

WFP Innovation Strategy

2025-2027

Executive Board Presentation

16 June 2025

DRAFT

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WFP Innovation Strategy 2025-2027

Introduction

“The priorities are clear: increase our resources, improve our effectiveness and scale up partnerships and innovation to bring modern solutions to those most in need.” Cindy McCain
Executive Director, WFP

1. Hunger is surging to unprecedented levels — with 343 million people now facing acute food insecurity, more than double the number in 2019. Conflict, climate-related disasters, economic instability are converging to create a global food crisis that demands not just action — but the most effective and efficient solutions leveraging innovation.
2. The World Food Programme (WFP) is committed to end hunger — saving lives in emergencies and reducing the needs and enhance resilience to withstand shocks. Innovation is not a luxury. It is a necessity. To meet rising needs with limited resources, WFP must fundamentally rethink how humanitarian and development work gets done — faster, smarter, and more locally grounded than ever before.
3. WFP has a long-standing commitment to innovation in all country offices and a track record of innovating and scaling solutions for modern, more efficient programmes that serve people better.
4. Since 2015, WFP has invested in building a global innovation infrastructure: from the Global Innovation Accelerator to regional and country-level hubs and the Business Innovation team. These efforts have already delivered impact — shaping how we deliver assistance, build partnerships and unlock new pathways to scale. But the time has come to go further.
5. The WFP Innovation Strategy 2025–2027 is a bold step forward. Rooted in WFP’s core values of humanity, integrity, collaboration, commitment and inclusion, it charts a path to make innovation a force multiplier across the entire organization. This is a strategy

designed not just to support individual projects — but to amplify innovations in the way WFP operates at scale, placing innovation at the heart of every programme, every country office, and every partnership.

6. WFP's Strategic Plan (2022-2025) emphasizes innovation as a key enabler in its mission to end hunger. It ensures WFP can continue to save lives and improve livelihoods in this increasingly complex environment. Cash-Based Transfers, once considered an innovation, are now mainstream. Similarly, other innovations — whether they are breakthrough innovations, systemic changes or incremental - have allowed WFP to serve people better, operate more efficiently and effectively and raise more funding. By adopting new approaches, WFP continues to improve its ability to better meet the needs of the people it serves.
7. Drawing on insights from over 150 global consultations — with WFP field staff, leaders, donors, partners and innovation experts — this strategy reflects a shared vision: that scalable, sustainable innovation must become one of WFP's most powerful tools to drive lasting change.
8. The WFP Innovation Strategy is closely aligned with WFP's broader policies and frameworks, including the WFP Strategic Plan, the People Policy, Duty of Care Governance Framework, Technology Strategy, Data Strategy, AI Strategy, Innovative Finance, Private Partnerships Strategy, Localization Policy, Resource Mobilization Strategy, Nutrition strategies and the Privacy and Data Protection Strategy, as well as with UN 2.0 and the Summit of the Future goals. This ensures a cohesive approach to organizational goals. By building on these core strategies and on the existing innovation life-cycle, the Innovation Strategy enhances WFP's efforts to leverage technology, partnerships and innovative solutions to address hunger and drive operational efficiency. The strategy also leverages innovation objectives within existing Country Strategic Plans (CSPs) and fosters the development of future CSPs, where innovation-driven approaches can offer new solutions while maximizing impact. The Innovation Focus areas will be strategically aligned with WFP's current and future Strategic Plan.
9. The direction is clear: to amplify WFP's innovation DNA empowering WFP country offices, and to turn today's challenges into the breakthroughs that end hunger tomorrow.

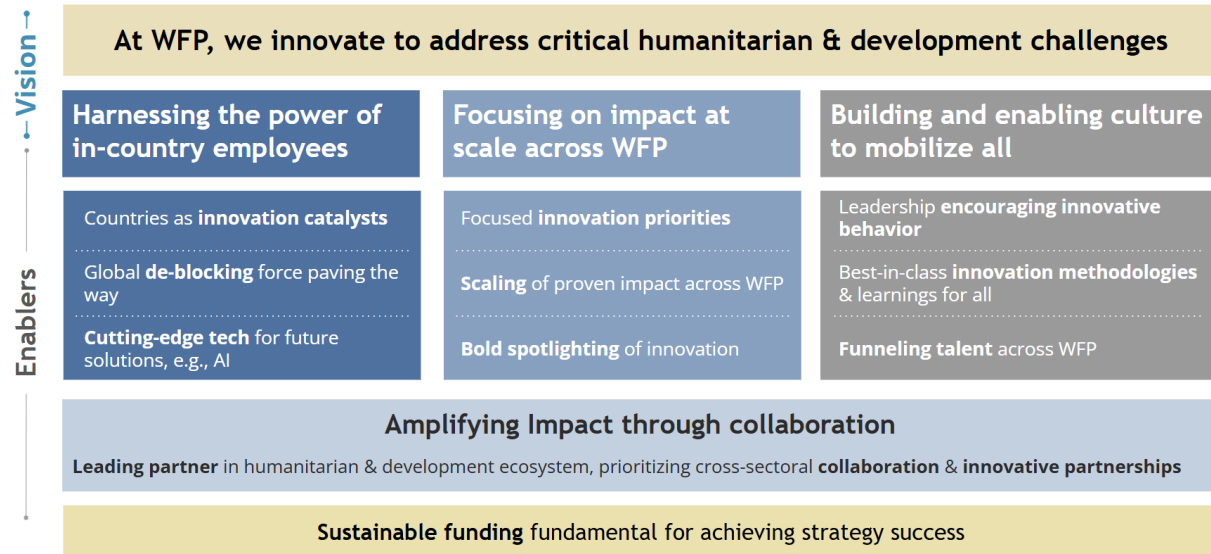
Vision for innovation

10. Our commitment to innovation at WFP is not only focused on advancing WFP's mission but also on fostering efficiency and effectiveness across the entire humanitarian and development ecosystem. As a leading partner in the UN system and beyond, WFP aims to make innovation-driven improvements available as a public good, enhancing the global response to hunger and humanitarian challenges.
11. Following a consultative process, a shared vision for innovation at WFP was defined, providing a clear direction and unified action towards this common goal:
12. The vision for innovation is as follows:
"We catalyse scalable, sustainable innovations and transformative business solutions to achieve zero hunger and address critical humanitarian challenges for the people we serve. By empowering staff, embracing human centered approaches, promoting localization and collaborating with other UN actors and partners from the public and private sector, we aim to deliver long-term, scalable impact and build resilience in a changing world to save lives in emergencies and sustainably end hunger."
13. Four elements in the innovation definition are fundamental and guide WFP's actions: the people we serve, innovation, WFP employees and scale:
14. People we serve: Our innovation efforts are driven by the needs of the people we serve. They are at the heart of our work and their experiences and feedback guide the design, implementation and scaling of innovations. By placing the people we serve at the center of the WFP Innovation Strategy, we ensure that solutions are co-developed and that innovations are not only effective, but also responsive to the realities on the ground.
15. Innovation: At WFP, "innovation" is defined broadly and inclusively, ranging from breakthrough and incremental innovations to business transformation efforts. It encompasses everything from individual solutions to systemic change. Innovations build, enhance and sustain value chains in the ecosystems we are active in. It includes process, product, and digital innovations as well as innovations to improve efficiency and effectiveness. It means improving the way we work across both enabling functions and programmes and solving problems in ways that are replicable, scalable and cost-effective.

16. WFP employees: This strategy is relevant for all WFP employees, from field officers to the Executive Director irrespective of contract type, role or location. Success means that innovation is not limited to single divisions or innovation projects, but all employees are enabled and encouraged to innovate with intention in their role. Leadership plays a critical enabling role and must be consistently engaged and empowered to champion innovation across WFP.
17. Scale: At WFP, scaling up innovations is multifaceted. 1) “Scaling out” refers to expanding an innovation from one WFP country office to others 2) Scaling functionally involves enhancing an innovation's capabilities 3) “Scaling deep” focuses on deepening the impact an innovation can offer within a specific context. Scaling aims to spread high-impact solutions across WFP's operating environment and the broader humanitarian ecosystem, extending its impact globally to benefit as many people as possible sustainably. Solutions must be cost-effective and in areas which WFP has considerable influence. Scalable solutions need to adapt to different operational contexts, particularly in challenging regions. Technology is a pivotal enabler for scalability and must be thoroughly understood to be maximally leveraged.

Strategic goals and enablers

Strategic enablers will drive innovation across WFP



#disrupthunger

Source: Country missions; WFP/BCG project team analysis

18. The WFP Innovation Strategy is designed to address critical humanitarian and development challenges by leveraging innovation across all levels of the organization. The strategy is anchored around five strategic goals: harnessing the power of in-country employees, focusing on impact at scale across WFP, building and enabling a culture to mobilize all, amplifying impact through collaboration, and sustainable funding.

19. These goals, supported by key enablers, provide the necessary frameworks, tools and partnerships to drive innovation and improve operational efficiency. Together, they form the foundation to transform WFP as a whole.

20. Harnessing the power of in-country employees

Goal: Empower WFP employees to act as innovation engines, driving innovation from within the organization.

18.1 Enablers: WFP will encourage and support employees at country offices to become engines of innovation, transforming them into catalysts for change. Localization will continue to be a guiding principle, ensuring that solutions are driven by local expertise, ownership and the needs of the communities we serve. To facilitate this, a global de-blocking team will be established to remove internal obstacles, ensuring the smooth implementation of innovative solutions. Additionally,

investments will be made in cutting-edge technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence, to develop and implement future-ready solutions that address the challenges faced by WFP.

18.2 Metric goal: Staggered plan developed by the end of 2026: Develop a staggered plan to ensure that all country offices have the necessary tools and resources to drive and support innovation efforts.

21. Focusing on impact at scale across WFP

Goal: Identify, develop, scale and invest in high-impact innovations that can be applied globally to address hunger.

19.1 Enablers: WFP will define and concentrate on priority areas where innovation can have the most significant impact, ensuring focused innovation priorities guide efforts. A structured governance framework for scaling successful innovations across all regions will be developed, ensuring that proven solutions are implemented widely. WFP will define a scalability assessment framework incorporating 1) **Financial Sustainability:** Evaluate long-term funding and resource needs 2) **Context Adaptability:** Assess how well innovations can be adjusted and applied in different contexts. Furthermore, WFP will continue to share innovative solutions and successes to inspire further innovation and drive organizational commitment.

19.2 Metric goal: For a country office programme, achieve a 1) 10-20 percent reduction in operational cost of assistance to WFP's people served or 2) increase the number of people served by 10-20 percent or 3) improve operational efficiency by 10-20 percent by integrating innovations within programmes (dependent on Country CSP planning)

22. Building and enabling culture to mobilize all

Goal: Create an organizational culture that encourages and sustains innovation at every level.

20.1 Enablers: Leadership at all levels will play a crucial role in promoting and encouraging innovative behavior, creating an environment where new ideas can flourish. To support this, WFP will cultivate a culture that embraces responsible risk-taking as a fundamental aspect of the innovation process. Recognizing that innovations are inherently new and hence riskier than established processes, the strategy emphasizes the importance of risk-adjusted experimentation and scaling as

a necessary requirement for building the WFP of the future. Innovation processes are designed to achieve results, while learning and iterating fast and limiting risks. Access to best-in-class innovation methodologies and learning opportunities will be provided to all employees, ensuring they have the tools and knowledge to contribute to WFP's innovation goals. Individual and team recognition at all levels is a crucial part of enabling a culture of innovation. Additionally, identifying and nurturing talent within WFP will be prioritized, funneling skilled individuals into roles where they can drive and sustain innovation efforts.

20.2 Metric goal: Innovation leadership activation activities carried out in Top 10 country offices; Innovation assessments used in reassignment processes: Ensure a growing number of WFP employees receive training in innovation methodologies and tools to empower them to contribute to the organization's innovation goals. WFP innovation awards will be carried out to recognize innovations and teams.

23. Amplifying impact through collaboration

Goal: Collaborate with private-sector companies, science institutions, governments, partners, programme-governments, local partners, other UN agencies, investors and individuals to co-create solutions.

21.1 Enablers: Sustainable funding and capacities are crucial for long-term impact, and WFP will secure diverse and reliable funding sources to support innovation initiatives. By positioning WFP as a leading innovation partner in the humanitarian and development ecosystem, stronger collaborations will be fostered and the innovation capacity enhanced. Cross-sectoral partnerships and opportunities to influence the ecosystem will be actively pursued to maximize the reach and effectiveness of innovations, ensuring that collaborative efforts yield substantial benefits for those WFP serves. Innovations will be a standard offering to engage partners and strengthen WFP's ability to respond as an agile and efficient organization.

21.2 Metric goal: US\$50 million Raised by 2027: Secure US\$50 million in funding and capacities from various partners across WFP operations and Global HQ units to support high-impact innovation projects and WFP's innovation capabilities.

24. Sustainable funding of innovation

Goal: Ensuring adequate basic funding for innovation infrastructure, activities and innovations across WFP is essential for achieving strategy success

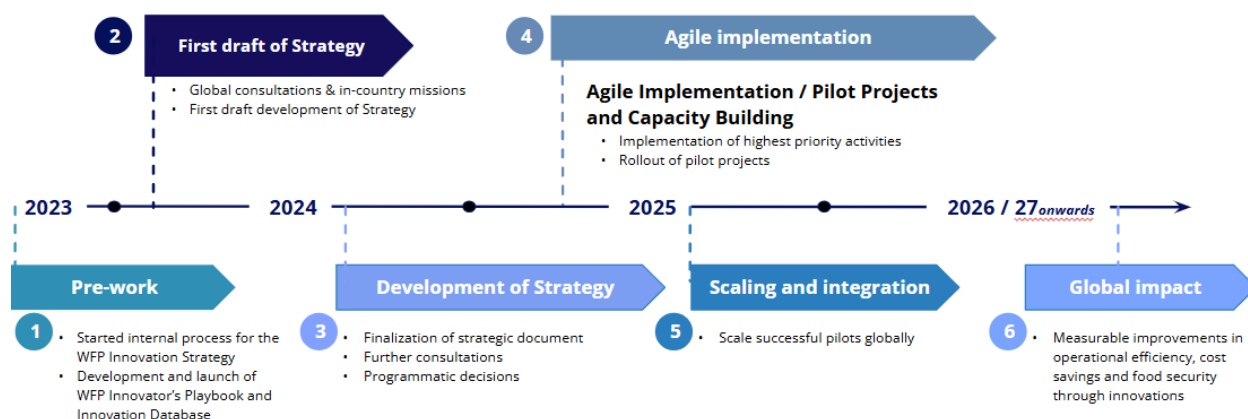
22.1 Enablers: Specific innovation funding and capabilities are required to ensure the capacities on global, regional and country level, allowing for critical capabilities in-house to enable and unlock new partnerships, new approaches and amplifying and scaling solutions. Positioning WFP as a modern and innovative organization will be included in all relevant proposals to partners. In addition, new innovative partnership approaches will be explored to further strengthen WFP's capacity to fulfill its mission.

22.2 Metric goal: US\$17.5 million annual funding for core Innovation Strategy development with additional funding required to scale innovations across operations.

Implementation Roadmap

25. The WFP Innovation Strategy reflects a highly consultative development process, engaging stakeholders across the organization to ensure alignment with WFP's mission and priorities. After the strategy's development, its implementation will be agile, with pilot projects and capacity-building initiatives rolled out early on. Over time, innovations will be scaled and integrated into WFP's global operations. By 2027, the goal is to achieve measurable improvements in operational efficiency, cost savings and enhanced food security through innovation, ensuring continuous adaptation to meet evolving needs and challenges.

Implementation Roadmap | WFP Innovation Strategy



Innovation processes and methodologies

26. To achieve transformational outcomes in food security, humanitarian and development assistance, WFP will adopt and refine a range of innovation processes and methodologies that ensure agility, efficiency and measurable impact. These approaches will foster a culture of experimentation and rapid learning across the organization, ensuring that new ideas are tested, iterated and scaled successfully.
27. **Human-centered design:** The heart of WFP's innovation process will be human-centered design at country office level, ensuring that the needs of the people we serve are the core focus of every innovation. This approach involves engaging directly with communities, understanding their specific challenges and co-creating solutions that are contextually relevant and culturally appropriate. Empathy-driven insights will guide the design of both technology and programmatic innovations to ensure high adoption rates and sustainable outcomes. Privacy, recognized as a fundamental human right, will remain a foundational principle of this process as an enabler of responsible innovation.
28. **Lean and agile innovation:** WFP will implement lean and agile methodologies to accelerate the pace of innovation, allowing for rapid prototyping, testing and scaling of solutions. This approach emphasizes flexibility, quick feedback loops and iterative development, which are critical in responding to the ever-changing landscape of global food security. Through short innovation cycles, teams will be empowered to adjust their projects based on real-world feedback and data. The deblocking team will work to establish further lean and agile processes, including transitioning scalable innovations into WFP vendors through innovation-ready procurement processes.
29. **Acceleration, venture building and scaling:** To maximize impact, WFP will specifically support the most promising scalable transformative innovations, internally and externally to WFP. Through its Global Accelerator and Ventures, regional and local innovation hubs, WFP will continue to support entrepreneurs and innovators within and outside the organization, including those that evolve into vendors for WFP, to develop sustainable innovations and ventures. Such assistance includes mentorship, funding and operational support, e.g. external communications or coaching on navigating WFP procurement processes. Innovations can be enabled by technology like Artificial Intelligence or new business models like innovative finance or by working with the private sector. To further advance this, responsible AI-driven solutions that can enhance food

security and humanitarian operations will be identified and scaled in a dedicated “AI Accelerator”. WFP will prioritize innovations that have demonstrated proof of results and potential for global scaling.

30. **Business innovation, transformation and change solutions:** Supported by its Business Innovation and Change Unit, WFP will transform strategy into action to plan and execute transformation and organizational change, increasing efficiency, effectiveness and simplification. To do so, WFP will promote collaboration with other UN agencies to co-create innovative solutions, cultivating cross-fertilization and enabling the development of successful innovation initiatives by promoting best practices across the organization.
31. **Knowledge sharing and management:** The WFP Innovation Network, comprising of elements such as the growing network of regional and local innovation hubs and innovation champions, will play a crucial role in Knowledge Management, promoting the implementation of field-driven, evidence-based toolkits and lessons learned, knowledge, successful innovations and fit for purpose innovation models from one region to another, fostering cross-regional learning and promoting best practices.
32. **Co-creation and ecosystem engagement:** New collaborative approaches, frameworks and spaces will be continuously cultivated to engage diverse stakeholders effectively in the problem-solving process. This will enable WFP teams, clusters and coalitions to lead and be engaged in co-creation processes in meaningful and impactful ways.
33. **Innovative partnerships and innovative finance:** Recognizing the power of the private sector, cross-sector collaboration and startups in driving disruptive change, WFP will expand its collaboration with the global innovation ecosystem. The organization will continue to explore and build partnerships and collaborations with global, regional and local organizations, directly benefitting WFP operations. WFP will use innovative partnership and finance approaches that further integrate private sector funding and organizations into helping address WFP’s strategic goals.

Risk considerations and mitigation

34. Innovation inherently involves uncertainty, and responsible risk-taking is essential to unlocking transformative change. WFP recognizes that innovative approaches often come with higher levels of uncertainty compared to established practices. To ensure that risks are proactively managed while maintaining agility, the implementation of the Innovation Strategy will be closely aligned with WFP's broader risk management framework and policies. This includes identifying potential risk factors across innovation lifecycles such as operational feasibility, financial sustainability and ethical considerations, while developing mitigation strategies early on. WFP will support innovation teams through guidance, tools and risk-adjusted decision-making that enables being bold while maintaining accountability. By embedding structured risk management into innovation governance and portfolio steering, WFP aims to scale impactful solutions responsibly, maximizing benefits for the people it serves while minimizing unintended consequences.

KPIs and success metrics

35. As part of the WFP Innovation Strategy, it is essential to define Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) at the regional offices, headquarters, and country office levels, ensuring that the success of innovation is measurable at every stage of the process - early, mid and late stage. Metric goals to measure success for each dimension will be developed and continuously refined in collaboration with country offices. These KPIs will provide a comprehensive view of WFP's innovation performance and ensure alignment with broader organizational goals. These KPI's will also enable WFP to monitor and drive the success of innovation at all levels, ensuring a unified and strategic approach to transforming WFP's operations globally.

Way forward

36. WFP's Innovation Strategy is more than a roadmap — it's a commitment to bold, systemic change.

37. By 2027, WFP aims to unlock the full potential of innovation to enhance operational performance, cut costs, and — most importantly — improve outcomes for the millions of

people it serves. WFP will strengthen the capacity to innovate and scale what works. It will empower country offices with the right tools to lead innovation locally. WFP will build a global network of partnerships and collaborations to enable the co-creation of the next generation of humanitarian solutions.

38. This will only be possible with increased partnerships and collaborations with governments, technology leaders, academic institutions, private-sector companies and innovators around the world. This is a collective call to action — to disrupt hunger with the same urgency and creativity the world applies to its greatest challenges.
39. Innovation is not optional. It is how WFP ensures that every dollar delivers more impact and that WFP stays agile in a rapidly changing world.
40. Now is the moment to act — with urgency, creativity, and shared purpose — to turn bold innovations into real-world breakthroughs, so that innovation drives lasting change for the people who need it most.