

IAA Network Peer Learning Exchange Programme

A Public Explainer | June 2026

Across Africa, innovation agencies work daily to build ecosystems that support entrepreneurs, researchers, and national development goals. Yet too often, these agencies operate in isolation, unaware of what their peers have built, learned, or overcome. The **IAA Network Peer Learning Exchange** is changing that.

Running from June 2026, this programme brings together national innovation agencies from across the continent in structured, peer-to-peer learning exchanges. Member agencies visit one another, in person or virtually, to observe, engage, and absorb practices that have worked elsewhere, then carry those insights home to strengthen their own institutions.

This document explains what the programme is, how it works, who is involved, and what participating agencies and the broader public can expect.

1. What Is the Peer Learning Exchange?

The Peer Learning Exchange is a flagship programme of the Innovation Agencies in Africa (IAA) Network — a continental body that brings together national agencies mandated to drive innovation, science, and technology across African countries.

The programme is built on a straightforward but powerful idea: the most relevant lessons for an African innovation agency are often held by another African innovation agency. Rather than looking only to global best practices developed in very different contexts, this programme enables agencies to learn from peers who understand the same realities, limited funding, young ecosystems, complex government relationships, and the urgency of building institutions that last.

Each exchange is structured, purposeful, and supported. Visiting agencies identify a specific institutional challenge or learning need, are matched with a host agency that has relevant expertise, and spend three days, in person or virtually, learning directly from their peers through meetings, site visits, and facilitated discussions.

*The Peer Learning Exchange is not a conference or a workshop. It is a **practitioner-to-practitioner experience**, designed to deliver real institutional learning, not just awareness.*

2. Who Is Involved?

The IAA Network Secretariat

The Secretariat coordinates the entire programme, from receiving and assessing applications, to matching agencies, supporting logistics, facilitating documentation, and ensuring each exchange delivers value. It operates from Nairobi, Kenya, and serves as the engine that keeps the programme running.

Host Agencies

Host agencies are IAA Network members that have volunteered to open their institutions to peer visitors. They share their expertise, their systems, and their honest experiences, including what has worked and what has not. For the June 2026 cycle, six agencies have confirmed as hosts:

Host Agency	Country	Thematic Areas	Timing	Format
Núcleo Operacional para a Sociedade de Informação (NOSi)	Cape Verde	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Digital Government transformation ii. Interoperability platforms iii. Government cloud & data centres iv. Cybersecurity for public sector & digital inclusion 	June 2026	In-person / Virtual
National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST)	Malawi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v. Innovation fund design & management vi. Technology transfer support vii. Policy development & government engagement 	June 2026	In-person / Virtual
Ministry of Innovation and Technology (MInT)	Ethiopia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> viii. Startup & SME support programmes ix. Innovation fund design & management 	June 2026	Virtual
Kenya National Innovation Agency (KeNIA)	Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> x. Ecosystem mapping & coordination xi. Monitoring, evaluation & impact measurement xii. Startup & SME support xiii. Innovation fund design xiv. Partnership & stakeholder management xv. Institutional strengthening 	April– June 2026	In-person / Virtual
Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH)	Tanzania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> xvi. Incubator/accelerator operations xvii. Policy development & government engagement 	April 2026	In-person
Technology Innovation Agency (TIA)	South Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> xviii. Startup & SME support xix. Incubator/accelerator operations xx. Monitoring, evaluation & impact measurement xxi. Partnership management xxii. Institutional strengthening xxiii. Project Management 	April– June 2026	In-person

Agencies whose learning needs may not perfectly match the above are still encouraged to engage with the Secretariat. The programme is flexible enough to explore alternative arrangements where suitable.

Visiting Agencies

Visiting agencies are IAA Network members that apply to participate in an exchange as learners. They identify a specific institutional challenge or capacity gap, explain how peer learning would help address it, and commit to translating insights into action upon return. Each visiting agency nominates two to three staff members directly involved in the relevant area of work.

3. How Does the Programme Work?

The exchange follows a clear, sequential process from application to post-visit reflection. Below is a step-by-step overview of how the programme operates:

1	Expression of Interest Member agencies submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) identifying their learning need, strategic rationale, staff nominees, and preference for a host agency. The EOI is submitted online and assessed by the Secretariat.
2	Assessment and Selection The Secretariat reviews all EOIs using a transparent, weighted scoring framework that considers clarity of learning need, strategic alignment, institutional context, readiness to apply learning, quality of host match, and equity across the network.
3	Matching Selected visiting agencies are matched with the most appropriate host agency based on their stated learning priorities and the host's areas of expertise. The Secretariat facilitates the introduction and confirms the match with both parties.
4	Visit Planning The visiting and host agencies jointly develop a concise visit plan — no longer than one page — outlining the agenda, objectives, and key sessions for the three-day exchange. The Secretariat supports this process.
5	The Exchange The peer learning visit takes place — either in person at the host agency's location, or virtually via a structured online programme. Over three days, participants engage in guided discussions, demonstrations, Q&A sessions, and reflection activities tailored to the visiting agency's learning goals.
6	Post-Visit Reflection and Reporting After the exchange, the visiting agency documents key insights and intended actions in a brief post-visit report, supported by the Secretariat. These reports contribute to the IAA Network's growing knowledge base on African innovation practice.

Travel and accommodation costs for visiting agency staff are covered by the IAA Network for in-person exchanges. Agencies are responsible for preparing their staff and committing to apply the learning gained.

4. How Are Participants Selected?

Selection is merit-based and transparent. All EOIs are assessed using a weighted scoring framework that evaluates applications across six criteria:

Criterion	Weight	What it measures
Clarity of learning need	25 pts	How clearly the agency defines its institutional challenge or capacity gap
Strategic alignment	20 pts	How well the learning request connects to the agency's mandate and priorities
Institutional need	20 pts	Consideration of system maturity and the agency's broader operating context
Readiness to apply learning	15 pts	Evidence that insights will be translated into concrete institutional action
Quality of host match	10 pts	Strength of fit between the agency's needs and available host expertise
Equity considerations	10 pts	Balanced participation across the network, especially for first-time participants
Total	100 pts	

Applications are assessed not only on what agencies wish to learn, but on why that learning matters, how it aligns with institutional priorities, and how the agency intends to put insights into practice. The programme also recognises that agencies operate in different contexts: those facing greater institutional or system-level constraints may receive additional consideration where peer learning is likely to be particularly impactful.

Equity considerations are built into the framework to ensure that over time, participation is balanced across the network, giving all member agencies the opportunity to benefit.

5. What Happens If an Agency Is Not Selected?

The Peer Learning Exchange operates on a rolling basis. Being not selected in one round does not close the door permanently, agencies retain full eligibility for future rounds and are encouraged to refine and resubmit their learning priorities.

The Secretariat will communicate selection outcomes within two weeks of the application deadline and will provide all applicants with feedback on their submissions. Agencies not selected in the current window may also be directed to interim learning opportunities where available.

The programme's long-term goal is for every IAA Network member agency to participate, as both a visiting and a host agency, over time.

6. What Are the Benefits?

For Visiting Agencies

- Direct exposure to institutional models, tools, and approaches that have been tested in comparable African contexts
- Structured time away from day-to-day pressures to reflect, learn, and envision institutional change
- Strengthened relationships with peer agencies across the continent
- A supported process for translating insights into action
- Travel and accommodation costs covered for in-person exchanges

For Host Agencies

- Opportunity to share institutional knowledge and contribute to continental learning
- Fresh perspectives on their own systems and practices through peer engagement
- Enhanced visibility and recognition as a centre of expertise within the IAA Network
- Stronger bilateral relationships with fellow member agencies

For the IAA Network and Africa's Innovation Ecosystem

- A growing body of documented knowledge on how African innovation agencies operate and evolve
- Stronger, better-connected institutions across the continent
- A practical demonstration of African-led, peer-driven capacity building in action
- Contribution to the long-term vision of a well-functioning, integrated African innovation system

7. About the IAA Network

The Innovation Agencies in Africa (IAA) Network is a continental network of national agencies mandated to promote and coordinate innovation, science, and technology across African countries. Established to facilitate knowledge sharing, joint advocacy, and institutional development, the Network currently brings together nine founding member agencies from across the continent.

The IAA Network is hosted by the Kenya National Innovation Agency (KeNIA) and coordinated through its Secretariat in Nairobi.

The Peer Learning Exchange is one of the Network's flagship programmes, a concrete expression of its commitment to building capable, connected, and collaborative innovation institutions across Africa.

Contact & Further Information

For enquiries about the programme, applications, or the IAA Network, please contact:

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