



WEST AFRICA DEMOCRACY FUND (WADF)

Information Webinar

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Organizational Eligibility & Registration

1.1 Registration Location & Legal Status

#	Question	WADF Response
Q1	Do we need to be physically registered in one of the seven priority countries, or is having active programmes there sufficient?	The WADF invites applications from organisations that are legally registered to operate OR have active programmes in any of the seven priority countries: Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo. Organisations headquartered outside the region, whether in the US, UK, EU, or elsewhere in Africa, may apply, provided they have documented programme presence in an eligible country.
Q2	Can organisations based in non-listed countries (e.g. Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Gambia) apply, and is the list of seven countries exhaustive?	The seven priority countries are the primary focus. Organisations based in non-listed countries may still apply if they work at the West Africa sub-regional or ECOWAS level, or have active programmes in one or more of the seven priority countries.
Q3	Are Central African organisations (e.g. DRC) eligible?	No. The WADF focuses on West Africa. Organisations from Central Africa are not eligible unless they have active programmes within the seven priority West African countries or are engaged at the ECOWAS level.
Q4	Can UN agencies apply?	UN agencies may apply provided they have active programmes in one of the seven priority countries or work at the West Africa/ECOWAS regional level, in line with the general eligibility criteria.
Q5	Are public institutions allowed to apply as individual entities or as consortium members?	Yes. The WADF explicitly includes key public institutions as eligible recipients of funding, including judiciaries, electoral management bodies, and media regulatory bodies. They may apply individually or as part of a consortium.

1.2 New, Informal, or Unregistered Organizations

#	Question	WADF Response
Q1	Can recently registered or very new organisations apply? How is experience assessed for organisations that were informally active before registration?	The Call does not set a minimum age for organisations, but they must have previous experience in governance, democracy, and civic engagement. For organisations that were active informally before registration, the WADF team will assess the substance of that experience. Applicants should also showcase the experience of key staff on the implementation team as evidence of relevant capacity. New organisations that cannot demonstrate experience managing budgets of a comparable size are encouraged to secure a fiscal sponsor for financial management purposes.
Q2	Can an organisation apply without an audited financial statement?	Yes. At the initial application stage, only the narrative form and budget are required. Audited financials will be requested at the full application stage.
Q3	What is a fiscal sponsor, and can an unregistered coalition or network apply through one?	A fiscal sponsor is a registered organisation that receives and manages grant funds on behalf of another organisation, taking on legal and financial accountability while that organisation carries out the activities. This arrangement is not limited to unregistered groups, even a newly registered organisation that does not yet have demonstrable financial management capacity may apply through a fiscal sponsor. The fiscal sponsor would be the lead applicant and signatory on the grant agreement.
Q4	What rules apply to the fiscal sponsor — does it need to be based in the region, be part of the consortium, or serve as the lead applicant?	The fiscal sponsor must meet all standard WADF eligibility requirements, including being legally registered to operate or having active programmes in one of the seven priority countries. It serves as the lead applicant and signatory on the grant agreement. Whether it needs to be a formal consortium member will depend on the structure of the proposal.
Q5	Can a subsidiary organisation apply separately from its mother/parent organisation?	Yes, provided the subsidiary is independently legally registered and meets all eligibility requirements in its own right. The subsidiary's application must stand on its own merits.

1.3 International Organisations & INGOs

#	Question	WADF Response
Q1	Can international organisations apply, and can they serve as lead applicants?	International organisations based in Africa with active programmes in an eligible country, or that work at the ECOWAS/West Africa regional level, may apply. The Call does not restrict lead applicant status to locally headquartered organisations. An INGO with a country office legally registered in a priority country may apply as lead.
Q2	Can international organisations participate as sub-grantees or consultants, and does this penalise the lead applicant?	Yes. International organisations may participate as sub-grantees or consultants and this does not penalise the lead applicant. However, eligibility criteria also apply to sub-grantees, and consultants must demonstrate unique expertise in the relevant thematic areas.
Q3	Can international technical partners from outside the region be engaged as consultants or trainers, and can INGOs participate in more than one consortium?	International technical partners may be engaged as consultants or trainers, provided they demonstrate relevant expertise.
Q4	Are academic institutions, universities, research laboratories, and think tanks eligible?	Yes. Academic institutions, universities, research laboratories, and think tanks are eligible to apply. If pre-selected, the due diligence process will determine whether a fiscal sponsor arrangement is required.

2. Consortium Structures & Partnerships

2.1 Consortium Formation

#	Question	WADF Response
Q1	Is there a maximum number of organisations in a consortium?	The Call does not specify a maximum number of organisations in a consortium. However, applicants should ensure the consortium structure is proportionate to the project scope and that the lead organisation has the capacity to coordinate and manage all partners effectively.
Q2	Are consortia recommended over single-organisation proposals?	The Call welcomes both. Applications can be submitted by a single organization, a consortium, or a network. Consortia are recommended for large grants (\$500,000).
Q3	Can a national organisation form a national-only consortium, or must it	A national-only consortium is permitted. The Call allows applications for local, national, or regional

	include organisations from different countries?	level activities. There is no requirement for cross-country representation in a consortium.
Q4	Can a coalition of newly formed organisations apply as a consortium?	The lead organisation must have prior experience in leading similar work or regranteeing capacity. A newly formed coalition led by an inexperienced organisation may not meet this requirement, but if the lead has a relevant track record, other consortium members may be newer.
Q5	Must the lead organisation meet all eligibility criteria?	Yes. The lead organisation must be legally registered to operate or have active programmes in a priority country, have relevant experience in governance and democracy work, and have prior experience in leading similar work or regranteeing capacity when applying as a consortium.

2.2 Roles Within Consortia

#	Question	WADF Response
Q1	Can an organisation submit multiple applications — for example, as lead in one and as a partner in another?	Yes. Each application will be considered on its own merits. However, it is unlikely that one organization will be funded twice. Organizations should therefore submit their strongest and most strategically aligned proposal.
Q2	Can the lead applicant be different from the consortium partner that meets the funding history/experience requirement?	No. The eligibility requirements — including experience managing a comparable budget — apply to the lead organisation. The lead must itself meet all eligibility criteria.
Q3	Can a tech company be the primary grantee with civil society groups as consortium partners?	The WADF primarily targets civil society organisations, community groups, trade unions, women-led organisations, and public institutions. A tech company as primary grantee would not typically align with this mandate and will need to work under a consortium or be engaged as a consultant.
Q4	If we apply as a consortium, does the lead organisation fill out the application, or can a sub-grantee fill it out on behalf of the consortium?	The lead organisation must complete and submit the application. Sub-grantees and consortium partners may contribute to the proposal content, but the submission must come from the lead organisation.

2.3 Sub-Granting & Consultants

#	Question	WADF Response
Q1	How does sub-granting work, and is it mandatory for large grants?	Under the sub-granting model, a lead organization receives a large grant (up to \$500,000) and distributes portions of that funding to smaller organizations. Applications for large grants specifically for regranteeing or subgranting purposes are particularly invited. However, sub-granting is not mandatory — a large grant can also be used for direct implementation by a single organization.
Q2	Can sub-grantees or consultants be based outside West Africa, and do they need to register locally?	Sub-grantees and consultants may be based outside West Africa, provided the project activities and intended impact remain within the eligible countries. Sub-grantees are not required to register locally. WADF does not retain control over the selection of sub-grantees but thoroughly evaluates the lead organisation's capacity as a grantmaker and its due diligence procedures to ensure compliance.
Q3	Should international organisations engaged as technical consultants be named in the proposal, or can they be identified by role only?	Where specific consultants have already been identified, they should be named. Where they have not yet been identified, identifying them by role and required expertise is acceptable at the application stage.
Q4	Must a network be formally registered to apply for a large grant?	The lead organisation of any application — including for a large grant — must be legally registered to operate in a priority country. An unregistered network would need to apply through a legally registered fiscal sponsor.

3. Regional vs. National Projects & Geography

#	Question	WADF Response
Q1	Does a regional project need to cover all seven priority countries, and what is the minimum number of countries to qualify as regional?	No. A regional project does not need to cover all seven countries. The Call does not set a minimum country threshold for regional projects. Regional proposals at the ECOWAS or West Africa level are welcomed without requiring coverage of every priority country.
Q2	If a project is regional, can it include countries outside the seven named priority countries?	Regional projects should primarily focus on the seven priority countries. However, where a project has a compelling regional rationale, limited engagement of non-priority West African countries may be

		considered. The majority of activities and resources must remain within the seven priority countries.
Q3	Can a project focus on one country only?	Yes. The Call explicitly welcomes projects implemented at local and national levels. A single-country project is entirely eligible.
Q4	What levels of implementation are supported, and what geographic reach is expected for national projects?	All levels are eligible, local, community, district, national, and regional. The Call explicitly includes initiatives at local government levels under the Innovative Projects theme. For national projects, the expected geographic reach is not prescriptively defined, proposals should justify their scope relative to the objectives and budget.
Q5	Must the lead organisation be registered in each country of implementation, and can a regional organisation be registered in just one country?	The lead organisation does not need to be registered in every country of implementation. It must be legally registered to operate or have active programmes in at least one of the seven priority countries. Consortium partners with a presence in other countries can cover those geographies. Regional organisations formally registered in just one country but working across several others are encouraged to apply.

4. Areas, Programmatic Focus & Context

4.1 Thematic Eligibility

#	Question	WADF Response
Q1	Must a proposal cover all thematic areas, or can it focus on just one?	A proposal can focus on one or more thematic areas. There is no requirement to address all themes. Applicants should align their proposals to whichever thematic area(s) are most relevant to their work.
Q2	Are projects focused on justice systems, anti-corruption, or institutional reform eligible?	Yes. Strengthening the judiciary is listed under the Strengthening Strategic Public Institutions theme. Anti-corruption advocacy at any level, including subnational, falls under the Advocacy for Institutional Reform theme.
Q3	Are projects focused on civic technology, digital platforms, or disinformation eligible?	Yes. Digital platforms to counter disinformation and disseminate information are explicitly listed under the Multi-stakeholder Dialogues theme. Broader civic technology with a governance focus is also eligible under Innovative Projects.
Q4	Are projects focused on the inclusion of marginalised groups — including women,	Yes. The Call includes projects that strengthen the voices of women, persons with disabilities, young

	persons with disabilities, youth, and LGBTIQ+ persons — eligible?	people, and minority groups in the democratic process. The WADF seeks to advance democratic governance without distinction of race, gender, class, or disability. Projects advancing inclusive democratic participation for all groups may be considered where they align with the Fund's thematic areas and objectives.
Q5	Are projects focused on citizenship, social justice, natural resources, environmental governance, or culture and arts eligible?	Citizenship, social cohesion, and inclusion of marginalized groups are central to the Fund. Natural resources and environmental governance can be eligible if the project advances democracy and citizens centered governance. Culture and arts-based approaches with a clear governance and civic engagement dimension are eligible and encouraged under the Innovative Projects theme.
Q6	Are projects focused on electoral integrity eligible?	General election monitoring is not funded. However, projects using election monitoring findings to advance the inclusion of priority groups may be considered, and strengthening electoral management bodies and the transparency and accountability of electoral processes are eligible.
Q7	Can a project work with political parties? Where is the line between governance work and partisan activity?	The WADF does not fund partisan activities, including the promotion of specific candidates in any elections. Working with political parties in a non-partisan, governance-strengthening capacity may be permissible, but any activity that promotes specific candidates or parties will not be funded.
Q8	Does the fund support projects in countries experiencing political transition, military rule, or fragile governance contexts?	Yes. Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso are among the seven priority countries. The Call references political transition processes, institution building, and social cohesion as dialogue themes. Applicants working in transition environments should clearly explain how their approach is adapted to the political reality on the ground.

4.2 Innovation & Scale

#	Question	WADF Response
Q1	Are you looking for small local experiments or large national/systemic projects?	Both. The Call supports local, national, and regional level activities across all grant sizes. Innovative projects at local government level are explicitly welcomed alongside larger systemic interventions. The grant category should match your project scale and your organisation's management capacity.
Q2	Are projects that build on existing experience and propose scaling encouraged?	Yes. Building on proven approaches and scaling them is consistent with the Fund's aim of leapfrogging toward more resilient democracy.
Q3	Does having a functional AI prototype strengthen an application?	Innovation is defined broadly — it includes creative, adaptive, and non-traditional approaches and is not limited to technology. What matters is whether the approach is feasible, relevant, and demonstrates clear added value. .
Q4	Are proposals grounded in indigenous or African concepts of democracy encouraged, and does WADF encourage co-creation with communities?	Yes, on both counts. The Call mentions indigenous knowledge systems and practices such as ubuntu and reparative justice as examples of reimagining governance. WADF also strongly encourages projects grounded in the lived experiences and aspirations of citizens and communities.
Q5	How is intersectionality considered in the selection criteria?	WADF recognizes that individuals experience overlapping systems of oppression, discrimination or privilege based on their multiple identities (gender, race, disability, class, geography, etc.). In this sense, contextual programming is considered to be one that for instance, recognizes that a rural young woman, faces different barriers to political participation than an educated, urban young woman.

5. Budget, Grant Sizes & Financial Requirements

#	Question	WADF Response
Q1	What are the grant sizes, and can we apply for less than \$50,000?	Small grants start at a minimum of \$50,000. Medium grants go up to \$250,000, and large grants up to \$500,000. All grants run for 12 to 24 months.
Q2	Is there a required prior funding amount, and what counts as comparable experience?	There is no fixed threshold. The Call requires applicants to have experience managing a budget of comparable size to the grant category for which they are applying. The team should demonstrate its ability to manage grants of a similar size to the amount requested or capacity to handle larger budgets than previously managed.
Q3	Is TrustAfrica able to fully fund projects without co-funding requirements?	Yes. The WADF does not require co-funding. Organisations may apply for full project funding within the stated grant categories.
Q4	How many projects will be funded in total, and is there a quota per grant category or per country?	The number of projects funded will depend on the quality of applications received and the funding required per project. There is no fixed quota per grant category or per country. All eligible and competitive applications will be considered on their merits.

5.1 Budget Structure

#	Question	WADF Response
Q1	What are the rules around administrative costs, staff salaries, and the two-thirds activities requirement?	Administrative costs should not exceed 10% of the total grant amount requested. Salaries and benefits are considered direct project costs, not administrative costs. At least two-thirds of the requested budget must be spent directly on project activities — no more than one-third may be allocated to overhead and administrative costs.
Q2	Will the budget template be shared, and can rows be added to accommodate additional activities?	Yes. There is a link to the budget template on the online narrative proposal form sent to all prospective applicants upon registration. Rows may be added to accommodate additional activities.

6. Application Process, Platform & Communication

#	Question	WADF Response
Q1	Is this a one-stage or two-stage process? What is required at the initial submission stage?	This is a two-stage process. At the initial stage, applicants submit only the online narrative application form and the budget. Shortlisted applicants are then invited to submit an elaborated full application. The full pre-award process follows this sequence: pre-screening → technical review → Fund Steering Committee evaluation and selection → full application submission → due diligence → final award decision.
Q2	Can applicants save their progress, return to the form, or correct a mistake after submitting?	No. Once the form has been submitted, no changes are allowed. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review all entries carefully before submitting.
Q3	What documents are required at the initial stage, and do we need audited accounts now?	At the initial application stage, only the narrative application form and the budget are required. Supporting documents such as the legal registration certificate, audited financials, and CVs of key staff will be requested at the full application stage.
Q4	The area-of-intervention field in the application form appears inactive — is this intentional or an error?	This was a technical error. It has now been corrected. Applicants who experienced this issue should refresh the form and the field should now be active.
Q5	We already submitted our application before the webinar — is that submission valid, or do we need to resubmit?	No resubmission is required. Applications submitted before the webinar are valid and will be considered.
Q6	Will an offline or Word version of the application form be shared?	Yes, but please note that all submissions must be done through the online application form.
Q7	Will evaluation criteria for the initial screening and full review stages be shared with applicants?	Yes, the evaluation criteria will be published. All applications undergo review by independent external assessors, and the Fund Steering Committee makes the final selection decision.
Q8	In which language(s) can proposals be submitted? Will Francophone organisations be disadvantaged?	Applications can be submitted in English or French. Both languages are equally acceptable, reflecting the Fund's West African regional scope. Francophone organisations will not be disadvantaged.
Q9	Will the webinar recording, presentation slides, and FAQ document be shared with registered participants?	Yes. The webinar recording, presentation slides, and this FAQ document will be shared with all registered participants.

7. Selection, Timelines & Call Structure

#	Question	WADF Response
Q1	What is the selection and contracting timeline — when will decisions be made and projects start?	The contracting process is expected to start by July 2026. Successful applicants will be notified ahead of this, following the completion of due diligence and final award decisions.
Q2	Will there be a second round of the call, and will future rounds target different types of organisations?	Yes. Two calls for proposals are planned each year. Following the first call, sufficient time will be taken to review lessons learned before announcing the second call. Any changes from the first round will be announced. Applicants are encouraged to follow TrustAfrica's social media channels and website for updates.
Q3	How many grants will be awarded per category?	The number of grants awarded per category is not predetermined. The Fund Steering Committee has final authority to make funding decisions based on the quality of proposals and their alignment with the Fund's goals.

8. Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

#	Question	WADF Response
Q1	Does WADF provide a preferred M&E framework, and how important is learning and adaptation in the programme design?	Applicants are expected to propose their own M&E framework aligned with the Fund's objectives and their project outcomes. The Fund encourages applicants to build in mechanisms for reflection, learning, and course correction throughout implementation. WADF will provide guidance on reporting requirements to successful applicants at the contracting stage.
Q2	Can prior consortium experience be counted beyond the lead organisation's own track record?	Yes. While the lead organisation must meet the eligibility requirements in its own right, the collective experience and track record of consortium members may be taken into account in assessing the overall capacity and credibility of the proposal.

9. Additional Questions

#	Question	WADF Response
Q1	Are community foundations, youth-led organisations, and other specific organisation types eligible?	Yes. Youth-led organisations are explicitly listed as eligible recipients of WADF funding. Community foundations with a governance and civic engagement focus are also encouraged to apply.
Q2	Can a person with a disability apply individually (not through an organisation)?	No. The WADF funds organisations, not individuals. Applications must be submitted through a legally registered organisation.
Q3	How long will selected organisations have to implement their projects, and can the project design be modified after selection?	Grants are implemented over a period of 12 to 24 months. The initial proposal will be revised at the final selection stage and should incorporate only the feedback provided by the reviewers.
Q4	For early-stage or smaller organisations, does the fund provide capacity-building support for proposal design and implementation?	The WADF does not provide capacity-building support for proposal development for this call. Organisations are expected to apply based on their existing experience and capacity.
Q5	Can an organisation based in one eligible country collaborate with organisations in non-priority countries for project implementation?	Yes. An organisation may collaborate with partners in non-priority countries, provided all project activities are implemented within the seven priority countries.