



Youth for Water and Climate  
La Jeunesse pour l'Eau et le Climat  
La Juventud por el Agua y el Clima

# Quality Assurance Framework for assessing project proposals

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The goal of the Youth for Water and Climate (#YWC) platform is to enhance youth contributions to the 2030 development and climate agendas by supporting youth-led initiatives, including youth social entrepreneurship and new technologies. The platform supports youth in developing their projects on water and climate by promoting opportunities for collaboration between organizations, experts and youth. This support ranges from technical support to youth to certification of project proposals and support in fundraising.

The Quality Assurance (QA) framework is a key component of #YWC. The overall objectives of the QA framework are to assess and ensure the quality of youth-led project proposals and give assurances to potential sponsors on the quality of these proposals. The QA process:

- assesses and certifies the quality of the project proposals;
- helps the youth build relevant, quality and actionable project proposals, based on the feedback which is provided to them through the process;
- gives assurances to potential sponsors on the quality of the proposals which have been certified, thus facilitating access to support for youth-led projects.

The QA framework consists of a review of project proposals, using a defined process with a set of criteria and scoring system. The criteria used in the QA framework include:

- general criteria which are commonly used to assess projects proposals;
- specific criteria corresponding to the sets of values promoted by #YWC for youth-led projects.

It is important to note that, once a project is matched with a potential sponsor on the platform, the sponsor might have additional and specific processes for reviewing and approving project proposals, with their own set of criteria.

The present document describes the QA framework of #YWC. It is made available to prospective applicants to guide them in the preparation and submission of their project proposals under #YWC. The approach ensures a transparent process and certification of projects in conformity with #YWC principles.

## **1. A preliminary step to the QA process: submission of project proposals on #YWC platform; resources and guidance for submission**

Project proposals are submitted by youth on a rolling basis or following specific calls for proposals. To initiate the translation of ideas into project proposals, there are some project templates and guidance documents available in the Resource Centre of #YWC Platform. These guidance materials help the youth learn about the different components of a good project proposal and help them work on those components.

Key resources available to the youth include:

- **Application:** The Submit Project section includes the specific parts that need to be addressed in a project proposal, allowing the youth to adapt their application accordingly and reduce the application burden.
- **Templates and guidance material:** specific templates and guidance material on different project parts/sections are available for youth to read and download. This helps ensure that youth who have no prior knowledge of project development are not left behind. In the case of calls for proposals, submissions will have to follow a specific template, which might be specific to that call. For unsolicited proposals, use of templates is encouraged but not mandatory.
- **#YWC Assessment criteria:** These are the set of assessment indicators that are used to assess youth-led project proposals as per the QA framework.

## **2. The QA process: assessment of project proposals**

**Foreword:** The process described here uses a two-stage approach, with a first review by young professionals followed by a review by experts. Over time, depending on the results of the evaluation of the QA process and volume of projects submitted for review, this might be reduced to one stage only.

The 2 stages for the review of project proposals are as follow:

1. A first assessment is done by young professionals. The projects are screened out at this stage if they don't fulfil the criteria. These screened out projects will be returned to the youth who submitted the project to incorporate necessary changes, as suggested by the reviewer. This is an iterative process and the project cannot move forward until the project reaches a certain score in the assessment (see below for a description of the comments and iteration process). Upon comments, feedback and modification, projects will be assessed again until the project assessment score reaches a certain threshold; it can then move to the second stage.
2. The second stage is a review by topic experts. This will also be done in iteration until the project score reaches a certain threshold. The project is then certified as 'QA approved' on #YWC platform.

The goal of the assessment is to ensure especially that project proposals are aligned with YWC values, are actionable, and are credible in terms of implementation and achievement of their objectives. Completeness of the information provided and clarity of expression in the project proposal will be important for the assessment of the different criteria.

The criteria under consideration for assessing #YWC projects are listed in annex 1. Annex 2 shows how the scoring system could work through a prototype scoring sheet.

In the case of specific calls for proposals developed with partners, the set of criteria and/ or scoring system used to assess project proposals might be adapted. The information on this will be made available to applicants.

Following the assessment based on the criteria, a proposal may be either accepted or areas for improvement might be identified by the reviewer. In this case, the applicant receives information on the assessment and is invited to update and complete his/ her project proposal. For transparency purposes, all applicants receive feedback comprising a summary of the reviewer's decision and constructive comments.

The reviewer's decision can be as follow:

- i. Recommended for certification

The project is of high quality, fulfilling all the criteria, and is recommended for certification.

- ii. Conditionally recommended

Certain aspects need to be clarified before a formal decision can be taken. This can be anything, ranging from providing a better specified budget to agreeing to accept certain recommendations by the reviewer. This would mostly be happening under stage 2 review, that is the review by experts.

- iii. Conditionally rejected (or referred to as "postponed" applications)

The project is promising but revisions are needed which necessitate significant changes in a section or sections of the project proposal. This would mostly happen under stage 1 review, that is the review by young professionals.

- iv. Not recommended for certification

Not recommended but invited and/or encouraged to come back with an improved application (i.e. projects in need of major revision – such major revisions are more extensive than in the previous 'conditionally rejected' category and may necessitate that the whole application may be re-conceptualised and re-written). #YWC technical support tools might be suggested by the reviewer if appropriate (mentor, using specific templates, analysing case studies, ...). This would mostly happen under stage 1 review, that is the review by young professionals.

### **3. The QA process: checking and improving the QA process**

For the QA framework to be valid and recognised as such, it is necessary to check that it is working properly, allowing #YWC to recognize good quality proposals, and to improve and strengthen it as needed.

The following mechanisms are under consideration:

- have a second level assessment of the QA framework implementation. This task would be carried out by second level reviewers, who would:
  - check 5 to 10% of labelled project proposals, to verify that they indeed match the criteria
  - make sure that the various steps for the review of project proposals are followed (for example, the reviewers should have gone through a capacity building process on how to use the framework)
  - provide feedback to #YWC secretariat and consortium members on how to improve and strengthen the QA framework
- #YWC secretariat would be in charge of implementing a continuous improvement approach, in concertation with the consortium members and key sponsors

#### **4. The role of #YWC Secretariat in the QA process**

- Is responsible for developing, monitoring, evaluating and improving the QA framework, in relation with #YWC Consortium
- Maintains the pool of reviewers (identification and recruitment of reviewers at all levels, training)
- Assigns project proposals to reviewers and tracks that reviews are moving ahead
- Organizes the second level assessment of the QA framework implementation
- Gathers feedback from youth, reviewers and second level reviewers on the QA framework

### Criteria under consideration for assessing #YWC Projects

We assess the proposal against the following:

1/ Does the project contribute to the achievements of the 2030 development and climate agendas as per the priorities identified by # YWC?

- ⇒ Is the project youth-led? (is (are) the project leader(s) below 35?)
- ⇒ Is the project related to at least one of the themes and recommendations of the COP21 White Paper (the themes being Water and Agriculture, Water and Health, Water Sharing & Water and Climate Hazards)
- ⇒ Does the project take into consideration different disadvantaged groups especially youth and women?

2/ Does the project appear meaningful in terms of issues to be addressed and could it achieve real change?

- ⇒ Does the proposal contain an explanation of the situation that needs to be changed, and why [contextual analysis]?
- ⇒ Is there evidence supporting the claim that change is needed (policy documents, newspaper articles, research papers, pictures..)?
- ⇒ Does the proposal identify previous or current projects relevant to the project proposal (relevance in terms of location and theme of intervention or similarity of approach in a comparable situation)? Are there lessons drawn from these to support the validity of the proposed approach?
- ⇒ Does the proposed approach appear technically valid?

3/ Does the organization for the implementation appear credible and adapted to the ambitions set out for the project ?

- ⇒ Is the proposed implementation mechanism described and does it appear credible?
- ⇒ Is there a description about how responsibilities to implement the project will be shared and does it appear adapted to the project (within the group and with potential partner organizations)?
- ⇒ Do some of the youth leader(s) have some prior experience with managing or implementing projects?

#### 4/ What is proposed could be achieved

- ⇒ Clear and attainable goals are defined
- ⇒ The proposed planning fits the objectives of the project
- ⇒ There is a budget and a proposed timeline for implementation
- ⇒ The budget appears realistic
- ⇒ The timeline for implementation is sufficiently detailed and appears realistic
- ⇒ The team has thought about on how to keep track of the results, and has thought about the indicators to be used to report on achieving the goals and the achieved change (monitoring and evaluation).
- ⇒ A simple coherent Logframe is developed, linking activities to the objectives that the project wants to achieve and identifying indicators which will be used to track the progress

## Prototype scoring sheet for #YWC QA assessments

	Scoring (max. points)	Points given by reviewer
<b>1. Does the project contribute to the achievements of the 2030 development and climate agendas as per the priorities identified by # YWC ?</b>		
a. Is the project youth-led? (is (are) the project leader(s) below 35?)	go/no go	
b. Is the project related to at least one of the themes and recommendations of the COP21 White Paper (the themes being Water and Agriculture, Water and Health, Water Sharing & Water and Climate Hazards)	go/no go	
c. Does the project take into consideration different disadvantaged groups especially youth and women?	4	
<b>2. Does the project appear meaningful in terms of issues to be addressed and could it achieve real change ?</b>		
a. Does the proposal contain an explanation of the situation that needs to be changed, and why (contextual analysis) ?	5	
b. Is there evidence supporting the claim that change is needed (policy documents, newspaper articles, research papers, pictures..) ?	3	
c. Does the proposal identify previous or current projects relevant to the project proposal (relevance in terms of location and theme of intervention or similarity of approach in a comparable situation) ? Are there lessons drawn from these to support the validity of the proposed approach ?	4	
d. Does the proposed approach appear technically valid?	3	
<b>3. Does the organization for the implementation appear credible and adapted to the ambitions set out for the project ?</b>		
a. Is the proposed implementation mechanism described and does it appear credible ?	5	
b. Is there a description about how responsibilities to implement the project will be shared and does it appear adapted to the project (within the group and with potential partner organizations) ?	3	
c. Do some of the youth leader(s) have some prior experience with managing or implementing projects ?	4	
<b>4. What is proposed could be achieved</b>		
a. Clear and attainable goals are defined	5	
b. The proposed planning fits the objectives of the project	5	
c. There is a budget and a proposed timeline for implementation	go/no go	
d. The budget appears realistic	5	
e. The timeline for implementation is sufficiently detailed and appears realistic	5	
f. The team has thought about on how to keep track of the results, and has thought about the indicators to be used to report on achieving the goals and the achieved change (monitoring and evaluation)	5	
g. A simple coherent Logframe is developed, linking activities to the objectives that the project wants to achieve and identifying indicators which will be used to track the progress	4	

**Total**

## Required scoring

All projects need to score a 'go' on question 1a, 1.b and 4c

- i. Recommended for certification 50-60
- ii. Conditionally recommended 40-50
- iii. Conditionally rejected (or referred to as “postponed” applications) 30-40
- iv. Not recommended for certification 0-30