ASCENT PPF Private Sector Support Window Clarifications 2

#	Question	Answer
61	Are sole proprietorships or one-person companies eligible to apply?	For a sole proprietorship, provided the applicant is registered as a private company or equivalent legal entity and independently meets all eligibility criteria. These include a full-time CEO or equivalent and at least one full-time senior staff member in a functional leadership role. A one-person business would therefore not meet the current management-team requirement.
62	Can project preparation activities for a critical-minerals or mining project be supported under this window?	Not unless the applicant and proposed activities fall within the DRE, clean cooking or PUE mandate and directly advance clean energy access in an eligible ASCENT country. Geological validation, metallurgical test work, graphite purification and preparation of a mining project are not eligible solely because they involve feasibility, ESG or transaction-advisory activities.
63	Can preparation of an M&A or consolidation transaction qualify for support?	Potentially. Legal structuring, due diligence and transaction-advisory costs may be eligible where the applicant is an eligible company, the consolidation forms part of a concrete financing transaction, and the activities directly improve bankability. The PPF would not finance the acquisition consideration or general corporate costs.
64	Can a project-preparation platform or manager apply under the current CfP to support a cohort of developers?	Not under the current company window, unless it independently qualifies as an eligible DRE or clean cooking company and is seeking support for its own financing transaction. Support delivered to a cohort through an investor, industry association or other project-preparation provider would fall under a separate PPF support route, to be announced when available.
65	Can developers in a cohort apply jointly to retain one service provider for separate transactions?	Where the developers are pursuing separate financing transactions, each should apply individually and independently meet the eligibility criteria. A joint application is appropriate only where there is one eligible lead applicant and one financing transaction. Applicants may indicate a preferred service provider, but appointment cannot be guaranteed.
66	Does a Letter of Interest from a fund or facility that is still fundraising satisfy the investor-verification and co-financing requirements?	It may be submitted as evidence of investor engagement, but its credibility will be assessed based on the status of the fund and the specificity of the proposed ticket, instrument, purpose and timeline.

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67	What is the indicative timetable for grant awards and how will funds be disbursed?	The first review will cover applications submitted by 31 August, with evaluation expected from early September, Selection Committee approval and contracting indicatively in October, and implementation from Q4 2026. Disbursements are processed by the COMESA PIU on the instruction of the PPF Manager. An initial mobilisation tranche of up to 50% may be paid after grant agreement signing and satisfaction of pre-conditions, with later tranches paid against verified milestones.
68	Is there any disadvantage to applying in a later rolling submission cycle?	There is no different evaluation weighting solely because an application is submitted in a later cycle. Applications are assessed competitively against the published criteria, and the facility will remain active until 2030.
69	Would a carbon-credit forward sale or offtake agreement qualify as a financing transaction?	A standard commercial offtake agreement without a financing component would not normally satisfy the requirement for active engagement with an investor or lender. It may be considered where it includes credible upfront or prepayment financing and is evidenced as a concrete financing transaction.
70	Should a company operating in several eligible countries submit separate applications, and is the grant amount available per country?	Where the same project or financing transaction covers several eligible countries, the company should submit one consolidated application covering the full geographic scope. The general grant range of USD 50,000 to USD 200,000 applies per company/application, not per country. Requests above USD 200,000 may be considered subject to enhanced scrutiny.
71	What business maturity and documentation are required at application stage?	Applicants must have: • at least three years of operations and verifiable revenue; • minimum annual revenue of USD 250,000 for SHS companies or USD 150,000 for minigrid, clean cooking and PUE companies; a • experienced full-time management team; • active investor or lender engagement; • and registration in an eligible ASCENT country. Required documents include incorporation and tax registration documents, recent audited financial statements or management accounts, and signed investor letters of intent where applicable.
72	Are there any separate deadlines or targeted calls for Zambia-based applicants?	No Zambia-specific deadline or targeted company call has been announced. Zambia-based applicants are eligible under the same rolling company window, with the first review covering applications submitted by 31 August.
73	Can the experience and track record of a parent company be used to meet the eligibility criteria?	The mandatory eligibility criteria apply to the legal entity submitting the application as lead applicant. Relevant parent-company or group experience may support the assessment of team capacity and track record, but it does not replace the applicant's minimum operating history, revenue, eligible-country registration or investor-engagement requirements.

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74	How should an applicant present multiple activities in the online form?	If the activities all contribute to one financing transaction or financial close, they should be included in one application, with separate milestones and budget lines where appropriate. If they relate to separate financing transactions, only one should be included in the current application; a further application may be submitted after the applicant has received formal notification of the outcome of the first application.
75	Would the developers be permitted to select [service provider] as their service provider, particularly if [service provider] is selected to the Roster of Experts?	Applicants may express a preference for a specific provider from the Roster of Experts. However, final matching and appointment will be managed by the PPF Manager, considering expertise, availability, value for money, conflicts of interest and applicable procurement requirements. Alternatively, an applicant may request grant funding to engage its preferred provider where there is strong justification, subject to approval.
76	Are responses to clarification questions shared bilaterally, or published to all prospective applicants?	To maintain fairness and transparency, substantive clarification questions and responses are consolidated and published for all applicants. Administrative or technical issues may be addressed directly where they do not affect the substance of the CfP.
77	The link to further information does not work.	Applicants should use the official SmartME application portal: https://smartme.adalia.fi/A-PPF/applicant. Persistent access issues should be reported to ascentppf@cygnumcapital.com, with a description of the issue and, where possible, a screenshot.
78	Is it permitted to submit three separate applications, or must there be one application for all three countries under the parent company?	Where the same project or financing transaction covers several eligible countries, one consolidated application should be submitted. If the activities relate to separate financing transactions, the company may submit a further application only after receiving formal notification of the outcome of its previous application.
79	If the application must be submitted under the parent company, is the maximum amount still limited to US$200,000, or is it US$200,000 per country?	The general grant range of US$50,000 to US$200,000 applies per company and application, not per country. Requests above US$200,000 may be considered but will be subject to enhanced scrutiny.
80	What is the current application window and process for private-sector DRE companies?	The current CfP is open to eligible private-sector DRE and clean cooking companies, with applications accepted on a rolling basis. Applications undergo completeness and eligibility screening, technical and financial evaluation, comparative assessment, recommendation, approval, due diligence and contracting.

#	Question	Answer
81	What types of support, grants or technical assistance, are best suited to an early-stage distribution company at our scale?	Very early-stage companies, including companies with less than three years of operations, insufficient revenue or no active investor engagement, are not eligible under the current window. Eligible companies may request TA, grant funding or a combined package, depending on the specific investment-readiness barrier and financing transaction.
82	Can two or more SMEs apply as a consortium and combine their turnover to meet the eligibility requirement?	The minimum eligibility criteria, including annual revenue, apply to the **lead applicant**. Companies may collaborate on a project, but their revenues cannot be aggregated solely to meet the eligibility threshold. A formally established consortium or SPV may apply as the lead applicant but would be assessed against the eligibility criteria in its own right.
83	Can a private company apply in partnership with an NGO or association?	A private company may apply in partnership with an NGO, association or other organisation where relevant. However, the **lead applicant and primary grant recipient must be an eligible private-sector company**. NGOs, research institutions and public-sector entities may participate as partners but cannot be lead applicants under this window.
84	Given that we have multiple activities, how would you suggest we submit them on the platform?	If the activities contribute to the **same financing transaction**, they should be included in one application and may be presented as separate activities or milestones. If they relate to separate financing transactions, the applicant should prioritise one transaction for the current application and may reapply in a subsequent cycle once the previous application has been concluded.
85	Please confirm whether electric mobility activities, including battery leasing, battery swapping, and associated charging infrastructure serving MSME transport operators, fall within the eligible DRE or PUE scope of this window, where the requested support is directly linked to a defined financing transaction.	This window will prioritise activities that directly contribute to expanding energy access and **new or expanded energy access**. Electric mobility, battery leasing or swapping may only be considered where the applicant can demonstrate a clear and material link to expanding DRE-based energy access in an eligible country, in addition to meeting the other eligibility requirements and linking the support to a defined financing transaction. Standalone e-mobility, charging or battery-swapping businesses without a clear energy-access outcome would generally be **lower priority and may not be considered sufficiently aligned** with this window.

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86	Is engagement with an investor or capital provider affiliated with the applicant's corporate group recognised, where supported by signed letters of intent specifying ticket size, type, purpose, and timeline?	The Guidelines do not exclude engagement with an affiliated investor or capital provider. The affiliation should be fully disclosed and the applicant must provide credible evidence of the financing transaction, including signed investor documentation where applicable. The strength and commercial substance of the investor engagement will be considered during evaluation.
87 a	Confirm whether grant funds may be used to engage advisors or dedicated personnel to lead preparation and execution of the financing transaction, including firms or individuals affiliated with the applicant's corporate group or with an investor referenced in the application, where the affiliation is fully disclosed and the engagement is on arm's-length terms.	Support may include advisors or dedicated personnel directly required to advance a financing transaction. Where similar expertise is available through the Roster of Experts, this would normally be the preferred route. An applicant may request grant funding to use its own provider where there is strong justification. Any affiliation with the applicant, its corporate group or an investor must be fully disclosed and would be subject to conflict-of-interest, value-for-money and other applicable requirements.
87 b	If eligible, please describe any conditions that would apply, such as procurement requirements, justification relative to the Roster of Experts, or caps as a share of the total budget	Any such request should demonstrate **strong justification for using the proposed provider rather than the Roster of Experts, clear additionality, arm's-length and value-for-money terms, full disclosure of affiliations and conflicts, and compliance with applicable procurement requirements**. The Guidelines do not specify a separate percentage cap for advisor or personnel costs; these would be assessed as part of the overall scope and budget.
88	Does a solar-powered aquaponics and cold-chain business qualify under the PUE category as the lead applicant?	This window will prioritise PUE activities that directly contribute to expanding energy access and productive economic activity in eligible countries. Solar-powered aquaponics and cold-chain activities may be considered where the applicant can demonstrate a clear and material energy-access outcome, in addition to meeting the other eligibility requirements and linking the requested support to a defined financing transaction. Businesses using renewable energy primarily for their own operations, without a clear wider energy-access outcome, would generally be lower priority and may not be considered sufficiently aligned with this window.

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89	Is the USD 150,000 threshold measured on the applicant's total revenue or only on energy-linked revenue	The USD **150,000 minimum annual revenue threshold is assessed against the applicant company's total verifiable annual revenue**, not only revenue generated from the specific energy-linked activity proposed for PPF support. The applicant must otherwise qualify as an eligible PUE, minigrid or clean cooking company under the window.
90	Can a Kenyan-registered eligible DRE company apply as the lead applicant for a renewable-energy project located in Zambia?	A Kenyan-registered DRE company may apply as lead applicant for a project located in Zambia, provided the project is located in an eligible ASCENT PPF country and the applicant meets the Private Sector Support Window eligibility requirements. The applicant should demonstrate that it has the legal, technical, financial and operational capacity to develop and implement the project in Zambia, including any required local authorisations, partnerships, permits, licences or project rights. The country of company registration does not automatically need to be the same as the country where the project is located, but the applicant must show a credible basis for delivering the proposed project in the target country.
91	Can a Zambian-registered company apply as the lead applicant while engaging a Kenyan-registered DRE company as a technical, EPC and/or co-development partner	A Zambian-registered company may apply as lead applicant and engage a Kenyan-registered DRE company as a technical, EPC, co-development or implementation partner. The application should clearly identify the lead applicant and all participating partners, explain each party's role, and demonstrate that the overall project team has the required technical, commercial, implementation and country-delivery capacity. The lead applicant should be authorised to submit the application and would normally remain responsible for the application, project coordination, reporting and compliance with any resulting support agreement.
92	Does the Private Sector Support Window permit applications involving consortiums, joint ventures or project-specific SPVs, and if so, what requirements would apply to the lead applicant and participating partners?	Applications involving consortiums, joint ventures, partnerships or project-specific SPVs may be considered where the structure is clearly explained and appropriate for the proposed project. The application should identify a lead applicant or principal counterpart, describe the legal and commercial relationship between the parties, and set out each party's role, ownership or participation interest, decision-making authority, delivery responsibilities and relevant experience. Where the project is being developed through an SPV, the application should explain the SPV's status, ownership, relationship to the sponsor or consortium members, and authority to receive or implement support. COMESA and the PPF may request supporting documentation, such as incorporation documents, shareholder information, consortium or joint-venture agreements, memoranda of understanding, board authorisations, letters of commitment or evidence of project rights.

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92	Can decentralized fecal-sludge treatment plants that convert human waste into biomass briquettes for use as a cooking or thermal fuel be considered eligible under the Clean Cooking category?	Such projects may be considered under the Clean Cooking category where the proposed project has a clear and direct clean-cooking or clean thermal-energy use case, such as the production and distribution of biomass briquettes that replace more polluting cooking or thermal fuels. The application should clearly demonstrate the link to clean cooking or renewable thermal energy, the intended end users, the fuel quality and safety standards, the commercial model, and the relevant environmental, social, health and safety safeguards. A project that is primarily a sanitation or waste-treatment project, without a clear eligible clean-cooking or clean thermal-energy application, would be unlikely to qualify solely on the basis of waste treatment.
93	Can the conversion of industrial or institutional boilers from heavy fuel oil to biomass, combined with the provision of renewable thermal energy or steam as a service, be considered eligible under the Productive Use of Energy (PUE) category?	A project involving conversion from heavy fuel oil to sustainable biomass, combined with renewable thermal energy or steam-as-a-service, may be considered under the Productive Use of Energy category where it supports productive, commercial or institutional energy use and is clearly aligned with the Facility's distributed renewable energy, clean thermal energy or energy-access objectives. The application should demonstrate the productive-use rationale, the sustainability and traceability of the biomass supply, the technical and commercial viability of the energy-service model, expected emissions and cost benefits, and compliance with applicable environmental, social, health, safety and regulatory requirements. Conventional industrial fuel-switching projects with no clear distributed renewable energy, clean thermal, access, affordability or productive-use rationale may fall outside the intended scope.