

2026: Call for Proposals in Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia
Answers to Applicants' Questions - Concept Note (Stage 1)
Date of publication: 30.04.2026

No.	Questions in English	Answers in English
Section: Categorisation / Catégorisation		
1	For a Category 3 project, if 70% of the jobs are created at third-party factories (supported by letters of intent) and 30% within the applicant's own company, would this be sufficient to qualify under Category 3, or is a higher proportion of third-party job creation required?	For Category 3, at least 50% + 1 of the jobs must be created at third-party entities. In this case, 70% would meet this requirement, provided the jobs are clearly evidenced (e.g. through letters of intent) and are a direct result of the project (see further details in the Guidelines). Jobs created thanks to improved general socio-economic framework conditions cannot be counted, even if these improvements are an indirect effect of the project.
Section: Eligibility / Eligibilité		
2	Are UN agencies eligible to apply?	Yes, UN agencies can apply in principle for any category depending on the nature of the proposed project. However, please note that the agency/entity must be registered in the country of the Call for Proposals when applying as an individual applicant, or if it has its own legal personality when participating as a member of a consortium. Kindly refer to the Guidelines for Applicants for further details.
3	I was informed via email that the healthcare sector is not included for component #2. Could you please confirm whether this is correct?	<u>With the exception of Egypt</u> , so far all professions with health-medical related competencies are not eligible. This includes professionals who interact directly with patients to diagnose, treat, and manage illnesses (e.g. physicians, nurses, dentists, pharmacists) and professionals providing specialized diagnostic, technical, and therapeutic services (e.g. therapists, radiologic / surgical / medical technicians, paramedics emergency medical technicians, nutritional and mental health specialists etc.). please frequently check IFE's website as any update will be reflected accordingly in the download center during the Call for Proposal.
4	Could you please confirm whether the plastics and packaging sector is eligible under Component #1 and Component #2?	this call for proposal is welcoming all sectors to apply under Component #1. For Component #2, kindly refer to the list of eligible occupational sectors outlined in the Guidelines for Applicants. Please take note of KfW exclusion list for excluded sectors
5	Are assemblies and government entities at the regional and sub-regional levels eligible to apply?	All entities are eligible to apply, regardless of their nature, provided they have a distinct legal status and are registered in the concerned Country for the Call for Proposals, in Africa or EU/EFTA
6	Could you please confirm whether a consortium may include both private and public entities?	Yes, consortiums including both public and private entities are welcome. Public-private partnerships are encouraged to apply as well; however, the roles and responsibilities of each partner must be clearly defined within the project.

7	The organization must have an average turn-over of at least 50% of the requested grant amount. Could you please clarify whether this requirement applies only to the lead applicant or to the combined average turn-over of all consortium partners?	For individual applicants, commercial companies are expected to have an average annual turnover of at least 50% of the requested grant amount. In the case of a consortium, the combined average turn-over of all consortium partners will be taken into account. However, the lead applicant's average annual turnover must represent at least 50% of the total consortium turnover. Please refer back to Section 1.1- General Eligibility Conditions in the Guidelines for Applicants.
8	In the case of a consortium, could you please clarify whether financial eligibility criteria apply only to the lead applicant or also to all consortium partners in case of an NGO?	Please refer the the Guidelines for Applicants chapter 1.1. and Annex 6. Some criteria apply to the lead applicant only and some to the entire consortium
9	Are projects involving more than one IFE-eligible country considered eligible?	Yes, multi-country projects are eligible, provided they involve countries participating in the call for proposals. KPIs will be considered only if they are directly linked to the project and achieved within those countries.
10	Could you please elaborate on what is considered an ongoing project? For instance, if vendor selection is finalized and equity commitments are secured, would signing a conditional letter of intent with a supplier impact the project's eligibility?	Applicants have to prove that the IFE support is essential for the implementation of the project. Projects, which have already secured full financing, have initiated or even signed contracts beyond preparatory activities, are risking to be considered as ineligible.
11	To confirm applicant eligibility, if I request a grant of €1,000,000, should my average annual turnover be at least €500,000?	Yes, that is correct. The applicant's existing entity must have an average annual turnover over the past three years of at least 50% of the requested grant amount.
12	Would the replacement of equipment be considered eligible, particularly if it leads to the creation of new employment opportunities?	Replacement of equipment is only eligible if it results in additional job creation (i.e. increased shifts that ultimately results in more jobs to be created). Simple replacement of functioning equipment without new employment is unlikely to qualify.
13	Do travel and tour services qualify under the hospitality sector, and are plastic waste activities eligible?	Travel and tour services may broadly fall under hospitality; however, eligibility is based on defined occupational roles (e.g. cooks, hotel managers, catering staff) as outlined in the Guidelines for Applicants. General roles such as tour operators are not considered eligible occupational sectors.
14	If grants are subject to a 22.5% tax by the Egyptian Tax Authority upon receipt, should this tax be included in the funding plan as a necessary but ineligible cost?	It is at your discretion to include it as a necessary but ineligible cost; however, it will not be considered part of either the IFE contribution or the applicant's own contribution. It must be covered separately, in line with the Guidelines for Applicants.
15	Can an academic institution apply?	Yes, an academic institution can apply if they have a new investment project that would create jobs in the private sector.
Section: General / Générale		
16	Could you please clarify the level of detail expected in the concept note and outline the key elements that should be covered (e.g. objectives, problem statement, stakeholders, etc.)?	To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the concept note requirements, applicants are required to register on SmartMe, our official application platform. The platform provides access to all relevant templates, detailed instructions, and supporting documentation. The registration link is available in the Guidelines for Applicants. Please note that the concept note does not need to be completed in one session, as the platform allows you to save your progress and develop your submission incrementally before the deadline, then press submit.
17	Could you please clarify whether the labour mobility component is required to be integrated within the same project, or if it may be submitted as a separate, standalone project?	The labour mobility component cannot be submitted as a standalone project. It must be included within a single application as part of one project with two components. While it does not need to be directly linked to the main component, it should clearly demonstrate how the mobility pathway will be implemented.

18	Could you please elaborate further on the 60% threshold applicable to Component #2?	For Component #2 (labour mobility), IFE may finance up to 80% of the eligible measures, with a minimum funding amount of EUR 30,000. At the same time, the requested funding for Component #2 must not exceed 60% of the funding requested under Component #1. In all cases, IFE co-financing is capped at 80% of the total cost of Component #2, and all thresholds must be respected cumulatively.
19	Could you please clarify how the maturity of the project is assessed and what documentation or evidence is required to substantiate it?	Projects are expected to demonstrate a solid level of maturity in planning and preparation, including a well-developed concept, identified project location, and supporting documentation such as cost estimates, financial planning, feasibility study and market analysis. IFE supports projects that are largely ready for implementation, with financing gaps remaining. Please see for details Annex 6.2 of the Guidelines.
20	As BMZ-funded projects are often implemented in collaboration with KfW and/or GIZ, could you please clarify whether these organizations also play a role in the IFE initiative?	IFE is a subsidiary of KfW as part of the Special Initiative. GIZ also contributes to the initiative through complementary programmes, though not directly within IFE.
21	For Component #2: By “visa application,” do you refer to the planning and process for obtaining visas, rather than requiring participants to already hold valid visas?	Applicants are not expected to have participants with valid visas at this stage. However, they should demonstrate a clear understanding of the visa process and outline a credible approach to support it, as part of the concept note submission.
22	If the 2025 financial statements are not yet finalized, would it be acceptable to submit draft financials at the concept note stage?	Yes, unaudited management accounts may be submitted at the concept note stage. However, please note that audited financial statements will be required upon shortlisting and submission of the full project proposal.
23	Considering the majority of job creation occurs after the project becomes operational and the investment costs have already been disbursed, would it be permissible to use the grant to service debt obligations to the bank financing the project?	No. IFE does not provide retroactive financing, debt servicing, or ex-post financing under Component #1. Funding is provided during the investment phase to co-finance eligible expenditures, enabling the project to pay suppliers and contractors in line with approved procurement plan.
24	Are all webinars identical?	Yes, the webinars will cover the same content. In addition, technical workshops will be organized to guide applicants through the SmartMe platform, the application process, and IFE requirements. These will be available both online and on the ground in selected countries. Participants may also reach out to their respective Country Focal Points for further support.
25	Could you please clarify whether demonstrating that IFE’s financial contribution is essential to the project implies that applicants would not be eligible if alternative financing options, such as bank loans, are available?	If the project in the foreseen scope and timing can be fully financed through other sources (e.g. bank loans), it would not be eligible for IFE support. IFE funding is intended to address financing gaps. However, if IFE support enables additional developmental impact that would not otherwise be achieved, this can still be considered—provided it is clearly substantiated. Please refer back to Annex 6 in the Guidelines for Applicants for further details.
26	Could you please further elaborate on the grant structure and the disbursement mechanism?	Following the completion of due diligence, a project-specific investment and implementation timeline is agreed upon. Based on this, a disbursement schedule is established alongside the procurement plan, which will also be an entire part of the grant agreement to be signed. Disbursements are made in line with project progress and agreed milestones. As a general principle, IFE financing is disbursed after the applicant’s own contribution has been utilized.
27	Could you please elaborate on the monitoring mechanism following the disbursement of the grant?	Following disbursement and the end of the investment phase, beneficiaries are required to report on KPI achievement, particularly job creation, on a quarterly basis for a period of three years. This includes submitting supporting documentation for verification, as well as undergoing periodic on-site visits to validate progress. In addition, external audits will be undertaken.

28	Is there a specific template that applicants are required to follow when preparing the concept note?	Please register on SmartMe, where all required templates and data fields are available. These include Excel sheets and online forms to be completed. You may start your submission, save your progress, and update it until final submission.
29	Are there specific documents or evidence required to substantiate the additionality?	Applicants are expected to demonstrate that they have engaged potential financiers (e.g. banks or investment funds) but were unable to fully close the funding gap.
30	In the case of multi-country or multi-stakeholder projects, are administrative, programme management, monitoring, and reporting costs eligible for co-financing?	No, management and operational costs are not eligible for co-financing. Applicants must also demonstrate how the project will be effectively implemented across countries, including the involvement of relevant partners where applicable. Please refer to Section 2.4.3- Eligible Expenditures in the Guidelines for Applicants.
31	Should all financial documents be submitted at the concept note stage?	Yes. Applicants are required to submit financial documents at the concept note stage, including three years of historical financials for the applicant (or lead applicant) and any consortium partners, as well as a five-year financial forecast using the provided template. Additional supporting forecasts may be submitted if available. Please refer to the Guidelines for detailed explanations on the documents to be submitted. Missing documents will lead to the rejection of the proposal.
32	Could you please provide an overview of the expected application timeline, including key stages such as proposal submission, shortlisting, and subsequent steps?	Please refer to the Guidelines for Applicants, where an indicative timeline for the entire process is provided.
33	We have a company in Ghana that has been operating in the food processing sector for over three years. As part of our growth strategy, we plan to invest in equipment, vehicles, and training to expand into a new business segment. Could you please confirm whether such an expansion project would be eligible in principle?	Yes, in principle such a project would be eligible.
34	Does IFE recommend/ collaborate with any local financial advisors or advisory firms to support applicants in preparing their applications?	No, we do not collaborate with specific local financial advisors or firms. Applicants are free to engage any consultants they prefer, if needed. However, the application process on SmartMe is designed to be straightforward and step-by-step, allowing applicants to complete it progressively, although it does require a dedicated level of effort.
35	When will the on-ground SmartMe technical support workshops take place, and how can applicants register?	Please contact your respective Country Focal Point or the CFP mailbox to request information on the technical workshops; they will guide you on registration and relevant details.
36	Could you please confirm whether grant disbursements are made on a reimbursement (ex-post) basis after costs are incurred for Component 2?	For Component 1, IFE disburses funds in line with agreed co-financed items, typically prior to payment to contractors, with a retention portion held until completion and KPI verification. For Component 2, infrastructure-related costs follow the same approach as Component 1, while softer measures (e.g. training, language or intercultural courses) are reimbursed on an ex-post basis.
37	Should all consortium members register on SmartMe, or is registration required only for the lead applicant?	Registration on SmartMe should be completed by the lead applicant, who submits the application and communicates with IFE on behalf of the consortium.
38	Could you please confirm whether management and personnel costs for non-profit entities are eligible costs?	No, management and personnel costs are not eligible; all operational costs must be excluded from the investment plan.
39	Is it permissible to lease land for project implementation, and if so, is there a minimum lease duration required?	Yes, land can be leased; however, rental costs are considered operational expenses and are not eligible as investment costs or part of the applicant's own contribution (except emphyteutic lease agreements). While there is no fixed minimum lease duration, longer-term agreements are expected to ensure project sustainability.

40	Is there a specific template that should be used for Letters of Intent (LoIs)?	Yes, a template for Letters of Intent (LoIs) for jobs to be created at third-party entities is available on SmartMe.
41	Could you please clarify whether costs related to travel to Germany for training, or for bringing German nationals to provide training, are eligible costs?	Costs related to bringing specialized trainers to the project country (e.g. Egypt or Ghana) for equipment or skills training may be eligible. Please refer to the Guidelines for Applicants for detailed conditions.
42	Could you please clarify the minimum grant amount that can be requested?	The minimum IFE co-finance that can be requested is EUR 800,000 for the job creation component.
Section: KPI / ICP		
43	Could you please clarify the minimum number of jobs required to be created under Component #1?	The minimum number of jobs under Component #1 is linked to the requested grant, based on a maximum cost of EUR 10,000 per job. This means at least 100 jobs per EUR 1 million, and a minimum of 80 jobs for EUR 800,000. As this is a competitive call, lower- but realistic - cost/job ratio may strengthen the proposal scoring.
44	Could you please clarify whether KPI 2 and KPI 3 are mandatory requirements?	KPI 1 (job creation) is mandatory and carries the highest weight in the evaluation, based on the costs / job ratio. KPI 2 and KPI 3 are optional; however, they can provide additional scoring depending on the project's scope and impact.
45	If an SPV is established for the project and the operations and maintenance team is employed by a sister company within the same group, would these jobs be considered as third-party job creation?	No, if the entity is within the same group, the jobs are considered as created within your own entity and do not qualify as third-party job creation. Only jobs created through independent external entities may be considered third-party.
46	Are there specific documents or evidence required to substantiate the projected number of jobs to be created?	Applicants are expected to provide a clear and realistic justification for the projected job creation, supported by credible analysis or studies. The estimates should be proportionate to the scale and nature of the project. In cases of third-party job creation, supporting evidence such as Letters of Intent (LoIs) should also be provided.
47	Could you please clarify whether waste management and green jobs would fall under social services within the eligible sectors for Component 2?	These are considered business areas rather than defined sector categories. The eligible occupational sectors for Component 2 are specified in the Guidelines for Applicants, where examples are provided. Roles related to social services may include various occupations (e.g. technicians, electricians, etc.)
48	Could you please clarify whether there is a minimum number of jobs required under Component #2?	There is no minimum number of jobs required under Component #2. The focus is on the quality and relevance of the labour mobility measures, as well as the presence of a clear and credible implementation roadmap demonstrating how these measures will be carried out.
49	If an expansion project involves replacing outsourced labour with newly hired employees within the facility, would these positions be considered as new jobs?	No, such positions would not be considered as new jobs under KPI 1. They may be considered under KPI 2, as they reflect improvements in working conditions.
50	In the context of the jewellery industry, particularly for trainers or artisan/craftsman roles, is it required that these positions be formal waged employment?	All jobs must comply with KPI 1 requirements, meaning they should be formal, non-temporary positions with employment contracts and salaries at least in line with the national minimum wage. In cases involving self-employment (e.g. artisans), applicants must demonstrate that their income will correspond to the minimum wage conditions and that they can have access to social protection, whether public or private. Please refer to the Guidelines for Applicants Section 2.3 Eligibility criteria and Annex 1 for definition of new good jobs.
51	I operate a government-certified TVET school within my factory, providing training in mechanical, electrical, and textile trades leading to a high school diploma. For the labour mobility component, would graduates from these programmes qualify under the metal and electrical industry category?	Mechanical and electrical trades would qualify under the relevant sectors. Textile trades would require further specification. However, the labour mobility component must represent an additional activity, not the continuation of existing programmes. IFE cannot finance equipment or activities for ongoing courses serving the local market; support is limited to measures targeting students with a clear pathway towards employment in Germany.

52	For Component #2: Could you please confirm whether a letter of intent from the German counterpart is required for job creation?	<p>It is not necessary to submit signed Letters of Intent (LoI) from German Employers. However, a plausible explanation has to be provided of how and by whom (which partners) job placements In Germany can be achieved for the beneficiaries of the labour migration component. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Cooperation with other initiatives, who are actively engaged in labour migration activities towards Germany and who demonstrate existing links with German employers, professional associations etc. •Cooperation with German professional associations, who have demonstrated their interest in supporting job placements in Germany. •Cooperation with specialized recruiting agencies, who can demonstrate their relationship with German employers in the respective occupational sectors. <p>Please note that placement services must be based on recognised standards of fair recruitment, particularly with regard to transparency towards participants.</p>
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Facility Investing for Employment

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