

Call for Expression of Interest: Addressing Basic Needs and Supporting Livelihoods of the People of Afghanistan

(Ref: AFG/2024/Call for expression of interest 1)

Questions raised and answers provided at the online information session held on April 30, 2024

Question	Answer
1. Is a UK-registered organisation eligible to apply as a Lead Applicant?	UK registered organisations are eligible as per Article 28 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/947 (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R0947). Please consult also PRAG Annex A2a1.
2. Can you explain what ‘exclusively’ means in this context: “Member States of the OECD (appendix 9) are also eligible when contracts are exclusively implemented in a Least Developed Country or in a Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC). Would expenditure that occurs as part of the project management outside the LDC or HIPC London be eligible? Or, does ‘exclusively’ means that the entire funding has to be spent in Afghanistan?”	Please consult the rules on cost eligibility, as set out in Article 14 of the General conditions to EU’s grant contracts (PRAG, annex G, e3h2_gencond_en.pdf).
3. What is the minimum and maximum duration of the contracts that will be funded through this Call for Expression of Interest?	Please consult Section 2 of the Guidelines for this CfEol.
4. Could a concept note propose activities (in particular under Lot 1/Education) for the Afghan refugees living in Pakistan, along with working with returnees in Afghanistan?	Proposed activities should target exclusively returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) within the territory of Afghanistan. Afghan refugees outside Afghanistan are not targeted under this CfEol. As to activities targeted by this CfEol, please consult Section 2 of the Guidelines thereto.
5. Is the registration in PADOR mandatory for both the lead and co-applicants?	Registration in PADOR is mandatory for the Lead Applicant for the concept note submission phase (this CfEol). PADOR registration for co-applicants is required when the full application is submitted (outside the scope of this CfEol). Please consult the Guidelines for this CfEol.

Question	Answer
<p>6. The EU encourages co-financing up to 20% but at the same time is open for 100% financing. Does this mean that the co-financing will not have any weight in terms of Concept Note evaluation? Could you provide more detail on the criteria that will be used to evaluate the concept notes?</p>	<p>The co-financing has no weight in the evaluation of the concept notes. Please consult Section 2.3 of the Guidelines for the CfEol, that contains the criteria for evaluation of the concept notes.</p>
<p>7. Given that partnerships are encouraged with local organization (p. 5), is there flexibility with the EUR 60 000 financial support to third parties?</p>	<p>Section 2.1.3. of the Guidelines stipulates that: <i>“The maximum amount of financial support per third party is 60 000 EUR <u>except where achieving the objectives of the actions would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult in which case this threshold can be exceeded.</u> A threshold below EUR 60 000 can be set if appropriate.”</i> Note that “third party” does not refer to co-applicants.</p>
<p>8. As regards Lot 2, and potential activities in support of value chain/market linkages, would larger scale infrastructure activities be permissible, if they bring community benefit and support market linkages? Is there a ceiling for small or medium infrastructures?</p>	<p>This CfEol is being launched as part of the EU's basic needs assistance to the Afghan people, with an emphasis on community needs. In that regard, small-scale community assets (for example, check dams) may be considered, whereas large hydropower projects cannot. Furthermore, ownership of the assets will need to be explained. The Guidelines for this CfEol do not establish any ceiling for the size of small and medium infrastructure. Applicants must duly justify investments in small-scale community assets in their proposals.</p>
<p>9. Given the focus on sustainability and local empowerment in the Call guidelines, could the panel elaborate on how much weight is allocated to these elements in the evaluation process? Furthermore, are there specific examples of successful initiatives from previous calls could be integrated in this CfEol?</p>	<p>Sustainability is indicated as one of the principles for this CfEol. The evaluation grid as per Section 2.3. of the Guidelines contains the criteria for evaluation of the concept notes. Reference to successful previous initiatives and the integration of lessons learned into proposals submitted under this CfEol are welcomed and encouraged.</p>
<p>10. We understand that under Lot1, EU prefers Health and Nutrition, and Education with Protection and Gender mainstreaming as cross cutting. Do we also stand the chance to integrate Protection and Child Protection as key sectors or this is not encouraged?</p>	<p>Please refer to Section 2.1.3. of the Guidelines for this CfEol, that list types of activity for each Lot.</p>
<p>11. Are there any particular limitations on the number of co-applicants/affiliated entities per proposal?</p>	<p>No, there are no such limitations.</p>

Question	Answer
<p>12. Is the maximum amount of a project indicated in the Guidelines inclusive or exclusive of co-financing? For example, can an NGO submit a project proposal with a total value more than the amount of the maximum EU contribution indicated?</p> <p>Could you please explain the actual meaning of the 80% minimum percentage for the EU contribution?</p> <p>Is it mandatory for the NGO applicant to make a financial contribution?</p>	<p>1) The maximum amount indicated in the Guidelines to this CfEol refers to the EU financing only. A Lead Applicant may submit a concept note with a greater amount providing that the EU financing accounts for at least 80 % of the total contract value.</p> <p>The minimum percentage of the eligible costs of the action financed by EU is 80 %.</p> <p>Merely as an example: If the total eligible costs of the Action (which includes the EU contribution and the implementing partner's own co-financing) is EUR 10 million, the EU minimum contribution should be at least EUR 8 million (80%), with the maximum partner contribution of up to EUR 2 million (20%). It is also possible for the EU to contribute EUR 9 million (90%) and the partners to contribute EUR 1 million (10%).</p> <p>2) It is not mandatory for the applicants to make a financial contribution. The action could be fully funded by the EU (100 % of the total eligible costs of the action), in which case the contract maximum value equals the maximum EU contribution.</p> <p>Please consult Section 1.3. of the Guidelines for this CfEol.</p>
<p>13. On the case of Education, can applicants exceed the EUR 60,000 limit for sub-contracting to local partners, as they will be implementing the action?</p>	<p>Please note the distinction between financial support to third parties (for which a EUR 60.000 maximum is set - refer to Section 2.1.3. of the Guidelines for this CfEol) and the procurement/contract award rules (refer to details in Annex IV of the EU's standard grant contract).</p>
<p>14. In terms of infrastructure and rehabilitation, are applicants allowed to do WASH, or would it be eligible to also procure other classroom material that would support the enhancement of learning, like lab materials, projectors for showing videos, etc.</p>	<p>The activities listed in the Guidelines for this CfEol are indicative and non-exhaustive. However, classroom material does not strictly fall into the category of school infrastructure. Activities different from the ones indicated could be considered as promoting an improved "quality of school infrastructure".</p>
<p>15. In the context of basic needs and nexus, could applicants start with the provision of basic services and then move into more development-like activities, which may involve the construction of small-scale infrastructure for some basic centres/facilities?</p>	<p>With the exception of WASH, the construction of new facilities is not eligible.</p>

Question	Answer
16. Is the deadline for submitting of the Full Application already decided?	No, this will be communicated to the Lead Applicants invited to submit full application.
17. The guidelines stipulate that only legal persons and non-profit organizations are eligible to apply, but could a consultancy firm (registered in EU or other eligible countries) also apply?	Both Lead Applicant and Co-Applicants have to comply with the cumulative eligibility criteria established in Section 2.1.1. of the Guidelines to this CfEoI. Profit making entities are not eligible to apply.
18. Could you please confirm that at the concept note stage, the detailed budget is not required, but only the overall estimate and the requested EU contribution?	Please refer to the following text under section 2.2.1. of the Guidelines: <i>“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.”</i>
19. Demining is identified as eligible when enabling the fulfilment of the two specific objectives and mentioned activities. Can a project be focusing solely on those demining activities (contributing to an enabling environment de facto by releasing land from explosive contamination and enhancing access to basic services and land) or does it need to be a component as part of a project where the main activities are in line with the OS. One of the section read: “Proposals outside the identified specific objective and priorities (section 1.2) of this Call will not be considered for funding”. Should mine Action be integrated with other sectors? Could be included in activities under specific objective 1/Lot 1?	A project cannot be focusing solely on demining activities. Any demining proposed should feature as a component of a project, which activities are in line with those listed in either Lot 1 or Lot 2.
20. Can organization registered in Afghanistan, and operating since 2019, submit application if the organisation has not implemented large projects but possesses relevant expertise? Can an organisation that has office in Afghanistan but no active projects apply under this CfEoI? Can an organisation that has no office in Afghanistan but do manage projects currently apply under this CfEoI?	The Contracting Authority cannot determine the eligibility of particular entities prior to the submission of the concept note and other required documentation. Please refer to the eligibility criteria in Section 2.1.1 of the Guidelines.

Question	Answer
<p>21. Since there is more insistence for the companies to be actively involved in operations in Afghanistan, and many companies are not yet active on the ground due to various restrictions, would you elaborate on the conditions for JV and the percentage of right in the contract based on the EU procurement guidelines?</p>	<p>As to the eligibility of entities under this CfEol, please consult section 2.1.1 of the Guidelines thereto.</p>
<p>22. Is it possible that one National NGO could be a partner with second International NGOs to apply for one or more lots? Furthermore, is it possible for a National NGOs to apply directly in one or two lots, or should it collaborate with an International NGO? Does the International NGO that applies as a Lead Applicant need to be affiliated with the local partner that will act as a co-applicant?</p>	<p>As to the eligibility of entities under this CfEol, please consult section 2.1.1 of the Guidelines thereto.</p>
<p>23. Can an organization be a lead applicant in one application, and co-applicant in another? Will that mean that only one grant will be awarded? Can one organization apply being the member of multiple consortiums for this call? Is it possible for a single NGO to act as a co-applicant for two distinct lots, submitting separate applications for each?</p>	<p>As to the eligibility of entities (as well as eventual consortia formations) under this CfEol, please consult section 2.1.1 of the Guidelines thereto.</p>
<p>24. Can the Lead Applicant coordinate an action where the actual implementation is the responsibility exclusively of the co-applicants to deliver the intervention without the Lead Applicant implementing directly?</p>	<p>The specific roles of consortium members should be detailed in the concept note. The overall responsibility for the implementation of the action remains with the Coordinator (Lead Applicant during the application phase).</p>
<p>25. In terms of geographical coverage, is there a preference on higher coverage with streamlined integration by partners, or a closely integrated approach with lower coverage is preferred? Of course, the locations would be based on needs and ad-hoc needs assessments.</p>	<p>As regards the Geographical focus, the Guidelines for this CfEol indicate the following on page 5: <i>“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.”</i></p>
<p>26. Enhanced access to quality education in safe learning environments, particularly for girls: Would that encompass an online education mechanism that would reach maximum number of beneficiaries across the country? The beneficiary would be only girls across the country but for this outcome, but should there be some sort of agreement with the de facto authorities?</p>	<p>Support to distance/multimedia learning is one of the activity listed in the Guidelines. Project activities proposed in a concept note need to factor in all relevant aspects of the operational environment including provisions established by the de facto authorities such as the signing of project memoranda of understanding, without compromising -whatsoever- the principled approach promoted by the EU.</p>

Question	Answer
27. Is it mandatory that the Lead Applicant to be registered in Afghanistan?	No. The Guidelines for this CfEol (Section 2.1.1.) stipulate the following: “[the Lead Applicant must] be a non-governmental civil society organisation, established in a Member State of the EU or an eligible country as per Article 28 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/947.”
28. Can the catchment population of institutions, schools, or health facilities benefit from the water supply project, given that most of the surrounding communities are in need?	The support included in the project proposals should seek to benefit as many Afghan people in need as possible within the targeted areas.
29. Under the education component, is there any space to support capacity-building activities (no cash disbursement) to local authorities such as PEDs and DEDs? Concerning technical capacity building of relevant Ministry/ies and departments for sustainability purposes, would it be possible to provide the much-needed technical capacity building to contribute to the sustainability of the outcomes of the interventions for the Afghan population?	No, such activities are not possible. Please refer to the information in Section 1.1.(background) of the Guidelines to this CfEol: “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. <u>No funds can be channelled through the Taliban de facto authorities neither in Kabul, nor at the local level, neither directly nor through other actors;</u> 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.”
30. In lot 1, two to three activities require working with MoPH, and supporting HRH systems and PGME. To what extent it is possible to engage with MoPH to strengthen their current HRH information and PGME system?	Activities proposed in the concept notes for this CfEol must adhere to the principles outlined in the Guidelines and specified in the answer to question 29.
31. Should we address all activities in one lot or we can focus on specific activities relevant to our experience? Is it possible that one single proposal addresses objectives under the two lots of the Call?	The list of activities is non-exhaustive and indicative and gives the applicants the flexibility to choose the areas to be covered under the project proposals based on their relevant experience, expertise and capacities. The proposals submitted can only address objectives within a single lot. The lot number must be indicated explicitly in the concept note. Minor supplementary activities from the other lot can be incorporated in the proposal, but the primary activities must contribute to the objectives of the lot under which the specific proposal was submitted.

Question	Answer
32. Is there a fixed number of grant awards to be awarded under each lot? In addition, is there any guidance on percentage split between operation and management cost?	No, there is no fixed number of grant awards for each lot. The maximum amount of EU funding that can be allocated under each lot is fixed. The number of grant awards will depend on the size of the requested financial contributions. No, there is no guidance on the percentage split between operational and management costs.
33. To what extent may applicants include the cost to purchase medical equipment to support a project? For example, can the purchase of a mammogram unit for cancer detection be included?	The project proposals need to be balanced in terms of types of actions (soft, supplies, HR/admin costs, materials, workshops/trainings, monitoring) and form an integrated package of interventions to ensure they respond to the needs and can achieve the expected outcomes.
34. Would it be possible to target host community along with IDPs and returnees?	Yes, this is possible.
35. Is the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) eligible to be a co-applicant for this call?	Any co-applicant would need to demonstrate that it fulfils all eligibility criteria established under section 2.1.1. of the Guidelines to this CfEol.
36. Based on previous experience, there is a high chance that two or more applicants proposing overlapping activities in their Concept Notes. Will there be an opportunity for negotiation after the concept notes evaluation to modify overlapping section or to allow the applicants to coordinate.	No negotiations will take place at the stage of concept notes submission and evaluation. The contracting authority may ask the Lead Applicants of the highest scoring concept notes (invited to submit full application) to adjust their proposals in view of avoiding potential duplication.
37. Could you kindly confirm the earliest possible start date for the project?	The earliest possible start date of the contracts awarded under this CfEol is September/October 2024.
38. Given the volatile situation in Afghanistan, has the EU considered any risk sharing mechanism?	There is not any additional risk management system in place beyond the contractual provisions. Each proposal must identify major risks and respective mitigation strategies. It is possible to incorporate a contingency reserve in the contract budget to cover expenditures incurred due to unforeseen situations.
39. Has the EU taken steps with the DFA to facilitate the approvals and the issuance of the documents necessary for the implementation of the contracts that will be awarded under this CfEol?	It is understood that process is in place allowing Memoranda of Understanding to be concluded within 50 days.
40. Is there a fixed quota for girls and women beneficiaries to be applied in the proposals under this CfEol?	No, there is no fixed quota, but women and girls should make up a significant share of the project's beneficiaries. Furthermore, applicants should ensure that

	women and girls are involved in every aspect of the project (including the delivery of planned assistance).
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