

# Developing a Sustainability Framework for Instant Payment System Operators in Africa

## Request for Proposals

### April 2026

## I. Background

AfricaNenda Foundation is an Africa-led organization dedicated to accelerating the expansion of inclusive instant payment systems (IIPS) that enable affordable, accessible, and safe retail digital payments for all across the continent. According to the SIIPS in Africa 2025 report<sup>1</sup>, Africa now has 36 live IPS across 31 countries, processing approximately 64 billion transactions valued at close to USD 2 trillion in 2024, underscoring how central these systems have become to everyday economic participation. Yet as systems scale, the report also highlights growing overlaps: several countries are now simultaneously served by a domestic IPS and one or more regional IPS, and at least one regional scheme has rolled out domestic retail payment functionality in member states, effectively competing with or duplicating national systems. These configurations expand reach but can fragment volumes, complicate revenue models, and dilute investment on both the domestic and regional rails, raising critical sustainability questions that IPS operators and policymakers must address as they plan for the next wave of growth.

In many African markets, IPS are under pressure to recover costs, maintain robust infrastructure, offer low user fees, and support innovation by participants, all while operating within evolving regulatory, macroeconomic, and technological contexts. Sustainability is shaped by a cluster of determinants - ranging from business models and pricing, to scheme governance, technical resilience, regulatory environment, and underlying digital and ID infrastructure - not by a single factor. Without a structured approach to understanding and managing these determinants, IPS operators can face fragile business models, underinvestment, and stalled IPS inclusivity gains.

IPS sustainability is a core part of the Foundation's mandate, and AfricaNenda aims to develop an IPS Operator Sustainability Framework to strengthen the long-term viability and performance of IIPS across the continent. To achieve this, AfricaNenda seeks to engage a highly qualified consulting firm to (i) design a rigorous, yet practical IPS Operator Sustainability Framework tailored to African IPS operators, and (ii) support at least three IPS operators in applying the Framework to diagnose sustainability gaps, develop action plans, and kick-start implementation.

The consultancy will be delivered in two phases under a single contract:

- Phase 1 – Development of the IPS Operator Sustainability Framework.
- Phase 2 – Application of the Framework with at least three IPS operators in Africa.

AfricaNenda is looking for a dynamic firm with deep expertise in instant payment systems; IPS design and operations, financial infrastructure sustainability, and ecosystem development in Africa, and with the capability to translate technical frameworks into practical operator-level support.

## II. Objectives of the Consultancy

The overarching objective of this consultancy is to develop and operationalize an IPS Operator Sustainability Framework that strengthens the long-term financial, operational, and institutional sustainability of IPS in Africa. Specific objectives are to:

- a. **Design a fit-for-purpose IPS Operator Sustainability Framework**

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<sup>1</sup> [State of Inclusive Instant Payment Systems \(SIIPS\) in Africa 2025 Report.](#)

- Develop an integrated Framework that captures and operationalizes key sustainability determinants across commercial/business-model, governance and scheme design, technical and operational, inclusion and market-development, including contextual/cross-border dimensions.
  - Translate these determinants into clear pillars, indicators, assessment tools, and guidance that IPS operators can use to assess their current position and plan for sustainability.
- b. **Support the operationalization of the Framework by IPS operators**
- Pilot the Framework with at least three IPS operators in Africa, supporting them to conduct structured sustainability diagnostics and develop realistic, prioritized action plans.
  - Provide early implementation support and capacity-building so that IPS operators can incorporate the Framework into ongoing strategic planning, risk management, and performance monitoring.
- c. **Generate learning and enable scale-up**
- Document lessons learned, refine the Framework based on field experiences, and produce practical knowledge products that can inform other IPS operators, policymakers, and ecosystem enabling partners across the continent.

### III. **Scope of Consultancy**

The consultant is expected to propose a compelling, technically sound, and practical approach to deliver both phases of this assignment.

#### **Phase 1: Development of the IPS Operator Sustainability Framework**

##### **i. Diagnostic and landscape review**

- Conduct a rapid but robust review of global and African experiences with IPS and payment-system sustainability, including business models, pricing approaches, governance arrangements, and cost-recovery strategies.
- Map IPS operator models in Africa (central bank-led and non-central bank-led), highlighting how ownership and governance structures influence sustainability.
- Review existing sustainability and risk-management frameworks used by payment system operators and identify elements that can be adapted to IPS operators in Africa.

##### **ii. Framework design**

The consultant is expected to propose a structured IPS Operator Sustainability Framework that, at a minimum, addresses the following dimensions:

- **Core economic and business-model variables** - Applicants should outline how they will analyze IPS revenue and cost-recovery pathways, pricing structures across key use cases and participants, transaction scale and diversification, and the robustness of funding arrangements for core infrastructure over time.
- **Governance and scheme design variables** - Proposals should describe how the Framework will assess IPS governance arrangements and decision-making (including representation), participation and access rules, clarity of mandates and ownership models, and the integration of risk management, AML/CFT, consumer-protection, and longer-term scheme evolution.
- **Technical and operational variables** - Applicants should indicate how they will evaluate the resilience and availability of the IPS platform, the scalability and modernity of its architecture, cyber-security and data-protection practices, settlement and liquidity arrangements, and key operational efficiencies at the scheme and participant level.
- **Inclusion, market-development, and policy variables** - Proposals should set out how the Framework will capture interoperability and market reach, diversity of use cases and revenue streams, end-user affordability and usability, the role of government and public volumes, and the broader regulatory and policy environment for banks and non-banks.

- **Contextual and cross-border variables in Africa** - Applicants should explain how they will factor in overlaps between domestic and regional IPS, regional interoperability, and cross-border capabilities, and relevant macroeconomic and FX conditions that influence IPS sustainability and risk.

### iii. **Framework structure, tools, and validation**

- Propose a practical and decision-useful Framework structure (e.g., pillars/dimensions, indicators, scoring scales, dashboards) that can be used for self-assessment and facilitated assessments.
- Develop tools such as templates, checklists, scoring matrices, and heat maps to visualize sustainability strengths and gaps.
- Clearly define the scoring methodology, including scale definitions, weighting logic where applicable, treatment of missing or partial data, and how results will be interpreted across different operator contexts.
- Validate the draft Framework and tools through consultation workshops with AfricaNenda Foundation and selected IPS stakeholders, and revise accordingly.

## **Phase 2: Framework operationalization**

### i. **Selection and onboarding of IPS operators**

- Refine criteria and support AfricaNenda in selecting at least three IPS operators (geographically and structurally diverse as much as possible).
- Develop structured onboarding packages for each operator (data requirements, roles/responsibilities, milestones, etc.).

### ii. **Sustainability diagnostics and action planning**

For each IPS operator:

- Facilitate application of the Framework, including data collection, interviews, and workshops.
- Produce a sustainability diagnostic report covering all Framework pillars, with a clear heat map of strengths, gaps, and risks.
- Co-develop a prioritized sustainability action plan (with short-, medium-, and longer-term measures, responsibilities, indicative resource needs and suggested indicators for tracking implementation).

### iii. **Early implementation support and capacity-building**

- Provide hands-on technical assistance support for selected priority actions (e.g., business-model refinements, pricing adjustments, governance improvements, resilience measures, new use cases or cross-border strategies).
- Design and deliver targeted capacity-building for operator leadership and technical teams (workshops, clinics, peer-learning) to embed the use of the Framework into their internal processes.
- Advise on integrating the Framework into regular planning, board reporting, risk management, and performance monitoring.

### iv. **Learning, refinement, and knowledge management**

- Synthesize cross-cutting lessons from the pilots, including key sustainability constraints and success factors for IPS in Africa.
- Refine the Framework and tools based on real-world applications.
- Develop concise knowledge products (e.g., case studies and briefing notes) that can be shared (subject to confidentiality) to inform the broader ecosystem.

**v. Monitoring, reporting, and impact measurement**

- Work with the AfricaNenda Foundation M&E function to integrate relevant indicators from the Framework into the broader results. Periodically report progress against agreed milestones (both for Framework development and operator-level application) and document lessons and outcomes.

**IV. Project Outputs**

The consulting firm is expected to deliver all outputs to a high standard, as agreed with AfricaNenda. Expected outputs include:

- Inception report and detailed methodology/workplan covering both phases.
- Draft IPS Operator Sustainability Framework (pillars, indicators, tools, and guidance notes).
- Validation workshop materials.
- Final validated IPS Operator Sustainability Framework.
- At least three IPS sustainability diagnostic reports and associated sustainability action plans.
- Capacity-building materials and records of support provided to IPS operators.
- Learning/knowledge products with recommendations for scale-up.
- The final project report.

**V. Project Timelines**

The project is expected to run for **12 months**, starting **Monday, May 18, 2026**.

**VI. Project Expertise and Technical Competencies Required**

The consultancy firm should demonstrate:

- **Strong instant payment systems expertise** - Experience working on instant payment systems in Africa or comparable emerging markets, including scheme design, operations, and governance. Demonstrated experience with IPS business models, pricing structures, and strategies.
- **Proven infrastructure sustainability and strategy capability** - Experience in designing or applying sustainability or viability frameworks for payment systems, financial market infrastructure, or similar entities. Capacity to build robust financial and operational models for infrastructure planning and sustainability.
- **Deep understanding of DFS, interoperability, and regulatory environments** - Solid knowledge of digital financial services, interoperability, cross-border payments, and the associated regulatory and supervisory frameworks. Familiarity with enabling regulation for non-bank PSPs and fintechs, and with inclusive and gender-responsive approaches.
- **Operator-level support and capacity-building track record** - Demonstrated experience providing technical assistance to IPS operators and central banks, or equivalent entities. Strong capability in designing and delivering practical capacity-building for technical and leadership teams.
- **Analytical, facilitation, and knowledge-management skills** - Ability to synthesize complex quantitative and qualitative data into actionable insights, tools, and guidance. Experience in documenting lessons and producing high-quality knowledge products.
- **Team composition and expertise** - A multidisciplinary team including, at a minimum: a lead IPS/payment-systems expert; a business-model/financial-modelling specialist; a governance/regulation specialist; and a capacity-building/knowledge specialist. Clear allocation of roles and time across both phases of the assignment.

**VII. Project Reporting**

The consulting firm will work under the direct supervision of designated AfricaNenda program representatives, who will coordinate internal inputs and approvals. Regular progress check-ins and periodic written updates will be required.

### VIII. Proposal Content

Consulting firms should submit separate technical and financial proposals that address the objectives and scope outlined above. While there is no minimum page limit, the maximum length is **15 pages**, including CVs of key team members. The proposal must be clear and concise, with no font smaller than size 11.

The technical proposal should:

- Demonstrate a strong understanding of IPS sustainability challenges in Africa and of the two-phase structure of this assignment.
- Describe the proposed methodology and workplan, including stakeholder-engagement and quality-assurance approaches.
- Present the team structure, roles, and time allocations, and summarize relevant experience (with detailed CVs in the annex).
- Highlight comparable assignments completed.

The financial proposal should:

- Provide a detailed budget in USD, clearly distinguishing costs associated with Phase 1 and Phase 2.
- State assumptions on the level of effort and ensure value for money.

### IX. Risk Management

The technical proposal should contain a clear and realistic list of anticipated project risks and proposed mitigation measures.

### X. RFP Process

#### Submissions

Proposals should be submitted electronically by **Friday, May 1, 2026**, to [info@africanenda.org](mailto:info@africanenda.org). The technical proposal and financial proposal shall be submitted as separate documents. Proposals received after the deadline will not be considered.

#### Queries

Queries relating to the preparation of the proposal should be submitted by email to the same address no later than **Friday, April 24, 2026**.

#### Notification and Contracting

All bidders will be notified of the outcome of their proposals as soon as possible after completion of the evaluation process. AfricaNenda will issue a contract to the selected firm, which will be expected to start the project on **Monday, May 18, 2026**.

### XI. Budget

Applicants are expected to submit competitive, value-for-money financial proposals for this assignment, covering both phases.

### XII. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria below.

Technical Proposal Criteria	Weighting (%)
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<p><b>Quality of proposal</b> – Demonstrates clear understanding of IPS sustainability and the RFP; proposes robust, practical methodologies for framework design and application; outlines strong quality-assurance mechanisms; incorporates innovative yet feasible approaches to diagnostics, modelling, and operator-level support; includes a realistic risk assessment and mitigation plan.</p>	<p>40%</p>
<p><b>Competence and experience of the consulting firm</b> – Demonstrated track record in IPS work, financial infrastructure sustainability, and technical assistance in African markets.</p>	<p>10%</p>
<p><b>Project resources and proposed team member CVs</b> – Strong alignment of team expertise with required roles (IPS, financial modelling, governance/regulation, capacity-building); clear evidence of relevant assignments; CVs show depth in IPS and DFS.</p>	<p>20%</p>
<p><b>Capability</b> – Demonstrated industry experience in digital financial services, instant payment systems, infrastructure/business-model analysis, and stakeholder engagement with regulators, IPS operators, and market players.</p>	<p>30%</p>
<p><b>Maximum score</b></p>	<p><b>100%</b></p>