**TA GAF & Guideline Review and Improvement**

**Main changes overview– version 01**

This note accompanies the revised application form for the technical assistance grants (TA GAF) and the Guidelines and identifies the key changes/amendments made to the version approved by the WBIF Steering Committee (SC) on July 2017. This document accompanies the revised TA GAF Template and Guidelines – version 01.

**Rationale behind updates**

* Avoid duplication, misunderstandings and confusions;
* Ensure correlation with the revised INV GAF Template;
* Incorporate the IAS report recommendations and the background documents for the 23rd WBIF SC (e.g. Document 4 ‘Announcement of TA Round 25 and INV Round 06’ and Document 6 ‘Public blending - EU eligibility criteria aligned with the Economic and Investment Plan’);
* Better support to the applicants in the preparation of the candidate TA GAF;
* Improve the quality of the TA applications;
* Match the form currently used in the MIS;
* Increased focus on the description of both Project and Action.

**Intervention in the TA GAF Template**

The revised TA GAF Template has been correlated/structured with the revised version of the INV GAF Template. **More elaborated/explanatory instructions on how each section of the TA GAF must be completed have been included;** primarily those pertaining to the description of Project and Action, project status and planning, budget, grant calculation, estimated timelines for Action implementation, the principles of gender quality, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, and risk assessment categories. Briefly, the interventions consist of:

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| Change | Description |
| Introduction of new sections | * S4 ‘Flagship’ * S15 ‘Type of WBIF financing source’; and, * S16 ‘Implementation of TA activities’;   therefore, various sections within the template have been re-numbered. |
| Slightly changed titles | The titles of a few sections have been slightly changed, as follows:   * **Part II of the TA GAF: ‘Description of the Project’** instead of ‘Detailed description of the Project’; * **Part III of the TA GAF: ‘Description of the Action’** instead of ‘Detailed description of the Action’; * **S2 ‘Grant code’** instead of ‘Grant number/code’; * **S3 ‘WBIF approval date’** instead of ‘Date of Steering Committee’; * **S11 ‘Lead Financial Institution’** instead of ‘Lead International Financial Institution’; * **S14 ‘Total WBIF grant amount’** instead of ‘Grant amount requested’ * **S19 ‘Description of the Project’** instead of ‘Short description and context of the Project’; * **S20 ‘Indicative project status and planning’** instead of ‘Project stage’; * **S21 ‘Coherence with the WBIF objectives, EU policies, adopted national/sectoral strategy’** instead of ‘Strategic justification and coherence with the WBIF objectives, adopted national/sectoral strategy and EU policies’; * **S36 ‘Issues to be clarified before WBIF grant approva**l’ instead of ‘Issues to be clarified before submission to the WBIF Steering Committee’; * **Annex ‘Approval by the EWBJF Assembly of Contributors’** instead of ‘Approval by the WBIF Steering Committee and by the EWBJF Assembly of Contributors’. |
| Improved/ restructured sections in line with revised INV GAF and MIS format | * **S5 ‘Sectors’:** eligible sectors have been amended to those included in “Doc 6 - Public blending - EU eligibility criteria aligned with the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans”; * **S14 ‘Total WBIF grant amount’** has been slightly amended to match the form currently used in the MIS; * **S19 ‘Description of the Project’:** S16 ‘Short description and context of the Project’ and S17 ‘Main objectives of the Project’ have been merged into a single section, as well as restructured into six sub-sections, to avoid repetition and possible misunderstandings, as follows: *19.1* ‘*Background and context of the Project’; 19.2 ‘Needs/demand analysis’; 19.3 ‘Main objectives of the Project’; 19.4 ‘Description of the Project’; 19.5 ‘Project map’; and, 19.6 ‘Reference documents’.* * **Section 18 ‘Project stage summary’ has been removed,** and therefore various sections within the template have been re-numbered. * **S20 ‘Indicative project status and planning’ has been** **amended and restructured:** (i)a distinctive line *‘Construction and other statutory permits*’ after *‘Detailed Design’* has been added; (ii) ‘Procurement’ has been replaced with ‘Procurement for works (per phase/component)’; (iii) a distinctive line for ‘Construction of works (per phase/component)’ has been introduced; and, (iv) two columnsrelated to the expected start and completion dates of the various project stages have been introduced. * **S24 ‘Project budget and financing plan’** has been replaced with the section used in the revised INV GAF Template to have a unitary format in the MIS. Additional clarification about the various cost components has been included. * **S27 ‘Project sustainability’** hasbeen restructured into four sub-sections, as follows: (i) Economic/financial viability; (ii) Environmental aspects; (iii) Social aspects; and, (iv) Institutional aspects (similar to that one used in the revised INV GAF Template); * **S28 ‘Risk assessment categories’** has been amended: (i) ‘Social and gender equality’ has been replaced with the ‘Socio-economic, equality/gender, minority/vulnerable groups’; and, (ii) a distinctive line ‘Operation risks’ has been introduced. * **Section ‘Indicative project calendar’** has been removed to avoid duplication of information with the new section S20 ‘Indicative project status and planning’. * **S29’Climate mitigation and adaptation aspects’:** a textbox has been added to provide additional explanations about the Rio markers; * **S31 ‘WBIF grant amount calculation and justification’:** distinctive lines related to the activities associated with the Actionhave been introduced (e.g. Preliminary Design, Preparation of tender dossiers, etc.); * **S33 ‘Indicative calendar of Action’** has been slightly restructured to match the form currently used in the MIS; * **Section ‘Issues to be clarified before WBIF grant approval’** has been moved before S37’ Contacts’ and become S36; * **S37 ‘Contacts’:** the contact for DG NEAR has been removed. |
| Restructured annexes | * **Annex I ‘Key requirements checklist’:** the text related to the WBIF beneficiaries has been reordered and updated; the eligible sectors have been revised. * **Annex ‘Approval’** has beenmoved under Annex ‘Payment of the grant from the Joint Fund’, and the contact details have been revised; * **Annex ‘Payment of the Grant from the Joint Fund’** has been slightly revised: (i) the timescales for disbursement has been updated (e.g. 15 days have been replaced by 60 days); and, (ii) distinctive line for ‘Final date of contracting’ has been introduced. |
| Instructions included in the template | All the instructions included in the template have been amended accordingly and drop-down lists have been included in sections S4 ‘Flagship’, S5 ‘Sector’, S7 ‘Beneficiary country’, S11 ‘Lead Financial Institution’, S12’ Co-financiers’, S20 ‘Indicative project status and planning’. |

**Intervention in the TA GAF Guidelines**

The TA Guidelines have been largely restructured and rewritten to (i) ensure correlation with the background documents for the 23rd WBIF Steering Committee; (ii) avoid duplication of information provided in the guidelines *‘Western Balkans Investment Framework. A Guide’* and *‘WBIF Communication and Visibility Guidelines’;* and, (iii) help applicants in completing the TA GAFs. The key changes are as follows:

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| Change | Description |
| Structure | * General information has been updated; * Additional references to the various guidelines/webpages and/or information on the WBIF-funded projects have been inserted; * Various definitions have been added in the **new ‘Glossary’ section** to avoid misunderstanding/confusions; * The sections and sub-sections of the Guidelines have been reordered/reorganised, as follows:   + **Chapters 5** ‘WBIF grant application process’, **6** ‘WBIF screening and assessment process’, **7** ‘Implementation of grants following approval by the SC’, as well as **Annex 1** ‘WBIF governance structure and related bodies’, **Annex 2** ‘Sector development projects’, **Annex 6** ‘Communication and visibility requirements’, and **Annex 7** ‘WBIF regional support contact points’ **have been removed** to avoid duplication of information provided in the above-mentioned guidelines;   + **Chapter ‘Eligibility provisions’** has been improved and restructured into two distinct chapters, as follows: (i) **Chapter 3 ‘Eligibility criteria’** refers to the eligibility criteria; and, (ii) **Chapter 4 ‘Step-by-step guide to developing a TA GAF**’ - this new chapter focuses on the TA GAF sub-sections that generally raise issues when completing the applications. |
| Restructuring and improvement | * Various sections have been amended to point out better the scope of the Guidelines and the WBIF process, such as **Chapter 1** *‘Purpose of the Guidelines’*and **Chapter 2** *‘General principal for TA grant support’;* * **Chapter 3 ’Eligibility provisions’:** the titlehas slightly been changed (e.g. Eligibility criteria’) and the section has been restructured/improved: (i) a few sub-sections have been moved to Chapter 4 and rewritten (e.g. ‘Additionality of the WBIF grant’ and ‘Budget and scope of the Project and Action’); (ii) the eligibility criteria has been detailed by including further clarifications on the eligible sectors in line with the background documents for the 23rd WBIF SC; the list of the non-eligible costs has been amended; (e.g. the cost for planning/design (permits) fees, project design review/check/verification of the revision committee, customs and import duties, or any other charges, second-hand equipment have been added); and, (iii) further details regarding the timeline schedule for TA Round 25 have been included; * **Chapter 4 ‘Step-by-step guide to developing a TA GAF’ - more elaborated/explanatory instructions** **and ‘Warning boxes’** have been includedto assist applicants in double-checking that the sections of the TA GAF are duly filled in with adequate information and data.   + Additional clarification on the Project & Action description has been included to ensure a better description of the grant-financed activities, as well as a clear distinction between the Project and the Action;   + The main objectives of the Project in terms of outcomes/outputs, as well as the definition of the Project’s socio-economic objectives, have been explicitly introduced;   + Additional clarification on the Project & Action budget has been included; the list of the non-eligible cost has been amended; more elaborated instructions related to the grant calculation has been included;   + Further details regarding the key milestones expected for the Project & Action have been added to ensure that the planned activities are realistically implementable within the foreseen period and logically sequenced. Specifically, the planning principles of the timelines underlying the preparation and implementation of the Project/Action have been included.   + Cross-cutting issues, such as the environment, gender equality and equal opportunities, the rights of minorities and/or vulnerable groups have been explicitly introduced, as a condition for demonstrating compliance with EU social standards;   + Further details regarding the risk assessment categories have been added, in particular for the environmental, social and implementation risks; moreover, ‘operation risks’ have been included   + Definition and remarks on the expected results and outputs of the Project have been included and revised (including Annex 2 ‘Indicators’).   1. The ‘Cross-sector indicators’ have been revised to take account of gender equality and equal opportunities, and additional specific indicators have also been introduced.   2. Additional indicators have been included in Annex 2. * **Annex 4 ‘WBIF Screening and assessment grid’** has been adapted in line with the revised TA GAF template. |