**Contracting authority**: COSV – Coordinamento delle Organizzazioni per il servizio volontario

Toka Jone – Re-use of confiscated land to promote social agriculture

Social Agriculture Development Fund (SADF)

Guidelines  
for sub-grant applicants

Reference: EuropeAid/171607/DD/ACT/AL

Deadline for submission of full application: January 19, 2024

NOTICE

This is an open call for proposals, where all documents are submitted together. Actions will be evaluated in a single step, without preselection. The instructions described in this document will help all the applicants to successfully submit their applications. You can download the Application Package at COSV webpage <https://www.cosv.org/>.

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1. TOKA JONË: SUB-SUB-GRANTING SCHEME Social Agriculture Development Fund – SADF
   1. Background

The Social Agriculture Development Fund - SADF call for proposals is developed under the EU funded TOKA JONË project EuropeAid/171607/DD/ACT/AL under the Civil Society Facility & Media Programme for Western Balkans and Turkey 2020 (CSF), a programme which was introduced in 2008 to strengthen civil society in the IPA Countries.

Toka Jone project through SADF sub-sub-granting scheme is fully in line with main priorities of EU support to civil society, in particular: 1) to achieve an environment that is conducive to civil society activities; and 2) to build the capacity of CSOs to be effective and accountable independent actors. To foster the diversification of revenue sources and strengthen the financial capacities of CSOs, as well as encourage good practices in terms of good governance and the promotion of a culture of legality - from a multidimensional perspective - the EU has consistently supported the reuse of abandoned assets for social purposes.

Confiscation of criminal assets, therefore, is a key aspect to prevent criminal organisations from remaining in their illegal activities. To that end, Toka Jone aims at contributing to some of most pressing Albanian national priorities on social re-use of confiscated assets as an effective solution for the growth of non-profit organisations and social enterprises combined with the strengthening of Albanian enforcement agencies and local government units.

Social re-use of confiscated assets is permissible in Albania to its law enforcement agencies, local government units and non-profit organisations whose objective is to protect and rehabilitate victims of organised crime. The alienated confiscated assets can be used, in the specific case of non-profit organisations, for the provision of loans, based on a request from the beneficiary with a substantiated and motivated interest. Supervision, in these cases, is carried out by the Agency for the Management of Seized and Confiscated Assets, based on instructions provided by the Minister of Finance and Economy. At present, Albania has little experience with the social re-use of confiscated assets. It should continue to monitor its efforts in this field with a view to establishing trends and assessing the effectiveness of the system, in order to make changes to it over time. Furthermore, the agricultural sector is attracting increasing interest and represents a field with enormous potential for the country. Therefore, the Project is addressed in particular at young people, women, vulnerable groups and relatives of organized crime victim, with the scope to provide piloting innovative green entrepreneurial activities based on social farming activities and by networking and engaging the local communities.

The project is implemented by a consortium led by the Coordinamento delle Organizzazioni per il Servizio Volontario (COSV), the Albanian Network for Rural Development (ANRD) and the Consorzio Nazionale della Cooperazione di solidarietà sociale Gino Matterelli (CGM) – with its associated entity (Consorzio La Rada CLR), in cooperation with the Agency for the Administration of Seized and Confiscated Assets (AAPSK) with the direct and intensive support of the Municipalities of Tirana and Shijak (located respectively in the Tirana and Durres Counties).

Toka Jone foresees the provision of a significant component of financial support to third parties, gathered in the specific financial instrument: the **Social Agriculture Development Fund (SADF).** The global aim of this sub-sub-grant mechanism is to support social agriculture initiatives managing confiscated assets from organized crime, as a means to promote socio-economic development, self-employment, upskilling and reskilling opportunities of vulnerable groups, sense of legality and rule of law.

SADF is conceived as a flexible instrument able to address the needs and aspirations of economic actors willing to launch or consolidate social agriculture experiences in the Tirana and Durres regional areas. In this context, will be selected and supported, through a sub-sub-granting scheme, at least three social agriculture initiatives that will benefit from financial and technical assistance to consolidate the economic activities. The involvement in social agriculture entrepreneurship activities and programs will provide new and innovative economic opportunities for youth, particularly those from poor households and rural areas, as well as rural women. Consequently, the SADF sub-sub-granting scheme aims to promote pivotal actions to raise awareness towards most vulnerable groups of the population to adequate social innovation, use of agricultural land through community –based social farming services (including therapy and rehabilitation, social connection and inclusion, and social services, through the re-use of confiscated assets at a community level). Particular attention will be devoted to the creation of new sustainable and pioneering partnerships, which focus on the green and social economy.

'Toka Jone' project will be implemented based on the Law no. 10192, date 03.12.2009 ''For the prevention and fight to the organized crime and trafficking through preventive measures against assets', amended and the Council of Minister Decision No. 888, dt. 11.11.2020 “On determining the evaluation criteria, manners and procedures for the commissioning and alienation of confiscated assets”. Through these laws and bylaws it is specified that the *Inter-Institutional Committee for Measures against Organized Crime* is the responsible authority to alienate the ownership on behalf of the Agency for the Administration of Seized and Confiscated Assets that is administrator of these properties. The establishment of social enterprises in the confiscated assets is expected to generate several benefits for the community such as: i) generate a direct impact on improving the life of victims of organized crime and groups at risk of exclusion; ii) to improve the economic opportunities of the rural communities; iii) increase the active participation of citizens in socio-cultural activities; iv) strengthen their trust in institutions and rule of law.

Presently, the below listed agricultural lands have been identified and are at disposal for the three expected Social Agricultural Initiatives (SAI) to be financed and supported by SADF sub sub-granting scheme. Such assets are administered by the Agency for the Administration of the Seized and Confiscated Assets (AAPSK).

AAPSK, COSV as the subcontracting authority and the incumbent beneficiary will have to sign a mandatory **Trilateral Usufruct Agreement (TUA)**. The object of the TUA will be the re-use of the confiscated asset from the organized crime by the selected SAI executor for a period up to 5 years free of charge, with the possibility of extension of the contract, to ensure the sustainability of the social enterprise funded through this Call for Proposals. Upon decisions No. 69 date 30.09.2022 and No. 86 date 06.02.2023 of the Inter- Institutional Committee for Measures against Organized Crime, it will be possible to put into usage under this Call for Proposals, the following land assets listed here below:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No. of Lot | Type of property | Area in m2 | Location | Decision of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Measures Against Organized Crime |
| Lot 1 | Land parcel | 2930 m2 (including a small building with a total area of no more than 60 m2) | Village of Rreth, Municipality of Shijak, Durres County | No. 69 date 30.09.2022 |
| Lot 2 | Land parcel / **Property Number 236/3** | 1000 m2 | Village of Yzberish, Municipality of Tirana, Tirana County | No. 86 date 06.02.2023 |
| Lot 3 | Land parcel **/ Property Number 236/4** | 1000 m2 | [Village of Yzberish,](https://www.google.com/maps/place/41%C2%B019'38.2%22N+19%C2%B045'30.6%22E/@41.3256142,19.5783515,12.46z/data=!4m4!3m3!8m2!3d41.3272809!4d19.7584982?hl=en&entry=ttu) Municipality of Tirana, Tirana County | No.86 date 06.02.2023 |

More detailed information on the confiscated agricultural lands that are on the disposal of Toka Jone project can be found at Annex Y of these Guidelines. Furthermore, the Figure 7. of the Annex Y provides clarification regarding the division of two confiscated agricultural lands in the village of Yzberish,

* 1. Objectives of the programme and priority issues

The SADF sub-sub-granting scheme relies on a holistic approach combining smart, flexible and action-oriented regulating solutions embracing technology and community collaboration. It aims to achieve the following objectives:

The **global objective** of this call for proposals is: to promote sustainable re-use of confiscated assets to benefit vulnerable groups at risk of exclusion.

The **specific objective(s)** of this call for proposals are: to develop innovative social agriculture initiatives re-using confiscated assets as a means to promote socio-economic development, use of agricultural land through community –based social farming service (including therapy and rehabilitation, social connection and inclusion, and social services, sense of legality and rule of law)

Expected Outputs:

(1) Innovative and environmental sustainable social agriculture initiatives supported and/or established

(2) Increased level of reactiveness and capacities of target actors in developing sustainable reuse proposals of confiscated assets from AAPSK.

(3) Raised awareness on re-use of confiscated assets for social purposes among local development actors and other relevant stakeholders.

The priorities of this call for proposals are:

* Establishment of Social Agriculture Initiatives (SAI) on the agriculture confiscated assets
* SAI that engage meaningfully vulnerable youth, women and relatives of organised crimes victims, people with disabilities
* Promotion of rule of law and good governance
  1. Financial allocation provided by the contracting authority

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is EUR 174,000. The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

Indicative allocation of funds by lot: (i) EUR 58,000 euro for lot 1; (ii) EUR 58,000 for lot 2; (iii) EUR 58,000 for lot 3.

Size of sub-sub-grants

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

* minimum amount: EUR 40,000
* maximum amount: EUR 58,000

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 <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ePRAG> ).

* 1. Eligibility criteria

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

1. the actors (2.1.1.):

* the ‘**lead applicant’**, i.e. the entity submitting the application form;
* if any, its **co-applicant(s)** (**where it is not specified otherwise the lead applicant and its co-applicant(s) are hereinafter jointly referred as ‘applicant(s)’**);

1. the actions (2.1.3.):

• actions for which a sub-grant may be awarded;

1. the costs (2.1.4.):

* types of cost that may be taken into account in setting the amount of the sub-grant.
  + 1. Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant(s))

**Lead applicant**

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

* be a legal person, **and**
* be non-profit-making, non-governmental **and**
* grassroots entities with strong connection to the territories are preferred (including NGOs such as membership-based organizations, foundations, centres, Social Enterprises, cooperatives, etc), **and**
* be established in[[1]](#footnote-2) Albania **and**
* be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with the co-applicant(s), not acting as an intermediary **and**
* be registered in Albania at least 2 years prior to the deadline for submission of project proposal.

In addition to the categories referred to in Section 2.1.1, the following are however also eligible:

* Preferably, the lead applicant should have at least 2 years of previous agriculture and farming experience.

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

Lead applicants, co-applicants, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over the lead applicant, the co-applicants 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 sub-grant contract. In this respect, provisionally selected lead applicants, co-applicants or those placed in the reserve list are obliged to declare that they are not in one of the exclusion situations through a signed declaration on honour (PRAG Annex A14). For sub-grants of EUR 15 000 or less, no declaration on honour is required. See Section 2.4.

In Section 8 of the sub-grant application form (‘declaration(s) by the lead applicant’), the lead applicant must declare that the lead applicant himself, the co-applicant(s) are not in any of these situations.

The lead applicant may act individually or with co-applicant(s).

If awarded the sub-grant contract, the lead applicant will become the beneficiary identified as the coordinator in Annex G (special conditions). The coordinator is the sole 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.

**Co-applicant(s)**

Co-applicants participate in designing and implementing the action, and the costs they incur are eligible in the same way as those incurred by the lead applicant.

Co-applicants must satisfy the eligibility criteria as applicable to the lead applicant himself.

Co-applicants must sign the mandate in Part B Section 4 of the sub-grant application form.

If awarded the sub-grant contract, the co-applicant(s) (if any) will become beneficiary(ies) in the action (together with the coordinator).

1. In addition, please note that contracts cannot be awarded to or signed with applicants included in the lists of EU restrictive measures (see Section 2.4. of the PRAG).
   * 1. Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made

Definition:

An action is composed of a set of activities.

Duration

The initial planned duration of an action should be 10 months.

Sectors or themes

The actions must relate to the Agriculture sector.

Location

Actions must take place in the following regions: Tirana and Durres.

Types of action

- Social farming[[2]](#footnote-3), combining social and economic imperatives to create unique societal contributions in the form of rural social enterprise or by setting up a new Agricultural Cooperation Association;

- Care farming, a multifunctional farming platform which promotes well –being as well mental and physical health with recreational activities or therapeutic and rehabilitative services and assistance and by increasing the quality of life, social engagement, socializing and intergenerational events in the local community;

- Green farming, to contribute to improve social and environmental awareness, in accordance with social and solidarity principles, cultivation of typical products, diversification of agricultural production and non –production activities, food education and gastronomy, physical exercise with professionals and socio-economic development of local rural communities.

- Didactic farms, to provide social or educational care services, through one-time and mid-term educational activities directly linked to farming and rural environment and sustainable development.

- Promoting pre-employment services and social inclusiveness and integration in countryside through rural entrepreneurship and by linking farming to society and local unit institutions.

- Social and bio-agriculture throughholistic production management system which promotes and enhances agro-ecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity.

Required crosscutting aspects to be taken into consideration

- Agriculture and Rural Development through Social Farming;

- Environmental Protection and Mitigation of Climate Change’s effects in Agriculture;

- Gender Mainstreaming in Rural Areas;

- Promotion of Rule of Law and Good Governance;

- Human Rights and Social Protection;

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 are focused only in agriculture activities without the social component.

Types of activity[[3]](#footnote-4)

- Start-up activities for the beginning of the social agriculture initiative (including purchase or rent of machineries and tools, equipment, supporting material, registration);

- Activities that contribute to the consolidation and improvement of already existing social agriculture initiatives in the local areas affected by crime;

- Mobilisation of local vulnerable and marginalized people, integration of victims of crime or of domestic abuse, substance abuse or youth delinquency etc.

- Organization on-the-job trainings for vulnerable groups to be involved in the farming activities or training courses in organic agriculture.

- Creation of small – scale innovative and green solutions and sustainable agriculture practices;

- Cultivation of traditional or typical agricultural products of the local area;

- Promotion of local products (labelling, marketing);

- Local products certification schemes and procedures;

- Activities related to sustainable and responsible agro-tourism activities;

- Raising awareness and visibility campaigns regarding social farming and agriculture activities and that have educational aims, especially for children and youth.

- Activities related to nature protection, environmental education, sustainable agriculture and nutrition;

- Educational activities with schools, kindergarten, and other institutions on the role of food and agriculture in society.

- Raising awareness to young people about rule of law and confiscated assets, to discourage illegal activities.

Financial support to third parties

Applicants may not propose financial support to third parties.

Visibility

The applicants must take all necessary steps to publicise the fact that the European Union has financed or co-financed the action. Unless the European Commission agrees otherwise, actions that are wholly or partially funded by the European Union must ensure the visibility of EU financing by displaying the EU emblem in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Operational guidelines for recipients of EU funding, published by the European Commission. If applicable, communication activities may be undertaken 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.

All measures and activities relating to visibility and, if applicable, communication, must comply with the latest Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU-funded external action, laid down and published by the European Commission ([Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU External Actions | International Partnerships (europa.eu)](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/comm-visibility-requirements_en)).

Number of applications and sub-grants per applicants

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

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

The lead applicant may not be a co-applicant in another application of the same lot at the same time.

A co-applicant may not be the co-applicant in more than 1 application per lot under this call for proposals.

A co-applicant may not be awarded more than 1 sub-grant per lot under this call for proposals.

* + 1. Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included

Union contributions under this call for proposals take the following form(s):

- Reimbursement of eligible costs that may be based on any or a combination of the following forms:

(i) actual costs incurred by the beneficiary(ies)

(ii) one or more simplified cost options (see below).

Only ‘eligible costs’ can be covered by a sub-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’.

Simplified cost options (SCOs) 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. This form is not applicable to output or result based SCOs.

Simplified costs options which can be proposed are the following:

"output or result based SCOs": they include 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 or unit costs 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 (Sub-grant application form – Full application). 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.

Please 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’, ‘LUMPSUM’ 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 and/or lump sums , 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.

Where SCOs are proposed 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 sub-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.

Recommendations to award a sub-grant are always subject to the condition that the checks preceding the signing of the sub-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 sub-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 sub-grant may take the form of a single lump-sum covering the entire eligible costs of an action or a work programme.  Single lump sums may be determined on the basis of the estimated budget, which should comply with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Compliance with these principles shall be verified ex ante at the time of evaluation of the sub-grant application.  When authorising single lump sums the authorising officer responsible shall comply with the conditions applicable to output or result based SCOs.  When using this form of financing, the description of the action shall include detailed information on the essential conditions triggering the payment, including, where applicable, the achievement of outputs and/or results. |

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 sub-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 sub-grant contract. The lead applicant may be asked to justify the percentage requested before the sub-grant contract is signed. However, once the flat rate has been fixed in the special conditions of the sub-grant contract, no supporting documents need to be provided.

If any of the applicants is in receipt of an operating sub-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 is not applicable.

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) sub-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 sub-grant contract, at the latest at the end of the action;
* currency exchange losses;
* in kind contributions (except for volunteers' work);
* bonuses included in costs of staff;
* negative interest charged by banks or other financial institutions;
* credit to third parties;
* salary costs of the personnel of national administrations.
  + 1. 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, abuse and harassment**

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.

Applicants other than (i) natural persons, (ii) pillar-assessed entities and (iii) governments and other public bodies, whose application has been provisionally selected or placed in a reserve list shall assess their internal policy against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEA-H) through a self-evaluation questionnaire (Annex L). For sub-grants of EUR 60 000 or less no self-evaluation is required. Such self-evaluation questionnaire is not part of the evaluation of the full application by the contracting authority, but is an administrative requirement. See Section 2.5.6 of the PRAG.

c) Anti-corruption and anti-bribery

The applicant shall comply with all applicable laws, regulations and codes relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The contracting authority 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.

Sub-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) 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 are discovered after the award of the contract, the contracting authority may refrain from concluding the contract.

* 1. How to apply and the procedures to follow

Open call for proposals

* + 1. Application forms

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the instructions on the full applications in the sub-grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A). Lead applicants should then keep strictly to the format of the sub-grant application form and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order.

Applicants must apply in English.

Please complete the full application form carefully and as clearly as possible so that it can be assessed properly.

Any error 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.

Please note that only the sub-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.

Please note that the following documents should be submitted together with the application form:

1. The statutes or articles of association of the lead applicant, (if any) of each co-applicant. Where the contracting authority has recognised the lead applicant’s, or the co-applicant(s)’s, eligibility for another call for proposals under the same budget line within 2 years before the deadline for receipt of applications, it should be submitted, instead of the statutes or articles of association, a copy of the document proving their eligibility in a former call (e.g. a copy of the special conditions of a grant contract received during the reference period), unless a change in legal status has occurred in the meantime. This obligation does not apply to international organisations which have signed a framework agreement with the European Commission.
2. Legal entity form (see Annex D of these guidelines) duly completed and signed by each of the applicants (i.e. by the lead applicant and by each co-applicant, if any), 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.
3. A financial identification form of the lead applicant (not from co-applicant(s)) 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.
4. Tax Office registration (NIPT)
5. Certificate of tax payment obligations (to be downloaded from e-albania)
6. Document issued by the Court and the Prosecution certifying that the organization has no pending cases, no older than 3 months (for civil cases statement)

In addition, for the purpose of the evaluation of the financial capacity, the following documents should be submitted:

For action sub-grants not exceeding EUR 750 000 and for operating sub-grants below EUR 100 000 a copy of the lead applicant’s **profit and loss account and the balance sheet** for up to the three last financial years for which the accounts were closed. A copy of the latest account is neither required from the co-applicant(s) (if any).

Documents 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 or in the language of the country where the action is implemented, a translation into English of the relevant parts of these documents proving the lead applicant's and, where applicable, co-applicants' 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' eligibility, into English.

If the abovementioned supporting documents are not provided by the deadline for the submission of the application form, the application may be rejected.

**No additional annexes should be sent.**

* + 1. Where and how to send applications

Applications must be submitted in one original and one copy in A4 size, each bound. The complete application form, budget and logical framework must also be supplied in electronic format (USB or zip folder via email at the following email address: [cosvbalkans@cosv.org](mailto:cosvbalkans@cosv.org)) in a separate and single file (i.e. the application must not be split into several different files). The electronic file must contain **exactly the same** application as the paper version enclosed. Hand-written applications will not be accepted.

The declaration by the lead applicant (Section 8 the sub-grant application form) must be stapled separately and enclosed in the envelope.

Where a lead applicant sends several different applications (if allowed to do so by the guidelines of the call), each one has to be sent separately.

The outer envelope must bear **the title of the call for proposals**, together with the full name and address of the lead applicant, and the words ‘Not to be opened before the opening session’ and ‘Albanian*’*.

Applications must be submitted in a sealed envelope by registered mail, private courier service or by hand-delivery (a signed and dated certificate of receipt will be given to the deliverer) at the address below:

Postal address

COSV in Albania, Rruga e Ullinjve, Njesia 1/1. Rezidenca Kodra e Diellit 1, Selite, Tirane, Albania

Address for hand delivery

COSV in Albania, Rruga e Ullinjve, Njesia 1/1. Rezidenca Kodra e Diellit 1, Selite, Tirane, Albania

Applications sent by any other means (e.g. by fax or by e-mail) or delivered to other addresses will be rejected.

**Please note that incomplete applications may be rejected. Lead applicants are advised to verify that their application is complete using the checklist (Section 7 of the sub-grant application form).**

* + 1. Deadline for submission of applications

The applicants' attention is drawn to the fact that there are two different systems for sending applications/full proposals: one is by post or private courier service, the other is by hand delivery.

In the first case, the application/full proposal must be sent before the date for submission, as evidenced by the postmark or deposit slip, but in the second case it is the acknowledgment of receipt given at the time of the delivery of the application/full proposal which will serve as proof.

The deadline for the submission of applications is January 19, 2024 as evidenced by the date of dispatch, the postmark or the date of the deposit slip. In the case of hand-deliveries, the deadline for receipt is at January 19, 2024, before 16.00 hours local time, as evidenced by the signed and dated receipt. Any application submitted after the deadline will automatically be rejected.

The contracting authority may, for reasons of administrative efficiency, reject any application submitted on time to the postal service but received, for any reason beyond the contracting authority's control, if accepting applications that were submitted on time but arrived late would considerably delay the award procedure or jeopardise decisions already taken and notified. (see indicative calendar under Section 2.5.2).

Any application submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

* + 1. Further information about applications

An information session on this call for proposals will be held on:

1. December 5, 2023 at 10.00 hours local time at COSV Albania premises, Rruga e Ullinjve, Njesia 1/1, Residence ‘Kodra e Diellit, Selite, Tirana.
2. December 11, 2023 online at the following [link](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_OWNlMmYxMDUtYWFjYi00MjI2LTg4YTctOGQ2Mjk0MDhmNWQ3%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22dc357b48-47a0-4b18-80e4-2b4f6f334148%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%224486b0ba-a305-4061-8440-5bd26eb86a17%22%7d).

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

E-mail address: cosvbalkans@cosv.org

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, an action or specific activities.

Questions that may be relevant to other applicants, together with the answers, will be published on the website where the call was published: website of COSV, as the need arises. It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned website regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

Please note that the contracting authority may decide to cancel the call for proposals procedure at any stage according to the conditions set out in Section 6.5.9 of the PRAG.

* 1. 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.
* application satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist in Section 7 of the sub-grant 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: EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATION**

If the applications pass the opening and administrative checks along the instructions of the Step 1: they will be further evaluated on their quality, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants. 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 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.

**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 sub-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** | **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 (especially knowledge of the issues to be addressed)? | 5 |
| 1.3. Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient management in-house capacity (including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)? | 5 |
| 1.4. Does the lead applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance? | 5 |
| **2. Relevance of the action** | **20** |
| 2.1. 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 |
| 2.2. 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 |
| 2.3. 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 |
| 2.4. Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices)? | 5 |
| **3. Design of the action** | **15** |
| 3.1. 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)? How does the project identify and prioritize innovative solutions? | 5 |
| 3.2. Does the proposal/Logical Framework include credible baseline, targets and sources of verification? If not, is a baseline study foreseen (and is the study budgeted appropriately in the proposal)? | 5 |
| 3.3. Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders? Does the project incorporate innovative strategies or technologies to address the specific needs or challenges within the community? | 5 |
| **4. Implementation approach** | **15** |
| 4.1. Is the action plan for implementing the action clear and feasible? Is the timeline realistic? | 5 |
| 4.2. 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 |
| 4.3. Is the co-applicant(s) 's level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory? | 5 |
| **5. Sustainability of the action** | **15** |
| 5.1. Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups? | 5 |
| 5.2. Is the action likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension capitalisation on experience and knowledge sharing? | 5 |
| 5.3. 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 |
| **6. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action** | **15** |
| 6.1. Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget? | 5 |
| 6.2. Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the expected results satisfactory? | 5x2\*\* |
| **Maximum total score** | **100** |

If the total score for Section 1 (financial and operational capacity) is less than 12 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 lead applicant applies without co-applicants the score for point 4.3 shall be 5 unless the involvement of co-applicants 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.

1. **STEP 3:** **VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANTS**

The eligibility verification will be performed on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority (see Section 2.2.1). It will by default only be performed for the applications that have been provisionally selected according to their score and within the available budget for this call for proposals.

* The declaration by the lead applicant (Section 8 of the sub-grant application form) 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.
* The eligibility of applicants will be verified according to the criteria set out in Section 2.1.1.

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.

* 1. Submission of supporting documents

The lead applicant should submit the documents listed in Section 2.2.1

In addition, a lead applicant whose application has been provisionally selected or placed on the reserve list will be informed in writing by the contracting authority. It will be requested to supply the following documents:

1. Declaration on honour: the lead applicant as well as all co-applicants shall fill in and sign the declaration on honour certifying that they are not in one of the exclusion situations (see Section 2.6.10.1 of the PRAG) where the amount of the sub-grant exceeds EUR 15 000. The declaration on honour shall be dated and signed, either by hand or by applying a qualified electronic signature (QES)[[4]](#footnote-5) by an authorised representative of the signatory.

After verifying the supporting documents, the evaluation committee will make a final recommendation to the contracting authority, which will decide on the award of sub-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 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. Notification of the Contracting Authority’s decision
     1. Content of the decision

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. Please note that the lead applicant is the intermediary for all communications between applicants and the contracting authority during the procedure.

An applicant believing that it has been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may lodge a complaint. See Section 2.12 of the practical guide.

Applicants and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion, their 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 sub-grant contract. For more information, you may consult the privacy statement available on <http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm>

* + 1. Indicative timetable

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **DATE** | **TIME** |
| **1. Information meeting (if any)** | December 5, 2023;  December 11, 2023 | 10.00  10.00 |
| **2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority** | December 30, 2023 | 16.00 |
| **3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority** | January 9, 2024 | - |
| **4. Deadline for submission of applications** | January 19, 2024 | 16.00 |
| **5. Information to lead applicants on opening and administrative checks (Step 1)** | January 26, 2024 | - |
| **6. Information to lead applicants on the evaluation of the full applications (Step 2)** | February 14, 2024 | - |
| **7. Notification of award (after the eligibility check) (Step 3)** | February 29, 2024 | - |
| **8. Contract signature** | March 4, 2024 | - |

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 where the call was published: website of COSV, as the need arises.

* 1. Conditions for implementation after the contracting authority’s decision to award a sub-grant

Following the decision to award a sub-grant, the beneficiary(ies) will be offered a contract based on the standard sub-grant contract (see Annex G of these guidelines). By signing the application form (Annex A of these guidelines), the applicants agree, if awarded a sub-grant, to accept the contractual conditions of the standard sub-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 sub-grant contract and its annexes shall not apply. References in these guidelines to the sub-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) to award procurement contracts, those contracts must be awarded in accordance with Annex IV to the standard sub-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 sub-grant contract, such subcontracting being subject to additional restrictions (see the general terms and conditions in the model sub-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 sub-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 sub-grant contract (see also the general terms and conditions in the model sub-grant contract).

1. LIST OF annexes

**Documents to be completed**

Annex A: Sub-grant application form (Word format)

Annex B: Budget (Excel format)

Annex C: Logical framework (Excel format)

Annex D: Legal entity form

Annex E: Financial identification form

**DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION**

Annex G: Standard sub-grant contract

- Annex II: general conditions

- Annex IV: contract award rules

- Annex V: standard request for payment

- Annex VI: model narrative and financial report

-Annex IX: standard template for transfer of ownership of assets

Annex H: Declaration on Honour

Annex I: Daily allowance rates (per diem), available at the following address: <https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding/guidelines/managing-project/diem-rates_en>

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

Annex K: Guidelines for assessing simplified cost options.

Annex Y: Report of agricultural experts

**Useful links:**

**Project Cycle Management Guidelines**

<https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/funding/managing-project_en>

**The implementation of sub-grant contracts**

**A Users' Guide**

<https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=48169235>

**Financial Toolkit**

<https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/financial-management-toolkit_en>

Please note: the toolkit is not part of the sub-grant contract and has no legal value. It merely provides general guidance and may in some details differ from the signed sub-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. 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-2)
2. Social farming can be defined as a cluster of practices that use agricultural resources – both animal and plant – to create adequate environment for the disabled or socially disadvantaged and for the general public with the aim of providing jobs, encourage their social integration, or, through education and leisure activities, contribute to their relationship to the countryside and nature. Therefore, such conditions must be created within the framework of farms of farming practices where people with specific needs can take part in daily farming activities as a way of furthering their development, making progress and improving their well-being. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The proposed actions must combine use of agriculture land with social activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Please note that only the QES within the meaning of Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 (eIDAS Regulation) will be accepted. Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market and repealing Directive 1999/93/EC. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)