



# Application guidelines

**Joint Matching Grant Fund (MGF) call for application ECOWAS Rice Observatory (ERO) and Market Oriented Value Chain for Job and Growth in ECOWAS region (MOVE)**

July 2024



BILL & MELINDA  
GATES foundation

Implemented by  
**giz** Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Internationale  
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



**MOVE**  
Market Oriented Value Chains for Jobs  
and Growth in the ECOWAS Region





## Table of Contents

Abbreviations .....	4
Section 1: Introduction .....	5
Section 2: Background (Context).....	6
ERO and the ECOWAS Rice Offensive .....	6
MOVE-CARI and Matching Fund institutionalization. ....	6
Section 3: Matching Fund guidelines.....	8
Main objective .....	8
Eligibility criteria.....	8
Categories of rice mills for this Matching Fund .....	8
Who can apply to the Matching Grant Fund?.....	9
Project duration and size .....	10
ERO .....	11
MOVE - CARI .....	11
Which project activities will be supported under the Matching Grant Fund?.....	12
Which costs are eligible for reimbursement under the Matching Fund? .....	15
Project indicators.....	16
Section 4: Matching Fund Process.....	17
Overview .....	17
ERO .....	17
Application Process.....	18
Contracting and Implementation at Regional Level (ERO).....	19
Right Recognized by ECOWAS and its Partners to Reject Proposals and Cancel the Call for Project Proposals .....	20
MOVE CARI .....	20
The Evaluation Committee .....	20
Application Process.....	20
Contracting and Implementation at MOVE-CARI level.....	22
Joint MF call process between ERO & MOVE – CARI .....	22
<b>Confidentiality of the Project Selection Process.....</b>	<b>23</b>
No information related to the review, evaluation, or comparison of the evaluators' ratings of project proposals, and recommendations concerning the grant award, may be disclosed to the	



bidders or any other person not involved in the review and evaluation process. .... 23

Any attempt by an organization to influence the committee during the review and evaluation of its proposal and the comparison of evaluators' ratings will result in the rejection of its proposal. .... 23

Annexes ..... 23



### Abbreviations

BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CARI	Competitive African Rice Initiative
CBS	Cooperative Business School
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ERO	ECOWAS Rice Observatory
FBS	Farmer Business School
FSRP	Food System Resilience Program - ECOWAS
GAP	Good Agronomic Practices
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
MGF	Matching Grant Fund
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOVE	Market-Oriented Value Chains for Jobs and Growth in the ECOWAS Region
NPO	Nonprofit organization
SRP	Sustainable Rice Platform



### Section 1: Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide directions to the joint Matching Grant Fund applicants, ERO&MOVE-CARI staff, partners, donors, and key stakeholders on the background of the Matching Fund, its guidelines, and how the Joint Matching Grant Fund process will proceed.

For the Joint Matching Grant Fund applicants, note that information will only be used internally for partner selection and assessment of proposals, and will not be shared without the applicants' prior consent. Please contact the ERO or MOVE-CARI team for further clarification.

This document is structured as follows:

- Section 2 describes the background to ERO, CARI, the Matching Fund instrument and MOVE.
- Section 3 sets out the Matching Fund's guidelines, including who is eligible to apply and what project activities will be supported.
- Section 4 outlines the Matching Fund process, from the pre-application preparatory stage to the implementation phase to closure; and
- The Annexes contain links to all templates required for the initial application and further guidance on which project costs can be reimbursed under the Matching Fund.



## Section 2: Background (Context)

### ERO and the ECOWAS Rice Offensive

ERO is a multi-stakeholder platform, conceptualized and established by ECOWAS and its partners, based on recommendations from the stakeholders' consultative meetings, statutory and identified priorities of the ECOWAS Commission as proposed in component 6 of the Action Plan. A joint decision for the establishment of an observatory was necessary in order to accelerate the implementation of the ECOWAS Rice Offensive. It's a Regional Rice Action Plan (2020–2025) developed in 2020 to ensure that the region meets the goal of attaining a sustainable and sustained revival of rice cultivation in West Africa and to provide support for the National Rice Development Strategies of Member States towards achieving rice self-sufficiency by 2025.

ERO is housed at the ECOWAS commission under the directorate of agriculture and rural development (DARD) in Abuja, Nigeria. Its main purpose is to coordinate rice sector-related programmes and projects involving both public and private sector investments, institutions, and policy recommendations for key decision-makers. At the same time, national rice platforms are being established comprised primarily of private sector stakeholders across the value chain, in addition a representation from research, government, and civil society to coordinate country-specific investments and policies.

The vision of ERO is fully aligned with the ECOWAS rice offensive, which is to see West Africa achieve rice self-sufficiency by 2030 through competitive, profitable, resilient, and environmentally sustainable farming and milling enterprises that contribute to rural job creation, poverty reduction, and gender equity.

ERO's mission is to facilitate collaboration, catalyze growth, track progress, and communicate the impact of the West African rice industry by establishing, coordinating, and harnessing synergies across investments to achieve maximum efficiency, effectiveness, competitiveness, and impact.

ERO's overall objective is to help key actors in the West African rice sector better coordinate policy and work synergistically.

### MOVE-CARI and Matching Fund institutionalization.

#### **CARI and origins of the Matching Fund Approach:**

The Competitive African Rice Initiative (CARI) was a programme commissioned by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), co-financed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and was implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. The first phase of CARI was implemented from 2013 to 2018 and the second phase from 2018 to 2021. The programme was active in Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Tanzania throughout the two phases and was also implemented in Ghana until December 2019. CARI's overall objective was to improve the livelihoods of rice farmers in selected countries in the sub-region to increase the competitiveness of domestic rice supply to meet increasing regional demand by strengthening private sector actors of the value chain. The programme's technical assistance was based on a value chain approach that addresses coordination challenges, creates improved linkages among rice value chain actors and as a result, increases the expected economic



returns for all stakeholders.

The Matching Fund served as the principal implementation instrument of CARI. Under the Matching Fund, public and private sector partners could apply for grants by submitting project proposals to work jointly on selected challenges associated with the rice value chain. Grants were then assessed and allocated based on a set of eligibility criteria, including a strong cost-share requirement from the grant recipient.

During the first phase of CARI, the Matching Fund was predominantly focused on improving the productivity of the rice production systems. Thus, the fund was mostly used as a cost-share to support Good Agronomic Practices (GAP) and Farmer Business School (FBS) trainings that were linked to targeted farmers.

During the second phase, the Matching Fund placed a greater emphasis on processing, contract farming, access to finance, mechanization services, and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT). Training materials on GAP were reviewed and upgraded to also include social and environmental aspects that are in line with the sustainable rice production standard of the [Sustainable Rice Platform](#) (SRP).

### MOVE

Market-Oriented Value Chains for Jobs and Growth in the ECOWAS Region (MOVE) is a new programme implemented by GIZ, which will run from January 2022 to June 2027, and possibly beyond. MOVE was commissioned by BMZ, with co-financing from BMGF and the European Union (EU) and will be implemented in six countries in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Senegal.

MOVE aims to increase the overall resilience and competitiveness of the cashew and rice value chains in the ECOWAS region and represents the merging of two former GIZ programmes: CARI (2014-2021) and the Competitive Cashew initiative (ComCashew) (2009-2021). The programme's five outputs are as follows:

- **Output 1:** Increasing the value creation of processing in the ECOWAS region.
- **Output 2:** Improving the economic/environmental sustainability of agricultural systems.
- **Output 3:** Improving the marketing of regional products.
- **Output 4:** Disseminating good practices in promoting inclusive business models.
- **Output 5:** Strengthening public-private cooperation in policymaking.



### Section 3: Matching Fund guidelines

#### Main objective

The overall objective of the Matching Fund is to leverage contributions from private partners and build ownership in order to drive sustainable growth in the rice sector, strengthen private sector development and improve the productivity and profitability of rice farmers in ECOWAS countries and specifically for the countries that have established their national chapters. As this is a joint concept note for MF institutionalization, the scope of this Matching Grant Fund program will be based on ECOWAS Rice Offensive outputs on one hand and on the MOVE's output on the other hand, and should foster inclusive business models, improve productivity along the rice value chain and strengthen viable business models.

The Matching Fund is a co-funding mechanism for engaging private sector enterprises to co-invest in activities that strengthen the rice value chains in West Africa. **There are two different funding streams from ERO and GIZ MOVE-CARI respectively, and potential applicant will able to apply for ONLY one in this round of call.**

#### Eligibility criteria

To be eligible, applicants must comply with the following criteria:

- Potential applicants for **ECOWAS Rice Observatory (ERO) funding stream** should come from ERO National chapters (**Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone**) established, and potential applicants for **GIZ/MOVE-CARI funding stream** shall come MOVE project countries (**Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Senegal**).
- Legally registered entity with mandate to enter into binding commercial and cooperation agreements.
- Contribution to the project of between 50% to 70% (in cash and/or in kind) for ERO funding stream and, between 60% to 70% (in cash and/or in kind) for GIZ/MOVE-CARI funding stream.
- Annual turnover for the last 2 - 5 years, of at least twice the amount of the grant (startups are not excluded from applying).
- Evidence of tax payment in the last 2 years for the lead applicant (if applicable).

#### Categories of rice mills for this Matching Fund

		Category 1	Category 2	Category 3
<b>Criteria</b>	Milling capacity	1,5≤ tones/hour≤ 4	1,5≤ tones/hour≤ 4	>4tones/hour
	Membership	Member of ERO National Chapters	Non-member of ERO National chapters	Member of ERO National Chapters
<b>Matching Fund to apply for</b>		ERO Matching Fund (ERO Funding stream)	MOVE-CARI Matching Fund (GIZ/MOVE-CARI Funding stream)	

Applicant that falls under the category 1 are invited to apply for the **ERO Funding stream**, and submit their application to [mgf-ero@araa.org](mailto:mgf-ero@araa.org) while applicants that fall under the categories 2 and 3 are invited to apply for the **GIZ/MOVE-CARI Funding stream** send their application to [move@giz.de](mailto:move@giz.de).



### Who can apply to the Matching Grant Fund?

Prospective partner organizations may apply for the Matching Grant Fund individually or as part of a consortium. However, all Matching Grant Fund projects must have at least one rice mill as a partner, which means that only rice mills will be considered for individual support through the Matching Grant Fund. The tables below outline which applicants/consortia will be considered for support through the Matching Grant Fund under ERO and/or MOVE.

**Table 1: Eligible applicants for ERO Matching Grant Fund support**

Who can apply?	Who cannot apply?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ERO National chapter member</li> <li>• Individual rice mills</li> <li>• Consortia with at least one rice mill as a partner</li> <li>• Consortia with a rice mill as lead applicant<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Consortia with a public sector organization or NGO as consortia member/partner</li> <li>• Consortia with private sector organizations (e.g. distributors, input suppliers) as lead applicant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consortia with no rice mills as a partner</li> <li>• Lead applicants (processors, aggregators, input suppliers, etc.) that is not a member of ERO National chapter</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Eligible applicants for MOVE Matching Fund support.**

Who can apply?	Who cannot apply?
Individual rice mills	Other individual private sector organizations (e.g. distributors, input suppliers)
Consortia with a rice mill as lead applicant <sup>2</sup>	Consortia with no rice mills as a partner
Consortia with at least one rice mill as a partner	Consortia with a public sector organization or non-governmental organization (NGO) as lead applicant

<sup>1</sup> Within each consortium, there will be a lead applicant, who will be responsible for the overall performance of the Matching Grant Fund project and for reporting to ERO. If the lead applicant is not a rice mill (e.g. a distributor or an input supplier), at least one of the other partners in the consortium must be a rice mill.

<sup>2</sup> Within each consortium, there will be a lead applicant, who will be responsible for the overall performance of the Matching Fund project and for reporting to MOVE. If the lead applicant is not a rice mill (e.g. a distributor or an input supplier), at least one of the other partners in the consortium must be a rice mill.



Consortium partners can include private sector companies, public sector institutions, NGOs and financial institutions. Preference will be given to consortium applications, based on how they contribute to the goal of ECOWAS rice Offensive. However, applications from individual rice mills will still be considered for support, especially if they are vertically integrated and effectively occupy other roles (e.g. distribution) in the rice value chain.

In terms of the requirements for a consortium, all partners must be legally recognized and empowered to enter into binding agreements. For the initial application stage, a letter of intent (see sample as Annex 2) from all consortium partners and the short proposal (see Annex 1) is sufficient. A signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that clarifies the roles, responsibilities and contributions of each partner must eventually also be provided before the Matching Grant Fund contract can be finalized. Where there are pre-existing business linkages between consortium partners prior to the Matching Grant Fund call for proposals, this should be indicated in the proposal as it may be beneficial to the application.

All Matching Grant Fund partners, whether applying individually or as part of a consortium, must make a specified contribution to the project, which can be provided in cash or in kind, or a combination of the two. In the case of consortia, the lead applicant is expected to make the largest contribution. Applicants may also wish to enlist external service providers as part of the proposed project, for example in the provision of mechanization services. However, it is important to note that these service providers are not consortium partners and are not expected to make a specified contribution to the project.

### **Consortium Partner vs Service Provider**

#### *What is a consortium partner?*

Consortium partners are contractual partners in a Matching Grant Fund project and make a specified contribution to the project, whether in cash or in kind.

Example: Input supplier as a consortium partner

An input supplier can be a consortium partner if it e.g. supplies inputs on a pre-financed basis, provides demonstration training, or similar.

#### *What is a service provider?*

Service provider delivers a service against payment. They are not part of the formal consortium and are not expected to contribute in cash or in kind to the project.

Example: Input supplier as a service provider

An input supplier is a service provider, if it provides inputs against cash payment.

### **Project duration and size**

Each Matching Grant Fund project will last approximately two years and must be concluded by August 2026. A final decision on the length of the project will be made between ERO and the Matching Grant Fund partners during the proposal review stage.



## ERO

ERO’s financial contribution for each Matching Fund project will be **up to \$50,000 (one hundred thousand dollars)** for the entire duration of the project. The ERO funding stream is expected to fund a maximum 10 project from the ERO chapters. Typically, these contributions will cover 30% - 50% of the total budget.<sup>3</sup> For illustration purposes, the table below lists some example project sizes and what financial contributions would be expected from ERO and the MGF partner(s).

**Table 2: Hypothetical project sizes and breakdown of contributions**

Project value (\$)	ERO contribution (%)	ERO contribution (\$)	Contribution from partner(s) (\$)
300,000	30%	90,000	210,000
250,000	50%	125,000	125,000

Thus, the Matching Grant Fund partner(s) will be required to contribute 50% to 70% of the project’s costs. While each consortium partner is required to make a specified contribution, in-kind contributions, such as staff time, will be included in this calculation.

## MOVE - CARI

MOVE-CARI’s financial contribution for each Matching Fund project will be up to **€100,000 (one hundred thousand euros)** for the entire duration of the project. The GIZ/MOVE-CARI funding stream is expected to fund a maximum 10 project from the 6 countries. Typically, this contribution will cover 30-40% of the total budget depending on the recommendation of the evaluation committee.<sup>4</sup> For illustration purposes, the table below lists some examples of project sizes and what financial contributions would be expected from MOVE-CARI and the partner(s).

**Table 2: Hypothetical project sizes and breakdown of contributions**

Project value (€)	MOVE contribution (%)	MOVE contribution (€)	Contribution from partner(s) (€)
300,000	30%	90,000	210,000
250,000	30%	75,000	175,000
200,000	40%	80,000	120,000
250,000	40%	100,000	150,000

Thus, the Matching Fund partner(s) will be required to contribute 60-70% of the project’s costs. While each consortium partner is required to make a specified contribution, in-kind contributions, such as staff time, will be included in this calculation.

<sup>3</sup> For most Matching Fund projects, the ERO contribution will be fixed at either 30% or 40% or 50%.

However, ERO board reserves the right to offer any of three proportions as suitable in any particular case.

<sup>4</sup> For most Matching Fund projects, the MOVE-CARI contribution will be fixed at 30%. However, MOVE-CARI reserves the right to offer a proportion above this level in particular cases.



### Which project activities will be supported under the Matching Grant Fund?

#### Core activities

There are proposed activities Under ERO Matching Grant Funds, the following **five** activities have all been shown to significantly improve rice production and profitability. Generally speaking, all Matching Grant Fund proposals should include not less than three (3) of these activities. Where it is not appropriate to implement up to three (3) out of five (5) of these activities (for example, if the farmers in question have already received one of the training courses), the reasons for its exclusion should be clearly articulated in the proposal.

- **Training and implementation of contract farming:** Contract farming is defined as forward agreements that outline the obligations of farmers and buyers as business partners. These contracts include the sellers' (i.e. farmers) obligation to supply specified volumes of goods that are of sufficient quality, and the buyers' (i.e. processors, aggregators) obligation to purchase these goods. Furthermore, these contracts often include additional services provided by the buyers, such as upfront delivery of inputs (e.g. seeds, fertilizers, plant protection products), pre-financing of input delivery on credit, and other non-financial services (e.g. extension, training, transport and logistics). This training aims to increase awareness of contract farming and its benefits and facilitate business linkages between value chain actors. It is typically targeted at farmer cooperative leaders, procurement personnel at rice mills and extension agents or officers.
- **Trainings for farmers on sustainable rice cultivation practices (SRP trainings):** This course focuses on the practices and requirements of rice cultivation, from planning farm activities, proper management of the crop in the field, selling the produce, and proper use of profit from the sale of the produce. It also considers the health and safety of workers involved in rice production. The content of this training is based on GAP and has been upgraded to also ensure environmental and social sustainability. The training follows the content of the globally recognized [SRP Standard](#).
- **Farmer Business School (FBS) training** FBS training strengthens agricultural smallholders' business skills and enables them to increase their income through diversification. Over the course of five morning sessions, producers are taught to treat agriculture as a business as well how they can improve the performance of their business. This is a "mass training", through which several thousand farmers can be reached.
- **Promotion of Rice Innovations:** There are innovations in the rice sector that have proven successfully, mostly in Asia. All innovations that are available can be integrated where applicable to the smallholder farming context in West Africa with the aim to increase farm yields and generate additional income through increased productivity or diversification.

#### **Examples:**

1. Integrated Farming Techniques -
2. Use of By-Products from Rice Production and Processing - Rice Straw Silage.



3. Good Agricultural Practices for Pest and Disease, and Nursery Management - Soil Solarization for Pest and Weed Control in Rice Fields and Nurseries, Modified Mat Nursery.

- **Upgrading small scale millers and mechanization/irrigation:** Poor **mechanization** is one of the major reasons for low level of yield of **rice small holder farmers**. To support the evidence of profitable small-scale mechanisation in the rice value chain. Land preparation and threshing are known to be priority operations from the rice farmers' perspective. The matching fund project can organise practical tests and demonstrations of the equipment. Both open-minded and entrepreneurial individuals and farmers groups should be organised to implore the use of adopted machinery. With close monitoring is required to get first-hand data about the performance of the equipment in practical application. In addition, the project should assist in improving the preconditions for the successful adoption of appropriate technologies by small-scale farmers. The following areas merit particular attention:
  - Capacity building for machinery use
  - Access to finance
  - Demonstration of available technical options for mechanisation
  - Capacity building for business plan elaboration
  - Initiation of joint machinery use

On the other hand, upgrading small scale millers will essentially be referenced to **mechanization for millers**. With the huge number of small-scale millers that exist in the region, and their contributions towards increased capacity and productivity in the rice sector. Meanwhile, they are very limited when it comes to efficient production and processing due to low mechanization. The current technologies available in processing at small-scale level involve limited mechanization and missing crucial machines like; **destoners, threshers and dryers** which impact mainly the quality of rice products. Thus, potential partners (millers) could showcase the need and how the introduction of some of the technologies would improve its efficiency ratio with improved quality of finished rice produced. This demonstration shall be proven with a business case submitted alongside the short concept proposal.

On the topic of access to irrigation or efficient water management which is a crucial element for yield gain in rice cultivation. Most especially when it comes to dry season cultivation that requires full irrigation or at times complementary irrigation. With the fragmented sizes of plots of rice farms owned by smallholder farmers. The type of irrigation system applicable in most cases are the movable small pumps fueled by gasoline or solar system. Which could be supported under this MGF scheme to further promote dry season rice production and all year-round production that boost the productivity of rice in the region.

### Additional activities

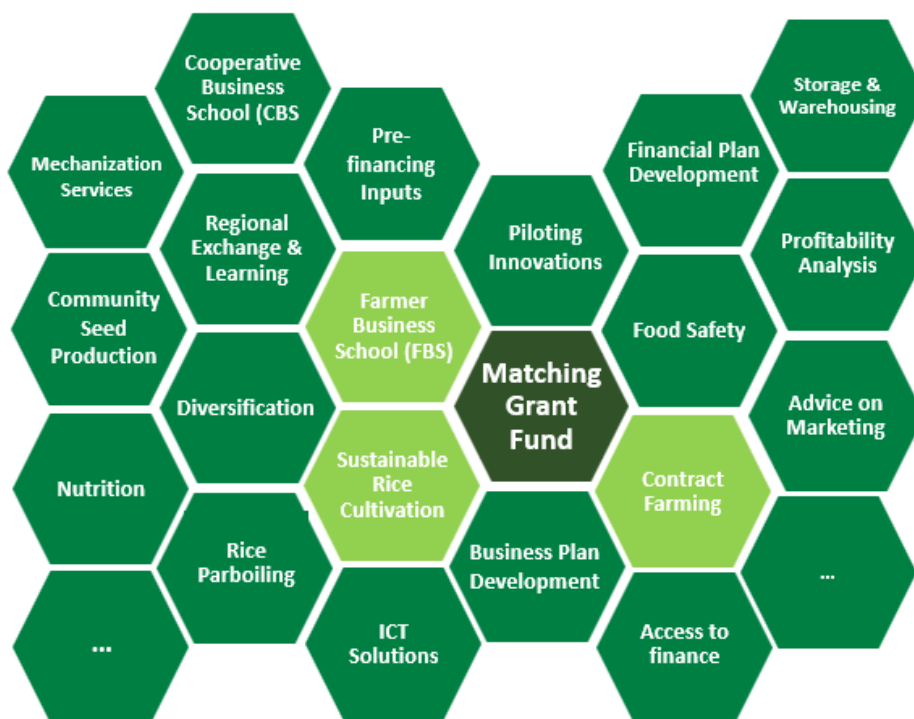
In addition to the core activities, applicants are invited to propose other initiatives that aim to upgrade the local rice value chain and align with the overall objectives of the ECOWAS Rice Offensive. Applicants are encouraged to provide innovative and ambitious proposals as, provided they are



realistic, this will be positively considered by ERO board when deciding which projects to fund, as well as ERO's overall contribution. Some other activities to be implemented could be as outlined below:

- **Rice parboiling training:** Parboiling involves partially boiling the paddy before milling to increase its nutrition value, to change the texture of the rice when it's cooked, and to reduce the proportion of broken grains during the milling process. Parboiling is done in three steps: soaking, steaming and drying. This activity is predominantly carried out by women in the rice value chain and could be harnessed by training women parboilers on how to use improved technology and equipment as well as best parboiling practice. This is a "mass training", through which several thousand women parboilers can be reached.
- **Cooperative Business School (CBS) trainings:** CBS is a one-week training for the management teams of farmer cooperatives and builds on the content of the FBS training. Participants develop their knowledge and skills with practical examples on business services and are taught how technical and economic viability is the foundation of successful businesses. CBS is not a "mass training" and is targeted at the management teams of farmer cooperatives.
- **RiceAdvice as an ICT-based solution:** The [RiceAdvice](#) application helps farmers identify the best combination of fertilizers to use, based on nutrient requirements and fertilizer prices, which helps farmers make better-informed decisions through specifically trained extension agents or service providers. The app is free to download and is available for mobile phones that run on Android. This is a targeted ICT-based intervention that would train extension agents on how to use the app. Each extension agent would then be able to support approximately 100 farmers each season with RiceAdvice.

In a nutshell, the diagram below depicts the possible up and downstream interventions under the MGF scheme.



**Figure 1: Up and Downstream interventions under the MGF**

**Which costs are eligible for reimbursement under the Matching Fund?**

**ERO**

Only the actual direct costs (with no mark-ups) immediately incurred by the project are eligible for reimbursement, in accordance with the ERO contribution agreed in the contract. Costs that exceed the percentage of total costs or the upper limit set by the contract will not be reimbursed. Costs incurred outside of the contract term of the Matching Fund will also not be reimbursed. Overhead costs and other lump-sum amounts, imputed costs, amortization and depreciation, allocations to provisions and profit mark-up or other costing mark-ups are not eligible for reimbursement.

For a more comprehensive guide to which costs are eligible for reimbursement under the Matching Grant Fund, please see Annex 3 (if applicable).

**MOVE CARI**

Only the actual direct costs (with no mark-ups) immediately incurred by the project quality are eligible for reimbursement, in accordance with the MOVE-CARI contribution agreed in the contract. Costs that exceed the percentage of total costs or the upper limit set by the contract will not be reimbursed. Costs incurred outside of the contract term of the Matching Fund will also not be reimbursed.



Overhead costs and other lump-sum amounts, imputed costs, amortization and depreciation, allocations to provisions and profit mark-up or other costing mark-ups are not eligible for reimbursement.

If machinery or other capital goods are purchased for Matching Fund activities, only the depreciation value during the contract term is considered eligible for reimbursement. At the end of the contract term, the original cost of any capital goods purchased can only be reimbursed if it is handed over to a public-benefit or public-sector organization.

For a more comprehensive guide to which costs are eligible for reimbursement under the Matching Fund, please see Annex 4.

### Project indicators

Key performance indicators, which will be used to measure the success or failure of the Matching Grant Fund projects, will be discussed and agreed upon during the application process. They may include the following:

- Increased productivity and quality of paddy rice;
- Improved capacity utilization of the rice mill/increased volume of paddy processed;
- Improved coordination and inclusion of key stakeholders in the local rice value chain;
- Improved mechanization in rice cultivation;
- Increased adoption of sustainable rice production techniques; and
- Improved contractual relations (between producer and processor or processor and trader/consumer).

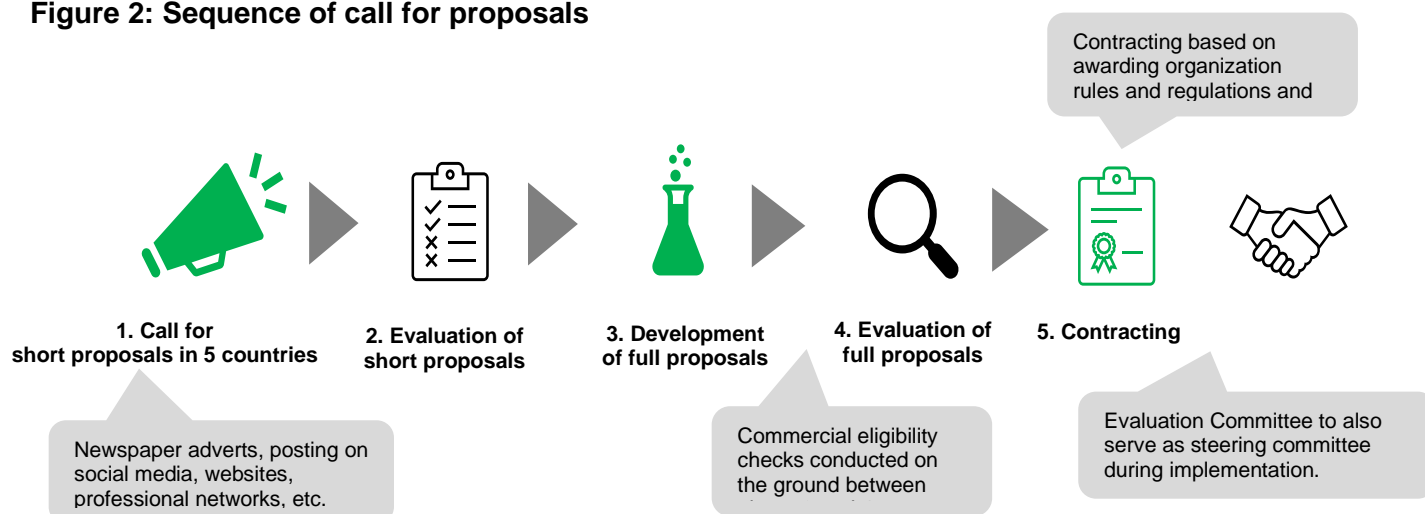
It is also important to note that including and empowering women and youth (between 18- and 35-years of age) within the rice value chain is a key thematic topic for both ERO and MOVE CARI Matching Fund. Applicants should indicate in their proposals if there are women and/or young people represented in the management or ownership of the organization as this will be looked upon favorably during the selection process. Applicants should also clearly explain how they plan to ensure that up to 40% but not less than 30% of the project's beneficiaries (e.g. training participants, recipients of pre-financed inputs) are women.



## Section 4: Matching Fund Process

### Overview

Figure 2: Sequence of call for proposals



The MF approach will follow a sequential step by step process through a call for proposals when evaluating and selecting interested partners.

### ERO

The Matching Grant Fund shall be managed by the ERO Core Team. So also, there will be MGF Evaluation committee consisting of all member state rice sector Reps and/or ERO National chapters Reps subject to the approval of the ERO board. ERO Core Team will be responsible for selecting, preparing and administering Matching Fund projects. The idea is to have the entire proposed MGF approach geared towards more national ownership and to further enhance integration of the rice sector investment approach at national level. The Matching Grant Fund process will begin with a publicized call for short proposals. Once ERO has received all completed short proposals from individual applicants and the lead applicants of consortia, select projects will be shortlisted. Shortlisted applicants will then be invited to develop a full technical proposal and budget. During this stage, ERO’s technical review team will work closely with the applicants to help refine the concept and to ensure the final proposal is suitable to receive support through the Matching Fund. Once a final decision has been made on which projects will be supported, contracts will be prepared ahead of the implementation phase. Before the call for short proposals is announced, all **documents and guidelines** on the Matching Fund application and the entire process shall be made available on website ([www.araa.org](http://www.araa.org)). Training material such as Farmer Business school and Sustainable Rice Production shall also be made available to potential applicants of the Matching Fund. In addition, two on the application process shall be organized prior to the call for applications. Partners would have the opportunity to ask questions by contacting ERO via [mqf-ero@araa.org](mailto:mqf-ero@araa.org) before the launch of the call.

# Joint MGF application guidelines

## Application Process

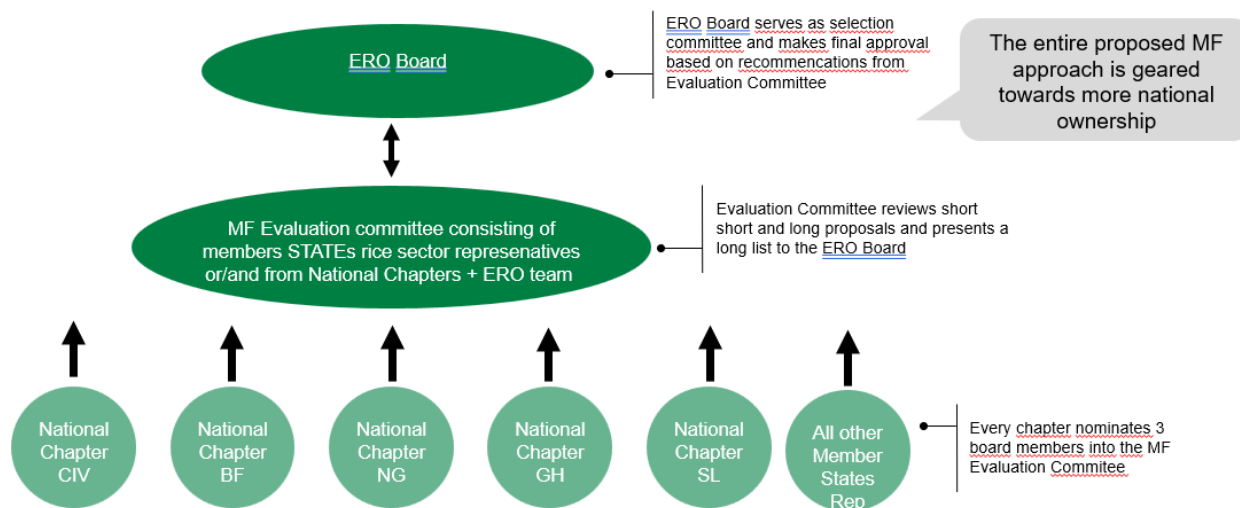
### Short proposal

The call for proposals will be officially announced and circulated through a number of channels to maximize its reach. The short proposal will formally register the prospective partners' interest, with details on the Matching Fund partner/consortium and the proposed interventions. Applicants must send a completed short proposal, for which a template is provided below (see Annex 1a) by the deadline provided. Those applying as part of a consortium must also submit a letter of intent (see Annex 2a), signed by all consortium partners.

### Review and shortlisting of short proposals

The MGF Evaluation committee will review all short proposals that are submitted and assign an overall score according to technical criteria. For example, it will be assessed how well each proposed project addresses key weaknesses in the rice value chain. Based on this technical score and a qualitative evaluation of other criteria, a selection of proposals will be shortlisted and invited to prepare a full technical proposal and budget. To maximize the chances of their proposed project being shortlisted, applicants would be encouraged to read the published guidelines carefully and provide detailed answers to the questions in the short proposal template.

**Figure 3: Proposed selection process of MGF applications**



### Preparation of full technical proposal and budget

Shortlisted applicants will be contacted and asked to submit a full technical proposal and budget using standard application forms, which will be provided by the ERO team. To support shortlisted applicants, a team of technical experts will be engaged by ERO to conduct a technical review of the existing operations and jointly develop the short proposal. A representative from ECOWAS procurement team will also be available to provide guidance on how the budget template should be developed and completed.

## Joint MGF application guidelines

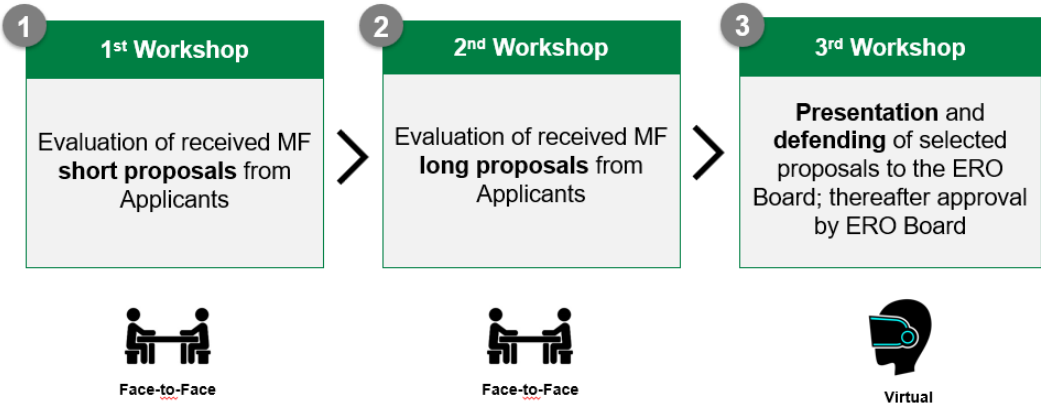
During the preparation of the full technical proposal, at least one meeting with all consortium partners and a ERO representative will be arranged to discuss the proposal details, as well as the roles and responsibilities of each consortium partner. Based on the outcomes of these discussions, an overall project approach will be agreed upon, as well as key performance indicators. During this stage, a commercial suitability assessment will be conducted. In some cases, lead applicants may also have to undergo a reputational risk analysis.

Final Matching Fund project selection

The full technical proposals and budgets from shortlisted applicants will be reviewed by the MGF Evaluation committee, who will collectively decide which projects will be selected and supported through the Matching Fund. This decision will be subject to the approval of the ERO board and issued in a timely manner after the submission of the full technical proposals and budgets and will be communicated in writing to all applicants.

The number of projects selected will ultimately be determined by the budget available to ERO, which will involve the participation of all ECOWAS countries, as opposed to the overall quality of the proposals. For this reason, shortlisted applicants that are not selected for this call are strongly encouraged to reapply for Matching Fund support in the future.

**Figure 4: Summary of MGF Evaluation committee stages of meetings and expected activities.**



### Contracting and Implementation at Regional Level (ERO)

Following approval by the Board, a project implementation contract shall be prepared between ECOWAS and the lead applicant. ERO’s finance and administration officer will also be in contact to explain the nature of the contract and answer any questions. The (lead) applicant shall be legally responsible for the project’s implementation and will consult regularly with ERO’s project team, who will be available on an ongoing basis to provide assistance. The agreed funding shall subsequently be released to the (lead) applicant to implement the approved activities, according to the agreed schedule of disbursement.

In terms of reporting requirements, the lead applicant will be required to provide regular technical



and financial reports that will be focused on the key interventions tied to the constraints that the Matching Fund investment is addressing. An external audit will be performed annually. Customized requirements related to the specific conditions and set-up of the partners/consortia may be considered and agreed on during the contracting phase.

At the end of the agreed project period, once the monitoring reports, the final project report and the final external audit have been submitted, ECOWAS will formally close the project.

### Right Recognized by ECOWAS and its Partners to Reject Proposals and Cancel the Call for Project Proposals

ECOWAS reserves the right to reject any proposal and to cancel the call for project proposals at any time before the grants have been awarded, without incurring any liability towards the concerned bidders and without being required to inform them of the reasons for the cancellation of the call for project proposals or the rejection of their proposals.

### MOVE CARI

The Matching Fund shall be managed by MOVE with the involvement of the ECOWAS Rice Observatory (ERO) National Chapters.

### The Evaluation Committee

The Evaluation Committee comprises the MOVE-CARI technical staff and experts from the Technical Committee of the ERO National Chapters from the five countries (Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone) involved in the implementation of the Matching Fund. These committee members have sound knowledge of the rice value chain, as well as proven experience and expertise and a good understanding of supply chain linkages and environmental resilience in this value chain. In addition, members are selected on a gender-neutral premise, they neither own a rice mill nor have stakes in any rice milling factory, nor belong to any rice processing association. The Matching Fund Evaluation Committee will be responsible for selecting, preparing, and administering Matching Fund projects. Once MOVE-CARI has received all short proposals from individual applicants and the lead applicants of consortia, the proposals will be shortlisted by the Evaluation Committee.

### Application Process

#### 1. Preparatory Stage

Before the call for short proposals is announced, all **documents and guidelines** on the Matching Fund application and the entire process shall be made available on MOVE-CARI ([www.cari-project.org](http://www.cari-project.org)). Training material such as Farmer Business school and Sustainable Rice Production shall also be made available to potential applicants of the Matching Fund. In addition, two **webinars** (*one in English and one in French*) on the application process shall be organized prior to the call for applications. Partners would have the opportunity to ask questions by contacting MOVE-CARI via [move@giz.de](mailto:move@giz.de) before the launch of the call.

#### 2. Call for short proposals

The call for short proposals will be officially announced and circulated through a number of channels to maximize its reach. The short proposals will formally register the prospective partners' interest,



with details on the Matching Fund partner/consortium and the proposed interventions. Those applying as part of a consortium must also submit a letter of intent (see Annex 2), signed by all consortium partners.

### 3. Review and shortlisting of short proposals

The assessment of the short proposals from the applicants will be made by the Evaluation Committee.

Scoring systems and assessment protocols are prepared by MOVE-CARI. Only those applicants with the highest scores will be selected to proceed to the next stage in which they draft a full budget and technical proposal. The Matching Fund Evaluation Committee will review all concept notes that are submitted and assign an overall score according to technical criteria predefined by MOVE-CARI. For example, each proposed project will be assessed on how it addresses key weaknesses in the rice value chain. Based on this technical score and a qualitative evaluation of other criteria, a selection of proposals will be shortlisted, and applicants invited to prepare a full technical proposal and budget. To maximize the chances of their proposed project being shortlisted, applicants are encouraged to read these guidelines carefully and provide detailed answers to the questions in the short proposal template.

### 4. Site visit

After the selection of the shortlisted proposals by the Evaluation Committee, the MOVE CARI technical staff will organize a site visit together with at least one Expert from ERO national chapter in the respective countries to confirm the existence and assess the operationality of the applicants as well as their link to the farmers (rice producers). A report will be submitted thereafter, and those applicants with successful site visits and the best assessments will be invited to draft/develop the full *proposal*.

### 5. Preparation of full technical proposal and budget

Shortlisted applicants will be contacted and asked to submit a full technical proposal and budget using standard application forms, which will be provided by the MOVE-CARI team. To support shortlisted applicants, a team of technical experts will be engaged by MOVE-CARI to conduct a technical review of the existing operations and support the drafting of the full proposal. A representative from MOVE's finance and administration team will also be available to provide guidance on how the budget template should be completed. For the budget, the detailed partner contributions (in cash and in kind) and the GIZ contribution requested must be prepared. Regarding cost items, investments can be considered whilst daily operation cost of ongoing business would, for instance, not be considered. All requested information, including annexes, needs to be submitted in order to qualify for funding.

During the preparation of the full technical proposal, at least one **meeting** with all consortium partners and a MOVE-CARI representative will be arranged to discuss the proposal details, as well as the roles and responsibilities of each consortium partner. Based on the outcomes of these discussions, an overall project approach will be agreed upon, as well as key performance indicators.

During this stage, a **commercial suitability assessment** will be conducted. In some cases, lead applicants may also have to undergo a reputational risk analysis.



### 6. Final Matching Fund project selection

The full technical proposals and budgets from shortlisted applicants will be reviewed by the Matching Fund Evaluation Committee according to the selection criteria. An overview of the scores will be prepared for **final approval by the ERO and MOVE management board**, who will collectively decide which projects will be selected and supported through the Matching Fund. This decision will be made in a timely manner after the submission of the full technical proposals and budgets and will be communicated in writing to all applicants.

Right Recognized by ECOWAS and its Partners to Reject Proposals and Cancel the Call for Project Proposals

The number of projects selected will ultimately be determined by the budget available to MOVE-CARI, irrespective of the overall quality of the proposals.

#### Contracting and Implementation at MOVE-CARI level

Following approval by the management board, a project implementation contract will be prepared between MOVE-CARI and the lead applicant. In addition to planned webinar discussions, MOVE-CARI's finance and administration team will also be in contact to explain the nature of the contract and answer any questions.

The Integrated Development Partnership Agreement of GIZ (iDPP) would be used for all private sector led applications. Here, the private partner must mobilize between 60% to 70% of the total resources needed.

The (lead) applicant shall be legally responsible for the project's implementation and will consult regularly with MOVE-CARI's project team, who will be available on an ongoing basis to provide assistance. The agreed funding shall subsequently be released to the (lead) applicant to implement the approved activities, according to the agreed schedule of disbursement.

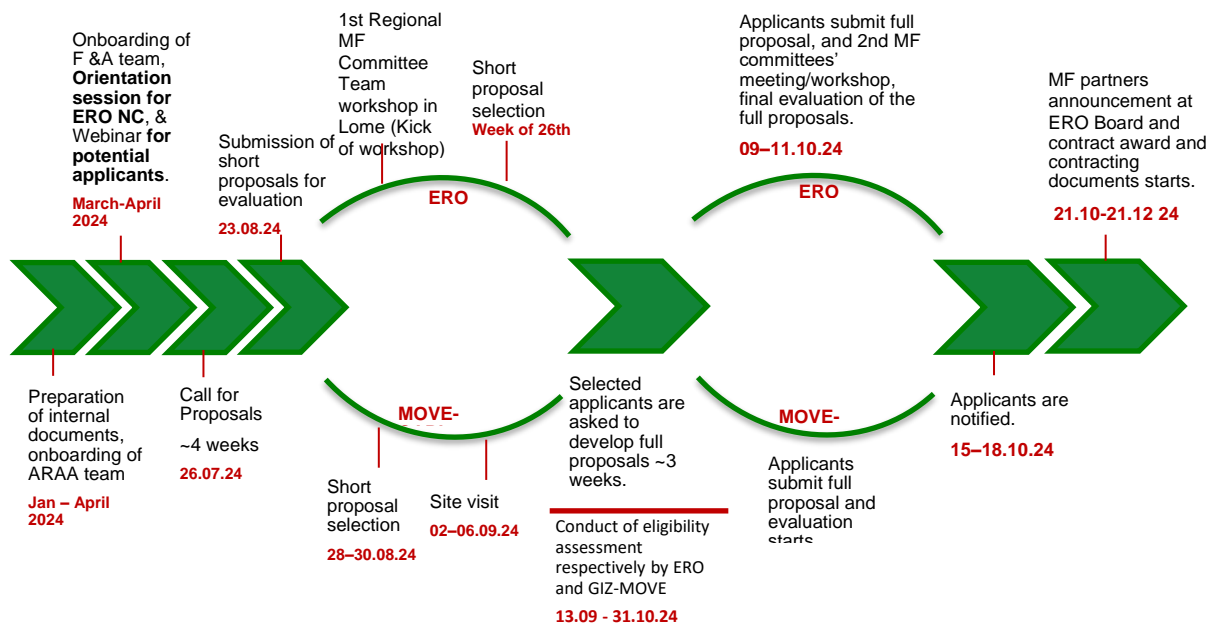
In reporting requirements, the lead applicant must provide regular technical and financial reports focused on the key interventions tied to the constraints the Matching Fund investment is addressing. An **external audit** will be conducted for projects at the end of the project irrespective of the project's overall budget. Customized requirements related to the specific conditions and set-up of the partners/consortia may be considered and agreed on during the contracting phase.

At the end of the agreed project period, once the final technical and financial reports and the final external audit have been submitted, MOVE-CARI will formally close the project.

#### Joint MF call process between ERO & MOVE – CARI

The chart below presents the comprehensive steps to be taken within this structure of joint MF call between ERO & MOVE-CARI.

# Joint MGF application guidelines



## Confidentiality of the Project Selection Process

No information related to the review, evaluation, or comparison of the evaluators' ratings of project proposals, and recommendations concerning the grant award, may be disclosed to the bidders or any other person not involved in the review and evaluation process.

Any attempt by an organization to influence the committee during the review and evaluation of its proposal and the comparison of evaluators' ratings will result in the rejection of its proposal.

## Annexes

Annex 1a: Short proposal template\_ERO

Annex 1b: Short proposal template\_GIZ

Annex 2a: Letter of intent template\_ERO

Annex 2b: Letter of intent template\_GIZ

Annex 3: Guidelines on costs eligible for reimbursement\_GIZ

