AFRICAN PROFESSIONALISATION INITIATIVE

Strategy Plan

2021-2023

The African Professionalisation Initiative (API) is a partnership between accountants general, the accountancy profession, supreme audit institutions and accountancy academics in Africa.

Introduction

The African Professionalisation Initiative (API) is a partnership between accountants general, the accountancy profession, supreme audit institutions and accountancy academics in Africa. The partnership was established through a cooperation arrangement between the following regional organisations:

- **The African Organisation of English-speaking Supreme Audit Institutions (AFROSAI-E)**
- **Le Conseil Régional de Formation des Institutions Supérieures de Contrôle des Finances Publiques de l'Afrique Francophone sub-Saharienne (CREFIAF)**
- **The East and Southern African Association of Accountants General (ESAAG)**
- **The Pan African Federation of Accountants (PAFA)**
- **The African Accounting and Finance Association (AAFA)**

The API is contributing to the strengthening of Public Value Management systems in order to achieve value creation, fiscal discipline, effective resource allocation and effective service delivery to citizens. The API has been established to support the growth in capacity of accountancy professionals who have the competencies needed in an evolving public sector role. This will be achieved through support of country-led initiatives that:

1. Strengthen the capacity of incumbents working in accounting and auditing in the public sector.

2. Equip accountancy professionals who seek career opportunities in the public sector with the necessary appreciation of the public sector context.

3. Work with local Professional Accountancy Organisations (PAOs) to include a public sector component in the accounting and auditing education and training curricula.

This strategy plan outlines the approach the API will adopt to achieve its objectives. It describes the initiative's vision, mission and value proposition. It also outlines the four strategy objectives of the API for the next three years. During the strategic period, it is expected that a permanent structure will be formed to house the initiative, as described in the section on the API's structure.

About The Partner Organisations

AFROSAI-E is a member-based institution with 26 Auditors-General from English-speaking African countries making up our Governing Board. The organization was established in 2005 with the shared vision to make a difference in the performance of our member Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs). Through our Executive Secretariat, which is hosted by the Auditor-General of South Africa, members are empowered to optimise their audit performance to comply with the INTOSAI Standards for Supreme Audit Institutions (ISSAIs) and to strengthen their institutional capacity to effectively implement their mandate.

CREFIAF is a member-based organisation for SAIs in French-speaking Sub-Saharan Africa, which was established in Yaoundé, Cameroon in 1997, with the aim of building capacity in the 23 SAIs of French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa. CREFIAF intends to be a catalyst for the promotion of independent and professional SAIs capable of contributing to transparency, a culture of accountability and the performance of public action for the well-being of citizens.Through its Executive Secretariat which is hosted by the SAI of Cameroon, it seeks to enhance the status of its member SAIs on one hand, and contribute to the improvement and harmonization of practices, methods and audit procedures through the adoption of modern standards, the implementation of integrated training and exchange on the other hand.

ESAAG is a member-based Association of Accountants General in the East and Southern region with 15 member countries. The objective of the Association is to strengthen the member countries to perform their roles in executing their PFM and governance roles in the wake of reforms.

PAFA's main objective is to facilitate the accountancy profession working through strategic partnerships in influencing policies that enable the utilisation of resources for the benefit of Africa's citizens to achieve socio – economic transformation. It is a non-profit organisation which is currently made up of fifty-five (55) Professional Accountancy Organizations (PAOs) from forty-four (44) countries. PAFA believes that good governance, accountability, good financial management and transparency are principal pillars in the acceleration of economic development and reduction of poverty. PAFA aims to have member PAOs in all the fifty – five Africa Union member countries.

AAFA is a voluntary non-profit Association bringing together academics, graduate students and practitioners from Africa and the Diaspora interested in accounting and finance education and research. It is at the forefront of efforts in bringing resources and opportunities for the capacity building of African academics in the areas of research and education. In so doing, AAFA's overall aim is to contribute to SDG 9 (specifically SDG 9.5) on enhancing scientific research capabilities and the number of active researchers, hence fostering innovation, while seeking to strengthen the evidence base for policymaking in Africa.

Overview

Countries in Africa tend to face challenges in effective allocation and management of scarce resources resulting in failure to deliver services effectively, efficiently, and economically. This usually results in dissatisfaction by citizens, which is expressed in various forms including service delivery demonstrations.

Among the many contributing factors to this is the inadequacy of accounting and auditing professionals that can provide governments with timely and relevant information for effective and efficient decision making. This situation is further affected by the majority of existing accounting and auditing professionals not being subject to regulation by a professional organisation that is responsible for ensuring continuous up-skilling by the accounting and auditing professionals, generally referred to as continuous professional development (CPD).

Accountancy professionals serving in the public sector need to develop competencies in public financial management (PFM), performance management, public sector accounting and reporting, public sector auditing and raising revenue. Professionals who are equipped with these competencies can add value across the PFM cycle, from planning and budgeting, day-to-day financial and performance management through to reporting, internal audit and external audit. They can operate in all spheres of government including at central, regional and local levels, in public entities and government business entities, in schools, hospitals and large infrastructure projects.

These professionals can:

- Balance regulation and policy with developmental objectives
- Make and support sound decision-making
- Contribute to economic growth without burdening future generations with public debt
- Act as guardians against corruption, illicit financial flows and exploitation of resources that does not benefit the citizens.
- Enhance the accountability of government
- Help ensure that foreign investment benefits their country

The above approach aligns with the African Union (AU)'s vision through its Agenda 2063, which seeks to create "The Africa we want"– an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, driven by its citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena. An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's renaissance.

In line with Agenda 2063 Africa is self-confident in its identity, heritage, culture and shared values and as a strong, united and influential partner on the global stage making its contribution to peace, human progress, peaceful co – existence and welfare. In short, a different and better Africa.

The API identifies with the aspirations of Agenda 2063. It seeks to contribute to their attainment, more specifically through the following aspirations:

Aspiration 1	Aspiration 3	Aspiration 6
A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development.	An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law.	An Africa whose development is people – driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.

The opportunities being presented by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) serve as enablers to the attainment of the API's vision and its strategic objectives.

The Covid-19 pandemic has served as a wake-up call to the African continent to accelerate the rolling out of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCTA). Trade within the continent will reduce the impact of economic disruptions that will be caused by this type of event.

To respond to the needs of the environment the API seeks to create value at a continental level that are premised on the need for local ownership of public value management (PVM) professionalisation efforts. PVM refers to the value created by government through its different actions. It is created by public officials producing desired outcomes within the constraints of the public sector environment.

Public Value Management (PVM)

The concept of public value management is central to the API's view on enhancing financial management in the public sector. Public value management is larger than public financial management.

In their book Chief Value Officer, Professor Mervyn King and Jill Atkins quoting the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) stated 'Over the past few decades, sustainability issues have slowly become mainstream, and there is a shift from the creation of share value to the generation of shared value. Ultimately, creating shared value acknowledges both the work that corporations need to do to reduce negative impacts on society as well as, and more fundamentally, how they can be part of progress on the global challenges such as climate change and enforcement of human rights.'

Public Value Management is seeing the resources of the continent beyond the financial value that is being presented by potential buyers. A lion in a game reserve has more tourism value than the money being offered by a trophy hunter. In the Public Value Management (PVM) system, the minerals underground are not commodities to be traded. They are the continent's capital to provide long term sustainable benefits to its citizens.

An Africa that uses the PVM approach will use its resources as its contribution in entering into agreements with providers of financial capital. Future dealings with financial capital will be based on a partnership with African countries using the value of their resources as 'share contribution ' thereby ensuring the country retains an equity interest in its own resources .

It is with the above context that the API promotes the concept of improved value management and not just improved financial management.

Vision & Mission

THE API's VISION

An African public sector capacitated with competent, ethical and influential professionals who support accountability, transparency and good financial governance.

When this vision is achieved, it will impact the continent through strong governance of public funds enabling service delivery and supporting inclusive growth and sustainable development.

THE API's MISSION

Grow the capacity of accountancy professionals in the African public sector for enhanced service delivery.

Value proposition

The API is working to support African countries to better deliver services to its citizens by:

- producing learning materials that support the enhancement of public sector accounting and auditing competence
- providing professional capacity building support to countries.

The API's competitive advantage is derived from:

- the influence of its partner organisations and their continental reach
- economies of scale that allow the production of quality learning material that are contextually relevant and available at a competitive price
- its long-term focus that avoids quick fixes in favour of sustainable structural change.

The API's structure

The API members are regional organisations (the partner organisations), currently AFROSAI-E, CREFIAF, ESAAG and PAFA. AAFA is currently an official observer to the work of the IOB. The Secretariat is comprised of representatives from the secretariat staff of the partner organisations. The API's governance structure provides oversight to its work and is presently comprised of the following organs:

The Oversight Board (currently the Interim Oversight Board or IOB) provides strategic direction and oversight. It is comprised of accountants general, heads of supreme audit institutions and senior representatives from the accountancy profession.

The Project Steering Group (PSG), comprised of the CEOs (or equivalent) of the partner regional organisations, leads the day-to-day operations and supports the IOB in its work.

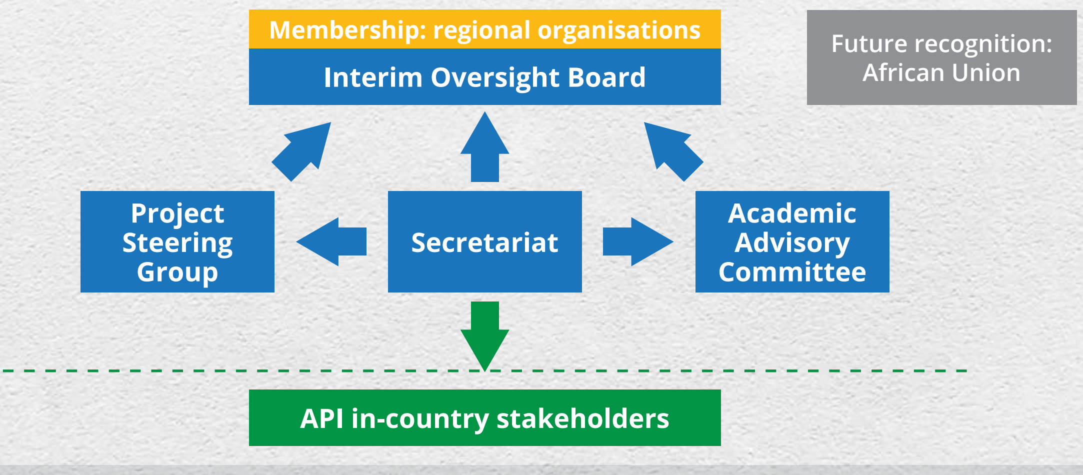
The Academic Advisory Committee (AAC), comprised of experts in public financial management and accountancy education, provides technical support and quality assurance to the development of all API learning resources.

The initiative seeks to have a mutually beneficial working relationship with the African Union (AU), that will eventually lead to recognition of the initiative by the AU.

The API partners are working to form a permanent structure, in the form of an entity or organisation, to house the initiative. The structure will be established by the partner organisations as founding members. The new structure will allow the API to conduct its activities independently in the interests of the respective communities of its members. In a more permanent form, the API will be able to appoint its own secretariat and work to secure its own funding in a sustainable manner. It will also be able to develop, own and leverage its own intellectual property to achieve its mission.

To this end, it is expected that the interim structures described in this section and shown in the below figure will be migrated and adjusted to meet the governance objectives of the new entity.

Figure 1 Current API structure



The API's approach to capacity building

The API was established on the premise that professional capacity building is a long-term endeavour which requires sustained effort to succeed. It recognises the importance of local ownership of capacity building while recognising that regional support can add value and reduce costs.

The API espouses a multi-stakeholder approach to the development and implementation of a professionalisation strategy. This means that all key stakeholders contribute and support its implementation.

The approach looks at building capacity throughout the public financial management cycle and across the public sector, in its broadest definition. This broad-scope approach creates economies of scale which make it possible to invest in learning programmes that are tailored to the country's context. The API is developing generic learning resources in a manner that will enable countries to incorporate local content in line with an approved process.

The API takes a multi-pronged approach to capacity building by looking to various sources for capacity, which also provides focus to its development of generic learning resources. Three main target audiences are emphasised:

Incumbents: senior officials serving in PFM roles but who don't have a professional accountancy background. They have significant experience and expertise but may be lacking in technical accountancy competencies and the practice of accountancy within a framework of professional ethics.

Accounting and auditing professionals who have an interest in accepting a role within the public sector but lack exposure to this environment.

Students: aspiring professionals who have an interest in pursuing a career in public sector accountancy.

In addressing the needs of the above target audiences, the API will also aim to capacitate non-finance officials that are often in decision-making roles, overseeing public finance processes.

The API encourages the implementation of tailored learning programmes for each of these audiences in support of professional capacity building. They each have unique learning needs to develop themselves into a fully-fledged professional accountant who is fit-for-purpose for a role in the public sector.

The API Theory of change

CONTINENTAL COLLABORATION of key players acting as a catalyst to overseeing the implementation of an African solution

Accountants General + Supreme Audit Institutions + Accountancy Profession + Accountancy Academics

TECHNICAL EXPERTS IN AFRICA working together to provide resources to support professionalisation

Generic learning resources. Capacity building approach and implementation support

API OUTPUT

COUNTRY INITIATIVES leveraging off the continental resources

Professional accountancy learning programmes integrating API learning resources Leveraging of the API's capacity building approach and advisory support

API OUTCOME

COUNTRY INITIATIVES

Legislation requiring key PFM positions to be filled by accountancy professionals

Incumbent PFM officials	Accountancy professionals	Students
Accelerated pathway to a professional accountancy designation	Post qualification specialisation in public financial management	Public sector content included in curriculum

COUNTRY OUTPUT

Increased capacity of accountancy professionals in the country's public sector

API IMPACT

An African public sector capacitated with competent, ethical and influential professionals who support accountability, transparency and good financial governance.

Agenda 2063 The Africa we Want

Contributing to... Agenda 2063 (Aspiration 1, 3 and 6)

Strategy objective 1

PROVIDE AND MAKE AVAILABLE QUALITY, INNOVATIVE LEARNING AND OTHER RESOURCES

Core to the value proposition is the development of quality generic learning resources and infrastructure. The generic learning resources will be complemented by country-specific content to ensure relevant learning programmes. All learning resources will go through a rigorous quality assurance process led by the Academic Advisory Committee.

Learning materials will be developed to target specific audiences to support the API's multi-pronged capacity building approach. This will include bespoke learning solutions for:

- **Incumbents:** those currently working in public finance roles but who do not have a formal accountancy background. An accelerated learning programme will be developed which local PAOs can use as part of a pathway to a professional accountancy designation.
- **Existing accounting and auditing professionals:** those professionals who were trained in a private sector context but desire to specialise in public sector. Content will be produced to support post-qualifications specialisations in public financial management.
- **Students:** aspiring accountancy professionals who should be exposed to public sector content and case studies during their initial professional development. Content will be produced which universities, PAOs and private education providers can integrate into their learning content to support the development of public sector competencies in young aspiring professionals.

Content will also be produced to develop basic accountancy competencies in senior officials with non-financial roles. This will be focused on empowering non-finance officials with the skills they need to use financial information in their decision making.

Infrastructure, in the form of an online learning platform "API Learning", will be built and maintained. API Learning will be available for use by PAOs and government training centres to support the delivery of the generic and local learning content.

Other resources will be produced from time-to-time to support the educational objectives of this strategy.

Ultimately, the adoption and incorporation of learning content into local qualification framework and professionalisation programmes will ensure a sustained outcome which, over time, will contribute to the desired impact for African governments.

STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 1: PROVIDE AND MAKE AVAILABLE QUALITY, INNOVATIVE LEARNING AND OTHER RESOURCES			
Key performance indicators	**Target 2021**	**Target 2022**	**Target 2023**
Online learning platform operational and catering to a growing number of learners	Online learning platform live and administered with external support. 200 active learners	Online learning platform live and administered independently by the API secretariat. 500 active learners	Online learning platform live and administered independently by the API secretariat. 1000 active learners
Quality, innovative learning and other resources developed	Completion of learning programmes for incumbents ("accelerated learning") and professional accountants ("specialisation") 1 research output or guidance material	Completion of learning materials for students ("initial professional development") 1 research output or guidance material	Completion of maintenance activities on accelerated learning and specialisation programmes. 1 research output or guidance material
API Learning programmes recognised by PAOs in Africa and integrated into their qualification framework	5 countries	10 countries (cumulative)	15 countries (cumulative)

Strategy objective 2

SUPPORT LOCAL ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The success of the API is dependent on countries choosing to implement its resources and capacity building methodology.

An API implementation will include the development of a professionalisation roadmap for a country that aligns to the API's capacity building methodology (see "The API's approach to capacity building" above). Implementations will include the integration of the API's competency framework and generic learning resources into local qualification frameworks and curricula to ensure that accountancy professionals have the right skillset to be effective in a public sector context.

Implementation support to the first countries to adopt the API approach will be provided by the partner organisations. This use of centralised capacity will allow the resources and capacity building methodology to be tested and refined.

For the API to have a continental impact, implementation support capacity will need to be decentralised across the continent in the medium term. This will allow for a larger number of countries to implement API aligned initiatives at any given time. As the decentralised capacity takes hold, the central secretariat will shift its focus to monitoring continent-wide progress, implementation success and the maintenance of generic resources.

STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 2: SUPPORT LOCAL ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION			
Key performance indicators	**Target 2021**	**Target 2022**	**Target 2023**
API implementations taking place in African countries	3	6 (cumulative)	9 (cumulative)
Growth of professional accountants working in the public sector in supported countries	None	25% growth from baseline in supported countries	50% growth from baseline in supported countries
Establishment of decentralised support network	None	None	10 experts identified and trained

Strategy objective 3

PROMOTE AWARENESS AND SHARED OWNERSHIP THROUGH ADVOCACY AND PUBLICITY

While the API already has a good level of awareness and recognition amongst key stakeholders, advocacy and publicity work will need to be ramped up as it shifts during this strategic period into its implementation phase. Awareness needs to be grown across all African countries. The focus will then shift from awareness to shared ownership of the API. The goal is for African stakeholders to consider the API as their own.

The API partner organisations have committed to include the API as a priority in their individual strategies which represents the seeds of Pan-African ownership. The development of an updated communications plan will direct most of the publicity activities and regular communications. The API's website will be enhanced to make it the go-to place for information and resources on public sector accountancy professionalisation and capacity building.

For the API to be recognised as a truly pan-African initiative it must be relevant to all contexts in Africa, cutting across languages, cultures and regions. Advocacy efforts will need to ensure that no one is left behind. It is recognised that while different countries may have different starting points, our vision of the end game is the same: An African public sector capacitated with competent, ethical and influential professionals who support accountability, transparency and good financial governance.

STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 3: PROMOTE AWARENESS AND SHARED OWNERSHIP THROUGH ADVOCACY AND PUBLICITY			
Key performance indicators	**Target 2021**	**Target 2022**	**Target 2023**
API included as a strategic priority in all partner organisations' strategies	50% of partners' strategies	100% of partners' strategies	100% of partners' strategies
API resources contextualised and translated for different African linguistic contexts	Targeted activities for the Francophone context	All API resources contextualised and translated for Francophone context	Targeted activities for Arabophone and Lusophone contexts
Approved communications plan implemented	80% of communications plan implemented	80% of communications plan implemented	80% of communications plan implemented

Strategy objective 4

BUILD A SUSTAINABLE API

For the API to have its desired impact, it needs to establish itself as a sustainable initiative which can add value to the continent for decades to come. While donor support will remain essential during the period of this strategy, the goal is to reduce this dependence over time.

The API partners will work to establish a separate entity during this period which can hold all intellectual property of the API. The entity will be established under a structure which allows it to earn revenue from its learning resources, advisory support and other activities on a cost-recovery model. The goal is to generate sufficient income to continue to pursue the mission and strategic objectives.

A dedicated secretariat will be a key success factor of the centralised support described in strategic objective 2 and the maintenance of learning resources and administration of API Learning as described in strategic objective 1.

The API recognises that without support from the political leadership of African states it will be unable to achieve its vision for the continent. Recognition of the initiative will be sought from the African Union through the mechanism of the existing memorandum of understanding between PAFA and the AU Commission. Such recognition is expected to result in greater political support at continental, regional and country levels and will help to ensure that the API will have the longevity needed to achieve the vision.

STRATEGY OBJECTIVE 4: BUILD A SUSTAINABLE API			
Key performance indicators	**Target 2021**	**Target 2022**	**Target 2023**
API permanent structure established	Endorsement version of all founding documents finalised	Permanent structure established	Permanent structure operational with a consistent operational and strategic planning cycle
API budget fully funded	Approved funding model	API budget 50% funded	API budget 100% funded
API formally recognised by the African Union	Engagements with AU Commission	Engagements with AU Commission	Formal recognition obtained

Risk register

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	RISK	IMPACT	LIKELIHOOD	IMPACT	MITIGATION
Strategy objective 1 & 4	Insufficient funding obtained to implement the API strategy	Insufficient funding will impact on the API's ability to develop new generic content and establish an independent structure.	Medium	Medium	Funding model designed to reduce dependence on donors. Continuous engagements with potential donors. The risk is somewhat reduced by the commitment of partner organisations and other stakeholders to fund their participation in API and the potential to generate income through learning materials.
Strategy objective 1	Learning materials become outdated	Due to the continual evolvement of accountancy standards, public financial management best practice and the emerging issues, learning material may lose their relevance over time. This could result in a loss of trust in the products of the API.	High	High	A maintenance plan will be in place to ensure learning materials are updated every 2-3 years according to needs. This will be monitored by the AAC.
Strategy objective 2	Lack of adoption by PAOs / governments	The API's theory of change assumes adoption and implementation of API resources at the country level. Without local ownership and alignment to the API's capacity building approach, the API's work will have a significantly reduced impact.	Medium	High	Emphasis on producing high quality, relevant products with participation from as many countries and stakeholders as possible. Programme of country visits and stakeholder engagements (communications plan). API included as a strategic priority in partner organisation's strategies

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	RISK	IMPACT	LIKELIHOOD	IMPACT	MITIGATION
Strategy objective 2	API resources do not adequately take account of different regional or linguistic contexts	API rejected by certain regions / language groups due to perception of it being an Anglophone initiative. The Pan-African aspirations will be impacted if there is not a share ownership. This would reduce the outcomes of the API to specific regions or language groups.	High	Medium	Targeted activities planned for Francophone stakeholders (country visits, workshop, implementation)
Strategy objective 3	The API may lose its relevance to key stakeholders	Loss of interest from key stakeholders. Due to the long-term nature of the API, stakeholders may lose interest overtime. The impact would be that the API is less likely to be accepted by all stakeholders in country level and will reduce the effectiveness of capacity building efforts.	Medium	High	Communications plan. Rollout of accelerated learning product as soon as possible to help secure buy in. Regular meetings of governance structures.
Strategy objective 4	Risk of change in leadership of the partner organisations	Change in the leadership of the partner organisation could negatively affect participation in the initiative, including the participation of the represented stakeholder group.	Medium	Medium	Involvement of partner organisation staff in various API activities, thus building institutional memory.
Strategy objective 4	Insufficient volunteers and staff to deliver on this strategy	Capacity challenges in the partner organisations and/or a reduction in the availability of volunteers will reduce the capability of the API to deliver on this strategy leading to a reduction in the potential impact of the initiative	Medium	High	Establishment of permanent structure with dedicated staffing. Ongoing stakeholder engagement activities to maintain interest and ownership amongst volunteers.

Defining success

The following outcomes will contribute to the API's overall vision of an African public sector capacitated with competent, ethical and influential professionals who support accountability, transparency and good financial governance.

- Increased number of professional accountancy organisations who incorporate public sector competencies into their qualifications and provide support to members working in the public sector
- Growing number of countries who fill senior public finance positions with professional accountants
- Professional accountants playing an active role in supporting and advocating public financial management reforms, including the implementation of International Public Sector Accounting Standards and Public Value Management.
- Improvement in key public financial management indicators (e.g. audit outcomes, PEFA assessments)
- Increased trust in public finance systems in African states by citizens, civil society, donors and the international community.
- Enhanced decision making by governments in the management of country resources for the benefit of citizens through the broader information provided by Public Value Management.
- Significant improvements in service delivery across the continent

Appendix:

HIGH-LEVEL BUDGET

	2021	2022	2023	Total	Funding sources
	USD	USD	USD	USD	
Provide quality, innovative learning and other resources	**329,411**	**407,433**	**14,167**	**751,011**	
- Development and translation	328,022	371,322	0	699,344	Donor
- Maintenance	0	33,333	11,111	44,444	Income from learning materials
- Online learning platform	1,389	2,778	3,056	7,223	Income from learning materials
Support local adoption and implementation	**29,167**	**29,167**	**29,167**	**87,501**	
- Travel costs	29,167	29,167	29,167	87,501	Partner organisations, donor and target countries
Promote awareness and shared ownership through advocacy and publicity	**25,555**	**65,055**	**71,561**	**162,171**	
- Travel costs	19,444	58,333	64,167	141,944	Donor / partner organisations
- Website and promotional materials	6,111	6,722	7,394	20,227	Donor / partner organisations
Build a sustainable API	**294,445**	**429,444**	**493,472**	**1,217,361**	
- Staff costs	263,889	394,444	458,333	1,116,666	Partner organisations (secondments) and donor
- Legal, administrative and meeting costs	30,556	35,000	35,139	100,695	Donor / partner organisations
Total for strategy implementation	**678,578**	**931,099**	**608,367**	**2,218,045**	

Notes

Connect with us on LinkedIn

AFRICAN PROFESSIONALISATION INITIATIVE

https://professionalisation.africa