



Contracting authority: European Commission

Addressing the drivers of migration and forced displacement by supporting economic stabilization and strengthening community resilience

Guidelines for Call for Expression of Interest

Reference: AFG/2026/Call for expression of interest 1

Deadline for submission of concept note: 5 June 2026

NOTICE

This is a Call for **Expression of Interest (Direct Award)**.

Only **Concept notes** (Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note) must be submitted for evaluation.

Following the evaluation of the submitted Concept notes, the Contracting Authority will establish a shortlist of lead applicants, some of whom may be invited to submit a **Full application** (Annex A.2 – Grant Application Form – Full Application).

After the evaluation of the full applications, an eligibility check will be performed for those which have been provisionally selected. Eligibility will be checked on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the Contracting Authority and the signed 'declaration by the lead applicant' sent together with the full application.

The Contracting Authority reserves the right not to award any grants under this procedure.

To apply to this Call for Expression of Interest, organisations:

- **must register in the Potential Applicant Data On-Line Registration system ([PADOR](#)).** It is an online system in which organisations that are potential candidates for calls register and regularly update information about their profile (legal, financial, etc.). Every organisation in e-Calls PADOR has a unique identification number (EuropeAid ID - EID);
- **must submit their application at the dedicated email address indicated in this document.**

All organisations may find more information regarding e-Calls PADOR in [the user's manual](#) and may also contact the technical support team via the online support form on the application page.

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ADDRESSING BASIC NEEDS AND SUPPORTING LIVELIHOODS OF THE PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN

1.1. BACKGROUND

On 11 October 2021, the EU Member States' Development Ministers agreed on the need to assist the population directly, while avoiding channelling support to, or through, entities controlled by the De Facto Authorities (DFA), with support that goes beyond humanitarian aid by focusing on basic services and livelihoods assistance. On 12 October 2021, the President of the European Commission announced that the European Commission (the EC) was working to make it possible to use funds previously intended for Afghanistan to support Afghan people in urgent need in the new context.

This Call for Expression of Interest is guided by the European Commission's objectives and priorities, as well as Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on Afghanistan of 21 September 2021 and 20 March 2023. Principles for delivery of aid that are to be followed include: 1) Women, girls and persons belonging to minorities should be able to access services in a non-discriminatory fashion; 2) Support can only be given through multilateral organisations, NGOs/CSOs or the private sector. No funds can be channelled through the Taliban DFA neither in Kabul, nor at the local level, neither directly or through other actors; 3) The Taliban DFA should not be involved in the hiring, recruitment policy, implementation or management of support mechanisms; and 4) A do-no-harm and conflict sensitive approach will be ensured.

In alignment with the Afghanistan Coordination Group (ACG)'s Framework for International Partner Support in Afghanistan (2023-2025), which has been extended beyond 2025, the actions under this Call will support the people of Afghanistan through initiatives aimed at promoting economic stabilisation and strengthening community resilience.

Additionally, future actions under this Call will adopt a human rights-based and principled "for-women-by-women" approach putting women and girls, as well as other vulnerable groups, at the centre of the activities.

Interventions will be expected to address drivers of migration and forced displacement in the context of the ongoing returnees' crisis and increased risk of outward migration and natural hazards, and factor climate change adaptation and climate resilience in the framework of resilient livelihoods support.

This Call for Expression of Interest is covered by the 2025 Annual Action Plan (AAP), Decision [NDICI/2025/63141](#) and the 2026 AAP for Afghanistan, pending its approval by the European Commission before the end of 2026¹. Its purpose is to invite eligible organisations to submit Concept notes proposing actions to achieve the objectives outlined in Section 1.2. Based on the evaluation procedure set out in this document, the Contracting Authority will select the entities whose Concept notes best align with the objectives of the Call and invite them to submit Full applications.

1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND PRIORITY ISSUES

The **Overall Objective of EU programmes for Afghanistan** is:

- to address the drivers of migration and forced displacement, enhance the reintegration of Afghan returnees and to support stability in Afghanistan by improving livelihoods and reducing security risks and forced displacement within the country and beyond.

The **Specific Objectives (outcomes)** are to:

¹ The availability of funds under the 2026 AAP for Afghanistan is subject to the endorsement by EU Member States and the approval of European Commission by end 2026.

1. Support economic stabilisation and
2. Foster community resilience.

The **Specific Objective (outcome)** of this Call for Expression of Interest is:

1. To improve access to resilient livelihood opportunities for people affected by internal displacement, including returnees, enabling their sustainable integration within host communities.

The **Outputs to be delivered by this Call** contributing to the corresponding Specific Objective (Outcome) are:²

- 1.1. Livelihoods are strengthened and decent jobs created, addressing particularly groups in vulnerable situations such as women, returnees, displaced people, and youth.
- 1.2. Innovative entrepreneurship and business solutions are promoted.
- 1.3. Local climate-resilient agro-value chains are supported.
- 1.4. MSMEs, including women-led businesses and returnees-led or returnees-employing businesses, are provided with comprehensive private sector and value-chain support.
- 1.5. Natural resources and eco-systems are managed in a sustainable manner by targeted communities and contribute to more resilient livelihoods.
- 1.6. Women's participation and social cohesion are strengthened through the inclusion of women and girls in family and community decision-making, improved equitable access of women, men, girls and boys to basic services and livelihoods
- 1.7 Targeted local communities are better prepared, adapted, and capable of managing climate change and disaster risks.

Key considerations of this Call include:

- **Targeting:** Proposed interventions must be grounded in a sound analytical approach and respond to needs in the areas of highest return in Afghanistan, in particular **Kabul, Kunar, Nangarhar, Balkh, Faryab, Jowzjan, Kunduz, Hilmand, Kandahar, Nimroz, Zabul, Farah, Herat**. However, proposed actions are not expected to cover all the listed provinces. Interventions outside these areas would require specific justification. Targeting should demonstrate how the intervention will achieve the greatest possible impact on beneficiaries. Priority will be given to areas with high numbers of displaced persons and returnees and limited existing services (see “Synergy and Complementarity” below). Applicants are therefore expected to specify the provinces and districts selected, as well as whether they are targeting returnees and/or displaced populations.
- **Resilience building and (re-)integration of returnees into host communities:** Interventions need to demonstrate how they respond to challenges faced by returnees and host communities and incorporate sustainable and scalable (re-)integration solutions for returnees, displaced population and host communities and returnees' absorption in areas of high return (urban, peri-urban or rural areas). Concrete measures promoting social cohesion between returnees and host communities should be included. (*For interventions aiming to address the Returnees crisis*).
- **Synergy and Complementarity:** Applicants are expected to design their proposed actions in complementarity with initiatives funded by the EU, EU Member States, and other donors. Proposals should clearly demonstrate the added value of the action to the EU's basic needs priorities and identify potential synergies with ongoing interventions. Coordination and, where necessary, continuity with ECHO funded returnees response operations, should be demonstrated.

² Actions proposed under this Call are not expected to cover all the outputs listed. Applicants should select the outputs on which their proposed actions will deliver, based on their capacity and expertise.

Applicants should outline the activities of other stakeholders in the same location and sector - including existing gaps - in order to assess and justify the value added of their proposal. Mapping of other interventions and needs assessments are expected to be undertaken during the formulation phase, not deferred to project inception. Concept notes should therefore already identify the targeted areas and the anticipated synergies, complementarities, and interfaces with other initiatives, especially EU-funded actions.

As part of this, proposals should describe concrete mechanisms to ensure coordination and avoid duplication with existing or planned activities by other stakeholders, such as referral systems or the use of existing infrastructure, including existing centres already providing integrated services

- **Principled approach:** Applicants should align their proposed actions with the EU’s principled approach, meaning that women can meaningfully participate in aid delivery and remain programme participants a do-no-harm and non-discriminatory approach. Priority is given to a ‘by-women for-women’ initiatives, while also ensuring the protection and safety of beneficiaries.
- **Sustainability, scalability and exit strategy:** Interventions are expected to demonstrate potential for sustainable outcomes and scalability regarding economic stabilisation and community resilience. Strengthening resilience and self-reliance will require prioritisation of market based and private sector-oriented approaches, to ensure financial viability of the proposed interventions.
- **Value for Money and Cost Effectiveness:** Given the limited resources available, priority will be given to proposals that demonstrate strong cost-effectiveness and value for money. Concept notes are expected to include an estimate of the share of the budget that will be allocated to:
 - Indirect cost/Overheads and Programme support cost:
 - Indirect Cost/Overheads
 - Programme administrative/support staff
 - Travel Cost
 - Equipment, Local office, Maintenance, Supplies, Services
 - Monitoring and Evaluation, audits
 - Core programme activities:
 - Technical staff delivering activities to beneficiaries
 - Activities delivering directly to beneficiaries.

A clear explanation of the number of beneficiaries directly and indirectly impacted by the support should be provided, along with a justification of the beneficiary categories—for example, whether they are training participants or recipients of other forms of support. The proposal should also clarify whether there is any overlap among beneficiaries across the planned activities. In addition, it should include an estimate of the anticipated average cost per beneficiary.

- **Innovative solutions and scaling up of successful system-based solutions:** Considering the multitude of constraints and the challenging operating environment in Afghanistan, applicants are encouraged to explore innovative approaches and novel concepts that could enhance sectoral / value chain-based impact and scalability, sustainability and improve access for vulnerable groups. Proposals that rely solely or disproportionately on service delivery will not be considered for selection.
- **Nexus Approach:** Whenever possible and applicable, activities should employ the nexus approach. Proposed actions must not overlap with humanitarian assistance and seek complementarity and resilience-focused solutions for targeted populations.
- **Localisation:** Applicants are expected to take into account the local context and power dynamics, and to integrate relevant localisation principles into their concept notes. This should include outlining concrete measures to ensure the genuine and meaningful inclusion of local actors. Such measures may include, but are not limited to, co-leadership and shared decision-making arrangements; the provision of financial support to third parties; equitable allocation of resources; and sustainable, context-specific capacity strengthening.

- **Partnerships:** Applicants are encouraged to establish partnerships with capable Afghan organizations.
- **Consortia:** Concept notes submitted by Consortia are welcome. However, they should be formed only where they add clear value - for example, by leveraging existing structures or enhancing the efficiency of the proposed actions. Consortia that lead to duplication, lack a clear rationale, or fail to demonstrate tangible benefits - such as improved outcomes for beneficiaries, cost savings, or better value for money – will not be considered positively.
- **Logical Framework Approach:** Actions should be built on a robust logical framework based on the EU Result Framework (inputs, outputs, outcomes, impact) with soundly defined SMART indicators.

Cross-Cutting Principles:

- **Gender:** In line with the EU’s Gender Action Plan III, the Gender Profile for Afghanistan and the Gender Index for Afghanistan, applicants are invited to:
 - Consider support for women CSOs;
 Ensure actions undertaken do not inadvertently contribute to or exacerbate normalization of discriminatory DFA policies, norms, and values; Embed social, economic, cultural, political and civil rights, especially women’s rights, as a cross-cutting theme, from the design to implementation and monitoring of all programming.
- **Youth:** Applicants should explain how youth will be actively involved as contributors and decision-makers, not solely as participants. They should show how youth will be reached and highlight ongoing opportunities for youth input and co-creation to ensure meaningful and sustained engagement.
- **Climate adaptation:** Applicants should integrate climate adaptation strategies that strengthen the impact and long-term sustainability of the proposed action.
- **Context sensitivity:** Applicants should demonstrate awareness of the context within which the intervention takes place and apply a ‘do no harm’ approach. Where possible, they should address drivers of conflict by fostering social dialogue.

1.3. FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

The overall indicative amount made available under this Call for Expression of Interest is EUR 40,000,000.³ The Contracting Authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

Size of grants

Any grant requested under this Call for Expression of Interest must fall between the following minimum and maximum amounts:

- minimum amount: EUR 5,000,000,
- maximum amount (indicative): EUR 12,000,000.

Any grant requested under this Call for Expression of Interest must fall between the following minimum and maximum percentages of total eligible costs of the Action:

- Minimum percentage: 80 % of the total eligible costs of the Action.
- Maximum percentage: 100 % of the total eligible costs of the Action (see also Section 2.1.4).

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 general budget of the Union.

³ This amount is indicative and subject to the Contracting Authority's final approval.

The grant may cover the entire eligible costs of the Action if this is deemed essential to carry it out. If that is the case, the lead applicant must justify full financing in Section 2.1 of Annex A.2. The validity of the justification provided will be examined during the evaluation procedure. The absence of any justification may lead to the rejection of the application.

Given the limited availability of resources, the scale of needs, and in view of leveraging additional funding for the Afghan population, priority will be given to actions that include co-financing. Such co-financing must be provided only in-cash (in-kind co-financing will not be considered) and constitute fresh funding; resources already allocated to other projects that do not generate additional support for beneficiaries will not be considered as co-financing.

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

These Guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the Actions financed under this Call, in conformity with the practical guide, which is applicable to the present Call (available on the internet at this address <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ePRAG>).

2.1. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

There are three sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

(1) the actors (2.1.1.):

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

(2) the Actions (2.1.3.):

- Actions for which a grant may be awarded;

(3) the costs (2.1.4.):

- types of cost that may be taken into account in setting the amount of the grant.

<i>2.1.1. Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant(s))</i>
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Lead applicant

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

- be a legal person **and**
- be non-profitmaking **and**

- be a non-governmental civil society organisation, established in⁴ a Member State of the EU or an eligible country as per Article 28 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/947⁵;

and

- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies), not acting as an intermediary **and**
- Be registered as a legal entity in Afghanistan and have a fully operational presence in the country.

(2) Potential applicants may not participate in this Call for Expression of Interest or be awarded grants if they are in any of the situations listed in Section 2.6.10.1 of the [EU INTPA Practical Guide](#);

Lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entities and, in case of legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over the lead applicant, the co-applicants and the affiliated entities are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion according to Section 2.6.10.1 of the practical guide, personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the early detection and exclusion system, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract. In this respect, provisionally selected lead applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities are obliged to declare that they are not in one of the exclusion situations through a signed declaration on honour (PRAG Annex A14). For grants of EUR 15 000 or less, no declaration on honour is required. See section 2.4.

In Annex A.1 Section 2 and Annex A.2 Section 5 ('declaration(s) by the lead applicant'), the lead applicant must declare that the lead applicant himself, the co-applicant(s) and affiliated entity(ies) are not in any of these situations.

The lead applicant may act individually or with co-applicant(s). If awarded the grant contract, the lead applicant will become the beneficiary identified as the coordinator in Annex G (special conditions). The coordinator is the sole interlocutor of the contracting authority. It represents and acts on behalf of any other co-beneficiary (if any) and coordinate the design and implementation of the action.

Co-applicant(s)

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

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

Co-applicants must sign the mandate in Annex A.2 Section 5.

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

(3) In addition, contracts cannot be awarded to or signed with applicants included in the lists of EU restrictive measures (see Section 2.4. of the PRAG).

Affiliated entities

⁴ To be determined on the basis of the organisation's statutes, which should demonstrate that it has been established by an instrument governed by the national law of the country concerned and that its head office is located in an eligible country. In this respect, any legal entity whose statutes have been established in another country cannot be considered an eligible local organisation, even if the statutes are registered locally or a 'Memorandum of Understanding' has been concluded.

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009 (Text with EEA relevance), *OJ L 209, 14.6.2021, p. 1–78*.

The lead applicant and its co-applicant(s) may act with affiliated entity(ies).

Only the following entities may be considered as affiliated entities to the lead applicant and/or to co-applicant(s):

Only entities having a structural link with the applicants (i.e. the lead applicant or a co-applicant), in particular a legal or capital link.

This structural link encompasses mainly two notions:

- (i) Control, as defined in Directive 2013/34/EU on the annual financial statements, consolidated financial statements and related reports of certain types of undertakings:

Entities affiliated to an applicant may hence be:

- Entities directly or indirectly controlled by the applicant (daughter companies or first-tier subsidiaries). They may also be entities controlled by an entity controlled by the applicant (granddaughter companies or second-tier subsidiaries) and the same applies to further tiers of control.
 - Entities directly or indirectly controlling the applicant (parent companies). Likewise, they may be entities controlling an entity controlling the applicant.
 - Entities under the same direct or indirect control as the applicant (sister companies).
- (ii) Membership, i.e. the applicant is legally defined as a e.g. network, federation, association in which the proposed affiliated entities also participate, or the applicant participates in the same entity (e.g. network, federation, association...) as the proposed affiliated entities.

The structural link shall as a general rule be neither limited to the action nor established for the sole purpose of its implementation. This means that the link would exist independently of the award of the grant; it should exist before the Call for Expression of Interest and remain valid after the end of the action.

By way of exception, an entity may be considered as affiliated to an applicant even if it has a structural link specifically established for the sole purpose of the implementation of the action in the case of so-called 'sole applicants' or 'sole beneficiaries'. A sole applicant or a sole beneficiary is a legal entity formed by several entities (a group of entities) which together comply with the criteria for being awarded the grant. For example, an association is formed by its members.

What is not an affiliated entity?

The following are not considered entities affiliated to an applicant:

- Entities that have entered into a (procurement) contract or subcontract with an applicant, act as concessionaires or delegates for public services for an applicant,
- Entities that receive financial support from the applicant,
- Entities that cooperate on a regular basis with an applicant on the basis of a memorandum of understanding or share some assets,
- Entities that have signed a consortium agreement under the grant contract (unless this consortium agreement leads to the creation of a 'sole applicant' as described above).

How to verify the existence of the required link with an applicant?

The affiliation resulting from control may in particular be proved on the basis of the consolidated accounts of the group of entities the applicant and its proposed affiliates belong to.

The affiliation resulting from membership may in particular be proved on the basis of the statutes or equivalent act establishing the entity (network, federation, association) which the applicant constitutes or in which the applicant participates.

If the applicants are awarded a grant contract, their affiliated entity(ies) will not become beneficiary(ies) of the action and signatory(ies) of the grant contract. However, they will participate in the design and in the implementation of the action and the costs they incur (including those incurred for implementation contracts and financial support to third parties) may be accepted as eligible costs, provided they comply with all the relevant rules already applicable to the beneficiary(ies) under the grant contract.

Affiliated entity(ies) must satisfy the same eligibility criteria as the lead applicant and the co-applicant(s). They must sign the affiliated entity(ies) statement in Annex A.2 Section 5.

2.1.2. Associates and contractors

The following entities are not applicants nor affiliated entities and do not have to sign the ‘mandate for co-applicant(s)’ or ‘affiliated entities’ statement’:

- Associates

Other organisations or individuals may be involved in the action. Such associates play a real role in the action but may not receive funding from the grant, with the exception of per diem or travel costs. Associates do not have to meet the eligibility criteria referred to in Section 2.1.1. Associates must be mentioned in Annex A.2 Section 4 — ‘Associates participating in the action’.

- Contractors

The beneficiaries and their affiliated entities are permitted to award contracts. Associates or affiliated entity(ies) cannot be also contractors in the project. Contractors are subject to the procurement rules set out in Annex IV to the standard grant contract.

2.1.3. Eligible Actions:

Definition:

An Action is composed of a set of activities.

Duration:

The initial planned duration of an Action may not be lower than 36 months nor exceed 48 months.

Sectors or themes:

Support to private sector development, sustainable food systems and agricultural value chains, livelihoods, women’s socio-economic empowerment, socio-economic (re)-integration of IDPs/returnees, climate resilience, social cohesion, and sustainable natural resources management.

Location:

Actions must take place in in the areas of highest return in Afghanistan, in particular **Kabul, Kunar, Nangarhar, Balkh, Faryab, Jowzjan, Kunduz, Hilmand, Kandahar, Nimroz, Zabul, Farah, Herat.**

Types of Action:

Financial support under this Call for Expression of Interest must be aimed at supporting projects, i.e. coherent and self-contained sets of activities designed to achieve a specific objective(s) (see section 1.2) with clear target groups, tangible outcomes with relevant indicators, and within a limited timeframe. The proposed action should be designed to produce specific, measurable results in response to identified problems and challenges and be based on a specifically tailored strategy and intervention methodology.

Proposals should be built on a theory of change, i.e. assumptions about how the activities implemented will bring about change and produce results in terms of the objectives and priorities outlined in section 1.2 of these guidelines. The theory of change is an outcomes-based approach, which applies critical thinking to the design, implementation and evaluation of initiatives, and programmes intended to support change in their contexts.

In relation to each expected result, applicants are requested to assess the baseline, at the time of proposal submission, and the estimated improvement expected at the end of the action implementation period. Indicators should be disaggregated by gender and (where applicable) displacement status. Quantitative indicators for baseline and expected results shall be reported in the logical framework, which should also include a detailed and realistic assessment of the assumptions, risk and hypothesis with potential mitigation measures linked to external conditions of the wider context where the action is being implemented.

In light of the considerable number of organisations currently active in crisis response interventions in Afghanistan, applicants are expected to elaborate on the coordination mechanism they plan to put in place to ensure complementarity and synergies and avoid duplication.

Proposals outside the identified specific objective and priorities (section 1.2) of this Call for Expression of Interest will not be considered for funding.

The following types of Action are ineligible:

- Actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses;
- Actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses.

Types of activity

Activities will take a sectoral / value chain-based approach and/or a multi-sectoral community-level approach. Activities listed below are indicative and non-exhaustive. The support should consider returnees/IDPs specific needs and constraints to increase the possibilities for their sustainable (re)- integration. Such activities must ensure complementarity with other ongoing resilience and service delivery interventions supporting returnees/IDPs. (N.B.: The proposed activities must be complementary to already existing activities in the targeted areas and build synergies with humanitarian actions and/or other basic needs interventions (See above on Synergies and Complementarities):

Indicative activities relating to Output 1.1.

- Support skills development and vocational training (including through the use of digital/alternative technologies) particularly for youth, women and returnees/displaced people and other people in vulnerable situations;
- Provide on-the-job learning opportunities and apprenticeships particularly for youth, women and returnees/displaced people and other people in vulnerable situations;
- Create or support household income generating activities, in particular for female-headed households when feasible and returnees/IDPs.

Indicative activities relating to Output 1.2.

- Support innovation and business incubators ensuring accessibility to people from vulnerable situations including returnees/IDPs;
- Support Business Development Services (BDS) providers and business organisations networks;
- Connect businesses to BDS providers and business organisations networks.
- Provide productive inputs (e.g. seeds, small livestock, organic fertilisers), equipment and tools (e.g. food storage capacity, water collection/storage, drip irrigation, solar panels, greenhouses) to smallholder farmers, which also support climate adaptation and contribute to sustainable eco-systems.

Indicative activities relating to Output 1.3.

- Promote climate-smart practices, soil regeneration techniques, integrated pest management and pollinators protection.
- Implement measures to reduce post-harvest losses (e.g. improved storage and handling).
- Enhance sustainable livestock management and veterinary services.
- Promote food safety standards and sustainable food conservation.
- Strengthen local distribution networks, in particular for value chains with women engagement.
- Provide market support for smallholder farmers and enhancing agri-business capacity.

A particular focus will be attributed to (i) strengthening of agricultural capacity through the implementation of agroecological principles and climate-resilient practices (adoption of practices such as conservation agriculture, minimum tillage, soil cover maintenance, crop rotation, and integrated farming systems, all aimed at improving soil health and fertility, along with the use of small-scale community works, to effectively address soil degradation) and (ii) diversification of agri-food systems and agricultural landscapes will be prioritised to reduce vulnerability to climate-related hazards, by preserving species diversity, including native crops, seed varieties, and livestock breeds. This activity is contributing to the enhancement of agricultural resilience and alignment with sustainable agricultural practices (young farmers and female farmers will be involved).

Indicative activities relating to Output 1.4:

- Provide production inputs (equipment, materials) to MSMEs.
- Provide grants for business development and access to finance.
- Provide technical training and coaching, including on climate-resilient practices, sustainable sourcing, quality assurance and financial management.
- Provide market linkages and trade opportunities to MSMEs, including in the region/internationally.
- Provide support for improving product quality and market competitiveness (e.g. packaging, innovation).
- Provide tailored support to scale up MSMEs and start-ups of returnees or enterprises employing returnees.

The proposed activities will mainly target businesses in food production and processing (e.g. poultry, dried fruits and nuts, honey, saffron, dairy, pastry) which rely on women's participation. Where feasible/needed, the focus can be on peri-urban areas to accommodate returnees/IDPs.

Indicative activities relating to Output 1.5:

- Expand community-based sustainable water systems and climate-smart solutions.
- Build local capacities for community-based water infrastructure maintenance and natural resources management.
- Contribute to re-/afforestation efforts and land rehabilitation using climate-adapted species to restore degraded landscapes, reduce surface runoff.
- Ensure women can participate and contribute to sustainable resource management.
- Reinforce local community-based, inclusive, governance mechanisms for the equitable and sustainable management of natural resources.

Indicative activities relating to Output 1.6:

- Promote women’s economic participation through context-appropriate livelihoods, skills development and linkages to local markets and services.
- Facilitate household and community dialogue to promote culturally appropriate and active participation of women and girls in joint decision-making.

Indicative activities relating to Output 1.7:

- Enhance community-based early warning systems.
- Support local communities’ capacities in disaster preparedness.

Financial support to third parties⁶

Applicants may propose financial support to third parties in order to help achieving the objectives of the Action.

The maximum amount of financial support per third party is 60 000 EUR except where achieving the objectives of the actions would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult in which case this threshold can be exceeded. A threshold below EUR 60 000 can be set if appropriate.

In compliance with the present guidelines and notably of any conditions or restrictions in this Section, the lead applicant should define mandatorily in Section 2.1.1 of Annex A.2 (Grant application form – Full application):

- (i) the overall objectives, the specific objective(s) and the outputs⁷ (i.e. the results) to be achieved with the financial support
- (ii) the different types of activities eligible for financial support, on the basis of a fixed list
- (iii) the types of persons or categories of persons which may receive financial support
- (iv) the criteria for selecting these entities and giving the financial support
- (v) the criteria for determining the exact amount of financial support for each third entity, and
- (vi) the maximum amount which may be given.

In all events, the mandatory conditions set above for giving financial support (points (i) to (vi)) have to be strictly defined in the grant contract as to avoid any exercise of discretion.

- Third parties eligible for financial support are: local partner organisations, non-governmental organisations and/or community service centres tasked with specific activities, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME’s), farmers and farmers group, producers and producer groups, persons and particularly women in the process of setting up a business, medical educational and training institutes and similar.
- Applicants will need to substantiate on which basis they have selected third parties.
- Financial support to third parties indicated above, in line with the objectives and priorities identified under this Call for Expression of Interest, can be foreseen for activities:
 - Related to access to finance, delivery of inputs, training, skills development, as well as support to the operational costs of the organisations.
 - Setting up or expanding commercial activities by any of the third parties, for example, sub-grants can be used, *inter alia*, to purchase services and /or machinery and equipment,

⁶ These third parties are neither affiliated entity(ies) nor associates nor contractors.

⁷ As per OECD DAC definition, the term ‘results’ includes: ‘impact’ (overall objective), ‘outcome(s)’ (specific objective(s) and ‘output(s)’.

production lines, and tools to upgrade business systems, processes, products and services; purchase of services (business support, certification and accreditation); testing, etc.

- The Action must include a comprehensive capacity building component (training, on-the-job training, know-how transfer, etc.) to support the third parties that are benefiting from the financial support and allow them to deploy the technical capacities acquired through the proposed Action.
- The lead applicant is expected to provide a SWOT analysis of the potential sub-grantees in their proposed action together with the proposed size of grants, duration and type of activities. The application should demonstrate a clear strategy for the identification, selection of the sub-grantees and award mechanism for the sub-grants with clear oversight and reporting mechanisms.

Applicants shall describe which internal systems and procedure they have in place, or will put in place, to provide financial support to third parties.

Visibility

The applicants must take all necessary steps to publicise the fact that the European Union has financed or co-financed the action. Unless the European Commission agrees otherwise, actions that are wholly or partially funded by the European Union must ensure the visibility of EU financing by displaying the EU emblem in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Operational guidelines for recipients of EU funding, published by the European Commission. If applicable, communication activities may be undertaken to raise the awareness of specific or general audiences of the reasons for the action and the EU support for the action in the country or region concerned, as well as the results and the impact of this support.

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

Number of applications and grants per applicants / affiliated entities

- The lead applicant may not submit more than 1 application under this Call for Expression of Interest.
- The lead applicant may not be awarded more than 1 grant under this Call for Expression of Interest.
- The lead applicant may be a co-applicant or an affiliated entity in another application at the same time.
- A co-applicant/affiliated entity may be the co-applicant or affiliated entity in more than 1 application under this Call for Expression of Interest.
- A co-applicant/affiliated entity may be awarded more than 1 grant under this Call for Expression of Interest.

2.1.4. Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included

Union contributions under this Call for Expression of Interest take the following form(s):

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

- (i) actual costs incurred by the beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies);
- (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’.

Eligible direct costs

To be eligible under this Call for Expression of Interest, costs must comply with the provisions of Article 14 of the general conditions to the standard grant contract (see Annex G of the guidelines).

Costs incurred for the use of legally registered cash transfer agents in Afghanistan, can exceptionally be considered as eligible for EU financing under the strict requirements described below:

- cash transfer agents have to be legally registered in accordance with relevant national law and cannot be subject to sanctions. For avoidance of doubt, a legally registered cash transfer agent is a natural or legal person that operates as a financial operator, including money services providers, in accordance with national law.
- use of these cash transfer agents is only possible where no other reasonable alternative exists;
- transfer costs are capped at 5% of the amount transferred regardless of the number of agents involved in the transaction;
- The contracting authority reserves the right to end the eligibility of this type of costs.

Contingency reserve

The budget may include a contingency reserve not exceeding 5 % of the estimated direct eligible costs. It can only be used with the **prior written authorisation** of the contracting authority.

Eligible indirect costs

The indirect costs incurred in carrying out the action may be eligible for flat rate funding, but the total must not exceed 7% of the estimated total eligible direct costs. Indirect costs are eligible provided that they do not include costs assigned to another budget heading in the standard grant contract. The lead applicant may be asked to justify the percentage requested before the grant contract is signed. However, once the flat rate has been fixed in the special conditions of the grant contract, no supporting documents need to be provided.

If any of the applicants or affiliated entity(ies) is in receipt of an operating grant financed by the EU, it may not claim indirect costs on its incurred costs within the proposed budget for the action.

Ineligible costs

The following costs are not eligible:

- debts and debt service charges (interest);
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- costs declared by the beneficiary(ies) and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union (including EDF) grant;
- purchases of land or buildings, except where necessary for the direct implementation of the action, in which case ownership must be transferred in accordance with Article 7.5 of the general conditions of the standard grant contract, at the latest at the end of the action;
- currency exchange losses;
- in kind contributions;
- bonuses included in costs of staff;
- negative interest charged by banks or other financial institutions;
- salary costs of the personnel of national administrations;
- Credit to third parties.

2.1.5. Ethics clauses and Code of Conduct

a) Absence of conflict of interest

The applicant must not be affected by any conflict of interest and must have no equivalent relation in that respect with other applicants or parties involved in the actions. Any attempt by an applicant to obtain confidential information, enter into unlawful agreements with competitors or influence the evaluation committee or the contracting authority during the process of examining, clarifying, evaluating and comparing applications will lead to the rejection of its application and may result in administrative penalties according to the Financial Regulation in force.

b) Respect for human rights as well as environmental legislation and core labour standards

The applicant and its staff must comply with human rights. In particular, and in accordance with the applicable act, applicants who have been awarded contracts must comply with the environmental legislation including multilateral environmental agreements, and with the core labour standards as applicable and as defined in the relevant International Labour Organisation conventions (such as the conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of forced and compulsory labour; abolition of child labour).

Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment

The European Commission applies a policy of 'zero tolerance' in relation to all wrongful conduct which has an impact on the professional credibility of the applicant.

Physical abuse or punishment, or threats of physical abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, harassment and verbal abuse, as well as other forms of intimidation shall be prohibited.

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

c) Anti-corruption and anti-bribery

The applicant shall comply with all applicable laws, regulations and codes relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel project financing if corrupt practices of any kind are discovered at any stage of the award process or during the execution of a contract and if the contracting authority fails to take all appropriate measures to remedy the situation. For the purposes of this provision, 'corrupt practices' are the offer of a bribe, gift, gratuity or commission to any person as an inducement or reward for performing or refraining from any act relating to the award of a contract or execution of a contract already concluded with the contracting authority.

d) Unusual commercial expenses

Applications will be rejected or contracts terminated if it emerges that the award or execution of a contract has given rise to unusual commercial expenses. Such unusual commercial expenses are commissions not mentioned in the main contract or not stemming from a properly concluded contract referring to the main contract, commissions not paid in return for any actual and legitimate service, commissions remitted to a tax haven, commissions paid to a payee who is not clearly identified or commissions paid to a company which has every appearance of being a front company.

Grant beneficiaries found to have paid unusual commercial expenses on projects funded by the European Union are liable, depending on the seriousness of the facts observed, to have their contracts terminated or to be permanently excluded from receiving EU/EDF funds.

e) Breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud

The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel the procedure, where the award procedure proves to have been subject to breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud. If breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud are discovered after the award of the contract, the contracting authority may refrain from concluding the contract.

2.2. HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW

To apply for this Call for Expression of Interest the lead applicants need to:

- I. Provide information about the organisations involved in the action. To this end, lead applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities must register in PADOR. Lead applicants must register at the Concept note step. Co-applicants and affiliated entities must register at the full application step; lead applicants must make sure that their PADOR profile is up to date. Please note that the registration of this data **in PADOR is obligatory** for this Call for Expression of Interest:

PADOR is an on-line database in which organisations register and update information concerning their entity. Organisations registered in PADOR get a unique ID (EuropeAid ID) which they must mention in their application. PADOR is accessible via the website: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/pador>

If it is impossible to register online in PADOR for technical reasons, lead applicants, co-applicants and/or affiliated entity(ies) must complete the 'PADOR registration form'⁸ attached to these guidelines. This form must be sent together with the full application, by the submission deadline (see section 2.2.5).

It is strongly recommended to register in PADOR well in advance and not to wait until the last minute before the deadline to submit your application.

- II. Please note that applications to this Call for Expression of Interest **can only be submitted by email**.

2.2.1. Concept note content

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

Applicants must apply in English.

Please note that:

1. In the Concept note, lead applicants must only provide an estimate of the requested EU contribution as well as an indicative percentage of that contribution in relation to the eligible costs of the action. A detailed budget is to be submitted only by the lead applicants invited to submit a full application in the second phase.
2. Only the Concept note form will be evaluated. It is therefore of utmost importance that this document contains ALL relevant information concerning the action. No additional annexes should be sent.
3. Please complete the Concept note carefully and as clearly as possible so that it can be assessed properly.
4. Any error or major discrepancy related to the Concept note instructions may lead to the rejection of the Concept note.
5. Clarifications will, at the discretion of the Evaluation Committee, only be requested when information provided is not sufficient to conduct an objective assessment.

⁸ Which corresponds to Annex F – PADOR off-line form (PRAG annex e13).

2.2.2. Where and how to send Concept notes

The Concept note together with the declaration by the lead applicant (Annex A.1 section 2) must be submitted electronically via e-mail.

Where lead applicants send several different Concept notes (if allowed to do so by the guidelines of the call), each one must be sent separately.

The e-mail should include the **reference number and the title of the Call for Expression of Interest**, together with the lot number and title and the full name and address of the lead applicant.

Concept notes must be submitted to the e-mail address below:

delegation-afghanistan-CfEoI-1-2026@eeas.europa.eu

Concept notes sent by any other means (e.g. by fax or by postal mail) or delivered to other addresses will be rejected.

Please note that incomplete concept notes may be rejected. Lead applicants are advised to verify that their concept note is complete by using the checklist for concept note (Annex A.1, Instructions).

2.2.3. Deadline for submission of Concept notes

The deadline for the submission of Concept notes is **Friday, 5 June 2026** and as evidenced by the date of the e-mail at **17h00 CET**.

Any Concept note submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

2.2.4. Further information about concept notes

An information session on this Call for Expression of Interest will be held on **Tuesday, 12 May 2026 at 10:00 CET** online. To attend the meeting, please **register before Friday, 11 May 2026, 17:00 CET** by sending an email to following address:

delegation-afghanistan-CfEoI-1-2026@eeas.europa.eu

The online meeting will be held via WebEx. **Please ensure that you install the WebEx application or test the web-based version well in advance of the information session.**

Questions may be sent by e-mail no later than 10 days before the deadline for the submission of concept notes to the e-mail address below, indicating clearly the reference of the Call for Expression of Interest:

delegation-afghanistan-CfEoI-1-2026@eeas.europa.eu

The contracting authority has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

Replies will be given no later than 5 days before the deadline for submission of Concept notes.

To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the contracting authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of lead applicants, co-applicants, affiliated entity(ies), an action or specific activities.

No individual replies will be given to questions. All questions and answers as well as other important notices to applicants during the course of the evaluation procedure will be published on the website where the Call was published:

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

2.2.5. Full applications

Following the evaluation of the Concept notes submitted, a ranking of the Concept notes will be made in function of their scores. A reserve list may also be created in this context.

The Contracting Authority will start negotiated procedures with the Lead Applicants that submitted the Concept notes with the best rankings by inviting them to submit Full applications.

Lead applicants invited to submit a Full application following pre-selection of their Concept note must do so using Part B of the grant application form annexed to these guidelines (Annex A.2 – Grant application form – Full application). Lead applicants should then keep strictly to the format of the grant application form and fill in the paragraphs and pages in order.

Lead applicants must submit their Full applications in the same language as their concept notes.

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

Please note that only the full application form and the published annexes which must be filled in (budget, logical framework) will be transmitted to the evaluators (and assessors, if used). It is therefore of utmost importance that these documents contain **ALL** the relevant information concerning the action.

Hand-written applications will not be accepted.

With the Full application the lead applicant also must submit completed PADOR registration form (Annex F) for the lead applicant, each (if any) co-applicants and each (if any) affiliated entities.

2.2.6. Where and how to send full applications

Full applications (i.e. the full application form, PADOR registration form (where applicable), the budget, the logical framework, and the declaration by the lead applicant) must be submitted electronically at the e-mail address below:

delegation-afghanistan-CfEoI-1-2026@eeas.europa.eu

2.2.7. Deadline for submission of Full applications

The deadline for the submission of Full applications will be indicated in the communication sent to the lead applicants whose Concept notes have been pre-selected.

2.2.8. Further information about Full applications

The applicants invited to submit Full application will be notified separately on how to obtain further information about the procedure and all other relate aspects.

2.3. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

The Full applications will be further assessed on their quality, including the proposed budget, capacity of the applicants and affiliated entity(ies), and how comments from the contracting authority after the evaluation of the concept note have been incorporated in the text. The aspects that will be taken into account in the

assessments of the Full application are detailed in the table below. However, please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

The Contracting Authority reserves the right to request modification of the Action (including budget and period of implementation).

The Contracting Authority may also start negotiated procedures with the Lead Applicants of Concept notes that have been placed on the reserve list.

The following aspects will be taken into account in the assessment of the Full Applications:

Section
1. Financial and operational capacity
1.1 Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient in-house experience of project management?
1.2 Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient in-house technical expertise? (especially knowledge of the issues to be addressed)
1.3 Do the applicants and, if applicable, their affiliated entity(ies) have sufficient in-house management capacity? (Including staff, sector coordination capacity, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action)?
1.4 Does the lead applicant have stable and sufficient sources of finance?
2. Relevance
3. Design of the action
3.1 How coherent is the design of the Action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the Action? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale to achieve the expected results? Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the envisaged outputs and outcome(s)?
3.2 Does the proposal/Logical Framework include credible baseline, targets and sources of verification? If not, is a baseline study foreseen (and is the study budgeted appropriately in the proposal)?
3.3 Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders?
4. Implementation approach
4.1 Is the action plan for implementing the Action clear and feasible? Is the timeline realistic?
4.2 Does the proposal include an effective and efficient monitoring system? Is there an evaluation planned (previous, during or/and at the end of the implementation)?

4.3 Is the co-applicant(s)'s and affiliated entity(ies)'s level of involvement and participation in the action satisfactory?
5. Sustainability of the action
5.1 Is the Action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups?
5.2 Is the Action likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension, capitalisation on experience and knowledge sharing?
5.3 Are the expected results of the proposed action sustainable? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financially (<i>e.g. financing of follow-up activities, sources of revenue for covering all future operating and maintenance costs</i>) - Institutionally (<i>will structures allow the results of the action to be sustained at the end of the action? Will there be local 'ownership' of the results of the action?</i>) - At policy level (where applicable) (<i>what will be the structural impact of the action — e.g. improved legislation, codes of conduct, methods</i>) - Environmentally (if applicable) (<i>will the action have a negative/positive environmental impact?</i>)
6. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action
6.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget?
6.2 Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the results satisfactory?

(1) STEP 1: ADMINISTRATIVE CHECKS AND CONCEPT NOTE EVALUATION

During the administrative check the following will be assessed:

- If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
- If the Concept note satisfies all the criteria specified in the checklist in Annex A.1 Instructions of the grant application form. This includes also an assessment of the eligibility of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that **sole** basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

The Concept notes that pass this check will be evaluated on the relevance and design of the proposed action.

The Concept notes will receive an overall score out of 50 using the breakdown in the evaluation grid below. The evaluation will also check on compliance with the instructions on how to complete the concept note, which can be found in Part A of the grant application form.

The evaluation criteria are divided into headings and subheadings. Each subheading will be given a score between 1 and 5 as follows: 1 = very poor; 2 = poor; 3 = adequate; 4 = good; 5 = very good.

Evaluation Grid

Scores*

	Scores*	
1. Relevance of the action	Sub-score	20
1.1 Consistency with the objectives of the Call: How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the Call and to the specific themes/sectors/areas or any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants? Are the expected results of the Action aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants (Section 1.2)?	5	
1.2 Relevance to the country/region/sector needs: How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target country, region(s) and/or relevant sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives and avoidance of duplication)?	5	
1.3 Target groups and final beneficiaries: How clearly defined and strategically chosen are the target groups and final beneficiaries? Have their needs (as rights holders and/or duty bearers) and constraints been clearly defined? Does the proposal address them appropriately?	5	
1.4 Added value elements: Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices) and the other additional elements indicated under 1.2. of the Guidelines for applicants?	5	
2. Design of the action	Sub-score	30
2.1 Intervention logic. Does the proposal indicate the expected results (outputs/outcomes/impacts) to be achieved by the Action? Does the design of the proposed Action identify explicitly the necessary sequence to achieve the desired objectives beginning with inputs, moving through activities and outputs, and culminating in outcomes and impacts?	5x2**	
2. Context analysis. Does the design of the Action include a robust analysis of the needs to be addressed, including the capacities of the relevant stakeholders? Are those also embedded adequately in the intervention logic?	5	
2.3 Risks and assumptions. Is the design based on clear assumptions (the necessary and positive conditions that allow for a successful cause-and-effect relationship between different levels of results)? Does it take into account also risks (the factors that might hinder the achievement of results)?	5	

2.4 Indicative Activities. Is the indicative list of activities linked to and consistent with the expected outputs?	5	
2.5 Cross-cutting issues: To which extent does the proposal integrate relevant cross-cutting elements such as environmental/climate change issues, promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities, needs of disabled people, rights of minorities and rights of indigenous peoples, and youth?	5	
TOTAL SCORE		50

**this score is multiplied by 2 because of its importance

Once all Concept notes have been assessed, a list will be drawn up with the proposed actions ranked according to their total score. The EU Delegation reserve the right to undertake verification of the information submitted in the concept notes, including from third party entities, and include the findings of such verification in the assessment of the Concept notes.

Irrespective of the scores achieved, the EU Delegation reserve the right not to pursue Concept notes and proposals based on the overall interest of the EU Delegation. This could be due to, but not limited to, individual proposals that seek to address the same beneficiaries in the same location or other aspects of overlap among submitted proposals or cost efficiency considerations which require the EU delegation to choose between otherwise qualified proposals.

Firstly, only the Concept notes with a score of at least 30 will be considered for pre-selection.

Secondly, the number of Concept notes will be reduced, taking account of the ranking, to the number of Concept notes whose total aggregate amount of requested contributions is equal to 130% of the available budget for this Call for Expression of Interest. The amount of requested contributions of each Concept note will be based on the indicative financial envelopes for each lot, where relevant.

After the evaluation of Concept notes, the Contracting Authority will send e-mails to all lead applicants, indicating whether their application was submitted by the deadline, informing them whether the concept note was evaluated and the results of that evaluation. The pre-selected lead applicants will subsequently be invited to submit full applications.

The invitation to submit a Full application does not commit the contracting authority to sign an agreement with the applicant.

(2) STEP 2: ASSESSMENT OF THE FULL APPLICATION

The Full applications will be further assessed on their quality, including the proposed budget, capacity of the applicants and affiliated entity(ies), and how comments from the contracting authority after the evaluation of the Concept note have been incorporated in the text. The aspects that will be taken into account in the assessments of the Full application are detailed in the table on pages 23 and 24. However, please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

The Contracting Authority reserves the right to request modification of the Action (including budget and period of implementation).

The Contracting Authority may also start negotiated procedures with the Lead Applicants of Concept Notes that have been placed on the reserve list.

STEP 3: VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF THE APPLICANTS AND AFFILIATED ENTITY(IES)

The eligibility verification will be performed on the basis of the supporting documents requested by the contracting authority (see Section 2.4). It will by default only be performed for the full applications that have been provisionally selected and within the available budget for this Call for Expression of Interest.

- The declaration by the lead applicant (Section 5 of Annex A.2)) will be cross-checked with the supporting documents provided by the lead applicant. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the declaration by the lead applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the application on that sole basis.
- The eligibility of applicants and the affiliated entity(ies) will be verified according to the criteria set out in Sections 2.1.1.

Any rejected application will be replaced by the next best placed application on the reserve list that falls within the available budget for this Call for Expression of Interest.

2.4 SUBMISSION OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR PROVISIONALLY SELECTED APPLICATIONS

A lead applicant whose application has been provisionally selected or placed on the reserve list will be informed in writing by the contracting authority. It will be requested to supply the following documents in order to allow the contracting authority to verify the eligibility of the lead applicant, (if any) of the co-applicant(s) and (if any) of their affiliated entity(ies)⁹:

1. The statutes or articles of association of the lead applicant, (if any) of each co-applicant and (if any) of each affiliated entity¹⁰. Where the contracting authority has recognised the lead applicant's, or the co-applicant(s)'s, or their affiliated entity(ies)'s eligibility for a Call for Expression of Interest under the same budget line within 2 years before the deadline for receipt of applications, it should be submitted, instead of the statutes or articles of association, a copy of the document proving their eligibility in a former call (e.g. a copy of the special conditions of a grant contract received during the reference period), unless a change in legal status has occurred in the meantime¹¹. This obligation does not apply to international organisations which have signed a framework agreement with the European Commission.
2. For action grants exceeding EUR 750.000 and for operating grants above EUR 100.000, the lead applicant must provide an audit report produced by an approved external auditor where it is available, and always in cases where a statutory audit is required by EU or national law. That report shall certify the accounts for up to the last 3 financial years available. In all other cases, the applicant shall provide a self-declaration signed by its authorised representative certifying the validity of its accounts for up to the last 3 financial years available.

This requirement shall apply only to the first application made by a beneficiary to an authorising officer responsible in any one financial year.

3. The external audit report is not required from (if any) the co-applicant(s) or affiliated entities.

This obligation does not apply to international organisations provided that the international organisation in question offers the guarantees provided for in the applicable Financial Regulation, as described in Chapter 6 of the practical guide.

4. A copy of the lead applicant's latest accounts (the profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed)¹². A copy of the latest account is neither required from (if any) the co-applicant(s) nor from (if any) affiliated entity(ies)).

⁹ No supporting document will be requested for applications for a grant not exceeding EUR 60 000.

¹⁰ Where the lead applicant and/or a co-applicant(s) and or an affiliated entity(ies) is a public body created by a law, a copy of the said law must be provided.

¹¹ To be inserted only where the eligibility conditions have not changed from one Call for Expression of Interest/call for expression of interest to the other.

¹² This obligation does not apply to natural persons who have received a scholarship or that are in most need in receipt of direct support, nor to public bodies and to international organisations. It does not apply either when the accounts are in practice the same documents as the external audit report already provided pursuant to Section 2.4.2.

5. Legal entity sheet (see Annex D of these guidelines) duly completed and signed by each of the applicants (i.e. by the lead applicant and (if any) by each co-applicant), accompanied by the justifying documents requested there. If the applicants have already signed a contract with the contracting authority, instead of the legal entity sheet and supporting documents, the legal entity number may be provided, unless a change in legal status occurred in the meantime.
6. A financial identification form of the lead applicant (not from co-applicant(s)) conforming to the model attached as Annex E of these guidelines, certified by the bank to which the payments will be made. This bank should be located in the country where the lead applicant is established. If the lead applicant has already submitted a financial identification form in the past for a contract where the European Commission was in charge of the payments and intends to use the same bank account, a copy of the previous financial identification form may be provided instead.
7. The lead applicant as well as all co-applicants and affiliated entities shall fill in and sign the declaration on honour certifying that they are not in one of the exclusion situations (see Section 2.6.10.1 of the PRAG). The declaration on honour shall be dated and signed, either by hand or by applying a qualified electronic signature (QES) by an authorised representative of the signatory.
8. Self-evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H: the lead applicant as well as all co-applicants and affiliated entities shall fill in the self-evaluation questionnaire assessing the organisation's internal policy and procedure against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEA-H) (Annex L) (see Section 2.5.6 of the PRAG)¹³.

Documents must be supplied in the form of originals, photocopies or scanned versions (i.e. showing legible stamps, signatures and dates) of the said originals.

Where such documents are not in one of the official languages of the European Union, a translation into the of the language of the Call for Expression of Interest of the relevant parts of these documents proving the lead applicant's and, where applicable, co-applicants' and affiliated entity(ies)' eligibility, must be attached for the purpose of analysing the application.

Where these documents are in an official language of the European Union other than the language of the Call for Expression of Interest, it is **strongly** recommended, in order to facilitate the evaluation, to provide a translation of the relevant parts of the documents, proving the lead applicant's and, where applicable, co-applicants' and affiliated entity(ies)' eligibility, into the language(s) of the Call for Expression of Interest.

If the abovementioned supporting documents are not provided before the deadline indicated in the request for supporting documents sent to the lead applicant by the contracting authority, the application may be rejected.

After verifying the supporting documents, the evaluation committee will make a final recommendation to the contracting authority, which will decide on the award of grants.

NB : In the eventuality that the contracting authority is not satisfied with the strength, solidity, and guarantee offered by the structural link between one of the applicants and its affiliated entity, it can require the submission of the missing documents allowing for its conversion into co-applicant. If all the missing documents for co-applicants are submitted, and provided all necessary eligibility criteria are fulfilled, the above-mentioned entity becomes a co-applicant for all purposes. The lead applicant has to submit the application form revised accordingly.

2.4. NOTIFICATION OF THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY'S DECISION

¹³ Applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities who are (i) natural persons (ii) pillar-assessed entities and (iii) governments and other public bodies do not have to submit the self-evaluation questionnaire.

2.4.1. Content of the decision

The lead applicants will be informed in writing of the Contracting Authority's decision concerning their application and, if rejected, the reasons for the negative decision. Please note that the lead applicant is the intermediary for all communications between applicants and the Contracting Authority during the procedure.

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

Applicants and, if they are legal entities, persons who have powers of representation, decision-making or control over them, are informed that, should they be in one of the situations of early detection or exclusion, their personal details (name, given name if natural person, address, legal form and name and given name of the persons with powers of representation, decision-making or control, if legal person) may be registered in the early detection and exclusion system, and communicated to the persons and entities concerned in relation to the award or the execution of a grant contract.

For more information, you may consult the privacy statement available on http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm

2.4.2. Indicative timetable

	DATE	TIME
1. Information meeting (if any)	12 May April 2026	10:00 CET (Brussels time)
2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority	26 May 2026	17:00 CET (Brussels time)
3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority	31 May 2026	17:00 CET (Brussels time)
4. Deadline for submission of concept notes	5 June 2026	17:00 CET (Brussels time)
5. Information to lead applicants on the results of the concept note evaluation (Step 1) and invitation to submit full application	15 July 2026	

All times are in the time zone of the country of the contracting authority.

This indicative timetable refers to provisional dates (except for dates 2, 3, and 4) and may be updated by the contracting authority during the procedure.

2.5. CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AFTER THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY'S DECISION TO AWARD A GRANT

Following the decision to award a grant, the beneficiary(ies) will be offered a contract based on the standard grant contract (see Annex G of these guidelines). By signing the application form (Annex A of these guidelines), the applicants agree, if awarded a grant, to accept the contractual conditions of the standard grant contract.

Implementation contracts

Where implementation of the action requires the beneficiary(ies) and its affiliated entity(ies) (if any) to award procurement contracts, those contracts must be awarded in accordance with Annex IV to the standard grant contract.

In this context, a distinction should be made between awarding implementation contracts and subcontracting parts of the action described in the proposal, i.e. the description of the action annexed to the grant contract , such subcontracting being subject to additional restrictions (see the general terms and conditions in the model grant contract).

Awarding implementation contracts: implementation contracts relate to the acquisition by beneficiaries of routine services and/or necessary goods and equipment as part of their project management; they do not cover any outsourcing of tasks forming part of the action that are described in the proposal, i.e. in the description of the action annexed to the grant contract.

Subcontracting: Subcontracting is the implementation, by a third party with which one or more beneficiaries have concluded a procurement contract, of specific tasks forming part of the action as described in annex to the grant contract (see also the general terms and conditions in the model grant contract).

LIST OF ANNEXES

DOCUMENTS TO BE COMPLETED

Annex A: Grant application form (Word format)

A.1 – Concept note

A.2 – Full application form

Annex B: Budget (Excel format)

Annex C: Logical framework (Excel format)

Annex D: Legal entity sheet

Annex E: Financial identification form

Annex F: PADOR registration form

DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION

Annex G: Standard grant contract

- Annex II: general conditions
- Annex IV: contract award rules
- Annex V: standard request for payment
- Annex VI: model narrative and financial report
- Annex VII: model report of factual findings and terms of reference for an expenditure verification of an EU financed grant contract for external action
- Annex VIII: model financial guarantee
- Annex IX: standard template for transfer of ownership of assets

Annex H: Declaration on Honour

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

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

Annex K: Guidelines for assessing simplified cost options.

Annex L: Self-Evaluation questionnaire on SEA-H

Useful links:

Project Cycle Management Guidelines

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

The implementation of grant contracts

A Users' Guide

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

Financial Toolkit

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

Please note: The toolkit is not part of the grant contract and has no legal value. It merely provides general guidance and may in some details differ from the signed grant contract. In order to ensure compliance with their contractual obligations beneficiaries should not exclusively rely on the toolkit but always consult their individual contract documents.

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