



EARLY EVALUATION OF THE FIRST CALL FOR PROPOSALS OF THE MODERN COOKING FACILITY FOR AFRICA (MCFA1)

Public Summary

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PUBLIC SUMMARY

The **Modern Cooking Facility for Africa** (MCFA) is a new financing programme managed by NEFCO that is designed to support the scale-up of **high-technology cooking solutions** in six **Sub-Saharan countries**, namely the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The programme aims to achieve this goal by offering **catalytic grants** and **RBFs** to private sector actors. The primary objective of the programme is to provide **access** to **clean, modern, and affordable** cooking solutions to **3 million people** in Africa by 2027. MCFA is set-up to provide financial incentives to private **Cooking Service Providers** (CSPs) who offer high-tier clean cooking solutions directly to consumers such as sustainably produced bioethanol, bio-LPG, biogas, electric cooking solutions, and solid biofuels from sustainable sources such as pellets and briquettes.

Altai Consulting has been tasked by NEFCO (Nordic Environment Finance Corporation) to undertake an evaluation of the first Call for Proposals (CfP) of the Modern Cooking Facility for Africa (MCFA1). The goal of this external evaluation is to assess the **process** and **appropriateness for the selected markets**.

This early evaluation of MCFA1 was based on **desk research** and **interviews** with **successful** applicants, **unsuccessful** applicants who were eliminated in various points of the process, companies who **did not apply** but could have qualified or could qualify if the requirements were adjusted, and **stakeholders** in the clean cooking sector. The evaluation also included a **country mapping analysis** building on an assessment NEFCO had completed prior to the CfP. The findings in these country specific analyses expanded upon the previous assessment and insisted on the **large differences** between the clean cooking **ecosystems in the eligible countries**.

This report presents the **findings** of the early evaluation conducted by Altai Consulting between April and August 2023. The main objective of this research is to assist NEFCO in gaining insights from the first CfP (MCFA1) and to provide **recommendations** that will inform the design and development of the **second** call for proposals (MCFA2) with the ultimate goal of maximising impact. Please note recommendations are provided in each individual section as they are topic specific.

At the start of the project, Altai set several research questions. These research questions evolved into **topics of focus** which form the **structure of the report**:

- Assessment of the MCFA offer to the five project countries
 - Country mapping
 - Country response to MCFA and reflections on market appropriateness
- Assessment of the MCFA offer to Cooking Service Providers (CSPs)
 - Fund design
 - Awareness
 - Eligibility criteria
 - Application process
 - Platform and Evaluation Process



Main messages

- The MCFA1 was **well-suited** to established companies operating in **mature markets**, but as this is not the reality of some of the six target countries some adjustments are needed.
- The **ticket size** and **co-financing** requirements were thought to be **too high** and the **proportion** of funding disbursed as a **grant** was deemed **too low** for companies in emerging clean cooking markets and for companies expanding to new, risky markets.

Main recommendations

- Split MCFA2 into **two separate offerings**: a **Scale-up RBF**, which should remain broadly similar to MCFA1 (albeit with lower co-financing requirements), and a **Catalytic RBF** targeted at earlier stage companies and markets

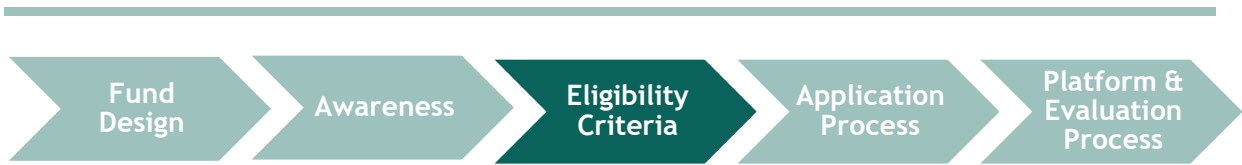


Main messages

- The **awareness level** of MCFA among interviewees (applicants and stakeholders) was **strong**, and the advertisement and dissemination strategy conducted by NEFCO was mostly **positively perceived**.
- Nevertheless, certain stakeholders claimed that the exclusive use of online channels and the distance between NEFCO and the players on the ground might have made it more **difficult** for **smaller players** to hear about the call.

Main recommendations

- Building on the connections NEFCO already has, create a **master list** of stakeholders per country to **be approached directly**
- NEFCO could do even more in **partnering with national clean cooking associations/organisations** on the ground to leverage their contacts and lines of communication
- If resources allow, it would be beneficial to organise **in-person workshop/seminars** to advertise and explain the CfP in all project countries
- The use of **traditional dissemination channels** (i.e. local newspapers) could also be explored



Main messages

- Many interviewees **challenged** the decision to **exclude LPG** in MCFA1, especially in **less mature** markets where LPG is the most widely available/feasible clean fuel. Some interviewees also argued that high-tier biomass should be included in MCFA2.
- The market experience **requirement for stoves sold** was **too high** for early-stage markets and companies.
- There was some **confusion over eligible location types** (rural, peri-urban, urban) and whether consortium members could be used to demonstrate adequate levels of experience.
- A couple of applicants struggled to secure **stove test certificates** in time to meet the deadline.

Main recommendations

- Expand MCFA2 to include **LPG**, at least **in some markets**, but continue to exclude unprocessed biomass stoves
- **Reduce the stove unit requirement** for both the Scale-up RBF and Catalytic RBF
- Provide **clearer guidance** on eligible **location** types and demonstration of **experience**
- Consider allowing applicants **more time** to secure their **test results**, especially for the Catalytic RBF



Main messages

- A large number of interviewees applied to the MCFA to **scale-up** their businesses.
- The majority of applicants, regardless of their success in the call and country, saw the application process as **demanding** due to the **quantity** and **complexity** of the documentation required.
- Only being able to apply in **English** was seen as a possible limitation in **DRC** and **Mozambique**.
- Unsuccessful applicants were frustrated by the **lack of feedback** and communication from NEFCO which should be improved for future rounds.

Main recommendations

- **Simplify** the application process by:
 - Reducing the **initial stage** to a **completeness check** and only requesting more detailed information from the applicants who meet the hard requirements and progress to the FA stage
 - Providing **basic templates** for the more complex requirements (e.g. business plan and financial projections) and/or having TA available for these elements
 - Providing guidance and clarity to applicants through **online tutorials/presentations** on the process, steps and required documents and/or through the creation of a discussion platform for applicants
- Making the MCFA guidelines available in **French** (DRC) and **Portuguese** (Mozambique) and allowing applications to be submitted in these languages



- Some general recommendations about the use of the application platform and evaluation process were added to the evaluation. The main suggestion was to **organise group discussions between evaluators** after they make their individual evaluations to collectively address any potential concerns with the application and make adjustments to the overall score given to an applicant if necessary.