Can AWEF funding be used as investment capital or other direct support to SGBs?
Unfortunately, no. AWEF funding can only be used for programmatic support. Previous winning proposals have included budget items for administration and program management, case studies, dissemination and marketing, research and design, technology development, travel, workshops, and more. Indirect costs or overhead may also be included.

ANDE lists a few organization types that are eligible to apply, but I’m not familiar with them. What do they mean?
ANDE references organization types in the RFP from our membership categories. While you don’t need to be a member to qualify, we use these categories across our work:

- **Capacity Development Providers**: Organizations that provide business development and advisory services to SGBs.
- **Investors**: Funds or financial entities that focus on providing capital to SGBs in developing countries. Investments include debt, equity, and quasi-equity and are generally under US$2M. In addition, some “investor” members also provide capacity development services.
- **Research and Advisory Service Providers**: Organizations that provide consulting, research and advisory services as the main mission of the organization, as well as associations that provide a service to the sector as a whole.

ANDE also lists **Non-Governmental Organizations** and **Non-Grantmaking (Operating) Foundations** as options in the application. What do these mean?

- **Non-Governmental Organizations**: Organizations independent from government involvement which typically serve humanitarian or environmental goals. We encourage applicants to select this organization type if your organization is a non-profit, non-governmental entity that does not fit the description for Capacity Development Provider, Investor, or Research and Advisory Service Provider listed above.
- **Non-grantmaking (Operating) Foundations**: Non-governmental organizations (as described above) which are named “foundation” but do not make charitable grants.

Do smallholder farmers or companies seeking less than USD $20K in financing qualify as small and growing businesses (SGBs)?
A key piece of the SGB definition is that SGBs are small but poised for growth. They are not livelihood-sustaining small businesses which start small and stay that way. If you’d describe the businesses impacted by your proposal in this way, then they qualify.
I. Eligibility

Does my organization have to be an ANDE member to apply?
No, the Advancing Women’s Empowerment Fund is open to ANDE member organizations and non-member organizations.

Does my organization have to fit the definition of a women-led business as provided?
No, organizations applying for the fund do not have to qualify as women-led businesses, per the RFP’s definition, however, proposals must address the financing gap faced by women-led businesses in eastern, western, and southern Africa. For the purposes of the fund, ANDE has defined women-led businesses. The definition can be found in the request for proposals, linked here.

Is there a geographic focus for this fund?
The 2021 Advancing Women’s Empowerment Fund is focused on eastern, western, and southern Africa. Proposals targeting any of the following countries in eastern, western, and southern Africa are eligible to apply:

**Western Africa**
- Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte D'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo

**Eastern Africa**
- Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda

**Southern Africa**
- Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

Projects implemented in multiple countries within one region will be accepted. Applicants must justify projects implemented in multiple regions in the application form.

Our consultancy firm or organization does not provide direct support to entrepreneurs, but we support other organizations that do support entrepreneurs directly. Do we qualify?
Yes, organizations that support other organizations directly supporting small and growing businesses (SGBs) qualify.

My organization is based outside the region. Am I still eligible to apply?
Yes, however, given that AWEF seeks to alleviate the gender financing gap endemic to eastern, western, and southern Africa SGB markets, we strongly encourage partnerships with organizations headquartered and/or founded there.
II. Guidelines to Consider

Can my organization submit more than one proposal?
Yes, an organization may submit or be involved in up to two proposals. However, an organization can be a lead or partner on one proposal.

Are proposals addressing the broader issue of gender equality in eastern, western, and southern Africa within the scope of this fund?
ANDE understands the scale of gender equality as a United Nations Sustainable Development Goal and as a broad area of focus for the SGB sector, however, AWEF will only focus on increasing investment into women-led SGBs and closing the investment gap between women-led and male-led SGBs.

Are girls accounted for in the definition of women-led SGBs or women-led businesses?
Women-led SGBs or women-led businesses are defined by ANDE for the Advancing Women’s Empowerment Fund as companies that have a woman in a leadership position with strategic decision-making authority and meet at least one of the following, prioritizing companies founded and led by all-women teams:

- founded and led by a team of at least 50% women
- have a woman currently serving in a top leadership role (CEO or other C-Suite, Executive Director, etc.) for at least one year
- 51% or more women ownership of the business

Models supporting youth founding teams that align with this definition do qualify.

What kind of budget line items are allowed?
While there are no overt restrictions on budget line items, we expect that all proposed budgets will be well thought-out, with reasonable amounts under each line-item to carry out the project in a reasonable and efficient manner. Previous winning proposals have included budget items for administration and program management, case studies, dissemination and marketing, research and design, technology development, travel, workshops, and more.

Indirect costs or overhead may also be included in the overall budget.

Cost-sharing is permitted. Proposals can request funding for a subset of a project, not a standalone project. If funding request is for an entire budget, please indicate that. If not, include total projected cost of project and indicate which portion this grant would support. A list of project funders, including prospective and committed, is required.

In the list of project funding, can we budget for items like contracting TA providers and accounting support?
Yes, however, if the funding required exceeds $150,000 total note that any additional funding required to make this project successful should be indicated in your application.
What does it mean when you ask for information about other project funders for our proposal? If funding request is for entire budget, please indicate. If not, include total projected cost of project and indicate which portion this grant would support. For example, you could list the total budget as $5 million, but total requested from this fund as $150,000. Proposals facing this circumstance will be evaluated based on their ability to implement the project with or without additional funding.

Do we need to have identified all potential partner organizations in the concept note or can some be identified later (i.e. indicate number and type, but specific organizations or firms still being finalized)? Ideally, we would like to have a sense for prospective and confirmed partners at this stage especially given our preference for interventions led by or in partnership with locally-headquartered organizations, however, we understand how things might change between the concept note and proposal.

Can some of the funding be used for business or partner development? Applications for this fund will be evaluated for efficiency in the sense of how these funds are being used to finance an intervention as well as disseminate learnings from that pilot. Any line item needs to support that objectives of the fund.

What is the maximum percentage of services that can be contracted? Contracting is allowable with no percentage maximum. However, note that the funding through AWEF cannot be used for loan guarantees, debt, equity etc. It is intended as grant capital alone.

III. Use of Funds

What types of SGB support models qualify for this funding? AWEF is open to any type of model that catalyzes investment into women-led SGBs. An accelerator is an example of a model AWEF will fund, however, there are many others that qualify.

Do proposals for research initiatives qualify? A purely research driven proposal would not qualify because we are looking to fund the piloting of interventions that tackle the investment gap for women-led SGB’s in eastern, western, and southern Africa.

Are subawards or grants to founders eligible budget items? We would consider this funding SGBs directly, so no. Not an eligible budget item.

Can AWEF funding be used to fund working capital (sewing machines, work sheds, etc.)? Technically, yes, however, budget line items must show a sufficient use of funds to tackle financing for women led business in eastern, western, and southern Africa.
IV. Metrics, Evaluation, and Learning

What percentage of target beneficiaries must be women-led organizations?
Your application must defend how your organization is tackling the investment gap for women-led SGBs in eastern, western, and southern Africa. There isn’t a requirement in terms of number of women-led SGBs impacted. Proposed interventions need to tackle the financing challenges for women-led businesses in the target region.

What types of outcomes is the fund looking for? Successful completion of the program or number of women-led SGBs impacted vis a vis their access to financing in light of the intervention?
The objective of the fund is to provide runway to interventions that have the capacity to address the financing gap for women-led businesses in eastern, western, and southern Africa. A combination of the two is best suited for sustainability and tackling this challenge of a financing gap for women-led SGBs in the region.

V. Other

Is there a specific timeframe within which the project needs to be completed. Or can the 12 months start at any time in 2021?
The project must begin in June 2021 and end in May 2022.

Could you tell us something of main learnings from round 1?
All of the projects are mid-way through implementation, so we do not have concrete learning yet. You can find more information on each model here.

Is there a determined number of women-led businesses that you would like to see supported through each awarded project?
No. Each applicant should submit its own unique list of learning questions and how it seeks to answer them.

Is AWEF focused on targeting international impact capital or local financing, such as through banks?
Ultimately, we are looking to tackle the financing gap for women-led SGBs in the region and we see increased access to both or either types of capital addressing this issue

What kind of support will my organization get from ANDE?
Winners will receive programmatic as well as monitoring, evaluation, and learning assistance from ANDE, structured around quarterly check in calls and in advance of reporting deadlines.
How important is innovativeness?
Incredibly important as this fund recognizes that existing interventions aren’t working or scaling to tackle the investment gap, thus we are looking for creative new ideas.