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ECREEE
Towards Sustainable Energy



IDRC • CRDI

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Application guidelines

**Grants for Women Entrepreneurs in Energy
sector (WEE)**

WOCEWA Grants

Table of Contents

Call Summary	3
Introduction.....	4
Background.....	4
WOCEWA Grants	5
Eligibility Activities.....	6
Eligibility Applicants	7
Geographic scope.....	7
WOCEWA Grants Financing	7
Eligibility criteria.....	9
Evaluation criteria.....	10
Submission of the objective.....	11
Application Review Process	11
Reservations.....	13
Contract Negotiation.....	13
Validity.....	13
Closing date	13
Addition Information	13
Corruption or fraudulent Practices.....	13

ANNEX A: Selection Criteria

ANNEX B: Minimum criteria for Conducting a Gender Impact Assessment

ANNEX C: Minimum Criteria for an awareness and communication strategy

Call Summary

All applications need to demonstrate a clear need and additionality for WOCEWA Grants

Call for Proposals Main studies	Biofuels liquid, Biogas, Cookstoves, Energy efficiency, Geothermal, Hydropower, Solar PV, Solar thermal, Solid biomass, Waste to energy, Wind power, other RE/EE technology or a combination of the previous, including energy storage projects.
Indicative Timeline	Call opening: 20 th December 2024 at 12pm UTC-1 Call closing: 20 th February 2025 at 11:59pm UTC-1 Final Decision: April 2025 Contracting period: May-June Project implementation: Maximum 24 months
Introduction	The WOCEWA Grants is launching an open, competitive Call for Proposals for women led SMEs, with a particular focus on clean energy and gender. Women entrepreneurs are invited to submit applications for early stage off-grid and on-grid clean energy projects in active development phase in West Africa. Projects will be evaluated based on Concept Innovation, Development Impact, and Business Model & Financial Sustainability.
Total WOCEWA funding allocated to this call	40,000 USD
Geographic Scope	Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo
Duration of the project	24 months
Who can Apply	Women and Community-based groups and associations (including youth organizations), Entrepreneurs/private sector, social enterprises, SMEs, and Start-ups
Eligibility requirements	See Application form
Evaluation criteria	Concept innovation, Business Model and Financial Sustainability, Development impact, Applicant Fitness
Online application	applications must be written and submitted using the online application platform, available at www.ecreee.org

1) Introduction

The ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE), with the support of the International Research Development Center (IRDC) is calling for the Women of Clean Energy in West Africa (WOCEWA) grants for women entrepreneurs in energy sector. This grant will provide financial support to upscale the deployment of projects with a particular focus on renewable energy and energy efficiency that simultaneously promote gender equality and improve energy access in the ECOWAS region.

Women entrepreneurs are invited to submit their applications for developing renewable energy technologies and distributing clean energy solutions in West Africa. Projects will be evaluated based on Concept Innovation, Development Impact, and Business Model & Financial Sustainability.

All applications need to demonstrate a clear need and additionality for WOCEWA grants.

2) Background

Lack of access to clean and modern forms of energy is affecting the ECOWAS region's economic growth and development. Over half of the population do not have access to electricity and access to modern fuels is even lower. Low energy access rates is especially affecting rural areas, where 60% of the population lives and 11 out of the 15 countries in the ECOWAS region are classified as Least Developed countries (LDCs) and Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPCs).

Energy access is clearly a necessity for the region if it is to eradicate poverty and achieve the desired level of economic growth and development. To achieve this, however, developing and mobilizing the necessary human capital; attracting and building up financial capital; creating investment opportunities for ECOWAS entrepreneurs and investors, and establishing an enabling environment for inclusive dialogue, are conditions that have been identified in regional and national forums.

However, it is important to note that addressing causes of inequalities that have led to an unlevelled playing field for the region's male and female population to participate in and benefit from energy development in the region is a prerequisite for the achievement of these conditions.

In ECOWAS countries, barriers and challenges that limit women's access to the same opportunities and resources, as well as participation in decision making processes that lead to improvements in energy access, as men, remain rampant. The result is that women miss valuable opportunities for contributing to addressing the region's energy crises, and without their representation and input, programmes and projects which are designed and implemented for them do not comprehensively meet the needs of women, the beneficiaries of these interventions.

It is against this background that the WOCEWA grants work to contribute to the region's agenda for universal access to clean and modern forms of energy, by supporting women and men to move from being mere beneficiaries to contributing actively in addressing the energy challenges in the region.

The objectives of the Grant are hinged on the fact that the issue of energy access and that of gender equality are tightly linked to many aspects of society. Energy access has been demonstrated to improve gender equality, notably through releasing female domestic labor for market work and carrying gender empowerment messages via media. Conversely, gender equality has been demonstrated to improve energy access, through inclusive energy programme design. Thus, tackling energy access through the lens of gender equality has the potential of supporting national and regional development in a way that breaks the cycle of energy poverty.

The WOCEWA Grants will fund Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) of USD 40 000

3) WOCEWA grants

The WOCEWA Grants will fund Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) under the ECOWAS Programme on Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access (ECOW-GEN), with the objective of promoting gender-responsive investments and business development. The aim of the grant is to support Women led SMEs who need small grant funding for their businesses. Specifically, the grant will aim to subsidize the costs of borrowing from commercial/regional banks.

ECOW-GEN has done this before through ECOW-GEN Facility's components:

- ECOWAS Women's Business Fund.
- Women's Technical Exchange program.
- Women's Economic Empowerment through Energy for Productive Uses.

However, this grant aims to reduce barriers and supporting more women into these sectors will:

- improve outcomes for women led business in energy sector.
- help SMEs be fair and more inclusive.
- address skills shortages in energy sector.
- boost women led business performance in energy sector.

Thus, the Grant will focus on contributing towards technology development and transfer; knowledge and skills acquisition; and establishment of sustainable energy businesses.

4) Eligibility Activities

Financial support of up to **\$40,000** will be allocated to the funded beneficiaries. Women entrepreneurs should be their activities in **renewable energy** and **efficiency energy**. These actions must fall within one or several of the following three categories:

Category A: Investment

This category covers the implementation, acquisition, purchase, and/or installation of new software, hardware, equipment, or other technologies, development of new technologies. Some examples include:

- Contributions to the installation of renewable energy systems such as solar panels, wind turbines, invertors, storage systems, power and charging for EV or any other relevant equipment.
- The implementation of energy optimization / management software on a production line.
- Development of new technology in clean cooking by efficient cookstoves by biogas, briquettes, bioethanol.

Category B: Consultancy

This category covers advisory & consultancy services related to the promoting of renewable energy. Also, the identification and implementation of energy efficiency improvements, as well as energy audits.

- Support SMEs led by women in the energy sector and define a detailed investment, a roadmap to improve their performance.
- Carry out a technical consultation to identify areas of improvement in renewable energy, energy efficiency and technologies adapted to the market.
- Carry out a technical consultation for gender integration in SMEs, private and public sector.

Category C: Skills & Training

This category covers access to training, courses, classes, and programs for education and upskilling of employees in gender and energy topics. Some specific examples include:

- Training for employees on best practices, awareness, regulatory aspects, and behavioral change related to gender mainstreaming in the energy sector.
- training in specialized areas ranging from business development to technology fabrication and/or application.
- Training to help WSMEs in producing audit statements, developing cash flow forecasts, technical studies.

5) Eligible Applicants

The following entities will be eligible:

- Women and Community-based groups and associations (including youth organizations);
- Entrepreneurs/private sector
- Social enterprises
- Small and Medium Enterprises
- Start-ups

A Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) is a category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. It consists of enterprises that employ fewer than 250 persons and have either an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million. A full definition is provided in Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC¹. This category includes start-ups.

The industrial end-user could be an SMEs or Large Company. It is important that the solution is applied in a real industrial environment. Test areas or simulated environment will not be considered as industrial applications.

6) Geographic Scope

The project must be implemented in at least one of the ECOWAS Member States.

7) WOCEWA Grants Financing

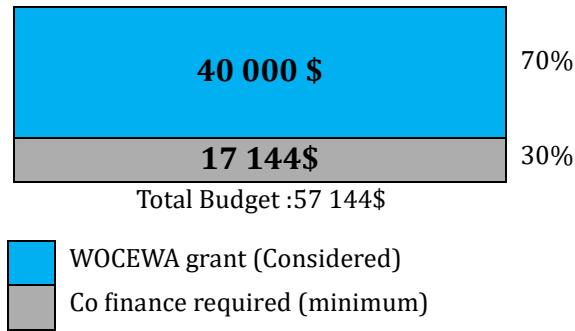
Under this call WOCEWA financing takes the form of grants of 40,000 USD value. Requests outside this value are eligible.

Meaningful co-financing participation in the total project budget is a minimum eligibility criterion to demonstrate credible ownership and risk sharing. Co-financing can be in the form of equity, loans, credit facilities or grants and is required to be in place and verified prior to disbursement of WOCEWA financing. SMEs requesting financing must be able to mobilize at least 30% co-financing as a share of the total project budget.

Higher levels of co-financing are encouraged with particular emphasis on own financing (“skin in the game”) by the applicant PME and will be given additional consideration in the evaluation phase if deemed credible and feasible. Indication on sources and types of co-financing is required at the application stage. Costs and expenditures incurred prior to WOCEWA financing are not eligible for consideration. In-kind co-financing is not considered eligible.

¹ Commission Recommendation of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium sized enterprises (2003/361/EC), OJ L 124, 20.5.2003, p. 36.

Example: Application for WOCEWA funding



The financing plan of the proposed project shall identify how the total budget is covered in terms of: a) funding sources, b) types of finance, and c) the status of readiness for each finance component (verified/available, being negotiated, date of expected commitment, applied or other). The availability/commitment of the minimum share of co-financing needs to be clearly addressed in the application.

Applicants will have to provide in their applications a detailed explanation of the activities to be implemented and the results to be achieved by the implementation of each activity. Costs must be recorded in the beneficiary's accounts. They should be identifiable and verifiable and be backed up by the original supporting documents. The contribution of the beneficiary is a mandatory prerequisite to a Project's approval.

The Dollars should be used in project application and reporting.

Only "eligible costs" will be considered in the calculation of grants. The eligible costs to be included in the budget are the following:

- Purchase of energy equipment and technologies
- Workshops, awareness, and sensitization activities
- Development of communication materials
- Personnel cost
- Travel and subsistence.
- Services
- Assessments and analysis
- Evaluation and audit

The following costs are not eligible:

- Purchase of electronic appliances
- Items already financed in another framework
- Purchase of land or buildings
- Tax

8) Eligibility Criteria

Each application will undergo a further screening to assess suitability in terms of the WOCEWA Grant objectives. All applications will be subjected to the following criteria which must be met:

a) Sector or Strategic Fit:

Project is within the priority areas considered by the WOCEWA Grant.

b) Development Impact:

The project improves the quality of life of the local population and which takes into account the following 7 SDGs :



Applicants should present a clear narrative detailing how the project supports the SDGs, with particular focus on: No Poverty (SDG 1); zero hunger (SDG 2) Gender Equality (SDG 5); Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7); Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8). Indication of contributions to other SDGs are also valued and should be demonstrated in the application.

c) regional priority:

The authorities (e.g. government Ministries, traditional leaders, etc.) are aware and in support of the project as contributing to the country's development goals and agenda.

d) Institutional Capacity

The project should currently have capacity or should have credible plans to add capacity towards management and project implementation.

Project Priority Criteria

It is important to note that applications will also be prioritized against certain additional priority criteria, namely:

1. Project must demonstrate that the grant will be additional in contributing to women's economic empowerment by enhancing employment and self-employment opportunities for women, especially those living below the poverty line.
2. Project should be market oriented, producing services for rural and urban markets and should support the development of the local labour market and improved opportunities for employment and skills development.

3. Projects must include a component with a strategy on public education/awareness raising, targeting the general population (men, women, and youth), about the social value of women's economic empowerment and gender equality.
4. Project proposals should describe a sustainability strategy which will ensure that the project continues to deliver benefits of poverty eradication and women's empowerment even after the grant.
5. Project proposals should include components on promoting lasting results to women's entrepreneurship development through the inclusion of actions for improving functional literacy and vocational training programmes.
6. Project proposals should demonstrate how the community will be involved from the inception to the final implementation of the project, particularly the role men will play in the project's activities. Emphasis should be placed on demonstrating how the project benefits the whole community.
7. Proposal should demonstrate practical, immediate results that the project will offer in the short term, e.g. increase in income or greater availability of resources.
8. Proposals should show how the approaches and activities developed in the project are adapted to the needs of the beneficiaries, particularly women.
9. A significant proportion of the heat or electricity generated from renewable energy and efficiency energy technology must be dedicated to income generating activities.
10. Projects for 'women's economic empowerment through energy for productive uses' are projects that lead to an increase in women's income levels and decision-making capacity.
11. The project should have a clear management structure, including structures for the operation and maintenance of the renewable energy installation.
12. The project should be able to be viewed and visited by others so that it acts as a true demonstration project.
13. Projects must satisfy environmental requirements and should not infringe on nature reserves.

9) Evaluation Criteria

Proposals which fulfil the eligibility and selection criteria indicated above will be assessed according to the evaluation criteria contained in Annex A.

10) Submission of the application

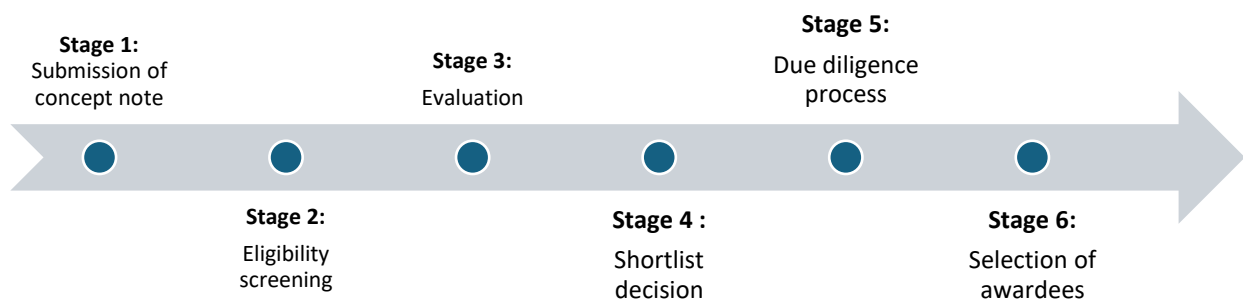
To be eligible for consideration, the application must be submitted using the prescribed application form available at www.ecreee.org . This will be operational on 20th December 2024 at 12pm UTC-1.

At the point of application, applicants need to ensure the following (where applicable):
Registered legal entity or identifiable natural persons (evidence to be attached)

- Established bank account at a registered ECOWAS Region financial institution (evidence to be attached)
- Tax clearance certificate (evidence to be attached)
- No adverse audit findings or disclaimer of audit opinion in last 2 years
- Not barred from participating in government procurement
- Not credit blacklisted through a default judgment or an un-rehabilitated insolvent.

11) Application Review Process

ECREEE as fund manager will receive all project applications through the online application process and together with the proposal review committee will review the projects along the criteria set out in the Annexes and will present a report for consideration to the Steering Committee. In brief the process described below will be followed by the ECREEE:



Stage 1: Submission of Concept notes

All submitted Concept Notes must be written and submitted using the online application platform, available at www.ecreee.org. The application window opens on **December 20th, 2024, at 12:00pm UTC-1**.

The application form consists of specific questions for applicants to present the identified issue they plan to address, and proposed activities. The application form will also include eligibility questions. For further guidance on the online application form, please refer to template for project proposal, annex D

Language

The application system as well as forms and guidelines, are available in English, French and Portuguese. Applicants can submit their Concept Notes in English, French or Portuguese. Handwritten documents will not be accepted.

Stage 2: Eligibility Screening

Applicants will undergo an initial eligibility screening to ensure they comply with the eligibility criteria of the call for proposals.

The eligibility screening will be performed based on the application form and the supporting. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the narrative included by the applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the application. The proposals will be received and reviewed by ECREEE.

Stage 3: Evaluation

Up to 25% of select Concept notes will be evaluated by Proposal Review Committee against the eligibility criteria and checked to ensure that the documents are complete, and that all necessary information is included. Eligible and complete applications will either be approved for due diligence or rejected by the Steering Committee. Applicants are updated on the outcome of the process.

Stage 4: Shortlist decision

Up to 9 applications will be longlisted for review and scoring by the ECREEE Evaluation Committee based on the evaluation criteria.

Stage 5: Due diligence process

Finalists will be asked to participate in a due diligence process which requires the applicant. An appraisal report will be prepared by the fund manager for final recommendation to the ECREEE Steering Committee to make grant funding available. With no exception, the final selection is conditional on a successful due diligence process. Based on source of funds, additional requirements for applicants will be communicated during the due diligence process.

During the due diligence stage:

- Administrative, operational and financial capacity of the selected finalist is assessed.
- Environmental and social management system assessments are assessed and finalised;
- Detailed review and final negotiation of the proposal, budget, logframe, and activity plan is performed; and
- Compliance with all administrative requirements is verified.

Stage 6: Selection of awardees

Award decision: Based on the technical evaluation and the successful completion of the due diligence process, WOCEWA Grants Steering Committee will select the winners for funding. All decisions will be final.

Communication of results: All applicants will be informed in writing via email, about the results of the evaluation of their proposals.

12) Reservations

The WOCEWA Grants Steering Committee expressly reserves the following rights:

- a) To reject all or any proposals.
- b) To waive any or all irregularities in the proposals submitted.
- c) To retain the right not to select any application/s even if meeting all the requirements.

13) Contract Negotiations

The successful applicant/s will be required to enter into a written Grant Facility Agreement with ECREEE.

14) Validity

All applications will be regarded as valid for a period of 12 months from the closing date. ECREEE may upon evaluation request an updated application or open another request for proposals.

15) Closing date

The Request for Proposals opens at **December 20th, 2024, at 12p m UTC-1 and closes on February 20th, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. UTC-1**

Applications must be submitted electronically in the prescribed format.

16) Addition Information

There will be no briefing sessions held. Only enquiries sent to sbangoura@ecowas.int with copy to ikkamara@ecowas.int ; pzidago@ecreee.org ; adeoliveira@ecreee.org et ombacke@ecowas.int. will be responded to. Responses to all enquiries will be published on the dedicate page at www.ecowgen.ecreee.org on a weekly basis.

17) Corrupt or Fraudulent Practices

ECOWAS requires that the applicant/s observe the highest standard of ethics during the procurement and execution of the project/s. See the [ECOWAS Procurement Rules](#) and [ECOWAS Grand Code](#) for information on these ECOWAS' Policies.

ANNEX A: Selection Criteria

SELECTION CRITERIA		
Criteria	Sub-criteria	Weight
Concept innovation	Technical design and tender documents	15
	- Quality of design	10
	- State of preparation of tender documents	5
	Project Presentation	10
	- Outlines of Terms of Reference	5
	- Schedule and Cost	5
	Social studies and public information	5
	- Public acceptance of project	2
	- Strength of Awareness and Communication strategy	3
	Innovation	15
	- Local market adoption	5
	- Viability of the proposed technology in the project operating environment	10
	Risks analysis	5
	- Overall preparedness of project	3
	- Technical risk	2
	Total	50
Business Model and Financial Sustainability	Market and Economic studies	10
	- Market analysis	2
	- Marketing strategy	2
	- Reliability of sales prospects	2
	- Sensitivity of economic benefits	2
	- Strength of economic return	2
	Financial studies	10
	- Readiness of financing plan	4
	- Likelihood of expected revenues	2
	- Strength of overall financial return	2
	- Robustness of business plan	2
	Total	20
Development impact	Gender studies	10
	- Quality of GIA	6
	- Appropriateness of remedial measures	4
	Environment	10
- Indirect and indirect environmental and social impact	4	
- Contribution to inclusive and sustainable green economic growth	3	
- contribute to productive use of clean energy	3	
	Total	20
Applicant Fitness	General capacity	10
	- Previous Experience in similar projects	4
	- Adequacy of Proposal and Implementation personnel	6
	Total	10

Grand total	100
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The proposals which successfully pass the eligibility check are evaluated and scored against 4 criteria: Concept innovation, Impact, Business model and Applicant Fitness.

The rating should use the following scale (out of a total of 10):

Score	Description
7 to 10	The information provided is outstanding in its details, clarity, and coherence, compared to the specific call provisions
4 to 6	The overall information provided is adequate, however, some aspects are unclearly or insufficiently detailed, compared to the specific call provisions
0 to 3	The information provided is considered irrelevant or inadequate compared to the specific call provisions

ANNEX B: Minimum criteria for Conducting a Gender Impact Assessment

A Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) is a vital exercise conducted before the onset of an intervention with the aim to identify the potential impacts of the intervention on its male and female beneficiaries. The goal is to ensure that the impacts are equally felt, and the benefits are equally shared, thus promoting gender equality².

Adherence to the principle of equal participation in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation stages of the project is principal.

The following is recommended:

Define issues and goals

- Identify and define what the project is trying to achieve (this should include the objectives, results and impacts in the near and long-term)
- Identify the inherent issues, such as social norms, perceptions and practices that may pose challenges for the project's benefits being felt and shared equally
- Develop a strategy to achieve equal participation and contribution in defining the project's component's and activities

Data collection and analysis

- Gather gender disaggregated statistics on direct beneficiaries in regards to needs/gaps and challenges
- Consult experts, women and men groups, including youth groups
- Analyses and interpret from different perspectives, with a focus on the perceived needs, challenges and expectations

Develop options

- Determine impact/implications for different groups
- Identify opportunities for the different groups
- Define remedial actions

Communicate (See Annex C for detailed minimum criteria for defining a communication strategy)

- Integrate with development commitments
- Design different strategies
- Use inclusive language

² Gender equality signifies equal access to the "opportunities that allow people to pursue a life of their own choosing and to avoid extreme deprivations in outcomes," including gender equality in rights, resources, and voice. Gender equality does not necessarily mean equal numbers of men and women or boys and girls in all activities, nor does it necessarily mean treating men and women or boys and girls exactly the same. It signifies an aspiration to work towards a society in which neither women nor men suffer from poverty in its many forms, and in which women and men are able to live equally fulfilling lives.

Annex C: Minimum Criteria for an awareness and communication strategy

Objective

The specific objectives of the guideline are to enable project promoters develop an awareness raising and communication strategy that:

- Communicates the existence of the project, its mission and objectives to the direct and indirect beneficiaries.
- Creates public awareness of the issues being addressed and build up public support on the strategies to address these issues.
- Generates the support of decision-makers, beneficiaries, and other key stakeholders.
- Encourages the identified target groups to adopt behaviors intended to be beneficial to them.
- Through participatory approaches, encourages dialogue about specific components of the project during the project formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

The following is recommended:

1. **Have a designation communication expert in the team:** a person with experience in planning and executing awareness raising and communication events should be part of the project team in order to ensure that communication problems are considered at the very early stage and implemented at strategic periods of the project's implementation.
2. **Conduct a communication audit:** identify the main communication channels used in the project location. Channels could include: radio and TV stations, newspapers and magazines, NGOs, places of worship, groups and associations. Also, the communication behavior of the direct beneficiaries should be recorded for monitoring.
 - **Develop a stakeholders list:** identify the likely stakeholders and classify them based on categories of direct and indirect stakeholders, influential and least influential (with regards to the achievement of the project's objectives). Develop a SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunities and threats) analysis based on this categorization.
 - **Develop a baseline:** to track and monitor the effects of the awareness and communication strategy, it is important to develop a baseline of the present situation in regards to attitudes, behaviors and perceptions (this is essentially the level of awareness).
3. **Design a strategy and activities for awareness raising and communication:** the strategy should outline
 - the purpose,

- the channels that would be used (describe how the message would be transmitted and/or how the stakeholders would be informed)
 - methods or formats (the specific approaches selected, e.g. group meetings, posters or handbooks, radio or TV broadcast)
 - output (the number of events or media which would be conducted or produced)
 - message that would be communicated to the stakeholders should be developed.
4. **Establish monitoring and evaluation procedures:** the impact of the awareness and communication activities should be evaluated and reported periodically, to help refine the strategy if necessary. Note that this should be reported according to stakeholders.