

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Business Call to Action (BCtA)?

The Business Call to Action (BCtA) aims to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by challenging companies to develop innovative business models that offer the potential for both commercial success and development impact. These types of business models are often described as “pro-poor” or “inclusive”, in that they seek to profitably engage low-income populations across company value chains, and meet the needs of these populations through the development of appropriate and affordable products and services.

2. Why was the BCtA launched?

The BCtA was launched in 2008 to encourage businesses to accelerate progress towards meeting the MDGs and address other social and economic challenges. By providing jobs, contributing to environmental sustainability, addressing healthcare challenges in developing countries, and creating opportunities for women, companies contribute to the long-term success and vitality of developing nations.

3. How is the BCtA funded?

The BCtA initiative receives financial and in-kind support from the Australian Agency for International Development, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the UK Department for International Development, the US Agency for International Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Global Compact, the Clinton Global Initiative, and the International Business Leaders Forum.

4. Who can join the BCtA?

Participants in the BCtA include national, regional, and multinational companies of all sizes committed to contributing to development solutions through their core business activities. Member companies represent a diversity of sectors, including financial services, information and communication technology, agribusiness, manufacturing and extractive industries.

5. How do companies join the BCtA?

Companies apply to join the BCtA by submitting an application form to the Secretariat. The application form aims to capture both qualitative and quantitative data about a proposed BCtA initiative, including goals, measures of success, and any potential roadblocks or challenges a company expects to face during implementation. It provides not only the basis on which a company is approved to join the BCtA, but also the record of original objectives set for the initiative, against which annual reports are later submitted. Where appropriate, the BCtA Secretariat and partners may help a company to refine its submission before approval.

6. Is there a fee to join the BCtA?

No, there is no membership fee to join the BCtA. Companies submit an initiative application to the BCtA Secretariat for consideration. Please see the BCtA Website for more information about the membership process.

7. Do companies receive assistance in developing an initiative?

Yes, limited technical support is provided by the BCtA Secretariat and/or BCtA's partners to help identify and develop appropriate company initiatives. For additional support, the BCtA Secretariat can refer companies to potential implementing partners and enterprise development experts.

8. Does BCtA provide financial support to member companies?

No, companies are expected to mobilize their own financing for initiatives. Where appropriate, BCtA can connect companies with donor organizations to support project implementation.

9. What are the membership benefits to joining the BCtA?

BCtA provides a global, high-visibility platform for companies to demonstrate their commitment to eradicating poverty. By joining the BCtA, a company has access to global knowledge and expertise on inclusive business models. The BCtA recognizes, validates and disseminates reported results, which can help a company enhance its reputation and market positioning. Companies also benefit from being part of the BCtA network of practitioners.

10. What are the membership requirements?

BCtA member companies are required to: 1) implement their approved BCtA initiatives, and 2) report results toward achievement of their initiatives on an annual basis. It is important that results include the measurable contributions (to date) to both development and commercial goals. Members have opportunities to participate in many other BCtA activities throughout a given year, but they are not required to do so.

11. How do members report results?

Companies are asked to identify specific, measurable targets for their initiatives at the time of application to the BCtA. Once the application is approved, BCtA members are required to submit results (against original targets) on an annual basis using an online Results Reporting Tool. The Reporting Tool aims to capture year-on-year progress made toward implementation of their BCtA initiative, including key business and development results. To learn more about the results reporting process, please refer to the “How to Report” guide.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):

12. What are the MDGs?

In 2000, 189 governments committed to achieve the MDGs by 2015. The MDGs are eight internationally-agreed targets which aim to reduce poverty, hunger, maternal and child deaths, disease, inadequate shelter, gender inequality and environmental degradation in developing countries.

13. How can business contribute to the MDGs?

Private sector-led economic growth and wealth creation is essential for the achievement of the MDGs. Business, as an engine of growth and development, has the potential to have a huge impact on improving the lives of people in developing countries through increasing investment, creating jobs, building skills, and developing goods, technologies and innovations which can make people’s lives better.

Inclusive Business:

14. What are Inclusive Business models?

Inclusive Business models are sustainable business solutions that expand access to goods, services, and livelihood opportunities for low-income communities. Inclusive Business models harness the core competencies of business to respond directly to the needs of poor consumers or to build productive beneficial linkages with poor producers. By focusing on commercial viability, these models have a demonstrated inherent capacity to be scaled to engage thousands, and increasingly millions, of people in low-income communities.

15. How is Inclusive Business different than Corporate Social Responsibility?

Inclusive business models differ from philanthropic or corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in that they engage the core business of the company with a view to supporting or growing the business in a commercially viable manner.

The growing interest in inclusive business models reflects widespread recognition that the most effective way for business to contribute to the MDGs is by leveraging its core business assets and capabilities to deliver sustainable and transformative change in developing countries.

16. How do companies develop Inclusive Business models?

To learn more about developing Inclusive Business models, please refer to “Selected Resources” on the BCtA Website.