

Evaluation and Selection Criteria

Background

The African Elephant Fund (AEF) was established in 2010 at the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). The Parties adopted Resolution Conf.16.9 on the African Elephant Action Plan and African Elephant Fund, outlining the mandate of the Fund in order to provide resources to implement the African Elephant Action Plan (AEAP) to safeguard the African elephant from extinction. The Twelfth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS COP12) also adopted the AEAP in the CMS Resolution 12.19. The AEAP was revised and approved by the range States in 2023.

I. Basic Principles for Evaluation and Selection of Proposals to the AEF

Division of Available Funds

1. The Steering Committee shall conduct its business in accordance with the principles as set out in the Terms of Reference.

In case of lack of sufficient funding to fund all projects that are eligible for funding, the Steering Committee shall strive to allocate funding in a way that each sub-region benefits from the Fund.

Basic Principles of Project Review

1. Each project proposal shall be evaluated equally based on its own merits.

2. The Steering Committee may choose, at its discretion, to seek the independent advice of relevant experts in relation to the evaluation of certain project proposals.

3. The Steering Committee, while reviewing the project proposals, will take into account the long-term sustainability measures reflected in the proposal, i.e. how the benefits of the project will be sustained beyond the funding period.

4. The Steering Committee in its selection process shall consider the track record of the project proponent i.e. reporting capacity, quality of communication, and financial responsibility.

5. The evaluation and selection process will be two phased: The project proposals will be subject to an eligibility assessment after which qualitative assessment will be conducted for those

proposals that have met the eligibility criteria. After this, additional considerations will take place with a view of final selection.

6. Standard communication will be sent by the Secretariat to all applicants on whether their project proposal has been accepted or rejected. For approved proposals, the communication will also indicate that the project agreement has to be signed within 1 year. If the signatory fails to do so, the funds will be returned to the AEF funds pool and the project will no longer be considered as an approved proposal.

Minimum Eligibility Requirements for AEFSC Consideration of Project Proposals

1. Project proposal and all accompanying documents required must be submitted on or before the deadline set in the call for proposals.
2. Project proposal must be submitted in accordance with the standard templates for AEF project proposals and must be linked to at least one of the AEAP objectives.
3. All project proposals submitted by range States shall be submitted by the Competent Authority or be accompanied by an endorsement letter from the Competent Authority. The Competent Authority shall be a national government entity responsible for wildlife.
4. Project proposals submitted for transboundary projects must have endorsement letters from all the Competent Authorities of the participating range States.
5. The project proponent must not have an existing/ongoing project or approved project proposal which has been at a standstill for six months from the date of the submission of the new project proposal.
6. The duration of the proposed project should be equal to or greater than 9 months (*note that this does not apply to projects funded from the discretionary account; please check criteria under section II*).

If the application does not meet one or more of the minimum eligibility criteria, the proposal shall be excluded from further consideration for funding. The Secretariat shall inform the proponent of the reason for exclusion.

Evaluation Criteria for the Project Proposals

The overall quality of the project proposal will be assessed. All mandatory fields of the proposal template must be completed. Project quality will be further assessed based on the feasibility of proposed activities, relevance of project partners, clarity of expected outputs and objectives and its relevance to the AEAP objectives.

1. Long-term conservation benefits: The project proposal must clearly demonstrate the expected long-term conservation benefit to elephant populations of the submitting range State(s).

2. Conservation benefits to elephant population of other range States (if applicable): For trans-boundary projects, conservation benefits to neighboring range States should be demonstrated and assessed.

3. Budget: The proposed budget will be assessed based on the clarity and rationale of the presented figures using the correct budget template. Where the proposed project procurement is more than 25% of the project budget or USD 10,000, whichever is lower, the proposal should indicate the procurement process that will be utilized in accordance with the UN rules.

4. Other sources of funding: Provision of co-funding for the project by the proponent or from the proponent's partners is encouraged.

5. Sustainability and exit strategy: The project proposal should demonstrate the measures that will be taken to ensure the continuity of the project and/or its impacts (ecological, economical, social) beyond the project period.

6. Transparency: The project proposal should demonstrate stakeholder involvement, for example, communities that may be affected, other organizations, or NGOs that are involved in the project and their respective roles, where relevant or appropriate. For transboundary projects, demonstration of other range States' involvement will be required.

7. Methodology: The project proposal should have a clear methodology building on best practices and lessons learnt, or a feasible distinctive and innovative methodology to address specific objectives of AEAP.

8. Replicability: Projects that can be repeated in other range States are encouraged.

9. Gender: The project proposal should incorporate gender considerations by outlining how gender issues are addressed in the project and if not, reasons for this. It should promote equal gender participation in the project activities as per the project's context, and in benefitting from the project's results or impacts. Proposals should also outline specific actions to address barriers to equal/inclusive gender participation/benefits.

10. Social and Environmental safeguards: The project proposal should incorporate social and environmental safeguard considerations by assessing any potential negative social or environmental impacts resulting from project implementation, and outline the measures that will be taken to mitigate them. The proposal should also outline how the project will benefit local communities, and protect vulnerable populations and environmental ecosystems throughout its implementation.

11. Monitoring and Evaluation: The project proposal should demonstrate that the project proponent(s) has a clear plan for assessing planned activities. Project proposals should identify clear milestones and indicators of achievements as well as interim technical and financial reporting.

II. Discretionary Account

To qualify for funding from the Discretionary Account (valued at 30% of donations received by the AEF), proposals must:

1. Address Priority Objectives 1, 2 or 3 as set out in the AEAP; and
2. Require actions to be initiated and completed in no more than 6 months;
3. Include actions relating to:
 - a. Securing small / vulnerable populations that are faced with an immediate threat;
 - b. Criminal investigations;
5. Result in a quick win situation for the elephant population involved;
6. Be endorsed by the sub-region as a priority project.

Example: A Proposal may request funding from the Discretionary Account to support the emergency deployment of anti-poaching officers to a remote area where elephant poaching has suddenly escalated (AEAP Objective 3).

ANNEX: Evaluation templates

1. Eligibility assessment

The objective of this assessment is to check if the project proponent and the project proposal comply with the minimum requirements for qualification for the funding. Only proposals that meet all the criteria based on the minimum requirements elaborated in this section will proceed to the quality assessment.

| Proposal Number: | Assessment | Comments |
|---|----------------|----------|
| 1. Was the proposal and all accompanying documents submitted on or before the deadline set in the call for proposals? | YES / NO | |
| 2. Was the AEAP/AEF Proposal submitted in accordance with the standard templates for AEF project proposals and linked to at least one of the AEAP objectives? | YES / NO | |
| 3.a. Is the Proposal submitted by the designated Competent Authority of one or more African elephant range State(s)? | YES / NO | |
| 3.b. Where not submitted by the Competent Authority, does the proposal have an accompanying endorsement letter from the Competent Authority? | YES / NO | |
| 4. For transboundary projects, have all participating range States provided endorsement letters from their Competent Authorities? | YES / NO / N/A | |
| 5. Does the project proponent currently have an existing/ongoing AEF project or approved project proposal at a standstill for more than 6 months from the date of the submission of the new project proposal? | YES / NO | |
| 6. Is the project duration equal to or greater than 9 months? | YES / NO | |

2. Quality assessment

Project Proposals that are in compliance with all eligibility criteria mentioned under section 1 will be evaluated based on the quality evaluation criteria elaborated in this section (2).

Scoring:

1: Poor

2: Partially satisfactory

3: Satisfactory

4: Very satisfactory

5: Excellent

| Proposal Number: | Scoring | Comments |
|--|---------------------|---|
| Does the Proposal aim to address AEAP Objectives 1, 2 or 3 | No scoring required | * Selection is of one or more of Objectives 1-3 |
| Which AEAP Priority Objective(s) does the Proposal meet? | No scoring required | * Selection is of one or more of Objectives 1-8 |
| Which AEAP Activity(ies) under the Priority Objective(s) does the Proposal meet? | No scoring required | * Selection is of one or more of Activities of the Objectives 1-8 |
| 1. Does the Proposal demonstrate a clear long-term conservation benefit to elephant populations of the submitting range State(s)? | 1,2,3,4,5 | |
| 2. In case of a transboundary project, does the Proposal demonstrate a clear conservation benefit to elephant populations in another or more range States? | 1,2,3,4,5 | |
| 3a. Budget: Is the budget feasible and realistic? Is it clear which part of | 1,2,3,4,5 | |

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| the budget will be used for the accomplishment of which part of the project? Are the amounts reasonable? | | |
| 3b. Budget: Is the procurement process identified and in accordance with the UN rules (clearly defined processes for procurement below USD 10,000 and above USD 10,000, or over 25% of project budget)? | 1,2,3,4,5 | |
| 4a. Is there any co-funding? | YES/NO | *If YES, 3 additional points are awarded |
| 4b. Do the project activities clearly demonstrate how they will deliver the expected results and outputs? | 1,2,3,4,5 | |
| 4c. Are the project partners relevant with the view of achieving the proposed project objectives? | 1,2,3,4,5 / N/A | |
| 5. <i>Sustainability and Exit strategy:</i> Will the project be sustainable in the long run (ecological, economical, social)? Does the proposal sufficiently outline the measures that will ensure that the continuity of the project and/or impacts of the project in the long-run? | 1,2,3,4,5 | |
| 6a. <i>Transparency:</i> If relevant, does the proposal demonstrate how stakeholders will be involved in the project, their respective roles and level of involvement? | 1,2,3,4,5 | |
| 6b. <i>Transparency:</i> For transboundary projects, does the | YES/NO | |

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| proposal outline the involvement of the other range States? | | |
| 7. <i>Methodology</i> : Does the project have a clear methodology based on best practices and lessons learnt or an innovative approach? | 1,2,3,4,5 | |
| 8. <i>Replicability</i> : Can the project be easily replicated by the range State or other range States? | 1,2,3,4,5 | |
| 9. <i>Gender</i> : Does the proposal outline how gender considerations have been incorporated into the project design and/or project implementation? Does it promote equal gender participation in the implementation of project activities? Does it outline how the outcomes/impacts will be beneficial to all genders? Does it outline specific actions/strategies that will be undertaken to address barriers to equal/inclusive gender participation relevant to the project? If the project does not contain information on gender, is there reasoning given? | 1,2,3,4,5 | |
| 10. <i>Environmental and Social Safeguards</i> : Does the proposal outline how social and environmental safeguard considerations have been incorporated, outlining any potential negative social or environmental impacts resulting from project implementation and the measures that will be taken to mitigate them? Does it outline how the project will benefit local communities, and | 1,2,3,4,5 | |

| | | |
|---|-----------|--|
| protect vulnerable populations and environmental ecosystems throughout its implementation? | | |
| <i>11. M&E:</i> Does the proposal outline a clear plan to assess planned activities? Are clear milestones and indicators of achievements identified, and interim reporting on technical and financial aspects outlined? | 1,2,3,4,5 | |

Scoring Threshold:

Min. = 30

Max. = 65

3. Additional considerations

The purpose of this phase is to check the number of proposals submitted from each sub-region and from each partner, to reflect the proposed project budgets against the funding available in the Fund, and to contribute to the overall assessment of whether the project can be approved by the Steering Committee.

| Proposal Number: | Scoring | Comments |
|---|----------------|-----------------|
| Which region does the Proposal fall under (East, Southern, Central, West)? | | |
| Has the project proponent submitted more than one proposal for the same call? | YES / NO | |
| Based on the finances available in the Fund and funding considered to be allocated to other projects, is the project budget feasible? | YES / NO | |