



**ASPEN NETWORK
OF DEVELOPMENT
ENTREPRENEURS**

Accelerating Women Climate Entrepreneurs (AWCE) Fund

Call for Concept Notes

Issuance date: Wednesday, July 14, 2021

Concept note size: a maximum 3-page written PDF document, or a 10-slide PDF PowerPoint presentation, or a 3-5 minute video (YouTube or Vimeo Link)

Eligibility: Non-profit small and growing business (SGB) entrepreneur support organizations

Concept note focus: Projects to support the growth of women climate entrepreneurs (WCE) in the SGB sector

Region: Sub-Saharan Africa

Deadline for submission of Concept Notes: Wednesday, August 4, 2021

Awards announced: By November 2021

Funding Type: Grant

Project Size: US \$30,000 – US \$ 65,500

Number of grants: 3 – 6 projects (winners) to be funded

1.0 ANDE Challenge Funds

As the leading global voice of the [small and growing business \(SGB\)](#) sector, the Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs (ANDE) believes that SGBs are a powerful yet underleveraged tool in addressing social and environmental challenges. As such, ANDE has run Catalyst and Challenge Funds since 2009 to fuel initiatives aimed at improving the capacity of organizations within the SGB sector. These funds have taken many forms and addressed various sector challenges. However, their core function remains constant – to award **SGB Support Service Providers** with the risk-tolerant capital they need to Test or Pilot innovative approaches to SGB sector challenges and share learnings within the ANDE community and SGB sector at large. SGB Service Providers are organizations that provide critical financial, educational, and business support services to small and growing businesses (SGBs) based on the conviction that SGBs will create jobs, stimulate long-term economic growth, and produce environmental and social benefits.

The Accelerating Women Climate Entrepreneurs (AWCE) project was established to support women climate entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa. This initiative is aligned with ANDE's strategic priorities contributing to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs or global goals) specifically around SDG 5 on *gender equality* and SDG 13 on *climate action* by

using grant capital to Pilot, Test or Expand models for increasing investments to support women climate entrepreneurs in SGBs in Sub-Saharan Africa.

AWCE defines women climate entrepreneurs as women entrepreneurs whose locally available, contextually-appropriate goods and services prioritize or significantly contribute to mitigate and/or adapt to climate change¹.

ANDE's Accelerating Women Climate Entrepreneurs (AWCE) Fund will award projects in Sub-Saharan Africa to support the growth of women climate entrepreneurs in the SGB sector.

We believe that entrepreneurship has been an underappreciated tool to address critical environmental challenges, climate change and gender related issues, and that women are underrepresented as entrepreneurs, investors, and leaders in climate action.

2.0 The Accelerating Women Climate Entrepreneurs (AWCE) Initiative

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) estimates a US \$320 billion financing gap for women entrepreneurs in emerging markets.² One of the most common methods to attempt to bridge this gap is through business **incubator** and **accelerator**³ programs, investor products and services, grants and credit—particularly for emerging global issues and certain types of entrepreneurs with limited access to financing, such as women. Climate change is the major urgent issue already disrupting millions of lives around the world. Attracting diverse investment and financing to mitigate, where possible, or adapt to the effects can help support women climate entrepreneurs, who face these intersecting challenges to scale their solutions effectively for national and local impact. As capital flows increase to specific climate markets, ensuring women, who are currently underrepresented in this space as innovators and designers of climate solutions, are incorporated and accessing financial and technical support is necessary to respond effectively to the growing climate change threat.

While support to women entrepreneurs to focus on climate adaptation and mitigation products and services is gaining momentum⁴, research shows a gender investment gap persists, which can partially be attributed to issues including:

¹ Please refer to the [2015 Paris Climate Agreement](#), [OECD Rio Markers](#) and [SDG13](#) for climate change priorities.

² International Finance Corporation. (2017). MSME Finance Gap - Assessment of the Shortfalls and Opportunities in Financing Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Emerging Markets. International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group. [here](#)

³ *Accelerators* focus on scaling up/growth of an existing business while *incubators* are often more focused on innovation/new business ideas.

⁴ Dutta S. (2019). Supporting last-mile women energy entrepreneurs: What works and what does not. Experiences from ENERGIA's Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) programme in Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda. International Network on Gender & Sustainable Energy (ENERGIA). [here](#)

Gender barriers facing women entrepreneurs

- Research shows that women entrepreneurs have limited skills and finances to commercialize their ventures and ideas largely due to structural barriers to developing these skills, and access financing. As a result, women-owned enterprises have lower productivity and profitability than men-owned enterprises.^{6, 5 & 6}
- Technical challenges to formalize enterprises; attributed to lack of streamlining of processes and access to information for business registration and licensing.⁶
- Socio-cultural barriers such as male dominance in decision making and women having to balance caregiver roles and entrepreneurship.^{6 & 8}

Gender issues related to climate action

- Focus on women entrepreneurship in climate adaptation and mitigation is not a frequent theme in business acceleration in emerging markets.
- In some markets, women may have limited awareness of viable climate smart solutions and business opportunities in the relatively male-dominated sector. This is primarily attributed to women's limited access to information, connections or experience due to limited access to digital platforms, lower technical skills, or financial challenges.^{6, 7 & 8}
- Would-be supporters of women climate entrepreneurs such as incubators, accelerators, training institutions and investors also face skills and financial gaps to understand the intersection between climate and gender while recruiting, supporting and working with women climate entrepreneurs in SGBs.⁶

To help address the aforementioned gaps, the AWCE initiative was established via funding by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and led by Aga Khan Foundation Canada (AKFC) working together in a consortium with the Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs (ANDE) and World University Service of Canada (WUSC). The consortium works to address challenges focused on gender lens investing and climate change in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Gender lens investing, defined in section 4.0 below, is a term coined in 2007 to integrate gender into the practice of investing and systems of finance.⁷ Under AWCE, ANDE is launching the **ANDE's Accelerating Women Climate Entrepreneurs (AWCE) Fund which will award projects in Sub-Saharan Africa to organizations that support women climate entrepreneurs in SGBs.**

⁵ Carranza E., Dhakal C., and Love I. (2018). Female Entrepreneurs: How and Why Are They Different? Jobs Working Paper Issue No. 20. World Bank, Washington, DC. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO. [here](#)

⁶ Toesland F. (2018). Women-led tech startups on the rise in Africa. United Nations Africa Renewal Information Programme. [here](#)

⁷ Anderson, J. (2021). Disrupting Fields: Addressing Power Dynamics in the Fields of Climate Finance and Gender Lens Investing. Criterion Institute with funding from Wallace Global Fund and UNICEF. [here](#)

3.0 Regional Context: Sub-Saharan Africa

The year 2020 was one of the warmest years on record. Over 50 million people globally were directly affected by floods, droughts or storms, and wildfires⁸, further worsened by the unprecedented effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Too often the impacts of climate change and associated costs are disproportionately borne by women, whether through increased informal labour, malnutrition, or lower access to education, health services, and formal employment because of their higher burden of care.⁹ Despite the disproportionate impact of climate change on women, women entrepreneurs already play an important role in addressing climate related problems. This includes women's vital role as educators, innovators and designers promoting more equitable interventions.¹⁰ An estimated 27% of African women are engaged in some form of entrepreneurial endeavor (AfDB, 2020). These are mainly informal ventures in sectors heavily affected by and/or highly relevant to addressing climate change such as agriculture, food, sustainable energy, and water and sanitation. As such, AWCE focuses on addressing existing barriers and tapping opportunities for women climate entrepreneurs to grow scalable climate-related businesses in Sub-Saharan Africa.

4.0 Definitions and Guidelines

4.1 Definitions

Working definitions for the context of this project include:

Women Climate Entrepreneurs – Women entrepreneurs whose locally available, contextually-appropriate goods and services prioritize or significantly contribute to mitigate and/or adapt to climate change¹¹.

Gender Lens Investing – Taking a gender approach to financial investments and allocations, valuing investments, and in targeting and providing support to SGBs. Applying a gender lens can lead to:

- Access to capital for SGBs led, founded, or owned by women
- Business models with products or services designed to fit women's needs and/or to benefit women and girls
- Workplace equity for women including workplace or employment policies which champion gender inclusivity
- Assessment of risks and opportunities for women along supply chains

SGB focused investors – These are funds or financial entities that provide capital to SGBs in developing countries. Investments include debt, equity, and quasi-equity and are generally between US \$20,000 and \$2 million. In addition, some investors may also provide capacity development services.

⁸ UNEP. (2021). Step up climate change adaptation or face serious human and economic damage. [here](#)

⁹ FAO, & The World Bank. (2017). How to integrate gender issues in climate-smart agriculture projects. The World Bank.

¹⁰ International Union for Conservation and Nature [IUCN] (2015). GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE: Strengthening climate action by promoting gender equality. Issues Brief. [here](#)

¹¹ Please refer to the [2015 Paris Climate Agreement](#), [OECD Rio Markers](#) and [SDG13](#) for climate change priorities.

4.2 Intervention

ANDE seeks Concept Notes from organizations that support women climate entrepreneurs in SGBs in Sub-Saharan Africa. Concept Notes should focus on projects that Pilot, Test, or Expand scalable solutions to tackle the financing gap for women climate entrepreneurs in SGBs that produce climate change mitigation and adaptation goods and services within Sub-Saharan Africa. These are expected to generate knowledge and proven solutions that can be replicated and scaled by the broader SGB sector.

ANDE is specifically focused on submissions catalyzing early-stage, growth-oriented capital to **enhance capacity of local entrepreneur support organizations to support women climate entrepreneurs in SGBs** starting and growing climate-related businesses such as expansion of market production and supply of green goods and services. ANDE encourages submissions employing creative solutions to both supply and demand components of the climate financing gap with a gender lens within AWCE priority sectors of Agriculture, Sustainable Energy, and Water and Sanitation; and that fit any of the following categories:

- **Entrepreneur support organizations supporting innovative approaches in agriculture** to help women entrepreneurs, including smallholder farmers, to start and grow climate resilient agribusinesses amid vulnerabilities to weather-related shocks such as floods, droughts, heatwaves, and fluctuations in rain seasons in Sub-Saharan Africa. This includes agri-production and agri-processing, cold-chains, data and information services, insurance and credit guarantee, market access and product distribution.
- **Entrepreneur support organizations supporting innovative and affordable clean off-grid renewable energy solutions** that can be accelerated for deployment or scaled up amid intensifying environmental degradation and climate change in Sub-Saharan Africa. This includes solutions such as but not limited to: small scale solar and wind-solutions and related products and services; energy efficient technologies; green transportation solutions, clean cooking solutions and training for women entrepreneurs to venture into clean energy solutions.
- **Entrepreneur support organizations supporting innovative approaches to environmental conservation**, greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation and natural resource management. This includes sustainable housing and building materials, community forestry, fisheries, efficient irrigation, wastewater reuse and recycling technologies and interventions.
- **Entrepreneur support organizations with climate related novel and practical methods that inform best practices to help funders and credit providers among other institutions invest more** in catalytic capital, credit and offer better financing products and services to women climate entrepreneurs. This includes approaches to integrate gender equality and safeguarding measures in funding processes.

ANDE encourages Concept Notes that **build on** or **learn** from existing gender responsive interventions relevant to climate action.

5.0 Qualifying Criteria

5.1 Geographic

SGB service providers with proposed projects in country/countries within Sub-Saharan Africa will be considered.

5.2 Organizational

Organizations eligible to apply

Non-profit entrepreneurs support organizations, such as:

- Incubators, accelerators, investors, capacity development providers, non-governmental organizations, operating (non-grantmaking) foundations, and research and advisory service providers, are qualified to apply.

Ineligible organizations

- For profit institutions, government agencies, donor finance institutions and grantmaking foundations are not qualified to apply.

Given AWCE's intention to tackle the gaps in financing focused on women climate entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa, while all activities should be focused on Sub-Saharan Africa, organizations based in any region are eligible to apply. However, preference will be given to organizations based in Sub-Saharan Africa, and for consortia including partners with a presence in those countries.

Note, however, that AWCE funding cannot be used to support the contributions of for-profit consortium members. While partnerships and consortiums are advised, it is required that a lead organization applies for the funding directly.

Qualified applicants may submit or be a partner for up to two Concept Note applications, but an organization can only either lead or co-implement one winning project. Applicants must submit the required documents by organization type and location provided in the *5.1 Geographic and 5.2 Organizational sections*.

5.3 Financial

ANDE intends to fund a minimum of three and a maximum of six projects for this round, from a total funding pool of US \$196,500. Submissions should be for activities of up to 11 months duration with a minimum total request of US \$30,000 and a maximum total request of US \$65,500. This fund has been made possible with generous support from Global Affairs Canada (GAC).

5.4 Language

All applications must be submitted in English.

6.0 Application Timeline

Phase 1: Concept Notes	
Wednesday, July 14, 2021	Issuance date
Monday, July 19, 2021 - 5:00pm EAT	Deadline to submit questions (as needed)
Thursday, July 22, 2021 - 3:00 - 4:00 PM EAT	Office hours for applicant questions (1-hour webinar)
Wednesday, August 04, 2021 - 11:59 PM EAT	Deadline to submit Concept Notes

Phase 2: Request for Proposals (RFP)	
Tuesday, August 31, 2021	Shortlisted applicants are notified to submit full proposal
Friday, September 03, 2021	Deadline to submit questions (as needed)
Tuesday, September 07, 2021	Office hours for applicant questions (1-hour webinar)
Tuesday, September 21, 2021	Proposals due
By November 2021	Winners announced

7.0 Concept Note Requirements

To apply for the Accelerating Women Climate Entrepreneurs (AWCE) grant, please submit a Concept Note as either: a maximum 3-page written document, a 10-slide PowerPoint presentation, or a 3-5 minute video. Applications should include the below information and follow specific guidance depending on the chosen medium.

Concept Notes Should Include:

7.1 General Overview

About half a page

- Title of project
- Identify lead organization and list partner organizations applying
- Identify lead contact and list contact name, phone number, and email information
- Amount of request (US \$30,000 – US \$ 65,500)
- Timeframe of proposed project or program (11 months maximum)
- 1-4 sentence brief description of the request

7.2 Organizational overview and proposed scope

2 pages maximum

- A brief description of your organization(s) and why you are well-suited to carry out the proposed project including if the organization is focused on gender equality, women's empowerment and/or women-led businesses.
- The key elements of the approach that will tackle the financing gap for women climate entrepreneurs in SGBs in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- How the project advances the goal of supporting and scaling women climate entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa.

7.3 Budget

About half a page

Please include a total proposed project budget, with a line-item breakout. If your application is selected to prepare a full proposal, you will be asked to submit a budget narrative.

- If the funding request is for the entire budget, please indicate.
- If not, include the total projected cost of the project and indicate which portion this grant would support.

8.0 Format Guidelines by Medium: templates can be found [here](#).

Text-Based Document

- Page Limit: 3 pages
- Format: PDF

PowerPoint

- Slide Limit: 10 slides
- Format: PDF

Video

- Time Limit: 3-5 minutes
- Format: YouTube or Vimeo Link

9.0 Evaluation Criteria

Clarity	Is there a clear understanding of the problem this fund seeks to address? Are solution objectives, as well as justification of the proposed solution, clearly articulated?
Feasibility and Internal Capacity	How is feasibility articulated for the objectives outlined? Has the organization demonstrated its ability to achieve the milestones laid out in the Concept Note?

Please submit completed Concept Note via [this link](#) no later than 11:59pm EAT on **Wednesday, August 4, 2021**. For questions, contact **Dennis Kyalo** at Dennis.Kyalo@aspeninstitute.org.

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