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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

Call for Proposals

Deadline for submission of full application: 08/07/2022



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To apply to this Call for Proposals organisations must register in Western Balkans Fund Online Grant Management System (OGMS) and submit their application in OGMS (see Section 8.3 of the guidelines).

The aim of OGMS is to ensure efficiency of the management of the call for proposals and to offer a good service to civil society organisations through functionalities such as the on-line submission and the possibility to follow up online the status of their application.

Preparation: Information Sessions on May/June, 2022 (please consult WBF Project Website – www.westernbalkansfund.org and/or www.wbfeuproject.org/ - for further information.

To help Applicants familiarise themselves with the system before the online submission, online mentoring sessions will be organised on June, 2022. Should you be interested in these sessions, please consult WBF Project Website – www.westernbalkansfund.org and/or www.wbfeuproject.org/ - for further information on the registration modalities to attend the information sessions.

Note: No costs incurred by the applicants for attending these information sessions are reimbursable.



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SUPPORT TO THE PROMOTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY REGIONAL ACTION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

1. Background

The Western Balkans Region includes **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo *, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia**, referred to collectively as **the Western Balkans or WB6 Region**. In this document the above geographical names are also used as abbreviations for the constitutional names of the Western Balkans Fund (WBF) Contracting Parties.

Promoting regional cooperation is a key component of the EU's policy towards the Western Balkans. The Western Balkans Fund, an international organisation, owned by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the region, shares the same goal and values. If you want to learn more about the Western Balkans Fund, please visit the official webpage, www.westernbalkansfund.org

A region with an active civil society is a critical component of democratic systems and an important player in reform processes taking place in the Western Balkan region. An empowered and active civil society is an essential component of any democracy. Civil society organisations (CSOs) can contribute to addressing many societal challenges, by engaging in the policy debates, putting forward innovative, sustainable and inclusive solutions and monitor the implementation of regional cooperation and reconciliation processes at beneficiary, regional and local level. CSOs in the Western Balkans need to engage in a range of challenges faced by their societies, including in fields such as regional cooperation, reconciliation, people to people links, good neighbourly relations, social cohesion and environmental protection.

A healthy regional cooperation supports and promotes dialogue and tolerance, furthermore, civil society has important roles to play in promoting confidence building and good neighbourly relations throughout the region, including normalisation of relations among different ethnicities in the WB region. In addition, CSOs have a key role in identifying and addressing various imbalances and gaps that push through reconciliation processes. WBF support to CSOs aims at building stronger democracies, improving capacities of grassroots organisations, accountability systems and ultimately achieving better, more inclusive, and sustainable regional cooperation and social cohesion. This Call for Proposals is launched in the framework of the EU/WBF Joint Action, these Guidelines for Applicants aim to inform the potential applicants on the rules of the grant scheme “Support to the promotion of civil society regional actions in the Western Balkans”. In an overall vision of enhanced regional cooperation, good neighbourly relations and reconciliation, whereas under this Call for Proposals, a number of grants will be awarded to create and/or support joint regional projects of CSOs in a range of WBF's areas of intervention. The projects financed will help improve regional partnerships among CSOs and capacity building support of CSOs in a Regional Level. Financial support to third parties (“sub-granting”) will enable WBF to expand the participation of grassroots organisations across the region within areas of intervention: a) cultural cooperation, b) education and scientific development and c) sustainable development.

The present Guidelines for Applicants are intended to inform the potential applicants on the general Rules of EU/WBF Grant Scheme. As such, they need to be carefully followed during all the preparatory work of the Project 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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1.1 Objectives and areas of intervention

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

The thematic areas (**Section 3**) of this Call for Proposal are the following:

- a) Cultural cooperation
- b) Education and scientific exchange
- c) Sustainable development

The 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.²
- b) Protection and promotion of ethnic minority rights.³
- c) Integration of persons with physical and mental disabilities.⁴
- d) Safeguard and promotion of youth and children rights.⁵
- e) Democratic standards, anti-discriminatory practices and good governance.⁶
- f) Environment⁷ and Climate change⁸.
- g) Cross-border Cooperation, Good Neighbourly Relations and European Integration,
- h) Promotion of Reconciliation and People to People links.

*Please note that mainstreaming cross-cutting issues is scored in the evaluation methodology of this Call for Proposals.

² 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.

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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).

⁶ 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.

⁷ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

⁸ 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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1.2 FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is EUR 500,000.00. The WBF (Contracting Authority) reserves the right not to award all available funds.

If the allocations indicated for this Call cannot be used due to insufficient quality or number of proposals received, the Contracting Authority reserves the right to reallocate the remaining funds to (an)other calls.

1.3 Size of grants

Any grant requested under this Call for Proposals must fall within maximum amount:

- 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 EU/WBF grant.

The EU/WBF grant scheme implementation has to respect and ensure balanced distribution of funds per each Contracting Party of the Western Balkans Fund.

2. 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.

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 (Section 2.2.2.),
- 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') (Section 2.2.3.),

(2) The actions:

Actions for which a grant may be awarded (Section 3.)

(3) The costs:

- Types of cost that may be taken into account in setting the amount of the grant (Section 4.).

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



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

Lead applicant

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

- be established in one or more of the WBF Contracting Parties (WB6), **and**
- be non-profitmaking, **and**
- be a legal entity/specific type of organisation from one of the following categories:
 - A civil society organization^{9 10}(CSO/NGO)
 - 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/faculty¹¹, 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.

Partners

The Lead Applicant is encouraged to have as many partners within the region and beyond, that could further contribute to the accomplishment to the EU/WBF Joint Action overall Objective.

- Eligibility Criteria stated in the Section 2, apply for the Partners in the same manner.
- The establishment of the partnership must be elaborated in the project application, including their contribution in the design of the Action under the methodology section.
- Partners must sign the Partnership Agreement of the grant application form (Annex A in OGMS) .
- If awarded the grant contract, the project partners will become beneficiaries in the action (together with the lead applicant).
- Partners established in an EU Member State can be involved as optional partners , in

⁹ The EU and WBF considers civil society organisations to embrace a wide range of actors with multiple roles and mandates which includes all non-State, not-for-profit, independent and non-violent structures, through which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, religious, environmental, social or economic or related to health [...] They include, but are not limited to: Nongovernmental organisations, organisations representing indigenous peoples, women's and youth organisations, diaspora organisations, migrants' organisations, local traders' associations and citizens' groups, cooperatives, employers' associations and trade unions (social partners), organisations representing economic and social interests, organisations fighting corruption and fraud and promoting good governance, civil rights organisations and organisations combating discrimination, local organisations (including networks) involved in decentralised regional cooperation and integration, consumer organisations, environmental, teaching, cultural, research and scientific organisations, universities, churches and religious associations and communities, philosophical and non-confessional organisations, the not-for-profit media and any non-governmental associations and independent foundations, including independent political foundations.

¹⁰ An organisation's must be established under the national law and its seat is located in one of WBF contracting parties and the operational activity of the CSO is not limited, it can be younger than two years with a good track record.

¹¹ **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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addition to (and not in replacement of) the mandatory partners, as specified below.

Mandatory Project Partners:

Under this Call for Proposals, the applicants must form Project Partnerships. A project partnership consists of the Lead Applicant and a minimum of two Project Partners from at least three (3) different WBF Contracting Parties.

- This means that the proposed partnership (including both Lead Applicant and Partners) must, as a minimum, represent CSOs and/or other eligible applicants stated in section 2.1.
- The proposed partnership should be balanced and meaningful in which each project partner has specific role and brings in specific expertise.
- Additionally, for the action to be considered relevant under this Call, a particular attention must be devoted to creating a constructive inter-cultural and inter-ethnic partnership among applicants and mandatory partners.

Exclusion Criterias

Potential applicants may not participate in this Call 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.
- Their proposed actions are not already supported by the European Union in order not to duplicate European Union funding of the same expenditures.
- They are directly affiliated to commercial profit.
- They are involved directly in political campaigning.
- They exclusively serve to religious purposes.

The above list is not exhaustive. Please, see Annex C.

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 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 project lead”. The project lead is the main interlocutor of the contracting authority. It represents and acts on behalf of other partners and coordinate the design and implementation of the action. The lead applicant is:



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- directly responsible for the preparation and management of the project and the relevant activities together with the project partners, and not acting as an intermediary.
- Not in any of the exclusion situations (listed below, as well as, in the declaration of honour to be attached to the Project Application).
- And must act with partner(s).

3. Areas of intervention:

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 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).

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.

Project proposals submitted under this 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.

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

- ☐ 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.
- ☐ Encourage active cooperation between museums, art galleries, artistic and folk



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assemblies, filmproducers, etc., by supporting joint regional activities and products.

- 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.
 - ☐ 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.
- iii. **Sustainable Development:** Advancement of regional cohesion and supporting institutional partnership in sustainable economic 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.



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- ☐ 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.

Cross-cutting topics: Promoting reconciliation, European Integration, cross-border cooperation, freedom of expression, gender equality and promotion of equal opportunities, protection and promotion of ethnic minority rights, including their participation in decision making processes, integration of persons with physical and mental disabilities, safeguard and promotion of youth's rights and promotion of youth's participation in decision-making processes, democratic standards, anti-discriminatory practices and good governance, including environment and climate change.

Note: Integrated and holistic approaches combining different cross-cutting topics are encouraged.

3.1 Application Process

In compliance with the Application Guidelines and notably of any conditions or restrictions in the Section 2, the Lead Applicant should define mandatorily in Project Application Form:

1. the overall objectives, the specific objective(s) and the outputs (i.e. the results) to be achieved with the EU/WBF grant;
2. the different types of activities;
3. the types of external expertise needed for project implementation support;
4. the implementation methodology and partners engagement process;
5. the definition of risks and mitigation measures;
6. the visibility and dissemination plan.

Note: The Online Grant Management System (OGMS) will not allow applicant to submit their proposal unless all the above are defined and written in the system.

3.2 Number of Applications

- The Lead Applicant may be a partner in another project applications under this Call.
- The Lead Applicant may not be awarded more than one¹² grant under this Call for proposals.
- Partner may be a partner in more than one application under this Call for Proposals.
- The Lead Applicant with an ongoing project supported by EU/WBF 4th Call for Proposals, is not encouraged to apply with the same partnership and same project idea.¹³

¹² If the Lead Applicant applies with two or more project applications, WBF reserves the right to select only the best scored project proposal from the individual evaluation phase.

¹³ In order to have a wider impact and higher sustainability of Joint Initiatives, WBF encourages diversity in Partnership and Project Ideas.



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4. Financial Expenditures within the project

EU/WBF contributions under this call for proposals take the following form(s):

- i. actual costs incurred by the lead applicant and partners;
- ii. one or more simplified cost options (see below).

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

Costs options are divided in two categories:

1. **Unit Costs:** this category includes units identified by days, months, participants, contracts etc., multiplied with per unit cost. These costs help the applicant carefully plan and foresee anykind of unexpected event. Where possible and appropriate, unit costs shall be determined in such a way to allow their payment upon achievement of concrete outputs and/or results. This type of cost can be proposed by the beneficiary (no threshold is applicable) at application (in Annex B OGMS – Budget). In case the evaluation committee is not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided reimbursement on the basis of actually incurred costs is always possible.
2. **"Lump Costs":** This second category entails lump sum amounts for all of the works agreed upon before the works starts. Lump cost can be included by the applicant only during the application phase since it is expected to have decent information on the market prices.

The methods used to determine the amounts or rates of **unit costs** or **lump sums** costs must comply with the criteria set in WBF financial guidelines that the costs correspond fairly to the actual costs incurred by the lead applicant and partners are in line with their cost accounting practices, no profit is made and the costs are not already covered by other sources of funding from EU and/or WBF (no double funding).

WBF before awarding the grant checks preceding are integral part of the process before signing the grant contract. During this phase Contracting Authority in case of revealing any potential problem, double financing or discrepancies is entitled to impose potential modifications/changes to the submitted budget by the Lead Applicant. Changes may include but are not limited to: arithmetical errors, inaccuracies, unrealistic costs and ineligible costs.

- ☐ It is not possible to increase the grant or the percentage of EU/WBF co-financing as a result of these corrections.
- ☐ It is therefore in the applicants' interest to provide a realistic and cost-effective budget.

4.1 Eligible direct costs

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



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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. To be eligible under this call for proposals, costs must comply with the provisions of Section 4. of the Application Guidelines.

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 Annex B.

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:

4.1.1 Human Resource costs:

The total costs for Human Resources, must not exceed 30% of the EU/WBF total granted amount (Amount Requested by EU/WBF).

- ☐ includes the cost of staff assigned to the action (gross salaries of the dedicated project personnel). Salary costs of the personnel that are crucial for the Action to be successfully implemented.

4.1.2 Travel and Accommodation costs

- include travel costs for persons and staff 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.)
- include accommodation and full board costs.

4.1.3 Other direct costs, services

- include 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,
- include public relations costs, printing, advertising and design of promotion material, awards and prizes,
- include fees for artists/copyrights.
- Include fees for experts, specifically dedicated to the action stated in gross amounts
- Include bank charges costs, financial service costs and other cost of financial transfers related to the action.

4.2 Eligible indirect costs

The indirect costs incurred in carrying out the action may be eligible for flat rate funding, but the total must not exceed 7 % of the estimated total eligible direct costs. Indirect costs are eligible provided that they do not include costs assigned to another budget heading in the standard grant contract. The lead applicant may



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be asked to justify the percentage requested before the grant contract is signed. However, once the flat rate has been fixed in the grant contract, no supporting documents need to be provided.

The applicant is encouraged not to include the total co-financing contribution to the Action in Indirect Costs. If any of the applicants or co-applicant/partner is in receipt of an operating grant financed by the EU/WBF, it may not claim indirect costs on its incurred costs within the proposed budget for the action.

4.3 Contributions in kind

Contributions in kind mean the provision of goods or services to lead applicant or co-applicants/partners free of charge by a third party. An in-kind contribution is a noncash, other than monetary contribution or input which cannot be given a cash value. As contributions in kind do not involve any expenditure for lead applicant or co-applicant/partners, they are not eligible costs (except for personnel costs for the work carried out by volunteers under an action or an operating grant if so authorised). Contributions in kind may not be treated as co-financing.

In-kind contribution 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.

4.4 Ineligible costs

The following costs are not eligible:

- activities occurred prior the signing of the Grant contract;
- subgranting/sub-contracting to third parties portion of activities;
- 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 grant;
- purchases of land or buildings;
- purchase of goods and equipments;
- currency exchange losses;
- credit to third parties;
- fines, financial penalties and expenses of litigation
- individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses
- taxes, including VAT. (Except when it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation might be eligible.)



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- Activities aimed at profit making activities;
- Activities that are affiliated directly with/or supportive to political and/or religious agendas.

5. Visibility & Dissemination

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

The applicants shall also adhere to the EU/WBF Communication and Visibility Guidelines for Grantees 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 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/>

When awarded with the Grant Contract, the grantees shall collaborate with the EU/WBF team to provide information about the project and ensure overall coordination. The Fund reserves the right to make use of the project results for its promotion.

6. MONITORING AND MENTORING

This support should in particular strengthen the participation of grassroots CSOs in regional networks and carry out activities linked to the overall objective of the action. To do so, the WBF provides ex-ante monitoring process where the team provides mentorship to the grantees of this Call during the implementation of the project activities, and share methodologies and knowledge with them. Special consideration shall be given to capacity building measures to support the grantees in the implementing their activities as well as their professional development in accordance with their needs.

In addition to strengthening the capacities of the CSOs around the region, WBF also measures the impact of its support through a regular monitoring process. WBF monitoring process sets out important standards that guide WBF's work at the same time assures an accountable and transparent process of accomplishment of results closely linked with the credibility and the position of WBF in the region. In order to reach a successful partnership among grantees, beneficiaries and WBF; numerous monitoring methods and approaches will be applied that further guarantee success and increase the relevance of WBF's support in the region.

*In cases where the ex-post evaluation takes place the grantee shall remain available to provide all the inquired inputs.



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7. Ethics clauses and Code of Conduct

7.1 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.

7.2 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 Western Balkans Fund 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.

7.3 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.

7.4 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 Western Balkans Fund are liable, depending on the seriousness of the



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facts observed, to have their contracts terminated or to be permanently excluded from receiving EU/WBF funds.

7.5 Breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud

The Western Balkans Fund 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.

8. HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW

8.1 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.

8.2 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 are in English language.

8.3 Where and how to send project application

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 OGMS provides 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



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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

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

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

8.4 Deadline for submission of full applications

❖ **The deadline for the submission of project applications is: 08/07/2022, 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.

8.5 Additional Information

Inquiries pertaining to this Call for Proposals can be sent by e-mail no later than 15 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 days before the deadline for submission of project proposals at the EU/WBF website.

<https://wbfeuproject.org/>

Please note that the replies to the questions asked during the Information Sessions will also be published on WBF website.

9. 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 Officials¹⁴ 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.

¹⁴ 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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According to WBF internal rules, the grant scheme implementation has to respect and ensure balanced distribution of projects/funds per each Contracting Parties. All applications will be evaluated according to the steps and criteria enclosed in this Section 15. If the examination of the application reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in Section 2., the application will be rejected on this sole basis without undertaking further evaluation steps.

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;
- ii. If the project proposal satisfies the eligibility criteria specified in the Chapter 2 of this Application Guideline;
- iii. If the project has minimum 3 project partners coming from three different WBF Contracting Parties;
- iv. If the project application is submitted through Online Grant Management System;
- v. If the Declaration by the Lead applicant has been filled in and signed;
- vi. If the application 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 does not exceed 10 months nor it is less than 3 months;
- ix. If the requested WBF/EU contribution (amount) does not exceed 15,000 EUR;
- x. If the lead applicant is legal entity established in the WB6 region;
- xi. If the project partners are legal entities established in the WB6 region;
- xii. If the lead applicant and project partners are non-profit organizations/institutions;

**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.

Section	Maximum Score
1. Relevance of Partnership	10
1.1 Does the diversity of partnership bring an added value to the scope of proposed project? (Please Specify)	5
1.2 Does the partnership bring extended regional inclusion? (Please Specify)	5
2. Description of the Project	25
2.1 How realistic are presented challenge/s to be addressed within this project? How responsive to the listed challenges are the objectives of this Project Proposal? (Please Specify)	5
2.2 How realistically is the regional impact/change addressed in this Project Proposal? (Please Specify)	5



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2.3 Do the activities explain in a convincing way how the expected results will be achieved? Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the envisaged outputs and outcome(s)? (Please Specify)	5
2.4 Does the Project Proposal address properly Target Groups and Final Beneficiaries, including their needs and constraints? (Please Specify)	5
2.5 Does the Project Proposal address sufficiently one or more of the relevant Cross-Cutting issues? (Please Specify)	5
3. Relevance of the Project	15
3.1 Does the relevance of the Project Proposal sufficiently contributes to the overall objective of the Call for Proposal? (Please Specify)	5
3.2 Does the relevance of the Project Proposal sufficiently contributes to the areas of intervention as well as the cross cutting issues of this Call for Proposals? (Please Specify)	5
3.3 Are the expected results in accordance with the overall objective of the Call for Proposals? (Please Specify)	5
4. Implementation Approach & Methodology	20
4.1 Is the organisational structure (team proposed for the implementation) and their tasks clearly described? (Please Specify)	5
4.2 Is the proposed idea a novel idea or already supported/continuation from other Donors? (Please Specify)	5
4.3 Did the applicant clearly described monitoring methodology/approach in line with the expected results of the project proposal? (Please Specify)	5
4.4 Did the applicant clearly described in the Project Proposal risks and mitigation measures? (Please Specify)	5
6. Sustainability of the Project	10
6.1 Is the expected impact longlasting and clearly defined? (Please Specify)	5
6.2 Does this Project Idea have any potential for further replications? (Please Specify)	5
7. Visibility and Dissemination	5
7.1 Did the applicant provide clear Visibility and Dissemination Plan? (Please Specify)	5
8. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action	15
8.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget? (Please Specify)	5
8.2 Is the co-financing clearly explained? How it will be used and in what form? (Please Specify)	5
8.3 Are the ratios of HR budget heading and Indirect Cost Budget Heading in line with the criterias presented in the Grant Application Guidelines? (Please Specify)	5
Maximum total score	100

If the total score for overall application is less than 45 points will not be recommended for funding by the Evaluation Committee.



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STEP 3: Evaluation Panel

The main purpose of the Evaluation Panel is to create a list for high ranking projects and further recommend them to the Council of Senior Officials, Council of Ministers of WB6 for the final approval.

STEP 4 – Submission of supporting documents

The pre-selected lead applicants will subsequently be invited to submit additional 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 capacity form
4. 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 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.

10. Notification of the Contracting Authority's decision

10.1 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.

10.2 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.



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	DATE	TIME
1. Online dissemination Period (if any)	20/05/2022 – 08/07/2022	N/A
2. Information Sessions around the region	30/05/2022 – 20/06/2022	N/A
3. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority	15 days before the submission deadline	COB
4. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority	10 days before the submission deadline	COB
5. Deadline for submission of full applications	<08/07/2022>	16:00 ¹⁵ CET
6. Information to lead applicants on the evaluation of the full applications	< Refer to OGMS >	N/A
7. Notification of award (after the eligibility check)	< Refer to OGMS>	N/A
8. Contract signature	End of 2022	N/A

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, Stamp, Scan and Upload in the OGMS)

¹⁵ All times are in the time zone of the WB6 region