ST4A Programme: Endorsement Process

Within the SusTech4Africa (ST4A) programme, OVO integrates compliance and due diligence as a structured preparation and screening process alongside coaching. This process ensures that projects advancing through OVO's pipeline meet essential standards and positions them for informed decision-making.

Compliance checks do not provide investment advice or guarantees. Instead, they verify whether projects meet OVO's internal requirements before being considered for the OVO Certification, which signals readiness to be presented to potential investors.

The Compliance Cell drives this process. It comprises a pool of Compliance Officers who investigate the accuracy, completeness, and consistency of information for potential and existing investments. All compliance efforts support OVO's goal of preparing African SMEs for investment and facilitating responsible growth.

Selection Phase - During the selection phase, compliance focuses on initially screening projects for eligibility and readiness to enter the ST4A programme. After local partners conduct pre-assessments, a team of OVO experts selects projects that meet OVO's eligibility criteria for the Boost Camp, as detailed in Annex 1. At this stage, compliance verification checks the availability and basic consistency of key documents outlined in the OVO Compliance Document List.

This initial compliance check confirms that projects maintain a minimum level of structure and legitimacy to benefit from coaching and development. It does not judge investment suitability.

Development phase - Compliance is fully embedded in the development phase as a capacity-building and professionalisation process. Entrepreneurs, supported by Business Coaches and experts, progressively work towards meeting OVO's compliance standards while developing their grow and financial plans.

Throughout this phase, the Compliance Document List functions as a roadmap rather than a pass/fail checklist. Entrepreneurs are guided to:

- Develop their growth plan and strategic priorities;
- Align financial documentation and create a coherent financial plan, including projections aligned with their growth objectives;
- Structure and formalise their legal and governance documentation;
- Reflect on social responsibility, sustainability, impact, and ethical considerations through the SDG Assessment, in line with their business model and growth ambitions.

OVO supports this process by providing structured databases, templates, and tailored compliance document lists. Train-the-trainer sessions equip Business Coaches with familiarity with OVO's compliance standards and tools. When necessary, Business Coaches call upon Country Coordinators or Compliance Officers for targeted support.

Compliance during this phase recognises that projects are still evolving. The objective is not full investor-grade due diligence but to ensure entrepreneurs understand compliance requirements and engage transparently with future investors.

At the end of the development phase, projects seeking financing undergo a final compliance and due diligence review by the Compliance Cell. This review verifies the completeness of documentation and confirms minimal conditions are met. Only projects that pass this review move forward to the Investment Committee for final decision-making as part of the endorsement process.

By embedding compliance and due diligence across all ST4A phases, OVO maintains minimal quality standards, supports higher-performing SMEs, mitigates risks for entrepreneurs and investors, and ultimately contributes to more sustainable and resilient investment outcomes.