



CATALYTIC FUNDING FOR COHERENT NUTRITION ACTION

APPLICATION MANUAL – OCTOBER 2025

INTRODUCTION

This manual provides guidance for UN country teams on applying for catalytic funding to strengthen multi-agency coordination for nutrition at the country level. Catalytic funding acts as a strategic spark and a commitment mechanism, enabling UN entities to move from fragmented efforts to coherent, country-owned nutrition action. It supports the initial stage of a longer-term process, laying the groundwork for sustainable collaboration aligned with national priorities and UN development frameworks.

All information related to the catalytic funding process can be found [here](#), and the website will be continuously updated with the latest guidance, templates, and announcements.

Importantly, catalytic funding is not intended for direct service delivery or technical programmes. Instead, it is designed to unlock new ways of working together and to embed nutrition as a cross-cutting priority within national development agendas. Countries that are not selected for funding will still receive tailored support to strengthen their readiness for future opportunities.

This catalytic funding initiative is made possible through the generous support of Irish Aid, the resource partner for this project. The funding and approach described in this manual are fully aligned with the broader project proposal “UN-Nutrition: Catalyzing Coherent Nutrition Action through Advocacy, Learning and Partnerships”. Irish Aid’s partnership has been instrumental in shaping the strategic direction, eligibility criteria, and implementation modalities for catalytic funding, ensuring coherence with previous phases and other Irish Aid-supported initiatives.

The application process follows a two-stage approach:

- Stage 1: Expression of Interest (EOI): A short submission outlining intent, strategic focus, and added value. **Due December 1, 2025.** [Expression of Interest Form](#)
- Stage 2: Concept Note: A detailed application for selected countries, including activities, timelines, budget, and sustainability measures. **Due December 22, 2025.**

This document provides:

- The purpose and scope of catalytic funding, including eligible countries and funding allocation.
- The two-stage application process, timelines, and assessment criteria for each stage.
- Roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms for endorsing agencies.
- Monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge-sharing expectations to ensure learning and sustainability.
- Content needed for Concept Note submissions (Annex I).

OVERVIEW OF CATALYTIC FUNDING

Catalytic funding is a small financial support to country teams aiming at promoting new and innovative ways of working together to enable countries to embed nutrition as a cross-cutting priority in their national development agendas. It is limited to a six-month igniting phase and is not intended to finance direct service delivery or technical programmes.

Eligible Countries for Catalytic Funding

Eligible countries have been identified based on two criteria: alignment with past and current Irish Aid priority countries. The pool of eligible countries includes Burkina Faso, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Palestine, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Funding Allocation and Duration

Five countries will be selected following the application process and based on the selection criteria described below, each receiving USD 120,000 to implement activities between 1 January and 30 June 2026, or whenever the agreement is finalized. The grant duration will be maximum 6 months.

What Catalytic Funding Supports

Catalytic funding may be used for a broad range of activities that strengthen collaboration, partnership, and coordination, including but not limited to those listed here, provided they contribute to the defined objective:

- **Joint Diagnostics and Analysis:** Coordinated nutrition analyses, diagnostics, and stakeholder/platform mapping to identify gaps, opportunities, and inform joint strategies.
- **Strengthening Coordination Mechanisms:** Establishing or enhancing national and sub-national nutrition coordination platforms, multi-stakeholder partnerships, joint planning sessions, and governance structures.
- **Collaborative Planning and Policy Support:** Facilitating workshops and dialogues to co-design joint strategies and programmes aligned with government priorities and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs).

- **Capacity Building and Peer Learning:** Strengthening the skills of government staff, UN agency personnel, and partners through training, mentoring, and exchanges that foster peer-to-peer learning and south-south cooperation.
- **Advocacy and Resource Mobilization:** Designing and piloting joint advocacy initiatives, developing investment cases, and mobilizing innovative domestic and external resources for nutrition.

Knowledge Management and Adaptive Learning activities are mandatory. This can include capturing, sharing, and applying lessons and insights through monitoring and evaluation, case studies, and knowledge products that inform national practice and global learning. Activities should demonstrate how experiences from catalytic funding can contribute to global change and learning.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process for catalytic funding is designed to be transparent, collaborative, and aligned with UN-Nutrition's strategic priorities. Country teams are expected to work jointly across agencies in preparing the expressions of interest and, if requested, their full Concept Notes, both agreed by at least two UN agencies and the Resident Coordinator Office.

The expression of interest provides an initial outline of intent and strategic direction, while the Concept Note offers a detailed plan of activities, timelines, budget, and sustainability measures. Following a technical review, only five countries will be invited to develop a full Concept Note, with technical support provided during this stage.

Countries not selected to develop a full Concept Note will receive tailored support to strengthen readiness for future opportunities. This phased approach as shown in the table below ensures that applications are robust, context-specific, and reflect genuine multi-agency commitment, paving the way for effective catalytic investment in nutrition coordination.

PHASE	DATES	KEY ACTIONS
Application Package Dissemination	20 Nov. 2025	Application materials made available to country teams
Development Expression of Interest	20 Nov. – 1 Dec. 2025	Country teams will draft expressions of interests (EOI).
Submission Deadline Expression of Interest	1 Dec. 2025	Final Expressions of interest will be submitted to the Secretariat through an online form.
Review and Scoring	1 – 8 Dec. 2025	UN-Nutrition and selected Steering Committee members conduct technical review and scoring
Selected countries invited to submit concept note	8 – 9 Dec. 2025	Selected countries will be notified, feedback shared and invited for full concept note development.
Development Concept Notes	9 – 22 Dec. 2025	Full concept notes under development (see template in Annex II); technical support will be provided by the Secretariat as needed
Submission Concept note	22 Dec. 2025	Final Concept note submission through an online form
Review and feedback concept note	22 Dec. 2025 – 5 Jan. 2026	UN-Nutrition conducts technical review and offers inputs for improvement, if needed
Feedback shared	5 Jan. 2026	UN-Nutrition shares consolidated feedback on the concept notes with country teams.
Concept notes are finalized	12 Jan. 2026	Country teams receive and incorporate feedback and finalize concept notes in collaboration with UN-Nutrition Secretariat
Grant Disbursement & Project Launch	15 Jan. 2026	Launch Catalytic funding projects, activity implementation starts

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST AND CONCEPT NOTE REQUIREMENTS

The [EOI Form – UNN Catalytic Funding 2026](#) provides the detailed outline of the Expression of Interest. Submission of the expression of interest will be done using the online form due **December 1, 2025**.

After review of the EOI's, five countries will be selected and invited to develop a **concept note**, which will be due by **December 22, 2025**. To support this process, Annex I provides an overview of the content needed for the concept note. Preparing according to this guidance ensures that concept notes are clear, concise, aligned with the objectives of the catalytic funding, and manageable for review within the timeline.

SELECTION CRITERIA, AND REVIEW PROCESS

Expression of interests and concept notes for catalytic funding will be evaluated against a set of key criteria to ensure they are strategic, feasible, and have the potential for lasting impact. Reviewers will assess each expression of interest against the following criteria:

- **Strategic Intent and Alignment:** Does the EOI clearly articulate why catalytic funding is needed and how it aligns with national priorities and UN system coherence?
- **Focus Areas and Added Value:** Are the proposed focus areas relevant and likely to strengthen multi-agency collaboration? Does the EOI explain how the approach adds value beyond routine coordination?
- **Multi-Agency Commitment:** Is their agreement from at least two UN agencies and the Resident Coordinator Office?
- **Agreement from the government:** Does the project falls within the already agreed on agreement with the government, or will this need to be approved before project implementation?
- **Sustainability Orientation:** Does the EOI indicate how initial efforts could lead to sustained coordination beyond the funding period?

Reviewers will assess each Concept Note against the following criteria and give concrete recommendations/feedback on how this can be strengthened.

- **Alignment with National Priorities and UN System Coherence:** Clearly link to national nutrition strategies, policies, and broader development frameworks, while promoting coordinated UN system engagement.

- Potential for Catalytic Effect and Systemic Impact: Funding should spark innovation, strengthen coordination mechanisms, or initiate approaches with lasting, system-wide improvements in nutrition governance.
- Feasibility within the Six-Month Timeframe: Activities must be realistic and achievable within the defined period, with a clear timeline, milestones, and practical implementation plan.
- Strength of Multi-Agency Collaboration and Buy-In: Demonstrate meaningful engagement and agreement from at least two UN agencies, with clearly defined roles and joint ownership.
- Robust Knowledge Management and Adaptive Learning Plan: Include mechanisms for documenting progress, sharing lessons, and adapting activities based on emerging insights to inform future coordination.
- Sustainability and Potential for Replication or Scale-Up: Explain how results will be sustained beyond the funding period and demonstrate potential for scaling or replicating successful approaches.
- Budget Efficiency and Value for Money: Present a clear and justified budget that demonstrates efficient use of resources and strong return on investment relative to expected outputs and catalytic impact.

Each Expression of interest and concept note will be reviewed and scored by the UN-Nutrition Steering Committee and the Secretariat, using a standardized template based on the criteria above.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Fund administration for the catalytic funding will be managed by the FAO country office in close collaboration with the UN-Nutrition Team, ensuring timely and transparent disbursement of resources. All endorsing agencies are expected to implement the proposed activities in line with the approved workplan and agreed deliverables, maintaining accountability and alignment with the catalytic objectives. Monitoring and reporting will include a technical mid-term report, prepared halfway through the six-month period, to assess progress, highlight challenges, and provide recommendations for adjustments. At the end of the project, a technical terminal report will be submitted to capture key outcomes, learned lessons, and good practices, supporting knowledge sharing and informing future multi-agency coordination efforts. Further implementation modalities will be shared with the selected countries.

FURTHER RESOURCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional resources and up-to-date information on UN-Nutrition's catalytic funding initiative, please visit the official UN-Nutrition website dedicated page here: [2026 UN-Nutrition Catalytic Funding for UN Country Offices | UN-Nutrition: the United Nations inter-agency coordination mechanism for nutrition](#). If



you have further questions or require specific guidance, you are welcome to contact the team at unnutrition@fao.org.



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ANNEX I

Concept Note Content – Catalytic Funding Application

1. Basic Information

Country: [Insert]

Lead UN Agency/Coordination Focal Point: [Insert]

Agreed Agencies (minimum 2): [List agencies with focal points including contact information]

Agreed by Resident coordination officer: Y/N [List focal point including contact information]

Technical focal points: [Name, title, email, phone]

2. Background and Rationale (max 400 words)

- Provide a concise overview of the country's nutrition governance and coordination context.
- Identify the specific challenge, gap, or opportunity that catalytic funding will address.
- Explain how the proposal will promote system-wide coherence, improve efficiency, and strengthen UN and government collaboration in nutrition.
- Demonstrate alignment with national priorities and existing coordination mechanisms to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication.

3. Objective(s) (max 150 words)

- Define the strategic objective(s) of the proposed activities.
- Show how objectives are catalytic in nature — sparking innovation and laying the foundation for long-term, multi-agency collaboration.

4. Proposed Activities (max 400 words)

- Describe planned activities that directly strengthen coordination, collaboration, and partnership among UN agencies, government, and other actors.
- Ensure that activities are feasible within the six-month period, with clear sequencing and deliverables.
- Explain how activities demonstrate a catalytic effect (e.g., piloting new models, testing joint approaches, improving efficiency).
- Include mechanisms for knowledge capture and peer learning to support adaptive management and shared learning.

5. Expected Results and Outputs (max 300 words, or 1 page if logframe)

- Outline the tangible outputs/indicators to be delivered (e.g., strategies developed, platforms strengthened, new partnerships formalized). Make the indicators/outputs clear and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).
- Describe the short-term results that demonstrate tangible improvements in coherence, collaboration, or governance.

6. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting (max 300 words)

- Describe how progress will be tracked using indicators, milestones, and regular team reflection or learning sessions.
- Include a plan for mid-term and final reporting to capture achievements, challenges, lessons.
- Explain how learning will be shared across agencies and with national stakeholders to inform future coordination or scale-up.
- Partnership and Collaboration (max 300 words)
- Demonstrate multi-agency engagement and shared ownership, specifying each agency's role and contribution.
- Describe how the Resident Coordinator Office and government counterparts are involved throughout design and implementation (including agreement)
- Indicate any collaboration with civil society, academia, or development partners.

7. Work Plan and Timeline (max 1 page)

- Provide a clear 6-month timeline (1 Jan – 31 Jul 2026) outlining major milestones, deliverables.
- A simple table or Gantt chart is encouraged.

8. Budget (USD 120,000 maximum) (Max 1 page)

- Present a detailed, **cost-effective budget** by major categories (e.g., personnel/consultancy, workshops, coordination meetings, travel, communication, etc.).
- Justify how each cost contributes directly to expected outputs and catalytic impact.
- Highlight **value for money** and efficient use of resources.

9. Sustainability and Scale-Up Potential (300 words)

- Explain how catalytic funding will lay the foundation for continued coordination and partnership beyond the project period.
- Describe any plans for integration into ongoing national or UN programmes.
- Outline how lessons, insights, and good practices will be shared and used to inform broader policy or programmatic action nationally and globally.