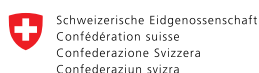


ENGAGEMENT FOR JOINT ACTION - **EJA KOSOVO**

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION FOR SMALL PROJECT GRANTS

Co-financed by:



Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



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 to a democratic and inclusive society in Kosovo, on its path towards integration into the European Union. Designed as a pooled funding mechanism, EJA Kosovo is currently co-financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Sweden and Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Centering citizen engagement and participation throughout the work of civil society, EJA Kosovo aims to contribute towards two main objectives where: (a) civil society uses and claims spaces for participation in shaping public affairs and (b) civil society organizations have strengthened ties to their constituents and improved accountability and transparency towards the wider public and their constituents.

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. Small project grants

Small project grants are intended to deliver concrete results within a set timeframe. Beneficiaries of these grants may be individuals, unregistered initiatives and non-governmental organizations with the most compelling and innovative ideas that have real potential for advancing the goals and objectives of the program. Small project grants will support specific actions of civil society initiatives and individuals that address concrete issues, both of more systematic nature or limited in scope and duration. In addition they are intended to support the initiatives of individuals, unregistered initiatives and non-governmental organizations for more focused and short-term projects. Civil society initiatives are required to operate in their respective localities.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF CALL REQUIREMENTS

a. Eligibility criteria

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

- Be individuals (citizens of the Republic of Kosovo), unregistered initiatives or organizations active in Kosovo engaged in any non-profit initiative (branches of foreign and international NGOs registered in Kosovo are not eligible to apply);
- Have annual turnover up to EUR 25,000 for the last three years (applies only for NGOs);
- Be directly responsible for the management of the grant. Partnerships with other NGOs/unregistered initiatives are allowed only if the leading applicant takes full responsibility for project implementation and management.
- Demonstrate capacity for the management of proposed main activities;
- Are not led or managed by Politically Exposed Persons.¹

b. Individuals and unregistered initiatives

In cases when the applicants are individuals or unregistered initiatives, they shall demonstrate that their engagement is not for profit and is for public benefit rather than private interest. They should also demonstrate that they adequately meet the relevant eligibility criteria. When these applicants are awarded with grants, all grant related payments will be administered by KCSF. Beneficiaries should ensure that all invoices are received on behalf of KCSF and submitted to KCSF on time. All other requirements related to grant administration are applicable as per non-governmental organizations.

¹ For more on limitations related to Politically Exposed Persons see the Application Form Template.

c. For 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.

d. Number of applications

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

e. Timeframe and budget

Applicants will be eligible to receive a maximum 12 months of funding. The maximum budget requested for funding from this call should not exceed EUR 10,000 (including audit costs).

f. 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.

g. Level of intervention and geographical coverage

Through this call, support will be provided to civil society initiative 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 small project grants will be subjects based and operating outside of Prishtina.

h. Civic engagement

Engagement of citizens throughout the work of the initiative/organization is an important aspect of the supported interventions under EJA Kosovo.

Thus, applicants are expected to clearly elaborate how they intend to engage citizens in their work in their current proposal and future work.

Applicants should present a clear analysis of their target group, why their engagement and participation are relevant for the work of their initiative 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 of their target groups (such as sex, age, ethnicity, religion, education, location, socio-economic circumstances, interests and needs) and adapt their proposals and intervention accordingly.

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 applicants will have access to mentoring and capacity building on participatory advocacy and community mobilization which will provide assistance in building on their previous experience presented and the plan for inclusion of citizens. For guidance on constituency, please see the short document [Constituency engagement](#) on KCSF website.

i. 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.

j. 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.

k. 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 interventions/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:

- For individuals and unregistered initiatives salaries and fees are not allowed;
- Customs and import duties;
- Debt or payments for losses;
- Value Added Tax - VAT (for 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

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 [web-site](#).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding registration or grant application, please email us at aja@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.

a. Deadline for application submission

Applications for small project grants can be submitted at any time as long as the call remains open at all times.

The evaluation of applications is done on a three-month basis. For the first cycle of applications submitted by September 30, 2024, the evaluation is done during the month of October/November 2024.

EVALUATION AND NOTIFICATION

Evaluation of applications for a project grant will be done in two phases:

- 1) Administrative control (verification of formal criteria) and
- 2) Content evaluation (based on pre-defined evaluation categories and criteria).

a. Administrative control (verification of formal criteria)

During this phase all applications are assessed if the following has been respected/submitted:

- 1 All administrative and technical requirements indicated in the application form;
- 2 Mandatory documents, including the eligibility of applicants;
- 3 Budget size
- 4 Grant duration

Applications that do not meet the specified criteria will be automatically rejected.

The results of the administrative control will be communicated to each applicant in written form.

b. Evaluation of applications and final decision

Applications that pass the administrative control will be evaluated by Grants Evaluation Team (GET) consisting of three external experts with relevant expertise and knowledge. GET will evaluate the proposals in two stages 1) through review of documents and 2) public interviews.

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

- 1 Relevance of the project and logic of intervention (35%)
- 2 Involvement of citizens/target group in the project (35%)
- 3 Cross-cutting issues (10%)
- 4 Capacities relevance to project implementation (10%)
- 5 Cost-effectiveness of the proposed budget (10%)

The maximum evaluation per application is 100 points.

After the initial evaluation of the submitted application and all other mandatory documents, the applicants that receive at least **51 points** (out of 100), as well as half of available points (**50%**) in each of the four categories presented above are shortlisted.

All shortlisted applicants will be invited for public interview. The interview of shortlisted applicants will be public and consists of a brief presentation of the grant proposal and a Q&A session with the Grants Evaluation Team members.

After conducting the interviews, the Grants Evaluation Team recommends the list of applicants to be awarded for a project grant. In order to be considered for funding, applicants need to receive at least 71 points in total, as well as the half of available points (50%) in each of the four categories presented above. The list of applicants recommended for a grant will be reviewed against the geographical quota whereby at least 30% of the beneficiaries will be organizations based and operating outside of Prishtina.

Donors have a veto right on list of applicants recommended for a grant that are considered against the values promoted by the donor or are overlapping with other similar interventions.

Successful applicants, prior to contracting, will be assisted by KCSF in a mentoring session to finalize their dossier. During this phase, all conditions set by GET must be met. KCSF also reserves the right to suggest minor adjustments that do not change the fundamental aspects of the application or approved activities, but may improve the successful implementation of the project.

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..