**Contracting Authority**: European Commission

European Neighbourhood Instrument
Regional East Civil Society Facility 2018

Strategic Partnerships for Capacity Development of Civil Society Organisations in the Eastern Partnership

Guidelines for framework partnership and grant applicants

Budget line(s): BGUE-B2018-22.040201-C1-NEAR

Reference:
EuropeAid/164964/DH/FPA/Multi

Deadline for submission[[1]](#footnote-2) of full application:

05/09/2019 at 12:00 (Brussels date and time)

NOTICE

This is a call for proposals to establish Strategic Partnerships, understood as a long-term cooperation mechanism through Financial Framework Partnership Agreements and grants to co-finance their implementation. The establishment of a Financial Framework Partnership Agreement does not guarantee the allocation of a grant.

This is an open call for proposals, where all documents are submitted together (Framework Partnership application forms and specific grant application). In the first instance, only the Framework Partnership applications will be evaluated. An eligibility check will be performed for each FFPA application. Eligibility will be checked on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the Contracting Authority and the signed ‘Declaration by the Applicant’ sent together with the application. Only Framework Partnership Applications from Applicants having passed the eligibility check will be evaluated. Thereafter, the lead applicants who have been selected will sign a Financial Framework Partnership Agreement, and their specific grant applications will be evaluated. The successful grant applications will then result in the signature of Specific Grant Agreements.

At a later stage, additional grants may be awarded, for which eligibility would be restricted to organisations having signed an FFPA with the EU under the present call. The procedure for awarding specific grants within the FFPA is specified in the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement template.

**Online submission via PROSPECT**

**To apply to this call for proposals, organisations must register in PADOR and submit their application in PROSPECT (see section 2.2.2 of the guidelines).** The aim of PROSPECT is to increase the efficiency of the management of the call for proposals and to offer a better service to civil society organisations through a new panel of functionalities such as the on-line submission and the possibility to follow up online the status of their application.

Information sessions will be held in webinar format.

Should you be interested in this session, please send an email by 24 June 2019 to capacitybuilding@eapcivilsociety.eu, indicating: name, surname, nationality and email address of the persons who are interested to be informed about these webinars. No costs incurred by the applicants for attending this information session are reimbursable.

All organisations can find the e-learning (Annex L) and the PROSPECT users' manual (Annex M) and the FAQ published together with the documents of this call. You may also contact our technical support team via the online support form in PROSPECT[[2]](#footnote-3).

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1. Strategic Partnerships for Capacity Development of Civil Society Organisations in the Eastern Partnership

**1.1 Background**

The Joint Declaration adopted by the EU Member States and all 6 Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries[[3]](#footnote-4) at the 5th Eastern Partnership Summit in 2017 recognised the role of civil society in achieving the 20 Deliverables for 2020 and stated that a 'broadened outreach and targeted support to grassroots civil society organisations and social partners, remains an integral part of this [the Eastern] Partnership'.

The Civil Society Facility was set up in 2011 to support the role of civil society in advancing democratic reforms across the Neighbourhood. The Neighbourhood East regional component of the Civil Society Facility aims to underpin existing support and ensure continuity of relevant civil society support in the wider eastern neighbourhood. To that regard, the actions proposed take into account the achievements of relevant regional policies – ie the objectives of the Eastern Partnership, global EU commitments in relation to civil society – i.e. the recognition of civil society organisations (CSOs) as governance actors (as per the 2012 Communication "The Roots of Democracy and sustainable development: Europe's Engagement with Civil Society in External Relations", and subsequent *Council Conclusions[[4]](#footnote-5)*) and drivers of societal resilience (as per EU's Global Strategy), as well as country specific policies – as outlined in the Country Roadmaps for EU Engagement with Civil Society.

Capacity development of CSOs is one of the three areas where the EU is focusing its efforts. In the Neighbourhood East, recent measurements (ie USAID CSO Sustainability Index) are already capturing the effects on EU's support in Eastern Partnership countries. Continuing this momentum, the EU is anticipating its future generation of capacity development programmes in the region by establishing a pool of framework partners that wish to contribute to increasing capacity of CSOs across the region.

The Call for Proposals aims to help establish such a pool of highly capable and trusted organisations, with which the European commission will sign Financial Framework Partnership Agreements (FFPA-s) in order to enhance cooperation and coordination of actions and initiatives which strengthen the role of CSOs as governance actors in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood. Together with current projects and future initiatives, these partnerships should increase the impact of EU capacity development actions across the wider Eastern Neighbourhood. The financing in this particular call is made available through the Regional East Civil Society Facility 2018. Future funding earmarked for Framework Partners may be available for framework partners from bilateral and regional envelopes.

**1.2 Objectives of the programme and priority issues**

Framework partners will be selected in order to, jointly with the EU, advance the role of civil society as governance actors in the Eastern Partnership, either through country or regional actions.

The **global objective** of this call for proposals is to strengthen the role of CSOs as governance actors in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood.

The **specific objective(s)** of this call for proposal are:

* to establish a pool of framework partners that share's EU's vision on capacity development across the Eastern Neighbourhood and establish a framework of enhanced cooperation based on mutual interests and common general objectives;
* to award specific grant agreements to a limited number of those framework partners, in order to increase capacities of CSOs and reinforce their role in the democratisation process in Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation.

Within this call for proposals the EU is aiming to select a total of up to 12 strategic partners and conclude Financial Framework Partnership Agreements with organisations that through their vision and actions, including financial support to third parties:

* design and test new ways (financing tools) to fund CSOs and work towards improving CSOs’ financial sustainability;
* adjust capacity development programmes to the specificities of the local communities;
* support CSOs in their own outreach and engagement with citizens and communities;
* support the development of professional not-for-profit management and strengthen internal control and governance;
* advance regional and thematic policy dialogue between civil society and relevant stakeholders.

The Financial Framework Partnership Agreements will constitute the basis for a medium term cooperation framework between the Commission and specific beneficiaries. The Commission intends to set up a network of Framework Partners which will enable regular communication and coordination (collectively and individually) on topics of mutual interest and in line with common objectives.

Amongst the selected Framework Partners, specific grants will be awarded to a limited number of organisations in order to:

* Conduct activities to strengthen the capacities of CSOs to participate in the democratisation process in Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation and become better communicators of their work.
* Provide Financial Support to Third Parties in Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation, and provide step-by-step support in the implementation of project funding received through, coupled with oversight of the organisations' own development strategies and ambitions.
* Coordinate appropriately with EU Delegations and relevant donors on the implementation and monitoring of supported initiatives.

Within the context of the current call for proposals, the application form consists of a Framework Partnership Application Form and a Specific Grant Application Form, and this call is structured in two phases:

1. During the first phase, strategic partners will be selected on the basis of their Framework Partnership applications (part 1 of the application form), and their partnership with the EU will be formalised through a Financial Framework Partnership Agreement (FFPA). The target group for such partnerships are organisations with significant experience in providing support (including financial) to civil society organisations, either in one of the EaP countries, or across the Eastern Neighbourhood region. This FFPA will be based on the common political objectives shared by the EU and the applicant’s strategic plan, and will define the respective roles and responsibilities of the Commission and its strategic partner in implementing the partnership. Strategic Partnerships will take into account the following aspects:
* Mutual interest and common general objectives shared by the Commission and its partners in pursuing the European Union policy on cooperation to development;
* Relevance and impact of planned actions on challenges and citizens in the Eastern Partnership and the wider region by contributing to advancing the role of civil society as a governance actor, informing decisions, sharing best practices and engaging stakeholders.

The evaluation will be based on the criteria specified in section 2.3. Step 3 “Evaluation And Selection Of Framework Partnership Application” and included in the evaluation grid, among which the competences, experience, expertise and capacity of the organisation as well as the relevance, coherence, quality, effectiveness and potential impact of their strategic plan translating in operational terms the objectives of the organisation.

The successful applicants of the first phase of this call for proposals will establish a Financial Framework Partnership Agreement with the EU. Their Specific Grant Application Form will be evaluated in the second stage of the present call.

**Signature of an FFPA does not guarantee that the beneficiary will be awarded a grant.**

**The financial allocations, as well as the size of grants, relate exclusively to the second phase of the selection process: the Specific Grants.**

1. During the second phase, beneficiaries of a Specific Grant will be selected among the awarded partners of the first phase, on the basis of their Specific Grant applications (part 2 of the application form). Specific Grant Agreements will provide financial support to implement an action in line with the objectives and terms of the strategic partnership, instrumental to reaching political priorities and objectives which are shared between the EU and its partners. The Selection criteria for this second phase are explained in section 2.3. Step 6 “Evaluation and selection of the specific grant application”.

The scope of the established Financial Framework Partnership Agreements will go beyond the present call for proposals, and Framework Partners may benefit from future bilateral and regional EU funding for civil society support in the Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation. The list of selected partners will be made available to all European Commission services and EU Delegations, who can launch calls for specific grants to those framework partners only. Funding for such specific grants can come from any programme of the European Commission, in case similar objectives as those identified under the strategic partnership and described in the FFPAs are supported. The procedure for awarding specific grants within the FFPA is specified in the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement template – Annex G.

**Lots under this call for proposals:**

The call for proposals is divided into different lots per types of civil society actors. Framework Partnership and Specific Grant Applications must target **one or two** of the following lots:

Lot 1: Capacity building of CSOs in at least 3 countries of the Eastern Partnership and the Russian Federation

Lot 2 Capacity building of CSOs in Ukraine

**1.3 Financial allocation provided by the contracting authority**

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is **EUR 5 000 000**. The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

**Indicative allocation of funds by lot:**

**Lot 1: EUR 4 200 000**

**Lot 2: EUR 800 000**

If the allocation indicated for a specific lot cannot be used due to insufficient quality or number of proposals received, the contracting authority reserves the right to reallocate the remaining funds to (an)other lot(s).

**Size of grants**

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts:

**For Lot 1:**

* minimum amount: EUR 750 000
* maximum amount: EUR 1 400 000

**For Lot 2:**

* minimum amount: EUR 600 000
* maximum amount: EUR 800 000

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall between the following minimum and maximum percentages of total eligible costs of the action:

* Minimum percentage: 55 % of the total eligible costs of the action.
* Maximum percentage: 90 % of the total eligible costs of the action (see also Section 2.1.6).

Any grant requested under this call for proposals which includes in the proposed budget in-kind contributions (including volunteer’s work) and/or non-eligible taxes must further be limited to 20% of the estimated total accepted costs[[5]](#footnote-6). In case during the implementation of the action progress and final reports show that the total accepted costs are equal to the total eligible costs, the percentage applicable to the total accepted costs applies to the total eligible costs to ensure the required co-financing.

Wherever in the call for proposals a reference to the percentage of eligible costs is made, the further limitation to the percentage applicable to the total accepted costs will apply. As a reminder, before sending your application please check that the requested contribution is equal to or less than the maximum percentage of the estimated total accepted costs allowed.

The balance (i.e. the difference between the total cost of the action and the amount requested from the contracting authority) must be financed from sources other than the general budget of the Union.

The grant may cover the entire eligible costs of the action if this is deemed essential to carry it out. If that is the case, the lead applicant must justify full financing in Section 2.1 of Part B of the grant application form. The validity of the justification provided will be examined during the evaluation procedure. The absence of any justification may lead to the rejection of the application.

1. Rules FOR thIS call for proposalS

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the actions financed under this call, in conformity with the practical guide, which is applicable to the present call (available on the internet at this address <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prag/document.do?locale=en>).[[6]](#footnote-7)

**2.1 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

1. the actors:
* The ‘**lead applicant’**, i.e. the entity submitting the application form (2.1.1),
* and, if any, **affiliated entity(ies)** to the lead applicant. (2.1.2);
1. the Strategic plans and related actions

Actions for which a specific grant may be awarded (2.1.5);

1. the costs:
* types of cost that may be taken into account in setting the amount of the grant (2.1.6).

***2.1.1 Eligibility of applicants***

**Lead applicant**

(1) In order to be eligible for a grant, the lead applicant must:

* be a legal person **and**
* be non-profit-making **and**
* be a civil society organisation[[7]](#footnote-8) **and**
* be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with the affiliated entity(ies), not acting as an intermediary a**nd**

**For Lot 1:**

* be established in[[8]](#footnote-9):

**i. EU partner countries** eligible for Union funding under the European Neighbourhood Instrument established by Regulation (EU) No232/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council (the ‘European Neighbourhood Instrument’) including the Russian Federation;

**ii. the EU Member States** and contracting parties to the Agreement on the European Economic Area.

**and**

* have recent proven experience of at least 3 years (since 2015) in implementing CSO capacity building activities in at least three countries from the Eastern Partnership[[9]](#footnote-10) and the Russian Federation, including coaching and on-the-job training, aiming at strengthening strategic management, advocacy and communication capacities of CSOs, **and**
* have recent proven experience (since 2015) in awarding and managing grants to CSOs, including the publication of calls for proposals, the definition of selection and award criteria, the evaluation of applications and the monitoring of implementation.

**For Lot 2:**

* be established in:

**i.** Ukraine;

**ii. the EU Member States** and contracting parties to the Agreement on the European Economic Area.

**and**

* have recent proven experience of at least 3 years (since 2015) in implementing CSO capacity building activities in Ukraine, including coaching and on-the-job training, aiming at strengthening strategic management, advocacy and communication capacities of CSOs, **and**
* have recent proven experience (since 2015) in awarding and managing grants to CSOs, including the publication of calls for proposals, the definition of selection and award criteria, the evaluation of applications and the monitoring of implementation.

For British applicants: Please be aware that eligibility criteria must be complied with for the entire duration of the grant. Unless sector-specific eligibility rules provide otherwise[[10]](#footnote-11) if the United Kingdom withdraws from the EU during the grant period without concluding an agreement with the EU ensuring in particular that British applicants continue to be eligible, you will cease to receive EU funding (while continuing, where possible to participate) or will be required to leave the project on the basis of Article 12.2 general conditions to the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement.

(2) Potential applicants may not participate in calls for proposals or be awarded grants if they are in any of the situations listed in Section 2.6.10.1 of the practical guide;

Lead applicants, affiliated entities and, in case of legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over the lead applicant and the affiliated entities are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion according to Section 2.6.10.1 of the practical guide, personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the early detection and exclusion system, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract.

In Part B Section 8 of the grant application form (‘declaration(s) by the lead applicant’), the lead applicant must declare that the lead applicant himself and the affiliated entity(ies) are not in any of these situations.

The lead applicant must act individually.

1. Applicants included in the lists of EU restrictive measures (see Section 2.4. of the PRAG) at the moment of the award decision cannot be awarded the contract[[11]](#footnote-12).

***2.1.2 Affiliated entities***

The lead applicant may act with affiliated entity(ies).

**Only the following entities may be considered as affiliated entities to the lead applicant:**

Only entities having a structural link with the applicants (i.e. the lead applicant), in particular a legal or capital link.

This structural link encompasses mainly two notions:

(i) Control, as defined in Directive 2013/34/EU on the annual financial statements, consolidated financial statements and related reports of certain types of undertakings:

Entities affiliated to an applicant may hence be:

* Entities directly or indirectly controlled by the applicant (daughter companies or first-tier subsidiaries). They may also be entities controlled by an entity controlled by the applicant (granddaughter companies or second-tier subsidiaries) and the same applies to further tiers of control;
* Entities directly or indirectly controlling the applicant (parent companies). Likewise, they may be entities controlling an entity controlling the applicant;
* Entities under the same direct or indirect control as the applicant (sister companies).

(ii) Membership, i.e. the applicant is legally defined as a e.g. network, federation, association in which the proposed affiliated entities also participate or the applicant participates in the same entity (e.g. network, federation, association) as the proposed affiliated entities.

The structural link shall as a general rule be neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation. This means that the link would exist independently of the award of the grant; it should exist before the call for proposals and remain valid after the end of the action.

By way of exception, an entity may be considered as affiliated to an applicant even if it has a structural link specifically established for the sole purpose of the implementation of the action in the case of so-called ‘sole applicants’ or ‘sole beneficiaries’. A sole applicant or a sole beneficiary is a legal entity formed by several entities (a group of entities) which together comply with the criteria for being awarded the grant. For example, an association is formed by its members.

##### What is not an affiliated entity?

The following are not considered entities affiliated to an applicant:

* Entities that have entered into a (procurement) contract or subcontract with an applicant, act as concessionaires or delegatees for public services for an applicant,
* Entities that receive financial support from the applicant,
* Entities that cooperate on a regular basis with an applicant on the basis of a memorandum of understanding or share some assets,
* Entities that have signed a consortium agreement under the grant contract (unless this consortium agreement leads to the creation of a ‘sole applicant’ as described above).

How to verify the existence of the required link with an applicant?

The affiliation resulting from control may in particular be proved on the basis of the consolidated accounts of the group of entities the applicant and its proposed affiliates belong to.

The affiliation resulting from membership may in particular be proved on the basis of the statutes or equivalent act establishing the entity (network, federation, association) which the applicant constitutes or in which the applicant participates.

If the applicants are awarded a grant contract, their affiliated entity(ies) will not become beneficiary(ies) of the action and signatory(ies) of the grant contract. However, they will participate in the design and in the implementation of the action and the costs they incur (including those incurred for implementation contracts and financial support to third parties) may be accepted as eligible costs, provided they comply with all the relevant rules already applicable to the beneficiary(ies) under the grant contract.

Affiliated entity(ies) must satisfy the same eligibility criteria as the lead applicant and the co-applicant(s). They must sign the affiliated entity(ies) statement in Part B Section 5 of the grant application form.

***2.1.3 Associates and contractors***

The following entities are not applicants nor affiliated entities and do not have to sign the ‘mandate for co-applicant(s)’ or ‘affiliated entities' statement’:

* Associates

Other organisations or individuals may be involved in the action. Such associates play a real role in the action but may not receive funding from the grant, with the exception of per diem or travel costs. Associates do not have to meet the eligibility criteria referred to in Section 2.1.1. Associates must be mentioned in Part B Section 6 — ‘Associates participating in the action’ — of the grant application form.

* Contractors

The beneficiaries and their affiliated entities are permitted to award contracts. Associates or affiliated entity(ies) cannot be also contractors in the project. Contractors are subject to the procurement rules set out in Annex IV to the standard grant contract.

***2.1.4 Duration of the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement***

The framework agreement shall be concluded for a period of four years starting from the date of its entry into force.

***2.1.5 Eligible actions: actions for which a specific grant application may be made***

Definition:

An action is composed of a set of activities.

Duration

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 24 months nor exceed 36 months.

Sectors or themes

Framework Partnerships will be established to enhance cooperation and coordination of actions and initiatives, which strengthen the role of CSOs as governance actors in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood.

Specific Grants will be awarded to selected Framework Partners in order to:

* Conduct activities to strengthen the capacities of CSOs (including grassroots organisations) to participate in the democratisation process in Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation and become better communicators of their work;
* Provide Financial Support to Third Parties to CSOs in Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation to support CSOs in their own outreach and engagement with citizens and communities;
* Coordinate appropriately with EU Delegations and relevant donors on the monitoring of the roll out support;

Location

Lot 1: Location

The majority of the action must take place in countries of the Eastern Partnership and the Russian Federation. Exceptionally, some study tours, networking or other activities may be foreseen in the EU.

Lot 2: Location

The majority of the action must take place in Ukraine. Exceptionally, some study tours, networking or other activities may be foreseen in the EU.

Types of action

The following list of actions is not exhaustive and other relevant and innovative proposals will be considered:

* Capacity building in order to strengthen local CSOs (including grassroots organisations) to participate in the democratisation process in Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation and become better communicators of their work;
* Design and test new ways (financing tools) to fund CSOs and work towards improving CSOs’ financial sustainability;
* Support the development of professional not-for-profit management and strengthen internal control and governance;
* Advance regional and thematic policy dialogue between civil society and relevant stakeholders;
* Provide Financial Support to Third Parties to support CSOs in their own outreach and engagement with citizens and communities.

Capacity building should be adopted as a concept that goes beyond the conventional perception of training and supply of equipment. Capacity building should be carried out as a continuous exercise and linked to the concept of learning organisations. The learning concept involves constant changes and experiments by using feedback of processes and results, transforming individual and organisational practices and values and adjustment of structures to cope with changes. Therefore, the capacity building actions to be proposed should show the added value or cumulative effect of the action to be undertaken. They should be based on knowledge sharing of partner organisations through mentoring, coaching and on-the-job training. The capacity building actions need to be results oriented and sustainable, and aimed at strengthening organisational ability to make more effective decisions, become more active players and to take full responsibility for the consequences of decisions.

Actions must ensure complementarity with other (regional and bilateral) programmes implemented by the EU in the Eastern Partnership and the Russian Federation, and responding to country-specific needs and contexts.

Actions must integrate **cross-cutting principles** of human rights, gender equality and environmental sustainability.

The following types of action are ineligible:

* actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses;
* actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
* actions that may be contradictory with the interest of the EU;
* actions that would be against EU fundamental values;
* actions which include proselytising activities;
* one-off conferences: in principle, conferences can only be funded if they form part of a wider range of activities to be implemented in the life-time of the action. For these purposes, preparatory activities for a conference and the publication of the proceedings of the conference do not, in themselves, constitute such “wider activities”;
* actions supporting directly political parties.

Types of activity

The activities covered by the specific grant should be directly linked to the Action Plan foreseen in the FFPA, and should be coherent with the objectives of this plan. The following list of activities (including those to be supported through financial support to third parties) is not exhaustive and other relevant and innovative types of activities may be proposed:

* Capacity assessments and capacity building activities, training, coaching and on-the-job-training activities aimed at strengthening CSO’s (including grassroots organisations’) technical, advocacy and managerial capacities (i.e. organising events such as seminars and consultations, workshops, awareness raising initiatives, conferences, dialogue facilitation, training and mentoring of personnel and organisations, etc.);
* Policy research, analysis and engagement in policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and impact analysis processes, including engagement around national development programmes and strategies;
* Identifying constituency interests, needs and concerns and framing of issues around these and communication to government at different levels; development and presentation of collective voices and engagement in constructive dialogue with different stakeholders, by also using media in a constructive and efficient manner;
* Monitoring and (shadow) reporting on policy and decision making processes, implementation of legislation, management of public resources;
* Promotion of networks, coordination fora, platforms, etc., and development of skills and systems to facilitate institutional processes (incl. networking systems), undertake joint sector analysis and formulate action plans and networks with other CSOs in the municipality or region.
* Facilitation of experience and knowledge sharing among CSOs at multiple levels (between CSOs from the EU and partner countries; among organisations from partner countries), including possibly through the development of information and communication tools and materials - including social media related tools, exchanges of experience and dissemination of good practices, mentoring and/or coaching, peer-learning seminars, twinning between CSOs, development and delivery of trainings

Financial support to third parties[[12]](#footnote-13)

Applicants shall propose financial support to third parties.

To strengthen the capacities of CSOs (including grassroots organisations) to participate in the democratisation process in Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation, and support CSOs in their own outreach and engagement with citizens and communities, for both lots, applicants shall propose financial support to third parties in order to help achieving the objectives of the action.

This financial support can entail both project-based and operational support to third parties.

To implement financial support to third parties, calls for applications should be published in local languages, and applicants for financial support to third parties should be able to submit applications in local languages. The application forms and procedures should be tailor-made to the technical and managerial capacities of local organisations of the respective countries. They should foresee an evaluation and selection based on high quality and/or innovative ideas and initiatives, and a review process during which the quality of the intervention logic, the impact and sustainability of the activities can be improved and further developed.

Coaching and on-the-job training should be foreseen to support beneficiaries of financial support in the implementation of their activities, as well as in the management of the financial support (i.e. related to financial and narrative reporting, budget execution and revisions, etc.).

Under this call, financial support to third parties is considered essential to achieve the objective of the action.

In compliance with the present guidelines and notably of any conditions or restrictions in this Section, the lead applicant should define mandatorily in Section 2.1.1 of the grant application form:

1. the overall objectives, the specific objective(s) and the outputs[[13]](#footnote-14) (i.e. the results) to be achieved with the financial support, which must be in line with the overall and specific objective of this Call for Proposals;
2. the different types of activities eligible for financial support, on the basis of a fixed list
3. the types of persons/organisations or categories of persons/organisations which may receive financial support;

(iv) the criteria for selecting these entities and giving the financial support, the evaluation and award procedure (frequency of calls, duration of the evaluation procedure, composition of the evaluation committee, etc);

1. the criteria for determining the exact amount of financial support for each third entity and whether co-financing will be required;
2. the maximum amount which may be given, and
3. the communication tools and channels by which they will ensure outreach to potential beneficiary organisations in the Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation.

In all events, the mandatory conditions set above for giving financial support (points (i) to (vii)) have to be strictly defined in the grant contract as to avoid any exercise of discretion.]

Visibility

The applicants must take all necessary steps to publicise the fact that the European Union has financed or co-financed the action. As far as possible, actions that are wholly or partially funded by the European Union must incorporate information and communication activities designed to raise the awareness of specific or general audiences of the reasons for the action and the EU support for the action in the country or region concerned, as well as the results and the impact of this support.

Applicants must comply with the objectives and priorities and guarantee the visibility of the EU financing (see the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU external actions specified and published by the European Commission at <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/communication-and-visibility-manual-eu-external-actions_en>).

Number of applications and grants per applicants/affiliated entities

The lead applicant may not submit more than 1 application under this call for proposals.

The lead applicant may not be awarded more than 1 grant under this call for proposals.

The lead applicant may not be an affiliated entity in another application of the same lot at the same time.

An affiliated entity may not be the affiliated entity in more than 1 application per lot under this call for proposals.

An affiliated entity may not be awarded more than 1 grant under this call for proposals.

***2.1.6 Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included***

Only ‘eligible costs’ can be covered by a grant. The categories of costs that are eligible and non-eligible are indicated below. The budget is both a cost estimate and an overall ceiling for ‘eligible costs’.

The reimbursement of eligible costs may be based on any or a combination of the following forms:

* actual costs incurred by the beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies);
* one or more simplified cost options.

Simplified cost options may take the form of:

* **unit costs:** covering all or certain specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance by reference to an amount per unit.
* **lump sums:** covering in global terms all or certain specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance.
* **flat-rate financing:** covering specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified in advance by applying a percentage fixed ex ante.

Simplified costs options (SCOs) are divided in two categories:

1/ "output or result based SCOs": this category includes costs linked to outputs, results, activities, deliverables in the framework of a specific project (for example the determination of a lump sum for the organization of a conference, or for the realisation of a determined output/activity). Where possible and appropriate, lump sums, unit costs or flat rates shall be determined in such a way to allow their payment upon achievement of concrete outputs and/or results. This type of SCO can be proposed by the Beneficiary (no threshold is applicable) at proposal's stage. In case the evaluation committee and the contracting authority are not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided reimbursement on the basis of actually incurred costs is always possible.

2/ "other/recurrent SCOs". This second category entails simplified cost options embedded in the accounting practices of the beneficiary, for which an ex-ante assessment is deemed necessary, considering the need of a consistent application of the conditions required. Examples are: an additional percentage on actual salaries to cover remuneration-related costs or the use of an allocation method to apportion costs of a project office foreseen in the Description of the Action. In order the use of systemic/recurrent SCOs, the beneficiary's accounting practices need to have been positively assessed by an audit firm based on standard ToRs provided by the Commission. To obtain reimbursement of this category of SCOs, the beneficiary shall make reference to the previously obtained ex-ante assessment in the budget justification sheet (annex e3c).

The amounts or rates have to be based on estimates using objective data such as statistical data or any other objective means or with reference to certified or auditable historical data of the applicants or the affiliated entity(ies). Determining SCO is possible also through ‘expert judgement’ provided by internally available experts or procured in accordance with the applicable rules. Experts must be either commissioned auditors or chartered accountants, or staff of the Commission but cannot be staff of the beneficiary. The methods used to determine the amounts or rates of unit costs, lump sums or flat-rates must comply with the criteria established in Annex K, and especially ensure that the costs correspond fairly to the actual costs incurred by the beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies), are in line with their accounting practices, no profit is made and the costs are not already covered by other sources of funding (no double funding). Refer to Annex K for the details of the procedure to be followed depending on the type and amount of the costs to be declared as SCO.

Applicants proposing this form of reimbursement, must clearly indicate in worksheet no.1 of Annex B, each heading/item of eligible costs concerned by this type of financing, i.e. add the reference in capital letters to ‘UNIT COST’ (per month/flight etc.), ‘LUMPSUM’, ‘FLAT RATE’ in the Unit column (see example in Annex K).

Additionally in Annex B, in the second column of worksheet no.2, ‘Justification of the estimated costs’ per each of the corresponding budget item or heading applicants must:

* describe the information and methods used to establish the amounts of unit costs, lump sums and/or flat-rates, to which costs they refer, etc for output or result based SCO.
* clearly explain the formulas for calculation of the final eligible amount for output or result based SCO[[14]](#footnote-15)
* make reference to the previously obtained ex-ante assessment for other/recurrent SCOs.

In case of output or result based SCOs the evaluation committee and the contracting authority decide whether to accept the proposed amounts or rates on the basis of the provisional budget submitted by the applicants, by analysing factual data of grants carried out by the applicants or of similar actions. In case the evaluation committee and the contracting authority are not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided reimbursement on the basis of actually incurred costs is always possible.

No threshold is set ex-ante for the total amount of financing that can be authorised by the contracting authority on the basis of simplified cost options. Other/recurrent SCOs can be declared only if previously successfully ex-ante assessed.

Recommendations to award a grant are always subject to the condition that the checks preceding the signing of the grant contract do not reveal problems requiring changes to the budget (such as arithmetical errors, inaccuracies, unrealistic costs and ineligible costs). The checks may give rise to requests for clarification and may lead the contracting authority to impose modifications or reductions to address such mistakes or inaccuracies. It is not possible to increase the grant or the percentage of EU co-financing as a result of these corrections.

It is therefore in the applicants' interest to provide a **realistic and cost-effective budget**.

The responsible authorising officer may consider that the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary are compliant with the conditions applicable to simplified cost options, if they are accepted by national authorities under comparable funding schemes. In this case the grant beneficiary shall demonstrate that the national authority accepted the cost accounting practices and will have to specify in which context this acceptance is given.

The evaluation committee and the contracting authority will assess if the funding scheme is comparable and in case of positive outcome will consider these practices as if they were ex-ante assessed by an external auditor.

Eligible direct costs

To be eligible under this call for proposals, costs must comply with the provisions of Article 14 of the general conditions to the standard grant contract (see Annex G of the guidelines).

Contingency reserve

The budget may include a contingency reserve not exceeding 5 % of the estimated direct eligible costs. It can only be used with the **prior written** **authorisation** of the contracting authority.

Eligible indirect costs

The indirect costs incurred in carrying out the action may be eligible for flat-rate funding, but the total must not exceed 7 % of the estimated total eligible direct costs. Indirect costs are eligible provided that they do not include costs assigned to another budget heading in the standard grant contract. The lead applicant may be asked to justify the percentage requested before the grant contract is signed. However, once the flat rate has been fixed in the special conditions of the grant contract, no supporting documents need to be provided.

If any of the applicants or affiliated entity(ies) is in receipt of an operating grant financed by the EU, it may not claim indirect costs on its incurred costs within the proposed budget for the action.

Contributions in kind

Contributions in kind mean the provision of goods or services to beneficiaries or affiliated entities free of charge by a third party. As contributions in kind do not involve any expenditure for beneficiaries or affiliated entities, they are normally not eligible costs.

As an exception, contributions in kind may include personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or work programme (which are eligible costs).

Contributions in kind from third parties in the form of volunteers' work, valued on the basis of unit costs defined and authorised by the contracting authority, shall be presented in the estimated budget, separately from the other eligible costs (i.e. as an accepted costs together with other contributions in kind).

Volunteers' work may comprise up to 50 % of the co-financing.

When the estimated costs include volunteers' work, the grant shall not exceed the estimated eligible costs other than the costs for volunteers' work.

The contracting authority may accept co-financing in kind, if considered necessary or appropriate. In such cases, the value of such contributions must not exceed:

1. either the costs actually borne and duly supported by accounting documents;
2. or the costs generally accepted on the concerned market of reference,
3. or, for volunteers' work, the unit cost defined in the budget and accepted by the contracting authority for a maximum of 50% of the co-financing..

Contributions involving real estate must be excluded from the calculation of the amount of co-financing. In kind contributions must comply with national tax and social security rules.

If co-financing in kind is proposed, it must be included in Annex B (Worksheet 3) to the guidelines for applicants on the expected sources of funding for the action. The same amount must be indicated in the budget (worksheet 1).

Ineligible costs

The following costs are not eligible:

* debts and debt service charges (interest);
* provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
* costs declared by the beneficiary(ies) and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union (including through EDF) grant;
* purchases of land or buildings, except where necessary for the direct implementation of the action, in which case ownership must be transferred in accordance with Article 7.5 of the general conditions of the standard grant contract, at the latest at the end of the action;
* currency exchange losses;
* credit to third parties;
* salary costs of the personnel of national administrations.

**Ethics clauses and Code of Conduct**

a) Absence of conflict of interest

The applicant must not be affected by any conflict of interest and must have no equivalent relation in that respect with other applicants or parties involved in the actions. Any attempt by an applicant to obtain confidential information, enter into unlawful agreements with competitors or influence the evaluation committee or the contracting authority during the process of examining, clarifying, evaluating and comparing applications will lead to the rejection of its application and may result in administrative penalties according to the Financial Regulation in force.

b) Respect for human rights as well as environmental legislation and core labour standards

The applicant and its staff must comply with human rights. In particular and in accordance with the applicable act, applicants who have been awarded contracts must comply with the environmental legislation including multilateral environmental agreements, and with the core labour standards as applicable and as defined in the relevant International Labour Organisation conventions (such as the conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of forced and compulsory labour; abolition of child labour).

**Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and sexual abuse:**

The European Commission applies a policy of 'zero tolerance' in relation to all wrongful conduct which has an impact on the professional credibility of the applicant.

Physical abuse or punishment, or threats of physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, harassment and verbal abuse, as well as other forms of intimidation shall be prohibited.

c) Anti-corruption and anti-bribery

The applicant shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations and codes relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The European Commission reserves the right to suspend or cancel project financing if corrupt practices of any kind are discovered at any stage of the award process or during the execution of a contract and if the contracting authority fails to take all appropriate measures to remedy the situation. For the purposes of this provision, ‘corrupt practices’ are the offer of a bribe, gift, gratuity or commission to any person as an inducement or reward for performing or refraining from any act relating to the award of a contract or execution of a contract already concluded with the contracting authority.

d) Unusual commercial expenses

Applications will be rejected or contracts terminated if it emerges that the award or execution of a contract has given rise to unusual commercial expenses. Such unusual commercial expenses are commissions not mentioned in the main contract or not stemming from a properly concluded contract referring to the main contract, commissions not paid in return for any actual and legitimate service, commissions remitted to a tax haven, commissions paid to a payee who is not clearly identified or commissions paid to a company which has every appearance of being a front company.

Grant beneficiaries found to have paid unusual commercial expenses on projects funded by the European Union are liable, depending on the seriousness of the facts observed, to have their contracts terminated or to be permanently excluded from receiving EU/EDF funds.

e) Error, irregularities or fraud

The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel the procedure, where the award procedure proves to have been subject to substantial errors, irregularities or fraud. If substantial errors, irregularities or fraud are discovered after the award of the contract, the contracting authority may refrain from concluding the contract.

**2.2 How to apply and the procedures to follow**

To apply for this call for proposals, lead applicants need to:

1. Provide information about the organisations involved in the action. Please note that the registration of this data in **PADOR is obligatory**[[15]](#footnote-16)for all lead applicants and affiliated entitiy(ies).

PADOR is an on-line database in which organisations register and update information concerning their entity. Organisations registered in PADOR get a unique ID (EuropeAid ID), which they must mention in their application. PADOR is accessible via the website: <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/pador_en>.

1. Provide information about the action in the documents listed under section 2.2.2. Online submission via **PROSPECT is obligatory** for this call.

**It is strongly recommended to register in PADOR well in advance and not to wait until the last minute before the deadline to submit your application in PROSPECT**.

If it is impossible for the organisation to register online in PADOR for technical reasons, applicants and/or affiliated entity(ies) must complete the ‘PADOR off-line form[[16]](#footnote-17) attached to these guidelines. This form must be sent **together with the application**, by the submission deadline (see section 2.2.2.).

Before starting using PADOR and PROSPECT, please read the user guides available on the website. All technical questions related to the use of these systems should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at EuropeAid-IT-support@ec.europa.eu **via the online support form in PROSPECT.**

***2.2.1 Application forms***

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the instructions on the Framework Partnership application and the Specific Grant applications in the application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A).

* Framework Partnership Application (Annex A.1)

Applicants must attach the complete strategic plan of the organisation to their application form. This plan may be an internal document of the organisation, as endorsed by its governing body. The applicant may submit this plan in its original form (following no specific template), but must clearly identify in the application for the framework partnership which parts of this strategic plan they consider to be relevant for a partnership with the European Union, which should be based on common political objectives shared with the EU as detailed in section 1.2 of these Guidelines. If the applicant is selected as a Framework Partner, the strategic plan will become part of Annex I (“Action Plan”) of the Framework Partnership Agreement.

* Specific Grant application (Annex A.2)

In the Specific Grant Application, applicants must provide a detailed budget for the proposed action. The budget must contain the contribution requested from the Contracting Authority and the percentage of that contribution in relation to the total amount of the grant, which must fall between the minimum and maximum amount and respect the percentages of co-financing, as laid down in these Guidelines in section 1.3. Own contributions by the applicants can be replaced by other donors' contributions at any time.

Applicants must apply in English.

Any error or major discrepancy related to the points listed in the instructions on the Framework Partnership application or any major inconsistency in the application e.g. if the amounts in the budget worksheets are inconsistent) may lead to the rejection of the application.

Clarifications will only be requested when the information provided is unclear and thus prevents the Contracting Authority from conducting an objective assessment.

Hand-written applications will not be accepted.

Please note that only the Framework Partnership application and the grant application form and the published annexes which have to be filled in (budget, logical framework) will be evaluated. It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain ALL the relevant information concerning the action.

**With the application the lead applicant also has to submit completed organisation data forms (Annex F) for the lead applicant, each (if any) co-applicants and each (if any) affiliated entities.**

No additional annexes should be sent.

***2.2.2 Where and how to send applications***

**Online submission:**

Applications **must be submitted online** via PROSPECT <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prospect> following the instructions given in the PROSPECT user manual.

Upon submission of the application online, the lead applicant will receive an automatic confirmation of

**Please note that incomplete applications may be rejected. Lead applicants are advised to verify that their application is complete using the checklist (Annexes A.1 and A.2, Instructions).**

***2.2.3 Deadline for submission of applications***

The deadline for the submission of applications is **05/09/2019 at 12:00** (Brussels date and time). In order to convert this deadline to local time you can use any online time converter tool that takes into account timezones and winter/summer time changes (example available[**here**](http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html)**)[[17]](#footnote-18). Lead applicants are strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit their applications**, since heavy Internet traffic or a fault with the Internet connection (including electricity failure, etc.) could lead to difficulties in submission. The contacting authority cannot be held responsible for any delay due to such aforementioned difficulties.

Any application submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

***2.2.4 Further information about applications***

An information session on this call for proposals will be held in webinar format. Should you be interested in this session, please send an email by 24 June 2019 to capacitybuilding@eapcivilsociety.eu, indicating: name, surname, nationality and email address of the persons who are interested to be informed about these webinar. No costs incurred by the applicants for attending this information session are reimbursable.

Questions may be sent by e-mail no later than 21 days before the deadline for the submission of applications to the below address, indicating clearly the reference of the call for proposals:

E-mail address: NEAR-TENDER-164964@ec.europa.eu

The contracting authority has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

Replies will be given no later than 11 days before the deadline for the submission of applications.

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the contracting authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entity(ies), an action or specific activities.

No individual replies will be given to questions. All questions and answers as well as other important notices to applicants during the course of the evaluation procedure will be published on the EuropeAid website: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?do=publi.welcome>. It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned website regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

All questions related to registration in PADOR or the online submission via PROSPECT should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at EuropeAid-IT-support@ec.europa.eu **via the online support form in PROSPECT:** Please note that the working languages of the IT support are English, French and Spanish. Therefore, users are invited to send their questions in those languages should they wish to benefit from an optimum response time.

**2.3 Evaluation and selection of applications**

Applications will be examined and evaluated by the contracting authority with the possible assistance of external assessors. All applications will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria.

If the examination of the application reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in Section 2.1, the application will be rejected on this sole basis.

1. **STEP 1: OPENING & ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKS**

During the opening and administrative check the following will be assessed:

* + - If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
* If the application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist in the framework partnership application form. This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.
1. **STEP 2: VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANTS**

The eligibility verification will be based on the supporting documents requested by the Contracting Authority

* The Declaration by the applicant (part of the framework partnership application form) will be cross-checked with the supporting documents provided by the applicant. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the Declaration by the applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the application on that sole basis.
* The eligibility of applicants, and the areas of intervention will be verified according to the criteria set out in Sections 2.1.1, 2.1.2 and 2.1.5.

Applicants must supply the following supporting documents in order to allow the Contracting Authority to verify the eligibility of the applicant: Supporting documents must be provided through PADOR (see section 2.2.).

The statutes or articles of association of the lead applicant, and (if any) of each affiliated entity[[18]](#footnote-19).

An external audit report produced by an approved external auditor where it is available, and always in cases where a statutory audit is required by EU or national law. That report shall certify the accounts for up to the last 3 financial years available.

The external audit report is not required from (if any) affiliated entities.

A copy of the lead applicant’s latest accounts (the profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed)[[19]](#footnote-20). A copy of the latest account is not required from (if any) affiliated entity(ies)).

Legal entity sheet (see Annex D of these guidelines) duly completed and signed by each of the applicants (i.e. by the lead applicant), accompanied by the justifying documents requested there. If the applicants have already signed a contract with the contracting authority, instead of the legal entity sheet and supporting documents, the legal entity number may be provided, unless a change in legal status occurred in the meantime.

A financial identification form of the lead applicant conforming to the model attached as Annex E of these guidelines, certified by the bank to which the payments will be made. This bank should be located in the country where the lead applicant is established. If the lead applicant has already submitted a financial identification form in the past for a contract where the European Commission was in charge of the payments and intends to use the same bank account, a copy of the previous financial identification form may be provided instead.

The requested supporting documents (uploaded in PADOR or sent together with the PADOR offline form) must be supplied in the form of originals, photocopies or scanned versions (i.e. showing legible stamps, signatures and dates) of the said originals.

Where such documents are not in one of the official languages of the European Union, a translation into English of the relevant parts of these documents proving the lead applicant's and, where applicable, co-applicants' and affiliated entity(ies)' eligibility, must be attached for the purpose of analysing the application.

Where these documents are in an official language of the European Union other than English, it is **strongly** recommended, in order to facilitate the evaluation, to provide a translation of the relevant parts of the documents, proving the lead applicant's and, where applicable, co-applicants' and affiliated entity(ies)' eligibility, into English.

Applicants have to take into consideration the time necessary to obtain official documents from national competent authorities and to translate such documents in the authorised languages while registering their data in PADOR.

If the abovementioned supporting documents are not provided before the deadline indicated in the request for supporting documents sent to the lead applicant by the contracting authority, the application may be rejected.

After verifying the supporting documents, the evaluation committee will make a final recommendation to the contracting authority, which will decide on the award of grants.

NB : In the eventuality that the contracting authority is not satisfied with the strength, solidity, and guarantee offered by the structural link between one of the applicants and its affiliated entity, it can require the submission of the missing documents allowing for its conversion into co-applicant. If all the missing documents for co-applicants are submitted, and provided all necessary eligibility criteria are fulfilled, the above mentioned entity becomes a co-applicant for all purposes. The lead applicant has to submit the application form revised accordingly.

1. **STEP 3: EVALUATION OF THE FRAMEWORK PARTNERSHIP APPLICATION**

The Framework Partnership Applications that pass the eligibility check will be evaluated.

The Framework Partnership Applications will receive an overall score out of 100 using the breakdown in the evaluation grid below. The evaluation will also check on compliance with the instructions on how to complete the Framework Partnership Applications, which can be found in the application form A.1.

The quality of the Framework Partnership Applications, the capacity of the applicants and affiliated entity(ies), will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.

**The selection criteria** help to evaluate the lead applicant’s and affiliated entity(ies)’s operational capacity and the applicant's financial capacity and are used to verify that they:

* have stable and sufficient sources of finance to maintain their activity throughout the proposed Strategic Plan (this only applies to lead applicants);
* have the management capacity, professional competencies and qualifications required to successfully implement the proposed Strategic Plan. This also applies to any affiliated entity(ies).

**The award criteria** help to evaluate the quality of the applications in relation to the objectives and priorities set forth in the guidelines, and to award Framework Partnership to applicants that maximise the overall effectiveness of the call for proposals. They help to select applications which the contracting authority can be confident will comply with its objectives and priorities. They cover the relevance of the Strategic Plan, its consistency with the objectives of the call for proposals, quality, expected impact and sustainability, cost-effectiveness of the proposed partnership – as reflected in the strategic plan.

Scoring:

The evaluation grid is divided into Sections and subsections. Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

**Evaluation Grid**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Maximum Score** |
| **1. Financial and operational capacity** | **20** |
| 1.1. Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient in-house experience of project management? | 5 |
| 1.2. Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient technical in-house expertise in building capacities of CSOs? | 5 |
| 1.3. Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient management in-house capacity to manage large scale capacity development programmes for smaller CSOs including financial support to third parties (including staff, equipment, and ability to handle the budgets for the specific grants? | 5 |
| 1.4. Does the lead applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance? | 5 |
| **2. Relevance of the partnership** | **30** |
| 2.1. How relevant is the proposed strategic plan to the objectives and priorities of EU support towards increased capacity development of CSOs in Eastern Partnership countries and the Russian Federation? Are the expected results of the partnership aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants (section 1.2)? | 5x2\*\* |
| 2.2. How relevant is the proposed strategic plan to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies), region(s) and for capacity development of CSOs in one or more Eastern Partnership countries (including synergy with other development initiatives, avoidance of duplication with existing EU capacity development support) and capacity to reachout to most remote regions and marginalised or vulnerable groups? | 5x2\*\* |
| 2.3. How clearly defined and strategically chosen are the targeted groups of CSOs? Have their needs and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately? | 5 |
| 2.4. Does the proposed partnership (as per the strategic plan) contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices)?  | 5 |
| **3. Quality of the strategic plan** | **50** |
| 3.1. How coherent is the overall strategic plan? Does the proposed strategic plan indicate the expected results to be achieved by the partnership? Is the alignment with EU's policies clearly explained? Is the proposed strategic plan in line with the values, work programme and ambitions of the lead applicant? Is the proposed strategic plan formulated from a gender-sensitive perspective? | 5x2\*\* |
| 3.2. Does the strategic plan reflect a robust analysis of the problems faced by CSOs in the wider Eastern Neighbourhood, and their current capacities and ambitions?  | 5 x2\*\* |
| 3.3. Do the measures proposed take into account external factors (risks and assumptions)?  | 5 x2\*\* |
| 3.4. Are the activities feasible and consistent in relation to the expected results (including timeframe)? Are results (output, outcome and impact) realistic within the timeframe of the partnership?  | 5 x2\*\* |
| 3.5. Is the proposed strategic plan likely to achieve long term impact for a (relatively) large number of CSOs, including organisations in remote regions or representing the interests of vulnerable or marginalised groups?  | 5 x2\*\* |
| **Maximum total score** | **100** |

\*\*: this scores is multiplied by 2 because of its importance

Note: A score of 5 (very good) will only be allocated if the proposal specifically addresses more than the required minimum number of priorities as indicated in Section 1.2 (objectives of the programme) of these guidelines.

Once all Framework Partnership Applications have been assessed, a list will be drawn up with the proposed actions ranked according to their total score.

If the total score for section 1 is less than 15 points, the application will be rejected. If the score for at least one of the subsections under section 1 is 1, the application will also be rejected.

If the total score for section 2 is less than 23 points, the application will be rejected.

The number of Framework Partnership Applications will be reduced, taking account of the ranking, to up to 7 for Lot 1 and up to 5 for Lot 2.

Lead applicants will receive a letter indicating the reference number of their application and the respective results. This letter will automatically appear online in the PROSPECT profile of the lead applicant.

1. **STEP 4: Notification of the Contracting Authority’s decision to award a Financial Framework Partnership Agreement**

The lead applicants will be informed in writing of the Contracting Authority’s decision concerning their Framework Partnership application and, if rejected, the reasons for the negative decision. This letter will be sent by e-mail and will appear online automatically in the PROSPECT profile of the user who submitted the application. Therefore, please check regularly your PROSPECT profile, taking into account the indicative timetable below.

An applicant believing that it has been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may lodge a complaint. See further Section 2.4.15 of the practical guide.

1. **STEP 5: signature of a Financial Framework Partnership Agreement**

Following the decision to award a Financial Framework Partnership Agreement, the Beneficiary(ies) will be offered a contract based on the Contracting Authority’s standard Financial Framework Partnership Agreement (see Annex G of these Guidelines). By signing the application form for an FFPA (Annex A of these Guidelines), the applicants agree, if awarded a Financial Framework Partnership Agreement, to accept the contractual conditions of the standard Financial Framework Partnership Agreement.

Successful Applicants may be invited to Brussels for the signature of the Financial Framework Partnership Agreement.

1. **STEP 6: EVALUATION OF THE SPECIFIC GRANT APPLICATION**

Firstly, the following will be assessed:

* If the specific grant application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist (part of Annex 2 - specific grant application form).

The specific grant applications that pass this check will be further evaluated on their quality, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants and affiliated entity(ies). They will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below. There are two types of evaluation criteria: selection and award criteria.

**The selection criteria** help to evaluate the applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s operational capacity and the lead applicant's financial capacity and are used to verify that they:

* have stable and sufficient sources of finance to maintain their activity throughout the proposed action and, where appropriate, to participate in its funding (this only applies to lead applicants);
* have the management capacity, professional competencies and qualifications required to successfully complete the proposed action. This applies to applicants and any affiliated entity(ies).

For the purpose of the evaluation of the financial capacity, lead applicants must ensure that the relevant information and documents (i.e. accounts of the latest financial year and external audit report, where applicable) in their PADOR profile are up to date. If the information and documents in PADOR are outdated and do not allow for a proper evaluation of the financial capacity, the application may be rejected.

**The award criteria** help to evaluate the quality of the applications in relation to the objectives and priorities set forth in the guidelines, and to award grants to projects which maximise the overall effectiveness of the call for proposals. They help to select applications which the contracting authority can be confident will comply with its objectives and priorities. They cover the relevance of the action, its consistency with the objectives of the call for proposals, quality, expected impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

*Scoring:*

The evaluation grid is divided into Sections and subsections. Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

**Evaluation grid**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Section** | **Max. Score** |
| **1. Relevance of the action** | **20** |
| 1.1. How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals and to the specific themes/sectors/areas or any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants (section 1.2)? | 5 |
| 1.2. How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies), region(s) and/or relevant sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives and avoidance of duplication)? | 5 |
| 1.3. How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs (as rights holders and/or duty bearers) and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately? | 5 |
| 1.4. Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices)?  | 5 |
| **2. Design of the action** | **15** |
| 2.1. How coherent is the design of the action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale to achieve the expected results? Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the envisaged outputs and outcome(s)? Is the action designed from a gender-sensitive perspective? | 5 |
| 2.2. Does the proposal/Logical Framework include credible baseline, targets and sources of verification, disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant factors? If not, is a baseline study foreseen (and is the study budgeted appropriately in the proposal)? | 5 |
| 2.3. Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders? | 5 |
| **3. Implementation approach** | **15** |
| 3.1. Is the action plan for implementing the action clear and feasible? Is the timeline realistic? | 5 |
| 3.2. Does the proposal include an effective and efficient monitoring system? Is there an evaluation planned (previous, during or/and at the end of the implementation)? | 5 |
| 3.3. Is the affiliated entity(ies)'s level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory? | 5 |
| **4. Sustainability of the action** | **15** |
| 4.1. Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups? | 5 |
| 4.2. Is the action likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension capitalisation on experience and knowledge sharing? | 5 |
| 4.3. Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable?- Financially (e.g. financing of follow-up activities, sources of revenue for covering all future operating and maintenance costs)- Institutionally (will structures allow the results of the action to be sustained at the end of the action? Will there be local ‘ownership’ of the results of the action?)- At policy level (where applicable) (what will be the structural impact of the action — e.g. improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods) - Environmentally (if applicable) (will the action have a negative/positive environmental impact?) | 5 |
| **5. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action** | **15** |
| 5.1. Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget? | 5 |
| 5.2. Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the expected results satisfactory? | 5x2\*\* |
| **Maximum total score** | **80** |

\*\*: this score is multiplied by 2 because of its importance

If the score for at least one of the subsections under Section 1 is 1, the application will also be rejected.

If the lead applicant applies without affiliated entities the score for point 3.3 shall be 5 unless the involvement of affiliated entities is mandatory according to these guidelines for applicants.

*Provisional selection*

After the evaluation, a table will be drawn up listing the applications ranked according to their score. The highest scoring applications will be provisionally selected until the available budget for this call for proposals is reached. In addition, a reserve list will be drawn up following the same criteria. This list will be used if more funds become available during the validity period of the reserve list.

**2.4 Notification of the Contracting Authority’s decision to award a Specific Grant**

***2.4.1 Content of the decision***

Following the decision to award a grant, the Beneficiary(ies) will be offered a contract based on the Contracting Authority’s Specific Grant Agreement (see Annex III to Annex G of these Guidelines). By signing the application form (Annex A.1 and A.2 of these Guidelines), the applicants agree, if awarded a grant, to accept the contractual conditions of the Specific Grant Agreement.

The lead applicants will be informed in writing of the Contracting Authority’s decision concerning their application and, if rejected, the reasons for the negative decision. This letter will be sent by e-mail and will appear online automatically in the PROSPECT profile of the user who submitted the application. Lead applicants who, in exceptional cases (see section 2.2), had to submit their application by post or hand-delivery will be informed by e-mail or by post if they did not provide any e-mail address. Therefore, please check regularly your PROSPECT profile, taking into account the indicative timetable below.

An applicant believing that it has been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may lodge a complaint. See further Section 2.4.15 of the practical guide.

***2.4.2 Indicative timetable***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **DATE** | **TIME** |
| **1. Information session in webinar format** | 27 June 2019 | 11:00 |
| **2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority** | 15 August 2019 | 12:00 |
| **3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority** | 25 August 2019 | 12:00 |
| **4. Deadline for submission of Framework Partnership and Specific Grant applications** | 05 September 2019 | 12:00 |
| **5. Information to lead applicants on opening, administrative checks and Framework Partnership application evaluation (Steps 1-4)** | Mid September 2019 | - |
| **6. Signature of Financial Framework Partnership Agreements (Step 5)** | End September 2019 | - |
| **7. Information to lead applicants on the evaluation of the Specific Grant applications (Step 6)** | Early October 2019 | - |
| **8. Notification of award**  | Mid October 2019 | - |
| **9. Specific Grant Contract signature** | Early November 2019 | - |

All times are in the time zone of the country of the contracting authority.

This indicative timetable refers to provisional dates (except for dates 2, 3, and 4) and may be updated by the contracting authority during the procedure. In such cases, the updated timetable will be published on the web site of DG International Cooperation and Development: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?do=publi.welcome>.

**2.5 Conditions for implementation after the contracting authority’s decision to award a grant**

Following the decision to award a grant, the beneficiary(ies) will be offered a contract based on the standard grant contract (see Annex G of these guidelines). By signing the application form (Annex A.1 and A.2 of these guidelines), the applicants agree, if awarded a grant, to accept the contractual conditions of the standard grant contract. Where the coordinator is an organisation whose pillars have been positively assessed, it will sign a contribution agreement based on the contribution agreement template. In this case references to provisions of the standard grant contract and its annexes shall not apply. References in these guidelines to the grant contract shall be understood as references to the relevant provisions of the contribution agreement .

Implementation contracts

Where implementation of the action requires the beneficiary(ies) and its affiliated entity(ies) (if any) to award procurement contracts, those contracts must be awarded in accordance with Annex IV to the standard grant contract.

In this context, a distinction should be made between awarding implementation contracts and subcontracting parts of the action described in the proposal, i.e. the description of the action annexed to the grant contract , such subcontracting being subject to additional restrictions (see the general terms and conditions in the model grant contract ).

Awarding implementation contracts: implementation contracts relate to the acquisition by beneficiaries of routine services and/or necessary goods and equipment as part of their project management; they do not cover any outsourcing of tasks forming part of the action that are described in the proposal, i.e. in the description of the action annexed to the grant contract .

Subcontracting: Subcontracting is the implementation, by a third party with which one or more beneficiaries have concluded a procurement contract, of specific tasks forming part of the action as described in annex to the grant contract (see also the general terms and conditions in the model grant contract ).

1. LIST OF annexes

**Documents to be completed**

Annex A: Framework Partnership and Specific Grant application form (Word format)

Annex B: Budget (Excel format)

Annex C: Logical framework (Excel format)

Annex D: Legal entity sheet

Annex E: Financial identification form

Annex F: EuropeAid offline registration form ***(ONLY IF IMPOSSIBLE TO REGISTER IN PADOR)***

**DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION[[20]](#footnote-21)**

Annex G: Standard financial framework partnership agreement

- Annex II: General conditions applicable to European Union framework partnership agreements for external actions

- Annex III Model specific grant agreement

- Annex IV: Contract award rules

- Annex V: Standard request for payment and financial identification form

- Annex VI: Model narrative and financial report

-Annex VII: Terms of reference for an expenditure verification of a European Union financed grant contract for external actions and model report of factual findings

-Annex VIII: Standard template for transfer of ownership of assets

Annex H: Daily allowance rates (per diem), available at the following address: <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/about-procurement-contracts/procedures-and-practical-guide-prag/diems_en>

Annex J: Information on the tax regime applicable to grant contracts signed under the call.

Annex K: Guidelines and checklist for assessing budget and simplified cost options.

**Useful links:**

**Project Cycle Management Guidelines**

[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/aid-delivery-methods-project-cycle-management-guidelines-vol-1\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/aid-delivery-methods-project-cycle-management-guidelines-vol-1_en)

**The implementation of grant contracts**

**A Users' Guide**

<http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/companion/document.do?nodeNumber=19&locale=en>

**Financial Toolkit**

<http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/procedures-beneficiary-countries-and-partners/financial-management-toolkit_en>

Please note: The toolkit is not part of the grant contract and has no legal value. It merely provides general guidance and may in some details differ from the signed grant contract. In order to ensure compliance with their contractual obligations beneficiaries should not exclusively rely on the toolkit but always consult their individual contract documents.

\* \* \*

1. Online submission via PROSPECT is mandatory for this call for proposals (see section 2.2.2). In PROSPECT all dates and times are expressed in Brussels time. Applicants should note that the IT support is open Monday to Friday from 08:30 to 18:30 Brussels time (except for public holidays) Applicants should take note of the weekly maintenance hours mentioned in the PROSPECT user manual. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. If PROSPECT is unavailable, the IT support can also be reached via email: EuropeAid-IT-support@ec.europa.eu [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. COM (2012) 492 final, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0492:FIN:EN:PDF> ;

Council Conclusions (2012) [www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/132870.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/132870.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Estimated total accepted costs = estimated total eligible costs + in kind contributions (including volunteers 'work), non-eligible taxes, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Note that a lead applicant (i.e. a coordinator) whose pillars have been positively assessed by the European Commission and who is awarded a grant will not sign the standard grant contract published with these guidelines but a contribution agreement based on the contribution agreement template. All references in these guidelines and other documents related to this call to the standard grant contract shall in this case be understood as referring to the relevant provisions of the contribution agreement template. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. In line with the 2012 Commission Communication “The Roots of Democracy”, the EU considers CSOs to include all non-state, and non-profit making structures, non-partisan and non –violent, through which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, social or economic. They include membership-based, cause-based and service-oriented CSOs. Among them, community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, faith-based organisations, foundations, research institutions, Gender and LGBT organisations, cooperatives, professional and business associations, and the not-for-profit media. Trade unions and employers' organisations, the so-called social partners, constitute a specific category of CSOs. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. To be determined on the basis of the organisation’s statutes, which should demonstrate that it has been established by an instrument governed by the national law of the country concerned and that its head office is located in an eligible country. In this respect, any legal entity whose statutes have been established in another country cannot be considered an eligible local organisation, even if the statutes are registered locally or a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ has been concluded. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Eastern Partnership countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. For instance, Article 9(1)(f) of Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 provides for eligibility of member countries of the OECD, in the case of contracts implemented in a Least Developed Country or a Highly Indebted Poor Country, as included in the list of ODA recipients. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. The updated lists of sanctions are available at [www.sanctionsmap.eu](http://www.sanctionsmap.eu).

Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. These third parties are neither affiliated entity(ies) nor associates nor contractors. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. As per OECD DAC definition, the term ‘results’ includes: ‘impact’ (overall objective), ‘outcome(s)’ (specific objective(s) and ‘output(s)’. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Examples:- for staff costs: number of hours or days of work \* hourly or daily rate pre-set according to the category of personnel concerned;- for travel expenses: distance in km \* pre-set cost of transport per km; number of days \* daily allowance pre-set according to the country;- for specific costs arising from the organization of an event: number of participants at the event \* pre-set total cost per participant etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Natural persons who apply for a grant (if so allowed in the guidelines) do not have to register in PADOR. In this case, the information included in PROSPECT and in the concept note is sufficient. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Which corresponds to sections 3 and 4 of Annex A.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. For example: http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Where the lead applicant and/or an affiliated entity(ies) is a public body created by a law, a copy of the said law must be provided. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. This obligation does not apply to natural persons who have received a scholarship or that are in most need in receipt of direct support, nor to public bodies and to international organisations. It does not apply either when the accounts are in practice the same documents as the external audit report already provided pursuant to Section 2.4.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. These documents should also be published by the contracting authority. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)