

CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

WaterStarters Franchisees for Sustainable Water Enterprises in Kajiado, Makueni, Machakos and Kitui Counties

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1. About Amref Health Africa

Amref Health Africa was founded in 1957 and has grown into the largest Africa-based international health development organisation. It runs more than 180 programmes reaching over 40 million people across 35 African countries, with a workforce of more than 2,000 staff. Headquartered in Nairobi, it has country offices in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea (Conakry), Kenya, Malawi, Senegal, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, supported by eleven advocacy and fundraising offices in Europe and North America.

Amref's vision is 'Lasting health change in Africa'. Its mission is to catalyse community-led, people-centred health systems while tackling the social determinants of health. Amref believes the power to transform health in Africa lies within its communities. It works to make sure health systems function well and that communities are empowered to hold them accountable for quality, affordable care.

2. About WaterStarters

Safe water, sanitation and hygiene are among the most important of these determinants. [WaterStarters](#) is one of the ways Amref puts this approach into practice. It is an enterprise-driven initiative implemented by Amref Health Africa in Kenya in partnership with The Poul Due Jensen Foundation and County Governments. It helps local entrepreneurs and organisations own and run commercially viable, climate-resilient water enterprises in rural and peri-urban communities through a franchise model. The programme currently supports a network of franchised water schemes in Kajiado and Makueni counties, serving more than 70,000 people. Its goal is to reach 1.5 million Kenyans with safe water by 2035.

The WaterStarters model offers:

- **Blended financing.** The total cost of the franchise is covered by three parts: your own contribution, a grant (money you do not repay), and a recoverable loan (money you pay back over time from business profits). This mix reduces the amount you need to borrow and makes monthly repayments more affordable, giving you a stronger start as a business owner.
- **Water Infrastructure Development.** WaterStarters and the entrepreneur co-design water schemes that are solar-powered, smart-metered, remotely monitored and built to serve multiple water uses.
- **Business coaching, community health promotion and livelihood support,** to build demand and strengthen the enterprise.

3. Purpose of this call

Amref Health Africa invites Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from entrepreneurs that want to develop, expand or rehabilitate a water scheme as WaterStarters franchisees in **Kajiado, Makueni, Machakos or Kitui County**.

Selected franchisees will get technical, financial and business support to establish or upgrade their water supply system. They will then own and operate it as a sustainable water enterprise.

4. Who can apply

The call is open to legally registered entities operating, or planning to operate, a water service in the target counties:

- Private companies and business enterprises
- Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and Water Users Associations
- Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs)

Women-led and youth-led enterprises are strongly encouraged to apply.

5. Types of projects supported

- **Rehabilitation and upgrading** of existing boreholes, springs or water schemes. This can include solarisation, replacing diesel pumping, storage, pipeline repair or extension, and metering.
- **Expansion** of existing schemes to new customers, such as additional kiosks, household connections or last-mile extensions.
- **New water schemes** where a reliable water source has been confirmed, or can be confirmed through hydrogeological and/or hydrological assessment.

6. Eligibility criteria

To be considered, applicants must:

1. Be a legally registered entity in Kenya.
2. Be located in, or propose a scheme in, Kajiado, Makueni, Machakos or Kitui County.
3. Have legal rights to the proposed site. This means land ownership, a lease, or documented consent for the water source and key infrastructure.
4. Be able to raise an **upfront co-investment of at least 15% of the total capital cost**.
5. Commit to operating the scheme on a commercial basis. This includes using prepaid or smart metering, keeping financial records and repaying the recoverable finance.
6. Commit to complying with applicable water sector regulations and permits from respective county governments, Water Services Regulatory Board (WASREB), Water Resources Authority (WRA), and the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA).

7. Selection criteria

Eligible EOIs will be assessed as follows:

Criterion	What we look for	Weight
Mandatory evaluation criteria		
Registration and legal standing	Entity is registered in Kenya under the appropriate law (Companies Act, Societies Act, Cooperative Societies Act, or with the Department of Social Development or county government for CBOs); valid certificate of registration or incorporation; registration status is active and in good standing	Compliant/non-compliant
<i>Applications missing any of the above mandatory requirement will be considered non-responsive and therefore will be eliminated at this stage.</i>		
Technical evaluation		
Water source	Existing source with known yield and water quality, or strong potential confirmed by hydrogeological and/or hydrological surveys	40%
Market and demand	Size of population and institutions served; unmet demand; potential for household, institutional and productive (e.g. irrigation, livestock) water use; competition from other sources. <i>NB: The minimum population is 3,000 people (approximately 500 to 600 households, assuming an average rural/peri-urban household size of 5–6 members).</i>	40%
Financial capacity	Ability to raise the 15% contribution; financial track record; bank statements or savings; existing revenue, if any	20%
Total		100%

8. What WaterStarters offers selected franchisees

- **Financing** of the project cost through a blended structure. The franchisee's share is at least 15%. The remainder combines a grant and recoverable finance, repaid from water revenue on terms aligned to the scheme's cash flow. Final terms will be set out in the franchise agreement.
- **Technical design and implementation**, including hydrogeological assessment, system design, solar pumping, storage, distribution, and supervision of works.
- **Smart technology**: prepaid meters and water ATMs, M-Pesa integration, IoT monitoring of water levels, flow and quality, and the WaterStarters Maintenance App.
- **Business development support**: training and coaching in business management, bookkeeping using the WaterStarters bookkeeping module, tariff setting, marketing and customer growth.
- **Operations and maintenance support**, including preventive maintenance systems and backstopping for major repairs.
- **Demand creation through behaviour change communication**
- **Livelihood linkages**, such as climate-smart irrigation demonstrations and market linkages, where relevant.
- **A pathway to full ownership** of the scheme's assets as the recoverable finance is repaid, in line with the franchise agreement.

9. Franchisee responsibilities

Selected franchisees will be expected to:

- Pay the agreed upfront co-investment before construction starts.
- Operate and maintain the scheme and ensure reliable service to customers.
- Collect revenue through agreed prepaid and cashless systems.
- Make regular loan repayments and pay franchise fees as stipulated in the Franchise Agreement.
- Keep accurate financial and operational records and share data through the WaterStarters platforms.
- Maintain the required permits and comply with county and national water regulations.
- Take part in training, monitoring visits and learning activities.

10. Selection process

1. **EOI submission and screening** against the eligibility criteria.
2. **Shortlisting** of the successful applications.
3. **Site visit and assessment:** technical, financial, market and governance assessment, jointly with county water officers where possible.
4. **Hydrogeological and technical feasibility**, where needed.
5. **Business case and financing proposal** agreed with the applicant.
6. **Signing of the franchise agreement** and payment of the co-investment.
7. **Implementation**, followed by commissioning, training and operational support.

11. How to apply

Fill and submit the [Expression of Interest Form](#) on the WaterStarters Website

Deadline: [dd Month 2026, 5:00 pm EAT]. Late submissions will not be considered.

Enquiries: [Name, Title], [email], [phone], by [date]. Answers to common questions will be shared with all applicants.

12. Important notes

- **Amref Health Africa does not charge any fee at any stage of this process.** Be cautious of anyone claiming to represent Amref Health Africa or its affiliates and asking for payment, and report such activity immediately to [fraud reporting contact].
- This call is published on Amref's official website and social media pages, and official emails from Amref Health Africa come only from an @amref.org address. Verify any communication about this call against these channels.
- Submitting an EOI does not commit Amref Health Africa to selecting any applicant or financing any project.
- Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.
- Information provided will be treated confidentially and used only to assess the EOI.
- Amref Health Africa reserves the right to verify all information provided and to reject any application that contains false or misleading information.
- Amref Health Africa is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults, and expects all partners and franchisees to share this commitment.