KCSF

FONDACIONI KOSOVAR PER SHOQERI CIVILE
KOSOVAR CIVIL SOCIETY FOUNDATION

EJA

ENGAGEMENT FOR JOINT ACTION -
EJA KOSOVO

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL GRANTS
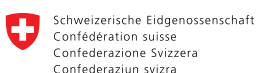
ABOUT EJA KOSOVO

Engagement for Joint Action (EJA Kosovo) is a KCSF program that supports civil society initiatives through grants and capacity building with the overall aim to contribute meaningfully to the democratic and socio-economic development of Kosovo. Designed as a pooled funding mechanism, EJA Kosovo is currently co-financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Sweden.

Centring citizen engagement and participation in the work of civil society, EJA Kosovo aims to contribute towards two main objectives (a) Increasing civic engagement in public life through participatory advocacy of civil society and (b) Enabling CSOs to strengthen their constituency relations and improve their organizational capacities.

EJA Kosovo is based on the premise that through tailor-made systems of inclusiveness, transparency and accountability on the one hand, and better access and communication with the community, on the other hand, CSOs by involving citizens in their work, can build a stronger and more engaged base of support. This strengthens their constituency and allows them to better represent the needs and concerns of the community. Together with improved internal governance, transparency, and citizen engagement, it will contribute to increased public trust in CSOs, and citizens come to see civil society as a legitimate and effective platform for raising concerns and advocating for change.

INTRODUCTION

The traditional view of policymaking focuses on formal legal and normative processes. However, effective policymaking extends beyond these structures. It encompasses all aspects of society and public life, ensuring that the voices and needs of all citizens are heard and considered. Every Kosovar man and woman, boy and girl, needs to have the opportunity to address their needs, concerns and proposals in the most adequate way to his/her capacities, needs and context. Civil society has an opportunity, but also responsibility to empower citizens and bring their concerns and voice into the limelight of public policies and public discourse.

a. EJA Kosovo instruments of support

While recognizing the diversity of civil society and its varied approaches, EJA Kosovo places a special focus on initiatives and individuals that embed participatory practices in their work. This focus is grounded in the belief that civil society can only be truly responsive to the needs of citizens by systematically and intentionally including them in its activities. Such inclusion not only increases impact, transparency, and accountability but also enhances internal governance practices beyond mere paperwork. By building on the existing capacities and experience within civil society, EJA Kosovo aims to narrow the gap between civil society and citizens, thereby enhancing its legitimacy and impact.

To support these aims, EJA Kosovo offers several support mechanisms: Institutional Grants, Organizational Development Grants, Project Grants, Urgent Grants, and an annual Democracy Award. Each instrument is designed to address specific needs within civil society, ensuring that a broad spectrum of initiatives can find the support they need.

b. Institutional grants

EJA Kosovo recognizes that in addition to addressing specific issues of importance to particular groups of citizens, civil society can contribute to more systemic changes. Such contribution requires consistent advocacy, in-depth knowledge on the relevant subject matter, and developed internal systems and practices. These prerequisites are not met if organizations operate solely on short-term funding or are required to implement strict project activities, regardless of changing context and needs. In order to maintain their professional staff, organizations with qualified staff and solid experience are forced to continuously search for funding opportunities and many times implement scattered small-scale projects instead of focusing on their long-term strategies. This affects their potential for change and risks any sustainability of civil society interventions.

Building on previous successful experience of KCSF, including during phase I of EJA Kosovo, EJA Kosovo believes that by providing long-term and flexible financial support, organizations that have demonstrated consistency as change agents in their area of expertise will sustain their interventions and further advance their missions.

Institutional grants aim to support strategic plans of organizations, helping them to strengthen internal organizational capacities and become the voice of citizens in the thematic areas that they cover.

Institutional grants are meant for organizations that are well - established, have a clear strategic direction and plan and proven technical and organizational capacities. Institutional grantees are expected to be ready and act immediately in policies of public interest which lie in their domain of activities. They will have the needed flexibility to adapt to emerging external contextual and programmatic developments and mobilize to act quickly when necessary. Moreover, institutional grants enable organizations to address in a consistent and systematic manner, the inclusion of citizens in their work and improve internal governance practices. Furthermore, should they be previous beneficiaries of Institutional Grants from KCSF, they are expected to demonstrate a positive trend of development both with regards to internal capacities and programmatic strategy, as per the goals and objectives of previous institutional support.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF CALL REQUIREMENTS

a. Eligibility criteria

In order to be eligible for application, applicant organizations need to fulfil the following criteria:

- Be a domestic non-governmental organization registered according to the applicable law in Kosovo (branches of foreign and international NGOs registered in Kosovo are not eligible to apply);

- Be directly responsible for the management of the grant;

- Demonstrate capacity for the management of proposed strategy/program;

- Demonstrate a positive trend of development both with regards to internal capacities and programmatic strategy, as per the goals and objectives of previous institutional support (for previous beneficiaries of Institutional Grants from KCSF);

- Is not led or managed by Politically Exposed Persons;[1]

- Accepts and commits to abide to the Core Values for EJA grantees[2];

- Should not be supported with an institutional/core grant by Sida during the period requesting support from EJA Kosovo.

b. Non-Governmental Organizations

Applicants shall demonstrate that their engagement is within the area of democratization and eligible program areas. Despite their legal status, not all NGOs are included in the above eligibility criteria, due to the wide scope of the applicable legislation for registration of NGOs in Kosovo. Sports clubs, sports federations, amateur cultural associations or religious organizations that are registered as NGOs are not eligible for KCSF grants. Similarly, NGOs that represent businesses or similar entities with clear financial capacity to cover the costs of their organization or sustain their activities are not eligible for KCSF grants.

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1 For more on limitations related to Politically Exposed Persons (PEP) see the application form. All applying organizations are required to declare that none of the persons in the leading positions pursuant to the definition of Politically Exposed Persons fall under this category.

2 For more about the Core Values for EJA grants, see the application form. All applying organizations are obliged to accept and commit to adhere to the Core Values for EJA grants.

c. Number of applications

Organizations can submit one application only in this Call for Proposals.

d. Timeframe and budget

Organizations can apply for funding for a period of minimum 24 months and maximum 36 months.

The maximum budget requested for funding from this call should not exceed EUR 40,000/year (including audit).

Up to 15% of the total proposed budget can be allocated for organizational development[3] (i.e. internal systems, staff capacity building, office equipment, etc.).

e. Areas of intervention and targeted population

EJA Kosovo focuses on civil society's contribution to policy making, emphasizing constituency integration in advocacy efforts and creating spaces and practices for citizen engagement. The program aims increased civic participation in public policy processes at all levels, with priority areas including women and marginalized groups' participation, socio-economic and cultural rights improvement, civil society's watchdog role strengthening, youth empowerment in policy processes, and human rights civic education. The program emphasizes watchdog activities, policy implementation monitoring, and addressing controversial topics such as environmental issues and marginalized groups' representation.

EJA Kosovo is committed to supporting initiatives focused on addressing the rights and needs of marginalized groups. These include women, people with disabilities, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, Serb ethnic minorities, the LGBTI community, the elderly, and youth.

f. Level of intervention and geographical coverage

Through this call, support will be provided to NGOs throughout Kosovo that seek to bring about transformations at local/municipal and/or national/central level. In particular, at least 30 percent of the beneficiaries of institutional grants will be organizations based and operating outside of Prishtina.

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3 This call intends to primarily support implementation of existing strategies of applicant organizations, thus organizational development is not a primary target of support through this instrument. During the end of 2024, EJA Kosovo will launch a specific call intended only for organizational development of organizations. For more see section of EJA Kosovo instruments in this link.

g. Civic engagement

EJA Kosovo emphasizes citizen engagement throughout the work of supported organizations. Applicants for institutional grants are expected to clearly demonstrate how they will involve citizens in their current strategies and future work.

Target group analysis - Applicants should present a clear analysis of their target group, why their engagement and participation is relevant for the work of the organization and the different ways that they intend to engage them.

In the analysis of their target group, applicants are expected to be cognizant of the differences within their target groups (such as gender, age, ethnicity, religion, education, location, socio-economic circumstances, interests and needs) and adapt their proposals and intervention accordingly to address the diverse needs and interests within the group.

Engagement strategies - Applicants are also expected to analyse the potential of target groups for engagement and elaborate a realistic approach for gradual but systematic increase of their involvement in the work of the organization.

Previous EJA Kosovo support - If applicants are beneficiaries of previous support from EJA Kosovo (regardless of grant instrument), they should provide a summary of how they engaged citizens in their work until now, highlighting progress and challenges.

Supported NGOs will have access to mentoring and capacity building on participatory advocacy and community mobilization to assist them to develop a plan for inclusion of citizens based on their previous experience.

h. Internal governance

Internal governance of NGOs is an important aspect in efforts to improve and build the trust of citizens in the civil society sector and to be able to lead by example of good governance, transparency and accountability to the public in general. All applicants must provide information on internal control mechanisms, management and governance structures, decision making process and financial management.

Shortlisted applicants will undergo an in-depth verification during on-site visits by KCSF whereby supporting documents for all of the abovementioned categories need to be presented. If applicants are beneficiaries of previous support from KCSF in the period 2015-2024 (regardless of program and grant instrument), they should present a summary of internal development activities supported by KCSF, audit findings and recommendations, and KCSF monitoring recommendations, and how each of these has been addressed by the applicant.

Following the initial assessment, KCSF will work intensively with supported organizations to develop tailor made mentoring to address identified good governance practices, sound financial management and tenets of transparency, the fight against and prevention of corruption and accountability.

i. Cooperation/Networking groups

Expectations - To foster greater collaboration and joint action between NGOs, EJA Kosovo will provide different platforms and meeting venues where NGOs can meet, exchange and share experiences amongst each other. Cooperation on issues of common interest would be an intended outcome, thus it is expected that supported organizations will be proactive in identifying and contributing to mobilization of other civil society initiatives in their areas of interest.

Thematic events present a platform which will be available to all supported organizations to propose relevant issues in their scope of work and/or issues that do not directly fall within their scope of work but are deemed important, urgent and relevant. Since the objective of EJA Kosovo is to expand civil society activity country wide and contribute in creating the link to citizens, these thematic events are intended to be organized mainly outside of Prishtina.

j. Cross cutting issues

Gender mainstreaming, environmental considerations, and human rights will be crosscutting, and horizontal issues integrated into all interventions. Gender mainstreaming as a tool toward gender equality requires all supported organizations to ensure their interventions equally consider the effects on men and women, boys and girls, and avoid contributing to harmful stereotypes. Environmental considerations necessitate that all interventions are mindful of their environmental impact, promoting sustainability and minimizing negative effects on the environment. Human rights principles shall guide all activities to ensure that they respect, protect, and promote the rights and dignity of all individuals involved, avoiding any form of discrimination or injustice.

ELIGIBILITY OF OPERATIONS AND COSTS

a. Ineligible interventions/activities

The following activities will not be supported:

- Interventions that are directly affiliated with or are supportive of political parties or candidates for political elections;

- Interventions that are contrary to the Core Values for EJA grantees;

- Capital Investments;

- Grants composed entirely or mostly of preparatory work and/or studies;

- Cross border project activities and interventions;

- Activities to be implemented outside Kosovo (except meetings with partner organizations or networks with the purpose of cooperation and sharing of experiences);

- Service type activities, like the ones similar to Technical Assistance;

- Awareness raising campaigns without proper follow up;

- Interventions which are dependent on multilevel approval from third parties and posing a disproportionately high risk of failure and not achieving results;

- Sub granting to third parties. Small scale financial support to beneficiaries of the work of the organization is allowed only in cases when all expenditures are executed by the implementing organization;

- Scholarships.

Unless they are imperative for the achievement of the intended organizational strategy objectives, in principle, the activities outlined below will not be supported:

- Conferences, round table discussions or other similar events in venues (such as hotels) that are not open and easily accessible to ordinary citizens;

- Research and feasibility studies, especially as a tool to design the rest of the intervention;

- Study trips outside of Kosovo.

b. Eligible costs

To be considered eligible, costs should meet the following criteria:

- are necessary for the successful implementation and achievement of the indicated intervention results;
- are reasonable, justified and comply with the requirements of sound financial management including fair and market-based calculations and cost-efficiency;
- comply with the requirements of applicable tax legislation in Kosovo;
- will incur during the implementation of the grant;
- are indicated in the approved budget;
- are identifiable and traceable.

c. Ineligible costs

The costs presented below are considered ineligible:

- Customs and import duties;
- Debt or payments for losses;
- Value Added Tax - VAT (for all invoices above EUR 200);
- Loan and interest repayments;
- Currency exchange fees;
- Equipment depreciation expenditures;
- Purchase of land or immovable property;
- Purchase of vehicle or generator;
- Payment of expenses covered by other donors;
- Credit to third parties.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

a. Submission of applications

All applications for EJA Kosovo grants have to be submitted through the online platform.

Applicants must provide their information, elaborate the idea and submit the necessary documents through the **online application system.**

For instructions on registering and using the online application system, please refer to the information that is available on the online application system **website.**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding registration or grant application, please email us at eja@kcsfoundation.org. All questions and answers regarding the application will be published in the Q&A (questions and answers) section of the KCSF website. Applicants are advised to check this section regularly.

We strongly encourage applicants to submit their applications well before the deadline to avoid any last-minute technical difficulties due to heavy internet traffic or a fault with the internet connection (including electricity failure, etc.), or heavy internet traffic in the online application system that could lead to difficulties in submission. KCSF cannot be held responsible for any delay due to such afore-mentioned difficulties.

b. Deadline for application submission

The deadline for submitting applications is **15/07/2024** at **23:59.** Applications received after the deadline shall not be taken into consideration.

c. Contact

For questions related to the application process you can contact us at eja@kcsfoundation.org no later than 05/07/2024. All questions and answers will be published in the Q&A section of KCSF website no later than 10/07/2024.

Please use only this email for communication with KCSF regarding the application process.

MANDATORY DOCUMENTS

In addition to the application form that needs to be completed as per EJA Kosovo template for institutional grant, the applicants shall submit the below documents that shall be submitted as separate documents:

1. NGO Registration Certificate issued by the NGO Department;

2. Declaration on Politically Exposed Persons (PEP) (accepted as per EJA Kosovo template);

3. Declaration on Core Values for EJA grantees (accepted as per EJA Kosovo template);

4. Organizations' Strategic Document (which covers the entire or larger part of the grant period);

5. Budget of the whole organization for the applying period, with clear separation of those budget lines for which support is requested by EJA Kosovo, as well as salary specification and reasoning (as per EJA Kosovo template);

6. Annual Work Plan of the whole organization for the applying period, clear separation of main activities for which support is requested by EJA Kosovo (as per EJA Kosovo template);

7. Logical Framework of the Organizations' Strategic Document (as per EJA Kosovo template);

MANDATORY DOCUMENTS AFTER SHORT-LISTING

1. Statute of the organization (signed version identical to the Statute as submitted to the NGO Department);

2. In case the applicant is a foundation or an institute, the list of Governing Board members;

3. In case the applicant is an association, the name of the Head of Assembly of Members. Also, if the association has any intermediary boards or other bodies, a list of members of such body;

4. Annual financial statements of the organization[4] for the last two (2) years (2022 and 2023)

5. Auditor's reports for the last two (2) years (2022 and 2023), if the applying organization is legally obliged to posses an audit report, or if the organization has it regardless of the legal obligations)

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4 Annual financial statements should on the minimum show the balance sheet and income and expenses statement. Audit reports should cover two financial statements of the organization. For recently established organizations, only if applicable.

EVALUATION AND NOTIFICATION

Evaluation of applications for an Institutional Grant will be done in two phases:

1) Administrative control (verification of formal criteria and all required documentation as specified in the guidelines for applications) and

2) Content evaluation (based on evaluation categories and criteria).

a. Administrative control

During this phase all applications are assessed if the following have been in compliance with the call:

1. All administrative and technical requirements.

2. Eligibility criteria for organizations.

3. Mandatory documents.

4. Requested amount, and

5. Grant duration.

Applications that do not meet the specified criteria will not pass to content evaluation.

The results of the administrative compliance will be communicated to each applicant in writing.

b. Evaluation of the content and final decision

Applications that pass the administrative control will be evaluated by Grants Evaluation Team (GET) consisting of five external experts with relevant expertise and knowledge.

The Grants Evaluation Team will evaluate applications based on the following criteria and weight:

1. Quality of the organization's strategy (30%)

2. Involvement of citizens/target groups in the work of the organization (30%)

3. Cross – cutting issues (10%)

4. Level of organizational capacity (10%)

5. Relevance of previous experience (10%)

6. Cost-effectiveness of the proposed budget (10%)

7. The maximum evaluation per application is 100 points.

The evaluation of proposals by GET will be conducted in two stages:

1) Review of submitted documents, and

2) Public interviews.

After the initial evaluation of the submitted application and all other mandatory documents, the applicants that receive at least **65 points** (out of 100), as well as **half of available points** (50%) in each of the six categories presented above are shortlisted.

KCSF will organize site visits to all shortlisted applicants. Prior to the site visit shortlisted applicants will be requested to submit additional documents and information related to internal governance.

The visit by KCSF staff will focus on internal governance and financial management, as well as confirmation of addressing recommendations for previous grantees of KCSF. After the visit and any additional follow-up confirmation, a report is prepared by KCSF for each short-listed organization, with the following categories of assessments:

● Very Good: All or almost all elements are assessed as appropriate to the size and nature of the work and the organization (or the nature of recommendations), with no significant issues to address and a low risk of failure if awarded the grant.

● Sufficient: Most elements are assessed as appropriate to the size and nature of the work and the organization (or the nature of recommendations). However, there are some important elements to address during implementation to lower the risk of failure if awarded the grant.

● Insufficient: A significant portion of elements are assessed as not appropriate to the size and nature of the work and the organization (or the nature of recommendations), with a very high risk of failure if awarded the grant, making it unacceptable to award the grant.

Short-listed organizations assessed to have an insufficient level of internal governance, financial management, and addressing of previous recommendations will not be invited for public interviews.

The public interview will consist of a brief presentation of the grant proposal (10 minutes) followed by a Q&A session (10 minutes) with the GET members.

After completing the interviews, GET will recommend a list of applicants for financing. To be eligible for funding, applicants must achieve a minimum of 75 points overall, as well as at least 50% of the available points in each of the five evaluation categories.

The final selection of applicants recommended for financing will depend on the availability of funds and must meet the geographical quota, with at least 30% of beneficiaries being organizations based and operating outside of Prishtina.

Donors possess the right to veto any applicants on the recommended list if they are considered to conflict with the values promoted by the donor or if they overlap with other similar interventions financed by the respective donor. The donor veto is final and applicants may not appeal the decision.

KCSF will support successful applicants to finalize the dossier during the contract preparation stage and the inception phase. During this stage, all conditions set by the GET must be met. KCSF also reserves the right to suggest minor adjustments that do not alter the fundamental aspects of the application or approved activities but may enhance the successful implementation of the institutional grant.

c. Notification of the decision and complaint mechanism

Decisions for financing taken by the Grants and Evaluation Team and not vetoed by the donors are final. Once this process is completed, KCSF will inform the unsuccessful applicants with the results of their application, including the total score, points per category and final ranking. Further information may be provided by KCSF only upon request, in the form of a summary of anonymized comments from members of the Grants and Evaluation Team.

A formal complaint may be submitted only in cases when unsuccessful applicants have solid grounds to believe that a specific document submitted by them has been left out from the evaluation process, resulting in significantly lower score in a particular category or overall. The formal complaint shall be submitted based on the formal complaint template published in KCSF's website.

The Executive Director of KCSF will establish an internal committee to assess whether the claimed omission has occurred in reality, based on both submitted evidence from the unsuccessful applicant and traceable information from the evaluation system of KCSF. In case the internal committee confirms that the omission has occurred in reality, the omitted document will be included in the dossier and the application will be re-evaluated by the GET, and the new score resulting from the re-evaluation will be including in the final rank of applicants.

ROLE OF KCSF

EJA Kosovo is a program of KCSF that is currently co-financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Sweden. KCSF is responsible for the design and implementation of the program, in close cooperation with the funding donors on strategic and main operational issues.

The evaluation of individual applications is conducted by the Grants and Evaluation Team composed of external evaluators, with KCSF having a supporting role consisting on the following elements: defining the evaluation criteria, designing the evaluation system, randomly selecting the members of the GET from the pool of external evaluators contracted by KCSF, undertaking the administrative control of submitted applications, organizing site-visits to the short-listed applicants for verification of documents and practices of internal governance, assessing the level of internal governance based on the submitted documents and results of the site-visits, assessing the level of follow-up and compliance with formal requirements from previous grants with KCSF and/or audit recommendations, as well as methodology guidance for and monitoring of the members of the GET on adequate implementation of the evaluation system and methodology.

Following final decisions for financing taken by the Grants and Evaluation Team and completion of the veto process by donors, KCSF takes the following steps: prepares the grant contract, supports the grantee in finalizing the implementation documents (final budget, logical framework, activity plan) and capacity building and networking plan, regularly monitors the implementation of the grant, receives and approves periodic reports from grantees based on the reporting guidelines and templates, contracts auditing companies to conduct external audits of the grant, organizes and/or facilitates capacity building and networking activities for grantees, and communicates with grantees on various issues relevant to successful implementation of the grant.

IMPORTANT TENTATIVE DATES

Process	Tentative date
Launch of the Call for Institutional Grants	31/05/2024
Information session	Detais at www.kcsfoundation.org and KCSF FB page
Deadline for questions and clarifications	05/07/2024
Last date to publish answers	10/07/2024
Deadline for submission of applications	**15/07/2024**
Information on administrative control	23/07/2024
Information on shortlisted applicants	End of August
Visits from KCSF to shortlisted applicants	September 2024
Public interviews	October 2024
Final decision	October 2024
Contracts signature	December 2024
Start of implementation	**January 2025**