***Community-Led Development Incubator***

***Participant Application 2025-2026***

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| --- | --- |
| Full Name |  |
| Organization Name |  |
| Vision or Mission Statement (if available) |  |
| Email |  |
| Physical Address/Location |  |
| Phone Number (WhatsApp) |  |
| Date of Birth |  |
| Social Media Handles (optional) |  |
| Name and contact information for person who helped you complete this application (if relevant) |  |

***About***

The Chain Collaborative (TCC)’s mission is to co-create opportunities and strengthen capacities for community-led change in the coffee sector. We build relationships with local leaders in coffee-growing regions, cultivate their project design and management skills, and foster the development of their farming enterprises for long-term sustainability. Our work allows global communities to combat intergenerational poverty and marginalization in the coffee sector on their own terms, and according to their own visions for change. In addition to our work with grassroots leaders in coffee communities, we also consult for impact-driven organizations and companies, train coffee professionals in sustainability through virtual courses, and innovate across the value stream via special projects.

***Our Commitment to Community-Led Development***

We believe that coffee communities make the best decisions about their own development and that sustainable change comes from local leadership. If we support a community’s vision by investing in their leaders who are committed and driven to see change, we believe that we can build more equitable and sustainable communities with beneficiaries at the helm of their own initiatives. In sum, we challenge traditional top-down models of development, whereby an outside organization offers a pre-designed service or program, or imposes a project on a community. The Chain Collaborative is different. We invest exclusively in the skills and ideas of local leaders so that they can bring their own projects to life.

***Our Community-Led Development Incubator Program***

The Community-Led Development Incubator is an 18-month program and opportunity for local leaders from coffee-growing communities in East Africa and Latin America to design, execute, and evaluate their own project. Over the course of the Incubator, cohorts of 4-10 local leader participants engage in a collaborative learning experience and design projects that will propel their communities toward more sustainable and equitable change. Eligible participants are people who make up the leadership of a community-based organization in the coffee sector and have a vision to create, implement, and sustain change to improve their local community. Of note, community-based organizations can be cooperatives, associations, social enterprises, or other formal or even informal networks. The Latin American cohort will be conducted in Spanish and the East African cohort will be led in English. If an organization would like to nominate a participant who does not speak English or Spanish, they are more than welcome to do so. TCC will hire local support to provide translation during sessions and of program materials.

After being accepted into the program, participants complete three program phases: 1) a six-month Learning and Design Phase, 2) a nine-month Implementation Phase, and 3) a three-month Peer Support Phase. During the 6-month Learning and Design phase, participants build relationships with one another, co-develop their project design and evaluation skills, and present their individual project proposals. Once they submit their complete project proposal, participants enter the 9-month Implementation Phase, during which they must carry out (with the financial support of TCC) the project that they prioritized and designed for their community. Finally, the 3-month Peer Support Phase is a reporting and offboarding stage, allowing participants the time they need to measure and report on impact, and join a virtual alumni community. This ongoing community is made up of TCC stakeholders, past and present Incubator participants, and other supply chain partners.

Together, the three phases of the Community-Led Development Incubator program allow participants to design a community project, implement it with robust support, report on its impact, and join an ongoing TCC-led network of changemakers in the coffee sector.

***Benefits to Local Leader Participants:***

* Training on leadership; community-led development; partnership development; as well as project planning, management, and evaluation—all with a focus on how to use these skills to benefit the broader community, both during and after the Incubator program.
* Funding of up to $15,000 for a locally-designed community project.
* Opportunity to collaborate with TCC, other cohort members, and a variety of supply chain partners.
* TCC mentorship throughout the program via group and individual meetings with TCC staff, trainers, and supporters.
* Recognition as a TCC partner via social media and other platforms.
* Additional workshops and mentorship from supply chain actors with experience in topics such as climate change, gender equity, financial planning, and digital readiness.

***Participant Requirements and Local Leader Eligibility:***

The ideal participant:

* Is a leader of a community-based organization in a coffee-producing community.
* Is passionate about creating equitable and sustainable change in their community.
* Has the ability to commit to 1) 2-hour calls once monthly with the rest of their cohort, and 2) additional 1-hour calls once monthly with a TCC staff member.
* Has the ability to commit 5-10 hours per month or more (depending on the project) to fully design, implement, and evaluate a locally-defined community initiative.
* Is typically available for additional remote communication via email and WhatsApp.
* Has the ability to make an 18-month commitment and complete each of the program phases during 2025 and 2026.

**Note**: There are no language requirements to participate. TCC will provide translation for those who do not speak the language of instruction. If you need support in the translation of this application or would prefer to complete the application verbally, please contact us.

***Application Process:***

* Send completed application questions to TCC’s Programs Manager (email below) by February 1, 2025
* Up to two rounds of remote video interviews with TCC staff in February and March 2025
* Final selection by March 15, 2025
* Program start: April 2025

***Application Questions***

***Organization* *Information***

1. What is the history of your organization, enterprise, or community of farmers? Describe how the farmers or farmworkers you engage with are organized today, and how the community is engaged in your initiative. Be as detailed as possible.

1. Tell us about the vision for your initiative, organization, enterprise, or community of farmers. Has your vision evolved over time, and in what ways?

1. What are some of the current challenges that your community is facing and attempting to address? How are you and your community currently addressing these challenges? How do you hope to address them in the future?

1. What are the existing assets, resources, and capacities (human, financial, environmental, or other) in your community? How do you as a community leader engage with community members to ensure their voices are heard?

1. Has your community led and implemented projects in the past? If so, what were they, and what were the impacts that those projects sparked?

***Coffee-Related Information***

1. Please describe your involvement in the coffee sector today. If relevant, how many farmers do you work with that are growing and selling coffee? Do you work with male and female farmers? What species or varieties are grown? What are the quality and productivity levels, harvest season details, and average land holdings that you are aware of? If relevant, how do you process coffee for sale? Who do you sell to? Do you engage with farmworkers? Be as detailed as possible.

1. What do you see as your current role in the coffee industry? What is the value you bring to community members as related to the coffee industry? What is the vision of your involvement with the coffee industry over time? How do you hope to grow?

***Vision for Participation in the Community-Led Development Incubator***

1. What would a successful partnership with The Chain Collaborative look like to you? What do you hope to give and what do you hope to receive?

1. Do you have any initial ideas about what type of project you may want to design and implement with your community?

1. Please provide any additional thoughts, ideas, or information that you would like to share with TCC.

***References***

Please provide up to three professional references who can speak about their experience collaborating with you, and about your commitment to your community.

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| Name |  |
| Title/Organization |  |
| Contact Information (Email or WhatsApp) |  |
| Relationship to Applicant |  |

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***Additional Information***

* If desired, applicants can send along 2-5 photos that best represent themselves, their community, or their farm, to give TCC a visual of work conducted to date.
* Once completed, send this completed application – including your name, questions, references, and photos – to [**info@thechaincollaborative.org**](mailto:info@thechaincollaborative.org) with the subject line “Your Name – TCC Community-Led Development Incubator Application.”
* If needed, TCC can accommodate verbal applications. However, we prefer to start with a written application and encourage applicants to seek support as needed for the written component.
* Should you have any further questions about the Incubator, you may address them to the same email.

***Good luck! We look forward to receiving your application!***