

FINANCIAL SERVICES & DIGITAL INCLUSION

Score credit for informal traders with no bank history

Commercial bank • Harare



Give informal traders a fair way to qualify for small working-capital loans without a bank history.

POSTED BY	Commercial bank • Harare	PILOT BUDGET	US\$25,000
LOCATION	Harare (remote work possible)	APPLICATIONS CLOSE	15 Jan 2027
SUB-THEME	Financial Services & Digital Inclusion	TEAM SIZE	2-6 people

1 The problem

Background

Many of the bank's potential small-business customers are market traders who run their businesses in cash and mobile money. They have no audited accounts, payslips or credit bureau records.

What's going wrong

The bank's current scoring rejects most of these traders, or asks for collateral they do not have. The bank believes many are good risks but cannot show it with the data it has today.

2 What we need

A strong solution will:

- ✓ Score applicants using alternative data such as mobile money activity, supplier records and savings group history.
- ✓ Explain each decision in plain language to loan officers and applicants.
- ✓ Meet Zimbabwe's data protection and consumer lending rules.
- ✓ Support loans from US\$50 to US\$1,000.

Constraints

- Personal data must stay in Zimbabwe.
- Applicants must give explicit consent for any data used.
- The applicant journey must work on feature phones.

3 Deliverables

By forum week, matched teams are expected to bring:

- 01 A scoring model or process tested on the sample data.
- 02 A fairness and bias check across gender and location.
- 03 An onboarding flow that works over USSD.
- 04 A seven-minute pitch for forum week.

4 How teams are evaluated

Applications and final pitches are scored by the challenge owner and the ZBIF secretariat.

CRITERION	WHAT WE LOOK AT	WEIGHT
Fit to the problem	Does it solve the problem as the challenge owner describes it?	30%
Technical feasibility	Can the team build and run it with the resources available?	25%
Cost and scalability	Is it affordable to pilot, and to roll out if the pilot works?	20%
Team capability	Does the team have the skills and time to deliver?	15%
Local impact	Jobs, skills or value it keeps in Zimbabwe.	10%

Who can apply

- ✓ A registered ZBIF innovator account: innovators, consultancies, technologists, university teams or freelancers.
- ✓ At least one team member based in Zimbabwe.
- ✓ Able to attend forum week in Bulawayo on 27–28 April 2027 if shortlisted.
- ✓ IP ownership and pilot terms are agreed between your team and the challenge owner in the Deal Room.

5 Timeline

2 Oct 2026	Challenge posted
15 Jan 2027	Applications close
Within 3 weeks	Matching results sent to teams and the challenge owner
Until mid-April 2027	Build phase, with mentor and challenge-owner check-ins
27–28 Apr 2027	Live pitch and Deal Rooms at forum week, Bulawayo

6 Data and resources

Shared with matched teams after signing a simple data-use agreement.

Repayment data from an earlier micro-loan pilot	Anonymised dataset
Sandbox access to the bank's test APIs	For matched teams
Product manager and credit risk analyst	Points of contact

7 How to apply

- 01 Create a free innovator account at zbif.bulconsultancy.com, or sign in.
- 02 Open this challenge (ref ZB-103) and press **Apply**.
- 03 Tell us your team name, size and how you would solve the problem. Applications close on **15 Jan 2027**.

Questions about the brief can be asked from the challenge page. Answers are shared with every applicant.