



Contracting authority: European Commission

**Addressing Basic Needs and Supporting Livelihoods of the People of
Afghanistan**

**Guidelines
for Call for Expression of Interest**

**Budget line(s): BGUE-B2023-14.020130-C1-INTPA, BGUE-B2024-
14.020130-C1-INTPA**

Reference: AFG/2024/Call for expression of interest 1

**Deadline for submission of concept note: 3 June 2024 at 17:00
(Brussels date and time)**

NOTICE

This is a Call for **Expression of Interest**.

In the first instance, only **concept notes** (Annex A.1 – Grant application form - Concept note) must be submitted for evaluation.

Thereafter, lead applicants who have been pre-selected will 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.

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.**

Preparation: Information session and user manuals

To help applicants familiarise themselves with the process before the email submission, an online WebEx information session will be organised on **30 April 2024 at 10:00** (Brussels date and time).

Should you be interested in this session, please send an email by **29 April 2024 at 17:00** (Brussels date and time) to delegation-afghanistan-CfEoI-1-2024@eeas.europa.eu, indicating: name, surname, nationality and email address of the persons who are going to participate as well as their organisation (max. two participants per organisation). No costs incurred by the applicants for attending this information session are reimbursable.

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 on the application page.

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1. ADDRESSING BASIC NEEDS AND SUPPORTING LIVELIHOODS OF THE PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN

1.1. BACKGROUND

This Call for Expression of Interest responds to some of the most urgent challenges facing Afghanistan and is in line with the decision by the EU to focus basic needs and livelihoods support to the Afghan people following the power take-over by the Taliban on 15 August 2021. On 11 October 2021, the EU Member States' Development Ministers agreed on the need to assist the population directly, while avoiding channelling funding through Taliban controlled entities, with support that goes beyond humanitarian aid.

The Call is furthermore guided by the Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on Afghanistan of 21 September 2021 and 20 March 2023, the latter stating that the EU will provide assistance “where women can meaningfully participate in its delivery and where women remain beneficiaries in a do-no-harm and non-discriminatory approach, in a ‘by women for women’ spirit, also protecting the safety of beneficiaries. Female staff affected by the ban should not be replaced.”

Assistance provided through this Call should adhere to key principles, including: 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 de facto authorities neither in Kabul, nor at the local level, neither directly or through other actors; 3) the Taliban de facto authorities 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 is to be ensured.

The Call is covered by the 2023 Special Measure for Afghanistan (Decision [NDICI/2023/62315](#)) and the 2024 Special Measure for Afghanistan subject to a Commission Decision to be approved later in the year 2024. Its purpose is to invite eligible organisations to submit concept notes for basic services and support to livelihoods. Based on the evaluation procedure laid out in this document, the Contracting Authority will select entities whose concept notes best fit the objectives of the Call and invite them to submit full applications.

In coherence with the Afghanistan Coordination Group (ACG)'s Framework for International Partner Support in Afghanistan (2023-2025), the actions under this Call will support (i) improved uptake of basic services, and (ii) enhanced resilient livelihoods and economic opportunities. As outlined by the donor community, assistance should increasingly focus on supporting women and girls in Afghanistan in a by women for women and girls approach and on redirecting support more than before for the direct benefit of women and girls

Interventions will be expected to take into account the challenges of forced displacement and irregular migration, in a context of an increased risk of outward migration and natural hazards, and factor climate change adaptation and climate resilience in the framework of resilient livelihoods support.

1.2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMME AND PRIORITY ISSUES

The **global objective** of this Call is: to address basic needs and support livelihoods of the people of Afghanistan, which would contribute to increased stability, reduced security threats and forced displacement within Afghanistan and from Afghanistan to the region and beyond.

The **specific objectives** of this call are:

1. Improve the uptake of basic services of the Afghan population, particularly for women, children and vulnerable groups, including minorities, IDPs and returnees (lot 1);
2. Enhance resilient livelihoods and economic opportunities, particularly for women, children and vulnerable groups, including minorities, IDPs and returnees (lot 2).

The **outputs** to be delivered will contribute to the corresponding Specific Objectives (Outcomes) are:

- contributing to Outcome 1 (or Specific Objective 1)

- 1.1. Enhanced access to quality services in health and nutrition by the population, particularly women, children, and vulnerable groups (including people with disabilities, drug users, IDPs and returnees);
 - 1.2. Enhanced access to quality education in safe learning environments, particularly for girls.
- contributing to Outcome 2 (or Specific Objective 2)
- 2.1. Improved access to income-generating and business support services, including for agricultural resilience and climate-compatible activities;
 - 2.2. Enhanced value chain effectiveness and market access, particularly climate-resilient agricultural value chains;
 - 2.3. Improved access to microfinance services, including for smallholder farmers;
 - 2.4. Improved disaster risk reduction and natural resource management, including climate adaptation, by local communities particularly those at risk of displacement. This includes the agricultural sector and the provision of WASH services.
- The **priorities** of this Call are:
- **Principled approach:** applicants should pay particular attention to align their proposed actions with the EU's principled approach, entailing women can meaningfully participate in aid delivery and remain beneficiaries in a do-no-harm and non-discriminatory approach, in a 'by women for women' spirit, also protecting the safety of beneficiaries.
 - **Sustainability:** Interventions are expected to demonstrate potential for sustainable outcomes either in regards to basic needs or livelihoods. Strengthening resilience and self-reliance will require prioritisation of market based and private sector oriented approaches, where feasible, in order to ensure financial viability of the proposed interventions.
 - **Value for Money and Cost Effectiveness:** given the scarce resources, priority will be given to proposals offering greater cost effectiveness and value for money.
 - **Innovative 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 sustainability and improve access for vulnerable groups.
 - **Geographical focus:** Interventions having a clear focus on basic needs and livelihoods in underserved and hard to reach areas of Afghanistan. Grant applicants are therefore expected to indicate the selected provinces/districts.
 - **Nexus Approach:** Whenever possible and applicable, activities should employ the humanitarian-basic needs nexus approach.
 - **Afghan displacement:** Actions should consider incorporating activities to contribute to addressing the consequences of the Afghan displacement crisis and use the findings of the relevant needs assessment/s.
 - **Herat Post Disaster Needs Assessment:** Following the devastating earthquakes in Herat in October 2023, the UN, WB, EU, and ADB conducted a comprehensive [Post-Disaster Needs Assessment \(PDNA\) assessment for Afghanistan's Herat province](#). The applicants are encouraged, whenever relevant and feasible, to consider supporting the needs identified in the PDNA.
 - **Partnerships:** Grant applicants are encouraged to provide for partnerships with Afghan partner organisations.
 - **Context sensitivity:** Actions should demonstrate awareness of the context within which the intervention takes place and the need for a 'do no harm' approach. Where possible, drivers of conflict by fostering social dialogue should be addressed.

- **Logical framework approach:** Actions should be built on a robust logical framework based on EU Result Framework (inputs, outputs, outcomes, impact) with soundly defined SMART indicators.

Cross-cutting principles and added-value elements to be taken in consideration include:

- **Gender equality and women empowerment:** Gender blind proposals will not be accepted. Applicants are invited to:
 - Factor in support for women CSOs including through long-term, flexible funding to registered and unregistered entities;
 - 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 across all interventions, from the design to implementation and monitoring of all programming.
- Applicants will need to appropriately integrate issues surrounding youth, internally displaced persons and migrants, as well as the impact of climate change on Afghanistan's natural environment, into their interventions.

1.3. FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

The overall indicative amount made available under the Call is EUR 65,000,000 from which EUR 34,000,000 is to be financed under the 2023 Special Measure for Afghanistan and indicatively EUR 31,000,000 is to be financed under the 2024 Special Measure for Afghanistan budget and subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the general budget of the Union for 2024.

The contracting authority reserves the right not to award all available funds.

Indicative allocation of funds by lot :

Lot 1: Improved uptake of basic services – EUR 25,000,000

Lot 2: Enhanced resilient livelihoods and economic opportunities– EUR 40,000,000

If the allocation indicated for a specific lot cannot be used due to insufficient quality or number of proposals received, the contracting authority reserves the right to reallocate the remaining funds to another lot.

Size of grants

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

Lot 1: Improved uptake of basic services

- minimum amount: EUR 4,000,000
- maximum amount: EUR 10,000,000

Lot 2: Enhanced resilient livelihoods and economic opportunities

- minimum amount: EUR 4,000,000
- maximum amount: EUR 12,000,000

Any grant requested under this Call 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 or the European Development Fund¹.

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.

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.

2.1.1. Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant(s))

Lead applicant

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

- be a legal person **and**
- be non-profit-making **and**

¹ Where a grant is financed by the European Development Fund, any mention of European Union financing must be understood as referring to European Development Fund financing.

- be a non-governmental civil society organisation, established in² a Member State of the EU or an eligible country as per Article 28 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/947³ **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 operational (i.e. already managing a current⁴ project and/or have an office) in Afghanistan.
- (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 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 him/herself, 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 him/herself.

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

² 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.

³ 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*.

⁴ Implemented during the time after the takeover by the Taliban in August 2021

Affiliated entities

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: actions for which an application may be made

Definition:

An action is composed of a set of activities.

Duration:

The initial planned duration of an action may not be lower than 24 months nor exceed 48 months.

Sectors or themes:

Basic needs and livelihoods.

Location:

Actions must take place in Afghanistan, country-wide and/or in selected areas of Afghanistan based on needs and local conditions.

Types of action:

Financial support under this Call 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. The proposed activities should include an

indicative beneficiary quota for women and for vulnerable groups, such as IDPs/returnees and Afghans with disabilities (where applicable). Attention should be also paid to ensuring youth are engaged in the activities.

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 amount 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.

Furthermore, applicants should briefly describe a communication strategy foreseen for the action in line with the guidance described below under ‘visibility’ section.

Proposals outside the identified specific objective and priorities (section 1.2) of this Call 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 approach and/or a multi-sectoral community-level approach. Activities listed below are indicative and non-exhaustive and non-inclusive (within one lot).

Activities related to Output 1.1. Under lot 1:

- Support to building a stronger, more adequate and robust system of human resources management in health incl. strengthening Health Information Management System for Human Resources in Health (HRH), planning, deployment and retention of health workforce in the health facilities, especially within the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) and Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS) coverage; development of capacity building and development plan for HRH and its enhanced coordination and harmonisation;
- Support to skills and competence update and upgrade of already graduated but unemployed cohorts of nurses and midwives and their (re-)integration in the job market through refreshing training, employment opportunities, on the job training and mentoring;
- Support to postgraduate medical education provided under the oversight of the df MoPH in the key professions such as dentistry, pharmacy, anaesthesia, medical technology, with focus on female applicants/students through enrolment facilitation, enhanced quality and capacities of postgraduate medical education system;
- Support to development and strengthening health promotion, prevention, control, treatment and management of Non-Communicable Diseases, with focus on major causes of mortality and morbidity in Afghanistan, notably cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, cancers, diabetes at EPHS and BPHS level (e.g. PEN - Package of Essential Non-Communicable Disease implementation, capacity building, service provision and access, integration in the EPHS and BPHS, referral system, medical supplies etc.);

- Support to improved inclusive, accessible and quality adolescent health and nutrition services at primary and community level, with focus on the vulnerable groups such as adolescent girls, young mothers, youths with mental disorders and physical disabilities;
- Deliver mental health and psychosocial support particularly for women, children and vulnerable groups including IDPs and returnees;
- Provide protection services for victims of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence (if feasible within the Afghan context). This includes analytical studies, case management and referral systems, specialised health care, awareness raising, etc.;
- Support child protection services.

Activities relating to Output 1.2 under lot 1:

- Conduct research and assessments to inform partners and stakeholders about developments/status of the education sector (including learning assessments);
- Support access to qualitative and inclusive in-person learning opportunities for adolescents including in areas affected by high numbers of IDPs/returnees and underserved areas aiming at capitalising youth human, social and economic potential;
- Provide catch up classes, psychosocial support and nutrition to out of school including street children;
- Support distance/multimedia learning, life skills and livelihood learning courses , and literacy classes;
- Support to advocacy, initiatives and capacity development to grass root CSOs and activists/NGOs to voice issues of importance including climate resilience and women’s rights at communal, national and international level;
- Organisation of social dialogue rounds on issues in sectors that points of consensus for all parts of Afghan society;
- Improve quality of school infrastructure with a particular focus (nonexclusive), on ensuring access to WASH services.

Activities related to Output 2.1 under lot 2:

- Provide cash-based transfers and/or productive inputs (e.g. seeds, small livestock) for subsistence farming and micro-businesses;
- Create or support household income generating activities;
- Provide production inputs to businesses (e.g. small equipment/material, solar panels, cold storage capacity);
- Conduct analysis on livelihood patterns and inclusive and sustainable value chains;
- Provide technical trainings, skills development and coaching services. A particular focus will be attributed to (i) strengthen agricultural capacity through the implementation of agro-ecological principles (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 infrastructure, to effectively address soil degradation), and (ii) diversification of agri-food systems and agricultural landscapes 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;
- Provide veterinary services for safeguarding livestock;
- Support Integrated Pest Management and pollinators protection;
- Diversify on-farm incomes and provide value addition opportunities for small-scale farmers including areas affected by the ban on poppy cultivation;
- Provide different types of support (e.g. logistics, equipment, materials, grants, trainings) to Business Development Services (BDS) providers and business organisations networks;

- Support improved quality standards for goods and services;
- Connect businesses to BDS providers and business organisations networks, including support and capacity development to private sector and economic advocacy initiatives.

Activities related to Output 2.2 under lot 2:

- Promote the use of renewable energy in agro-processing and cooking;
- Connect producers to other actors of the value chain (e.g. traders, transporters, networks);
- Promote Business-to-Customer and Business-to-Business;
- Organise trade fairs, exhibitions and other market opportunities or support businesses in attending them, potentially also outside of Afghanistan.

Activities related to Output 2.3 under lot 2:

- Support private sector microfinance services;
- Support community-based savings and loans schemes;
- Connect Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) to microfinance services providers.

Activities related to Output 2.4 under lot 2:

- Create climate-smart community assets (e.g. watersheds, checkdams, storage capacity, irrigation systems) and build local capacities (e.g. trainings) for community asset maintenance and replication;
- Enhance community-based early warning systems for timely disaster preparedness;
- Innovate disaster-resilient agricultural practices to safeguard food production in the face of climate-related threats;
- Expand community-based irrigation and drainage networks to reduce the impact of disasters on agriculture and water management;
- Sensitise local communities on climate resilience and train them in sustainable agriculture, natural resource management and disaster risk reduction. Land rehabilitation may be coordinated with demining actions funded among others by the EU Foreign Policy Instrument;
- Enhance ability of MSMSEs to contribute to, and develop business models, for climate resilient solutions in the livelihoods and food security sectors.
- Support local communities on local conflict resolution related to climate change and access to natural resources, including water.

Cross-cutting activities (enabling the fulfilment of the two specific objectives and above-mentioned activities):

- Demining for the purpose of improved access to public services and livelihoods and food security;
- Foster improved information to citizens (e.g. on human rights-related issues via independent and neutral media and civil society actors);
- Promote and safeguard human rights and accountability;
- Resilience: given the prevalence of gender based violence and poor mental health amongst the population, attention to be given to these areas in the project design in support of beneficiaries and implementing partners alike.

Financial support to third parties⁵

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 outputs⁶ (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, 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, mentorship, 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.

⁵ These third parties are neither affiliated entity(ies) nor associates nor contractors.

⁶ As per OECD DAC definition, the term ‘results’ includes: ‘impact’ (overall objective), ‘outcome(s)’ (specific objective(s) and ‘output(s)’).

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 \(europa.eu\)](#).

Number of applications and grants per applicants / affiliated entities

The lead applicant may not submit more than 1 application per lot under this Call for Expression of Interest.

The lead applicant may not be awarded more than 1 grant per lot 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 actual costs incurred by the beneficiary(ies) and affiliated entity(ies).

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).

Subject to other conditions of the grant contract, including eligibility of costs (see section 2.1.5) and EU restrictive measures (see section 2.4 of the PRAG), costs of transfers through legally registered cash transfer agents in Afghanistan can be accepted as eligible costs subject to the cumulative additional conditions:

- no other reasonable alternative exists;
- the transfer costs shall be capped at 5% maximum of the total amount transferred regardless of the number of agents involved in the transaction. Where several cash transfer agents are involved in one transaction, the number of these shall be kept to the strict necessary;
- the cash transfer agent operates as a financial operator, including money services providers, in accordance with national law;
- reporting obligations laid down in the grant contract shall be respected; and

- costs of transfers are incurred during the period laid down in the special conditions

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;
- salary costs of the personnel of national administrations.

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’⁷ attached to these guidelines. This form must be sent together with the full application, by the submission deadline (see section 2.2.5).

- II. Provide information about the action in the documents listed under sections 2.2.2 (Where and how to send concept notes). Please note that **electronic submission by email** is obligatory for this Call of Expression of Interest.

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.

Before starting using PADOR, please read the user guides available on the website. All technical questions related the use of these systems should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu via the online support form.

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 only be requested when information provided is not sufficient to conduct an objective assessment.

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**.

⁷ Which corresponds to Annex F – PADOR off-line form (PRAG annex e13).

Upon submission of a concept note by email, the lead applicant will receive a confirmation of receipt.

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

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

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

delegation-afghanistan-CfEoI-1-2024@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 3 June 2024 at 17:00 (Brussels date and time) and is evidenced by the date of the e-mail.

In order to convert this deadline to local time you can use any online time converter tool that takes into account time zones and winter/summer time changes (example available [here](#)). **The lead applicant is strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit** its concept note, since heavy Internet traffic or a fault with the Internet connection (including electricity failure, etc.) could lead to difficulties in submission. The contracting authority cannot be held responsible for any delay due to such afore-mentioned difficulties.

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 online on 30 April 2024 at 10:00 (Brussels date and time).

Should you be interested in this session, please send an email by 29 April 2024 at 17:00 (Brussels date and time) to delegation-afghanistan-CfEoI-1-2024@eeas.europa.eu, indicating: name, surname, nationality and email address of the persons who are going to participate as well as their organisation (max. two participants per organisation). No costs incurred by the applicants for attending this information session are reimbursable.

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-1-2024@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:

https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/afghanistan_en

It is therefore advisable to consult the abovementioned website regularly in order to be informed of the questions and answers published.

All questions related to registration in PADOR should be addressed to the IT helpdesk at INTPA-SUPPORT-SERVICES@ec.europa.eu via the online support form: Please note that the working languages of the IT support are English, French and Spanish. Therefore users are invited to send their questions in English, French or Spanish should they wish to benefit from an optimum response time.

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.

Lead applicants will be informed by email about the outcome of the concept note evaluation. The Contracting Authority will invite the lead applicants of the best scoring Concept Notes to start direct award procedures and submit full applications. Information on how to submit full application will be communicated by email to the pre-selected lead applicants.

2.3. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications will be examined and evaluated by the contracting authority with the possible assistance of external assessors. All applications will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria.

If the examination of the application reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in Section 2.1, the application will be rejected on this sole basis.

(1) 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*	
1. Relevance of the action	Sub-score	20
1.1 How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the Call for Expression of Interest 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 How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the target country(ies), region(s) and/or relevant sectors (including synergy with other development initiatives and avoidance of duplication, coordinating mechanisms)?	5	
1.3 How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs (as rights holders and/or duty bearers) and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately?	5	
1.4 Does the proposal contain particular cross cutting principles and added-value elements (e.g. innovation, principled approach, value for money, ACG framework, nexus approach, best practices, and delivery through consortium/local partners) 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 How coherent is the overall 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?	5x2**	
2.2 Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved, and the capacities of the relevant stakeholders?	5	
2.3 Does the design take into account external factors (risks and assumptions)?	5	

2.4 Are the activities feasible and consistent in relation to the expected results (including timeframe)? Are results (output, outcome and impact) realistic?	5	
2.5 To which extent does the proposal integrate relevant cross-cutting elements such as environmental/climate change issues, promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities, human rights, migration, needs of disabled people, rights of vulnerable people (IDPs, women, girls, children), youth(if there is a strong prevalence in the target country/region)?	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.

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 up to 100% 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.

Lead applicants will receive a letter indicating the reference number of their application and the respective results. The pre-selected lead applicants will subsequently be invited to start direct award procedures and submit full applications.

The invitation to submit a full application does not commit the Contracting Authority to sign a grant agreement with the applicant.

2.3.1. Indicative timetable

	DATE	TIME
1. Information meeting (if any)	30 April 2024	
2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority	24 May 2024	17:00 CET (Brussels time)
3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority	29 May 2024	
4. Deadline for submission of concept notes	3 June 2024	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 2024	

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

This indicative timetable refers to provisional dates (except for dates 2, 3, and 4) and may be updated by the contracting authority during the procedure. In such cases, the updated timetable will be published on the web site where the call was published: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/afghanistan_en.

3. 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 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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