African Water Facility
Facilité africaine de l'eau

Mobilising Resources for Water in Africa

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE AWF 2026 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

General Information

Q1.1 - What is the African Water Facility, and what are its two financing windows?

TheAWF is a multi-donor Special Fund of the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW), established in 2004 and hosted and administered by the African Development Bank. It provides financing through two windows: (i) the AWF Grant and Technical Assistance Financing (AwGTF) window, which offers grants and technical assistance/studies; and (ii) the AUSII Investment Financing (AUSII-IF) window, launched under the African Urban Sanitation Investment Initiative (AUSII), which provides grants for project preparation activities as well as concessional loans and guarantee instruments to catalyse private-sector investment in urban sanitation.

Eligibility for funding under the 2026 Call for Proposals

Q2.1 – Eligibility of sovereign and non-sovereign entities to apply for funding under this 2026 Call for Proposals?

Entitieseligible for AWF grantsunder this Callfor Proposals are:

- For project preparation requests (as indicated in Section E.1 of the template under “SP1- Project Preparation to Catalyse Investments for Water Security and Safe Sanitation”) including funding requests to prepare feasibility studies and master plans, to carry out institutional development activities and studies, etc., only public entities (sovereign entities) are eligible to apply. These include:
  - Regional Member Countries (RMCs) of the African Development Bank; this includes national and sun-national agencies such as ministries, municipalities, water and sanitation utilities, state-owned enterprises, etc.
  - Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and their special institutions.
  - Other regional governmental agencies such as transboundary river and/or lake basin organizations; groundwater organizations; etc.
  - Partnerships between public entities and NGOs are eligible where appropriate. In such cases, the public entity must be the applicant. The proposal should clearly justify why the particular NGO has been selected, demonstrate the added value of the partnership, and explain why the government is

unable to implement the proposed activities on its own.

- For projectrequests under “SP2-SecuringWaterand Sanitation Finance and Investment” in Section E.1, non-sovereign entities may apply. Non-sovereign entities include private companies, commercial banks, microfinance institutions, impact funds, Public–Private Partnerships, and NGOs/CSOs. See Q2.3, Q2.4 and Q2.7 for more details.

Q2.2 Can an individual apply for an AWF grant?

No. AWF funding is restricted to eligible institutional entities, sovereign bodies, regional/transboundary organizations, and qualifying non-sovereign organizations (See Q2.1) that satisfy the conditions defined in the Call for Proposals. Applications from individual natural persons are not accepted.

Q2.3 What is meant by “Other eligible entities” in the eligibility criteria?

The Call's eligibility criteria list specifies (i) RMCs; (ii) public institutions and implementing agencies affiliated with RMCs; (iii) regional and transboundary organizations; and (iv) “other eligible entities in accordance with AWF operational policies and procedures.”

“Other eligible entities” include qualifying non-sovereign entities such as private companies, financial institutions, PPPs, and NGOs/CSOs, commercial banks, specifically for funding under AWF’s Strategic Priority 1 (See Section E.1 in the template).

Q2.4 Can a non-sovereign entity apply for funding through Strategic Priority SP1?

Non-sovereign entities **cannot** apply for investment project preparation funding (SP1). Note that SP1 (Project Preparation to Catalyse Investments for Water Security and Safe Sanitation) includes project preparation (such as feasibility studies), governance work (such as master/investment planning, institutional development and capacity building, and catalytic projects.

Q2.5 Are UN agencies eligible to apply for AWF funding?

No, the United Nations and its specialized agencies are not eligible to apply for AWF grant funding. They can, however, act as co-financiers for a project funding request through a sovereign entity.

Q2.6 Is a consortium of organizations eligible to apply for AWF funding?

A consortium cannot apply directly (be the lead applicant) for AWF funding. However, an eligible sovereign entity (or a non-sovereign entity in the case of SP2 (see Section E.1) may act as the lead applicant and grant recipient, with the other consortium members participating as implementing partners or service providers. The lead applicant alone holds the grant relationship with AWF.

Q2.7 Can a consulting/engineering firm help the government prepare a proposal, and can it later bid for the resulting implementation contract?

Yes, a consulting or engineering firm may assist an eligible applicant in preparing its proposal.This assistance is governed by a service provision agreement between the firm and the applicant and does not need to be declared to AWF at the submission stage. However, where a firm has participated in preparing a proposal, this constitutes a conflict of interest, meaning that firm will not be eligible to participate in the subsequent procurement process for consulting services financed by the resulting AWF grant.

Eligible activities and conditions

Q3.1 What is the difference between a “feasibility study” and a “project at an advanced stage of preparation”?

The fundamental difference lies in the project's maturity and its progress toward investment readiness (bankability):

- Feasibility Study: This is a foundational, investigative stage. It involves comprehensively evaluating a proposed project to determine whether it should proceed. This phase rigorously assesses the project's technical practicality, financial and economic viability, and overall social and environmental sustainability. At this stage, the core viability of the investment is still being established.
- Advanced Stage of Preparation: This refers to a mature project that has already successfully completed a full feasibility study. The project's viability has been proven, but it requires targeted, final adjustments to become fully "bankable" and ready to secure financing.

Grants for projects at an advanced stage of preparation are typically used for funding activities such as:

- Updating existing environmental and social assessments to meet current standards.
- Finalizing or implementing Resettlement Action Plans (RAPs) and Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs).
- Making final tweaks to engineering designs.
- Preparing or refining formal bidding documents for procurement.

Q3.2 What is the 30% downstream funding condition for investment project preparation applications, and does it apply to master plans, knowledge-building, or capacity-building activities?

The 30%downstream funding condition stipulates that an application for investment project preparation will be considered significantly stronger and more competitive if the applicant can demonstrate indicative commitments covering at least 30% of the project's preliminary estimated downstream investment costs.

The purpose of this requirement is to act as a viability filter. It ensures that AWF grant resources are strategically deployed to support upstream preparation activities for projects that have a high probability of reaching financial closure and successful implementation, thereby avoiding the risk of funding studies that never materialize into physical investments.

This condition does not apply to foundational or non-infrastructure activities such as the development of master plans, knowledge-building, or capacity-building. The 30% threshold is specifically designed for capital investment projects where mobilizing downstream infrastructure financing is the primary, measurable objective.

Q3.3 What is the national endorsement requirement (see Section E.4) for an application led by a non-sovereign entity (for an SP2 project)?

Non-sovereign entities eligibletoapply for certain AUSII funded activities (specifically throughSP2(see Section E.1) must provide evidence of government support, either through a Memorandum of Understanding with a public institution or a letter signed by an appropriate national or regional government official, confirming that the proposed activities are consistent with national or regional water and sanitation priorities.

Q3.4 What is the maximum grant amount available under the 2026 Call for Proposals?

One(1)million € is the maximum grant amount available for each project request. Any request above this threshold will risk being rejected.

Q3.5 Is there a limit on the number of proposals a single organization may submit?

No,there is no official limit on the number ofapplications a single organization cansubmit.

However, while multiple submissions are permissible, the AWF strongly advises applicants to prioritize quality over quantity. When considering submitting more than one proposal, organizations should keep the following strategic points in mind:

- Independent Evaluation: Every proposal is reviewed and scored independently on its own individual merits. Submitting multiple proposals does not inherently increase the chances of any single project being selected.
- Strategic Focus: Developing a high-quality, competitive application requires significant time, data, and resources. Applicants are encouraged to focus their efforts on their strongest, most robust projects that perfectly align with the AWF’s core mandate and the specific objectives of the Call.
- Distinct Project Scopes: If an organization chooses to submit multiple applications, each proposal must represent a clearly distinct project. There must be no overlap in scope, deliverables, target beneficiaries, or funding requests across the submissions.

Q3.6 If you already have a project that was shortlisted under the 2023 Call for Proposals but not yet funded, should you reapply for this project under this 2026 Call for Proposals?

No, youshould not reapply using the sameproposal.

The reason for this depends on the exact status of your previous application and whether the project itself has changed:

- Active Pipeline Projects: If your application was successfully shortlisted (selected) but simply hasn't received funding yet, it remains active within the AWF project pipeline. It continues to be eligible for financing as resources become available, making a duplicate application unnecessary.
- Unchanged, Unsuccessful Projects: If your application was reviewed and ultimately not selected, resubmitting the identical proposal under the 2026 Call will result in the same outcome (rejection).
- The Exception (Substantially Modified Projects): The only scenario where a previous concept should be submitted again is if the project has undergone significant redesign, structural modifications, or improvements. If the proposal has been substantially modified, you may submit it, but it will be evaluated entirely as a new application rather than a resubmission.

SCAN TO RETURN TO THE CALL FOR PROPOSAL