



AGRICULTURE
FAST TRACK

CONCEPT NOTE APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Thank you for your interest in applying for a grant from the Agriculture Fast Track Fund (AFT). Before proceeding with the Concept Note (CN) application, please read the information below carefully.

AFT Overview:

The AFT is a grant making facility to support the preparation of agriculture infrastructure investments in Africa. The AFT is intended to support the costs of project preparation activities for financially sound, environmentally sustainable, and socially beneficial food security investments. The AFT provides grant funds to cover investment preparation costs such as business plan development, market research, financial modelling, feasibility studies, and environmental and social impact studies. The goal of the AFT is to unlock financing agriculture infrastructure projects by defraying the initial preparation costs that investment sponsors are unable to shoulder alone.

Grant Application Process

The AFT proposal application process follows a two-stage process with an initial submission of Concept Note where the applicants provide information about their planned investments and expected output, and impact.

The Concept Notes are assessed by AFT Coordinating Unit (CU), who shortlist the best applications, and forward them to the Technical Review Committee (TRC). The TRC assesses the shortlisted Concept Notes, and decides which applications will be invited to the second stage.

Grant Approval Process

After the Concept Note invitation closes, Concept Notes will be reviewed. Applicants who are shortlisted will be invited to submit a full application proposal. The expected duration of this process, from acceptance of a Concept Note application through final decision and CN invitation applicant notification is expected to take 15 - 30 days. CN Applications for grants can be submitted by local or international businesses or from government offices. The applicant must be the principal promoter of the investment. Applications will not be accepted from intermediaries.

Investment Eligibility

The AFT will provide grant funding solely for investment preparation costs (not investment implementation) for a broad range of agriculture infrastructure investments spanning the entire value chain from production to market. These investments can be private or public sector projects (or public/private). At present, the AFT is open to supporting investments in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tanzania.

Examples of Eligible Investments

Illustrative examples of the types of agriculture infrastructure investments the AFT could support include (but are not limited to):

- A marketing plan for a sesame hulling facility supported by a nucleus farm and corresponding out-grower scheme, which will create stronger market linkages for smallholders;
- A feasibility study for a joint venture to establish a cassava processing operation focused on smallholder farmers that produce high quality cassava flour for the domestic market;
- An environmental hydrological study for a government or privately sponsored irrigation system that would support smallholder vegetable production.

Eligible Project Preparation Activities for Grant Uses:

Activities that the AFT can support include:

- Feasibility studies
- Market research
- Business plan development
- Environmental/social impact assessments
- Engineering designs and costing
- Legal and tax advice
- Advice on investment structuring and financing

Activities that the AFT cannot support include:

- Actual construction costs
- Working capital
- Employee salaries
- Training, capacity building, or post investment technical assistance

Grant amounts

The AFT will provide grants of up to \$1.5 million US dollars for qualifying investment preparation costs.

AFT Concept Note Grant Selection Criteria

Applications for an AFT Grant will be evaluated on the following criteria:

1. General management Experience
2. Planned investment and financing plan for the investment project
3. Project preparation activities, and requested for AFT Grant
4. Expected Outputs and Impact of Overall Planned Investment and Project Preparation

Concept Note Application Form Instructions

- Please complete all applicable fields of the Concept Note Application form.
- Attach additional pages may be completed if necessary and returned along with the completed Application.
- Please be certain to attach any required supporting documentation. Applicants may address questions regarding the completion of these forms to: AFTHelp@afdb.org