

ENGAGEMENT FOR JOINT ACTION - EJA KOSOVO

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION FOR SMALL PROJECT GRANTS

INTRODUCTION

Engagement for Joint Action (EJA Kosovo) is a KCSF program that supports civil society initiatives through grants and capacity building with the overall aim to contribute to a democratic and inclusive society in Kosovo, on its path towards integration into the European Union. Designed as a pooled funding mechanism, EJA Kosovo is currently co-financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Sweden and Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.


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

EJA Kosovo is based on the premise that through tailor-made systems of inclusiveness, transparency and accountability on the one hand, and better access and communication with the community, on the other hand, CSOs will embed the practice of involving citizens in their work, develop an emotional linkage thus directly contribute to strengthening of their constituency. Combined with improved internal governance and increased transparency and accountability, it is expected to increase trust in CSOs as an adequate platform to voice citizens' concerns.

Kosovo continues to face significant socio-economic difficulties, with a crippling unemployment and economic vulnerability, high corruption and distrust in public institutions. Women, youth, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, and Serb minorities, people with disabilities, LGBTI and elderly are those who suffer the most from these difficulties. It is the role of civil society to serve to these groups, as well as require institutional response for the needs of most marginalized. Similarly, civil society must strengthen the links to its constituents, build trust and increase communication with the community, and act as a watchdog to the institutions. The global spread of the COVID-19 and the effects of the pandemics have further exposed inequalities in our society, having a disproportionate impact in the most marginalized groups. Already existing inequalities will only be deepened if the marginalized groups are not brought to the forefront during the recovery phase. It is necessary that civil society is mobilized and gives voice to those who need it most now.

1. BACKGROUND

Kosovar citizens are facing a deepened inequality and majority of them are alienated from resources, opportunities, decision-making and political life. Inclusive processes and open institutions are an exception rather than a norm.



Policy making shall be understood beyond formal processes of normative nature, as it includes all aspects of society and public life. In order to address needs of all citizens, policy making needs to be inclusive to all, beyond those who are in power or few others that are well-educated and eloquent in legal and policy writing. Every Kosovar man and woman, boy and girl, needs to have the opportunity to address their needs, concerns and proposals in the most adequate way to his/her capacities, needs and context. Civil society has an opportunity, but also responsibility to empower citizens and bring their concerns and voice into the limelight of public policies and public discourse.

While recognizing the diversity of civil society and its different approaches, EJA Kosovo focuses on civil society initiatives and individuals that embed participatory practices in their work because it believes that only by systematically including citizens in their work, civil society is responsive to the needs of citizens. Furthermore, such inclusion goes hand in hand with increasing transparency and accountability of civil society, as well as improvement of internal governance practices beyond papers and reports. Joining efforts through networking and alliance building will maximise the potential for change in a context of scarce human and financial resources. Adding the above to the already existing capacities and experience of civil society, EJA Kosovo aims to narrow the existing gap between civil society and citizens and contribute to increase civil society legitimacy.

a. EJA Kosovo instruments of support

EJA Kosovo has been designed with the intention to facilitate and adequately support this new approach, through providing both the necessary financial means and capacities for civil society initiatives and individuals interested to contribute to a democratic and inclusive society in Kosovo. Through *institutional grants*, it will support well-established organizations that have a clear strategy to continue their work in respective thematic areas; through *organizational development grants* it will support organizations that have a clear direction of their development but need specific tools and resources to advance their work; through *project grants* it will support specific actions of civil society initiatives and individuals that address concrete issues, both of more systematic nature or limited in scope and duration; through *urgent grants* it will enable instant reactions of civil society initiatives and individuals to unexpected developments of public importance; and through its annual *Democracy Award* it will recognize outstanding contribution to the development of democracy in Kosovo and promote role models to be followed. Training and mentoring, as well as networking and alliance building opportunities will be provided in addition to financial support.

b. Small project grants

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

2. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF CALL REQUIREMENTS

a. Eligibility criteria

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

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

b. Individuals and unregistered initiatives

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

c. For Non-Governmental Organizations

In cases where applicants are NGOs, they shall demonstrate that their engagement is within the area of democratization and eligible program areas. Despite their legal status, not all of NGOs are included in the above eligibility criteria. Due to the wide scope of the applicable legislation in Kosovo for registration of NGOs, sports clubs, sports federations, amateur cultural associations or religious organizations that are registered as NGOs are not targeted for KCSF grants. Similarly, NGOs that represent businesses or similar entities which have obvious financial capacities to cover the costs of their organization or sustain their activities are not targeted for KCSF grants.


d. Timeframe and budget

Applicants will be eligible to receive a maximum 12 months of funding.

The maximum budget requested for funding from this call should not exceed EUR 10,000 (including audit costs).

e. Areas of intervention

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



EJA Kosovo's support will focus on civil society contribution to the policy making cycle, while increasingly including citizens in their advocacy efforts and creating/exploring venues and spaces for citizen engagement.

EJA Kosovo aims to contribute to increased civic engagement in influencing the priorities, planning, decision making and implementation of public policies at the local and central government, with a particular focus on the following priority areas:

- Higher participation of women and other marginalized groups in budgetary planning;
- Improving socio – economic and cultural rights of marginalized groups;
- Strengthening advocacy and watchdog role of civil society with a special emphasis on the rights and needs of marginalized groups;
- Empowering youth to participate in policy making and implementation;
- Civic education for human rights.

Watchdog activities, monitoring of drafting and implementation of policies and legislation, contribution to public policies, contribution to controversial topics, improvement of representation of marginalized groups, creation and utilization of public spaces, awareness raising and education in combating gender stereotypes and representation of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians would be an illustration of some of the initiatives that will be supported and fit within the larger theory of change of the intervention.

EJA Kosovo will support initiatives that will focus on addressing the rights and needs of marginalized groups, namely women, people with disabilities, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, and Serb minorities, LGBTI, elderly and youth.

f. Level of intervention and geographical coverage

Through this call, support will be provided to civil society initiative throughout Kosovo that seek to bring about transformations at local/municipal and/or national/central level. In particular, at least 30 percent of the beneficiaries of small project grants will be subjects based and operating outside of Prishtina.


g. Constituency

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

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

Applicants should present a clear analysis of their target group, why their engagement and participation are relevant for the work of their initiative and the different ways that they intend to engage them.

In the analysis of their target group, applicants are expected to be cognizant of the differences of their target groups (such as sex, age, ethnicity, religion, education, location, socio-economic circumstances, interests and needs) and adapt their proposals and intervention accordingly. Applicants are also



expected to analyse the potential of target groups for engagement and elaborate a realistic approach for gradual but systematic increase of their involvement in the work of the initiative/organization.

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

h. Internal governance

Internal governance of NGOs remains an important aspect in efforts to improve and build the trust of citizens in the civil society sector and to be able to lead by example.

All applicant NGOs are expected to give information on their internal control mechanisms, management structure, internal decision making and financial management. Selected applicants, after signing the contracts, will undergo an initial evaluation of capacities by KCSF. After the initial evaluation, KCSF will intensively work with the supported organizations to develop a tailor-made mentoring for addressing the identified needs, good governance practices, sound financial management and tenets of transparency, anti-corruption and accountability.

i. Joint Action/Alliance Building

In order to foster greater collaboration for joint action between grantees, EJA Kosovo will provide different platforms and meeting venues where grantees can meet, exchange and share experiences amongst each other. Joint organizing and action on issues of common interest would be an intended outcome, thus it is expected that grantees will be proactive in identifying and contributing to opportunities for mobilization of other civil society initiatives in their areas of interest.

Thematic events present a platform which will be available to all grantees to propose relevant issues in their scope of work and/or issues that do not directly fall within their scope of work but are deemed important, urgent and relevant. Since the objective of EJA Kosovo is to expand civil society activity country wide and contribute in creating the link to citizens these thematic events are intended to be organized mainly outside of Prishtina.

j. Cross cutting issues

Gender mainstreaming as a tool towards gender equality will be a crosscutting issue throughout all interventions. As a general rule, all grantees are required to extend their interventions equally, be mindful of the effects of the intervention for men and women, boys and girls, and avoid contributing to harmful stereotypes. All grantees are expected to collect and maintain data disaggregated by sex. For guidance on gender mainstreaming, please see the short document prepared by KCSF in [KCSF website](#) referring to EJA Kosovo program.

3. ELIGIBILITY OF OPERATIONS AND COSTS

a. Ineligible interventions/activities

The following interventions/activities will not be supported:

- Interventions that are directly affiliated with or are supportive of political parties;
- Capital Investments;
- Grants composed entirely or mostly of preparatory work and/or studies;
- Cross border projects and proposals for activities to be implemented outside Kosovo;
- Service type activities such as Technical Assistance;
- Awareness raising campaigns without proper follow up;
- Interventions which are subject to multilevel dependency and approval, thus posing high risk for achieving results;
- Sub granting to third parties. Small scale financial support to beneficiaries is allowed only in cases when all expenditures are executed by the implementing organization;
- Scholarships.

Unless they are imperative for the achievement of the intended organizational strategy objectives, in principle, the activities outlined below will not be supported:

- Conferences, round table discussions or other similar events in venues (such as hotels) that are not open and easily accessible to ordinary citizens;
- Research and feasibility studies, especially as a tool to design the rest of the intervention;
- Study trips outside of Kosovo.

b. Eligible costs

To be considered eligible, costs should meet the following criteria:

- are necessary for the successful implementation and achievement of the indicated intervention results;
- are reasonable, justified and comply with the requirements of sound financial management including fair and market-based calculations and cost-efficiency;
- comply with the requirements of applicable tax legislation in Kosovo;
- will incur during the implementation of the grant;
- are indicated in the proposed budget;
- are identifiable and verifiable.

c. Ineligible costs

The costs presented below are considered ineligible:

- For individuals and unregistered initiatives salaries and fees are not allowed;
- Customs and import duties;
- Debt or payments for losses;
- Value Added Tax - VAT (for invoices above EUR 200);
- Loan and interest repayments;
- Currency exchange fees;

- Equipment depreciation expenditures;
- Purchase of land or immovable property;
- Purchase of vehicle or generator;
- Payment of expenses covered by other donors;
- Credit to third parties.

4. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Applicants must provide their information, elaborate the idea and submit the necessary documents through the [online application system](#).

For instructions on registering and using the online application system, please refer to the information that is available on the [website](#).

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

All questions and answers regarding the application will be published in the Q&A (questions and answers) section of the KCSF website. Applicants are advised to check this section, published on the website.

a. Deadline for application submission

The deadline for application for this cycle of Small Project Grants is **15 May 2023 at 23:59**. Evaluation of applications for the following period will be, as follows:

For all applications submitted before 15 May 2023, latest 23:59, evaluation is conducted during June/July 2023.

5. EVALUATION AND NOTIFICATION

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

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

a. Administrative control (verification of formal criteria)

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

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

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

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

b. Evaluation of applications and final decision

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

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

- Relevance of the project and logic of intervention (40%)
- Involvement of citizens/target group in the project (40%)
- Capacities relevance to project implementation (10%)
- Cost-effectiveness of the proposed budget (10%)

The maximum evaluation per application is 100 points.

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

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

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

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

Successful applicants, prior to contracting, will be assisted by KCSF in a mentoring session to finalize their dossier.

c. Notification of the decision and complaint mechanism

Each applicant who has participated in the application process receives a response regarding the evaluation process and the result of their application, including the total score. Unsuccessful applicants may request clarifications. In case they consider their proposal was not evaluated based on merits even after receiving additional clarifications, applicants may submit an official complain. The procedure to request additional clarifications or complain is public on the [KCSF website \(link\)](#). Information on the selected grantees will be published in KCSF website after the contracts are signed.