



Strengthening Inclusive Partnerships for Smallholders in Rainfed Areas (SIPRA) Programme in Sudan

Challenge Fund – Large Grant Facility Guide

This guide serves as a practical resource for prospective applicants, reviewers, and managers of the Challenge Fund (CF) – Large Grant Facility, a central component of the Strengthening Inclusive Partnerships for Smallholders in Rainfed Areas (SIPRA) Programme in Sudan.

Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, SIPRA promotes inclusive and sustainable agricultural development to unlock the potential of Sudan's rainfed agricultural system. The Large Grant Facility is a core component of SIPRA, designed to support impactful, scalable, and market-driven solutions that directly advance SIPRA's main objectives: strengthening food and nutrition security and improving the incomes and livelihoods of smallholder women, men, youth, and other vulnerable groups involved in rainfed agriculture and related value chains, including horticulture, livestock, fisheries, and poultry.

This guide is organized into four main sections to support the effective management and implementation of the Large Grant Facility while ensuring transparency, consistency, and alignment with SIPRA's objectives:

- Scope and Objectives of SIPRA and the Large Grant Facility,
- Eligible Applicants and Required Documentation,
- Proposal Template and Guidance,
- Proposal Application and Evaluation Process and Criteria.

1. Scope and Objectives of SIPRA and the Large Grant

SIPRA is a four-year initiative in Sudan funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and implemented by a consortium of four partners: ZOA, World Relief, SOS Sahel Sudan, and Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation (WCID), with technical assistance provided by MetaMeta for agribusiness and CF management.

Active in seven States – South Darfur, East Darfur, Central Darfur, South Kordofan, White Nile, Blue Nile, and Gedaref – SIPRA aims to unlock the potential of Sudan’s rainfed agriculture as well as its interconnected poultry, livestock, fisheries, and horticulture systems. Its core objectives across the target States include:

1. *Increase agricultural production and productivity:* Promote the adoption of improved inputs, sustainable farming practices, value addition, and enhanced post-harvest management to boost yields and reduce losses among smallholder farmers – including women, men, youth, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs),
2. *Improve food and nutrition security:* Enhance smallholder households’ access to diverse and nutritious foods and strengthen nutrition knowledge and practices to ensure better dietary outcomes,
3. *Promote climate-resilient agriculture:* Implement water conservation, soil fertility improvement, drought-tolerant crops, agroforestry practices, and other adaptive strategies to help smallholder farmers adapt to climate variability and reduce the risk of agricultural losses across rainfed crops, livestock, poultry, fisheries, and horticulture value chains,
4. *Revitalizing local markets and economies:* To improve the availability and affordability of essential food commodities, strengthen market linkages, upgrade infrastructure, facilitate access to finance, foster partnerships with private sector actors, and promote the circulation of money within local communities to stimulate sustained economic activity and resilience within value chains,
5. *Sustainably enhance incomes and livelihoods:* Support inclusive agribusiness development, income diversification, and entrepreneurial capacity building for smallholder farmers to enhance economic resilience and improve their standard of living.

SIPRA partners with smallholder farming communities not only as beneficiaries but also as active agents of change, engaging them in agribusiness investment, strengthening service delivery systems, and building strong local networks for support and innovation.

To translate the objectives into tangible impacts on the ground, SIPRA combines targeted technical assistance with catalytic funding through the Large Grant Facility. This Facility offers financial support ranging from €20,000 to €100,000 for proposals demonstrating strong potential for impact, sustainability, and scalability across priority value chains:

- Rainfed cereal, legume, and nutrition-rich crop production,
- Livestock, poultry, fisheries, and horticulture,
- Agricultural inputs and services,
- Agro-processing and post-harvest management,
- Market linkages and access to finance.

Requests exceeding €100,000 may be considered under exceptional circumstances, subject to prior consultation and justification as detailed in Section 5 below.

To operationalize market-driven agribusiness investment and partnerships that respond to the objectives above, align with the priority value chains, and directly benefit smallholder farming

communities, SIPRA has launched a call for Large Grant proposals. This offers a unique opportunity for private sector actors, producer associations, and other relevant business-minded institutions. Applicants are invited to advance inclusive, resilient, and sustainable food systems in some of Sudan’s most fragile and conflict-affected regions. The Large Grant is not just a funding mechanism – it is an invitation to collaborate on transformative solutions with the potential for lasting impact on Sudan’s food and nutrition landscape.

2. Eligible Applicants and Institutional Prioritization

SIPRA places a strong strategic emphasis on strengthening local agribusiness capacity as a pathway to sustainable food systems transformation in Sudan. Accordingly, **Sudanese private sector institutions** are the primary target group for the Large Grant Facility. All eligibility and selection criteria reflect this core priority.

The Large Grant Facility is open to the following categories of applicants, provided they are actively engaged in the target States addressing critical challenges of Sudan’s rainfed agriculture and its interconnected value chains – poultry, livestock, fisheries, and horticulture:

1. *Farmer Producer Associations and Networks*: Operating farming as a business and producing for the market,
2. *Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)* in agribusiness, food and nutrition security,
3. *Large Private Companies* (including financial institutions) with the capacity to implement scalable agribusiness solutions,
4. *Non private sector institutions such as NGOs, research and development organizations* with proven experience in delivering sustainable, market-oriented agribusiness models.

Institutional Eligibility Ranking

Applicants are prioritized based on institutional type and operational presence in the SIPRA target States in Sudan. The ranking below informs the selection process under the Large Grant Facility. Within each category, priority is given to institutions that are owned by, or employ significant numbers of, women, youth, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

Rank	Type of institution and presence in Sudan
1	Sudanese private sector institutions: with active operations in the SIPRA States in Sudan, including a) institutions with both management and technical/operational teams based in Sudan, and b) institutions whose management has temporarily relocated due to conflict but retain in-country operational capacity
2	Private sector institutions with either: a branch office or substantial local team in the SIPRA States in Sudan, or a well-established partnership with a Sudanese private sector institution. Preference is given to proposals where the Sudanese partner is the primary applicant.
3	Non-Dutch private sector institutions: with operational presence and partnerships in the SIPRA States in Sudan equivalent to those described above
4	Sudanese non-private sector institutions: such as NGOs, research and development organizations, and social enterprises, with a proven track record in sustainable agribusiness programmes
5	Non-private institutions: with operational presence or strong partnerships in the SIPRA States in Sudan, as specified above
6	Other international non-private institutions: non-Sudanese, non-Dutch with active operations or partnerships in the SIPRA States in Sudan consistent with the criteria outlined above

3. Required Documents

As part of the application process for the Large Grant Facility, all applicants are required to submit documentation demonstrating their legal status, financial standing, and operational capacity. These documents are critical for eligibility screening, proposal evaluation, and due diligence, including verification of any affiliations with dubious and sanctioned actors and entities.

The CF management team will conduct additional due diligence using the GOPA Vendor Verification system. This system verifies that applicants:

- Are not listed on U.S., Canadian, or EU sanctions lists,
- Are not engaged in illegal, dubious or suspicious financial transactions.

MetaMeta, as a member of the GOPA Group, has direct and full access to the GOPA Vendor Verification system. This tool has been successfully used in managing large-scale programmes valued at millions of euros, ensuring compliance and financial integrity across partners.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to ensure that all documents are clear, complete, and properly labelled to avoid delays or disqualification during the eligibility review process.

The table below outlines the required documents and specifies which categories of applicants must provide each one, based on organizational type and size:

Document	Required from
Company registration number or certificate	All applicants
Audited financial statements (last two years) <i>Note: Pre-April 2023 statements are acceptable if conflict disrupted operations</i>	Required for all large institutions SMEs and Farmer Producer or Network associations may submit internal financial records instead – these will be verified against bank accounts
Proof of Zakat (2.5% charitable obligation for Muslims)	All Sudanese institutions, whether lead applicants or contributing partners
Evidence of financial capital to meet the required co-funding contribution. See Proposal Template, Annex 1, for budget-based co-funding thresholds	All applicants
Bank account details in the requested currency	All applicants

4. Template for the Large Grant Proposals

All applicants are required to complete a standardized Proposal Template (Annex 1) as part of their submission. In addition to providing the above required documents and passing the due diligence assessment, below is a summary of the key sections that must be completed:

- *Project Title and Location:* Concise title capturing the project’s focus, and a brief description of the implementation area (village, locality, state), with optional location map as annex,

- *Budget Overview*: Summary of total project cost requested grant amount (€20,000 to €100,000), and applicant co-funding contribution. Proposals exceeding €100,000 require prior consultation and justification,
- *Applicant and Consortium Information*: Legal name, year of establishment, registration certificate, bank details, and core sectoral focus of the lead applicant and any consortium partners. If a consortium is involved, each partner's role must be clearly described,
- *Vision and Strategic Goals*: Statement of the applicant's short-term objectives and long-term aspirations, aligned with sustainable agribusiness development,
- *Organizational Business Sustainability*: Outline of the applicant's revenue model, stakeholder value proposition, operational structure, sources of funding, and internal financial systems,
- *Problem Statement*: Clear articulation of the key challenges faced within relevant SIPRA value chains, including rainfed agriculture, livestock, fisheries, horticulture, inputs, processing, and market systems. Includes analysis of climate-related and social vulnerabilities,
- *Proposed Solutions and Roles*: Description of the interventions to address the identified problems, including climate-resilient practices, private sector engagement, market access, and financial inclusion. For consortia, roles and coordination mechanisms must be detailed,
- *Expected Results and Impacts*: Anticipated outcomes such as improved productivity, food security, climate adaptation, market revitalization, and income generation. Also includes organizational benefits such as stronger partnerships and financial sustainability,
- *Target Beneficiaries*: Disaggregated estimates of direct beneficiaries by gender, age, and vulnerability (e.g., women, men, youth, children, IDPs, and PWDs), along with the specific benefits to each group,
- *Assumptions, Risks, and Mitigation Measures*: Outline of the key conditions necessary for success, potential risks (e.g., accessibility and security, climate shocks, implementation delays), and realistic mitigation strategies,
- *Project Business Sustainability Plans*: A strategy to sustain project outcomes beyond the implementation period, including market linkages, continuity of services, and reinvestment mechanisms to support lasting impact for smallholder agribusinesses,
- *Activity Schedule (Workplan)*: A timeline of major project activities from inception through completion, and the upscaling phase,
- *Detailed Budget and Co-Funding Requirements*: Itemized results-based budget broken down by cost category, grant request, and required co-funding (cash or in-kind), aligned with SIPRA thresholds,
- *Supporting Documentation*: Required attachments include registration certificate, financial records, bank statements, Zakat proof (where applicable), and conflict-of-interest declarations,
- *Declarations and Contact Details*: Disclosure of affiliations, conflict of interest confirmation, and full contact information and signatures of the lead applicant and consortium partners.

5. Application and Evaluation Process

The SIPRA Large Grant Facility follows a structured multi-stage evaluation process designed to ensure transparency, strategic alignment, and effective deployment of funds. The summary table below provides a concise overview of each step in the process. This is followed by detailed

descriptions in the subsequent sections, which explain the roles, criteria, timelines, and decision points involved at every stage.

Step	Process Stage	Description	Responsibility	Timeline	Decision /Appeal Details
1	Submission	Proposals submitted via open call or direct solicitation to cfsipra@metameta.nl	Applicants; MetaMeta (MM) Challenge Fund (CF) Management team responds to any queries with support from ZOA, as necessary	Rolling basis	Early submission encouraged due to limited funds
2	Screening and Pre-Selection	Eligibility, document completeness, due diligence (sanctions, illegal businesses and transactions), alignment with SIPRA thematic and geographical focus	MM CF Management team for MM-initiated proposals, screening and pre-selection is conducted by SIPRA Consortium Programme Manager (PM) and Agribusiness Advisor (BA) to avoid conflict of interest	3 to 5 working days; processed in batches of 3 to 5 proposals	Passed all assessments: proceeds to Internal Evaluation Committee (IEC) review Failed one or more assessments: Rejection with justification Rejected applicants who have passed due diligence criteria may resubmit
3	Internal Evaluation Committee (IEC) Review	Evaluation against five criteria (max 60 pts): strategic relevance and impact, feasibility in conflict context, institutional and consortium capacity, budget completeness, business sustainability	Four IEC members: SIPRA PM and BA, MM SIPRA Project Director (PD), short-term economic and financial expert MM SIPRA Projec Leader (PL) and CF Manager coordinates the process SIPRA PM and BA (ZOA employees) recuse themselves from proposals solicited by ZOA and are replaced by MM PL and CF Manager. MM PD recuses themselves from MetaMeta-initiated proposals; the other three members conduct the evaluation.	5 working days (3 to 5 proposals per batch)	45 to 60 pts: Shortlist 35 to 44 pts: Revisions requested <35 pts: Rejected. Appeal within 10 working days. Final decision on appeals made with the next batch of proposals
4	Strategic Review: Special Purpose Large Grant Facility Steering Committee (SPLG-SC)	Reviews IEC findings and also considers, among other factors, synergy among shortlisted projects and other relevant initiatives, geographical and thematic balance when making a final decision	SPLG-SC members: 3 Consortium Directors/Delegates, a representative from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN) SIPRA PM and MM PL and CF Manager and/or MM PD participate as non-voting members to present IEC findings and respond to any queries	5 working days (3 to 5 proposals)	Approve, request revisions, or decline Appeals possible – see step 5

5	Notification, Appeal & Additional Documents	Notify applicants; request supporting documents from shortlisted applicants (includes Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (IMEP), budget details, CVs, consortium agreements, if applicable); process appeals	MM PL and CF Manager and team manage communication Appeals reviewed by SPLG-SC	Appeals: 10 working days Documents: 1 to 3 weeks depending on the extent of the feedback	SPLG-SC considers and makes final decisions on appeals during the review of the next batch of proposals
6	Detailed Technical Review: Independent Finance Committee (IFC)	Detailed technical review for all shortlisted applicants and those with successful appeals (max 100 pts): problem analysis, proposed solutions, expected impact, risk management & assumptions, sustainability & scaling, budget justification, IMEP, organizational and team capacity	Three IFC members: public sector, private sector, and academic experts MM PL and CF Manager and MM PD organize and coordinate the review process with support from SIPRA PM and BA	15 working days per batch	85 to 100 pts: Fund 75 to 84 pts: Minor revisions 65 to 74 pts: Major revisions <65 pts: Rejected. Appeals within 10 working days
7	Final Decision, Contracting, and Disclosure	Consolidate IFC results, resolve score discrepancies and appeals, notify and contract awardees	MM PL and CF Manager and SIPRA PM consolidate and notify SPLG-SC resolves IFC score discrepancies and decide on appeals ZOA manages contract signing	3 to 5 working days	Score discrepancies and appeals are resolved during the next batch. Final decisions communicated; summary of funded projects published on ZOA and EKN websites.
8	Disbursement, Administrative Onboarding & Alignment	Post-contract, ZOA initiates fund disbursement and onboards applicants on financial, reporting, and compliance systems Applicants finalize IMEP aligned with ZOA's MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning) standards	ZOA finance, admin and MEAL team MM CF management team can provide support as and when needed	Within 2 to 4 weeks post contract	Orientation and onboarding for contract recipients

The detailed application and evaluation process is as follows:

Step 1: Submission of Proposals

Proposals may be submitted either through an open call or via direct solicitation to: cfsipra@metameta.nl, managed by the MetaMeta CF Management Team. To avoid a conflict of interest, proposals initiated by MetaMeta must be submitted directly to the SIPRA Consortium Programme Manager (PM) and Agricultural Business Advisor (BA).

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Early submission is strongly encouraged due to the limited nature of available funds.

Step 2: Screening and Preselection

MetaMeta CF Management Team manages communication and screens and preselects all proposals (except those initiated by MetaMeta) for:

- Compliance with eligibility criteria (see Section 2),
- Completeness of required documents (see Section 3),
- Due diligence via the GOPA Vendor Verification System (see Section 3),
- Alignment with SIPRA's thematic and geographical focus (see Section 1).

Proposals initiated by MetaMeta are assessed by the SIPRA PA and BA or their officially delegated experts, to maintain transparency and avoid any conflict of interest.

Timeline: 3 to 5 working days. Proposals are processed in batches of 3 to 5 to ensure efficiency.

Applicants are informed of the outcomes:

- Passed all four criteria: Proceed to Step 3 – Internal Evaluation Committee (IEC) review,
- Failed one or more of the four assessment criteria: Application is rejected with a written justification,
- Eligible for resubmission: Applicants who passed the due diligence criteria but failed in other areas may revise and resubmit.

Step 3: Internal Evaluation Committee (IEC) Review

The Internal Evaluation Committee (IEC) is responsible for assessing proposals that have passed the initial screening and preselection stage. The committee has the following members:

- SIPRA Consortium Programme Manager (SIPRA PA),
- SIPRA Consortium Agribusiness Advisor (SIPRA BA),
- MetaMeta SIPRA Technical Support Programme (TSP) Director (MM PD) ,
- Short-term expert (Economic and Financial Analyst).

To ensure impartiality, conflict of interest procedures are in place:

- When proposals are solicited by ZOA, the SIPRA PA and BA, who are ZOA employees, recuse themselves. They are replaced by the MetaMeta SIPRA Project Leader and Challenge Fund (MM PL and CF) Manager,
- For proposals initiated by MetaMeta, the MM PD recuses themselves. The remaining three members continue with the evaluation.

The evaluation process is triggered once a *minimum of three proposals* have been screened and approved for further review. Each batch, typically consisting of three to five proposals, is evaluated within *five working days*.

IEC Evaluation Criteria (Total: 60 Points):

The evaluation criteria, detailed in the Table below, places the highest priority on *Strategic Relevance and Feasibility in Conflict Context*, each carrying 15 points. This reflects SIPRA’s focus on selecting projects that clearly align with its core objectives – boosting agricultural productivity, improving food and nutrition security, market revitalization, and enhancing the income and livelihoods of smallholder farmer communities – while ensuring the proposed interventions are realistic and actionable in Sudan’s fragile and conflict-affected settings.

Equally important are *financial and Institutional Sustainability, the Consortium Capacity, and Budget Completeness*, each weighted at 10 points. Sustainability assesses whether the project has a clear plan for maintaining and scaling activities beyond the grant period, ensuring lasting impact. Institutional and Consortium Capacity evaluates the applicant’s proven ability to deliver results effectively, while also considering financial integrity and the absence of links to conflict-related and dubious actors. Budget completeness examines the thoroughness of the financial plan, ensuring that the proposed budget fully supports the proper implementation of project activities in alignment with on-the-ground conditions.

Criteria	Description	Max Points
Strategic relevance to SIPRA and impact of the grant	Evaluates how clearly and strongly the proposal advances SIPRA’s core objectives: agricultural productivity, food and nutrition security, climate resilience, market revitalization, income and livelihood improvement. Also assesses the reach and inclusiveness of the positive impact of the intervention - particularly the number and types of smallholder farmers (women, men, youth, IDPs, PWDs) and agribusinesses it will benefit. Strategic relevance also includes alignment with priority value chains such as cereals and legumes, nutrition-rich crops, livestock, poultry, fisheries, agro-processing, inputs and services, and horticulture	15
Feasibility in conflict context	Assesses the realism and practicality of implementing the proposed activities in Sudan’s fragile, conflict-affected context. Are the objectives and assumptions realistic? Are risks identified with mitigation plans?	15
Institutional and consortium capacity – business, financial, technical	Reviews the applicant’s experience in the proposed thematic area(s), their operational presence in the SIPRA States in Sudan, and financial management capacity: including accounting systems, internal controls, and prior experience managing similar grants Analyse how the applicant organization currently operates to generate revenue, deliver value to stakeholders (e.g., small holder farmers, offtakers, communities, partners), and sustain its activities. Include your cost structure, key customers or beneficiaries, and sources of income or funding and financial management system	10
Budget completeness	Examines that the budget is comprehensive, includes all required components, and features realistic cost estimates appropriate to the local context	10
Project Business Sustainability	Analyses whether the proposed project business ventures are relevant and viable within the local context, whether deliverables can be achieved within the implementation period and budget, and whether there is a credible plan for sustaining or scaling the initiative beyond the project’s duration. Also examines the financial and economic viability of the proposed intervention.	10

IEC Decision Outcomes Based on Total Score and follow-up action

Score Range (points)	Decision	Description	Action
45 to 60	Shortlist for Steering Committee (SC) review with or without minor revisions	Proposal strongly meets criteria and shows high potential impact	The MetaMeta Challenge Fund (CF) Management Team informs applicants. The MetaMeta Project Leader and CF Manager consolidates and submits the shortlist to the SIPRA Consortium Programme Manager, who forwards it to the SC members for review (see step 4)
35 to 44	Request major revisions	Proposal has potential but requires substantial improvements	The CF Management Team notifies applicants of the required changes and additional documents to be submitted within 1 to 3 weeks as detailed in Step 4.
Below 35	Reject with clear justification	Proposal does not sufficiently meet evaluation criteria and is not recommended for further review	The CF Management Team informs applicants. Applicants may submit a written request for reconsideration with justifications to cfsipra@metameta.nl . A CF Management/ZOA team with no conflict of interest will review the request and issue a final decision.

Step 4: Strategic Review by Special Purpose Large Grant Facility Steering Committee

The Special Purpose Large Grant Facility Steering Committee (SPLG-SC) convenes specifically to evaluate the report submitted by the IEC. The SPLG-SC is composed of:

- Directors or their official delegates from the three SIPRA consortium member organizations,
- A representative from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN), the donor organization, as observer and contributor to the discussion with no decision power involved. 'With a voice, but no vote'

The SIPRA PM, supported by MM PL and CF Manager and/or MM PD, presents the IEC's evaluation findings and the shortlisted proposals to the SPLG-SC. These project staff have no voting power; their only task is to respond to questions and provide clarifications.

Timeline: The SPLG-SC finalizes and shares its review within 5 working days for a batch of 3 to 5 proposals.

Review focus: The SPLG-SC validates the IEC assessments and may apply additional strategic criteria to guide its decisions, including: a) Portfolio synergy – ensuring proposals complement ongoing projects or initiatives supported by SIPRA or its partners, and b) Geographical and sectoral balance – promoting equitable distribution across target States and agricultural value chains.

Decisions:

- Approve for Independent Finance Committee (IFC) review (with or without minor revisions),
- Request major revisions, and
- Decline with justification (appeal allowed).

Follow-up to these decisions is detailed in Step 5 below.

Step 5: Notification, Request for Additional Documents, and Appeal Process

MM PL and CF Manager and team will communicate the SPLG-SC's review and decision to all applicants. This notification includes both those shortlisted for the next stage of detailed technical review and those whose proposals were not successful.

Applicants whose proposals are not approved will have a clear opportunity to contest the decision. Appeals must be submitted in writing *within 10 working days* from the date of the decision notification. The appeal should include justifications and any additional information the applicant wishes to be considered.

MM PL and CF Manager compiles appeals and present them to the SIPRA PM for a second and final review by the SPLG-SC. This process ensures fairness and transparency, allowing the SPLG-SC to reconsider its decision in light of new information or clarifications during the review of the next batch of proposals. The decision made by the SPLG-SC is final and binding.

Meanwhile, shortlisted applicants will be invited to respond to feedback from both the IEC and the SPLG-SC. They will be requested to provide additional documentation to strengthen their proposals, including:

- Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation Plan, IMEP (a template will be provided)
- List of relevant projects previously implemented
- Consortium Agreement, if applicable
- CVs of key personnel leading the proposed intervention
- Detailed budget aligned with proposed activities
- Any other documents or clarifications requested by the IEC or the SPLG-SC

MM PL and CF Manager and team will communicate clear submission deadlines, generally *allowing one to three weeks* depending on the volume and nature of the feedback. Once all requested documents are received, proposals will proceed to the detailed technical review phase led by the Independent Finance Committee (IFC).

Step 6: Independent Finance Committee (IFC) Review

The IFC will be composed of the following members:

- One public sector representative,
- One private sector representative,
- One academic expert.

In line with the Terms of Reference (ToR), IFC members will receive a modest remuneration for their contributions.

Considering the unique challenges and geographic diversity of the SIPRA project territory, it is recommended to establish two separate IFC panels – one serving West Sudan and the other East

Sudan. Each panel will be comprised of knowledgeable and reputable experts familiar with the specific contexts of their respective regions.

MetaMeta and ZOA, drawing from their wide networks and, as necessary, in consultation with the SIPRA Area Based Organizations (ABOs), will identify a pool of experts and institutions with the relevant expertise, and inform them that they may be called upon to participate in the IFC as needed. This communication will be handled by MetaMeta CF management team.

This flexible approach would allow us to select the most appropriate members based on the nature of each proposal, rather than having a fixed IFC membership. It ensures we bring in the right mix of technical and contextual expertise for each investment decision, while also maintaining transparency and readiness.

To facilitate an effective review process and outcome, MM PL and CF Manager and/or MM PD supported by SIPRA PM and BA, will be responsible for organizing an orientation session for all IFC members. This session will cover the objectives of SIPRA and discuss in detail the Large Grant Facility, as well as the purpose and scope of the evaluation process and the interpretation of the evaluation criteria.

IFC Evaluation Criteria (Total: 100 Points)

The IFC evaluation criteria (see table below) are designed to rigorously assess proposals, complementing the initial shortlisting by the IEC and SPLG-SC. The IFC focuses on a detailed technical and operational review to ensure funded projects are feasible, impactful, and sustainable within Sudan’s complex and fragile context.

Given the challenging operating environment, particular emphasis is placed on the quality and relevance of proposed *solutions*, *expected impact*, *risk management and mitigation* strategies, and the *IMEP*. These four areas carry the highest weights (15 points each) as they directly influence the project’s likelihood of success and resilience amid ongoing instability.

Supporting criteria, which include problem analysis, sustainability plans, budget justification, and the qualifications of the project team and organizational capacity, receive substantial but slightly lower weights (10 points each). These elements ensure the proposal is well-grounded, financially sound, and managed by competent personnel and institutions.

No.	Evaluation Criteria	Description	Max Points
1	Problem analysis	The problem is clearly articulated and supported by evidence	10
2	Proposed solutions	Solutions must directly and fully respond to the identified problems, be technically appropriate and feasible within the fragile Sudanese context and demonstrate sustainability (demand)	15
3	Expected Impact	Clarity and measurability of the intended impact in at least some of the following areas: increased agricultural production and productivity; improved food and nutrition security; employment generation; and enhanced incomes and livelihoods of smallholder farming community members, including women, men, youth, children, and other vulnerable groups.	15

4	Risk Management & Assumptions	Quality of risk identification across key dimensions; including conflict, access, markets, and environmental factors; and the clarity, and practicality of the proposed mitigation strategies	15
5	Sustainability & Scaling	Realistic and clear plans for continuation or expansion beyond the project implementation period	15
6	Budget Justification	The budget should be clear, complete, and realistic in relation to the proposed activities and local context, avoiding significant over and under costing	10
7	Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	The plan should clearly outline how project activities will be executed, monitored, and evaluated. It must include roles, timelines, resources, measurable indicators, and methods for tracking progress and addressing challenges. It should also explain how findings will inform project improvements	10
8	Organizational and team capacity	Strength of lead applicant in terms of track record, presence in Sudan and overall implementation capacity. The added value of the consortium members, if applicable. Assessment of the qualifications and relevant experiences of proposed team members, based on submitted CVs, ensuring alignment with their assigned roles and responsibilities	10

IFC Decision Outcome Based on Total Score

The IFC will share its decisions within 15 working days for a batch of 3 to 5 proposals as follows:

Score Range (Points)	Interpretation	Evaluation Outcome
85 –100	Excellent: fully meets or exceeds all requirements	Recommended for funding
75 – 84	Very good: strong response with minor gaps in meeting requirements	Conditionally recommended – minor revisions needed
65 – 74	Good: meets most requirements but with some major gaps	Conditionally recommended – major revisions needed
Below 65	Weak: fails to meet key requirements	Proposal rejected, appeal allowed, see step 7

Step 7: Final Decision, Appeal, Contracting and Public Disclosure

The MetaMeta CF Management Team, together with ZOA, carefully consolidate the reviews and recommendations from the IFC to finalize funding decisions. In cases where there are significant differences in scoring or recommendations among IFC members, the SPLG-SC will be convened to make a definitive and final decision.

Once the final funding decisions have been made, the CF Management Team formally notifies all applicants of the outcomes. Successful applicants will then move forward to contract signing, which will be managed by ZOA as the lead partner. A small signing ceremony may be organized to mark the occasion and celebrate the new partnerships.

Applicants whose proposals are not approved may submit a formal written appeal within 10 working days of receiving the decision notification. The appeal must clearly outline the grounds for the complaint and include any relevant supporting information. The MM PL and CF Manager will compile and forward all appeals to the SIPRA PM, who will coordinate a thorough review by the SPLG-SC. Decisions made at this stage are final.

To promote transparency and accountability, ZOA will publish a summary of the final funded proposals. This public disclosure will include the names of the selected applicants, the titles or themes of the approved projects, grant amounts awarded, and the regions or sectors in which the projects will operate. This information will be made available on ZOA's official website and may also be shared by the EKN, the programme's donor. This step ensures that third parties can verify the integrity and fairness of the evaluation process and the resulting funding decisions.

Step 8: Disbursement, Administrative Onboarding and Alignment with ZOA Systems

- Following contract signing, ZOA will initiate the disbursement process in accordance with its financial management systems, based on the approved budget, co-funding arrangements, and project timelines,
- All administrative and financial procedures, including reporting formats, fund release schedules, and procurement guidelines, will be guided by ZOA's established compliance and accountability frameworks and will be tailored, where necessary, to fit the specific context and needs of each project,
- Applicants will be oriented on these systems as part of the post-contract onboarding process,
- As part of this onboarding, applicants will finalize their IMEP, aligning it with ZOA's MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning) standards and tools. This IMEP will serve as the basis for ongoing reporting, adaptive management, and performance tracking throughout the project lifecycle.

Annex 1: Challenge Fund – Large Grant Proposal Template

1. Generic Project Information

<i>Field</i>	<i>Details / Instructions</i>		
Project title	Should concisely communicate the focus of the project		
Project location (village, locality, state)	Brief description; location map may be added as annex		
Budget summary Grant amount requested: Applicants requesting above €100,000 must consult the SIPRA team in advance to confirm eligibility and provide a clear justification prior to submission. If the SIPRA team decides to consider such proposals, the applicant will be asked to share a 2-pager clearly stating the problems, solutions, and impacts and the detailed budget with justifications for why a higher amount is needed	Description	Amount (€)	Remarks
	Total project cost <i>(this is the grand total of your detailed budget breakdown)</i>		
	Co-funding (Applicant contribution) - see section '12' below for guidance		
	Grant amount requested <i>(Should be within allowed range (€20,000 to €100,000))</i>		

2. Information About the Applicant

<i>Field</i>	<i>Details / Instructions</i>
Name of your organization (lead applicant)	
Name(s) of the consortium partner organizations (if any)	Note: The lead applicant is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the co-funding is made available, all project activities and deliverables are implemented on time, meet agreed-upon quality standards, and remain within the approved budget. While roles and responsibilities of consortium partners should be briefly described here, it is important to note that the lead applicant holds full accountability for the overall coordination and successful execution of the project. If the proposal advances to the detailed technical review phase, the lead applicant will be required to submit a formal consortium agreement outlining the specific roles, responsibilities, and contributions of each partner
Year of your organization's establishment (lead applicant)	
Registration number or attach legal certificate of registration (lead applicant)	
Bank account information of lead applicant in Euros or USD	

<p>Which of these sector(s) best describe your activities? Tick as many as are relevant</p>	<p>Lead applicant</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Commercial (mechanized) Agriculture</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Equipment and Installations</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Food processing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Aggregation and warehousing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure and construction</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Input supplies</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Branding and Packaging</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Market Standards and Specifications</p> <p>Others, please describe: _____</p> <p>Consortium partners</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Commercial (mechanized) Agriculture</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Equipment and Installations</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Food processing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Aggregation and warehousing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure and construction</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Input supplies</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Branding and Packaging</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Market Standards and Specifications</p> <p>Others, describe ____</p>
<p>Farming system profile (lead applicant)</p>	<p>Note: only relevant in case the Farmer Network is the lead applicant: describe cultivable area (size in hectares, under lease, individual ownership, group or communal ownership), season crops and their respective yields, farming practices such as intercropping cereal and leguminous crops, relay cropping or intensive agriculture, etc. (Maximum 200 words)</p>
<p>Relevant experience (lead applicant)</p>	<p>Describe your organization's experience related to the proposed project focus. Highlight any relevant projects, partnerships, or achievements that demonstrate your capacity to deliver on this project. (Maximum 300 words)</p>

3. Vision and Mission Statement

<p>What does your organization (lead applicant) want to achieve in the next two years, and how? What are your organization's long-term ambitions? (maximum 200 words)</p>

4. Organizational Business Sustainability

<p>Describe how your organization currently operates to generate revenue, deliver value to stakeholders (e.g., farmers, buyers, communities, partners), and sustain its activities. Include your cost structure, key customers or beneficiaries, and sources of income or funding and financial management system (Maximum 300 words)</p>

5. Problem Statement

To begin, please describe the key challenges your organization faces that directly affect your work in the relevant SIPRA value chains:

- Rainfed cereal, legume, and nutrition-rich crop production,
- Livestock, poultry, fisheries, and horticulture,
- Agricultural inputs and services,
- Agro-processing and post-harvest management,
- Market linkages and access to finance.

Then, clearly explain:

- The specific problems and the context in which they arise, including challenges related to climate variability and resilience,
- Why addressing these problems is critical for your organization, your agribusiness partners, and your beneficiaries (Smallholder farmers, women, men, youth, Internally Displaced Persons, IDPs, and Persons with Disabilities, PWDs),
- How these challenges impact agricultural productivity, food security, climate resilience, market functionality, and livelihoods.

If applying as a consortium, please describe any unique challenges faced by your partner organizations relevant to the project. (Maximum 300 words).

6. Proposed Solutions

Building on the challenges identified above, please explain the specific activities and strategies your organization plans to implement using the requested grant to address these issues. Focus on key interventions such as:

- Promoting adoption of improved inputs, sustainable farming, and climate-resilient agricultural practices
- Strengthening input supply chains, agro-processing, and post-harvest management
- Enhancing market access, infrastructure, and facilitating access to finance
- Fostering private sector partnerships and entrepreneurial capacity building

Describe your approach, key steps, and any innovative tools, technologies, or best practices you will apply, particularly those that enhance climate resilience. Highlight how your solution builds on existing experience or work.

For consortium applications, specify each partner's roles, responsibilities, and how coordination will be managed to ensure effective delivery of the solution.

Also, describe how your partners will collaborate to ensure effective and coordinated delivery of these solutions. (Maximum 300 words).

7. Expected Benefits

Based on the solutions proposed, please outline the concrete benefits and positive impacts your project will deliver to smallholder farmers – including women, men, youth, IDPs, and PWDs – in alignment with SIPRA’s objectives. These may include:

- Increased agricultural production and productivity through improved inputs, sustainable and climate-resilient farming practices, and value addition
- Enhanced food and nutrition security by improving access to diverse, nutritious foods and nutrition awareness
- Strengthened climate resilience through water conservation, soil fertility management, drought-tolerant crops, and agroforestry
- Revitalized local markets and economies through better market linkages, infrastructure, and private sector engagement
- Sustainable income growth and livelihood diversification through inclusive agribusiness development and entrepreneurial capacity building

Additionally, describe expected benefits for your organization and any consortium partners, such as improved business sustainability, diversified revenue streams, stronger partnerships, and enhanced capacity to deliver lasting impact. (Maximum 300 words).

8. Target Beneficiary Information

The table below summarizes the varied categories of beneficiaries and the respective expected benefits. This information will be verified through the Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) developed by applicants in line with ZOA’s proven and effective approaches and practices.

Please estimate how many people will benefit from your proposed intervention. Disaggregate the total number of beneficiaries by gender, age, and vulnerable groups – including women, men, youth, children, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

How many people will benefit from your proposed intervention?	Total number of Beneficiaries	Women	Men	IDPs	PWDs	Children up to 15 years	Youth (ages 15 to 30)	
							Boys	Girls
Please disaggregate the targeted number of beneficiaries								
Describe briefly what will be the specific benefits to each of the target beneficiary groups (max. 300 words)								

9. Assumptions, Risks and Mitigation Measures

Assumptions (100 to 200 words):

Briefly describe the key conditions that must be in place for your proposed solution to succeed. These may include adoption of climate-smart agriculture practices (e.g., composting, organic manure use), functioning of the cooperative smallholder groups, availability of relevant skills, timely release of project funds, accessible project sites, no bureaucratic obstacles, support from local stakeholders, etc. The listed items are illustrative – please specify the assumptions relevant to your *intervention*.

Risks and Mitigation Measures (200 to 300 words):

Identify the major risks that could hinder implementation, such as climate change and variability (e.g., droughts, floods), pest and disease outbreaks, limited technology uptake, supply chain disruptions, political instability, or financial delays. For each risk, outline realistic mitigation strategies, such as deploying drought-tolerant crops, delivering targeted training, engaging stakeholders, strengthening input and market systems, or adjusting implementation timelines.

10. Project Business Sustainability

Explain your plans after this investment to maintain, replicate and/or scale up the proposed solutions and benefits (300 words)

11. Detailed Schedule of Activities

This should cover implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and documentation activities until the currently set end of the SIPRA program, which is August 2026 as well as the expected extension duration, August 2028.

Activity description	2025	2026	2027	August 2028
	Divide this into relevant monthly intervals	Divide this into relevant monthly intervals	Divide this into relevant monthly intervals	Divide this into relevant monthly intervals
1.				

12. Project Budget and Co-Funding

All applicants must complete the budget table below. Co-funding is a mandatory requirement, and proposals *will not be considered* without meeting the specified co-funding thresholds. Co-funding can be in cash, in-kind, or a mix, depending on project size.

Budget and Co-Funding Breakdown in Euros

Budget Category	% of Total Budget	Total Amount (a)	Applicant Co-Funding – see requirements below (b)	Requested Grant (a-b)	Example Items
1. Staff and Personnel	20%				Project manager, technical and field staff, facilitators
2. Investments	45%				Agricultural equipment, storage

					facilities, processing machinery
3. Operational Costs	15%				Training, logistics, transport, utilities
4. Monitoring, Evaluation, Documentation	5%				Field visits, data collection, reporting
5. Formulating Upscaling Plans	5%				Stakeholder consultations, strategy design
6. Contingency	10%				Inflation and unforeseen costs
TOTAL	100%				

Co-Funding Requirements in Euros

Grant size (€)	Co-Funding rate (%)	Co-Funding Amount (€)	Cash Requirement (Minimum % of Co-Funding)
20,000 – 40,000	10%	2,000 – 4,000	5%
41,000 – 80,000	15%	6,150 – 12,000	20%
81,000 – 100,000	25%	20,250 – 25,000	25%
100,001 – 150,000	30%	30,000 – 45,000	30%
150,001 – 200,000	35%	52,500 – 70,000	40%
200,001 – 250,000	40%	80,000 – 100,000	45%
Over 250,000	50%	125,000+	50%

Important Notes on Project Budget and Co-Funding

Budget deviations during proposal review:

- Applicants are expected to adhere strictly to the budget structure and co-funding requirements,
- Any major deviation from the budget categories or co-funding structure must be pre-approved during the review process and fully justified in the proposal.

Budget deviations after contracting (during Implementation):

- Once the project is approved and under contract, budget deviations of up to $\pm 10\%$ per category are permitted without prior approval,
- Any changes exceeding $\pm 10\%$ during implementation must be discussed and agreed upon in writing with ZOA, the contracting party.

The tiered co-funding system balances flexibility and accountability:

- Lower-budget projects allow more in-kind support to accommodate applicants with limited cash resources,
- Higher-budget projects require stronger cash contributions to ensure financial commitment and long-term sustainability,
- The approach is designed for fragile contexts such as Sudan, where liquidity may be constrained, while aligning with global best practices in CF management,
- Applicants must submit evidence of financial capacity (e.g. a recent bank statement) to confirm their ability to provide the required co-funding. This is part of the mandatory list of required documents (see section 13),

- Co-funding must be clearly itemized in the budget and reported quarterly once the project is active,
- Proposals that pass the internal review stage will be required to submit a detailed Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation Plan (IMEP) showing how co-funding will be tracked and reported,
- Approved projects will adhere to ZOA procurement and financial management system for both the co-funding and grant budget management.

13. Supporting documents to be attached to this proposal

Document	Required from	Joined to this proposal
Company registration number or certificate	All applicants	<input type="checkbox"/>
Audited financial statements (last two years) <i>Note: Pre-April 2023 statements are acceptable if conflict disrupted operations</i>	Required for all large institutions; SMEs and Farmer Producer or Network associations may submit internal financial records instead of audited statements – this will be checked against bank accounts or equivalent amount in assets – will be further verified through field inspection	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proof of Zakat (2.5% charitable obligation for Muslims)	All Sudanese institutions, whether lead applicants or contributing partners*	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence of financial capital (bank statement) to meet the required co-funding contribution. See Proposal Template, Point 12, for budget-based co-funding thresholds	All applicants, Farmer Producers or Networks may present assets with equivalent amounts	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bank account details in the requested currency	All applicants	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Should your institution be exempted from financial audits or Zakat payment, please explain why and submit supportive documents.*

14. Affiliation Disclosure and Conflict of Interest Disclaimers

- Affiliation Disclosure:** I declare that no individual, organization, or entity involved in the grant application is directly or indirectly affiliated with any party to an active conflict, nor are they subject to any national, regional, or international prohibitions. Applicants agree to undergo necessary background, and compliance checks to verify this status. They are required to promptly disclose any changes to this status throughout the duration of the grant lifecycle. Non-compliance may result in the suspension or termination of grant funding and repayment of allocated funds.

Conflict of Interest: I understand that I must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest related to the grant application. This includes any personal, professional, or financial relationships with members of the grant management team, implementing partners, or decision-making bodies. Failure to disclose such information may result in disqualification, withdrawal of funding, or other appropriate measures. All applicants are expected to uphold the highest standards of integrity and impartiality throughout the application and implementation process.

15. Contact Details and Signature of the Lead Applicant

Name	
Function/position	
Address (village, locality, state)	
E-mail (if available)	
Telephone	
Date and signature	

16. Contact Details and Signature of the Consortium Partners, if Applicable

Name	
Function/position	
Address (village, locality, state)	
E-mail (if available)	
Telephone	
Date and signature	