



WATER and
ENERGY
for FOOD

**WE4F SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA
REGIONAL INNOVATION HUB**

OPEN CALL FOR INNOVATIONS (O-CFI)

Q & A SUMMARY



Norad



Sweden
Sverige



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Overview

This document compiles the significant questions raised by potential innovators before, during, and after the WE4F S/SEA RIH Open Call for Innovations (O-CFI) Q&A webinar held on May 25, 2023 and January 16, 2024.

Q&A Summary

Question	Answer
<u>Application: Documents & Others</u>	
What kind of evidence/documents are required/accepted for confirming matching funds?	<p>Agreement or contract which you have signed with any government or a donor except WE4F donors. Evidence of receiving money from the donors under such an agreement.</p> <p>The evidence will depend on what kind of matching funds you are showing.</p>
What if the enterprise has a track record, but the innovation is new, so currently very limited end users?	Assessment will be case-by-case. For track records exceeding 5,000 end-users, applicants must submit concept notes first. They must explain plans to use the network of current users and expand WE4F's total end-users to at least 10,000 by the program's end. If the unit price is more than USD 100, track records exceeding 1,000 end-users will be considered.
The advice stipulates that the end users should reach 10,000 by the program's end. If I qualify for this round, when will the program end? How many years/months do I have to reach a minimum of 10,000?	This would be the target for May 2025. However please note, that end-users are not the same as customers. For, if a household is using your product and the average household size is 4, then we will report 4 end-users (but one customer). You can count a minimum of 10,000 end-users in this way. The minimum number does not guarantee an entry to the program, it will depend on the combined evaluation criteria.
We have a total of twenty-five kinds of products including stoves, ovens, fertilizers, briquette presses and others plus consultancy services. The total number of paid customers after retrieving my records from 2010 to 2023 is 250 clients. They consist of individual clients, farmers, urban poor families, office workers, food processors as well as community organizations and NGOs. The total number of end users from these clients is estimated to be 3,500. Will I be eligible to apply to WE4F?	The relevant products for us in this case would be those that are sold to or used by farmers and food processors who may employ farmers or procure from them. That category of end-users is more than 1,000 (if the price of your product is >USD 100) and more than 5,000 (if the price of your product is <USD 100). Kindly refer to the solicitation document on Page 15 about what will not be supported.
Is there any guidance about the rate of facilities and technical assistance for WE4F innovation?	Yes, this will be co-created after you are in the program, you can check our website blogs to learn more.
May we know the last date to apply?	Application is open on a rolling basis. However, you are recommended to apply as soon as possible.
Is the concept note the same as this online application?	Yes, the full list of questions is in the solicitation document.

Question	Answer
The application asks for a pitch deck. Should it be a video recording? If so, how many minutes should it be? Or could it be a PowerPoint presentation? What is the limit on the number of slides?	It can be a presentation that you typically use to present to stakeholders. We do not have a cap on the number of slides, but yes, brief documents with necessary details to highlight your expansion potential and business model would be preferable.
What is CRM? Should we also provide the contact number of the clients in this application? Shall we insert them inside the reply boxes?	CRM refers to customer relationship management which documents the past and current relationships with the current/potential customers of the company. You do not need to share them now but if onboarded will need to submit the same for MEL purposes.
Where is the Save and Continue Icon in the online application form?	While completing the application, as long as you don't leave the webpage/web browser, you can continue to fill out the survey. In addition, respondents can change their answers on any survey page until they complete the survey.
Where can I find Concept Note Stage Question document?	You can access the question document here: Link
Is there a limited slot per country? How many slots for the Philippines for this batch?	There is no restriction on the number of innovators per country. As long as you meet the criteria and generate impactful results, you are eligible regardless of the country in the South and Southeast Asia region.
How can the proposal be submitted?	Please visit our website at https://we4f.org/apply-ssea and click on the "Apply Now" button. You can use the Word template to draft your answers, and then copy and paste the same responses into the Survey Monkey link.
Is an organization allowed to submit multiple concept notes and can be awarded multiple grants?	An applicant can submit the concept notes as many times as they would like. The award will only be one grant only.
Is it possible to apply as a consortium, with a lead applicant and another organization?	Yes, forming a consortium is allowed. An applicant can be an individual organization or a consortium of multiple organizations. However, the lead applicant must be locally registered in a country where WE4F operates.
<u>Eligibility</u>	
Are entities of government and individuals not eligible to apply?	The entities of any government and individuals are not eligible to apply. An incorporated entity is eligible to apply.
Can local NGOs and private companies join a consortium of proposals?	Yes, they can join as long as they pass all eligibility criteria
Our organization is a nonprofit organization/non-governmental organization. While we do not currently generate revenue through the commercialization of an innovative product or service within the water-energy-food nexus. We would like to understand if our organization can participate in the program as part of	WE4F S/SEARIH welcomes non-profit organizations - either independently or in consortium. However, our mandate is to solicit the application from innovators whose innovation is already proven and in the scale-up stage with a certain number of end users.

Question	Answer
the consortium, provided that the lead applicant meets all the requirements outlined in the guidelines.	
Can local NGOs in a country or across countries join a consortium of proposals?	Yes, the cross-country consortium is allowed. However, the lead party must have the entity in the WE4F SSEA country
Can a university or academia institution apply?	Yes, universities are encouraged to apply as long as they are qualified per the eligibility criteria
Is our organization's location here in Papua New Guinea eligible to submit the concept note?	We appreciate the work that you are doing in Papua New Guinea, however, it does not come under WE4F South/Southeast Asia regional hub. Unfortunately, we cannot take applications from there.
Are projects that already have some partial support or technical assistance from organizations other than USAID eligible? For example, from GIZ, World Bank, UNDP, etc.	Additional resources from any donor, except WE4F donors, can be considered. Such additional funding must be part of the approved WE4F program budget and should be used to scale the WE4F innovation.
Can I also apply for this project as local CSOs in Myanmar?	Yes, non-profit organizations can apply as long as they pass all eligibility criteria.
I kindly request clarification on whether the questionnaire is indeed only two pages in length and if we have the opportunity to resubmit the application after further discussion and collaboration with my senior team.	Yes, you can resubmit the application, while the list of application questions can be found in the solicitation document (Ctrl+Click). You will find a list of questions for the concept note stage on page 20; "Section Ii – Application And Submission Information", then "1. Expression of Interest and Concept Note Stage".
Our innovation is not a construction project. However, as an organization, we do help build water infrastructure for remote villages. Would this automatically disqualify us for funding? What if this construction was not going to be funded by the grant, but rather by other sources?	You are qualified to apply because the innovation you plan to submit does not involve construction. Regarding the other infrastructure projects that will not be part of this application and will not be funded by WE4F, you can do that at your own cost.
In addition to setting up hydroponic systems that save water in agriculture production, we also sell chemical fertilizer/nutrient. I'd like to clarify if it is among the scope that WE4F promotes before we make the official application.	Unfortunately, we cannot support your organization if you use chemical fertilizers. However, if your organization transitions to organic fertilizers for the hydroponic units under WE4F, then you can apply and will be considered as per the process.
We are indigenous women, banwaon, manobo and Talaandig. We are coconut farmers. we are engaged in the production of cocopeat and coco fiber. we would like to explore the coconut shell briquette. Can we use your grant to acquire equipment to produce coco shell briquette?	Yes, you are allowed to use the funds to purchase equipment, with the conditions –a) the unit cost of the equipment does not equal or exceed USD 5,000 and b) it should not be made in China. If the equipment unit cost exceeds this threshold, then you would need to cover this from your cofounding/matching funds contribution.
Is it acceptable to scale and refine the current model/innovation?	Yes

Question	Answer
Is my tech startup, focused on environmental and agriculture applications (non-digital), acceptable for the grant? Or is there a preference for unicorn startups with digital platforms?	Yes, it is acceptable as long as you meet other eligibility criteria as mentioned in the solicitation document
Our technology efficiently converts any organic waste, such as food, into organic fertilizer within 1 hour at 80% efficiency. We are now seeking to procure additional equipment and expand our distribution channels.	<p>Yes, you are allowed to use the funds to purchase equipment, with the conditions –a) the unit cost of the equipment does not equal or exceed USD 5,000 and b) it should not be made in China.</p> <p>If the equipment unit cost exceeds this threshold, then you would need to cover this from your cofounding/matching funds contribution.</p>
<u>Grants & Permissible Usage</u>	
Will grants through the government be qualified as matching grants?	Yes, a grant through another government can be considered a matching grant, provided it is not from WE4F donors. It should be part of the approved WE4F program budget and should be used to scale the WE4F innovation.
Is the matching fund from GIZ counted as it also origins from BMZ?	Grants from GIZ can be counted only if it is NOT associated with any of the WE4F donors.
Do you have financial guidelines for grantees? Or will we apply our financial policies and procedures?	You will apply your financial policies. We will be reviewing the policies during the pre-award survey.
Can we use our matching finance to buy items from China, but fund our labor costs from the grant?	Yes, an innovator may use the matching funds based on its business needs. Yes, labor costs are eligible expenses from the WE4F grant, provided they are part of the approved WE4F program budget.
For in-kind or financial contribution, can be staff salary, admin cost, transportation, and construction activities since the grant does not cover construction?	<p>Construction activities are not permitted to be funded under WE4F funds. It can be shown as a matching fund.</p> <p>Yes, salary, admin costs, and transportation costs are eligible expenses from the WE4F grant, provided they are part of the approved WE4F program budget</p>
What is the minimum amount for grants?	The minimum amount of grant is US\$25,000 but there could be innovators who need business and investment technical assistance and not grants. Individual awards are expected to range between US\$25,000 and US\$200,000, depending on the type of funding requested with the awardee expected to bring in a minimum 1-1 matching amount themselves. The period of performance for individual awards is up to two years; the actual period of performance for each award will be determined at the time of award.
If the grant is used to cover monthly expenses like Human Resources, software subscriptions, etc. How often will the amount be refunded through the grant? every month?	Yes, grant funds can be used to cover HR costs and software, depending on your program needs. Grant funds will be reimbursed on a monthly/quarterly basis. This will be specified in the grant agreement.
Is there any guidance about the rate of hardware or software for WE4F innovation?	The grant cannot be used for construction activities and any capital expenditures valued equal to or more than US\$ 5,000 per unit. The grant cannot be used to

Question	Answer
	purchase any equipment or item produced in the People's Republic of China
Would you be also funding research?	No, we are not allowed to fund research.
Will the matching grant share of applicants be deposited in their bank as proof of financial capacity?	The basic rules of the matching funds contribution are: A) The innovator must be able to share reasonable assurance of its ability to bring in matching funds B) The matching funds contribution should be received in the applicant's bank before any grant funds are released to the innovator
I am in the beekeeping business and can I use the fund to buy an artificial inseminator including laboratory materials to operate it?	Our funding operates on a milestone-based system. Yes, you are allowed to use the funds to purchase equipment, with the conditions –a) the unit cost of the equipment does not equal or exceed USD 5,000 and b) it should not be made in China. If the equipment unit cost exceeds this threshold, then you would need to be covered this from your cofounding/matching funds contribution.
Our agristartup is currently in a partnership to establish banana farms in Luzon to revive the Lakatan banana industry in Luzon also. Banana uses a lot of water. Can we apply for a grant to use drip irrigation on the farms? Currently, we have established almost 50Ha of banana farms. We are also using solar pumps. We want to scale it up	Absolutely, a solar pump is indeed a key technology that we support. Both solar pumps and drip irrigation systems play a crucial role in optimizing water usage, resulting in increased banana yield.
When it comes to matching funds, can we use the funds that we raise or can be raised from other partner venture(s) also?	Yes, you can use the matching fund to raise the investment from other partner ventures.
Can we use the grant for land acquisition?	No, grant funds can not be used for land acquisition
I sell solar dryer domes. Can I request funding to build a demonstration site in a specific food value chain?	The grant cannot be used to fund any construction activities.
Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture(IMTA) Bio Floc Technology(BFT) and Aquaponics System - Innovations in Aquaculture, are these qualified for funding?	Yes, If your innovation can assist the company in producing more with reduced energy or water usage, it aligns with the criteria. We recommend submitting the concept note.
Can the matching fund be sourced from existing investments of the startup, such as lot area and similar assets?	Cash and non-cash resources from the prospective applicants that are intended for project financing, along with the grant funding. These resources can come from the organization's own funds, governmental funds, or any other resources not funded by the Federal Government.
Can we include in the grant any certifications like Halal, GMP, or FDA CPR?	Yes, as long as the certification is pertinent to addressing challenges within the water-energy-food nexus (with food always being one of the two) and contributes to a long-term expansion plan that would generate more impacts.
I have a technology that can reduce plastic waste for agricultural applications. Is it possible to receive a grant for this?	Plastic waste does not directly link with the food dimension. Your innovation must address the water-energy-food nexus challenges. The innovation must

Question	Answer
	address at least two dimensions of the water-energy-food nexus, with food always being one of the two.
The shells of our peanuts are utilized for making bags and papers, minimizing waste. Additionally, we use them for our processing energy, converting them to charcoal for cooking. We operate machines using this charcoal to save energy in the processing.	Your innovation must address the water-energy-food nexus challenges. The innovation must address at least two dimensions of the water-energy-food nexus, with food always being one of the two.
<u>Contacts & Resources</u>	
Contacts of the Country Coordinators:	<p>Country Coordinators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thailand and other S/SE Asian Countries (Bhutan, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste): Pongsagorn "Art" Satjipanon, Pongsagorn.Satjipanon@tetrattech.com - India, Nepal: Ashwani Mishra, ashwani.mishra@tetrattech.com - Indonesia, Nepal: Kunto Binawan, kbinawan@devworks.org - Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam Tran Thi Tuyet, ttran@devworks.org - Philippines: Dexter Difintorum, ddifintorum@devworks.org <p>If there is any question on O-CFI, please feel free to send to: WE4FAsiaBids@tetrattech.com</p>
Where can we download the solicitation document?	You can download the document from solicitation document (Ctrl+Click). For other information, please visit: Apply for OCFI - SSEA
Could you please advise when we are likely to receive your acknowledgment that our submission has been registered (the full application was completed, and what is the timeline for your response and next steps?	The hub will consider the completed application only and disregard the incomplete one. The evaluation will start in July 2023, and we expect you to hear from us in the last of July if you graduate to the next step of the evaluation process.
Is it possible to get slides and a recording of the session afterward?	Yes, please find the presentation deck here & recording of the webinar here
Are there environmental, social, and governance guidelines?	Please see the guideline here: ESG Guidelines

Commented [1]: Can you list these out so people know what are the other countries covered?

If you have any questions regarding the O-CFI, please feel free to reach out to us at WE4FAsiaBids@tetrattech.com.