operra

the knowledge infrastructure for essential services

water · sanitation · solid waste — founded by Sparkoper · operra.foundation

FUNDING DOSSIER

the barrier to ai in essential services isn’t technology. it’s data.

2026

THE ONE LINE

we structure utilities' data — then train their teams to use ai on it.

Operra is the first AI-native foundation for essential services. We structure the operational data of water, sanitation and solid-waste utilities in the Global South, train their teams to use AI on it, publish open maintenance reference frameworks, and provide continuous post-training support through a sector-specific AI assistant.

the trigger — proof in one breath

2,000
inactive meters
lost revenue

35%
miscategorised complaints
service inefficiency

3
trucks on irregular routes
route anomalies

In one utility's structured data, AI surfaced exactly this. That moment — a technical director seeing what their own data reveals — is what converts "AI" from an abstraction into a decision. We delivered it with **NWSC Uganda, in partnership with SUEZ (Dec 2025) — SUEZ-certified.** What utilities do next with these findings — the operational outcomes — is the first deliverable of Year 1, not a claim we make today.

why now — two things just flipped

TO RUN ONE UTILITY'S AI	~~too expensive~~ → **a few hundred € a year**	↓ ~10× cheaper per year — IEA 2026
TO STRUCTURE ITS RAW DATA	~~not good enough~~ → **done in minutes**	

a lean ask, maximum leverage

EUR 120K in cash funds Operra's full first year — all three programs:

AI training for utility operators (200 people, 3–5 countries, 18 months)	**EUR 120,000**
Maintenance reference framework (open, Creative Commons)	**EUR 60,000**
Digital observatory (annual report + seminar)	**EUR 40,000**
Total Year-1 budget	**EUR 220,000**

- **Over 85%** of every euro reaches programs directly.
- Sparkoper **co-finances 40–50% in kind**; your EUR 120K cash + in-kind covers the full EUR 220K.
- A modest cheque + in-kind co-financing → a multi-country program. Unusual leverage for the sector.

YOU FUND AN EXISTING ECOSYSTEM, NOT A PROMISE

~500
managers · 200 cities · 54 countries

97 / 98
equipment categories & procedures — built

live
sector AI assistant, deployed & operational

independent by design

Operra is a legally independent endowment fund (fonds de dotation), founded by Sparkoper and transparent about it: independent board majority, founder with no veto and systematic recusal, market-rate pricing, certified accounts. Operra trains on AI in general, not on Sparkoper products; utilities stay free to choose any provider, and their data is reused only with their explicit consent. The overlap with Sparkoper is disclosed and managed, not denied.

Your investment advances SDG 6 (water and sanitation) and SDG 11 (sustainable cities) — with results measurable in real time, not in a three-year report.

talk to the team → operra.foundation

ANNEX — DETAIL FOR THOSE WHO DIG

the full picture

1 · who we serve — and who we are not for

Among the 10,000+ operators tracked globally, **2,000–3,000 intermediate-size urban utilities** already have the connectivity and minimal digital base (email, WhatsApp, Excel) to benefit from AI now. We deliberately do **not** target the most fragile rural operators: they need basic infrastructure first, the role of other actors (WaterAid, World Bank, bilateral programs). Knowing who we are not for is as important as knowing who we are for.

2 · the problem — data, not ai

Complaints arrive by phone and end up in a notebook. Field interventions sit in paper registers, if recorded at all. Meter readings are hand-copied into disconnected spreadsheets. AI cannot work with this — not because AI is limited, but because there is nothing to analyse. The real barrier to adoption isn't technology. It's data. The trajectory is: **raw → structured → analyzable → AI insights → operational decisions.** Operra accompanies the first two steps — the real bottleneck.

3 · what we do — three programs, one method

Program 1 — Train (data-first). Before training, our team collects the utility's raw data; AI cleans, structures and categorises it. During training, participants see their own data turned into insights — the trigger. After training, the lasting change is that the utility begins to structure its data: standardised complaint forms, digital intervention reports. Cost to the utility: a smartphone and an internet connection.

Program 2 — Publish. Open, living maintenance reference frameworks, organised by sector, equipment type and context, multilingual. Each adapted template enriches the framework for the next similar utility.

Program 3 — Support. A sector-specific AI assistant accompanies each utility after training. It runs on existing Sparkoper infrastructure; marginal cost is a few hundred euros a year per utility. The assistant can be backed by a proprietary or an open-source model — sovereign or not — according to the utility's data-protection requirements.

Tools, data and sovereignty. Operra's trainings use the best available AI tools; most are third-party and not necessarily sovereign. That trade-off is not hidden — digital sovereignty and data protection are explicit topics in every training, where open-source and sovereign alternatives are presented so each utility chooses with eyes open.

The learning effect. Every utility trained makes the shared knowledge base better for all the others; we estimate it becomes materially useful at ~50 utilities, within the first 18 months. This is a learning effect — the framework compounds with use.

4 · proof — proven vs projected

● PROVEN TODAY

- NWSC Uganda: 4-day AI training with SUEZ for ~50 senior managers (Dec 2025); SUEZ-certified; training-of-trainers phase 2 (~50) scheduled May 2026.
- Knowledge base of 97 equipment categories and 98 procedures, built.
- A sector AI assistant, deployed and operational.
- An existing network of ~500 managers across 200 cities and 54 countries.

◌ PROJECTED

- 200 people trained across 3–5 countries in 18 months.
- Continuous post-training support at network scale.
- First documented outcome data from early adopters (Year 1).

Early indicators at NWSC: a spontaneous request for phase 2, integration of AI use cases into NWSC's internal curriculum, reuse of the structured-data templates. To be clear: what NWSC proved is the diagnostic and the trigger. **Outcome data — operational results from adoption — is the first deliverable of the funded Year 1, not something we claim today.**

5 · why now

The cost of an AI task keeps falling by roughly an order of magnitude a year (IEA, 2026), and today's models structure raw exports in minutes. Two years ago, neither was true. Operra does not start from zero: the wider ecosystem — the AgroParisTech "Water for All" Chair (~500 managers across 200 cities in 54 countries) and the AI Club for Water Utilities (~26 utilities) — is the pool from which Operra builds its **own** opt-in community of operators. Jean-Antoine Faby, who led the Chair for 15 years, becomes Board President. Before its first funded program, Operra co-publishes with AgroParisTech an **AI Readiness Barometer** (summer 2026, September at the latest); its first results will be published with the names, number and water utilities surveyed — making Operra's own community tangible and verifiable.

6 · the economics & the ask

The Year-1 program budget is **EUR 220,000**, across three programs:

PROGRAM	YEAR-1 BUDGET
AI training for utility operators (200 people, 3–5 countries, 18 months)	EUR 120,000
Maintenance reference framework (open, Creative Commons)	EUR 60,000
Digital observatory (annual report + seminar)	EUR 40,000

Sparkoper co-finances **40–50% in kind** through a documented sponsorship agreement. The foundation needs **EUR 120K in cash**, which together with Sparkoper's in-kind contribution covers the full EUR 220K. Over **85%** of every euro goes directly to programs; validation workshops are hybrid to control costs.

Sustainability — stated plainly. This is a grant-funded public good, and it is designed to stay one. The target utilities do not have the budget to pay for the training or for the AI that runs after it; even the ~EUR 600 per person is grant-covered, not utility-paid. Modest cost recovery may emerge over time — symbolic contributions, paid advanced services for the few solvent utilities, academic co-publications — but it will

offset costs, not replace grants. Read Operra as durable capacity-building infrastructure, not a business on a path to self-financing.

7 · governance & independence

Operra is a legally independent endowment fund, founded by Sparkoper and openly symbiotic with it: Operra owns and publishes the open knowledge; Sparkoper keeps its proprietary data and platform. Guardrails: **independent board majority; founder has no veto; systematic recusal from any Sparkoper-related vote; market-rate pricing with competitive bidding possible; certified accounts and an annual report disclosing Sparkoper expenditure.** Utility data remains the utility's property; structured datasets are delivered back to the utility; the AI assistant stores no conversation history. This aligns with the African Union's Data Policy Framework.

8 · the people & continuity

Julien Guittet — Founder & Executive Director. Former SUEZ subsidiary director (180 staff; 70 service contracts; 4 plants serving 600,000 people; EUR 60M). MBA IE Business School. Creator and CEO of Sparkoper. Lecturer at AgroParisTech.

Jean-Antoine Faby — Board President (from summer 2026). Director of the AgroParisTech–SUEZ "Water for All" Chair since 2009; ~500 managers trained from 54 countries; 4 African Centers of Excellence; co-lead of a Center of Excellence in urban solid waste with the University of Lomé (2026).

Operational continuity. Operra is built on an enduring ecosystem. Delivery draws on institutional partners — the AgroParisTech "Water for All" Chair and its network of certified trainers, SUEZ, and four African Centers of Excellence — and on a training-of-trainers model that progressively places delivery with local certified trainers. Training content is fully documented and modular, and the AI-native model carries much of the production, data structuring and post-training support. Day-to-day coordination is held by a dedicated team member on a permanent contract from September 2026.

9 · your return on investment

- **Year 1** — 30–50 utilities, 3–5 countries, reference framework v1, AI Readiness Barometer co-published, first learning effects measurable.
- **Years 2–3** — 200+ utilities, 10+ countries; the AI assistant becomes the sector reference.
- **Year 5** — 500+ utilities (15–25% of the addressable 2,000–3,000), 20 countries.

Measurable in real time: utilities connected, questions processed by the AI assistant, templates adopted, digital maturity via the Barometer. No three-year wait for a final report.

10 · what you fund — and what you get

Framed from the funder's perspective, not ours.

Alignment. Operra advances **SDG 6** (clean water and sanitation), **SDG 11** (sustainable cities) and **SDG 9** (resilient infrastructure and innovation); it contributes to **SDG 13** through resource efficiency (leak and loss reduction) and to **SDG 17** through institutional partnership.

- Results you can measure in real time — not a final report in three years.
- A replicable, low-overhead model: over 85% of every euro on programs.
- Recognition as a founding funder of the first AI-native foundation for essential services, with transparent reporting and certified accounts.
- Leverage: your cash is matched by Sparkoper's in-kind co-financing and amplified across a multi-country network.

11 · risks & mitigations

RISK	HOW WE MANAGE IT
Adoption — a 4-day trigger may not shift entrenched paper workflows	Training-of-trainers, post-training AI assistant, local certified champions, 3- and 6-month adoption surveys as standard
Outcome evidence is not yet in	Outcome data is the explicit first deliverable of Year 1; we report what utilities do, not just what AI surfaced
Conflict of interest with Sparkoper	Independent board majority, founder recusal, market-rate pricing, certified accounts; utilities free to choose any vendor; data reused only with the utility's consent; the symbiosis is disclosed, not denied
Grant dependency	Stated plainly — this is a grant-funded public good; modest cost recovery offsets, it does not replace, grants
Key person	Operra's network is its own — opt-in and documented through the Barometer (summer 2026); delivery rests on institutional partners and a training-of-trainers model, not one person
Data protection & sovereignty	Sovereignty and data protection are explicit training topics; open-source / sovereign options offered; utility data stays the utility's; the assistant stores no conversation history

12 · track record

Operra is founded by Sparkoper, which has deployed digital platforms (complaint management, maintenance, AI assistants) for water utilities across 6 countries for over 5 years (Angola, Brazil, Kenya, Uzbekistan), on its own proprietary, digitally sovereign platform.

Note on environmental footprint. At 50 utilities generating 500–1,000 AI queries/day, total consumption is ~55–110 kWh/year — a European household's use for 2–4 days. A single undetected leak wastes hundreds of thousands of litres pumped, treated and distributed with energy. Operational AI in water is strongly net-positive.