraged to leverage opportunities for global visibility and recognition through events, publications, and knowledge products. No formal reporting is required.

For more information, please refer to the 2026 Trust by Design Fintech Challenge Official Rules available [here](#).

13. What kind of evidence is required?

In Stage 1, applicants will be asked to provide high-level information about their solution and traction. This may include:

- Basic traction metrics (e.g., active users, retention, repayment, or engagement)
- Evidence that women customers are actively using the product or service

- A description of harm-reduction or trust-building practices
- Customer-level data is not required in the initial application

In Round 2, shortlisted applicants may be asked to provide additional details on supporting evidence during the interview, such as:

- More detailed impact or performance data
- Customer testimonials or qualitative insights
- Documentation of internal processes or policies

Where possible, applicants should provide aggregated metrics rather than customer-level data.

14. How will the information we submit be used and will it remain confidential?

Information submitted through the application is used for eligibility verification, scoring, and selection. It may also inform industry engagement and knowledge sharing activities promoting best practices in trust-centered fintech innovation.

No information will be used to identify your company or solution publicly without your involvement. Any case studies, quotes, or communications that name your company will be developed collaboratively with you.

If your solution is selected as a winner, accepting the award confirms your agreement to this collaborative use. If your solution is not selected, you may opt out of your company's information being used on an identifiable basis in any knowledge sharing or outreach activities.

15. Is there an equity requirement?

No. This challenge does not require equity participation.

16. Is this an accelerator or investment program?

This Challenge is neither an accelerator nor investment program. It recognizes and amplifies proven models. While introductions to investors and other industry stakeholders may be facilitated, this is not an accelerator or pathway to investment.

17. What does “harm reduction” mean in this Challenge?

Harm reduction refers to measurable decreases in consumer risk and negative outcomes, such as fraud losses, over-indebtedness, coercive collections, exclusion or bias, data misuse, or unresolved complaints, as well as improvements in transparency, consent, trust, and effective recourse.

18. What does “trust and confidence” mean in this Challenge?

“Trust and confidence” refers to measurable improvements in customer understanding, perceived safety, willingness to use services, repeat usage, complaint resolution satisfaction, and reduced fear of misuse, coercion, or fraud.

19. Can our organization submit more than one application?

Each organization may submit one application. If you have multiple solutions that could be eligible, we encourage you to select the one with the strongest evidence of traction and outcomes for women customers.

20. Can we apply in a language other than English?

Applications must be submitted in English.

21. Will applicants receive feedback?

All applicants will receive a decision notification. Where feasible, shortlisted applicants may receive brief feedback. Due to volume, detailed feedback is not guaranteed.

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. VOID WHERE PROHIBITED. Open to all fintechs, represented by an applicant at least 18 years old at the time of entry. Begins 12:00AM EDT on April 20, 2026 and ends 11:59PM EDT on July 17, 2026. To enter, complete and submit an application at <https://www.accion.org/trust-by-design-fintech-challenge> by 11:59PM EDT on June 5, 2026. Winners will be selected by a panel of qualified judges based on highest scoring evaluations. Total ARV of all prizes: \$94,000. For full Official Rules, visit <http://bit.ly/TrustByDesignRules>. Sponsored by Accion.