



AKAZI KANOZE ACCESS STRATEGIC PLAN (2022 – 2026)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AKA: Akazi Kanoze Access

BDF: Business Development Fund

BYOB: Be Your Own Boss

CSOs: Civil Society Organizations

EDC: Education Development Center Inc.

EICV: Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey

GIZ: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit

GoR: Government of Rwanda

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

IGAs: Income Generating Activities

MIFOTRA: Ministry of Public Service and Labour

MINICT: Ministry of ICT and Innovation

MYCULTURE: Ministry of Youth and Culture

M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation

NEET: Neither in Employment nor in Education or Training

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations

NISR: National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda

PSDYES: Private Sector Development and Youth Employment Strategy

PSF: Private Sector Federation

PWDs: Persons with Disabilities

RDB: Rwanda Development Board

RPHC: Rwanda Population and Housing Census

RTB: Rwanda TVET Board

SDF: Skills Development Fund

SLAs: Savings and Lending Associations

SMEs: Small and Medium Enterprises

SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

TVET: Technical and Vocation Education and Training

UNHCR: Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

WDA: Workforce Development Authority

WEF: World Economic Forum

WR: Work Readiness

WRC: Work Readiness Curriculum

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current strategic plan will guide AKA's actions and interventions for the next 5 years (2022-2026). It builds on the achievements and lessons learnt from the previous strategic plan and endeavors to address the identified weaknesses, maximizing the current and near future opportunities while putting in place strategies to mitigate existing and potential threats for the organization.

The strategic plan is an outcome of an extensive consultation, both internal within AKA (staff and its organs) and with inputs from partners and stakeholders (state and non-state actors). The strategic plan development process also benefitted from the existing rich information, both from within AKA, its partners, and from the state institutions, on youth employment and economic empowerment.

Deriving from the organization's vision itself, the overall goal of this strategic plan is to "Improved youth well-being through employability skills and support services". This overall goal will be attained through the realization of 4 strategic goals (objectives): 1) Reinforce employability of Rwandan youth; 2) Support access to finance, increased productivity and effectiveness of youth entrepreneurs; 3) Strengthen partnerships, and advocate for youth friendly policies and programs; and 4) Improve AKA institutional capacity and ensure sustainability. Different strategies and actions have also been identified that will lead to the achievement of these 4 strategic goals.

The current strategic plan capitalize on AKA's key strengths and comparative advantages including the organization's brand "*Akazi Kanoze*"; the organization's reputation and well-recognized technical capacity and competence in delivering employability knowledge and skills; the technical expertise in materials development; being a pioneer local organization to deliver life/employability skills training at such a high calibre; strong field experience including partners' management, capacity building, and follow up; and the good working relations with partners and stakeholders, including local administration authorities.

The current strategic plan will benefit both educated and uneducated (dropout) youth, graduates and still-in school youth, rural and urban youth, as well as youth in emergence situations (refugees, etc). A total of 20,000 youth is targeted during the 5 years of the current strategic plan. The focus will be on youth who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET), who currently makes up 33.0% (around 1.1 million) of the youths aged 16 and 30 years old¹. Despite the previous strategic plan, current plan ensures that the youth will be empowered will a full package of knowledge and skills (life/employability, technical, digital, and language skills) that increases their chances of getting or creating jobs.

To diversify its funding sources and ensure sustainability, AKA will be very proactive and propositional in resource mobilization. In this regard, AKA will nurture existing partnerships and actively strive to build new ones. AKA will intentionally invest in building and strengthening its resource mobilization capabilities and to raise its visibility as an organization.

¹ National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), Labour Force Survey Trends, November 2021, p. 36, [file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/LFS_NOVEMBER%202021\(Q4\)_FINAL%20REPORT.pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/LFS_NOVEMBER%202021(Q4)_FINAL%20REPORT.pdf)

More follow up and engagement of the AKA training and support services of beneficiaries (alumni) will be done to document the change brought about by AKA support, but also in the framework of continuous provision of accompaniment, coaching, mentorship, and linkages services and support. A digital tool will be developed to facilitate this real time follow up and support services.

To ensure the effective implementation of the current strategic plan, AKA will revise its staff structure, reinforce its internal systems, and continuously strengthen the capacities of its staff and organs.

The estimated total budget required to implement the current 5-year strategic plan is **12,035,125,000** Rwanda francs (USD **11,730,141**).

II. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This section provides the background information of the current strategic plan, introduces *Akazi Kanoze Access* (AKA) and elaborates on the context in which AKA works.

II.1. Introduction

The current AKA strategic plan covers the period from 2022 – 2026/27 and targets both in-school and out-of-school youth. AKA programs will target youth both from the rural and urban areas, and with varying levels of education: from primary and secondary dropouts, primary and secondary school leavers, to students and graduates from TVET schools and universities. The youth undergoing rehabilitation in rehabilitation centers such as *Iwawa* will also benefit from AKA training programs (Work Readiness & Be Your Own Boss, Entrepreneurship skills, and other products/programs), in addition to the practical skills training that they will gain from the centers.

Graduates from AKA training program will also benefit from other AKA support services (depending on the expressed needs), including internship programs, as well as linkages with employers and/or financing institutions, to enable the trained youth access jobs or start their own businesses.

II.2. About Akazi Kanoze Access

Akazi Kanoze Access (AKA) is a Rwandan non-profit, non-governmental organization that seeks to provide youth with market-relevant livelihood skills, work readiness training and support, hands-on training opportunities, and linkages to the employment, self-employment job market, access to capital and other support services to take advantage of economic opportunities.

AKA was created in 2015 as a sustainability initiative from the *AKAZI KANOZE: Youth Livelihoods Development* project implemented by Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) and funded by USAID.

Since its creation, AKA has been engaged in various programs which include employability skills, access to capital and productive means, access to market, advocacy, and various other interventions relative to youth empowerment.

AKA's current partners include USAID, EDC, Mastercard Foundation, Plan International, Educate, GIZ, YouMatch, Save the Children, and futurefirstglobal.

AKA has a strong governance and accountability structure. The overall management of the organization is overseen by the Board, which also reports to the General Assembly.

III. CONTEXT

According to the RPHC4, about 75% the total population, which is estimated at 12,955,768 inhabitants in 2021, is aged 35 years and below². Youth are defined as the population aged 16-30 years and they make up 27.9% of the total population (3,618,143 inhabitants), of whom 50.9% females and 49.1% males³. About 72.8% of youth live in rural areas against only 27.2% living in urban areas.

Official figures also indicate that as of November 2021, the unemployment rate in Rwanda was at 23.8% (equating to 1,135,637 people)⁴. Statistics also indicate that 53.8% of those unemployed are aged from 16 to 44 years old. Figures also indicate that unemployment among the youth (16-30 years old) was higher (29.8%) than among adults (19.3%). Further, statistics indicate that 33.0% of the youths aged 16 and 30 years old, are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET)⁵. Also, statistics indicate that 56.8% of Rwanda's labour force is underutilized⁶. The rate of underutilization is higher among the youth (60.9%) than in adults (53.6%)⁷. This means that most working youth are not employed to their full potential but in precarious jobs.

Despite the current figure of 21.8%⁸, the Government of Rwanda's target is to keep unemployment in the urban areas below 5% between 2035 and 2050⁹, whereas at the national level the target is to reduce unemployment to a rate of 7% by 2035¹⁰. This requires a lot of investments in job creation and in empowering community members, particularly the youths, with the right skills needed at the labour market, and the support needed to create their own jobs. Unemployment is also leading to increased number of workforce migration. The Fifth Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey indicates that 51.2% of the youth who migrated between 2011 to 2016, moved due to work reasons¹¹.

Like other national strategic documents, the Revised National Employment Policy acknowledges the problem of skills gaps that exists both in the formal and informal economies

² NISR, Thematic Report: Population Projections, <https://www.statistics.gov.rw/publication/rphc4-population-projections>

³ *Idem*

⁴ National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), Labour Force Survey Trends, November 2021, p. 33, [file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/LFS_NOVEMBER%202021\(Q4\)_FINAL%20REPORT.pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/LFS_NOVEMBER%202021(Q4)_FINAL%20REPORT.pdf)

⁵ National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), Labour Force Survey Trends, November 2021, p. 36, [file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/LFS_NOVEMBER%202021\(Q4\)_FINAL%20REPORT.pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/LFS_NOVEMBER%202021(Q4)_FINAL%20REPORT.pdf)

⁶ Labour underutilization includes unemployment, time-related underemployment and potential labour force. Time-related underemployment refers to the situation when the working time of persons in employment is insufficient in relation to alternative employment situations in which they are willing and available to engage. Potential labour force is defined as all persons of working age outside the labour force who, during the reference period, were neither in employment nor in unemployment but who were considered as either (a) *unavailable jobseekers* (seeking employment but not currently available) or (b) *available potential jobseekers* (currently available for employment but did not carry out activities to seek employment).

⁷ National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), Labour Force Survey Trends, November 2021, p. 38, [file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/LFS_NOVEMBER%202021\(Q4\)_FINAL%20REPORT.pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/LFS_NOVEMBER%202021(Q4)_FINAL%20REPORT.pdf)

⁸ National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), Labour Force Survey Trends, November 2021, p. 34, [file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/LFS_NOVEMBER%202021\(Q4\)_FINAL%20REPORT.pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/LFS_NOVEMBER%202021(Q4)_FINAL%20REPORT.pdf)

⁹ Republic of Rwanda, Vision 2050, p.29.

¹⁰ Republic of Rwanda, Vision 2050, p.43.

¹¹ NISR, The Fifth Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV5 2016/2017), p.31, <https://www.statistics.gov.rw/publication/eicv5thematic-reportyouth>

and which constitute a major barrier to gainful employment and in the transition from informal to formal work¹². The issue of limited skills has also been highlighted in different other national planning documents as well as reports by other stakeholders. For example, in The Global Competitiveness Report (2019) Rwanda scored only 40.1% under the skills' pillar, and ranked 128th out of 141 globally¹³. Skills development and improved access to training is, therefore, a key element to improve competitiveness on the labor market and raise labour productivity in all sectors.

However, youth unemployment is not only a result of the lack of or limited skills, but other issues also factor in such as access to capital, the small labour market (limited job opportunities, especially in the formal sector), and the attitude of some youth towards certain jobs.

As provided for in the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1: 2017-2024), the Government target and commitment is to create over 214,000 decent and productive jobs per year¹⁴. Some of the identified strategic interventions in the NST1 to enable the realization of the Government commitment, are to “support and empower youth and women to create business through *entrepreneurship* and access to finance”, and to “scale up the number of TVET graduates with skills relevant to the labor market”¹⁵.

In regard to the above commitments and in an effort to achieve the set targets, the GoR has put in place different policies, laws/regulations, and institutional frameworks, as well as programs that promote and support job creation, aimed to empower the youths and other community members with the necessary skills at the job market, and that support labor mobility.

Some of the policies and strategies put in place include the Revised National Employment Policy (2019), the National Labour Mobility Policy (2019), the Entrepreneurship Development Policy (2020), the National Skills Development and Employment Promotion Strategy (2019-2024), the Private Sector Development and Youth Employment Strategy (PSDYES 2018-2024), the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy in Rwanda (2008), the National Workplace Learning Policy (2015) and Implementation Guidelines (2021), the Rwanda Trade Policy (2010), the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Development Policy (2010), the National Industrial Policy (2011), the Made in Rwanda Policy (2017), the Financial Sector Development Strategic Plan (2018-2024), among others.

With the overall mission of strengthening and promoting the creation of productive jobs for all and a conducive environment for employment, some of the objectives of the Revised National Employment Policy include “To enhance employable skills and competence for all”, as well as “To promote entrepreneurship and access to finance for youth, women and PWDs”¹⁶. The

¹² Ministry of Public Service and Labor, Revised National Employment Policy, 2019, p.13.

¹³ World Economic Forum (WEF), The Global Competitiveness Report, 2019, p.488, https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf

¹⁴ Republic of Rwanda, 7 Years Government Programme: National Strategy for Transformation (NST1: 2017-2024), p.3

¹⁵ Republic of Rwanda, 7 Years Government Programme: National Strategy for Transformation (NST1: 2017-2024), p.3

¹⁶ Ministry of Public Service and Labor, Revised National Employment Policy, 2019, p.5.

Revised National Employment Policy 2019 recognises the critical linkage between education, skills development, and labour market needs.

The GoR has also established employment service centres to match job seekers with employers on available jobs as well as to improve the employability of jobseekers. A number of centers have so far been established including in Kigali, Musanze, and Huye. Also, the GoR, through RDB, introduced in 2009 the National Professional Internship Program with the aim of equipping interns with practical skills that are required to facilitate the transition from school to the labour market. More specifically, the program aims at reinforcing the Rwandan graduates' practical capacity by linking theoretical skills to the practice. It also sought to provide Rwandan graduates with opportunities to gain valuable experience that increase their chances for employment¹⁷. Interns are placed in public, private and civil society institutions related to their area of study for a period of 6 months. To continue supporting job seekers to get jobs, through linking them with employers and providing the necessary information on available opportunities, empowering the unemployed to start small businesses and create jobs, through facilitating them to develop sound business plans as well as linking them with the finance institutions and the guarantee fund, the GoR has put in place a Business Development and Employment Promotion Officer in all the 30 at the districts of the country.

Further, to deal with the problem of skills gap the GoR, in partnership with its development partners, has put in place the Skills Development Fund (SDF) whose main objective is to minimize the skills gap experienced by private business operators by rapidly increasing the supply of skills in high demand in the labour market and to ease the entry of new entrants to the labour market by providing them with the labour market-relevant skills¹⁸. Further, the GoR also established the Business Development Fund (BDF) with the objective of assisting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to access finance, particularly those without sufficient collateral to obtain credit from traditional financial institutions at reasonable rates¹⁹.

It should, however, be noted that despite the visible efforts of the GoR to address the skills gap, unemployment, and underemployment problems, there is still a long way to go, and more efforts are still needed from all stakeholders to address these issues. Career guidance, mentorship, and skills' development are some of the areas identified by the GoR to collaborate around with stakeholders to build an able and transformed workforce²⁰. The AKA's mission is directly linked to this GoR's priority and a clear need for most of Rwanda's workforce.

¹⁷ Rwanda Development Board, National Professional Internship Program, <https://kora.rw/internship/>

¹⁸ <https://sdf.rw/newsite/>

¹⁹ <https://www.bdf.rw/bdfeng/bdf-background/>

²⁰ Republic of Rwanda, Vision 2050, p.14.

IV. METHODOLOGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The methodology to develop the current strategic plan involved different stages and methods. Below are the key elements of the methodology used to develop this strategic plan:

Preliminary meeting with the AKA management: This meeting served to agree on the final methodology to use in the development of the strategic plan, the roadmap of activities, and the list of key partners and stakeholders to consult, as well as the identification of key documents to share with the consultant in the development of the current strategic plan.

Consultations with the AKA leadership and staff: Comprehensive consultations were held with the AKA leadership, through consultative meetings with Board Members and a strategic planning session/workshop with all staff, both technical and support staff, headquarter-based and field staff. Prior to the strategic planning session, each staff had been provided with the tool to submit their individual inputs on all aspects of the organizational setting (governance, operation, human resource, etc) and on the implementation of the previous strategic plan (including the lessons learnt, challenges, partners and stakeholders' relations, staff capacity development, their suggestion on the focus this new strategic, among others).

Partners and stakeholders' consultation: Extensive consultations were held with AKA partners and stakeholders in the development of the current strategic plan. Both public and private (including CSOs) partners/stakeholders were consulted during this process. A total of 20 partner and stakeholder institutions/organizations were consulted, including the Ministry of Public Service and Labour (MIFOTRA), the Ministry of Youth and Culture (MYCULTURE), and the Rwanda TVET Board (RTB). A full list of institutions consulted is attached to this strategic plan document, as annex I.

Documentation review: A comprehensive review of existing documentation (both AKA internal documents – governing documents and reports, and other relevant external documentations including policies, laws, program documents, government and stakeholders' reports, etc) was carried out. Some of the documents reviewed include the AKA constitution, the different policies and procedures manuals, the institutional and project reports, among others. Further, external documentation was also reviewed including national policies and strategies such as Revised National Employment Policy (2019), the National Labour Mobility Policy (2019), the Entrepreneurship Development Policy (2020), the National Skills Development and Employment Promotion Strategy (2019-2024), the Private Sector Development and Youth Employment Strategy (PSDYES 2018-2024), the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy in Rwanda (2008), the National Workplace Learning Policy (2015) and Implementation Guidelines (2021), the Rwanda Trade Policy (2010), the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Development Policy (2010), the National Industrial Policy (2011), the Made in Rwanda Policy (2017), and the Financial Sector Development Strategic Plan (2018-2024). Partners and stakeholders' reports were also reviewed including the Labor Force Survey Trends, and the Skills Gap Surveys.

Situational analysis: An in-depth situational analysis was conducted to both assess the implementation of the previous strategic plan, lessons learnt, and challenges, as well as to carry out a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of the organization. Outcomes from the situational analysis are elaborated in the section below.

Quality assurance and review meetings: Quality assurance and review meetings were held to ensure the integration of technical comments into the strategic plan for finalization.

V. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

This section briefly talks about the outcomes from the review of the implementation of the previous strategic plan, presents the SWOT analysis, and also highlight the identified challenges that the youth face in terms employment and economic empowerment.

V.1. Review of the 2015-2020 AKA Strategic Plan

The AKA Strategic plan 2015-2020 had 4 priority areas: 1) Employability skills development and transition to work services; 2) Access to capital; 3) Market access support; and 4) Advocacy. The 4 priority areas were the bedrocks of the 5 strategic goals that AKA intended to achieve under its 2015-2020 strategic plan: 1) Increase the number of employable Rwandan youth; 2) Increase the number, quality, and effectiveness of youth entrepreneurs; 3) Increase the number of Rwandan youths accessing capital and other productive capacity; 4) Advocate for youth friendly policies and programs; 5) Build AKA institutional capacity to reach its goals.

Below are some of AKA's key achievements under the previous strategic plan:

To reinforce the employability skills of Rwandan youth, AKA with its partners have been able to train **44,860** youth on the Work Readiness curriculum. Also, refresher training sessions on the Work Readiness Curriculum were conducted for **470** individuals. Further, **1,600** youth were trained in entrepreneurship skills. Whereas **1,200** youth were trained on loans management skills. The trained youths included those from rural and urban areas, university graduates as well as those who had completed secondary school level or those who attained the lower secondary level.

In addition, AKA with its partners conducted a training of trainers on the Work Readiness Curriculum (WRC) for **544** individuals, whereas **200** individuals were trained as trainers in entrepreneurship. AKA also maintains a database of master trainers, who leads AKA trainings and participates in the development of training materials.

Follow up, coaching, and mentoring was also done together with other support services whereby **2,000** youth were facilitated to create youth saving groups, **1,594** youth supported to open bank accounts, **300** youth were linked to financial institutions, **100** youth provided with start-up kits, **100** youth entrepreneurs linked with input suppliers, among other support services provided.

To allow the wider reach of AKA capacity building materials, through tapping into the advancements in the ICT, as well as promoting the use of ICT in the AKA activities, the Work Readiness (WR) and Be Your Own Boss (BYOB) modules content was digitalized to facilitate

the e-learning, and the audio program for these training modules were posted on the AKA website and is open for members of the public to access.

As the intended outcome of the AKA interventions is to enable the trained youth to acquire jobs and/or to start their own businesses, **17,498** who enrolled in the AKA training and support programs managed to get jobs or started their own small businesses that generate income for them.

In terms of strengthening the internal systems, AKA put in place the policies and procedures manual, which guides the general operations of the organization, and it includes sections on human resource, procurement, inventories management, office management, financial management, information and communications technology, marketing and branding, as well as on monitoring and evaluation.

The review also highlighted some of the key challenges AKA faced in the implementation of the previous strategy, including:

- Limited funding, partly due to the overreliance on a single/main partner (EDC) and the limited internal fundraising capacities. AKA was only able to raise 42.8% of the estimated budget for the implementation of its strategic plan;
- Limited staff, particularly on the field, due the limited budget;
- Lack of field/outreach offices;
- Limited engagement of the staff on the implementation of the strategic plan, including limited opportunities to reflect and learn from the experience;
- The COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the cessation of the organization's activities;
- Interventions and initiatives mostly being projects-based, and not necessarily being guided by the strategic plan.

The key lessons learnt from the implementation of the previous strategic plan on which the current strategic plan will build:

- ❖ Diversify the AKA donor/partnership base;
- ❖ Increased focus on the technical skills and the integration of digital skills training into AKA trainings to ensure the provision of a full package to the trained youths;
- ❖ Increased post-training follow up and support to the trained youth to ensure that the intended outcome of enabling them to acquire jobs or start their own businesses is achieved;
- ❖ Strengthened internal monitoring and data management systems;
- ❖ Increased visibility as an organization (and not as a project).

In implementing the current strategic plan, AKA should also leverage on its comparative advantage and competencies in the area it intervenes in. Below are highlighted key AKA's comparative advantages and competencies:

- ❖ Well-recognized competency in the delivery of employability skills training;
- ❖ The *Akazi Kanoze* brand which is very well-known among both public and private sector stakeholders;

- ❖ Competency in the development of quality and tailored training curriculums and manuals on employability skills;
- ❖ Being the pioneer local organization to deliver life/employability skills training at such a calibre;
- ❖ The reputation of working with big donors and partners, and being able to effectively deliver on the commitments;
- ❖ Very good working relations with relevant central government institutions, and local administration authorities;
- ❖ Having well-trained, experienced, and competent staff;
- ❖ The relevancy of AKA's program and interventions; focusing on youth employment, which a national and a global concern and priority;
- ❖ Strong field experience, including partners management, monitoring, and follow up as well as working with field stakeholders such as the youth (employment) centers, Business Development and Employment Promotion Unit at the district, etc.

V.2. SWOT Analysis

This section indicates the strengths and weaknesses of Akazi Kanoze Access (internal environment) as well as the opportunities and threats linked to the external environment.

INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The <i>Akazi Kanoze</i> brand and reputation; ❖ Technical expertise: Competent and experienced staff in delivering employability and entrepreneurial skills training; ❖ Quality products: training modules/courses; ❖ Relevancy of AKA's mission and programs/interventions; ❖ Clear understanding of the context and the issues at hand; ❖ Strong ability in partners management, field monitoring, and follow up; ❖ Ability to manage field activities and engage with stakeholders at the local administration level; ❖ Clear and strong institutional structures (the presence of independent board members, based on their expertise); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Overdependence on their main partner – EDC; ❖ Limited diversity in fundraising (not being proactive in fundraising); ❖ The lack of a comprehensive internal, data management system; ❖ Dependence on the projects, most of which are short-term; ❖ Lack of a strong resources mobilization strategy; ❖ Limited exploitation of AKA products and expertise; ❖ Limited intentional efforts to market and raise the visibility of the organization's achievements (limited marketing strategies); ❖ Limited follow up activities for the graduates from AKA training program; ❖ Staff feeling and behaving more as project staff than institutional staff (the tendency to act or behave as if they are employees of the prime

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The strong teamworking spirit and passion among the staff; ❖ Being linked to a well-established and very experienced organization – EDC; ❖ Partnership with reputable organizations/funders such as USAID, and Mastercard Foundation; ❖ The co-signing of AKA training certificates between AKA and WDA/RTB ❖ Having working relations with a big network of organizations working on youth, as a result of being the monitoring and supervisory organization of the EDC implementing partner organizations. 	<p>contract than of AKA - a subcontract);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Lack of independent investments as means to generate secure financial resources for the organization; ❖ The lack of copyright or formal license by AKA on most of the materials the organization use in training (still owned by EDC); ❖ Limited focus on advocacy (regarding the challenges and impediments youth face in accessing employment and/or becoming entrepreneurs).
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EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The high demand for AKA services (majority of Rwandans are youth, and need employability and entrepreneurship skills); ❖ Employment promotion and job creation being among the top priorities of the GoR under the NST1; ❖ The Existing national policies on youth employment and economic empowerment; ❖ Youth and women empowerment being a cross-cutting area in most donors' country program(s); ❖ The shift in donors funding strategy (prioritizing local implementors); ❖ The existences of several partners in the youth and education sectors; ❖ The possibility of partnerships with big and experimented organizations/companies to improve competitiveness; ❖ The strategy of most donors to prioritize funding of consortiums, instead of a single organization. This 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The gradual reduction of donor funding in Rwanda (donors shifting the attention to countries still in conflicts or the just came out of conflict); ❖ Increased competition in fundraising locally; ❖ Public health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and other shocks; ❖ Losing experienced staff to new market entrants; ❖ Limited ownership of some local leaders of the issues facing the youth.
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<p>provides an opportunity for more organizations, including AKA, to participate in funding opportunities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Advancement in ICT within the country (ICT opportunities); ❖ The existing good relations with government institutions, including the local administration; ❖ The existing forums to which AKA participants, including forums with donors and high government officials; ❖ Stakeholders' recognition and appreciation of AKA's skills and competencies in the area of employability skills development; ❖ Existence of youth centers in all the 30 districts of the country, through which AKA can engage the youth; ❖ Social media give an unprecedented opportunity for increasing the visibility and outreach, especially among the youth. 	
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V.3. Challenges facing the Youth

Consultations with the youth during the development of this strategic plan, highlighted the following challenges that the youth still face in terms of employment and economic empowerment:

- Limited skills to compete at the labor market (lack of market relevant skills), including the hands-on skills;
- Lack of or limited access to financial capital, due to the lack of collateral and other impediments;
- Lack of or limited knowledge and skills in the preparation of good project/business proposals (for loan and/or grant requests) as well as in business/project and grant management;
- Lack of or limited work experience;
- Limited job opportunities;
- Lack of information or limited awareness of the available opportunities (jobs, internships, trainings, etc);
- Lack of tax incentives for youth entrepreneurship start-ups;
- Attitude by some youth to denigrate some jobs, particularly those in the informal sector, the agricultural sector, etc;

- Laziness among some youths; lacking the spirit to make a true effort and maximize their full potential in terms of grabbing existing and potential opportunities;
- Fear to undertake new adventures, including looking for job opportunities outside the country (lack of a daring spirit);
- Limited access to technical training;
- Lack of or limited digital literacy and tools, and hence unable to access and benefit from the digital job opportunities, as well as doing other online searches for different opportunities (jobs, trainings, grants, etc);
- Limited career guidance, mentorship, and professional internship programs;
- Lack of or limited innovation and creativity among most youth;
- Lack of or limited confidence, probably due to the lack of or limited knowledge and skills mentioned above and/or limited career guidance and mentorship;

Youth with disabilities are particularly affected by the above-mentioned challenges due to the limited inclusion of programs and initiatives.

VI. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

This section provides the vision and mission of the organization, from which the overall goal of the current strategic plan is derived, and describes the values of that guide AKA's leadership and staff in all their actions, decisions, and interventions. This section also presents our theory of change for the current strategic plan, the strategic goals, relevant strategies that were identified to enable AKA achieve its goals, and then the results chain.

Vision

AKA's vision is to be a leading Organization contributing to youth well-being through employability skills and support services.

Mission

AKA's mission is to provide youth with employability skills, access to capital, and other support services to take advantage of economic opportunities.

Values

AKA is guided by the following values: 1) Integrity; 2) Excellence; 3) Professionalism; and 4) Innovation. Below is an elaboration of our value.

Integrity: is the possession and steadfast adherence to high ethical standards and principles, while striving to be transparent in our operations. We do not tolerate unethical behavior; we challenge it as a matter of personal responsibility, regardless of our position in AKA. We do the right thing, always. We appropriately question actions inconsistent with our core values. We make honesty and transparency the foundation for all actions. We are accountable at all levels.

Excellence: as achieving a high standard of accountability for our work in delivery, measuring, and reporting. We strive to achieve excellent results. We recognize achievement and reward high performance. We respond rapidly with high energy and resilience to the needs and expectations of our stakeholders. We promote teamwork and work together to promote AKA

values and mission. We take pride in producing high-quality work and delivering exceptional service to internal and external customers.

Professionalism: is the commitment to meeting AKA’s obligations to provide impactful services to stakeholders, and to positively influence the Rwandan community and building mutual trust among AKA and its stakeholders. We exercise high levels of professionalism in our work and reward merit. We work collaboratively towards our common goal of serving Rwandan youth regardless of individual roles or functions and apply the same ethos with our partners. We share our knowledge of best practices with colleagues at all levels to enhance the quality of AKA services.

Innovation: is continuing to pioneer ground-breaking programs to empower Rwandans to take advantage of economic opportunities. AKA is driven by continual improvement. We find new ways to make things better. We optimize results by working smarter. We are empowered to take risks, learn and grow. We learn from our failures and our successes.

AKA’s training and support services will benefit both educated and uneducated (dropout) youth, graduates and still-in school youth, rural and urban youth, as well as youth in emergency situations (particularly those in refugee camps). However, the main focus will be on youth who are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET), who currently makes up 33.0% (around 1.1 million) of the youths aged 16 and 30 years old²¹.

VI.1. Strategic Objectives

The identified 4 goals of the current strategic plan and the 15 strategic actions are oriented toward our Vision: Improved youth well-being through Employability skills and support services.

The following are the goals and strategic actions with additional clarification on interventions included in each of them:

Goal #1: Reinforce employability of Rwandan youth

Employability skills’ gap is still prevalent among the Rwandan youth, both uneducated/school dropouts and educated (university and TVET graduates)²². For the graduates, evidence indicates that there is still some mismatch between the skills acquired from schools/colleges and the required skills on the labor market, both life/employability and technical skills. As per the 2019 Global Competitiveness Report, the skillset of Rwandan graduates scored only 46.1% and Rwanda was ranked 94th out of the 141 globally; the quality of vocational training scored 50.4%, with Rwanda ranking 77th globally; whereas the digital skills among active population scored 49.4% and Rwanda ranked 84th globally²³. Further, evidence has also indicated that

²¹ National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR), Labour Force Survey Trends, November 2021, p. 36, [file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/LFS_NOVEMBER%202021\(Q4\)_FINAL%20REPORT.pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/LFS_NOVEMBER%202021(Q4)_FINAL%20REPORT.pdf)

²² National Skills Development and Employment Promotion Strategy (2019-2024). See also World Economic Forum (WEF), The Global Competitiveness Report, 2019, p.488, https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf

²³ World Economic Forum (WEF), The Global Competitiveness Report, 2019, p.488, https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf

majority of both the educated and uneducated youth or those who dropped along the way, lack the necessary skills and knowledge to start, manage, and grow their own businesses. AKA will contribute to addressing these skills and knowledge challenges through implementing the 4 following strategic actions:

Strategy #1: Train youth in life/employability, Entrepreneurship, technical, and digital skills

In the previous strategic plan, AKA mainly focused on life/employability skills, particularly by delivering the Work Readiness, Saving and loans management, and Entrepreneurship training. AKA will continue to deliver these trainings and broaden them to include other AKA training products such as School to Work Transition, Advanced Entrepreneurship, GROW (your business), Work-based Learning, among others. AKA has been partnering with a few TVET schools while supporting technical training, but considering the expressed needs, AKA will reinforce its interventions in this area by intentionally blending its life/employability skills training with technical skills as much as possible. In this regard, AKA will partner with more TVET schools/centers and youth rehabilitation centers to offer a full package of skills to students and youth under rehabilitation. This will also broaden the graduates base of opportunities. Under this partnership, AKA will work with the relevant TVET schools and reach out to companies, industries, workshops, and other stakeholders to facilitate the youth in TVET schools to benefit from the dual training program (theoretical and industrial attachment/training program)²⁴. Further, the requirement of some basic ICT skills to access some jobs as well as the availability of job opportunities online (including digital jobs) have highlighted the need to train the youth on digital skills, either to be able to use these skills in looking for and delivering on their jobs, but also to benefit from digital jobs opportunities (job searched online, done online, submitted online, and paid online). Despite the ever-increasing opportunities online, assessments indicated that less than 5% of unemployed Rwandans have used online tools to seek employment²⁵. Digital skills training will also be part of the AKA training package. To improve their ability to engage with (potential) employers, the business community, and/or clients, AKA beneficiaries will also be trained on communication and engagement skills. Further, depending on the level of education and the expressed interest in terms of career, AKA will train some beneficiaries on basic and/or professional English and provide them with the necessary materials for further learning. With the combination of life/employability, technical, digital skills, and language skills, as well as accompaniment and support services we believe the intended outcome of enabling youth access jobs or creating their own jobs will be realized. To facilitate access and to make the trainings more practical, AKA will partner with institutions to carry out workplace-based training to strengthen the skills of the youth at work.

In addition to general trainings, AKA will provide tailored and refresher training that are specific to the kind of business(es)/initiatives the concerned youth beneficiaries are

²⁴ A program that combines practical training in companies (training on the job), and theoretical, yet practice-oriented lessons in TVET schools. Putting into practice the theories they learnt in class improves the students/graduates' relevance in the job market.

²⁵ National Skills Development and Employment Promotion Strategy (2019-2024), p.68.

managing/engaged in. They may include cooperative/company management skills, tax awareness, supply chain of related products, packaging/branding, etc. Further, and considering AKA's well-recognized capacity in materials development and in life/employability skills training, AKA will also invest in and position itself as a "Training of Trainers" and "Training Materials Development" organization. Some civil society organizations, private sector institutions, as well as government partners such as the Rwanda TVET Board have expressed the need for AKA to train and empower their staff (including teachers/training facilitators) with the life/employability skills necessary for the youth to access and better execute their jobs and/or become competent entrepreneurs. AKA will engage these different partners and stakeholders', map out their needs and interest, and develop tailored training curriculums and manuals. Further, AKA can help to improve and standardize existing training materials of different CSOs and other stakeholders. In addition to sharing the knowledge, expanding the base of competent facilitators on employability and entrepreneurship skills and hence widening the reach of this skills development and youth empowerment program, AKA will also make money from these institutional capacity building services. This, however, requires AKA to do a comprehensive market assessment, package well its services/products, ensure that its business model is flexible and accommodative of the needs of different partners/stakeholders, and that prices are fair.

Strategy #2: Providing transition to work services such as facilitation to access internship and job opportunities

AKA will set up a helpdesk or unit/center with staff in charge, to facilitate and link graduates from AKA training programs with employers, both for internship and job opportunities. Actions under this strategy will also involve creating an online platform of AKA training graduates (including their bios) which would, among others, help to link graduates with (potential) employers or institutions/organizations that need interns and/or job candidates. AKA would promote the awareness and visibility of this platform among the public, particularly the employers so that they can visit it and probably contact the preferred candidate(s) directly. The staff in charge would also be able to share with the AKA graduates through the online platform, as well as on other engagement platforms such as WhatsApp that would be created, job and internship opportunities as well as grant opportunities so that the trained youth can apply for these opportunities. To effectively provide this support, AKA will carry out sector-based market opportunities assessment and mapping and the information will be shared with training participants as well as graduates from AKA training programs.

Strategy # 3: Encourage mindset change among university graduates for self-employment and on some jobs

Some university graduates still think that technical training is meant for those who were unable to reach university and that some jobs, particularly in the informal sector are meant for the school dropouts. Considering the shrinking opportunities in the white-collar jobs and the increasing opportunities for technical work, which is even the government priority, AKA will engage and sensitize the youth, particularly university graduates, on mindset change in this regard. This could involve working with universities/schools for awareness raising, organizing visits for university students to technical training centers for engagement and motivation,

supporting to link university graduates with technical schools/centers, facilitate university graduates that have undergone technical training to access internship and job opportunities, document success stories for some university graduates that have undergone technical training program and were able to access jobs and/or start their own workshops and use these success stories in sensitization, mobilize resources and provide toolkits for university graduates that have undergone technical training, etc. The youth will also be educated and sensitized on how they can expand their horizons, for example through exploring and seizing digital job opportunities (jobs searched online, applied online, done online, and paid online); there are websites and portals dedicated for that.

Strategy # 4: Introduce AKA E-Learning program. Considering the experience from COVID-19 pandemic and the advancements in the ICT, AKA will explore the opportunities for E-learning/training. This will involve conducting a feasibility study of the E-learning tool/portal on AKA website and upload training modules for self-learning. The E-learning program, which will include the online evaluations, will lead to the automatic generation of the certificate at the completion of the training. Such E-learning program may be a source of income for AKA in the future (learners would be required to pay a reasonable cost to access these online training courses and certificates).

Goal # 2: Support access to finance, increased productivity, and effectiveness of youth entrepreneurs

Strategy #5: Facilitate access to capital. This strategy will involve identifying youth friendly financial institutions and mapping out the available and potential opportunities for the youth to access seed capital and sharing such information to AKA training participants and graduates through the different communication and engagement platforms that will have been created. Under this strategy, AKA will also facilitate the training graduates to create saving groups, as a means of raising their own capital. Further, the youth will be trained on writing good business plans and loans management skills and will be provided with the accompanying and coaching support. AKA will also help to link the trained youth with warranty funds (such as BDF).

Strategy #: 6: Provide equipment and/or start-up kits for youth IGAs. AKA will work with its partners and mobilize resource to be able to support the AKA graduates, specifically those from technical schools, with the necessary kits and equipment to start their own businesses or to join workshops in their different trades, and hence being able to generate income.

Strategy # 7: Provide accompaniment, mentorship, and coaching services: AKA will do follow-ups, accompany youth businesses, and provide relevant services including mentorship, coaching for effective business management and access to market support. This strategy will provide important and much needed ongoing organizational, confidence building, and technical support for AKA graduates for example in terms of supporting AKA graduates to form cooperatives and/or saving and lending clubs/groups, loan application and management, record keepings, market opportunities, (potential) clients engagement, work ethics and network building, packaging, branding, and marketing, tax compliance and filing, as well as supporting in the resolution of any other issues that come up in businesses. Under this strategy, AKA will conduct a satisfaction survey with employers (where Aka graduates are working) to learn about

their appreciation of the staff's life/employability skills and what they think should be improved/reinforced. This will also be an opportunity to get feedback from the graduates on how the acquired skills are being useful in their work, and what they think, based on the experience, should be improved in AKA curriculum and/or approaches.

Strategy #8: Strengthen engagement with the AKA training graduates (alumni). With the creation and continuous updating of the database/portal of the AKA graduates, AKA will establish an Alumni network of its graduates. The Alumni network will help graduates to know each other, network and share experiences and information on the existing and potential opportunities (in terms of jobs, internships, and/or further training). In this regard, AKA will organize events that bring together Alumni members. In addition to the networking opportunities and information sharing among the alumni members, such events could even be an opportunity for fundraising, either internally from AKA graduates who managed to get jobs and/or started their own businesses (as a give back to the organization in terms of supporting the continuation of AKA work/trainings for other youths), but also AKA could invite stakeholders and partners (including donors and potential donors) to these events where some graduates may give testimonies of the support provided by AKA, what they benefitted from this support, and how it has been useful to them. Such testimonies could be a motivation and an inspiration to other graduates that are still looking for opportunities, but also may be used as fundraising messages about the importance and usefulness of AKA's work/programs (in terms of change to the real lives of the youth) and hence justify the need for more funding to continue implementing such activities. But also, those events would help a lot in increasing the visibility of AKA among partners and stakeholders. AKA could also invite members of the media to talk to some alumni members. To begin with, a tracer survey will be conducted to learn about and document the employability and entrepreneurship status of AKA training program graduates; those who are employed; those who are self-employed, and those that are still looking for jobs.

Strategy #9: Create a Youth Micro-finance Institution: AKA should work with its partners and stakeholders to explore to create a Youth Micro-finance. This micro-finance institution would come in to complement the GoR efforts, and to help in mitigating one of the key challenge the youth face in accessing capital – the requirement to offer a collateral, as well as the cumbersome (and discouraging) procedures to access loans and/or grants from some financial institutions. The primary target in terms of membership for and beneficiaries of this initiative would be AKA graduates/alumni members, but later other youth would as well be able to access the support under this microfinance after the capability review and provision of the necessary support in terms of loan management and servicing. As indicated in the prior strategy, AKA would provide accompaniment and technical support to beneficiaries of funds/grant from this mechanism/institution. In consideration of the huge initial capital and set up conditions required for Microfinance institutions, it could start as a savings and credit cooperative (which might benefit from the financial support of AKA and other partners) and later grow into a micro-finance institution. Some of the key activities that should be undertaken under the current strategic plan to kickoff this initiative includes: a) conducting a feasibility study for this initiative/mechanism (including organizing brainstorming sessions with AKA leadership and staff); b) identify and make a study visit in a country where such initiative was

successfully established; and c) organize a session with alumni members to discuss about the initiative and to sensitize them to become members. With the success of such initiative, AKA can ultimately self-sustain its programs, as they also support the youth to overcome the challenge of lack of start-up capital.

Goal # 3: Strengthen partnerships, and advocate for youth friendly policies/programs

Strategy #10: Evidence-based advocacy. AKA will carry out advocacy for youth friendly policies and programs, through research, engagements, and awareness raising on issues facing youth in employment and economic empowerment. AKA will conduct research and analysis on the existing youth-related policies, laws and regulations, programs and their implementation. Based on the evidence generated, the organization will produce policy briefs (position papers), organize stakeholders engagement events to share and discuss the findings and the necessary actions to address the identified issues. AKA will be proactive in following up on youth-related policies and programs under development or review and to offer the organization's inputs in the process. Engagement events such as workshops to review and validate the research findings, and roundtable dialogues as well as participation in parliamentary debates on bills of law, will not only serve the advocacy purpose, but will also help in increasing the visibility of AKA among partners and stakeholders, and hence contribute to fundraising efforts.

Strategy #11: Build more partnerships and join relevant networks. AKA will strengthen its existing partnerships and build new partnerships, through engaging and where possible sign MoUs or partnership agreements with key partners, such as MIFOTRA, MYCULTURE, MINICT, RTB, BDF, RDB, specific TVET schools and Rehabilitation centers, UNHCR, among others. Having such MoUs smoothens the working relations but can also be a fundraising tool. AKA should also work to have a focal person in each of the key partner institutions or stakeholders. Further, to amplify its voice, especially for advocacy purposes, AKA should join networks and forums of CSOs with the similar mission and objectives, such as the Rwanda Youth Organizations Forum (RYOF). Also, AKA should follow up and be aware of the Parliamentary program/schedule so that they can participate in Parliamentary Standing Committee's discussion on any legal bills that relate to the youth, employment, and economic empowerment. To facilitate partnership building and engagement, AKA will carry out an assessment or a comprehensive mapping out of partners and key stakeholders in the sector they work in. Building such partnerships would even help in making referrals whenever necessary. Further, AKA must build strong working relations with the District Business Development and Employment Promotion Officer, the Education Officer as well as the Representative of the Private Sector Federation (PSF) at the districts to ensure smooth implementation of the activities and stakeholders' involvement at the local level.

Goal # 4: Improve AKA institutional capacity and ensure sustainability

Strategy #12: Strengthen internal systems and structure of AKA. The internal systems and structure of AKA will be improved through: 1) revising AKA's organigram to reinforce the organization's capacity to effectively achieve its mission and objectives; 2) putting in place some of the missing policies/strategies such as the resource mobilization and sustainability

strategy, communication strategy, gender mainstreaming and inclusion policy, whistleblowing policy, policy against sexual abuse, harassment, and exploitation policy, etc; 3) Strengthen AKA's monitoring and information management system, through building an independent and strong MIS system; and 4) Organize statutory and non-statutory meetings, as necessary, and ensure all staff are effectively engaged. More staff engagement will also be done to ensure their increased ownership of the organization.

Strategy #13.: Diversify AKA funding sources/resources base. To ensure its sustainability, AKA must devise and implement strategies aimed at increasing and diversifying the sources of its funding. Some of the actions that must be implemented under this strategy include developing a fundraising strategy, which would guide all the organization's efforts in this regard; putting in place a business development unit or a business development specialist, which would be particularly in charge of proposal writing and resource mobilization in general; map out potential partners/funders, both from within and outside the country; increased and strategic engagement of potential new partners/funders, through among others, using the strategic forums and networks that AKA participate in; organizing breakfast and reflection meetings with donors, and partners. AKA alumni members may be invited to give testimonies at such events. AKA should also explore the possibility of cost-sharing where for example training participants can be requested to pay 25% and then AKA covers the remaining 75%. The money paid by training participants would be used in the training other youth. However, for this to happen AKA would need to do more in marketing its program and services.

Strategy # 14: Establish AKA training center(s). A means of resource mobilization and ensuring the sustainability of the organization, AKA should mobilize resources and establish a training center. Considering that the law governing NGOs in Rwanda allows the former to carry out income generating activities whereby the generated incomes come back to support the organization's mission and activities, the established training center would be managed by a private independent legal entity set up by AKA. The center would be used in conducting AKA trainings, but it would also host trainings and events from other organizations/institutions upon payment. The first center would be built in Kigali, and with the availability of funding regional centers would also be built in the 4 provinces of the country. Some of the initial activities that should be undertaken under the current strategic plan towards the establishment of this center include: a) conducting a feasibility study for the establishment of this center (including organizing brainstorming sessions with AKA leadership and staff); and b) identify and make a study visit in organizations where such centers were successfully established.

Strategy # 15: Increase the organization's visibility and outreach. AKA will develop a comprehensive communication and visibility strategy; support the work of the communication's officer; develop and disseminate AKA success stories (including preparing a documentary film and short videos on the AKA achievements/success stories) – AKA must build a strong evidence package on its achievements, and contribution; consistently produce and widely disseminate the AKA quarterly newsletter; regularly update the AKA website and social media platforms; ensure AKA's branding at events/activities in which the organization is involved, including negotiating for joint branding with the funders and/or prime contractors. As the communication and visibility work of an institution is not for one person, to realize the

mentioned actions under this strategy, AKA must strengthen the staff capacity in communication (including presentation skills, the development of communication materials such as press release, institutional brochures, newsletters, etc), drafting of success stories, photographing, media relations and engagement, public awareness skills etc. To improve its outreach and to strengthen its presence upcountry, AKA will open regional offices in the different provinces where it works. Having a strong presence upcountry and an increased focus on supporting the youth in rural areas to benefit from AKA training and support services may also lead to increased interest by more funders to support AKA work. Beyond Kigali, AKA activities have been working in the Eastern and Southern Provinces; AKA will mobilize resources and expand its activities to more districts and provinces. Expanding AKA activities to rural areas and providing start-up kits and capital (where possible) for the trained youth will also contribute to reduction of the current increasing issue of youth rural to urban migration.

Strategy 16: Continuous capacity building of staff: To realize the vision and mission of the organization, including the goals and commitments in the current strategic plan, there is need to continuously build the capacities of staff. In this regard, AKA will develop a comprehensive staff capacity development plan, which will guide the capacity development initiatives of the organization, based on the staff needs, responsibilities, and the strategic orientation of the organization, including on the effective partners engagement, advocacy, proposal writing, communication and media engagement, community engagement and awareness, etc. Equally important, AKA needs to continuously strengthen, through refresher trainings, the training and facilitation skills of its trainers and to intentionally build the next generation of trainers, through recruitment and empowering of new staff/trainers.

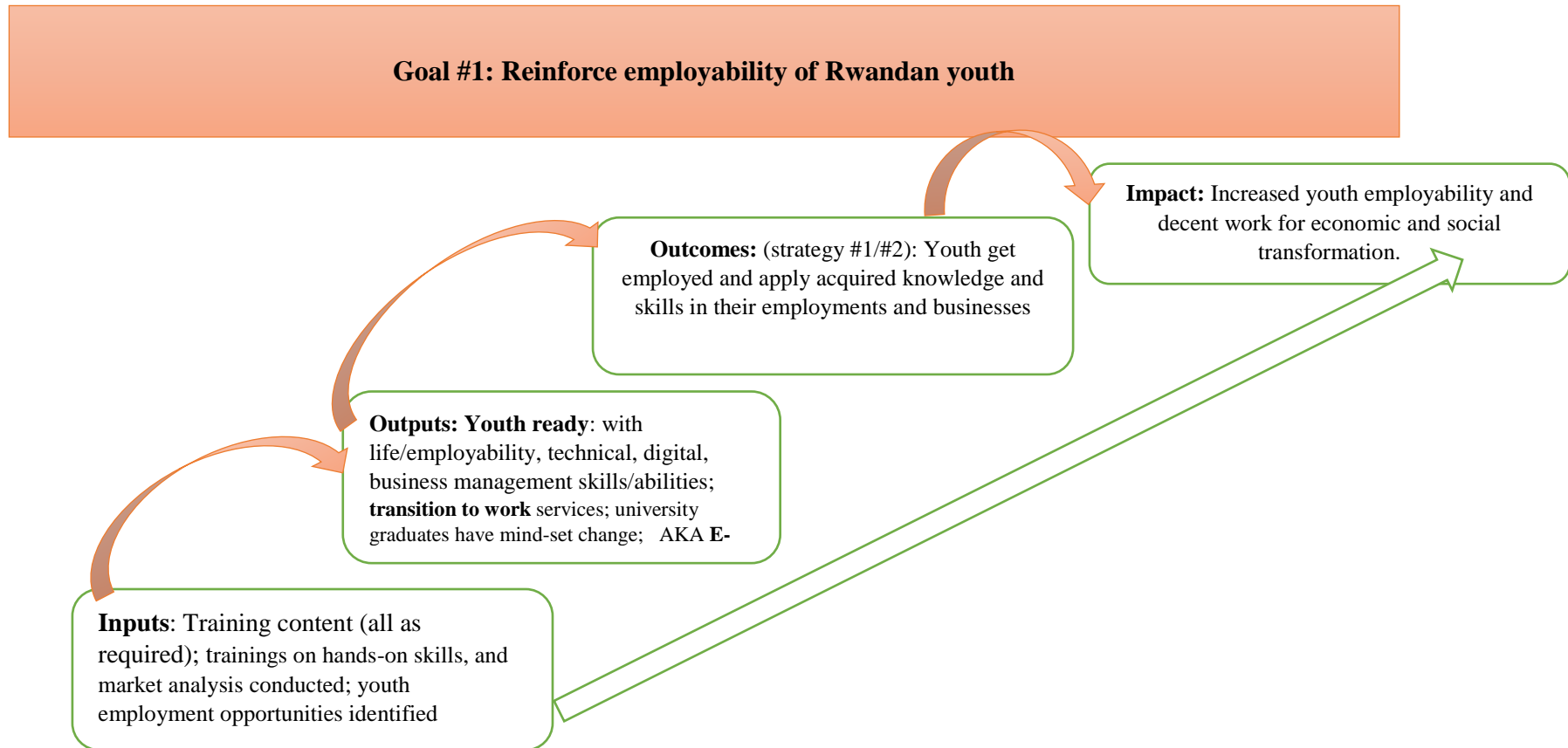
Cross-cutting actions:

- Strengthen inclusion in the AKA programs, including for PWDs:
 - Deliberately target and include PWDs in AKA’s trainings and support services.
- M&E Activities:
 - AKA must ensure the effective monitoring and evaluation of all the actions and activities in the current strategic plan;
 - Specifically, AKA must put in place strategies and tools to ensure the effective monitoring and follow up on the AKA training alumni members to be able to document the change brought about by the AKA training and support services (the end result). The goal should not just be training the youth (output level), but the change brought about by the training and other support services provided (outcome level). AKA should explore using a Mobile App for this tracking and follow up;
 - To reinforce the role of district administration in the monitoring and follow up on the trained youth, AKA should train local authorities in the monitoring, mentoring, and accompaniment of the training graduates, particularly those provided with start-up toolkits and capital and/or linked to financial institutions.

- Creativity, innovation, and expansion

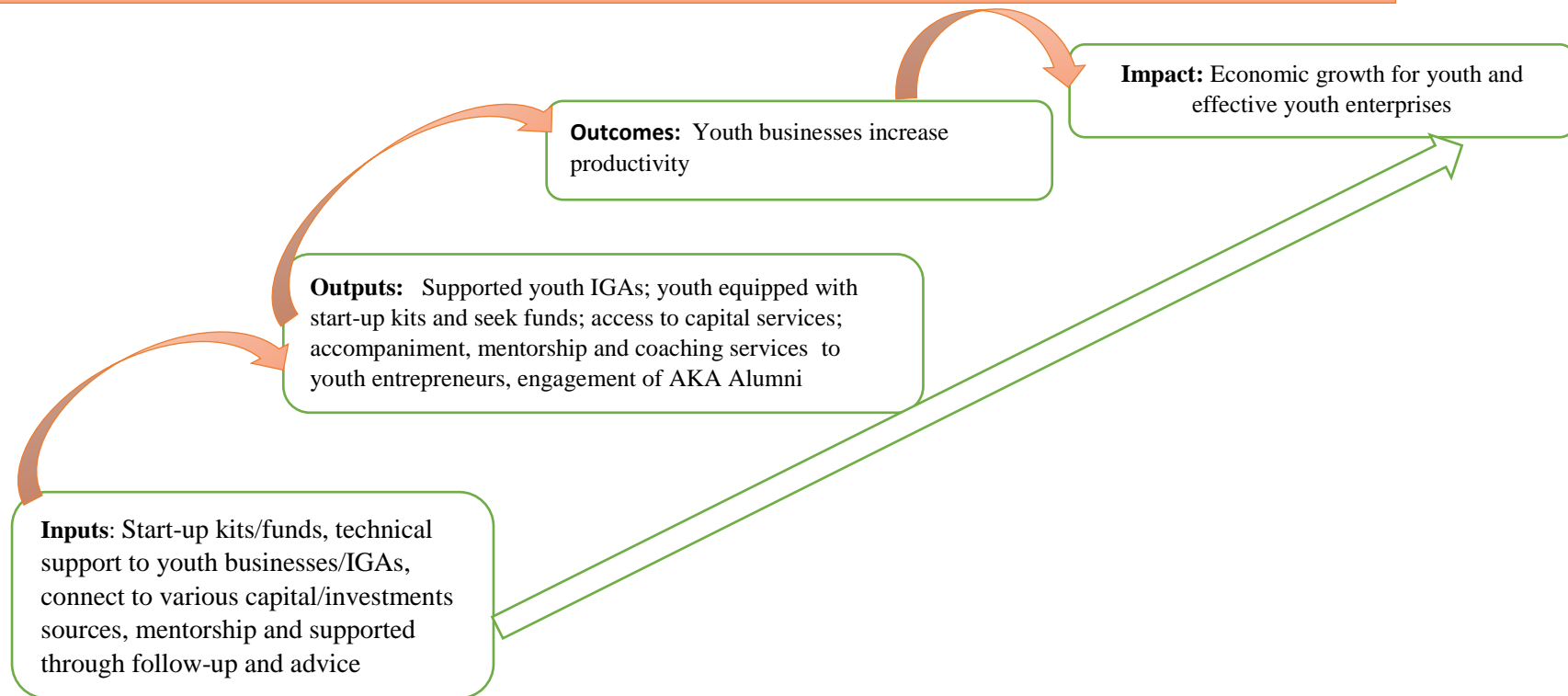
- AKA should not be comfortable with the existing products and the approaches the organizations has been using, but needs to always be creative and innovation in its work and services.
- To broaden its impact and to ensure sustainability, AKA should also start thinking about other complementary activities and services, to the human capital development services, that they can engage into (other youth support activities/projects). AKA should do an assessment and a reflection of what these services and interventions could be.

VI.2. Strategic Plan Theories of Change



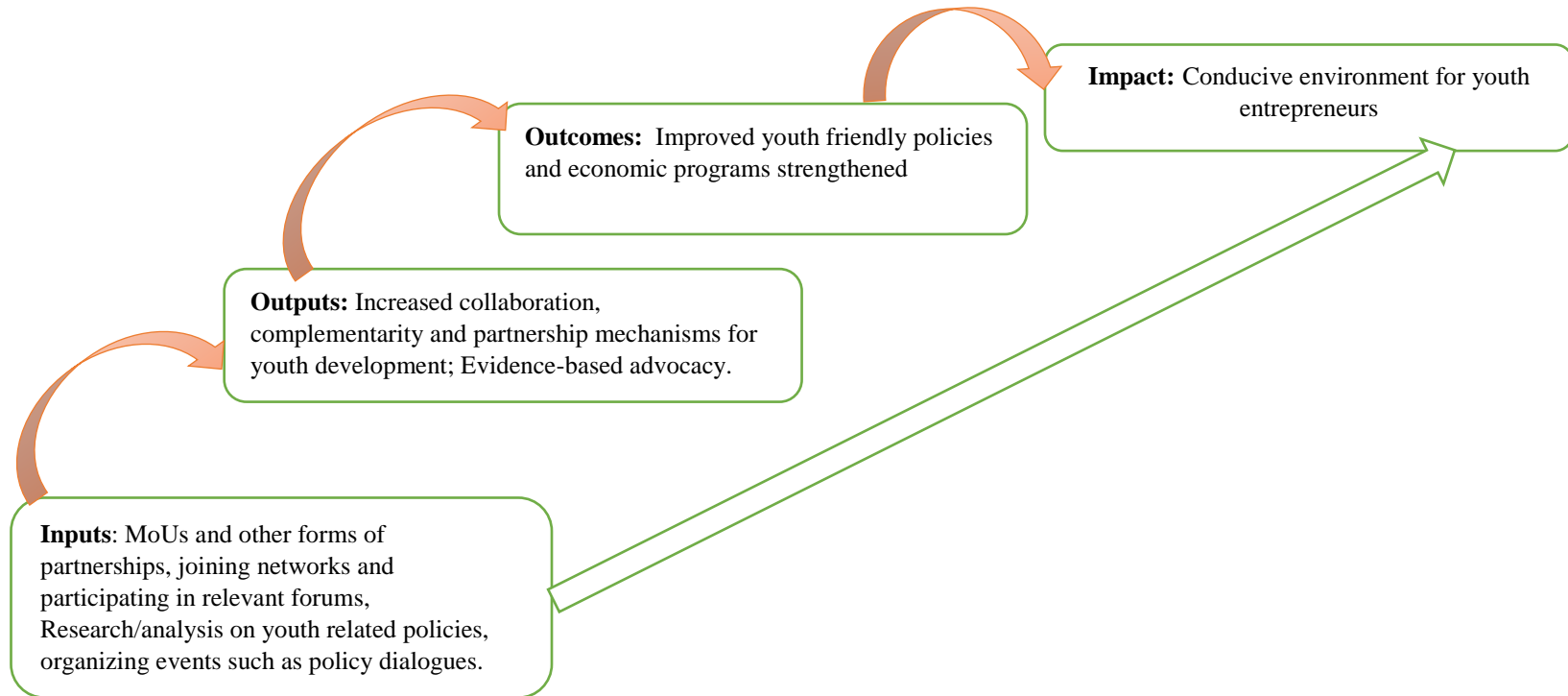
Our theory of change suggests that trainings for youth and support in identification of employment opportunities (inputs) will lead to knowledge acquisition in work readiness and link with employment opportunities (outputs). These outputs will result into application of acquired knowledge and skills in employment and businesses (outcomes), which ultimately increase youth employability and hence economic and social change improving youth livelihood and transformation.

Goal #2: Support access to finance, increase productivity, and effectiveness of youth entrepreneurs



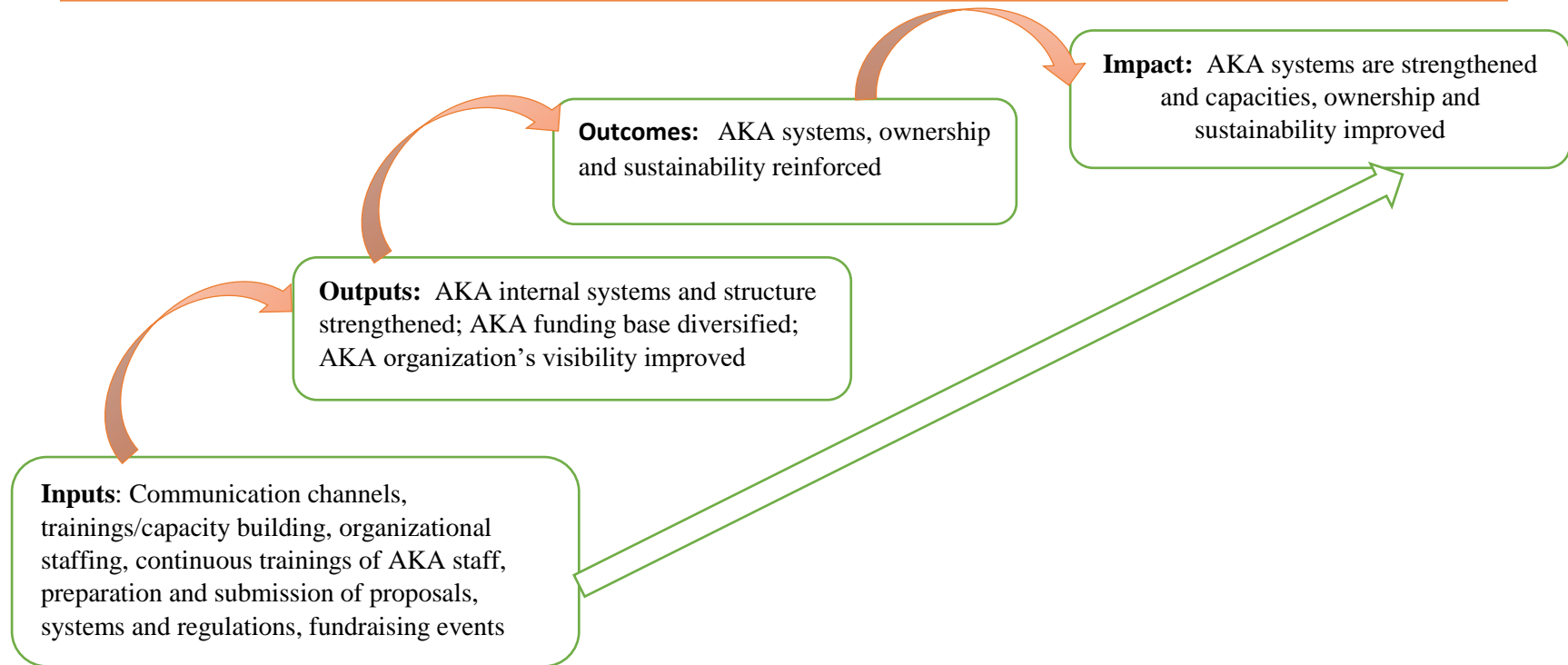
*Our theory of change for SP Goal # 2 suggests that if AKA provides to youth with the start-up kits/funds, mobilize its alumni together, give technical support to their businesses/IGAs, facilitates linkage to various capital/investments sources, offers them mentorship and support through follow-up and advice (**inputs**); **then** the youth and their businesses will advance (refer to **outputs above**) and increase their productivity (**outcome**). When productivity increases, the youth will ultimately reach economic growth and their IGAs will become effective (**impact**).*

Goal #3: Strengthen partnerships, and advocate for youth friendly policies and programs



*As illustrated above, AKA believes that scrutiny research and constructive dialogues with policy makers on real issues lead to improvement of policies and programs geared to youth development. Again, collaboration with relevant interveners, complementarity can fill the gaps to strengthen youth programs. All these elements put together, we will realize a conducive environment for youth entrepreneurs (**impact**).*

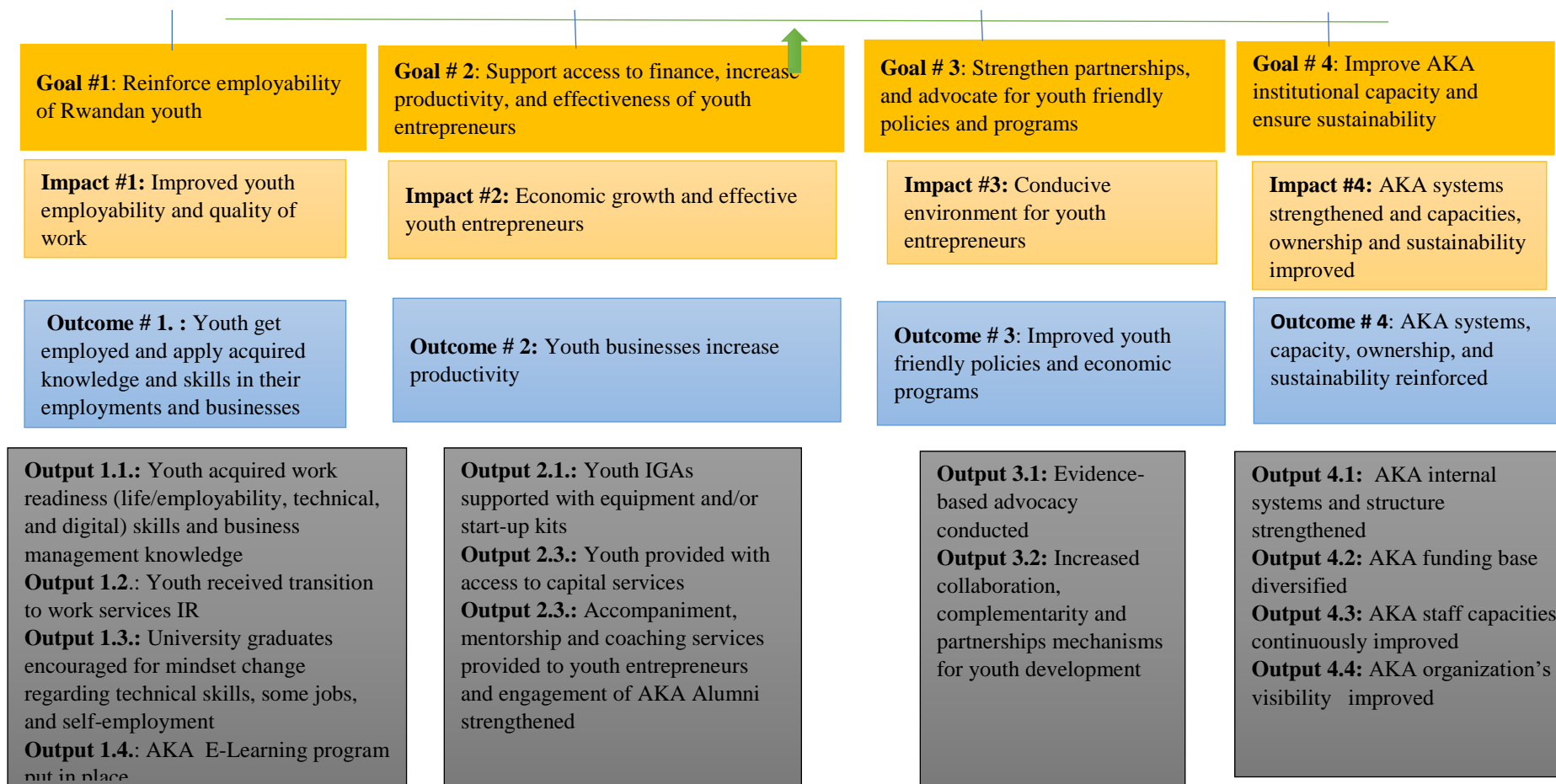
Goal #4: Improved AKA institutional capacity and sustainability



In relation to visibility, we believe that the effective implementation of the actions in the communication strategy will increase the visibility of AKA. With regard to systems, improvement of internal policies and tools, updating of the organizational staffing structure, and the trainings of AKA's organs/teams will lead to effective operation and management. As funding is always a corner stone for the organization's existence and sustainability, more partnerships, putting in place a strong fundraising or business development team, and continuous capacity building of staff in fundraising and partnership building/management are very important and will help to diversify AKA funding base. And all these results will lead to reinforced visibility, ownership, and sustainability of our systems (outcome) which in turn will contribute to improvement of AKA's institutional capacity and sustainability.

VI.3. AKA Strategic Plan Results Overview

Towards our Vision: Improved youth well-being through Employability skills and support services



VI.4. Strategic Plan Results Chain/Framework

Strategic goal	Results	Indicators	Baseline ²⁶ (2022)	Yearly Target	Overall Target - 2026	
Goal #1: Reinforce employability of Rwandan youth	Result/Impact: Improved youth employability and quality of work	% increase of AKA alumni obtaining jobs or self-employed	0	40%	200%	
		% decrease in youth unemployment in Rwanda	1.66% ²⁷	0.1%	0.5%	
		% of AKA alumni/youth satisfied with their jobs	68.1% ²⁸	2%	10%	
	IR 1./Outcomes: Youth get employed and apply acquired knowledge and skills in their employments and businesses	Sub IR 1.1./Outputs: Youth acquire work readiness (life/employability, technical, and digital) skills and business management knowledge	# of AKA alumni employed with new/better jobs	0	200	1,000
			# of AKA alumni self-employed	0	400	2,000
			% of partners confirming importance of AKA products and expressing satisfaction with skills of AKA graduates	0	10%	50%
			# of youth trained in life/employability skills	44,860	4,000	64,860
			# of youth trained in technical skills	0	900	45,000
			# of youth trained in digital skills and internet-based research	0	900	45,000
	# of youth trained in language skills	0	200	1,000		
	# of youth and/or youth businesses/initiatives provided with trainings tailored to their business	0	200	1,000		

²⁶ It would be good to conduct a (quick) baseline survey to capture missing baseline information. Alternatively, zero (0) may be used as the bench-mark for the newly introduced indicators of this Strategic Plan.

²⁷ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/812939/youth-unemployment-rate-in-rwanda/>

²⁸ AKA Annual Report 2021 indicates that 68.1% of youth gained a new or better employment.

		A survey on satisfaction with AKA graduates' skills and importance of AKA products conducted	0	Survey/mapping report available	Survey/mapping report available
Sub IR 1.2./Output: Youth received transition to work services		# of AKA training graduates facilitated to access internship opportunities	0	3500	14,000
		# of AKA training graduates facilitated to access job opportunities	0	700	3,500
		An inventory of employers (in AKA fields of trainings) created and updated	1 mapping-local employers	Updated	Updated
		# of CVs of AKA training graduates uploaded on the online portal	0	7,000	35,000
		Online portal of AKA laureates created and advertised	0	Available	Available
		# of organized AKA alumni events (including employers, donors, and other partners and stakeholders) organized	0	1	5
		Conduct a sector-based market opportunities assessment/mapping	0	Survey/mapping report available	Survey/mapping report available
Sub IR1.3./Output: University graduates encourage for mind-set change regarding some jobs, technical skills, and self-employment		# of university students or graduates initiating IGAs	0	50	250
		# of university graduates manifesting commitment to technical training and self-employment	0	100	500
		# of university students or graduates trained in technical skills	0	100	500

		# of university graduates sensitized on importance of technical skills, not neglecting some jobs, and on self-employment	0	500	25,000
	Sub IR1.4./Output: Introduce AKA E-Learning program	# of TVET schools, IPRCs or others benefiting e-learning roll-out	20 TVET/ IPRC	2	30
		# of E-learning modules/materials available	144	20	244
		A feasibility study of E-learning tool (on AKA Website) conduct	0	1	1
	Sub IR1.5./Output: Training of trainers (ToTs) conducted	# of individuals trained as ToTs (TVET facilitators, secondary school teachers, university teachers, local level officials, etc)	544	100	1,044

Strategic goal	Results	Indicators	Baseline (2022)	Yearly Target	Overall Target - 2026
Goal # 2: Support access to finance, increased productivity and effectiveness of youth entrepreneurs	Result/impact: Economic growth and effective youth entrepreneurs	% increase in incomes of youth businesses supported by AKA	0	10%	10%
		% of youth satisfied by AKA business support services	0	80%	85%
		Payback rate of youth loans to financial institutions	0	90%	95%
	IR 2./outcome: Youth businesses increase productivity	Total savings (Frw) by SLAs of AKA alumni	272,902,676	50,000,000	522,902,676
		Total loans (Frw) distributed by SLAs of AKA alumni	221,051,168	40,000,000	421,051,168
		Total loans (Frw) offered by banks to youth	0	20,000,000	100,000,000
		# of businesses provided with loans by financial institutions	0	20	100

	% of successful beneficiaries of start-up kits	0	85%	85%
Sub-IR. 2.1. Youth IGAs supported with start-up kits (equipment) and/or capital	# of selected youth or youth groups provided with start-up kits and/or equipment	100	200	1,100
	# of selected youth or youth groups provided with start-up capital	0	20	100
Sub-IR. 2.2.: Youth provided with access to capital services	# of youth or businesses facilitated to link with relevant institutions for loan application - financial institutions, BDF, etc.	80	25	205
	# of youth or youth groups supported by AKA to develop business plans/projects	0	20	100
Sub-IR. 2.3.: Accompaniment, mentorship and coaching services provided to youth entrepreneurs and engagement of AKA Alumni strengthened	# of SLAs created by AKA alumni	1,202	200	2,202
	# of members of SLAs	21,649	3,600	39,649
	# of coaching and mentoring visits per business conducted	0	1/2,040 ²⁹	1/10,200
	# of businesses advised (physical visits and/or remote support)	0	2,040	10,200
	# of AKA Alumni/graduates testimonies on importance of AKA support and youth life-changing stories shared/uploaded to the website	0	15	75
	AKA online Alumni portal set up	N/A	Portal (since FY 2)	Portal

²⁹ Total number of businesses provided with start-up kit (equipment), seed capital, and bank loan.

		A tracer survey for the AKA graduates conducted; employed, self-employed, and still looking for jobs are known	N/A	Survey report	Survey report
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Strategic goal	Results	Indicators	Baseline (2022)	Yearly Target	Overall Target - 2026
Goal # 3: Advocate and strengthen partnerships for youth friendly policies and programs	Result 3/impact: Conducive environment for youth entrepreneurs	Level of appreciation of development policies/programs by youth	Low	Low/medium	Very high
		# of policies and programs improved	0	-	3
	IR 3./outcome: Improved youth friendly policies and economic programs strengthened	# of laws and regulations with AKA contribution	0	-	2
		# of policy briefs/position papers submitted	0	-	3
		# and names of AKA affiliated advocacy networks and forums	0	2 (both will be joined in the 2 nd year)	2
	Sub-IR. 3.1. Evidence-based advocacy conducted	# of advocacy initiatives and/or events attended	0	2	10
		# of advocacy initiatives and/or events organized	0	1	5
		# of youth-related research or policy works/analysis conducted	0	1	5

	Sub-IR. 3.2.: Increased collaboration, complementarity, and partnerships mechanisms for youth development	# of MoUs signed with partners and stakeholders	7	2	17
		# of youth/students supported by AKA products following MoUs with their schools/centers, NGOs, MIFOTRA, RTB, etc.	0	400	2,000
		A mapping/survey report of partners intervening in the youth economic empowerment sector	0	Initiated/available	Available

Strategic goal	Results	Indicators	Baseline (2022)	Annual Target	Overall Target - 2026
Goal # 4: Improve AKA institutional capacity	Result/impact: AKA systems are strengthened and capacities, ownership and sustainability improved	# of new donors and/or new projects obtained	13	1	5
		% increase of funding	0	10%	10%
		# and titles of internal policies, strategies and systems developed/improved	0	1	5
	IR 4./outcome: AKA systems, ownership and sustainability reinforced	# and titles of internal policies, strategies and systems developed/improved	0	1	5
		Feasibility study report for AKA Youth Microfinance disseminated to relevant stakeholders	0	Ongoing/validated	Disseminated
		Feasibility study report for AKA Youth Training Center in Kigali disseminated to relevant stakeholders	0	Ongoing/validated	Disseminated
		% increase of visitors of AKA communication channels (website and other platforms)	0	20%	20%

Sub-IR. 4.1. AKA internal systems and structure strengthened	# and titles of AKA internal policies and strategies developed/improved (including: the resource mobilization and sustainability strategy; communication policy/strategy; gender mainstreaming and inclusion policy; whistleblowing policy; harassment, sexual harassment and exploitation policy).	0	5 policies/strategies will be developed in the 2 nd and 3 rd years	5
	AKA's organizational structure updated	1	Updated in the 1 st year	Update completed
	A more robust AKA Data Management Information System (MIS) put in place and operationalized	0	Initiated/ in progress	Operational
	Updraging of the Accounting software	1	Updraged in in the 2 nd year	Updrage completed
	Procuring and installation of a human resource management system/software	0	Software purchased and installed in the 2 nd year	Installation completed and system used
	# of statutory and other events organized/held (General Assembly, Board meetings, Staff meetings, Technical quarterly meetings, Labor day)	17	22	110
	Organize staff retreat	1	1	5

	Sub-IR. 4.2.: AKA funding base diversified	# of AKA donors events (such as breakfast and reflection meetings) organized	0	1	5
		# of project proposals submitted for funding to new donors	1	3	15
		A market and capacity needs assessment of private actors (including big and small businesses and NGOs) conducted	0	Initiated/ongoing	Produced/used
		# and types of private businesses/NGOs that procured AKA products and services	0	1	5
		Feasibility study of AKA Youth Microfinance initiated and produced	N/A	Initiated/Ongoing	Produced
		Feasibility study of AKA Youth Training Center in Kigali initiated and produced	N/A	Initiated/Ongoing	Produced
		AKA training center established	0	Initiated/Ongoing	Established and operational
Sub-IR. 4.3.: Capacities of AKA staff and organs continuously improved	Institutional capacity development plan put in place (after mapping staff capacity needs)	0	1	1	
	# and types of trainings and events organized to continuously increase capacities of AKA staff and organs in relevant fields identified	0	6	30	
Sub-IR. 4.4.: AKA's organizational visibility and outreach improved	AKA's communication and branding strategy initiated or adapted	0	Ongoing/validated	Disseminated	
	AKA quarterly newsletters regularly published	No	Yes	Yes	
	AKA's communication channels maintained and regularly updated (Website, and	5	5	5	

		Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn accounts)			
		# of regional/field offices established and operationalized	0	4 offices established in the 1 st and 2 nd years	4

VII. IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

A strategic plan is only good enough if it is effectively implemented. This section presents the necessary inputs for the implementation of the current strategic plan and the success factors for its realization. This section also provides a detailed monitoring and evaluation plan for the strategic plan, the risk analysis and mitigation strategies, the communication and dissemination strategy, the resource mobilization and sustainability plan, as well as the costing for the implementation of the strategic plan.

INPUTS FOR THE STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

To effectively implement the current strategic plan there is need for competent, dedicated, and enough staff and the availability of budget necessary to cover all the related costs.

- Competent, dedicated, and enough human resource

As highlighted above, AKA is lauded for its competent and qualified staff, however, there is need to continuously strengthen the capacities of the staff, particularly for the new staff, to ensure that the quality delivery of trainings never retards and that staff regularly sharpens their skills and knowledge, including on the new policies, laws and regulations, as well as programs and interventions in the sector of youth employment and economic empowerment. The AKA staff (training facilitators) need to always be aware of and up-to-date with any existing and/or potential opportunities, the requirements and access procedures so that they share this information with the youth undergoing training. AKA also needs to ensure that positions on the new organigram are filled, as the necessary resources are acquired. Staff will need to be capacitated to effectively deliver on the results of the current strategic plan, and in this regard a staff capacity development plan shall be developed and implemented.

- Budget availability

AKA must be more proactive and aggressive in resource mobilization to ensure that it secures the funds for the implementation of the current strategic plan, both in terms of covering the human resource needs, logistics, and other costs. A detailed annual activities' plan and budget shall be developed from the current strategic plan to guide the annual strategic plan implementation and the organization's expenditure.

SUCCESS FACTORS

The effective implementation of the AKA strategic plan will be founded on the following key success factors: 1) Diversification of the partners/donors; 2) Improved communication, marketing, and visibility; 3) Strengthened internal systems; 4) Continuous staff capacities development; and 5) Maintained good relations with state and non-state actors.

Diversification of partners/donors

AKA has for the past years been relying mainly on a single partner/donor – EDC. This is mainly because AKA is basically an off-spring organization of EDC. Considering these historical ties, EDC being a main partner was/is not a problem itself. However, considering the fact that AKA

is now an established organization itself, and also taking into account the changing dynamics in the funding environment, it is important and necessary that AKA diversifies its partners and funding streams to ensure its sustainability.

Improved communication and marketing

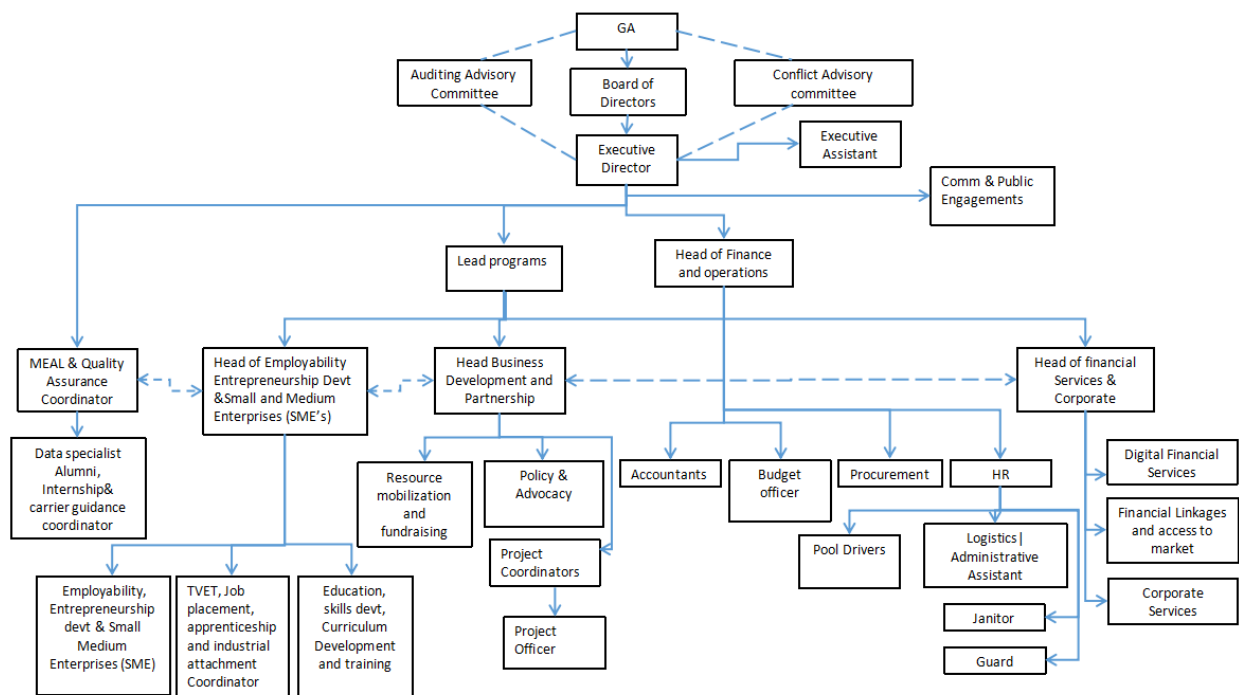
AKA must raise its visibility as an organization, not a project. To raise this visibility, AKA must be aggressive and strategic in terms of communication and marketing. In this regard, AKA must clearly document and publish its successes/achievements, ensure its branding even on joint activities with partners, strengthen its engagement with the media, ensure that its website and social media accounts are regularly updated and that all AKA relevant events, activities, and the key outcomes are captured on these organization's platforms. AKA should also be proactive in marketing itself and its products and services, both among the public sector, the private sector (including NGOs), and among the donor community.

Strengthened internal systems and capabilities

AKA has been performing well, but as the organization grows, more expectations, both from within and outside the organization (partners, stakeholders, and donors), and challenges come with it. In this regard, the organization must strengthen its internal systems and capabilities to live up to or exceed the expectations, and to respond to and/or be better prepared for any emerging challenges. In this regard, AKA should adopt and implement the following policies and strategies:

- The communication strategy;
- The resource mobilization strategy;
- The gender mainstreaming and inclusion policy/strategy;
- The policy against harassment, sexual harassment and exploitation;
- The anti-corruption (whistle blowing) policy.

In addition, and in consideration of the growth of the organization, the staffing structure (organigram) of the organization should be revised to be much more in line with the current human resource needs of the organization. Most of the current AKA staff are project-based, but the organization has to revise and put in place a strong organizational and staffing structure with clear roles and responsibilities. Some of the new positions/units that should be added to the organigram include the Business Development Unit to reinforce AKA's fundraising capacity. Below is the suggested new organigram:



4) Continuous staff capacities development

A competent and dedicated staff is a cornerstone for the realization of the organization’s mission and vision, and for the general growth of an organization. In this regard, for AKA to achieve the targets and aspirations under the current strategic plan, there will be need to continuously build the capacities of the organization staff. A capacity building plan will be developed, based on the expressed needs of the staff as per their different roles and responsibilities, to guide the capacity building initiatives during the five-year period of the implementation of the current strategic plan. In addition to other capacity needs that will be identified, staff will be trained on fundraising (including the preparation of winning proposals), Report writing skills, communication and marketing, networking and partners’ engagement, project management and monitoring and evaluation (managing for results), among others. For the new staff, a proper induction program will be organized to set the foundation for further capacity building activities. Staff will also be sensitized and encouraged to take ownership of the organization and its success, and to always be guided by that spirit in whatever they do.

5) Maintained good relations with all partners and stakeholders

AKA will maintain and continue to harness its good relations with partners and stakeholders, both state and non-state actors (including CSOs and development partners). In this regard, AKA will be active and responsive in its engagements with different actors, including participation in the different forums such as the Joint Action Development Forum (JADF) at the local government level, as well as in other networks with organizations intervening in the same area, forums with the donors, and with central government entities. As a key ingredient to good relations, AKA will continue to ensure its excellent performance, through effective and efficient delivery on its commitments, and respect of its obligations.

VII.1. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

The effective monitoring and evaluation of the strategic plan implementation will enable issues and challenges to be detected and addressed as they arise, and the necessary adaptations done, as lessons are used for future planning and programming. Below is the brief description of the M&E framework for this strategic plan, but a detailed M&E plan is attached to this strategic plan document as Annex 2.

MEL tools and approaches

AKA will use existing and new MEL tools to collect and report data on performance indicators as indicated in the SP Plan M&E plan. To collect data, AKA will use a variety of MEL methods including quantitative and qualitative and will apply different tools including case studies and testimonies, surveys, sign sheets, etc. the AKA technical teams will keep data in their usual and newly adapted databases that will allow connection between similar data produced from different sources. The quality of data will be ensured through verification and audit of data/information from various projects or sources, cross-checking to avoid duplication and consolidation to produce management information with regard to the indicators of the Strategic Plan.

Learning

The monitoring team of AKA will regularly record and keep lessons learned. The knowledge will be about experience and new ways of doing different types of work. The knowledge base will be kept for future use and will constitute or add on the AKA's Organizational Process Assets (OPAs). At least twice a year, AKA will organize learning events to share knowledge and experience with institutions operating in the same field.

Mid-term review

A Midterm evaluation of the strategic plan will be conducted in Year 3 (2024). The results from Midterm review will inform AKA and its partners on progress towards expected results (Outcomes and impact). The midterm evaluation will also provide lessons learnt that will be capitalized to review the targets, strategies and implementation plan. This exercise will be objectively conducted by external consultants in collaboration with AKA technical team.

End-line evaluation

In late 2026, AKA will conduct the final evaluation of the Strategic Plan to assess the achievement of expected results and impact. The final review will be an opportunity to draw lessons that will be accommodated in the new strategic Plan. This exercise will be conducted by external evaluators to measure the progress, assess the effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the results. The recommendations from the final review will be used in the design on the strategic Plan for 2027-2031.

Milestones (or timelines) for MEL Activities

M&E activity	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsible
Periodic Monitoring	Periodic reports: quarterly reports and other pre-defined reporting periods will compare annual targets and actual performance	Throughout	AKA MEL Specialist and team
Half-yearly and yearly learning events	Adapting implementation strategies and share experience with other stakeholders	Half-yearly and yearly	
Annual Review and Planning	Revision of implementation strategies where applicable, Annual Plan	Yearly - January each year	AKA Management
Midterm evaluation / Review	Midterm review report, Reviewed Strategic Plan	June/July 2024	External Consultants
End-line survey/Final review	Final review report/End-line report (Actual Vs. Targets)	September 2026	External Consultants
End of strategic Plan review meeting	Learning Report/ Plan for strategic Plan (2027- 2031)	From December 2026	AKA Management

VII.2. Risks and Mitigating Strategies

Risk	Mitigating strategies
Insufficient funding to deliver the strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a resource mobilization and sustainability strategy; - Diversify the funding base, including selling the organization's products to private business entities; - Improved documentation and sharing of AKA's results and impact.
AKA being perceived by some actors and stakeholders as a project, rather than an organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen the visibility of the organization; - Increased engagement of the stakeholders and participation in different networks working on youth empowerment and employment.
Losing the experienced staff to other organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve staff incentives and motivations, as much as possible; - Strengthen the organization ownership spirit among the staff; - Being open and more engaging to staff, so that they are fully aware of situation of the organization and the next plans.
Remaining in a comfort zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AKA has been successful in delivering employability skills, but should also start to think about other potential areas of intervention in supporting youth empowerment; - Cultivating the culture of creativity and innovation among the staff and management of the organization; - Continuous capacity building to staff, and empowerment of new staff in particular to ensure that they are up to the task in case any of their colleagues leave.
Appropriation and/or reproduction and modification of AKA training materials by some partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Register the copy rights of AKA products (training curriculums) with RDB; - Have MoUs with partners on when and how to use AKA curriculum and training materials

COVID-19 and similar crises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased utilization of ICT in the AKA’s programs and interventions; - Innovative approaches to programming; - Strengthen sustainability strategies of the organization, including having an internal sustainability/emergency fund.
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VII.3. Communication Strategy

Effective communication will be important to ensure the smooth implementation of the strategic plan. Internal communication enables the staff and leadership of the organization to be at the same page and to get feedback on the decisions being made and interventions undertaken. Whereas external communication helps to raise the organization’s visibility and engagement with the partners and stakeholders, including beneficiaries. Effective communication and engagement enable the organization to identify and seize new and potential opportunities. AKA shall develop a fully-fledged Communication Strategy that would guide the institution’s communication and engagements, both internally and with external stakeholders/partners. The communication strategy must define AKA communication goals, determine the target audience, the key message(s) for each audience, the effective communication and engagement strategies for each audience, the expected outcomes, and the required resources, both human and financial, to effectively implement the strategy. Some of the activities that AKA should undertake in the framework of its communication strategy include:

- **Consistently produce and disseminate AKA’s Newsletter**

AKA has a newsletter, but which has not been consistently produced. AKA should ensure that its newsletter is produced and disseminated every quarter. The newsletter should be shared with all partners, stakeholders, including at the local administration level, and donors (both existing and potential donors). In this regard, AKA should develop a mailing list of all its partners, stakeholders, and donors so that it becomes easy to share the newsletter. The newsletter must also be uploaded on the AKA website.

- **Enhance AKA’s engagement with the media**

AKA should build effective relations with the media, including creating a database of media houses/outlets, with contacts, and ensuring they are invited to AKA events. Where possible, AKA should have a focal person in a media house whom they can easily reach out to in case of any event that needs coverage. In addition to the on-site interviews that can be delivered by AKA officials, it should be a culture in AKA to prepare and disseminate a press briefing each event to provide the key messages to members of the media and to help in informing their interview questions. AKA should also conduct talk shows on radios and TVs about its programs

and successes. Some AKA alumni members could be invited to give their testimonies on these talk shows.

- **Regularly update AKA's website and social media platforms**

AKA has social media accounts (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn accounts) but the assessment indicated that most of them are not regularly updated. AKA should ensure their website and social media accounts are updated as regularly as possible. Also, to ensure the wide spreading of the information on its activities and achievements, AKA should encourage members of its alumni to join these social media accounts and to retweet/share AKA postings. They should also be encouraged to give feed to AKA with regard to the organization's visibility and communication strategies and efforts. AKA should also produce and post short videos and/or podcasts about the organization's activities and success stories (including testimonies from the beneficiaries).

- **Strengthen staff capacity in communication**

Every staff of the organization must be an agent of the good visibility of the organization and should be able to effectively communicate with partners and stakeholders and disseminate the organization's message. In this regard, AKA should build the staff's capacity in communication, including presentation skills, engagement with the media, as well as public awareness/education skills. AKA staff should also be educated and sensitized on how to effectively use social media to raise the visibility of the organization and to transmit the key messages of the organization.

- **Strengthen internal communication**

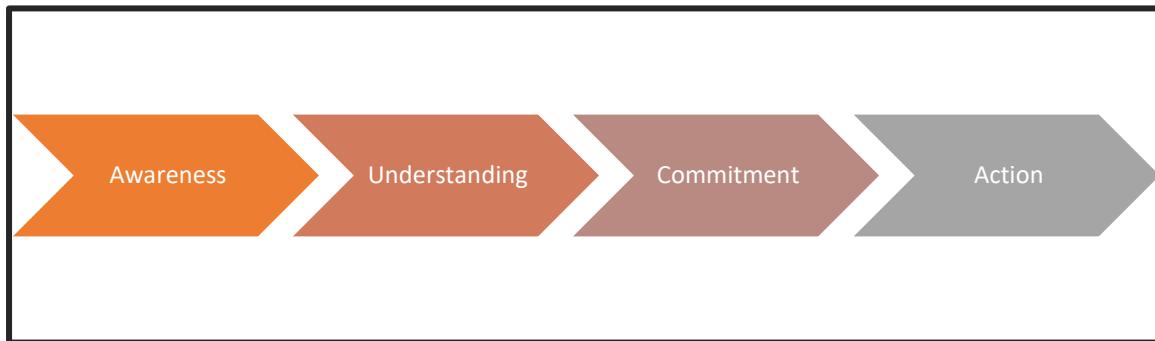
Effective communication within the organization is very important for the wellbeing and good performance of an organization. AKA should create an intranet system to communicate and share information among staff. Periodic meetings and workshops for staff should be held to inform/remind them about the institutional policies and regulations, discuss about the progress of projects and any existing challenges, share ongoing institutional plans and engagements (including fundraising plans and partnerships), clarify staff roles and remind them of their expected contribution, seek the staff's feedback and inputs on the ongoing plans and initiatives.

Dissemination of the current strategic plan

AKA will ensure the effective dissemination of the current strategic plan among its staff, organs, partners, and stakeholders, for their active participation in its implementation. Effective communication and dissemination strengthen staff, partners, and stakeholders' commitment, creates accountability, and helps prevent inefficiency during implementation, among others.

Approach

AKA will use a four-fold approach in the dissemination of the current strategic plan.



Awareness: Staff, partners, and stakeholders will be presented with the current strategic plan; its goals, implementation strategies, and the costing. The ultimate goal of doing the awareness is to inform the key actors and partners of the existence of the new AKA strategic plan and its key elements.

Understanding: The AKA staff and organs, as implementors, must clearly understand the implementation approach of the current strategic plan, the required collaboration and support between units and departments, the expectations from the individual staff, unit, and department, etc.

Commitment: AKA will seek and ensure the commitment of all staff and leaders of the organization to the effective implementation of the current strategic plan. This will be done through individual and departmental plans, which must always be aligned to and in response to the organization's strategic plan. Through engagements, AKA will also seek the commitment of partners and stakeholders' to actively participate in the implementation of the current strategic plan, including through their financial and other forms of support to AKA.

Action: To ensure that all the institutional and staff actions and decisions are geared towards the realization of the strategic plan, and to push the partners and stakeholders from commitment to action, by securing their support in the implementation of the strategic plan.

VII.4. Resource Mobilization and Sustainability Strategy

To realize the targets and aspirations under the current strategic plan, AKA will have to develop and implement an aggressive resources mobilisation strategy to raise the required resources for the strategy implementation. The strategy should define the target audience, the practical actions for donors and potential donors' engagement, should define those responsible for resource mobilization and the capacities and support they need, among others. Resource mobilization goes with partnerships building, and in this regard, AKA will also have to strengthen its partnerships and build new ones. Some of the actions that will be undertaken in this regard and which will elaborate further in the resource mobilization and sustainability strategy include:

- **Organizing reflection or breakfast meetings with donors**

AKA should organize meetings with donors and potential donors to share AKA's success stories and to learn about the existing and/or future opportunities with these donors. The reflection/breakfast meeting can be in form of a targeted meeting with a single (potential) donor or in form of a joint session with all the existing and potential donors. Depending on how the event was organized, AKA may invite some members of its alumni to give some testimonies. In case of a joint session, AKA can also invite some other partners and stakeholders, including government stakeholders; these may also help to testify and talk about the contribution of AKA in empowering the youth and fighting unemployment. Serious and timely follow ups should be done with the concerned (potential) donors, as necessary. Further, there must a clear and effective mechanism of information sharing and feedback provision by the one who attended the meeting with other relevant staff members within the organization to ensure follow up, sharing of the more information that might have been requested, as well as future engagements, even in circumstances where the concerned staff is no longer with AKA.

- **Document and widely disseminate AKA's achievements and lesson learnt**

AKA should assign an experienced and competent staff or crew to prepare professional and quality quarterly and/or annual reports. The report should clearly capture AKA success stories and the lessons learnt, include testimonies from the AKA training graduates, clearly indicate the value for money of AKA activities and interventions, and AKA's collaboration with the relevant actors working in the youth employment sector. The report should also highlight the challenges faced by AKA in the implementation of its strategic and annual action plans. The report should be shared with partners, stakeholders, and donors (including potential donors), and a copy should be posted on AKA's website. Key highlights of the report, including disaggregated figures and some action pictures, should be posted on the AKA's social media accounts.

- **Be proactive and propositional in fundraising**

AKA should not just wait for the release of call for proposals but should instead intentionally reach out and engage donors and potential donors about any existing and/or future funding opportunities. In this regard, AKA should assign an experienced and competent officer or team to prepare good concept notes and proposals. AKA staff and particularly the proposals writing team need to learn about and use the donor language (use the terms, and approaches that are catchy to the targeted donor). AKA should offer to (potential) donors to submit concept notes for the latter's review. AKA should also stay updated of any existing and/or potential funding opportunities through its engagement with other partner organizations and relevant networks to which AKA is a member.

- **Map out the existing and potential donors in the area of youth employment and economic empowerment**

AKA should carry out a comprehensive map out of existing and potential donors, both locally and internationally. The database of these existing and potential donors should be updated regularly, with contact details. This database would enable AKA to reach out to these donors

and to learn about any existing and/or future opportunities of collaboration, as well as inviting them to AKA events and activities. The database should not only be limited to donors and potential donors, but also other partners.

- **Reach out to private businesses and sell AKA's products**

The work readiness program and other AKA products can help the private business to boost the productivity of their staff and improve the entity's services to the clients. AKA should reach out to these private businesses such as hotels, restaurants, factories, restaurants, bars, coffee shops, among others, and sell its training products to them. Similar reach out should also be done for the non-governmental organizations. This would require AKA to do a comprehensive market survey and map out the needs of different categories of businesses and organizations. The outcomes from this analysis, would help to inform the packaging and enrich the delivery of AKA products/services. This would also require AKA to be flexible in its delivery packages, in consideration of the needs and means of the different business entities and organizations.

- **Raise the organization's visibility, and ensure that donors and potential donors are invited to AKA's events**

AKA should raise its visibility through more engagement with the media (print, audio-visual, and online) to share the organization's success stories, and talk about its areas of intervention and contributions in general. AKA should ensure that its website and social media accounts are regularly updated, and that organization reports are uploaded, and information about ongoing and future events posted on the organization's website and the social media accounts. To increase the AKA online community, all AKA graduates and beneficiaries should be encouraged to join AKA social media networks such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. Further, AKA should organize alumni days to celebrate what has been achieved, through testimonies by the AKA training and support services' beneficiaries. Both existing and potential donors as well as other partners and stakeholders should always be invited to such events to hear the AKA contribution and success stories right from the beneficiaries themselves. Visibility and engagement meetings should not only be organized at the national level, but also at the local level, targeting partners and stakeholders there.

Also, AKA should consistently collect and disseminate success stories through its quarterly newsletter.

- **Develop staff capacity in fundraising, communication, and partners' engagement**

To build the organization's capacity to fundraise, AKA should train its staff in fundraising, including proposal writing skills and on the use of donor language, as well as strengthen the staff capacities in communication and presentation skills and in partners' engagement. Donors have different familiar or preferred language; AKA should do this assessment and ensure that in submit a proposal they use the language that catches the interest of the donor. Staff must understand and be empowered to be agents of resource mobilization wherever they are, through the different engagements they have with partners and stakeholders. Stakeholders and partners can always help in spreading the word and/or making recommendations, and so their engagement should always be mindful of their power in fundraising.

- Create more partnerships and be active in the relevant networks and forums

AKA has created partnerships with different institutions, agencies, and organizations, both public and private, including some that it signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with. AKA should expand its partnerships, through engaging other beneficial partners. AKA should also identify and become a member of the relevant CSOs and private sector networks working in the area in which AKA intervenes, such networks include the youth organizations' networks, networks and/or forums of organizations working on employment, etc.

- Identify and participate in online events with the donors

Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, the advancement and accessibility to ICT (particularly internet accessibility), several donor events are taking place online. Though the COVID-19 pandemic is slowing down, with high chances of winning it, there is a high likelihood that most of such engagement events will continue to take place online. AKA should closely follow up, be aware of such events, and participate in such meetings and webinars. Where possible, AKA should also request a slot in such events to showcase its work; achievements, lessons learnt, and challenges. AKA should put in place a mechanism to ensure that the one who attends the webinar or other online events shares back what was discussed with other colleagues, so that next steps are discussed together and follow up easily done, where necessary.

ANNEX 1: LIST OF INSTITUTIONS CONSULTED

#	Organization	Person interviewed
1.	Swiss Contact	Mr. GAGA John
2.	Association pour la Promotion de l'Education et de la Formation à l'Etranger (APEFE/Rwanda)	- Mr. HUBY Eric - Mr. KAGABO Hubert
3.	Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)	Mr. GAKUBA MURANGIRA Franklin
4.	Bildungswerk der Baden-Württembergischen Wirtschaft e. V.	Mr. SALVATORE Mele
5.	National Union of Disabilities Organizations in Rwanda (NUDOR)	Ms. TURYASHEMERERWA Jacqueline
6.	Rwanda Organization for Development Initiatives (RODI)	Mr. UWIMANA Chrysostome
7.	Vision Jenuesse Nouvelle	Brother Vital
8.	Board Member, Akazi Kanoze Access	Ms. KABEGA Emilienne
9.	Deutsche Sparkassenstiftung für internationale Kooperation e.V. (DSIK) - German Sparkassenstiftung for International Cooperation	Ms. NAYITULIKI Ariane
10.	Urugaga Imbaraga	- Mr. GAFARANGA Joseph - Mr. MUNZUYARWA Denis - Mr. NTAKIRUTIMANA Joseph

11.	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH/ Promotion of Economy and Employment Program	- Mr. NGOBOKA Ezeckiel - Ms. AXIOTIS Melanie - Mr. BEUNDERS Niek - Mr. HEIDENREICH George
12.	Prince's Trust International (PTI)	Ms. REBECCA Arogvi-Hansen
13.	Educate	Mr. KAMUGISHA Rogers
14.	Board Member, Akazi Kanoze Access	Mr. RUGAMBA David
15.	Ministry of Youth and Culture (MYCULTURE)	Mr. RWAYITARE Jean Bosco
16.	Rwanda TVET Board	Mr. RWAMASIRABO Aimable
17.	Education Development Center Inc. (EDC)	Ms. ALEJANDRA Bonifaz
18.	Ministry of Public Service and Labour (MIFOTRA)	Mr. NZABANDORA Addallah Mr. NTIRAMPEBA Sylvere
19.	Association of Microfinance Institutions in Rwanda (AMIR)	Ms. UWASE KABAREGA Charity

ANNEX 2: MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL) PLAN

Results	Indicators	Indicator type	Disaggregation	Data collection		
				Frequency	Data source	Responsibility
Strategic goal # 1: Reinforce employability of Rwandan youth						
Result/Impact: Improved youth employability and quality of work	% increase of AKA alumni obtaining jobs or self-employed	Impact	Sex, age	Twice	Mid-term and final reports	AKA Management
	% decrease in youth unemployment in Rwanda		Sex, age	Twice	Mid-term and final reports	AKA Management
	% of AKA alumni/youth satisfied with their jobs		Sex, age	Twice	Mid-term and final reports	AKA Management
IR 1./Outcomes: Youth get employed and apply acquired skills in their employments and businesses	# of AKA alumni employed with new/better jobs	Outcome	Sex, age	Annually	AKA reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of AKA alumni self-employed	Outcome	Sex, age	Annually	AKA reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	% of partners confirming importance of AKA products and expressing satisfaction with skills of AKA graduates	Outcome	N/A	Annually	AKA reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
Sub IR 1.1./Outputs: Youth acquire work readiness (life/employability and technical) skills and business management knowledge	# of youth trained in life/employability skills	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of youth trained in technical skills	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of youth trained in digital skills and internet-based research	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of youth trained in language skills	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams

	# of youth and/or youth businesses/initiatives provided with trainings tailored to their business	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	A survey on satisfaction with AKA graduates' skills and importance of AKA products conducted	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
Sub IR 1.2./Output: Youth received transition to work services	# of AKA training graduates facilitated to access internship opportunities	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of AKA training graduates facilitated to access job opportunities	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	An inventory of employers (in AKA fields of trainings) created and updated	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of CVs of AKA training graduates uploaded on the online portal	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	Online portal of AKA laureates created and advertised	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of organized AKA alumni events (including employers, donors, and other partners and stakeholders) organized	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	Conduct a sector-based market opportunities assessment/mapping					
Sub IR 1.3./Output: University graduates encouraged for mind-set change regarding self-employment and technical skills	# of university students or graduates initiating IGAs	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of university students or graduates initiating IGAs	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of university graduates manifesting commitment to technical training and self-employment	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams

	# of university students or graduates trained in technical skills	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
Sub IR1.4./Output: Introduce AKA E-Learning program	# of TVET schools, IPRCs or others benefiting e-learning roll-out	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of E-learning modules/materials available	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	A feasibility study of E-learning tool (on AKA Website) conduct	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
Sub IR1.5./Output: Training of trainers (ToTs) conducted	# of individuals trained as ToTs (TVET facilitators, secondary school teachers, university teachers, local level officials, etc)	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams

Results	Indicators	Indicator type	Disaggregation	Data collection		
				Frequency	Data source	Responsibility
Strategic goal # 2: Support access to finance, increased productivity and effectiveness of youth entrepreneurs						
Result/impact: Economic growth and effective youth entrepreneurs	% increase in incomes of youth businesses supported by AKA	Impact	N/A	Twice	Mid-term and final reports	AKA Management
	% of youth satisfied by AKA business support services	Impact	Sex, age	Twice	Mid-term and final reports	AKA Management
	Payback rate of youth loans to financial institutions	Impact	Sex, age	Twice	Mid-term and final reports	AKA Management
IR 2./outcome: Youth businesses increase productivity	Total savings (Frw) by SLAs of AKA alumni	Outcome	N/A	Annually	Reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams

	Total loans (Frw) distributed by SLAs of AKA alumni	Outcome	Sex, age	Annually	Reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	Total loans (Frw) offered by banks to youth	Outcome	Sex, age	Annually	Reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of businesses provided with loans by financial institutions	Outcome	N/A	Annually	Reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	% of successful beneficiaries of start-up kits	Outcome	N/A	Annually	Reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
Sub-IR. 2.1. Youth IGAs supported with equipment and/or start-up kits	# of selected youth or youth groups provided with start-up kits and/or equipment	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of selected youth or youth groups provided with start-up capital	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
Sub-IR. 2.2.: Youth provided with access to capital services	# of youth or businesses facilitated to link with relevant institutions for loan application - financial institutions, BDF, etc.	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of youth or youth groups supported by AKA to develop business plans/projects	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
Sub-IR. 2.3.: Accompaniment, mentorship and coaching services provided to youth entrepreneurs and engagement of AKA Alumni strengthened	# of SLAs created by AKA alumni	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of members of SLAs	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of coaching and mentoring visits per business conducted	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams

	# of businesses advised (physical visits and/or remote support)	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of AKA Alumni/graduates testimonies on importance of AKA support and youth life-changing stories shared/uploaded to the website	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	AKA online Alumni portal set up	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	A tracer survey for the AKA graduates conducted; employed, self-employed, and still looking for jobs are known	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams

Results	Indicators	Indicator type	Disaggregation	Data collection		
				Frequency	Data source	Responsibility
Strategic goal # 3: Advocate and strengthen partnerships for youth friendly policies and programs						
Result 3/impact: Conducive environment for youth entrepreneurs	Level of appreciation of development policies/programs by youth	Impact	N/A	Twice	Mid-term and final reports	AKA Management
	# of policies and programs improved	Impact	N/A	Twice	Mid-term and final reports	AKA Management
IR 3./outcome: Improved youth friendly policies and economic programs strengthened	# of laws and regulations with AKA contribution	Outcome	N/A	Annually	Reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of policy briefs/position papers submitted	Outcome	N/A	Annually	Reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# and names of AKA affiliated advocacy networks and forums	Outcome	N/A	Annually	Reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams

Sub-IR. 3.1. Conduct evidence-based advocacy	# of advocacy initiatives and/or events attended	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of advocacy initiatives and/or events organized	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of youth-related research or policy works/analysis conducted	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
Sub-IR. 3.2.: Collaborate, complement and partner with stakeholders for youth development	# of MoUs signed with partners and stakeholders	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of youth/students supported by AKA products following MoUs with their schools/centers, NGOs, MIFOTRA, RTB, etc.	Output	Sex, age	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	A mapping/survey report of partners intervening in the youth economic empowerment sector	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams

Results	Indicators	Indicator type	Disaggregation	Data collection		
				Frequency	Data source	Responsibility
Strategic goal # 4: Improve AKA institutional capacity						
Result/impact: AKA systems are strengthened and capacities, ownership and sustainability improved	# of new donors and/or new projects obtained	Impact	N/A	Twice	Mid-term and final reports	AKA Management
	% increase of funding	Impact	N/A	Twice	Mid-term and final reports	AKA Management
	# and titles of internal policies, strategies and systems developed/improved	Impact	N/A	Twice	Mid-term and final reports	AKA Management

IR 4./outcome: AKA systems, ownership and sustainability reinforced	# and titles of internal policies, strategies and systems developed/improved	Outcome	N/A	Annually	Reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	Feasibility study report for AKA Youth Microfinance disseminated to relevant stakeholders	Outcome	N/A	Annually	Reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	Feasibility study report for AKA Youth Training Center in Kigali disseminated to relevant stakeholders	Outcome	N/A	Annually	Reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	% increase of visitors of AKA communication channels (website and other platforms)	Outcome	N/A	Annually	Reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
Sub-IR. 4.1. AKA internal systems and structure strengthened	# and titles of AKA internal policies and strategies developed/improved (including: the resource mobilization and sustainability strategy; communication policy/strategy; gender mainstreaming and inclusion policy; whistleblowing policy; harassment, sexual harassment and exploitation policy).	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	AKA's organizational structure updated	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	A more robust AKA Data Management Information System (MIS) put in place and operationalized	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of statutory events organized/held (General Assembly meetings, staff meetings)					

Sub-IR. 4.2.: AKA funding base diversified	# of AKA donors events (such as breakfast and reflection meetings) organized	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of project proposals submitted for funding to new donors	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	A market and capacity needs assessment of private actors (including big and small businesses and NGOs) conducted	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# and types of private businesses/NGOs that procured AKA products and services	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	Feasibility study of AKA Youth Microfinance initiated and produced	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	Feasibility study of AKA Youth Training Center in Kigali initiated and produced	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
Sub-IR. 4.3.: Capacities of AKA staff and organs continuously improved	Institutional capacity development plan put in place (after mapping staff capacity needs)	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# and types of trainings and events organized to continuously increase capacities of AKA staff and organs in relevant fields identified	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
Sub-IR. 4.4.: AKA organization's	AKA's communication and branding strategy initiated or adapted	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports,	MEL and technical teams

visibility and outreach improved					MEL database	
	AKA quarterly newsletters regularly published	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	AKA's communication channels maintained and regularly updated (Website, and Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn accounts)	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams
	# of regional/field offices established and operationalized	Output	N/A	Annually	Performance reports, MEL database	MEL and technical teams

ANNEX 3: BUDGET ESTIMATE