Kingdom of the Netherlands

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Call for concept notes: private sector development and business climate enhancement in Kenya

This document consolidates all questions and inquiries from applicants of the Call for Concept Papers referenced above. It provides responses to the questions to ensure fair and free access to information on the call for concept papers for all (prospective) applicants.

Please note that tailored feedback on unsuccessful concepts will not be provided due to the large number of applications.

Interested applicants are encouraged to be fully acquainted with the call for concepts details and information provided.

QUESTION	ANSWER
	A. General Questions
1. What is the maximum program budget annually per proposal and number of concepts to be selected for this call for proposals?	The Maximum program budget annually is KES 150.000.000 (equivalent in EUR is 1 million). Concepts focused on one or two intervention areas do not have to take up the maximum budget. For example, a concept with a budget of EUR 100,000 or EUR 300,000 will be selected if it meets the call for concepts criteria. Institutions are encouraged to submit concepts with budgets that they can demonstrate absorption capacity.
2. Can a private sector / for-profit company act as the lead applicant, or must the lead be a government body, NGO, or CSO?	Yes. Commercial for-profit companies registered in Kenya are eligible to serve as a consortium lead or member, provided they fulfill all standard threshold criteria, including the strict requirement to apply and operate at verified non-commercial rates.
3. Is a confirmed Dutch partner, investor, or knowledge institution a requirement, or does it simply strengthen scoring?	Direct consortium membership by a Dutch organization is welcome but is not a threshold requirement. The expected leveraging of Dutch content or contribution to Dutch earning capacity is not prescriptive. It can be demonstrated through future or current collaboration and will be evaluated during formal assessment.

4.	Are newly incorporated startups or early-stage companies eligible, either as lead applicants or as a consortium/technology partner alongside a more established organization?	The (lead) applicant should have a demonstrable track record in implementing comparable programs and with the government.
5.	Can an individual or sole proprietor apply directly, or must applications come through a registered organization, cooperative, company, or consortium?	Individuals and sole proprietors cannot apply to this call for proposals. Organizations can apply as a consortium or as a single organization. Applicants can be a civil society organization, private sector, international organization, or a knowledge institute with proper registration status.
6.	Is an organization headquartered outside Kenya eligible to apply as sole lead applicant?	Yes. Organizations headquartered outside Kenya are eligible to apply as sole lead applicant, provided they can demonstrate a proven track record of working with the government on the identified focus areas.
	B. Application Process & Submission	
7.	Where should completed concept notes be sent, a specific email address or an online portal?	Submissions should be send to nai-ea@minbuza.nl no later than 19 July 2026, 11:59pm.
8.	Is there an official concept note template, and where/how can it be downloaded? What file format is expected for submission?	The concept paper outline is presented in the call for concepts notes on page 3 & 4. Applicants are highly required to structure document headings in line with the template guideline provided. The file format should be submitted in PDF format. Concept notes not aligned with the guideline template provided will not be considered.
9.	Would applicants be able to arrange a short call or meeting with the team ahead of submission to discuss eligibility or fit?	Due to the high number of concepts, there is no possibility of arranging for a short meeting or call with the team to discuss eligibility or fit.
10.	When can applicants expect a response from the Embassy?	The selection of concept notes will be finalized on August 7th, 2026. Selected organizations/consortiums will be asked to submit a full proposal. Given the high volume of inquiries, responses will be limited to questions and concepts relevant to the call criteria.

11. Please clarify what word count limit applies for the concept note.	The word count for the concept notes is limited to 3000 (+/-100) words
C. Focus Areas & Scope	
12. For Focus Area A, does "collaboration with a government entity" require a signed MoU at concept note stage, or is a letter of intent / expression of interest sufficient, with a formal agreement to follow at full-proposal stage?	At the concept note stage, a signed MoU is not required. Any documented evidence of collaboration with a government entity, such as a letter of intent or expression of interest, is acceptable but not necessary.
13. Can a concept note address both Focus Area A and Focus Area B, and if so, does the government-collaboration requirement apply to the whole proposal or only the Focus Area A components? Does addressing both areas carry a scoring advantage over a single-area proposal?	A concept note may address both Focus Area A and Focus Area B. The government-collaboration requirement applies specifically to Focus Area A components. For Focus Area B, applicants are instead expected to demonstrate strong experience with relevant government policies, regulations, rules and operational standards. Addressing both focus areas does not automatically confer a scoring advantage over a single-area proposal. Institutions are encouraged to apply to focus areas that they can demonstrate track record and experience.
14. One of listed criteria requires proposals to either address one issue described under the focus areas in section three, or both. Where the proposal covers two separate issues that are not interlinked and have separate sets of consortium partners, can this be covered under one proposal or two proposals, keeping in mind the guidance on the word limits?	This can be covered under one proposal if the lead consortium partner is the same. The submission should specify the consortium composition for the two focus areas. Please refer to call for proposals document criteria 4F and 4G.
D. Budget & Financing	
15. What do "non-commercial rates" mean in practice for for-profit	The requirement to apply non-commercial rates applies strictly to formal, core consortium members that are for-profit organizations; it does not

applicants or partners, and what evidence/documentation is required to demonstrate it?	automatically extend to third-party subcontractors or commercial service providers under a contractual arrangement or standard procurement process. Non-commercial rates require the complete removal of all commercial profit margins. To evidence this, applicants must detail their regular commercial rates versus the baseline internal cost structure (eligible for subsidy). The Embassy reserves the right to commission external audits if the internal cost structure is unclear.
16. Is co-financing / matching funding required? Can in-kind contributions count toward the "additional contribution" that strengthens the budget score, or must it be cash?	Co-funding is not mandatory. In-kind contributions may count toward the "additional contribution" that strengthens the budget score, provided they are quantified. This can apply for institutions that are already implementing such programs.
17. Is the budget ceiling the KES 150,000,000 or the EUR 1,000,000 figure, and which exchange rate/date should be used? Should budgets be presented in KES, EUR, or both?	The budget ceiling is KES 150,000,000, equivalent to EUR 1,000,000 at the applicable exchange rate, annually. Budgets may be presented in the applicant's preferred currency. At the concept note stage, budgets should be structured around major, aggregated expenditure categories (see the budget annex in the call). A detailed breakdown by activity or operational line item is not required at this stage. For successful applicants incorporated in Kenya, contracts will be issued in KES. Applicants are also encouraged to present budgets appropriate to the program interventions, which can be lower than the budget ceiling as this provides room to consider more than 1 concept.
18. Are audited financial statements required at concept note stage, or only if shortlisted for a full proposal?	No. Audited financial statements are not required at concept note stage.
E. Consortium Rules, Track Record & Fund Scale	
19. How is "demonstrable track record in comparable programmes" assessed. Must it sit with the lead applicant alone, or can it	The demonstrable track record requirement must sit with the lead applicant specifically, given the requirement for direct experience working with government. Comparability is assessed against criteria including sector experience, website summaries of past similar interventions, scale,

be satisfied collectively across consortium members? What counts as comparable)?	geography, and donor-funded programme experience.
20. How many grants / concept notes do the fund expect to shortlist or award, and is there an indicative total funding envelope?	The total available funding envelope is a maximum of EUR 1,000,000 per individual project proposal, representing a 100% grant/subsidy framework. The Embassy intends to select and award funding to 1-3 proposals in total from this call.
21. May an organization submit only one proposal as lead applicant, or does the one-proposal limit also restrict participation as a co-applicant/partner in other consortiums?	Organizations can submit only one proposal. However, an organization is allowed to be part of multiple consortiums. We reference to page 3, point 4F.

Annex 1: Trade and investment focus of the Multi-Annual Country Strategy

Strategic Result:

1. Increased bilateral trade and investments, especially in strategic sectors, through enhanced economic cooperation to boost Dutch earning capacity as well as promoting inclusive economic growth.
2. Improved business climate by resolving key issues through economic diplomacy efforts and strategic interventions.

Strategic interventions:

1. Design and implement programs that promote market development and generate impact by making sure that business and investors are aligned with the needs of society.
2. Strengthen bilateral platforms for dialogue such as the Joint Trade Committee, Agricultural Working Group, and EPA improving the business climate for Dutch enterprises in Kenya.
3. Use the Dutch Diamond approach to promote private sector interests, addressing local needs.
4. Improve market access for Dutch companies in Kenya through economic diplomacy, RVO-instruments, trade-missions and public-private dialogue together with NL Business Hub, with a specific focus on high potential sectors such as agriculture, agro-logistics, health & life sciences, water and energy.
5. Create investment opportunities by mobilizing (Dutch) DFI’s for example Invest International Dutch private sector solutions, with priority given to sectors with high potential for the Netherlands and Kenya.
6. Strengthening market development by implementing programs that integrate marginalized groups into economic systems, scaling programs on trade and investment.
7. Create an enabling environment for development programs, businesses and investors to implement RBC standards (identifying sector-specific risks, mapping stakeholders, monitoring legislation), raising awareness of the impact of trade and investment.

Positioning of the Netherlands: The Netherlands is a top 5 export destination for Kenyan goods and is among the top 5 investors in Kenya. Together with various bilateral dialogue platforms, this creates a strong base for a balanced economic partnership with Kenya, promoting strengthened engagement. The leading role of the Netherlands on the Northern Corridor, focused on infrastructure development, trade facilitation and the reduction of food loss, will further enhance this position. By continuing to fund strategic interventions to enhance the business climate, often in partnership with the Government of Kenya or its parastatals, the Netherlands will maintain its profile of a champion in this domain. The Netherlands is in key sectors that are of interest to Kenya, like agriculture, infrastructure and health. As other geopolitical players are intensifying their economic cooperation with Kenya, the Netherlands will continue to maintain their position as significant economic partner.

Preconditions to be met: Anchoring mutual buy-in from Kenya and the Netherlands, at the appropriate diplomatic level, is crucial for the effectiveness of policy influencing through platforms for structural dialogue. To the same effect, a strong organization representing the Dutch business community in Kenya, such as the Netherlands Business Hub, is essential. Frequent engagement with the Dutch business community will help to keep track of business climate challenges and support in addressing these. Synergy between Dutch trade interests and the development agenda is essential to generate impact. For example, development cooperation and trade should be considered as mutually reinforcing when designing interventions, in particular relating to stability and marginalized groups at risk of being left behind. The instruments facilitating market development and inclusive financing need to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the needs of the Kenyan context.

For more information we refer to the following documents and links:

A. Website

B. Call for Proposals document

C. Market Development focus

D. Private Sector development focus

E. Business climate issues survey summarized in the call for proposals document.