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Contracting Authority:
WESTERN BALKANS FUND

Support to the promotion of Civil Society Regional Actions in the Western Balkans

Guidelines for Grant Applicants

Fourth Call for Proposals

Deadline for submission of full application: <23/12/2021>



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1. Support to the promotion of civil society regional action in the Western Balkans

1.1. Background

The Western Balkans geographical area includes **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo***, **Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia**, referred to collectively as **Western Balkans or WB6**. In this document the above geographical names are also used as abbreviations for the constitutional names of the Western Balkans contracting parties.

For the Western Balkans region, regional cooperation remains one of the key opportunities given its capacity to positively influence regional stability and bring significant benefits for its citizens and societies. To this end, strengthening of the regional cooperation represents an essential requirement for the Western Balkans, including their EU membership aspirations.

The direct award of grant from the European Union to the WBF is given based on Fund's unique combination of ownership by all the Western Balkans IPA beneficiaries; its mandate to promote regional cooperation; and its focus on providing financial support to grass-roots CSOs and local public authorities, where has marked a new cooperation spirit taking roots in the Western Balkans region at the highest institutional level.

The Western Balkans Fund's main objective is to foster cooperation between its members (WB6), by strengthening neighbourly relations and regional cohesion and contribute to the integration of the WB6 into the European Union by promoting cooperation and common values between local authorities, citizens, and civil society organisations, and foster people to people contacts, by providing funding for small- size regional projects to local authorities and civil society organisations, in the following key areas: 1) cultural cooperation 2) education and scientific exchange; 3) sustainable economic development.

The regional and small-scale nature of projects funded by the WBF makes its activities complementary to the bigger-scale regional projects financed by the EU in the Western Balkans for civil society organisations and local authorities. WBF grants to the benefit of grassroots organisations and local authorities have a small budget and limited duration and their approach focus primarily on promoting contacts and interaction between people within the Western Balkans region, as a basis for helping develop larger projects, facilitating communication between people, developing interpersonal contacts and building up partnerships, mobilising wider civil society and encouraging the development of cross-border civil society, advertise the principle of tolerance and respect and promoting the European idea.

The present Guidelines for Applicants aim to inform the potential applicants on the rules of the WBF grant scheme "Support to the promotion of civil society regional actions in the Western Balkans" that is the subject of the WBF Fourth Call for Proposals and guide them through the process of preparation and submission of their proposals.

*This designation is without prejudice to position on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence



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1.2. Objectives and areas of intervention

The **overall objective** of the WBF fourth Call for Proposals is to promote participation of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and grassroots organisations, in the Western Balkans, to participate in regional cooperation projects on social, cultural, scientific, and economic topics, including gender equality and disability inclusiveness to enhance good neighborly relations and reconciliation.

The **specific objective** of the WBF/EU fourth Call for Proposals is to contribute to regional and cross-border cooperation, and strengthen regional cohesion in the WB6 region.

As a result of the decision made by the WBF Council of Senior Officials on the 7th of October, 2021, the thematic areas of this Call for Proposal are the following ones:

- i. Cultural cooperation
- ii. Education and scientific exchange
- iii. Sustainable development

The 4th Call for proposals, will also take into account the mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues at project level. When developing a project to address any of the specific objectives of the call, cross-cutting issues need to be mainstreamed in the following manner:

- a) Gender equality and promotion of equal opportunities.¹
- b) Protection and promotion of ethnic minority rights, including their participation in decision making processes.²
- c) Integration of persons with physical and mental disabilities.³
- d) Safeguard and promotion of children's rights and promotion of children's participation in decision-making processes.⁴
- e) Democratic standards, anti-discriminatory practices and good governance.⁵
- f) Environment⁶ and Climate change⁷.

Please note that mainstreaming cross-cutting issues is scored in the evaluation methodology of this Call for Proposals as formulated in Section 2.5, below.

¹ Equality between sexes has to be taken into consideration when setting the project objectives, defining activities (e.g. participation in capacity building activities) and expected results. Equal opportunity prevails when women and men have the same rights, obligations and opportunities.

² Enforcement of equal opportunities has to be secured in the project design in order to promote the integration of ethnic minorities and ensure their participation in decision-making processes in line with project activities and expected results.

³ Enforcement of equal opportunities has to be secured in the project in order to promote integration of persons affected by disabilities and in securing their participation in project activities (e.g. accessibility to buildings and project sites) and in decision-making processes in line with project activities and expected results.

⁴ The project should involve children as relevant stakeholders where and if appropriate (e.g. in case the specific project objective is in a sector mainly relating to children's needs, such as education, health, sports and culture, but also in sectors in which the project can indirectly influence their lives).

⁵ Activities and operations cannot set up barriers in relation to religion or belief, age, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, racial or ethnic origin particularly regarding employment and HR policy pursued towards persons who will be employed within the projects implemented under this grant scheme. Actions must secure a wide public participation and consultation, where appropriate, throughout project activities.

⁶ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

⁷ Supporting sustainable development has been one of the priorities of WBF's support to civil society in the Western Balkans from the outset, and will remain an area targeted by WBF's grant schemes. Sustainable development and climate change shall be mainstreamed under all actions by addressing one or more of the UN Sustainable Development Goals



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1.3. Financial allocation provided by the contracting authority

The overall indicative amount made available under this Call for Proposals is EUR 400,000. The Contracting Authority reserves the right not to award all available funds or cancel the call, should the quality or number of proposals received be insufficient.

The grant scheme implementation has to respect and ensure balanced distribution of funds per each contracting party of the Western Balkans Fund (WB6). If the allocations cannot be used due to insufficient quality or number of proposals received, the contracting authority reserves the right to reallocate the remaining funds.

1.4 Size of grants

Any grant requested under this Call for Proposals must not exceed EUR 15,000.

Any grant funding requested from the WBF under this Call for Proposals must not exceed 80% of the total eligible cost of the action.

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 WBF grant.

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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),
- The **co-applicants** (hereinafter referred as, Project Partners) (**where it is not specified otherwise the lead applicant and its co-applicants are hereinafter jointly referred as 'Project Partners'**) (2.1.1),

(2) The actions:

Actions for which a grant may be awarded (2.1.2)

(3) The costs:

- Types of cost that may be taken into account in setting the amount of the grant (2.1.3).

The eligibility of project proposals will be checked against the criteria outlined below.



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2.1.1. Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and Partners)

Lead applicant

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

- be a legal person, (natural persons or entities without legal personalities are not eligible,) **and**
- be established in one or more of the WBF Contracting Parties (WB6), **and**
- be non-profitmaking, **and**
- be a specific type of organisation from one of the following categories:
 - A civil society organization⁸ (CSO/NGO)⁹
 - A local or regional public entity, or association of local or regional public entities
 - A business association such as: association of enterprises, agriculture association, chamber of commerce, tourism association, etc.
 - An educational institution such as university/faculty¹⁰, school, institute, library, research centre, academy of science/music/arts, etc.
 - Media associations such as: organizations working with media, journalism and freedom of expression.
 - An institution of culture or sports such as museums, art galleries, theatres, libraries, or associations of cultural institutions, sport associations, etc.

The above list is not exhaustive, other type of institutions can be considered eligible, provided they respect the first three criteria specified above.

- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the project and the relevant activities together with the project co-applicants (also defined in this document as project partners), and not acting as an intermediary.
- not to be in any of the exclusion situations (listed below as well as in the declaration of honour to be attached to the Full Application)

Exclusion situations

Potential applicants may not participate in calls for proposals or be awarded grants if they are in any of the following situations:

- They are bankrupt or having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities.
- They are not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions and/or the payment of any taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the contracting party in which they are established.
- They, or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them, have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organization, money laundering or any other illegal activity.
- They are directly affiliated to commercial profit.

⁸ **Clarification:** An organisation's must be established under the national law and its seat is located in one of WBF contracting parties.

⁹ **Clarification:** The operational activity of the CSO is not limited, it can be younger than two years with a good track record.

¹⁰ **Clarification:** privately owned universities can apply through this Call for Proposals as well, however their projects must not have the purpose of generating profit. Universities can apply on the level of faculties.



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- They are involved directly in political campaigning.
- They exclusively serve to religious purposes.

In Annex C (Declaration by the Lead Applicant), the lead applicant must declare that the Lead Applicant itself, and the Project Partners are not in any of these exclusion situations.

The lead applicant must act with minimum two project partners.

The above seven eligibility conditions apply to the lead applicant and the project partners.

If awarded the grant contract, the lead applicant will become the grant beneficiary and will be identified as “the Coordinator”.

The coordinator is the main interlocutor of the contracting authority. It represents and acts on behalf of any other co-beneficiary (if any) and coordinate the design and implementation of the action.

Partnership

Under this Call for Proposals, the applicants must form project partnerships. A project partnership consists of the lead applicant and minimum two project partners.

Partnership parties must come from at least three different WBF contracting parties (WB6).

WBF strongly encourages balanced and meaningful partnerships in which each project partner has specific role and brings in specific expertise.

The role of Project Partners

The role of lead applicant and project partners must be elaborated in the project application under the methodology section.

Project Partners

Project Partners participate in designing, developing the project idea and implementing the action, and the costs they incur are eligible in the same way as those incurred by the lead applicant.

Project Partners must satisfy the same eligibility criteria as applicable to the lead applicant.

Project Partners must sign the partnership agreement of the grant application form.

If awarded the grant contract, the project partners will become beneficiaries in the action (together with the coordinator/lead applicant).



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2.1.2. *Eligible actions: action for which an application may be made*

Definition:

An action is composed of a set of activities.

Duration:

The initial planned duration of a project may not be lower than 3 months nor exceed 10 months. (Including Reporting Period. Final Report must be delivered in 30 calendaric days within the above mentioned timeframe.)

Areas of intervention:

Project proposals submitted under the 4th WBF Call for Proposals can cover one or several of the following Areas of intervention:

- I. Cultural cooperation: Strengthening regional cultural identity and intercultural dialogue in the WB, by enhancing cooperation through cultural initiatives, activities and projects.
- II. Education and Scientific exchanges: Promoting regional projects/activities aiming education development, its growth and its extension, capacity building and mobility, regional scientific and research exchanges and improvement.
- III. Sustainable Development: Advancement of regional cohesion and supporting institutional partnership in sustainable economic development.

Promoting reconciliation, European Integration, cross-border cooperation, freedom of expression, gender equality and youth are the cross-cutting issues covering all actions under WBF key areas of activities.

Location:

Activities should take place in the Western Balkans region. In certain circumstances activities that promote WB region in other parts of Europe will be also taken into consideration.

Types of action:

Types of action which may be financed under this call (the list is non-exhaustive):

Cultural cooperation

- Supporting regional projects aiming to increase awareness of the richness in terms of cultural heritage in the WB, including history, art, culinary, tourism, etc.
- Promotion of regional intercultural dialogue that directly contributes to people to people links and good neighbourly relations.
- Promotion of regional interfaith dialogue, supporting the spread of best practices of tolerance, constructive and positive interaction between religious communities in the WB region.
- Promoting the Western Balkans region in other parts of Europe, such as promotion of the regional cultural identity/products.
- Supporting regional initiatives that monitor and promote the EU integration process.
- Promoting the raise of awareness for protection and preservation of archaeological sites, monuments and overall cultural heritage. Underlining the importance of regional cooperation in this respect.
- Supporting cultural and creative sectors in the region in creating and promoting authentic regional brands in their specific areas of activities.
- Promoting/supporting the organisation of regional sport activities in different specialties.



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- Encourage active cooperation between museums, art galleries, artistic and folk assemblies, film producers, etc., by supporting joint regional activities and products.

Education and Scientific exchanges

- Supporting and strengthening the cooperation among educational and research institutions in the region.
- Supporting teachers in the region, by offering concrete opportunities for sharing of the best practices.
- Supporting the development of regional initiatives in education academia and research.
- Supporting the increase in the volume of common of educational tools and their regional exchange (e.g. methodologies, common textbooks, internship programmes, etc.).
- Promoting best practices of education policies and sharing of best performances in the dialogue among decision-making bodies, municipalities, schools and families.
- Promoting innovation and knowledge-based entrepreneurship as the main source of growth and job creation.
- Supporting opportunities/actions for the researchers from the Western Balkans region ex. topic “brain drain”.
- Promoting Networks of Excellence to strengthen excellence on a particular research topic.
- Improving lifelong learning for better access to labour markets.
- Increasing science popularisation, with particular focus on the STEM curriculum for the women and youth.
- Supporting mobility in the region on specific topics such as: internships, youth summer/winter camps.

Sustainable Development

- Promoting initiatives for inclusive and sustainable economic growth and for improvement of the living conditions, competitiveness and overall economic development in the region.
- Supporting regional conferences (Start-up, Venture forums, Innovation Fairs, Business Accelerators etc.)
- Improving ecosystem for business development at the regional level.
- Facilitating science-industry cooperation and technology transfer by promoting knowledge transfer activities.
- Supporting sustainable growth through promotion of tourism; resources and products of the region.
- Promoting innovation initiatives in the region.
- Sharing of best practices on creating the suitable environment for SME's establishment and further development.
- Exchange of best practices to increase awareness on a healthy and active lifestyle, and for the prevention of substance abuse.
- Supporting activities for improving working skills and their adjustment to better access to the labour market.
- Promotion and exchange of best practices employment in the region and in vocational training.
- Supporting cross border projects among local authorities on activities that boost economic and social development, especially by sharing best practices cross-border areas.
- Supporting interconnection and exchange of experiences between local authorities, aiming to improve the management and transparency of municipal operations and exchange of know-how in improving living conditions.
- Promoting and supporting awareness raising initiatives on environmental protection and climate change in the region.



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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

Types of activity:

Indicative types of activities which may be financed under this Call for Proposals are given below (please note that this list is non-exhaustive):

- High-level events, awareness raising and communication activities
- Actions aiming at community building and exchange of good practices
- Project website putting together best practice examples
- Preparation and publishing of ready-to-use guidelines and standards
- Awareness and dissemination actions
- Consultation and training services and activities
- Studies, analyses, surveys

Financial support to third parties

Applicants **may not** propose financial support to third parties. In other words, sub-granting is not allowed under this call for proposals.

Visibility

The beneficiaries must take all necessary steps to publicise the fact that the European Union has financed the action. As far as possible, actions that are 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 European Union support for the action in the contracting parties and regions concerned, as well as the results and the impact of this support.

The beneficiaries must comply with the objectives and priorities and guarantee the visibility of the EU financing (see the 2018 Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU External Actions: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/funding/communication-and-visibility-manual-eu-external-actions_en).

The envisaged communication and visibility activities will be included in the work plan and the budget for the action. The level of detail will be appropriate to the nature, extent and cost of the activities envisaged.

In order to maximize the impact of communication investment:

- Activities need to be timely
- Information used must be accurate
- The right audience (s) will be targeted
- Messages will be interesting for the target audience (s)
- Communication and visibility activities will be appropriate in terms of resources spent, timing and expected impact.

Communication and visibility activities shall be coordinated closely with the WBF Secretariat.

The beneficiaries shall also adhere to the WBF Communication and Visibility Guidelines during the entire contractual period. Inter alia, they will include the Fund's logo and a direct link to the Fund's web page on the website of



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their organisation, as well refer to co-funding by the European Union logo as per EU requirements mentioned above. The beneficiaries are strongly encouraged to promote WBF on their social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn) and also make references to the Fund's active accounts:

- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/WesternBalkansFund/>
- Twitter https://twitter.com/balkans_fund
- Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/westernbalkansfund/>
- LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/westernbalkansfund/>

The Fund reserves the right to make use of the project results for its promotion.

Number of applications and grants that could be awarded to Lead Applicant and Project Partners:

“Under this Call for Proposals, an applicant, may submit only 1 (one) project proposal as the Lead Applicant and/or 1 (one) project proposal as a Project Partner.”

“Under this Call for Proposals, an applicant, may be awarded only 1 (one) grant as Lead Applicant and/or 1 (one) grant as Project Partner.”

Please note that, based on EU regulations, WBF shall not support third party actions that are already supported by the European Union in order not to duplicate European Union funding of the same expenditures. WBF will make sure that same activities and costs are not paid from two different awarded grants, to the same entity.

Failing to comply with the above requirement will cause the rejection of the relevant applications.

2.1.3. Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included

The reimbursement of eligible costs will be based on actual costs incurred by the beneficiary (coordinator and project partners).

This Call for Proposals foresees cost-sharing (also termed as co-financing) as a mandatory condition for receiving a grant. The WBF covers up to 80% of total project eligible costs. The remaining 20%, or more, must be covered by own grant beneficiary funds (from the coordinator and/or the project partners), other donors' financial contributions, or non-financial contributions (in-kind).

A well-planned budget shall be simple and realistic. The budget should include approximations of the project's future expenditures in EUR (€) based on real costs in the market. All budget costs have to be eligible costs, no matter the source of financing (grant or co-financing) and ONLY the costs presented in the budget will be considered for financing.

The total budget of the project consists of the grant awarded funds, up to 80% coming from WBF/EU and at least 20% co-financing, of the total budget. The amount of the awarded grant cannot be increased. Applicants are recommended to use the average exchange rates available at the given national bank at the time of preparing the application form.

Detailed project costs together with financing sources have to be presented in the budget form provided in the OGMS system.



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Eligible direct costs

The total costs for Human Resources, must not exceed 30% of the Total Granted Amount.

Indirect costs, must not exceed 7% of the subtotal direct eligible costs of the action.

When planning the budget, it is important to adhere to the following list of direct eligible cost categories, i.e. costs that can be covered by the Fund:

1. Human Resource costs up to 30 % of the Total Granted Amount:

The cost of staff assigned to the action (gross salaries of the dedicated project personal including social security charges and other related costs, excluding bonuses); salaries and costs shall not exceed those normally borne by the beneficiary(ies), unless it is justified by showing that it is essential to carry out the action.

Fees for experts, per diems specifically dedicated to the action, insurance, financial service costs (in particular bank charges and other cost of financial transfers related to the action).

2. Travel costs

- Travel and subsistence costs for staff and other persons taking part in the action, provided they do not exceed those normally borne by the beneficiary(ies) according to its rules and regulations. (The calculation of the travel costs by car must refer to the following criteria: ≤ 0.22 EUR/km.)
- Accommodation and Board costs.

3. Other direct costs, services

- Rent of premises and related technical services, rental or leasing costs for equipment (new or used) and supplies specifically dedicated to the purposes of the action, costs of consumables specifically dedicated to the action costs of services and supplies purchased by the beneficiary(ies) for the purposes of the action,
- Public relations costs, printing, advertising and design of promotion material, awards and prizes,
- Fees for artists/copyrights.

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 subtotal direct eligible costs of the Action. (e.g. project coordination, accountancy, one's own work on the project or other running expenses).

Indirect costs estimated as of the above 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.**

Since the same cost could be treated as direct or indirect cost, the applicant will describe in the application form which costs have been included in the category of the indirect costs allotted to the action.



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Ineligible costs

The following costs cannot be covered by the WBF grant:

1. Costs incurred for Applicant's activities undertaken before signature of the contract
2. Debts and debt service charges (interest);
3. Provisions for losses, or potential future liabilities;
4. Activities aimed at profit making activities;
5. Activities that are affiliated directly with/or supportive to political and/or religious agendas.
6. Costs declared by the beneficiary(ies) and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union grant;
7. Purchases of land or buildings;
8. Currency exchange losses;
9. Credits to third parties, unless otherwise specified in the special conditions;
10. Bonuses included in costs of staff; customs and import duties, or any other charges;
11. Fines, financial penalties and expenses of litigation;
12. Taxes, including VAT. (Except when it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation might be eligible.)
13. Beneficiary's individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, congresses.

Contributions in kind

Contributions in kind mean the provision of goods or services to beneficiaries free of charge by a third party. An in-kind contribution is a noncash, other than monetary contribution or input which can be given a cashvalue. Expenditures in-kind can take the form of:

1. Donation of goods or services, time or expertise, rather than cash or appreciated property.
2. Infrastructure support, office supplies support, equipment support etc.
3. Human resources of the organizing institution.

The value of such contributions must not exceed:

- a) either the costs actually borne and duly supported by accounting documents;
- b) or the costs generally accepted on the concerned market of reference,
- c) or, for volunteers' work, the unit cost per volunteer per day, defined and authorised by the contracting authority.

In kind contributions must comply with national tax and social security rules.



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2.1.4. 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 WBF 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.

c) 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.

d) Breach of obligations, 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 breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud. If breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud is discovered after the award of the contract, the contracting authority may refrain from concluding the contract.



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2.2. HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW

2.2.1. *Information Sessions*

Information sessions on this Call for Proposals will be held in Belgrade, Podgorica, Pristina, Sarajevo, Skopje, Tirana and other locations in the region. Please check the WBF webpage and social media pages for the exact Info-session schedule.

2.2.2. *Partnership Platform*

The Western Balkans Fund established a Partnership Platform in Facebook in order to assist applicants to find suitable Project Partners in the context of the preparation of this Call for Proposals.

The following partner search page supports the identification of potential project partners:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/WBFPartnershipPlatform/>

Applicants are encouraged to post messages on partners' search and interact with each other. Announcements will be in the English language.

2.2.3. *Where and how to send full applications*

Lead applicants are invited to submit project application on behalf of the established partnership, in English language, by using the online Grant Management System (OGMS). This system is developed to further facilitate the application process and is user friendly.

The online system will provide detailed information about the Annexes which are incorporated to the system. (Annex A, B and C)

A project application includes the following documents:

1. Annex A. Application form (OGMS)
2. Annex B. Budget (OGMS)
3. Annex C. Declaration by the lead-applicant (Download, Sign, Scan and Upload in the OGMS)

The project application must be submitted electronically as follows:

<https://www.wbfportal.org/applicant/>

Applications sent by other means (e.g. by fax, mail or by email) will be rejected. (In case of a system breakdown the applicants will be notified for further application instructions from the WBF Secretariat).

Upon submission of the project application online, the lead applicants will receive a confirmation of receipt with the link for the survey to be completed by the applicant. Should the confirmation of the receipt be not received within 7 days after the deadline please contact the WBF in writing by using the following email address:

WBFapplications@westernbalkansfund.org



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Please note that incomplete applications will be rejected automatically by the system.

Hand-written applications will not be accepted.

Clarifications will only be requested when the information provided is not sufficient to conduct an objective assessment.

2.2.4. *Deadline for submission of full applications*

The deadline for the submission of project applications is: 23/12/2021, 16:00 CET (time).

The lead applicant is advised to avoid waiting until the last day to submit the full application, since heavy Internet traffic or a fault with the Internet connection (including electricity failure, etc.) could lead to difficulties in submission.

2.2.5. *Additional Information*

Inquiries pertaining to this Call for Proposals can be sent by e-mail no later than 15 working days before the deadline for the submission of project proposals to the following e-mail address:

info@westernbalkansfund.org

WBF has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date. Only the questions sent in written will be answered (no phone inquiries).

Replies will be summarised and publicised no later than 10 working days before the deadline for submission of project proposals at the WBF website. Please note that the replies to the questions asked during the Information Sessions will also be published at the WBF website.

2.3. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF PROJECT PROPOSALS

Applications will be examined and evaluated by the contracting authority (WBF) with the assistance of external evaluators. The approval of the list of best selected projects will be made by the WBF Council of the Senior Officials¹¹ in close cooperation with EU/C Delegation, followed by the endorsement of the final award list by the WBF Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

According to WBF internal rules, the grant scheme implementation has to respect and ensure balanced distribution of funds per Contracting Parties.

All applications will be evaluated according to the steps and criteria enclosed in this Section.

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 without undertaking further evaluation steps.

¹¹ Clarification: The Council of the Senior Officials of the Western Balkans Fund is composed by the appointed officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the WB6 members.



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STEP 1: Opening, Administrative and eligibility checks according to the eligibility criteria for the Lead applicant and partners

During the opening and administrative and eligibility checks the following will be assessed:

- i. If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
- ii. If the project proposal satisfies the eligibility criteria specified in the Chapter 2.1 of this Guidelines.
- iii. If the project has minimum 3 project partners coming from three different WB6 Contracting Parties
- iv. If the project application was submitted through Online Grant Management System
- v. If the Declaration by the Lead applicant has been filled in and has been signed
- vi. If the application is typed and is written in English
- vii. If the Budget is completed in the format requested, and stated in EUR
- viii. If the duration of the action is not exceeding 10 months nor is it less than 3 months.
- ix. If the requested WBF/EU contribution (amount) is not exceeding 15,000 EUR
- x. If the lead applicant is legal entity established in the WB6
- xi. If the project partners are legal entities established in the WB6
- xii. If the project partners are non-profit organizations/institutions (or privately owned faculties)
- xiii. If any of the requested information/document is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that sole basis and the application will not be evaluated further

STEP 2: Evaluation of Applications

The project applications that pass the administrative and eligibility check will be evaluated on the relevance and design of the proposed action. The project applications will receive an overall score out of 100 in line with the evaluation grid below.

Name of the project:		
Protocol number:		
Scoring sections:	Specific Criteria	Justification
Partnership: (up to 10 points)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the partnership bring together partners from different parts of the region and with complementary expertise? 2. Is the partnership contributing to the addressed topic and contributing to the quality of expected results and impact, is this clearly demonstrated? 	
Description of the project: (up to 15 points)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How coherent and relevant is the proposal to the main objective of the call for proposal and to the specific areas of intervention or any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants? 2. How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their need and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately? 3. Does the project have substantial regional relevance (e.g. the project contributes to reconciliation, increase regional cooperation (quality or scale) or people-to-people links)? 	



<p>Relevance of the project: (up to 25 points)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How realistically the context situation have been described and is it linked with the Relevance of this project? 2. Are the results and deliverables clearly described in relation to proposed activities? 3. Is the specific problem listed in the project addresses sufficiently regional cooperation opportunities/challenges in WB6¹². 4. Does the project proposal integrate relevant cross-cutting elements such as environmental/climate change issues, promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities, needs of disabled people, rights of minorities and rights of indigenous peoples, youth (if there is a strong prevalence in the target contracting parties/region)? 5. Does the project proposal contain particular added – value elements (e.g. novel idea, cross border dimension, joint development and implementation, best practices)? 	
<p>Methodology and implementation approach: (up to 10 points)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has the applicant provided the methodological approach and explained the role of each partner in the project activities? 2. Has the applicant provided a project implementation methodology? 3. Is the implementation methodology inclusive enough? Is the partners level of involvement and participation in the project satisfactory and in accordance with their respective expertises? 4. Is the action plan/timeframe clear and realistic? 5. Does partnership plan a way to monitor and evaluate its actions and learn from them? 	
<p>Risk and Sustainability: (up to 10 points)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has the applicant defined clearly risks and provided mitigation plan? 2. Has the applicant outlined the continuity of the project impact after its implementation? 3. Has the applicant clearly stated how the partnership was formed and if the partnership is sustainable in the future? 	
<p>Visibility: (up to 10 points)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has the applicant clearly described all the visibility tools and methodology related to the project outreach? 2. Do the applicants have a clear visibility plan to ensure EU-WBF's visibility during the implementation of the project? 3. Is the project likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replications, extension, capitalisation on experience and knowledge sharing? 	

¹² Indicate any specific added-value elements of the e.g. reconciliation, innovation and best practices



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Budget and cost-effectiveness of the project (up to 20 points)	1. Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?	
	2. Is the budget correctly presented as per requirements in the application guidelines? (Refer to section 2.1.3 of this document)	
	3. Is it foreseen in the budget to have financial allocations between partners as per activity plan?	
Total score:		
100		

Applications which had obtained less than 60 points as score in the ranking list will not be recommended for funding by the Evaluation Committee.

STEP 3 – Submission of supporting documents

In order for WBF to verify the eligibility of the lead applicant and the project partners, shortlisted applicants will be required to provide the following documents:

Supporting documents must be provided through OGMS system:

1. Scanned statute and the registration certificate
2. Partnership Agreement
3. A financial statement of the lead applicant’s latest bank accounts (the profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed).

The declaration by the lead applicant will be cross-checked with the supporting documents provided by the lead applicant. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the declaration by the lead applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the application on that sole basis.

Any rejected application will be replaced by the next best placed application on the reserve list that falls within the available budget for this call for proposals. Please see the provisions of Section 1.3 above for more details.

After verifying the supporting documents, the WBF Evaluation Committee will make a final recommendation to the WBF Council of the Senior of Officials as the decision making body for awarding the grants.

2.4. NOTIFICATION OF THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY’S DECISION

2.4.1. Content of the decision

The lead applicants will be informed in writing and can follow their status of the application by the dedicated online grant management system. The decision will be disseminated through OGMS System/Email.

Letters to successful lead applicants must be sent within 5 working days after the decision is made. Unsuccessful lead applicants will be informed that they have not been selected.

Unsuccessful applicants will have the right to enquire further clarifications within 10 working days of the notification.



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2.4.2. Indicative timetable

Applicants shall be notified about the final decision on their application by the end of the evaluation period.

The grant contract shall be signed within 1 month following the notification of the award decision.

Implementation of the project shall begin on the day following the signing of the Grant Contract.

	DATE	TIME
1. Dissimination Period (if any)	15/11/2021 – 06/12/2021	N/A
2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority	15 working days before the submission deadline <03/12/2021>	COB
3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority	10 working days before the submission deadline <10/12/2021>	COB
4. Deadline for submission of full applications	<23/12/2021>	16:00 CET
7. Information to lead applicants on the evaluation of the full applications	< Refer to OGMS >	N/A
8. Notification of award (after the eligibility check)	< Refer to OGMS >	N/A
9. Contract signature	Spring 2022	N/A

All times are in the time zone of the contracting party of WBF.

This indicative timetable refers to provisional dates and may be updated by the contracting authority during the procedure. In such cases, the updated timetable will be published on the WBF web site as well as OGMS System.

LIST OF ANNEXES

DOCUMENTS TO BE COMPLETED

All annexes are foreseen to be incorporated on the Online Grant Management System. The applicants will find all related documents on the system.

- Annex A: Grant application form (OGMS)
- Annex B: Budget (OGMS)
- Annex C: Declaration by the lead-applicant (Download, Sign, Scan and Upload in the OGMS)