



INNOVATION AGENCIES IN AFRICA NETWORK

Member Onboarding Guide

Official Membership Processing Document

1. About the IAA Network

The Innovation Agencies in Africa Network is a pan-African platform uniting national and regional innovation agencies to collaborate on Africa's development challenges through science, technology, and innovation. Established with support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa, the network serves as the premier institutional home for Africa's public innovation agencies.

The IAA Network operates on four core pillars:

Category	Benefit Areas
Knowledge & Insight	Centralized knowledge platform Quarterly innovation trend reports Research repository access
Capacity Building	Tailored training programmes Mentorship opportunities Impact evaluation tools
Collaboration & Networking	Regional forum access Peer agency connections Joint programming initiatives
Policy & Advocacy	Policy development engagement Technical assistance Early access to funding opportunities

Mission

To enhance the capacity and capabilities of national and regional innovation agencies across Africa through coordinated collaborative efforts, knowledge exchange, and joint advocacy — contributing to Africa's broader science, technology, and innovation agenda.

2. Eligibility Criteria

Membership in the IAA Network is open to formally recognised national and regional innovation agencies operating within Africa that meet the following criteria:

Criterion	Requirement
1. National Agency	The applicant must be a formally recognised innovation agency operating within Africa, with a clear national or regional mandate.
2. Formal Innovation Mandate	The organisation must hold a governmental or public sector recognised mandate specifically for innovation promotion, funding, or coordination.
3. Commitment to Collaboration	The applicant must demonstrate a genuine dedication to continental collaboration, peer learning, and knowledge sharing across the network.

3. Membership Benefits

As a member of the IAA Network, your agency gains access to an integrated suite of resources and platforms designed to strengthen institutional capacity and continental collaboration:

Knowledge & Insight: Access to the IAA centralised knowledge platform, quarterly innovation trend reports benchmarked across member countries, and a shared research repository covering innovation policy, funding, and ecosystem development.

Capacity Building: Participation in IAA-coordinated training programmes, access to peer mentorship from more established member agencies, and tools for measuring the impact of innovation investments.

Collaboration & Networking: Access to regional and continental forums, direct peer-to-peer connections with counterpart agencies, and opportunities for joint programme design and co-implementation.

Policy & Advocacy: Direct participation in continental policy development processes, technical assistance from the Secretariat, and priority access to emerging funding opportunities.

4. Application Process

4.1 How to Apply

Applications are submitted through the IAA Network membership portal. The process is designed to be straightforward and takes approximately 30–60 minutes to complete.

Step 1 — Visit the membership page at iaanetwork.org/membership

Step 2 — Click the 'Become a Member / Join Network' button to initiate your application

Step 3 — Create an account using your organisation's official email and credentials

Step 4 — Complete and submit the four-section application form

4.2 Application Form Sections

The application form is structured in four sequential sections:

Section	Title	Key Information Required
Section 1	Organisation Details	Full legal name, country, contact details, head of agency information
Section 2	Organisation Profile	Mandate, key programmes, annual budget range, staff complement, year established
Section 3	Goals & Contributions	Strategic priorities, what you seek from the network, what your agency can offer
Section 4	Application & Signature	Authorised signatory declaration and commitment to network principles

5. Membership Processing Timeline

The IAA Network is committed to a transparent, efficient, and structured onboarding process. The following table outlines each stage of the membership journey, the expected timeframe, and the responsible party. The total expected onboarding duration is approximately 3–5 weeks, depending on Steering Committee meeting cycles and signing turnaround.

Step	Stage	Duration	Responsible Party	Description
1	Application Submission	30–60 minutes	Applicant	Submit Expression of Interest via the IAA membership portal at iaanetwork.org/login
2	Secretariat Eligibility Review	Within 48 hours	Secretariat	Preliminary review conducted against membership criteria: national agency status, formal innovation mandate, and collaborative commitment
3	Onboarding Meeting	Within 5 working days	Secretariat & Applicant	Virtual onboarding session (30–45 minutes) presenting the IAA value proposition, membership categories, roles, and expectations
4	Steering Committee Approval	Within 14 days	Steering Committee	Formal review and approval by the IAA Steering Committee — the key governance stage that determines overall timeline
5	Confirmation Letter Issued	Within 2 working days	Secretariat	Formal membership confirmation letter communicated to the applicant organisation
6	Database Registration & Invitation	Within 3 working days	Secretariat	New member added to communications database and invited to attend the next IAA General Meeting
7	Public Welcome Announcement	Within 5 working days	Secretariat (Comms)	Member onboarding announced via newsletter, website, and social media platforms
8	Declaration of Intent Signed	Within 7 working days	All Parties	Signing of the Declaration of Intent by all relevant parties to formally conclude the onboarding process

Important Note on Step 4: Steering Committee Approval

The Steering Committee Approval is the principal governance stage in the membership process. The 14-day window is calculated from the date of the onboarding call. Applications are tabled to the Steering Committee meeting following the onboarding session. Applicants will be notified of the outcome within 2 working days of the Steering Committee decision.

6. Onboarding Call Options

The onboarding call is a 30–45 minute session designed to ensure that your agency is well-informed about the IAA Network's value proposition, membership obligations, and opportunities. The Secretariat offers three flexible participation formats to accommodate varying institutional schedules:

Option	Format	Details	Best For
A	Live Virtual Call	Join a scheduled call with the Secretariat. Ask questions directly and connect with fellow members.	Agencies seeking real-time engagement
B	Self-Paced	Receive the onboarding toolkit and welcome video. A 15-minute check-in call available if needed.	Agencies with scheduling constraints

Option	Format	Details	Best For
C	Delegated	A senior representative attends on behalf of the Head of Agency. Secretariat must be notified in advance. Full onboarding benefits apply.	Agencies where the HoA delegates to a focal point

7. Post-Onboarding Expectations

Upon formal admission to the IAA Network, new member agencies are expected to fulfil the following obligations to ensure active and productive participation:

#	Expectation	Description
1	Appoint a Focal Point	Designate an official liaison who will attend IAA meetings, relay information internally, and serve as the primary contact for the Secretariat. The focal point should be at senior officer level or above.
2	Sign the Declaration of Intent	Formally commit to the IAA Network's mission and collaborative principles by signing the Declaration of Intent within 7 working days of confirmation.
3	Public Welcome Announcement	Your membership will be introduced to the wider innovation community via the IAA newsletter, website, and official social media channels.
4	Attend IAA Network Meetings	Join the next scheduled IAA Network General Meeting to engage with peer member agencies, contribute to strategic discussions, and access the network's collective resources.

8. Contact & Support

The Secretariat is available to provide guidance and support at every stage of the onboarding process. Do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Primary Contact (Communications) communications@iaanetwork.org	Website iaanetwork.org
Membership Portal iaanetwork.org/login	

We look forward to welcoming your agency to the IAA Network.

Together, we advance Africa's innovation agenda.