

Call for Expression of Interest
 “Afghanistan essential services and livelihoods stabilisation programme”
 Reference: AFG/2022/Call for expression of interest 1

Clarification n°1		
The following questions of general interest have been asked to the EU services:		
N°	Question	EU services answer
1	<i>Are there provinces that must be prioritised?</i>	The call covers the whole country (urban and rural area) while underserved/hard to reach area should also be considered when relevant.
2	<i>Can applicants coordinate activities with de facto authorities (DFA)?</i>	Yes, the organisations may interact with DFA for the purpose of coordination of activities. However, the interaction with DFA should not involve any decision-making role for the DFA in the implementation of the Action. Coordination should be strictly limited to technical aspects.
3	<i>Can applicants provide capacity building to public institutions?</i>	No capacity building can be provided to DFA or its institutions.
4	<i>Can the EU transfer funds to an organisation’s bank account in Afghanistan?</i>	Currently transfers of funds from the EU to Afghanistan are not possible. The situation may evolve and the transfers of money to Afghanistan might resume. Alternative payment modalities should be envisaged by the future contract beneficiaries/lead applicants. While it is not rejection reason at the concept note evaluation stage, the beneficiary/lead applicant will need to demonstrate its ability to transfer/receive funds into Afghanistan before the signature of a contract.

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5	<p><i>Can taxes (on salaries or other normal taxes) be paid to the de facto authorities (DFA)?</i> *** <i>What about tax payment to the government for the HR and other applicable costs?</i></p>	<p>No payment to the DFA is allowed except for official taxes on condition that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > they are covered by a legal basis in Afghanistan and > they are unavoidable (for example: taxes on salaries, utility bills, imports) in view of implementing the action > they are linked to activities that support basic human needs <p>(in application of the Article 1 of the EU Council Regulation 2022/148 and of the Decision (CFSP) 2022/153).</p>
6	<p><i>A potential beneficiary/lead applicant asked about its eligibility to apply to the call for expression of interest considering that it is affiliated to the an International NGO and a top manager is on the UN sanctions list</i></p>	<p>As a principle, no contract can be signed with entities or persons that are concerned by the EU/UN restrictive measures. No prior opinion may be formulated about the eligibility of specific entities. The Evaluation Committee and the Contracting Authority will make a decision in this kind of situation. The decision will follow the principle mentioned above and may consist of exclusion or mitigation measures aiming to ensure that the entities or persons that are concerned by the EU/UN restrictive measures will not receive EU-funds and will not be in a position to make decisions concerning the implementation of EU-funded grant contracts.</p>

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7	<p><i>Regarding eligibility criteria: private sector/companies cannot be applicant/co-applicant, but be only sub-contractor?</i></p> <p><i>Is it correct that private sector companies are excluded?</i></p>	<p>Please refer to the section 2.1.1. <i>Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant(s) of the Guidelines for grant applicants:</i></p> <p>Both the Lead Applicants and the Co-applicants(s) (if any) must be non-profit making.</p> <p>Commercial (and for profit) entities may be involved in the implementation as affiliated entities. In this the case, their involvement in the implementation of the Action must be free of any profit.</p> <p>Commercial (and for profit) entities may also be involved in the implementation as Contractors (please refer to the section 2.1.3 of the Guidelines for grant applicants)</p>
8	<p><i>Are there any restrictions on exclusions/restrictions on nationality, as with Brexit?</i></p>	<p>Please refer to the section 2.1.1. <i>Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant(s) of the Guidelines for grant applicants:</i></p> <p>The Lead Applicants and Co-applicants must be established in a Member State of the EU or an eligible country as per Article 28 of the Regulation (EU) 2021/947. This article stipulates (among others) the following:</p> <p><i>“Participation in procurement, grant and prize award procedures for actions financed under geographic programmes and under the Civil Society Organisations thematic programme and the Global Challenges thematic programme shall be open to international organisations and to all other legal entities, including civil society organisations, who are</i></p>

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		<p><i>nationals of and, in the case of legal persons, who are also effectively established in, the following countries:</i></p> <p><i>(a) Member States, beneficiaries listed in the relevant Annex to the IPA III Regulation and contracting parties to the Agreement on the European Economic Area;</i></p> <p><i>(b) Neighbourhood partner countries and the Russian Federation when the relevant procedure takes place in the context of the programmes referred to in Annex I in which it participates;</i></p> <p><i>(c) developing countries and territories, as included in the list of ODA recipients published by the OECD Development Assistance Committee, which are not members of the G-20 group, and overseas countries and territories;</i></p> <p><i>(d) developing countries, as included in the list of ODA recipients, which are members of the G-20 group, and other countries and territories, when the relevant procedure takes place in the context of an action financed by the Union under the Instrument in which they participate;</i></p> <p><i>(e) countries for which reciprocal access to external funding is established by the Commission; that access may be granted, for a limited period of at least one year, whenever a country grants eligibility on equal terms to entities from the Union and from countries eligible under the Instrument; the Commission shall decide on the reciprocal access and on its duration after consultation of the recipient country or countries concerned;</i></p> <p><i>(f) member countries of the OECD, in the case of contracts implemented in a LDC or a highly indebted poor country, as included in the list of ODA recipients.</i></p> <p><i>[...]”</i></p>
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9	<p><i>In the checklist for the concept note, Lead and Co-Applicants are requested to fill in administrative data including EuropeAid ID numbers. That being said, the guidelines for the call (page 17) states "Information in PADOR will not be drawn upon in the present call."</i></p> <p><i>As the concept note is to be submitted via email, we would greatly appreciate your confirmation as to whether our national partner (Co-Applicant) must register on PADOR prior to concept note submission.</i></p>	<p>No, PADOR registration is not necessary to participate to this Call for Expression of Interest .</p>
10	<p><i>EuropeAid ID number: what is it and what should we fill in?</i></p>	<p>EuropeAid ID number is a reference/number allocated to Applicants registered in PADOR. As explained above (see answer n° 9) this is not relevant in the context of this Call for Expression of Interest.</p>
11	<p><i>Establishment of leading agency: Does it need to be an organisation established in EU MS? Can we apply as a leading organisation or do we need partner(s)?</i></p>	<p>Please refer to the section 2.1.1. <i>Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant(s))</i> of the Guidelines for grant applicants:</p> <p><i>“The lead applicant may act individually or with co-applicant(s).”</i></p> <p>Please also refer to the answer n°8.</p>

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12	<i>Can one organization only target selected activities under one specific objective?</i>	While the list of activities foreseen in the Guidelines for grant applicants is indicative, the proposal should align with the thematic areas outlined.
13	<i>Could you please confirm whether a partner can submit a concept note as lead applicant, and be co-applicant in another CN (e.g., lead applicant in Lot 1 and co-applicant in Lot 2)?</i>	Please refer to the last sub-section of the section 2.1.4 of the Guidelines for grant applicants.
14	<i>In terms of the Concept Note structure, is it supposed to be based on the structure that is provided in “Annex A e3b Application Form Section 2.1 (Description of the Action)”? Is there a specific structure that has to be followed or we can prepare our Concept Note based on our own proposed project structure?</i>	As a principle, the respect of the structures and instructions from the templates applicable for this Call for Expression of Interest is compulsory. This is obviously true for the Annex A e3b Application Form.
15	<i>Can the lead Applicant, take an Afghan-based Consulting Firm as the Co-applicant with it in the Consortium, especially if the Afghan-based consulting firm has good relevant experience in implementing similar projects in the past?</i>	Please refer to the answer n°7 (see above).

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16	<p><i>As you are aware, following the collapse of the Western-backed government on 15th August 2021, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has not been recognized by the international community.</i></p> <p><i>Subsequent suspension of Afghanistan's external funding and imposed sanctions have severely impacted the economy and the banking sector, to the point that it is no longer safe or feasible to use banks.</i></p> <p><i>Despite sanction exemptions for remittances being applied to humanitarian aid and stabilization projects, it is not possible to transfer money into the country through banks.</i></p> <p><i>To date, use of the informal sector of Cash Transfer Agents has been the only viable option to continue Welthungerhilfe Afghanistan's extensive humanitarian programming.</i></p> <p><i>Since we foresee that this situation will not change in the near future, we wanted to ask if the EU allows the transfer of money via cash agents.</i></p> <p><i>If so, is there an official EU statement and specific guidelines to follow?</i></p>	<p>The use of Cash transfers agents may be acceptable on condition that no alternative allowing the implementation of the Action exists.</p> <p>The modality for cash transfers and related estimated costs should be elaborated in the concept note. The modality will be assessed during the evaluation procedure.</p> <p>Furthermore, the applicant are reminded of the need to comply with <i>Article 1 - General provisions “Role of the beneficiary(ies)”</i> and with <i>Article 12.8 “Administrative sanctions”</i> of the General Conditions of EU-funded grant contracts referring to EU restrictive measures and money laundering.</p> <p><i>“Role of the beneficiary(ies)</i> <i>1.5 bis. Grant beneficiaries and contractors must ensure that there is no detection of subcontractors, natural persons, including participants to workshops and/or trainings and recipients of financial support to third parties, in the lists of EU restrictive measures.”</i></p> <p><i>“Administrative sanctions</i> <i>12.8 Without prejudice to the application of other remedies laid down in the contract, a sanction of exclusion from all contracts and grants financed by the EU, may be imposed, after an adversarial procedure in line with the applicable Financial Regulation, upon the beneficiary(ies) who, in particular,</i> <i>...</i> <i>b) is guilty of fraud, corruption, participation in a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorist-related offences, child labour or trafficking in human beings. The duration of the exclusion shall not exceed the duration set by final judgement or final administrative decision or, in the absence thereof, five years;</i></p>
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17	<p><i>Alignment with already existing activities: The proposed activities should be aligned with already existing EU funded activities – where can we find information on what activities by which organizations are already in place and which regions/districts are carrying them out?</i></p>	<p>The Guidelines for grant applicants make reference to the overall support provided by the international community after 15 August 2021, and in particular to the EU support package, further details of which can be found at:</p> <p>https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_382</p>
18	<p><i>If our activities are to contribute to specific objective 1 To safeguard livelihoods of the Afghan population, we would like to know if we have to contribute to both outputs of objective 1 mentioned below, or if we can choose one output and design our project accordingly.</i></p> <p><i>1.1. Safeguarded community-based employment and income-generating opportunities as well as economic activities and opportunities for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), particularly female-headed MSMEs.</i></p> <p><i>1.2. Enhanced food security and enabled sustainable food production and processing, including food diversification.</i></p>	<p>You may contribute to one or both of the objectives. The Applicants are entirely responsible of the approach chosen.</p>
19	<p><i>With the new de-facto government, activities and measures aimed mainly at women are very difficult to implement. Approval from national, provincial and</i></p>	<p>We do understand the current challenges for activities supporting women (economic empowerment).</p>

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	<p><i>district authorities is required for any new project, with detailed project descriptions required to be submitted. Permission for female participation must also be negotiated on a case by case, village by village basis.</i></p> <p><i>Considering the new authorities and their position on women's rights, women's participation in the labor market, etc., it will be very difficult to obtain such approvals overtly. Certainly, such measures could be implemented, but they would have to be sold to the new authorities with the appropriate wording - instead of female-led businesses, for example, family-led businesses.</i></p> <p><i>How can female participation in the current situation in Afghanistan be addressed in this proposal and how should applicants best deal with it - after all, the requirements of the call of interest are difficult to reconcile with the real situation and obstacles in the country?</i></p>	<p>We expect that the Concept Notes submitted elaborate on how activities proposed by the applicant could best achieve the objective of the Call in the current restrictive environment.</p>
20	<p><i>Our organisation is based in Switzerland. Is Switzerland included in the EU, recognising it is associated with the EU through a series of bilateral treaties in which Switzerland has adopted various provisions of European Union law in order to participate in the Union's single market, without</i></p>	<p>Please refer to the answer n°8.</p>

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	<p><i>joining as a member state? I was unable to find a particular link in section 2.1.2 or any further in the guideline to clarify this.</i></p>	
21	<p><i>To this end, we are currently internally vetting different instruments that could be considered in this context. During these internal reflections some technical questions arose which we would clarify with the EU prior to submitting the concept note. As you had been mentioning the request in our previous engagements, we were hoping that you would be in the position to answer specific technical questions related to the request for proposals and would be potentially available for a thirty minute call tomorrow afternoon or Friday morning?</i></p>	<p>At this stage we can only respond to your questions in writing. The answers shall be shared with all potential applicants.</p> <p>You can send the specific questions to the dedicated e-mail DELEGATION-AFGHANISTAN-CFEOI-1-2022@eeas.europa.eu.</p> <p>Following the Concept Note evaluation process, negotiated procedures will be launched by the EU services with the Applicants that submitted the Concept Notes having obtained the best scores. If your Concept Note is among those selected, you may be in a position to directly discuss with us.</p>