



# **Innovation Management Awards (IMA)**

## **Submission Rules and Guidelines, 2026**

### **Introduction**

In 2005, as the world worked to improve the delivery of public services to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) introduced the Innovative Management Award (IMA) to promote and recognize innovations that improve performance in the public sector in African countries. The Award is a continent-wide award programme, designed to encourage, promote and recognize creativity and innovations in public sector institutions, organizations and ministries at national and local levels.

In September 2015 World leaders met in New York at the Headquarters of the United Nations and adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) incorporating the MDGs. Prior to this, in the same year, the Africa Union leaders had on their part adopted the Africa 2063 Development Strategy with its seven aspirations. The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development document (*the World we want*) in its paragraph 42 makes the Africa 2063 Development strategy (the Africa we want) a component of the 2030 Agenda.

Implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Africa 2063 strategy to achieve the SDGs and the Africa Aspirations necessitates creativity and innovation in all fields especially in the delivery of public services. Therefore, in launching and sustaining the Innovation Management Awards, AAPAM is contributing to the promotion and encouragement of innovation to contribute to the achievement of SDGs and Africa's Aspirations.

## **Purpose and Objectives:**

The purpose of AAPAM-IMA is to contribute to innovative development of public administration and management practices in Africa through effective realization of the African aspirations for the '*Africa We Want*' as set in the African Agenda 2063 and transform our world with goals determined in the Global Agenda 2030, '*Transformation of Our World*'.

## **Specific Objectives:**

The specific objectives of the Award are the following:

- (i) To recognize and publicize innovations in the Public Sector which are worthy of emulation.
- (ii) To enhance the image of the Public Sector in Africa through promotion, recognition and dissemination of effective, innovative, and accountable service delivery approaches and practices.
- (iii) To promote innovation in the Public Sector by encouraging and recognizing organizations and people for creative and effective ways of solving specific challenges of administration and management in the implementation of the 2030 agenda and Agenda 2063 to achieve the SDGs.
- (iv) To facilitate the transfer of innovations and best practices, including digital transformation as a way of improving the quality of Public Administration and Management in Africa.
- (v) To encourage and promote the culture of Innovation in public sector, governance and service delivery through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

With the above objectives the Award is also intended to serve as a platform for:

- (i) Advocacy for innovation and digital transformation for improving the delivery of public services and performance in general of public sector institutions.

- (ii) Research and learning through identifying best practices in digital transformation and public service delivery in Africa.
- (iii) Capacity development through sharing and replication of successful practices in digital transformation and service delivery.
- (iv) Partnerships and exchanges for effective performance of public sector institutions in Africa.

Hence through the Innovative Management Award, AAPAM promotes and rewards innovations and excellence in Public Service, in support of the realization of global and continental development Agenda including the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Award recognizes African initiatives in Public Administration and Management that demonstrate creativity and innovation in the improvement of service delivery to the citizens of the Continent.

## **INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT AWARD**

### **CONDITIONS, PROCEDURES AND RULES OF COMPETITION – ANNEXURE 1**

- (i) Entries shall be made by a Ministry/Organization/Authority. Submissions can also be made by Division/Section within organizations. All government ministries, departments and agencies, public sector institutions, local governments and municipal authorities and institutions of higher learning in African countries, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and international organization are eligible to participate in the competition.
- (ii) The initiative must be innovative and relevant to one of the IMA categories indicated in this call for applications.
- (iii) While applicants can apply in different categories, an application should not be submitted in more than one category.
- (iv) Awards will not be given to individuals but to organizations.
- (v) Submissions shall be made on a prescribed entry form and shall not exceed 1,500 words with an executive summary of not more than 50 words. All supporting materials, not exceeding three per submission, shall be placed in an appendix. Written submissions will NOT be accepted. All submissions will be made electronically via Google form.
- (vi) A submission entered in a previous competition, but which was not among the winners in that year, may be re-submitted for consideration by the Jury, provided that no submission shall be considered more than three times.
- (vii) Applications may be made in English, Arabic, or French languages. However, all Arabic and French submissions shall be accompanied by one summary page of official English translation.
- (viii) Participants will submit their consents indicating their approval to attend an in-person presentation in Lesotho in case they are selected among the shortlisted top nominations.
- (ix) The Jury shall consist of seven (7) distinguished persons who are knowledgeable in public sector management.
- (x) The Jury will draw up a final list of 5 entrants. The finalists will be invited to appear before the Jury to present and defend their submissions. The Jury will then determine the winners for the Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards.

- (xi) The five finalists will be given opportunity to present their entries at the Annual Roundtable Conference following which the Winners in the three categories will be announced and the Awards given.
- (xii) The decisions of the Jury shall be final. The jury may decide not to award prizes if the submissions in any one year are not up to standard.
- (xiii) The best three entrants shall receive the Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards in order of merit. The other two finalists may receive recognition trophies.

## **Disqualification**

Applications will be disqualified for the following reasons:

- Failure to observe the submission rules for the application.
- Any conflict of interest and non-adherence to the process by those concerned.
- Presenting misleading and false information and supporting documents.
- Inability to provide sufficient documentation to review the initiative.
- Unethical behavior, including undue pressure on any person involved in the evaluation and selection process.

## INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT AWARD

### CATEGORIES AND CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF SUBMISSIONS - ANNEXURE 2

For the IMA of 2026, the Award will be given in the following Categories:

**Category One:** *Enhancing effectiveness of public sector institutions to achieve SDGs.*

**Category Two:** *Promoting digital transformation in public sector institutions for effective service delivery.*

**Category Three:** *Promoting quality and equity in public service delivery.*

#### **Elaboration on the Categories and Criteria.**

In a general way the following will be the criteria to guide the assessment of the initiatives contending for the Award:

- Novelty
- Relevance
- Significance/positive impact
- Adaptability and Replicability
- Sustainability

**Category One:** *Enhancing Effectiveness of Public Sector Institutions to achieve SDGs: The following 5 criteria will guide the assessment of Award contending initiatives in category one:*

**Criteria 1: Novelty:** introduction of an innovative idea, policy, practice, or structure that is new/unique in the governance/management/administration of the institution.

**Criteria 2: Relevance:** The new idea, policy, practice, or structure is relevant in that it leads to effectiveness, accountability, inclusiveness, and equity in the delivery of services or development in general (see the 11 principles of effective governance elaborated by CEPA).

**Criteria 3: Significance/Impact:** It makes a significant and impactful contribution to the achievement of specified SDG or SDGs targets.

**Criteria 4: Adaptability/Replicability:** It has been adapted and replicated or demonstrates potential to be replicated to other public sector institutions in the same country, region, or other countries/regions.

**Criteria 5: Sustainability:** It demonstrates significance socially, economically and environmentally as well as capability to keep evolving with developments and has provisions for availability of the requisite resources for its continuity.

#### **Category Two: *Promoting Digital Transformation in Public Sector Institutions for Effective Service Delivery.***

**Criteria 1: Novelty:** Introduction of an innovative idea, policy, practice, or structure that is new/unique which is digitally implemented to improve delivery of services.

**Criteria 2: Relevance:** The new idea, policy, practice, or structure is relevant in that it leads to effectiveness, accountability, inclusiveness, and equity in the delivery of services or development in general.

**Criteria 3: Significance/Impact:** It makes a significant and impactful contribution to the achievement of specified SDG or SDGs targets.

**Criteria 4: Adaptability/Replicability:** It has been adapted and replicated or demonstrates potential to be replicated to other public sector institutions in the same country, region, or other countries/regions.

**Criteria 5: Sustainability:** It demonstrates significance socially, economically, and environmentally as well as capability to keep evolving with developments and has provisions for availability of the requisite resources for its continuity.

### **Category Three: *Promoting Quality and Equity in Public Service Delivery.***

The following criteria will guide the assessment of Award contending initiatives in category three:

**Criteria 1: Novelty:** Introduction of an innovative idea, policy, process, practice, or structure that is new/unique leading to a significant improvement of the quality of a public service.

**Criteria 2: Relevance:** The new idea, policy, process, practice, or structure which is implemented to improve the quality of the service is relevant, in that it leads to inclusiveness, and equity in the delivery of services or development in general.

**Criteria 3: Significance/Impact:** It makes an impactful contribution to the achievement of a specific SDG or SDG targets in an equitable manner.

**Criteria 4: Adaptability/Replicability:** It has been adapted and replicated or demonstrates potential to be adapted and replicated to other public sector institutions in the same country, region, or other countries.

**Criteria 5: Sustainability:** It demonstrates significant and impact socially, economically, and environmentally as well as capability to keep evolving with developments and has provisions for availability of the requisite resources for its continuity.