Application Rectifications, Questions & Answers

CALL FOR CONCEPT NOTES FOR FUNDING A NUTRITION PROGRAM IN ETHIOPIA

August 13, 2026

Please be informed of these rectifications

- Signatories: The TOR states (p.9) that all partners are requested to sign the submission. However, in Annex 1 Application form, the only box provided for signature is for the lead. To solve this omission, consortium members are requested to provide their signature in Annex 1 Application form, under section 'h', where all members are listed.
- Annex 1 mistakenly refers to eligibility criteria D.1 to D.7, but the provided form presents solely eligibility criteria D.1 to D.5.
- The link on p.4 of the TOR, to the FNS results framework was broken. Please find the correct results framework uploaded on the site of this call.
- Ethiopian public organizations (including ministries, agencies, universities) are not eligible to be consortium member. Please see more detail in the answers under sections eligibility and sub-contracting.
- On page 7 of the TOR it states: "*The lead party can demonstrate that in the period 2023 - 2025 at least 50% of the total annual income came from sources other than grants and/or contributions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (including missions). This criterion applies to the whole consortium.*"
  The statement has created confusion. Please note: Of the joint annual income of the consortium partners together, at *least 50% should come from other sources than grants and/or contributions from the M*inistry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (including Dutch embassies). Thus, as a whole, the consortium's total income of the period 2023-2025 should be >50% derived from other sources than Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

  There is an **exception** for organizations that act as lead partners (or have acted as such in the past 3 years) in a consortium (both financed by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs or other donors). If a lead partner receives funding that it will immediately pass on to consortium partners, this pass-through amount does not count as income for the lead partner.
  However, if an applicant receives funding for an activity financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands *as a consortium partner* (i.e. not as the lead), this amount must be reported as income from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. If consortium members use other than calendar years (such as, Ethiopian financial years) the most recent and completed last 3 years need to be used.

- Contradicting information has regrettably been provided in the ToR and Annex 1.
  The TOR states: "*Annual grant disbursement should not be more than twice the consortium's average annual turnover over the last 3 years.*"
  Annex 1 states: "*Average annual grant amounts (€8 million) under the nutrition program must not exceed 50% of the average total annual income of the consortium measured over the last three years.*"

  The correct information with regards to the annual grant disbursement that applies to this call is: "Average annual grant amounts (€8 million) under the nutrition program must not exceed 50% of the average total annual income of the consortium as a whole, measured over the last three years. Therefore, the combined consortium's annual income should not be lower than EUR 16 million in each of the last three years. Please note: the **actual** annual disbursement to the winning program under this call may not be exactly EUR 8 mln per year exactly; the average is used for simplicity (40 mln/5 yrs).

- Annex 2 Track Record Form specifies 'in Ethiopia'. However, the evidence submitted in the track record may include programs implemented in other African countries.

Answers to questions submitted to add-proposals@minbuza.nl before Aug 3, 23:59 hrs.

Questions on consortium depending on Dutch funding

- Is meeting at least 50% of the total annual income criterion a mandatory eligibility requirement that must be satisfied, or is it a criterion that adds value to the application?
    - This is a mandatory eligibility requirement. Only when the criteria listed on page 7 of the TOR under 'Eligibility assessment' are met, then the concept note will be assessed and scored. Not meeting these criteria will directly lead to rejection.

- Do organizations need to present their audited financial statements for 2025 at concept note stage? (Differentiating between lead and other partners) In relation to the above, in the case that an organization doesn't yet have the audited financial statements for 2025, can they use draft figures to answer the turnover question?
    - Audits have not been requested to be submitted as evidence at this stage.
    - For calculations on annual income, draft rates can be used in absence of audited statements.

Questions on eligibility organizations

- Are UN agencies, particularly UNDP, eligible to apply?
    - UN agencies, when compliant with the criteria stated in the ToR, are eligible to apply.
- Is GIZ, as a publicly owned but legally independent German limited liability company (GmbH), eligible to apply as the lead or as a consortium member?
    - A publicly owned but legally independent German limited liability company (GmbH), is eligible to apply as consortium partner. As it holds the status of a company, it cannot be the lead in a consortium for this program.
- Are Ethiopian government or public institutes eligible as consortium partners?
    - Ethiopian public organizations cannot be in a consortium.
      The consortium may subcontract specific activities to public organizations and collaborate with these institutions as strategic and/or implementing partners. This means, that governmental and public organizations (for example, but not limited to, EPHI and universities) can be **sub**contracted. They are not limited to 1 application multiple applications can take up these organizations in their plan. Please mention foreseen collaborations in format Annex 1, question i. See also questions on sub-contracting below.

- To ensure complete national alignment with the Food Systems Transformation and Nutrition Roadmap, the PSNP 6 and ACC 2, we intend to position the Ministry of Agriculture as a high-level Strategic Institutional Collaborator rather than a contractual fiduciary co-applicant. Does this arrangement align with EKN's expectations for fostering government ownership without creating contractual bottlenecks?
    - See answer above.

- Are international research institutions and universities are fully eligible core partners ?
    - Yes. International research institutions and international universities are eligible to apply as long as they meet the criteria for lead partners (if lead) or consortium partners as stated in the ToR.

- Can a " business development consultant" be included as part of the consortium?
    - If the "business development consultant" meets the requirements and applies non for-profit rates. Businesses cannot be lead partner.

- Is an organization permitted to participate in more than one consortium submitting a concept note under this call? Specifically, is it acceptable for the same organization to be involved as a consortium member in multiple concept note submissions, provided it is not serving as the lead applicant in more than one consortium?
    - No. An organization may participate in only one concept note submission under this call, either as the lead applicant or as a consortium member. An organization may not be included in multiple concept note submissions in any capacity. If the

same organization appears in more than one application, all applications involving that organization will be rejected.
    - However, an organization that is part of one consortium (as either the lead applicant or a consortium member) may receive sub-grants from another consortium during implementation, provided this arrangement is limited to specific implementation activities and complies with the applicable sub-granting provisions. See also questions on sub-contracting below.

- Does the rule limiting an organization to one application apply only to formal consortium members, or does it also apply to subcontractors, subgrantees, affiliated universities, and other non-consortium implementation partners?
    - It only applies to formal consortium members. It does not apply to subgranted entities.

- Can two partner organizations who are members of another consortium already funded by EKN for a different project join in a consortium to respond to this call?
    - Yes. Current EKN funding under a different project does not, by itself, disqualify an organization from applying under this call. Provided all other criteria are met, they may form or join a consortium and submit a concept note under this call.

- Clarity is sought on defining "specialized technical agencies" that are eligible to be consortium members.
    - Specialized technical agencies refers to the specialized agencies of the United Nations.

- Is there a limit of number of UN agencies in one consortium? Or any other representation like INGO, research, etc.?
    - No there is no limit on type of agency permitted within a consortium.

- The call indicates that for-profit companies cannot lead a consortium. Could you kindly explain the rationale behind this requirement? Is there any possibility that this condition could be reconsidered?
    - The requirement that the lead applicant must be a non-profit organization is a programmatic decision made during the design of the call, based on a range of strategic and operational considerations. This eligibility requirement will not be amended. However, for-profit companies remain eligible to participate in proposals as consortium partners, provided they meet the applicable requirements set out in the ToR.

- If an organization has a country office in Ethiopia and an affiliated office or headquarters in the Netherlands, and the Netherlands office serves as the lead applicant while the Ethiopia office participates as an implementing partner, will these be considered one organization or two separate organizations when determining the required number of consortium partners?
    - This will be considered one organization within the consortium. The grant or subsidy will be awarded to the Netherlands-based office or international headquarters as the formal consortium member/lead applicant, with implementation taking place through the Ethiopia office. The different offices of the same organization are considered part of a single legal entity and will therefore count as **one consortium partner** for the purpose of meeting the consortium composition requirements.

- Can a legally registered Ethiopian office of an international federation or international NGO (INGO) be considered as meeting the requirement to have an office in Ethiopia?
    - Yes. A legally registered office in Ethiopia of an international federation or INGO may be considered as fulfilling the requirement to have an office in Ethiopia.

- The call expects collaboration with relevant governmental institutions and regulatory authorities. Does that imply a mandatory requirement to have a government institution as one of the 3 to 6 consortium members?
    - No that is not a requirement and not a possibility either as government institutions cannot be part of the consortium.

Questions on track-record

- For the track record, references should be provided to prove relevant technical expertise and experience in Ethiopia and capacity of the consortium to implement a program of this scale and complexity. Is there a certain time period to which the track record can apply?
    - No there is no specific time period to which the track record must refer but preferably on recent activities.

- For Annex 2 (Track Record), may the lead, a Netherlands-registered organization, reference projects implemented in Ethiopia by its country office where those projects were contracted through a non-Netherlands legal entity within the same family organization, network, or federation? Or must the Lead Partner's references be limited to projects that were both implemented in Ethiopia and legally contracted through the same Netherlands-registered legal entity that would serve as the contracting party for this grant?
    - The lead partner in this example may reference projects implemented in Ethiopia by its country office. The source of funding is of no relevance to the track record. Please note the last rectification on p1 of this document.

- Must each project reference be implemented in Ethiopia, or can references collectively demonstrate the required experience? Are ongoing projects eligible?
    - Project references are not limited to programs implemented in Ethiopia, see rectification at the top of this document. Ongoing projects may also be included as part of the organization’s track record. All reference should be relevant to the experience and expertise requirements outlined in the ToR.

Questions on overhead

- What qualifies as a direct cost versus an indirect cost?

Direct personnel costs non-local staff are costs for hours that can clearly – entirely or partly – be attributed to the MFA/BHOS-funded activities. There is a direct, clear and demonstrable relationship between the personnel costs and the funded activities. This category covers all costs of the applicant’s staff who work at headquarters and are deployed from there (temporarily), whose hours can clearly be attributed in whole or in part to the activity.

Components:

- Gross salary, including holiday allowance, pension and social charges, and employer costs that can be attributed to the activity. For commercial partners in the alliance (enterprises), commercial hourly rates may **not** be used in the budget for MFA.
- Costs related to deployment for the project, such as foreign allowances, housing allowance and relocation allowance, labour-market allowances and acting allowances.
- The costs and personnel related to the activity must be appropriate to the implementation of the project (efficiency)

Direct personnel costs local staff must reflect the local context. An organization is expected to have guidelines on which these salaries are based.

Other direct program costs for materials etc can - wholly or partially- be attributed to the activities. There is a direct, clear and demonstrable relationship between these costs and the funded activities. This also applies for the other budget items under this heading.

Indirect costs have no direct relationship with specific activities within the proposal. Examples include indirect personnel costs (e.g. secretarial costs), telephone costs and heating costs. Indirect costs can be allocated proportionally (pro-rata or via allocation keys).

The following categories of costs may be included as **indirect** costs:

- Support staff and indirect personnel costs (eg salary costs of board/management, finance, IT, HR, administration and other support staff and travel costs).
- Non-activity related administrative costs (eg insurance, legal costs, office costs, IT licenses and systems, integrity policy and enforcement.

It is possible and advisable to incorporate future inflation into the cost structure when drawing up a multi-year budget for new activities. The maximum percentage per year is 5%.

- Is there a minimum/maximum budget percentage for personnel costs and/or activities?
    - There is no minimum/maximum budget percentage for personnel costs and/or activities other than the 85% direct costs.

Questions on budget and allocations

- Can you provide guidance on how local and non-local personnel are defined?
    - For the purpose of this call, personnel are considered local staff if they are employed under an Ethiopian employment contract. Personnel employed under a non-Ethiopian contract issued outside Ethiopia are considered non-local staff (see also question above).

- What does applying at "non-commercial rates" mean for private sector partners and how must this be evidenced, and does it apply to subcontractors?
    - Private sector partners participating in the consortium are expected to contribute their expertise, services, or resources at non-commercial rates, meaning that costs should be based on the actual expenses required to deliver the proposed activities. It requires the complete removal of all commercial profit margins. The grant is not intended to finance commercial profit or generate a financial return for participating companies.
    - At this stage, this does not need to be evidenced. In the next stage, the 3 selected consortia will be provided with clear instructions on how to evidence compliance with this criteria, such as providing details on their regular commercial rates versus the baseline internal cost structure (eligible for subsidy/grant). The EKN reserves the right to commission external audits if the internal cost structure is unclear. For larger Dutch companies, the RVO Integrale kostensystematiek guidelines can serve as an illustrative baseline: [Integrale kostensystematiek (IKS) | RVO.nl]
    - The criteria does not apply to subcontracted entities, as EKN does not have a direct contractual relationship with subcontractors.

- Can you confirm that consortium members will not separately receive the funding?
    - Correct. The grant agreement will be established with the lead applicant, which will be the sole recipient of the funding from EKN. The lead applicant will be responsible for transferring funds to consortium partners in accordance with the approved consortium agreement and agreed budget allocation.

- Is there a required percentage of the activity budget that must be implemented directly by the project staff of the lead applicant and/or consortium partners?
    - No. The call does not prescribe a specific percentage for the allocation of activities or budget among the lead applicant and consortium partners.

- Are the 32%, 62%, and 6% component allocations fixed percentages that must be met exactly, or are they indicative allocations? How should cross-cutting costs, such as central monitoring and evaluation, consortium coordination, and program management, be allocated across the components?

    - From the 100% funding, max 15% can be allocated to indirect costs. From the remaining 85%, the allocations will be 32% to component 1, 62% to component 2, and 6% to component 3.

- Are the component budget percentages mandatory or indicative?
    - These are obligatory.
- Regarding the innovation ceiling, does the maximum 25% for pilots and innovative approaches apply separately to each of Components 1 and 2, or collectively across the combined budgets of the two components?
    - The 25% ceiling applies separately to each component. Applicants may allocate a maximum of 25% of the available budget under Component 1 to pilots and innovative approaches, and a maximum of 25% of the available budget under Component 2 for the same purpose.
- How should "piloting new or innovative approaches" be defined?
    - The objective of EKN is to support approaches that are grounded in evidence and based on demonstrated results and lessons learned. The aim is not to introduce new approaches where existing solutions have already proven effective, but rather to build on what is known to work. At the same time, EKN recognizes that progress and improved outcomes may require testing new ideas, methodologies, technologies, or practices. Without creating space for experimentation, promising innovations and good practices may not be identified or scaled. The 25% ceiling for innovation therefore reflects a balance between applying evidence-based approaches and allowing room for learning and adaptation. Within components 1+2, up to 25% of the available budget may be allocated to piloting approaches, methodologies, technologies, or practices that have not previously been applied.
- Does the 25% ceiling cover only direct activity costs, or does it also include related personnel, research, equipment, monitoring, and management costs?
    - The 25% ceiling covers all direct activity costs (see explainer direct vs indirect costs above).

Questions on sub-contracting

- *"The consortium partners are expected to directly implement the proposed Program and shall not act solely as intermediary financing channels to third parties. Limited subcontracting for specialized technical support or localized implementation is permissible where appropriately justified"* Would organizations that engage local partners, service providers, or specialized institutions for specific implementation activities, while retaining full programmatic and financial oversight, be considered 'intermediary financing channels'? Clarity is requested in light of the requirement to avoid acting as intermediary financing channels to third parties.
    - The consortium partners are expected to directly implement the proposed program and remain responsible for the delivery of the agreed activities and results. Subcontracting specialized institutions, government entities, service providers, or other implementing partners is permitted only where there is a clear need and where this is appropriately justified, as outlined in the ToR.
      The majority of program activities should therefore be implemented by the consortium partners themselves, and this should be reflected in the proposed implementation approach and budget. Subcontracting should be limited to specific areas where external expertise, capacity, or localized implementation support is required, while the consortium partners retain full programmatic and financial responsibility for the implementation of the program.

- How much of the total organizational budget is allowed for subcontracting?
    - A percentage is not provided. See also answer above.

- Can a formal consortium member implement part of its assigned scope through a sub-grant or partnership agreement with an Ethiopian civil society organization, while retaining full programmatic and financial accountability to the Lead Partner? What contractual arrangements are permitted?
    - Yes. See answers above. Consortium members may engage Ethiopian civil society organizations or other local partners through sub-granting or partnership arrangements for specific elements of implementation. These organizations would not be considered formal consortium members. Such collaborations may be described in Annex 1, under question i, to demonstrate the consortium's implementation approach and partnerships.
    - The specific contractual arrangements with sub-grantees or subcontracted entities are to be determined by the consortium partners. The Lead Partner remains fully responsible and accountable to EKN for the overall implementation, financial management, and achievement of agreed results.

Questions on ORIA

- Please clarify whether all consortium members must have full ORIA approved status or whether ORIA approval is limited to the lead agency?
    - No. Not all consortium members are required to have ORIA-approved status. The lead partners of the three consortia selected to proceed to the full proposal stage will need to have an ORIA-approved status at the time of full proposal submission or provide the necessary documents to conduct the ORIA.
    - Thus if any of the selected lead partners have not yet undergone an ORIA assessment at the stage of full proposal submission, EKN will conduct the assessment. Lead partners will therefore need to demonstrate compliance with the applicable ORIA criteria. Applicants are encouraged to consider this requirement already at the Concept Note stage and ensure that the proposed lead partner is able to meet the ORIA criteria. Therefore the ORIA criteria were provided as addendum to this call.
    - By submitting the Concept Note, the consortium confirms its shared understanding that the lead partner either already complies, or will comply by October 2026, with the applicable ORIA criteria.

- Which levels of risk assessment do non-lead consortium members need to evidence?
    - The evidence and risk-related information required at this stage from lead applicants and consortium partners is specified in the ToR. No additional ORIA evidence or risk assessment documentation is required from non-lead consortium members at this stage.

- In the ORIA Appendix, section 2.2 Track Record, information on 3-5 cases will be required. Can you indicate if this can also include countries other than Ethiopia or if these cases should only relate to Ethiopia? Is there a certain time period to which the track record in the ORIA can apply?
    - For the ORIA assessment, the focus will be on relevant experience and track record in Ethiopia where available. If an organization does not have relevant cases from Ethiopia, examples from other countries may be considered. No specific time period is prescribed. The details will be provided to the three consortia selected to proceed to the full proposal stage, whose **leads** will need to have an ORIA-approved status at the time of full proposal submission.

- Is an already approved ORIA with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sufficient?
    - An ORIA is not yet requested. Please see answers above.

Questions on targeting /regions

- The call refers to a minimum of three "regions." Could you please clarify what is meant by "region" in this context? Does it refer to woredas, regional states, landscapes, or another geographic classification?

- Ethiopia is a federal state divided into 12 semi-autonomous regional states and 2 chartered cities. The call refers to the regional states. These are: Afar region, Amhara region, Binshangul Gumuz region, Central Ethiopia region, Gambela region, Harari region, Oromia region, Sidama region, Somali region, South Ethiopian region, South West Ethiopia region, Tigray region. The two chartered cities are : Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa, these are not considered regions in this call.

- What level of geographic alignment is expected between Components 1 and 2? Is operating within the same region sufficient, or should the selected urban and rural locations demonstrate direct food-system, supply-chain, or market linkages?
  - Component 2 is implemented in a minimum of 4 regions. A minimum of 3 regions out of these 4, need to be aligned with the regions of component 1. Operating in the same region is sufficient. The consortium determines itself whether linkages between the urban and rural locations is part of its approach to address the identified root causes of malnutrition.
- For Component 2, the call notes that strong alignment with existing EKN-supported programs is desirable. Does EKN expect implementation within the same geographic areas as those programs, or can applicants propose complementary geographic areas that create strategic linkages with existing investments?
  - Program implementation within the same geographic area is not obligatory and complementary geographic areas can be proposed.
- Do Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa count toward the minimum requirement for three regions under Component 1?
  - No, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa do not count towards the 3 regions under component 1, as these are chartered <u>cities</u>. The TOR states: "**<u>In addition,</u>** the consortium selects a minimum of 3 urban/peri-urban areas in a minimum of 3 regions and based on clear, self-defined criteria."
- Must all selected regions remain unchanged throughout the five-year implementation period, or may the consortium adapt geographic coverage based on learning, emerging needs, or contextual changes during implementation?
  - The Embassy takes pride in being a development partner that offers flexibility to its implementing partners of development programs, when they need to adapt in response to changing contexts, emerging needs, risks, and lessons learned during implementation. In close consultation with the Embassy, changes to program locations may be considered where there is a clear justification and where this contributes to achieving the intended results.

Questions of submission deadlines and formats

- Is it possible to add additional annexes beyond those recommended? For example, an annex outlining the roles of each consortium member, or listing the stakeholders? Will adding annexes cause our application to be rejected?
  - No. Additional annexes than the stated annexes are not permitted. Additional annexes will be deleted without being reviewed.
- Do we need to attach a "partnership agreement"/team agreement signed on behalf of all consortium partners as Concept Note attachment?
  - No, in this stage the partnership agreement is not necessary. This will be part of the next stage for the 3 selected consortia submitting a full proposal.
- Does EKN have specific template to submit the CN , ToC &, Risk or the guidance given on "*Technical Assessment Concept note*" section would suffice?

    - For these elements there is no template.

Other questions

- Reference to the following note is given: "Tentative: integrated WASH, SRHR and FNS program in Tigray, Amhara, Afar and Oromia". Are the stated target regions to be prioritized? Same for the prioritization of the thematic areas of "integrated WASH, SRHR and FNS"
    - This question refers to the list of programs currently financed by the EKN. The word 'tentative' was added as this specific program is in draft stage and no final decision on launching it has taken. The list of EKN funded programs does not determine the applicants' selection of regions or thematic area of this call for concept notes.

- Regarding Component 3, the call states that the program "doesn't facilitate research as such, rather sets an agenda and advocates for high-end scientific evidence to be fostered, localized, and then translated into rapid nutrition strategy, policy, and regulation." Can the embassy clarify the boundary between disallowed primary scientific research versus permitted evidence-generation and data synthesis expected under this component?
    - There is no restriction on funding primary scientific research under Component 3. Activities such as primary research, Master's or PhD research, evidence generation, and data synthesis are all eligible. However, as stated in the ToR, the primary focus of Component 3 is not on conducting research itself. Rather, the component is intended to be agenda-setting, eco-system strengthening and fostering collaboration. Research activities should therefore be positioned as contributing to these broader objectives.

- The call references emerging fields such as nutrigenomics, precision nutrition, and microbiome research. Should applicants treat these as illustrative examples, or is EKN specifically seeking programming that advances these areas?
    - The ToR for Component 3 describes the underlying challenges related to nutrition research and the use of evidence in Ethiopia. The references to areas such as nutrigenomics, precision nutrition, and microbiome research are intended as examples of identified gaps, rather than as mandatory or exhaustive priority areas. It is up to each consortium to design and justify an approach that responds to the challenges and objectives set out for Component 3 in the ToR. Applicants are encouraged to propose the most appropriate interventions, partnerships, and areas of focus to address those challenges.

- Is the Embassy expecting a narrated Theory of Change (ToC) alongside a visual in part III of the concept note?
    - The ToR does not prescribe a specific format for presenting the ToC. Applicants may choose to present it as a narrative, a visual diagram, or a combination of both, provided that the proposed ToC is clear, coherent, and adequately explains the program logic.

- How will EKN assess the balance between consortium strength and localization when evaluating proposals, particularly where international organizations partner with local institutions that play major implementation, leadership, and knowledge-generation roles?

    - On page 10 of the ToR it's described on what points the Consortium strength will be scored.

- What is EKN's expectation regarding the level of private sector involvement (eg as a consortium member vs collaborator) as the call emphasizes the role of local formal and informal economies, businesses, and SMEs in contributing to long-term food systems solutions?

    - Reference to private sector is made 3 times in the ToR. Applicants are encouraged to review the relevant sections of the ToR. Within these parameters, it is up to each consortium to design and justify the proposed intervention, including the role and level of engagement of private sector partners, as appropriate to the program objectives.

- The call requests submission as one PDF, while Annex 3 is provided in Excel format. Should applicants submit the original Excel workbook in addition to the combined PDF, or should Annex 3 only be included within the single PDF attachment?

    - Applicants are required to submit **one** PDF containing the complete application, including all annexes. The annex prepared in Excel should therefore be converted and incorporated into the **single** PDF prior to submission.

- Annex 1 states: *"The funding of commercial services, investments or commercial activities."* Can the grant be used to support activities that strengthen or scale existing commercial business models that contribute to the objectives of the Call, for example, scaling smallholder farming production?
    - Under this Call, the grant cannot be used to directly fund companies for the primary purpose of improving or scaling their own commercial business. As stated in Annex 1, funding of commercial services, investments or commercial activities is not eligible.
      However, the grant can be used to improve the enabling environment for the private sector and to support businesses in starting, launching or piloting new approaches that clearly and demonstrably contribute to the objectives of the Call, and that they would otherwise not invest in on their own. Such activities must be directly linked to the program's goals and go beyond normal commercial expansion or routine business operations

- Which forms of private sector support are eligible, given the exclusion of commercial services and activities?
    - There are many ways to engage the private sector beyond providing direct funding. Commercial companies may participate as consortium members on a non-profit basis, in accordance with the requirements of the ToR. In addition, private sector entities may be engaged through sub-granting arrangements where appropriate (see answers on sub-contracting above). Such partnerships can be described in **Annex 1, question i**, as part of the consortium's proposed implementation approach.

- Is an indicative timeline available for the announcement of the shortlisted Concept Notes and the subsequent steps in the selection process?
    - EKN aims to inform the three selected consortia of the outcome of the Concept Note stage on 12 October 2026. The selected consortia will then be invited to submit a full proposal by 25 November 2026. The date to select the winner is the third week of December 2026. The start of the program is foreseen in March 2027. These dates are indicative only. EKN reserves the right to amend the timeline if necessary.

- In relation to the grant agreement to be signed by the lead partner should it be awarded, what would be the payment modalities and particularly are advance payments contemplated?
    - The payment modalities will be discussed with the winning consortium

- The Call indicates that Component 2 should address persistent nutrition challenges in rural Ethiopia through sustainable, nutrition-specific, and resilience-oriented food systems approaches. Could EKN kindly clarify what you define as a "nutrition-specific" approach?
    - No further definition of the term "nutrition-specific" will be provided. Applicants are expected to rely on the guidance provided in the ToR and to justify how their proposed interventions align with the objectives and scope of the call.