



Mobile for Development Utilities Innovation Fund

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

February 2017

Innovation Fund

If you were familiar with our previous M4D Utilities Innovation Fund, please take note of the updated term sheets and frequently asked questions below.

We have intentionally designed the grant eligibility and evaluation criteria to be inclusive of the various actors and approaches in the fields of mobile-enabled energy, water and sanitation services. However, where our language or intentions may have left you with questions, we have done our best to address these with the answers below. If you have further questions, please contact us at utilities_grants@gsma.com.

Eligibility

- 1. Are there examples of projects supported by the fund?** While previously funded projects are not necessarily indicative of what will be selected, you can review our previously funded projects from Phase 2 in our [grantee catalogue](#).
- 2. How many people should the project reach?** The number of beneficiaries put forward by the applicant should be well evidenced and thought through in the concept note/proposal. The numbers should fit logically with the grant type (Seed or Market Validation), delivery model and proposed market/context for implementation. The numbers proposed by the applicants should demonstrate a sufficient return on investment for the Fund. Market Validation grants aim for scale and a suitable number of beneficiaries will therefore be expected.
- 3. Is the Fund focused more on supporting mobile solutions that are used by the end consumer as opposed to mobile solutions that improve the efficiency of the service provider?** Improving efficiency of the service provider is usually a first step to providing improved services to customers. However, there must be a quantifiable outcome in terms of the underserved or low-income consumers receiving improved/increased access to services.
- 4. There is no longer a separate Utility Partnership grant: is partnering with an urban (or peri-urban) utility company still eligible for funding?** We still strongly encourage partnerships between service providers or mobile operators with (peri-)urban utility organisations. Projects with utility partnerships may now be Seed or Market Validation grants depending on the level of maturity of the solution proposed. If a partnership involves a (peri-)urban utility, our strong preference is that the grant project be led by a third-party in partnership with the utility and/or government agency rather than by the utility itself.
- 5. Why are certain countries ineligible?** Some countries in these regions have not been included for this round for one or more of the following reasons:
 - Countries that are not identified as low-to-middle income.
 - Countries where the current political and/or economic climate is not conducive to providing on-the-ground support and/or facilitating commercial partnerships with local operators and the broader local ecosystem.
 - Countries that do not comply with directives from the UK government.
 - Countries to which the GSMA Foundation is not able to disburse funding.

Preparation of concept notes

6. **What is the minimum level of development to be eligible for a Seed grant?** To be eligible for a Seed grant, you must have a product/service with sufficient features that have been tested and validated in the field with users. The product's core functionality must be stable and robust so that the mobile component can be implemented as part of the grant project.
7. **What data will be shared publically?** The Innovation Fund's main objective is to capture insights and disseminate learnings from the grants in the form of case studies. We work with each grantee to agree on an Insight and Impact plan to be implemented during the grant. We also work with each grantee to agree on which data points can be shared publically through our case studies, insight reports and blogs.
8. **For Market Validation grants, do we need to have a mobile operator or utility partnership agreed when we submit the concept note?** A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with either a mobile operator or (peri-)urban utility provider is required at the proposal stage should your concept note be selected. Please refer to the Term Sheets for more information on MOUs. If you are unsure if your project requires an MOU please contact us at utilities_grants@gsma.com. We do recommend you develop these formal partnerships as soon as possible.
9. **Can the total project be shorter or longer than 12-18 months?** No. As mentioned in the term sheet, the total duration of the project is 12-18 months with the expectation that the implementation will be 12 months at most, with an additional 6 months for impact assessment. For these reasons, the total project cannot be less than 12 months to allow for sufficient time for impact assessment. The project must end after 18 months.
10. **Can I email my concept note instead of submitting it online?** Please submit your application via the online form. If you are having difficulties doing so, please contact us at utilities_grants@gsma.com.
11. **Can GSMA provide feedback on a draft concept note?** We do not have the capacity to review concept notes prior to submission and can only provide phone consultations on a "best-effort" basis. If you have specific questions about your concept note submission, please e-mail us at utilities_grants@gsma.com.
12. **Can concept notes be submitted in a language other than English?** Concept notes and proposals must be written in English, however, our Mobile for Development Utilities team can support discussions in French, Spanish, and Hindi.
13. **Can an organisation submit more than one concept note?** Yes; however, as we are looking to support a diversity of grants through a competitive selection process of the most promising proposals, it is unlikely that multiple concept notes from the same organisation would be selected.
14. **Can organisations re-apply after this round?** Yes, at the concept note stage, applications may be declined, accepted, or encouraged to resubmit at the next round with recommended changes.

At the proposal stage, the decision to award a grant is at the discretion of the Expert Panel who will take one or the following four options:

- Approve
- Approve with conditions
- Reject, but invite to resubmit – For this outcome the Applicant can revisit/amend their proposal in line with feedback from the Panel, and re-submit a proposal in the second call, without needing to resubmit a concept note.
- Firm rejection – For this outcome, the Applicant will have to submit a new concept note at the next round.

15. Can previous grantees or their partners apply? New proposals from these organisations will be considered where they meet the criteria described in the term sheets, though the objective of the fund is to learn insights from a wide variety of actors in different markets.

16. Why does this fund favor things other than pay-as-you-go energy models in East Africa? This fund is aimed at providing risk money to innovations that have yet to secure significant commercial investment. We previously funded several pay-as-you-go energy companies in East Africa and are now looking to support other innovations and markets.

Fund and Grant Structure:

17. Is there a quota for number of grants for each region? No; we strive to have equal numbers of grants across Asia and Africa.

18. Should I apply at the first or second round? Grants are awarded on a competitive basis and therefore the second round is usually more competitive. Therefore, we strongly encourage applicants to submit concept notes in the first round where possible.

19. Will there be enough time to be awarded a seed grant and then apply for the market validation grant? As our fund is currently structured, no.

Financial and Matching Requirement:

20. Will funds be delivered in local currency or GBP? Currency will be distributed in Pounds Sterling (GBP).

21. For the match funding, can we apply funds that have already been spent on project/hardware development? No. Funds for the matching component can be either in-kind or in cash and cannot have been spent before the notification of grant award. Furthermore, match funds must also be spent by the completion of the grant.

22. Are there any restrictions on where the match funding component comes from, such as another donor? Yes. Grantees may not use other DFID/UK aid funds toward the match as the grant itself comes from this organization. Matching funds from other donors or investors will be accepted.

23. Is there a required proportion between match funds from cash versus in-kind sources?

There is not a specific requirement, however the match should not only come from in-kind funds, and applicants using in-kind funds should have an appropriate balance.

24. Can an organisation invest more than the match funding requirement? Yes. as identified in the Term Sheets, the required match is a minimum.

25. How is financial health assessed and what if our organisation does not have two years of audited accounts? We understand applicants may be young organisations and if you do not have two years of audited accounts, we will work on a case by case basis to assess financial health. Applicants must propose what they can show if not two years of audited accounts, for example, other investments, how current operating costs are covered.

Partnerships/consortiums:

26. Are we required to have a mobile operator as a partner? As stated in the Term Sheets, this is required for the market validation grant unless you instead have an urban/peri-urban utility provider as a partner. Please note that we look for projects that can provide relevant learnings for the mobile industry and for organisations that have the potential and appetite to form strategic partnerships with mobile operators. Some Seed grants may have partnerships with mobile operators, even though this is not an eligibility requirement.

27. Can there be more than two organisations in a partnership? Yes.

28. Can an NGO be the lead organisation on a market validation grant? Potentially, but a key requirement for the market validation grant is to demonstrate a sustainable business model.



GSMA HEAD OFFICE

Floor 2

The Walbrook Building

25 Walbrook

London EC4N 8AF

United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)20 7356 0600

Fax: +44 (0)20 7356 0601