

## **AWF 2026 CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR PROJECT PREPARATION GRANTS**

### **Building Africa's Strategic Pipeline of Investment-Ready Water and Sanitation Projects**

The African Water Facility (AWF), an initiative the African Ministers' Council on Water, and administered by the African Development Bank Group, is pleased to launch its 2026 Call for Proposals (CfP) under the framework of the AWF 2026–2030 Strategy.

Through this CfP, AWF seeks to identify high-impact, investment-oriented projects and initiatives in the water and sanitation sectors across Africa that can accelerate access to finance, strengthen climate resilience, improve service delivery, and catalyse sustainable and inclusive development.

The CfP forms part of AWF's strategic effort to strengthen its pipeline of bankable operations and mobilise downstream investments in support of Africa's water security and sanitation agenda.

### **1. Background and Rationale**

As part of the implementation of its 2026–2030 Strategy, AWF aims to proactively strengthen its strategic project pipeline to ensure a continuous flow of high-quality operations aligned with its priority areas and capable of generating downstream investments.

Accordingly, AWF intends to:

- Expand the volume and diversity of projects within its pipeline;
- Increase the number of projects at advanced stages of preparation;
- Strengthen support for last-mile project readiness;
- Promote innovative and catalytic investment initiatives; and
- Enhance support for climate-resilient and inclusive water and sanitation services.

The 2026 CfP is therefore designed to identify projects with strong development impact and clear potential to reach technical and financial maturity.

Emphasis will be placed on projects requiring targeted support to address critical preparation gaps and accelerate progress toward investment readiness and financial close.

### **2. Objectives of the Call**

The objective of the 2026 CfP is to identify high-impact projects fully aligned with the AWF 2026–2030 Strategy and capable of catalysing downstream investments and strengthening the enabling environment for sustainable water and sanitation financing.

Specifically, the Call seeks to:

1. Strengthen AWF's pipeline of bankable and investment-ready projects;
2. Catalyse downstream investments from public and private financing institutions;
3. Accelerate project preparation through targeted technical and financial support;
4. Strengthen governance, institutional capacity, and sector coordination;
5. Promote innovative and scalable approaches to water and sanitation service delivery; and
6. Advance cross-cutting priorities including climate resilience, gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), and private sector participation.

### **3. Priority Areas**

AWF invites proposals for project preparation studies that contribute to the development of bankable water and sanitation investments in Africa and align with one or more of the following priority areas:

|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>PROJECT PREPARATION FOR INVESTMENT READINESS</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation studies linked to clearly identified and prioritised investment projects;</li> <li>• Advanced projects toward bankability (feasibility studies, detailed design, transaction structuring);</li> <li>• Last-mile readiness support for projects at advanced stages of preparation; initiatives close to financial or technical maturity have a high impact, and that can be rapidly implemented.</li> <li>• Indicative requirement: minimum 30% downstream financing identified, evidenced through MoUs, letters of intent, or commitments</li> </ul> |
| <b>MOBILISATION OF FINANCE AND CATALYTIC INVESTMENTS</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects with strong potential to catalyse downstream investments (ADB, ADF, private sector, partners);</li> <li>• Innovative financing approaches (blended finance, risk-sharing instruments, results-based financing);</li> <li>• Initiatives supporting SME participation and market development.</li> <li>• Projects demonstrating clear pathways for private sector participation, including PPP structuring, service contracts, or blended finance models;</li> </ul>                                                                                      |

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of market interest, such as expressions of interest, prefeasibility validation, or investor engagement;</li> <li>• Revenue-generating or cost-recovery mechanisms supporting financial sustainability.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>CLIMATE-RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects integrating climate resilience and adaptation measures;</li> <li>• Application of nature-based solutions (NbS) alongside grey infrastructure;</li> <li>• Interventions promoting sustainable and climate-smart water and sanitation services.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>GOVERNANCE, INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector reforms and institutional strengthening to improve the investment environment;</li> <li>• Strengthening planning, regulatory, and coordination frameworks;</li> <li>• Development of National strategies and master plans, investment programmes, and prioritised pipelines at national, regional, urban, or basin level.</li> </ul>                                                                                           |
| <b>INNOVATION AND SECTOR TRANSFORMATION</b>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovative technical, financial, and business models for service delivery;</li> <li>• Solutions promoting circular economy and resource recovery;</li> <li>• Decentralised and context-appropriate solutions, especially for secondary cities and underserved areas;</li> <li>• Pilot initiatives with strong scalability and replication potential.</li> </ul>                                                                       |
| <b>HIGH-IMPACT AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban and rural water supply and WASH, including CWIS/FSM aligned interventions;</li> <li>• Sustainable water resources management, including multi-sectoral planning (water–energy–food nexus);</li> <li>• Climate-resilient solutions and environmental protection; and Contributions to GESI, economic development, and sustainability;</li> <li>• Regional and transboundary initiatives with high development impact;</li> </ul> |
| <b>SANITATION SECTOR</b>                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-site sanitation (FSM, septage management, CWIS)</li> <li>• Sewerage systems (centralized / hybrid)</li> <li>• Wastewater treatment &amp; reuse</li> <li>• Nature-based sanitation solutions</li> <li>• Urban &amp; peri-urban sanitation service models</li> <li>• Institutional / regulatory sanitation frameworks</li> </ul>                                                                                                     |

## 4. Eligibility

The CfP is open to:

- Regional Member Countries (RMCs);
- Public institutions and implementing agencies in the water and sanitation sectors affiliated with RMCs;
- Regional and transboundary organisations, including river, lake, and groundwater basin organisations;
- Other eligible entities in accordance with AWF operational policies and procedures.

## 5. Financing Modalities

AWF will provide grant financing not exceeding EUR 1 million per selected project.

This ceiling applies exclusively to the AWF contribution and does not limit the total project cost. Projects with larger financing requirements may be considered, provided they demonstrate credible co-financing arrangements or investment potential.

Priority will be given to projects that:

- Already benefit from partial preparation support or financing from other sources;
- Clearly identify preparation gaps requiring AWF intervention;
- Demonstrate co-financing commitments or investor interest;
- Are at advanced stages of preparation and close to investment readiness.

Eligible activities may include:

- Feasibility studies;
- Detailed engineering designs;
- Environmental and social assessments;
- Transaction advisory services;
- Financial structuring;
- Institutional and regulatory strengthening activities.

## 6. Selection Process

The selection process will be conducted through a single-stage competitive application process designed to accelerate the identification and integration of high-quality projects into the AWF Strategic Project Pipeline.

Applicants shall submit a complete Project Funding Application using the official AWF Application Template. Following submission, applications will undergo a comprehensive technical and strategic evaluation by the AWF against the published eligibility and selection criteria.

The evaluation process will comprise the following stages:

7. Eligibility Screening – Verification of compliance with the eligibility requirements and completeness of the application.
8. Technical and Strategic Evaluation – Assessment of proposals against the published selection criteria, including strategic alignment, project readiness, investment potential, implementation capacity, climate resilience, GESI, innovation, and financial sustainability.
9. Pipeline Integration and Project Appraisal – Successful proposals will be admitted into the AWF Strategic Project Pipeline. Selected applicants may subsequently be requested to provide additional information or refine aspects of the proposal during the detailed appraisal process prior to grant approval, in accordance with AWF operational procedures.

## 7. Application Requirements

Applicants shall submit a complete Project Funding Application using the official AWF Application Template.

The application should provide sufficient information to enable AWF to assess:

- The development challenge and proposed intervention.
- Strategic alignment with national priorities and the AWF Strategy.
- Technical quality and project readiness.
- Expected development outcomes and beneficiaries.
- Downstream investment potential.
- Climate resilience, GESI and environmental sustainability.
- Institutional and implementation arrangements.
- Budget and financing plan.
- Key project risks and mitigation measures.

Applicants are encouraged to provide evidence supporting the maturity of the proposed project, including existing studies, government approvals, financing commitments, investor interest, or other documentation where available.

## 8. National Endorsement Requirements

To ensure strategic alignment with national development priorities and avoid fragmented submissions:

- All applications must include an official endorsement from the relevant national authority responsible for the water and sanitation sector.
- Applications should demonstrate consistency with national development plans, sector strategies, investment programmes, or master plans.
- For regional and transboundary initiatives, evidence of endorsement from participating countries or regional institutions should be provided where applicable.
- AWF reserves the right to limit the number of shortlisted proposals per country to ensure strategic coherence.

## 9. Submission of Proposals

Eligible applicants are invited to submit a complete Project Funding Application using the official AWF Application Template.

The application package shall include:

- Completed AWF Project Funding Application Form;
- Project Budget and Financing Plan;
- Implementation Schedule;
- Project Location Map;
- National Endorsement Letter; and
- Any supporting technical documentation available, such as pre-feasibility studies, feasibility studies, master plans, environmental assessments, or other relevant reports.

Detailed application guidelines and submission instructions will be published on the AWF website upon the official launch of the Call.

## 10. Indicative Timeline

| Activity                                 | Indicative Timing  |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Launch of the CfP                        | 15 July 2026       |
| Submission of project proposals          | 25 September 2026  |
| Review of project proposals              | 15 October 2026 15 |
| Final Selection and Pipeline Integration | 15 November 2026   |

## 11. About the African Water Facility

The African Water Facility (AWF) is an initiative of the African Ministers' Council on water, administered by The Development Bank, dedicated to mobilising investment and strengthening water security and sanitation across Africa through project preparation, investment facilitation, and sector innovation.

Since its establishment, AWF has supported the preparation of transformative water and sanitation investments across the continent while catalysing financing from development partners, governments, and private investors.

## 12. Contact Information

For further information regarding the 2026 CfP, please contact:

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CC:

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