

HCL and UpLink Call for Applications Globally for Aquapreneur Innovation Initiative

New York, 20 September 2022: HCL, a global conglomerate and UpLink, the open innovation platform of the World Economic Forum, announced today that applications have opened for the Global Freshwater Innovation Challenge. This is the first out of five Challenges of the HCL and UpLink's Aquapreneur Innovation Initiative, a programme to source innovative solutions to conserve and restore freshwater ecosystems, from 'aquapreneurs' (water focused entrepreneurs). The Initiative, launched during the Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos in May 2022, will create a first-of-its-kind innovation ecosystem for the global freshwater sector. The last date to apply is November 08, 2022. Full details and eligibility criteria can be found at this [link](#). HCL has committed \$15 million over five years to support the water focused entrepreneurs.

Roshni Nadar Malhotra, Chairperson of HCL Technologies said, *"An innovation ecosystem can enable water entrepreneurs with resources and mentoring to invest in creating new solutions and improving any existing ones for scale and impact. There are entrepreneurs and start-ups that have the potential to provide contextualized solutions to conserve freshwater and have been trying to create impact in small ways within small ecosystems. Out of these, many struggle to secure financing and lack the operational capacity to scale their solutions. HCL, through its large network and partnership with the World Economic Forum's UpLink, is keen to ensure that these entrepreneurs are identified and supported."*

The first year's challenge, called the Global Freshwater Challenge, will **focus** on:

- **Improved decision-making:** solutions that fill knowledge gaps, improve data collection, and create transparent and accessible data (i.e., solutions that monitor and forecast water use & demand)
- **Water quality restoration:** solutions that tackle water quality by monitoring, treating, restoring or protecting it. (i.e. solutions such as solar distillers for water purification)
- **Ecosystem resilience:** solutions that protect source waters across the value chain and strengthen resilience to climate and weather-related shocks, taking into consideration the most vulnerable areas at risk (i.e. solutions that reduce water evapotranspiration from extreme heat, or ways to absorb and store acute flooding)

Gim Huay Neo, Managing Director of the Centre for Nature and Climate at the World Economic Forum says, *"The Aquapreneur Innovation Initiative invites all entrepreneurs to participate to scale and accelerate their solutions and impact. Through this initiative, we seek to enhance freshwater resilience and better protect our water resource. The collaboration with HCL and UpLink will provide a platform for the top innovators to connect with public and private partners, as well as gain access to venture funds, to jointly transform our sustainable management and use of freshwater systems"*.

HCL and UpLink are looking for:

- **Stage:** Impact-oriented start-ups that are at pilot, growth or scale-up phase, with demonstrated success towards scale (i.e., a proven track record with measurable results and impact). Solutions that represent an "idea" or "prototype" phase will not be considered.
- **Business Model:** Ideally seeking for-profit start-up companies or social enterprises with a sustainable, and ideally hybrid, funding model.
- **Scale:** Start-ups which demonstrate the potential to scale, particularly for communities most impacted, alongside a vision for achieving long-term financial viability and sustainability.



Selected entrepreneurs will have the opportunity to work closely with industry experts, investors, and ecosystem partners to further develop their innovative solution, to scale and drive further impact.

About HCL Group

Founded in 1976 as one of India's original IT garage start-ups, HCL is a pioneer of modern computing with many firsts to its credit, including the introduction of the 8-bit microprocessor-based computer in 1978 well before its global peers. Today, the HCL Group has business presence across sectors including technology and healthcare and comprises three group companies –HCL Technologies, HCL Infosystems and HCL Healthcare. The Group generates annual revenues of over US\$11.8 billion with more than 211,000 employees operating across 52 countries.

HCL Technologies, a group company, empowers global enterprises with technology for the next decade, today. As a leading global technology company, it takes pride in its diversity, social responsibility, sustainability and education initiatives. HCL Technologies is also a strategic partner of the World Economic Forum.

About UpLink

UpLink is the open innovation platform of the World Economic Forum, dedicated to unlocking an 'entrepreneur revolution' to support positive systemic change for people and planet. Launched at the Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos in January 2020 in collaboration with Salesforce and Deloitte, Uplink is now a thriving ecosystem of 50,000+ entrepreneurs, investors and experts, who are collaborating around innovation for the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

For further information, visit www.hcl.com

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