



WE4F MENA Open Call for Innovations – 2nd Q&A Webinar

Q: Would it be possible for me to submit my proposal of an agricultural project to your organization? This project combines research, training and production. It satisfies every prerequisite for admission to your program.

A: The program supports private for-profit organizations or non-profit organizations with a for-profit arm or organizations in academia with a for-profit arm that are working with scalable sustainable innovations at the nexus of water-energy-food. All applicants must be registered in one of the 10 MENA countries covered by the program or have at least one local partner that is registered in one of these countries. The innovation must be already marketed with proven traction and production ongoing.

Q: I dream about establishing a small beer factory. I have experience as an individual for making beer and whisky from malt. I aim to offer great support for woman workers in my field, which is cereal technology.

A: This program is mainly designed to support organizations who have innovations around the food value chain. As such, Beer, Whisky and other beverages are not eligible.

Q: Is it possible for me to participate in the competition as an innovative person who does not have an organization, and my only project in Iraq is to participate in railways and iron transporting gas by train, knowing that the fleet has been idle for 25 years due to technical modification, to support energy and increase strategic gas storage?

A: You need to have an established company, proven market and traction and an innovation that is related to the water-energy-food nexus and the company should be legally registered.

Q: Please provide me with a way to participate in the WE4F program for innovators and entrepreneurs.

A: You can apply via the link: <https://we4f.org/apply-mena>. You can apply in English, French or in Arabic.

Q: What was the average grant amount disbursed to companies in the previous CFIs?

A: This is different for each cohort and each type of company. An average cannot be provided.

Q: Is the matching fund mandatory and is it necessary to secure the entire matching fund amount before signing the grant agreement? Can a funding promise be considered sufficient for the 1:1 criterion? In other words, can a company receive a grant from WE4F if the matching fund is in the form of a promise of funding rather than an actual direct investment from the company? Are there specifics or description of the matching fund from our side? Could it be in kind? Also, could bank loans



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or other grants cover the matching fund? Can the matching fund be invested in construction or machinery or are there any obligations similar to the fund part?

A: Yes, the matching fund is mandatory. It is important to identify the sources of the entire matching fund and secure as much as possible the commitments before signing the grant agreement. At the time of each disbursement of a grant tranche, the equivalent matching fund must be secured - that means it must have been received by the company and potentially invested, so it can be payment of a loan tranche, proof of payment of invoices/salaries under the matching fund budget with OPEX higher than grant previous disbursements, capital injection, minutes of the meeting of a board acknowledging reinvestment of profits (especially if the whole business is under WE4F activity) etc.. At no time, the total of grant payments disbursed can be greater than the total matching funds amount received, supported by documentation provided by the innovator. Bank loans, capital injections, reinvested profits and other grants also qualify. Yes, the matching fund can be invested in construction or machinery provided the environmental risk is managed.

Q: In the application form, page 13. Point 5 Grant request and Matching Funds, what is the difference between article (a.) and article (b.)?

A: Article (a.) means how much investment financing you will need to scale your innovation to 10-1000s of end users, so it is requesting the total cost of your growth plan. Article (b.) Asks what are your expected sources of funds and/or in-kind contributions to meet this target, when combined with WE4F support (please estimate a monetary value in US Dollars). So how are you planning to fund it, (i.e., through WE4F grants, bank loan, shareholder loan, reinvested profits etc). Please give the break-down of the total costs by funding source.

Q: Are there any restrictions on fund transfers to Tunisian and Algerian companies?

A: From WE4F's side there are no restrictions, if the banking system in Tunisia or Algeria can accommodate external transfers in foreign currencies.

Q: Can salaries be included in the financed activities?

A: Yes, it could fund new people onboarded and/or also existing employees working on the activity supported by WE4F. However, this will be subject to the budget revision and approval upon submission of a full proposal, noting that senior positions, non-local staff, and board members's salaries may not be included in the grant budget

Q: Should we be providing information about the potential customers that are going to benefit from the innovation we're proposing? Or should we provide information based on the actual current End-users/ customers benefiting from our products/services now, which are not using innovative techniques in water/energy consumption?

A: It is important that we see both your track record in providing water and/or energy solutions to end users in agri-food value chains (number of customers and end-users, revenues, etc. as well as your future targets and plans to achieve these targets. Both your track record and future plans are important for us to understand your experience and scale-up potential.



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Q: Can we apply with a new start-up, meaning a new business company, but with MVP?

A: No, unless the start-up is applying in partnership with an established organization or is a spin-off. Our eligibility asks for a proven track record of serving end-users and customers.

Q: Can the project include buying equipment to replace existing equipment that is known to save 30% on water and 20% on energy? The equipment is innovative in MENA region.

A: Yes, if the tech is going to save water/energy and is applied in the food production value chain. We welcome upgrades that lead to additional savings, but if the organization is not generating any savings yet and plan to do so with the grant, it is not eligible.

Q: Is there a prerequisite of the number of members in the company, mainly in the management team?

A: No, there is not a minimum number of management members. Having said that, management with complementary skills and gender balance and clear assignment of responsibilities and segregation of duties are a positive point for the application eligibility. If eligible, any deficiency will be addressed in the co-creation phase.

Q: Do you provide grants to companies that have invented local production lines using solar energy to produce and market grains as well as seeds and their related items for farmers?

A: Producing with solar energy alone is not enough of a criterion, but if the whole approach is about helping the end-users produce/process food that helps create energy and/or water savings when compared to alternatives, or making a special impact on the end-users from a livelihood perspective, then it is eligible. Selling production lines working on solar energy may be eligible if there is an innovative approach to it and proven traction with existing customers.

Q: We applied for the link from previous week, is it enough or should we apply again?

Please note that it takes 3-4 months to review applications. The MENA RIH will inform you if you are successful, or not successful, in moving to the next round.

In case you applied to the Iraq Call for Innovations which closed on January 7, please note that you can apply to both if you are working in Iraq, but it must be with different innovations. You will only be selected for one of them.

Q: What scope does the funding cover? Machines, operations, salaries...?

A: The grant funding covers operational costs, including salaries (subject to approval during pre-award stage) based on the activity the program is covering. Equipment including machines are accepted, provided their value is below 5,000 USD. If the value exceeds 5,000 USD, it requires special approval.

Q: What is the timeline to this project? When will it start and end?

A: If you apply to the OCFI now, by the end of April/early May you will sign an agreement and then you will receive the grant amounts based on your milestone submission schedule in the grant agreement.



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Please consult the solicitation document page for more information and note that no activity can outlast the overall WE4F program end date - July 2025.

Q: How much is allocated for technical support and what does it include? When does TA support start?

A: Technical assistance (TA) is an additional component of support that is separate from the grant, it is not deducted from the amount you are awarded. You will receive 2-3 months of support (or more), depending on the performance and commitment to the program. TA covers investment readiness, financial matters, tech, training, business modeling, quality control, UX/UI - anything needed for company growth. The hub offers other forms of TA like advisory from the hub staff and ad-hoc support. How much TA and how many instances you will receive will depend on your individual assessment. Some companies receive 4 or 5 instances, while others may need only 1 or 2. Part of the co-creation process of creating your Transformational Work Plan is to set activities, targets, and identify your technical support needs. If you are onboarded during this OCFI round, TA will kick off around May-June.

Q: In the application there are some unclear questions (what do you mean by nexus focus area, type of transaction and what are the documents needed), and finally, the concept note and the open call of innovations are the same r8? I checked them.

A: The nexus is just the term for the connection between water, energy, and food with food being the mandatory aspect of each potential application. Regarding the documents, in different parts of the application you are required to submit supporting documents, and it should be outlined in the application form. Type of transaction to the relationship with your customers (B2B or B2C), etc., depending on the context of the question. The first stage of the Open Call for Innovations application process is to complete the concept note.

Q: Could the concept note only provide information about the company including our overall activities and projects (not a specified description of our intended project), or should we refer to a specific project at this stage?

A: Not every company is necessarily starting a new initiative for this application, and that isn't required. If your company is already serving the water-energy-food nexus, then we need to know how you plan to grow and how this grant and TA will help with that. If you are currently not doing something related to the nexus, then we want to see a specific initiative/intervention that will make that happen.

Q: Hello, we are a one-year-old startup, we have our product ready to be sold, and we are implementing it now in one farm in Egypt. At this point are we eligible to bid or participate in the call?

A: We will have to look at your number of end-users and see if the minimum requirements are met (1000 end-users for innovations more than \$100, and 5000 end-users for innovations that cost less than \$100).

Q: We are aiming to install new autoclaves for food manufacturing, where we reduce the consumption of energy and hot water, is it eligible?



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A: We cannot judge your eligibility at this stage with limited information, please fill the concept note showcasing a clear link to water-energy-food nexus

Q: How can we get help in applying for the opportunity because there are many questions?

A: In order to maintain fair competition for all applicants, the hub team cannot give you direct assistance. So, the only support we can give from our side is the webinars and the many guidance documents you can find online, including these Q&A responses.

Q: We do solar pumps systems projects for underground water for domestics and agriculture. When asking for the number of our customers, are you looking for the number of projects or number of beneficiaries, as many of our projects are paid through social committees who share the cost of one project, as one project could cost around 20k USD? And the addition we did to the solar systems is by constructing local made solar holders for the solar panels, is it meeting your innovation standards?

A: Solar systems that power food or irrigation systems are eligible as they provide renewable energy for food production. If there are underground water extractions, we will thoroughly assess environmental risks, and we will request you to think of mitigation measures. When we ask about the numbers, we ask about customers and end-users (those are everyone who would benefit from this project). Innovation can be in the funding pattern of the projects.

Q: If our project has a different impact example on agricultural sustainability, water consumption and food security and self- sufficiency for households, are we eligible?

A: All water and energy savings impacting the food value chain are eligible.

Q: In the context of enhancing our data quality for training an AI irrigation optimization model, is it possible to fund IoT equipment for pilot farmers to collect data, considering that our startup manufactures the IoT devices?

A: It is possible for the grant to cover the IOT equipment allowing to train an irrigation optimization model provided this irrigation model is already marketed with an existing pool of customers. We need the application to show that within one year, you can significantly grow and achieve even more end-users. Also, as stated above, we cannot judge your eligibility at this stage with limited information, please fill the concept note showcasing a clear link to water-energy-food nexus.

Q: If our business is already using the best practices in sustainability (water and energy) but with the grant we can produce more food with the same practices (minimal water energy consumption) while meeting all the other criteria (impact on farmers income / reaching more food consumers....). Are we eligible for an opex grant with an opex matching payment?

A: Yes, both grant funding and matching funds can be spent on operating expenses (OPEX). We need to see that the amount you're asking for helps to grow the business and the impact, not just covering business as usual.



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Q: Regarding the applications; there was a question regarding the type of transactions and a part where we should upload documents. Those are unclear.

A: The question regarding the type of transactions includes a drop-down list for the answers: you must indicate if you have business-to-business or a business-to-customers or both. In other words, are your customers companies who resell the products to end-customers, or end-customers themselves, or a mix of both? If the document requested to be uploaded is your organizational profile, potential submissions could be a brochure or Powerpoint presentation of your company that includes the organization chart (if available).

Q: How many clients should we have or what is the order amount we must have already reached?

A: We need to see a track-record that is defined by the end-users, which includes both the clients as well as beneficiaries of the innovation. As stated above, you need to meet the minimum requirements (1000 end-users for innovations more than \$100, and 5000 end-users for innovations that cost less than \$100).

Q: Is Ghana qualified to apply?

A: As a Ghanaian innovator, you may apply for the MENA OCFI if you plan to work in MENA and have a partner who is registered in MENA. If not, other Calls for Innovations may be relevant to you, please check www.we4f.org.

Q: If we request an amount close to the funding ceiling, does it decrease our chances of approval? And if we need to demonstrate the financing capacity for the second part of the funding, is it possible to inquire about obtaining a bank loan after receiving approval?

A: No, it doesn't decrease your chances, but we may award you a lower grant amount than what you requested. We advise you to give us as much assurance as possible that you have secured matching funds, even if it is not 100% confirmed yet. The grant disbursement will be upon securing the matching fund, up to the equivalent of the disbursed amount.

Q: If we are vermicompost producers, and a share of our production is sold to wholesalers, does a wholesale client count as one client?

A: One wholesaler is counted as one customer. However, if data can be retrieved from the wholesaler to prove the number of unique customers they have at their end, then this number can be added to your end-users.



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