



Open
Mapping
Hub
LATIN AMERICA
& THE CARIBBEAN

HOT's Eastern and Southern Africa

OPEN MAPPING AWARDS 2026



To Apply: linktr.ee/esahub

USD 1,000: in prizes

USD 500: Open
Mapping Impact
Award

USD 300: Open
Mapping Innovation
Award

USD 200: Inclusive
Open Mapping
Award

Deadline: Rolling basis ends on 31st October

BACKGROUND

Across Africa, many roads, schools, health facilities, water points and drainage systems are missing from maps. Without this data, it is harder to plan services, prepare for disasters, and respond to climate change.

Local mappers are already changing this. They use OpenStreetMap and local knowledge to create open data that communities, governments and humanitarian groups can use. These awards recognise that work.

We are not only asking how much you mapped. We want to know what problem your mapping addressed, who took part, what changed because of your data, and whether the work will last.

The awards will also encourage greater participation of women, girls, marginalised groups and communities that are traditionally underrepresented in technology and geospatial activities.

PURPOSE

The Community Mapping Awards 2026 will recognize and celebrate teams that demonstrate exceptional use of OpenStreetMap, open mapping, geospatial technology and community knowledge to address development challenges in Africa.

The awards will shift the focus from simply:

~~“How much was mapped?”~~

to:

“What problem did the mapping address, who participated, what changed because of the data, and how can the approach create lasting impact?”

The awards will therefore recognise not only the quantity of mapping undertaken, but also impact, innovation, data quality, inclusion, leadership and sustainability.

OBJECTIVES

The awards will aim to:



Recognise and reward young people

Using open mapping to address real community, humanitarian, climate and development challenges.



Promote innovation, inclusion and quality

In the collection, improvement and use of OpenStreetMap and other open geospatial data.



Promote innovation, inclusion and quality

By encouraging sustainable mapping initiatives that can be replicated across communities and countries.

AWARD CATEGORIES

The three awards are intentionally designed to be distinct, so participants are recognised for different forms of excellence rather than competing against one another using the same criteria.

6. PRIZE ALLOCATION

The total prize fund will be USD 1,000, distributed progressively according to the three categories. The amounts are designed to recognize the different categories while ensuring that impact, innovation and inclusion are all valued.

\$500

Open Mapping Impact Award

Real-world impact

\$300

Open Mapping Innovation Award

Innovation & technology

\$200

Inclusive Open Mapping Award

Inclusion & participation

TOTAL

USD 1,000

CATEGORY 1

USD 500: OPEN MAPPING IMPACT AWARD

Our flagship award recognises projects that show the greatest real-world impact through open mapping. We are looking for projects that address community, humanitarian, climate or development challenges and answer the question: *What changed because of your mapping?*

The award should prioritise demonstrated outcomes rather than simply the number of buildings, roads or features mapped.

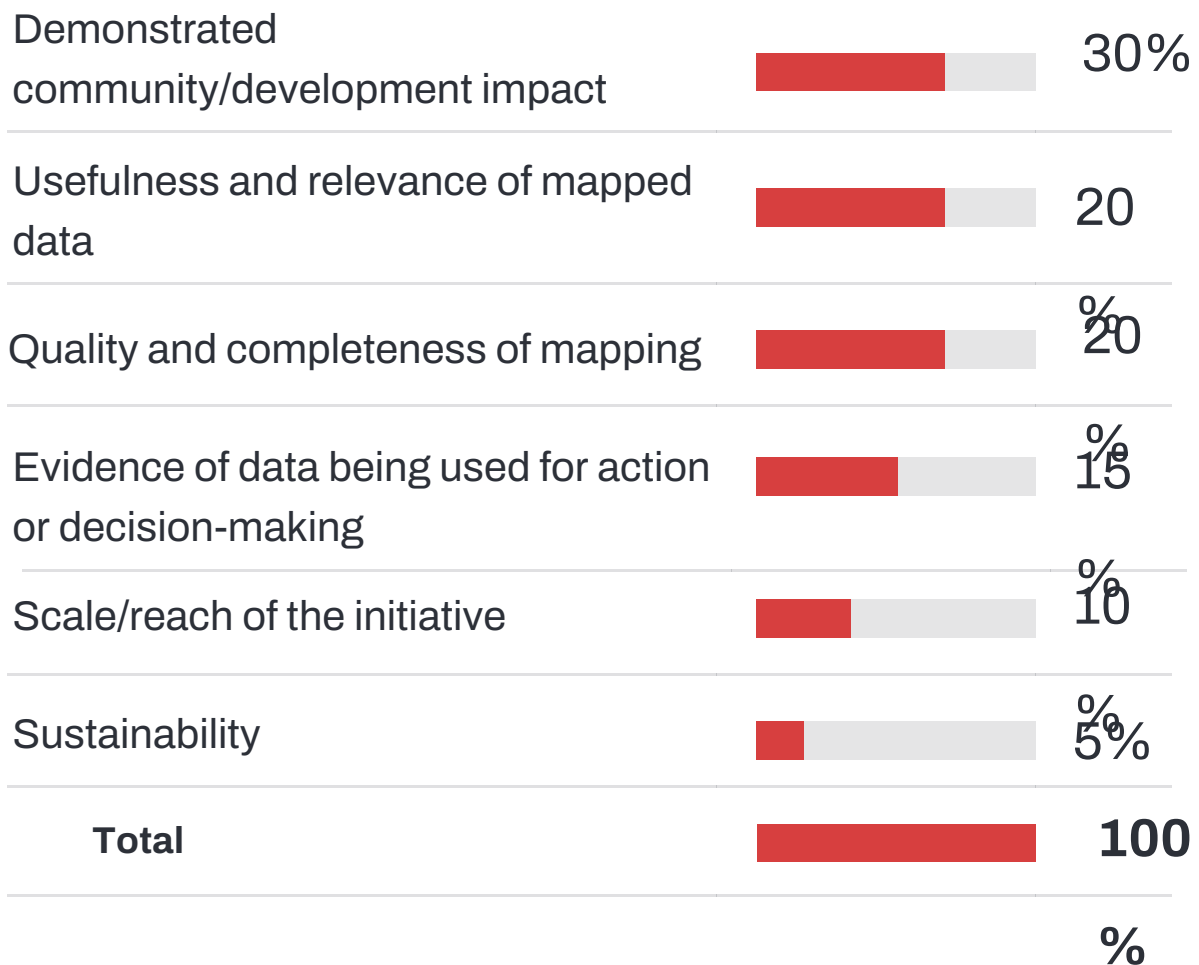
Examples may include mapping that:

- Supports disaster preparedness and response
- Strengthens climate resilience
- Identifies critical infrastructure gaps
- Improves understanding of health or education services
- Supports humanitarian response
- Helps communities or organisations make better decisions
- Provides data for planning and service delivery

SELECTION CRITERIA: CATEGORY 1

KEY QUESTION

What changed because of this mapping project?



CATEGORY 2

USD 300 : OPEN MAPPING INNOVATION AWARD

For the most creative approach to open mapping. Innovation does not have to mean advanced technology. A simple, low-cost idea that solves a real local problem counts. We are looking for projects that answer: *What did you do differently or better?*

Innovation could include:

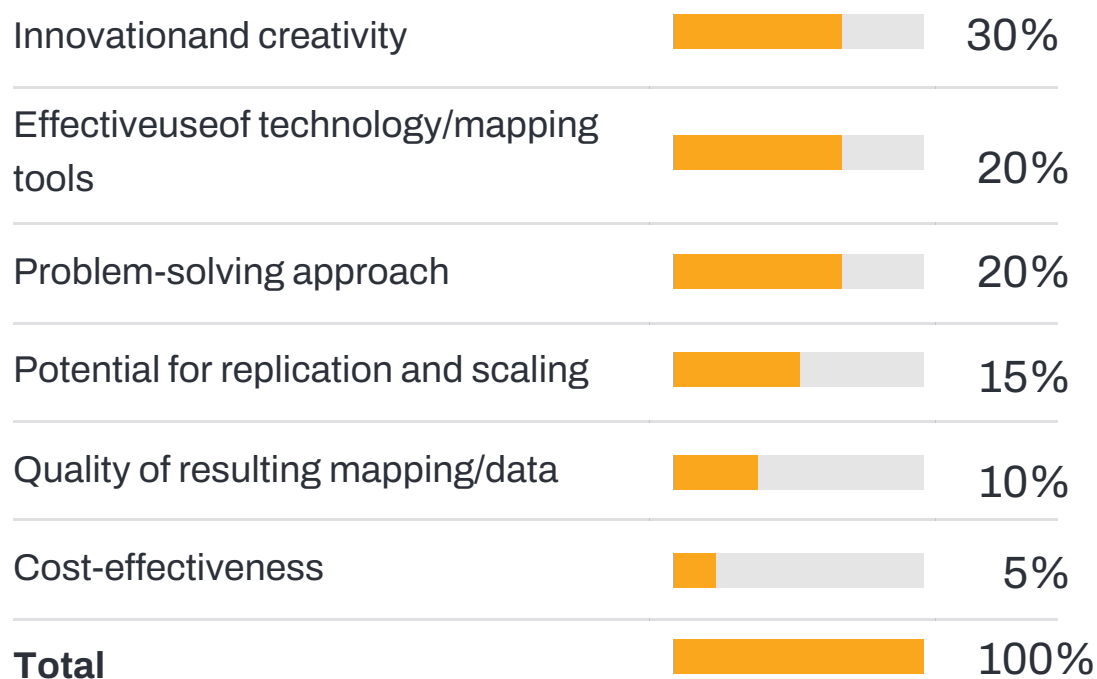
- Creative use of OpenStreetMap
- AI-assisted mapping
- Mobile mapping
- Remote mapping
- Innovative field data collection
- Community-led mapping
- Innovative mapathons
- Data visualisation
- New approaches to mapping hard-to-reach areas
- Approaches that make mapping easier and more accessible

Importantly, innovation does not have to mean advanced technology. A simple, low-cost approach that solves a significant local problem can be more innovative than an expensive technical solution.

SELECTION CRITERIA: CATEGORY 2

KEY QUESTION

What did this applicant do differently or better?



CATEGORY 3

USD:200 INCLUSIVE OPEN MAPPING AWARD

For mapping that meaningfully involves people often left out of technology and mapping. We look at how people took part, not just how many. We are looking for projects that answer: *Who helped create the map, and how did they make it better?*

It will recognize projects that deliberately involve:

- Women and girls
- Rural communities
- Marginalised communities
- Persons with disabilities
- People with limited digital access
- Low-income communities
- Other groups traditionally underrepresented in technology and geospatial activities

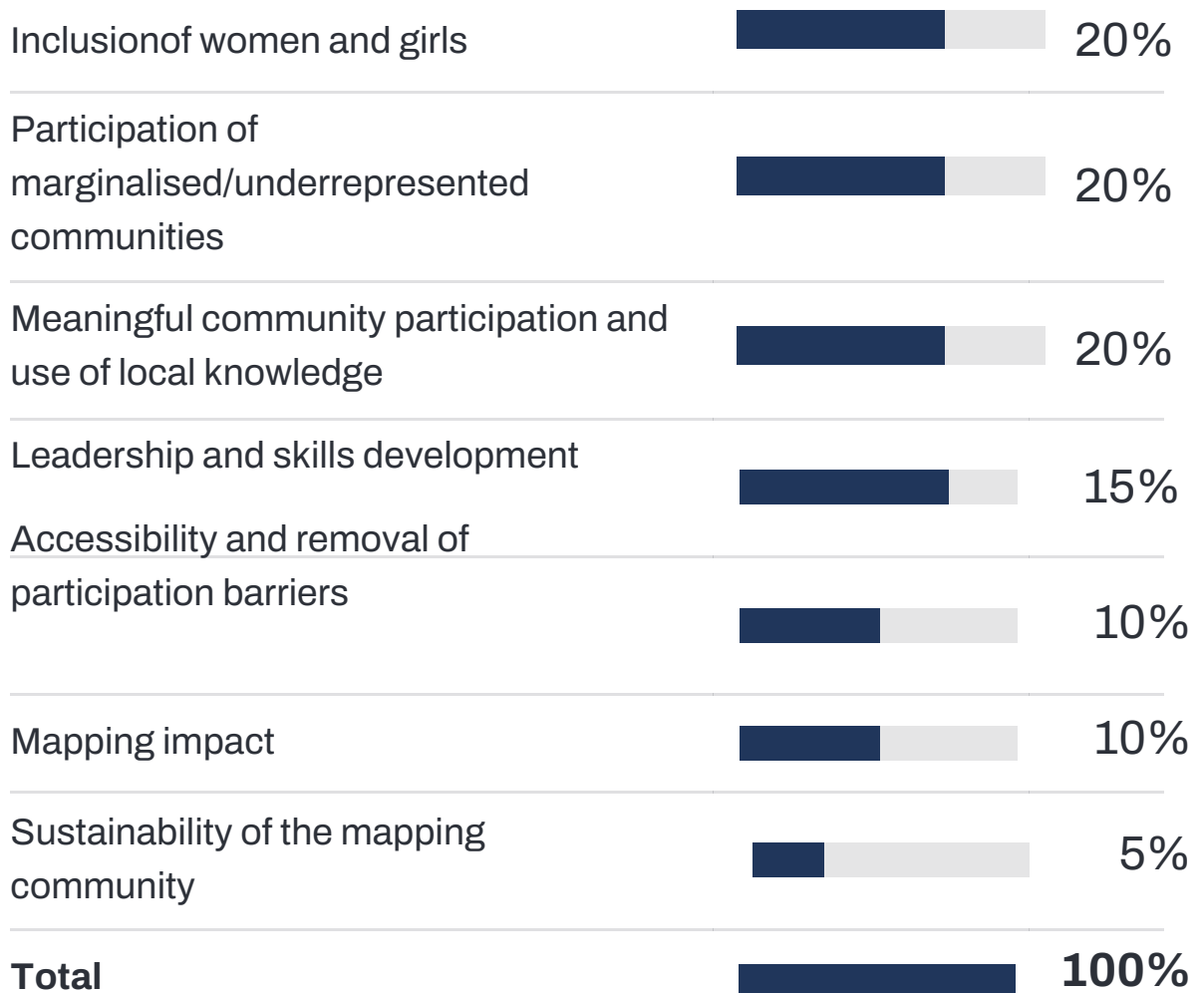
The award should focus on meaningful participation rather than numbers alone.

For example, an applicant should not receive full marks simply because 100 women participated in a mapathon. The jury should consider whether those women helped define the mapping priorities, collected or validated data, developed skills, took leadership roles and benefited from the project.

SELECTION CRITERIA: CATEGORY 3

KEY QUESTION

Who was included in creating the map, and how did their participation make the project better?



ELIGIBILITY

The awards may be open to:

Groups in Eastern and Southern Africa

- A mapping team
- YouthMappers chapters
- university or student group
- A community-based organisation, NGO or social enterprise
- OpenStreetMap communities and mapping groups

Applicants should demonstrate meaningful use of OpenStreetMap, open mapping or open geospatial data.

Projects may be:

Completed projects with demonstrated results

Ongoing projects with evidence of impact

Pilot initiatives with promising results

EVIDENCE REQUIRED

Applicants should provide evidence demonstrating their achievements.

This may include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ■ OpenStreetMap project or campaign links | ■ Photos of field activities |
| ■ Number and type of features mapped | ■ Community testimonials |
| ■ The number and type of features you mapped | ■ Evidence of data use |
| ■ Maps or dashboards | ■ Partner or community endorsements |
| ■ Before-and-after examples | ■ Reports or other project documentation |

The evidence requirement should remain accessible to all applicants and should not disadvantage applicants who do not have professional GIS or proposal-writing experience.

1

Stage 1 — Eligibility Screening

We check each application against the basic requirements.

2

Stage 2 — Jury Assessment

Eligible applications are independently scored using the criteria for their respective category.

The jury would ideally include expertise in:

Open mapping/OSM

Engagement styles

GIS/geospatial technology

Humanitarian/development work

Climate resilience

Gender and inclusion

Community engagement

3

Stage 3 — Finalist Presentation

Shortlisted finalists will present their project to the jury in a short pitch.

The final decision should be based on the quality of the evidence, the scoring criteria, and the applicant's ability to demonstrate the value of their work.

Timeline

CALL FOR
PARTICIPATION/
NOMINATIONS

October

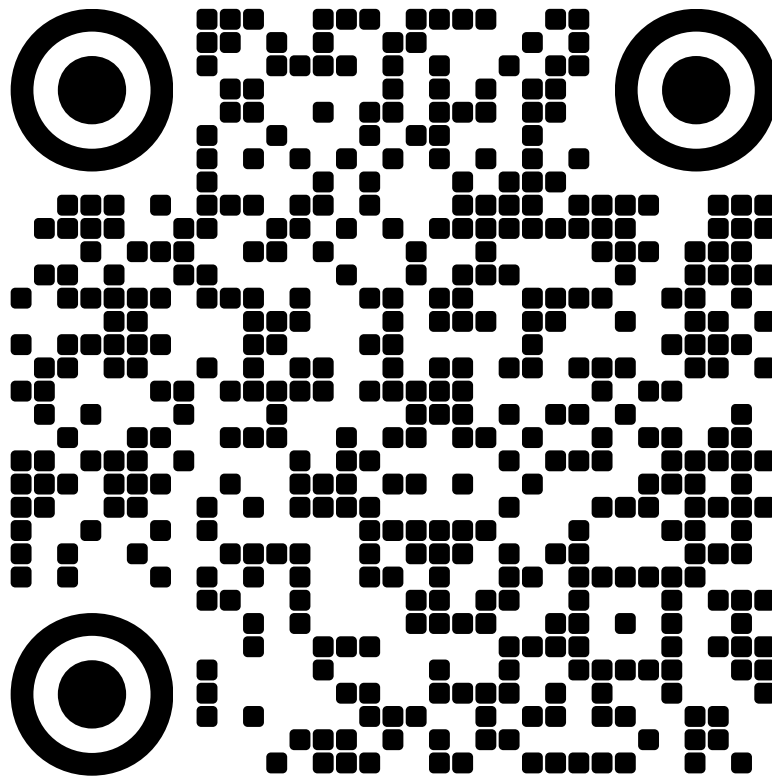
SELECTION

First two
weeks of
November

AWARD

November
18

SCAN TO APPLY



OR USE THIS LINK

<https://linktr.ee/esahub>

Email us at esahub-info@hotosm.org.

9. AWARD PHILOSOPHY

The three categories are designed to recognise different dimensions of excellence in open mapping:

**MAP WHAT
MATTERS.
INNOVATE HOW
YOU MAP.**

**INCLUDE THOSE
WHO ARE OFTEN
LEFT BEHIND.**

Ultimately, the awards seek to demonstrate that open mapping is more than creating maps. It is a way for people to transform local knowledge into open data, open data into evidence, and evidence into meaningful community action and sustainable development.



Humanitarian
OpenStreetMap
Team



Open
Mapping
Hub
EASTERN &
SOUTHERN AFRICA