

Guidelines for Application Sixth Call for Proposal

Annex A.

Deadline for submission of project proposals is 27 December 2023

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ACRONYMS

CfP	Call for Proposal
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
EU	European Union
LA	Lead Applicant
PP	Project Partners
WBF	Western Balkans Fund
WBF CSO	WBF Council of Senior Officials
WBF CP	WBF Contracting Parties

1. SUMMARY OF THE CALL FOR PROPOSAL

A major challenge facing the Western Balkans* region is the need of boosting regional cooperation which can positively impact regional stability and the well-being of citizens and societies, and to address this, efforts are being made to strengthen regional cooperation, with the goal of eventually joining the European Union.

Throughout its existence the Western Balkans Fund's (WBF), an organization created by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Western Balkans, has accomplished successful milestones, but still, there is room to fully satisfy the demand for regional cooperation, since it vastly exceeds the funding opportunities available.

Through the grant-making mechanisms, by providing funding opportunities, WBF fills some of gaps and meet more of the growing demand for people-to-people links and exchange of experiences in our region. Until now, WBF managed to successfully implement five Calls for Proposals and supported various actors enhancing good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation focusing on promoting reconciliation in the Western Balkans.

The Western Balkans Fund's main objective is to foster cooperation between its members (WB6), by strengthening good neighbourly relations and regional cohesion and contribute to the integration of the WB6 into the European Union. Promoting cooperation and common values between civil society organisations, local authorities, citizens, and other regional stakeholders, aiming to foster people to people contacts, is made possible by funding small/medium - size regional projects, in the following key areas: *1) cultural cooperation 2) education and scientific exchange; 3) sustainable economic development.*

The present Guidelines for Applicants aim to inform the potential applicants on the rules of the WBF Annual Grant scheme that is the subject of the WBF Sixth Call for Proposals and guide them through the process of preparation and submission of their proposals.

1.1. Goal and Objectives

The overall objective of the WBF sixth Call for Proposals is to actively engage Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the Western Balkans region, fostering their involvement in regional projects focusing on strengthening good neighbourly relations, people to people links and promotion of reconciliation.

1.2. Areas of Intervention

Based on the WBF statutory provisions, the thematic areas of this Call for Proposal are:

- i. Cultural cooperation
- ii. Education and scientific exchange
- iii. Sustainable development

The proposed action should align with at least one of the priority areas outlined and should attempt to mainstream cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, youth, social inclusion, non-discrimination, and the overall promotion of human rights, democratic standards, anti-discriminatory practices, and good governance, environment, and climate change.

The Western Balkans includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, referred to collectively as Western Balkans, WB6 or WBF Contracting Parties (CP). In this document the Capitals are used for the constitutional names of the Western Balkans Contracting Parties.

*This designation is without prejudice to position on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

1.3. Size of grants

Any grant requested under this Call for Proposals must not exceed EUR 15,000.00.

Any grant funding requested from the WBF under this call for proposals must not exceed 80% of the total eligible cost of the action.

The remaining percentage (i.e. the difference between the total cost of the action and the amount requested from the WBF) must be financed from the following non-WBF sources:

1. Beneficiary (self-financing or/and in-kind contributions).
2. Financial contributions from other donors.
3. Contributions in-kind from third parties (only in duly justified cases).

1.4. Location

The applicants of the WBF Sixth Call for Proposal should be located in one of the WBF CP.

Activities should take place in the Western Balkans region.

In certain circumstances, activities that promote WB beyond the region will be taken into consideration.

1.5. Definition

An action is composed of a set of activities.

1.6. Duration

The initial planned duration of a project may not be lesser than 3 months, nor exceed 10 months, from the moment of signing of the contract, including Reporting Period including potential non-cost extensions.

(Final Report must be delivered in the last 30 calendar days **within** the above-mentioned timeframe).

1.6. Partnership

Under this Call for Proposals, the applicants must form Project Partnerships.

A project partnership shall consist of the lead applicant and minimum two project partners.

Partnership parties must come from at least three different WBF Contracting Parties.

WBF strongly encourages balanced and meaningful partnerships in which each project partner has specific role and brings in specific expertise.

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the actions financed under this call.

2.1 Eligibility criteria

There are four sets of eligibility criteria, relating to:

1. Eligibility of Applicants
2. Eligibility of Partnership
3. Eligibility of Project Action
4. Eligibility of Costs

*The eligibility of project proposal will be checked against the criteria below.

2.1.1 Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and Partners)

2.1.1.1 The Lead applicant

To be eligible for a grant, the lead applicant must:

1. be a legal person, (natural persons or entities without legal persons are not eligible,) **and**
2. be established in one or more of the WBF Contracting Parties, **and**
3. be non-profitmaking, **and**

Be a specific type of organisation from one of the following categories:

- A civil society organization¹ (CSO/NGO)²
- A local or regional public entity, or association of local or regional public entities
- A business association such as: association of enterprises, agriculture association, chamber of commerce, tourism association, etc.
- An educational institution such as university/faculty³, school, institute, library, research centre, academy of science/music/arts, etc.
- Media associations such as: organizations working with media, journalism, and freedom of expression.
- An institution of culture or sports such as museums, art galleries, theatres, libraries, or associations of cultural institutions, sport associations, etc.

The above list is not exhaustive, other type of institutions can be considered eligible, if they respect the first three criteria specified in section 2.1.1.1.

Lead applicant shall not to be in any of the exclusion situations (listed below, as well as, in the declaration of honour declaring its commitment to cover 20%of co-financing to be attached to the Full Application).

If awarded, the lead applicant will become the “Grantee”.

2.1.1.2 Exclusion criteria

Potential applicants may not participate in the Calls for Proposals or be awarded grants if they are in any of the situations facing legal or financial complications, as following:

- ✓ They are bankrupt or having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities.
- ✓ They are not in compliance with their obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions and/or the payment of any taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the contracting party in which they are established.
- ✓ They, or persons having powers of representation, decision making or control over them, have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organization, money laundering or any other illegal activity.
- ✓ They are directly affiliated to commercial profit.
- ✓ They are involved directly in political campaigning.
- ✓ They exclusively serve to religious purposes.

2.1.1.3 Eligibility of partnership

Under this Call for Proposals, the applicants must form Project Partnerships.

A project partnership consists of the lead applicant and **minimum** two project partners.

Partnership parties must come from at least three different WBF contracting parties.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to form a balanced and meaningful partnerships in which each project partner has specific role and brings in specific expertise.

In Annex C (Declaration by the Lead Applicant), the lead applicant must declare that the Lead Applicant itself, and the Project Partners are not in any of these exclusion situations.

The above listed eligibility conditions apply to the lead applicant and the project partners.

¹Clarification: An organisation’s must be established under the national law and its seat is in one of WBF contracting parties.

²Clarification: The operational activity of the CSO is not limited, it can be younger than two years with a good track record.

³Clarification: privately owned universities can apply through this Call for Proposals as well; however, their projects must not have purpose of generating profit. Universities can apply on the level of faculties.

2.1.1.4 The role of Project Partners

The project application's methodology section should provide detailed explanations of the lead applicant's and project partners' roles, and these descriptions will factor into the evaluation process for scoring.

Project Partners are encouraged to actively engage in the design, development, and implementation of the project idea.

Project Partners must sign the partnership agreement of the grant application form.

If awarded the grant contract, the project partners will become beneficiaries in the action (together with the coordinator/lead applicant).

2.1.1.5 Partnership Platform

The WBF has established a Partnership Platform in Facebook to assist applicants to find suitable Project Partners in the context of the preparation of this Call for Proposals. The following [partner search page](#) supports the identification of potential project partners:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/WBFPartnershipPlatform/>

Applicants are encouraged to post messages on partners' search and interact with each other. Announcements shall be in the English language.

2.1.1.6 Number of grants and applications per applicant

Under this Call for Proposal an applicant may submit only one project proposal as the lead applicant.

Under this Call for Proposal an applicant may apply as a project partner in more than two project actions.

The WBF reserves the right to award best project action out of which the same organization may be selected for funding as a Lead Applicant and a Project Partner within different project actions.

3. ELIGIBLE PROJECT ACTIONS

3.1. Definition of the action

A project action is composed of a set of activities.

3.1.2 Areas of intervention

Project proposals submitted under the 6th WBF Call for Proposals can cover one, or several of the following areas of intervention:

- I. Cultural cooperation: Strengthening regional cultural identity and intercultural dialogue in the WB, by enhancing cooperation through cultural initiatives, activities, and projects.
- II. Education and Scientific exchanges: Promoting regional projects/activities aiming education development, its growth and its extension, capacity building and mobility, regional scientific and research exchanges, and improvement.
- III. Sustainable Development: Advancement of regional cohesion and supporting institutional partnership in sustainable economic development.

Under this Call, the applicants are encouraged to mainstream cross-cutting issues throughout the action which can be one of the listed:

- Promoting reconciliation, European Integration, cross-border cooperation, freedom of expression, gender equality, youth, and green agenda.

Please note that mainstreaming cross-cutting issues is scored during the evaluation.

3.1.3 Types of the Project Actions

The project actions shall encompass a range of activities aimed at achieving its objectives and maximizing its impact. Project actions shall include regional events, awareness-raising campaigns, and communication efforts, all of which serve to mobilize stakeholders and inform them about the project's mission. Any event that is focused on building a

sense of community and exchanging best practices, fostering a spirit of cooperation among members, is recommended.

Capacity development activities such as trainings/workshops and educational sessions that further empower the affected community with the necessary skills and knowledge to actively contribute to regional cooperation, are recommended.

Ensuring informed decision-making and to evaluate progress and impact, the actions that involve studies, analyses, and surveys to gather valuable data and insights aligned with its objectives, are recommended.

Types of action which may be financed under this call (the list is non-exhaustive):

Cultural cooperation

- Supporting regional projects aiming to increase awareness of the richness in terms of cultural heritage in the WB, including history, art, culinary, tourism, etc.
- Promotion of regional intercultural dialogue that directly contributes to people to people links and good neighbourly relations.
- Promotion of regional interfaith dialogue, supporting the spread of best practices of tolerance, constructive and positive interaction between religious communities in the WB region.
- Promoting the Western Balkans region in other parts of Europe, such as promotion of the regional cultural identity/products.
- Supporting regional initiatives that monitor and promote the EU integration process.
- Promoting the raise of awareness for protection and preservation of archaeological sites, monuments, and overall cultural heritage. Underlining the importance of regional cooperation in this respect.
- Supporting cultural and creative sectors in the region in creating and promoting authentic regional brands in their specific areas of activities.
- Promoting/supporting the organisation of regional sport and cultural activities in different specialties.
- Encourage active cooperation between museums, art galleries, artistic and folk assemblies, film producers, etc., by supporting joint regional activities and products.

Education and Scientific exchanges

- Supporting and strengthening the cooperation among educational and research institutions in the region.
- Supporting teachers in the region, by offering concrete opportunities for sharing of the best practices.
- Supporting the development of regional initiatives in education academia and research.
- Supporting the increase in the volume of common of educational tools and their regional exchange (e.g., methodologies, common textbooks, internship programmes, etc.).
- Promoting best practices of education policies and sharing of best performances in the dialogue among decision-making bodies, municipalities, schools, and families.
- Promoting innovation and knowledge-based entrepreneurship as the main source of growth and job creation.
- Supporting opportunities/actions for the researchers from the Western Balkans region.
- Promoting Networks of Excellence to strengthen excellence on a particular research topic.
- Improving learning for better access to labour markets.
- Increasing science popularisation, with particular focus on the STEM curriculum for the women and youth.
- Supporting mobility in the region on specific topics such as: internships, youth summer/winter camps.

Sustainable Development

- Promoting initiatives for inclusive and sustainable economic growth and for improvement of the living conditions, competitiveness, and overall economic development in the region.
- Supporting regional conferences (Start-up, Venture forums, Innovation Fairs, Business Accelerators etc.)
- Improving ecosystem for business development at the regional level.
- Facilitating science-industry cooperation and technology transfer by promoting knowledge transfer activities.
- Supporting sustainable growth through promotion of tourism; resources and products of the region.

- Promoting innovation initiatives in the region.
- Sharing of best practices on creating the suitable environment for SME's establishment and further development.
- Exchange of best practices to increase awareness on a healthy and active lifestyle.
- Supporting activities for improving working skills and their adjustment to better access to the labour market.
- Promotion and exchange of best practices employment in the region and in vocational training.
- Supporting cross border projects among local authorities on activities that boost economic and social development, especially by sharing best practices cross-border areas.
- Supporting interconnection and exchange of experiences between local authorities, aiming to improve the management, transparency, & exchange of know-how in improving living conditions.
- Promoting and supporting awareness raising initiatives on environmental protection and climate change in the region.

4. ELIGIBLE COSTS

Only eligible costs can be covered by a grant. The categories of costs that are eligible and non-eligible are as indicated below.

4.1 Eligible Direct Costs

The grant requested under this Call for Proposal must not exceed EUR 15,000.00 covering 80% of total project costs. The WBF Sixth Call for Proposals foresees cost-sharing or co-financing as a mandatory condition of receiving a WBF grant.

The remaining 20% of the budget shall consist of other financial contribution such as the applicant's, partners', or other donors' or non-financial contributions such as in-kind.

*The amount of the awarded grant cannot be increased. It is therefore in the applicant's interest to provide a realistic and cost-effective budget. A well-planned budget shall be simple and realistic. The budget should include approximations of the project's future expenditures in EUR (€) based on real costs in the market.

All expenditures should follow the eligibility of cost criteria, no matter the source of financing (WBF or co-financing), the costs presented in the budget will be considered for financing.

Applicants are recommended to use the average exchange rates available at the given national bank at the time of preparing the application form. Detailed project costs together with financing sources must be presented in Budget section in Online Grant Management System.

When planning the budget, it is important to adhere to the following list of eligible cost per budget headings, i.e., that can be covered by the Fund:

- **Human Resources Costs** with up to 30 % of the Total Granted Amount from WBF - include costs of staff assigned to the project action (gross salaries of the dedicated project personal), including social security charges and other related costs, excluding bonuses); salaries and costs shall not exceed those normally borne by the beneficiary(ies), unless it is justified by showing that it is essential to carry out the action.
NOTE: *personnel engaged cannot be included as experts in Other direct costs, services aiming to avoid the double financing principle.*
- **Travel, Accommodation and Board costs** for persons and staff taking part in the action, provided they do not exceed those normally borne by the beneficiary/ies according to its rules and regulations. (The calculation of the travel costs by car must refer to the following criteria: ≤0.3 EUR/km.) Accommodation costs include the expenses for securing living spaces, such as hotels, hostels, rental apartments, or other types of lodging, where project participants can stay during the project's duration (The calculation of the accommodation costs not to exceed 65 EUR per night in WBF region and 80 EUR outside of the WBF

region). Boarding encompasses the costs associated with providing meals and related services to project participants; more specifically covers expenses for breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks, and beverages.

- **Other direct costs, services**
 - Rent of premises and related technical services, rental or leasing costs for equipment (new or used) and supplies specifically dedicated to the purposes of the action, costs of consumables specifically dedicated to the action costs of services and supplies purchased by the beneficiary(ies) for the purposes of the action,
 - Public relations costs, printing, advertising and design of promotion material, awards, and prizes,
 - Fees for artists/copyrights.
 - Fees for experts, specifically dedicated to the action, insurance, financial service costs (bank charges and other cost of financial transfers related to the action).

Indirect Costs

- The indirect costs incurred in carrying out the action may be eligible for flat-rate funding, but the total must not exceed 10% of the estimated subtotal direct eligible costs of the project action. (project or other running expenses).
- Indirect costs estimated as of the above are eligible if 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.
- Since the same cost could be treated as direct or indirect cost, the applicant shall describe in the application form which costs have been included in the category of the indirect costs allocated to the action.

NOTE: Upon agreeing on the final version of the budget, the applicant shall sign and stamp the budget and include it as an integral part of the Grant Contract.

4.2 Ineligible Costs

4.2.1 The following costs cannot be covered:

- a) Costs incurred for Applicant's activities undertaken before signature of the contract
- b) Debts and debt service charges (interest);
- c) Provisions for losses, or potential future liabilities;
- d) Activities aimed at profit making activities;
- e) Activities that are affiliated directly with/or supportive to political and/or religious agendas.
- f) Costs declared by the applicant and financed by another action or work programme;
- g) Purchases of land or buildings;
- h) Currency exchange losses;
- i) Credits to third parties, unless otherwise specified in the special conditions;
- j) Bonuses included in costs of staff; customs and import duties, or any other charges;
- k) Fines, financial penalties and expenses of litigation;
- l) Taxes, including VAT. (Except when it is non-recoverable under national VAT legislation might be eligible.)
- m) Applicant's individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, congresses.

4.3 Contribution In-Kind

Contributions in kind mean the provision of goods or services to Lead Applicant and Partners free of charge by a third party. These contributions are non-monetary and can be assigned a monetary value. Expenditures in-kind can take the form of:

- a) Donation of goods or services, excluding cash or any appreciated property
- b) Volunteering work directly impacting the action.

*In-kind contribution shall not be counted towards indirect costs of the project.

The value of such contributions must not exceed:

- a) either the costs borne or duly supported by accounting documents.

- b) or the costs generally accepted on the concerned market of reference.
- c) or, for volunteers' work, the unit cost per volunteer per day, defined and authorised by the WBF.
- d) In kind contributions must comply with national tax and social security rules.⁴

5. DISSEMINATION AND MONITORING

WBF plans to inform the audience around the region through *Online* and *Onsite* meetings.

Information Sessions on this Call for Proposals are planned to take place in Belgrade, Podgorica, Prishtina, Sarajevo, Skopje, Tirana, and other locations in the region, during the month of November-December 2023.

Please check the WBF webpage and social media pages WBF or the exact Info-session schedule (online & onsite).

5.1 Visibility

The applicant must take all necessary steps to publicise the fact that the Western Balkans Fund has financed the grant. As far as possible, actions that are funded by the Western Balkans Fund must incorporate information and communication activities designed to raise the awareness of specific or general audiences of the reasons for the project and the Western Balkans Fund support for the project in the contracting parties and regions concerned, as well as the results and the impact of this support.

The planned communication and visibility activities must be distinctly outlined in the OGMS application form, integrated into the action's work plan and budget.

When planning communication activities funded by the Western Balkans Fund (WBF), applicants must consider the following:

- **Cultural & Conflict Sensitivity**– the applicant when choosing the of communication and the messages to be conveyed should align with the existing social and religious norms in the location where the communication activity is being conducted.
- **Environmental Considerations** - all activities must show respect for the local environment and should not cause any harm or disruption.
- **Language Usage** – the English should be the primary language of all communication followed by the local language. This ensures that information is accessible and comprehensible to a wider audience, effectively reaching both international and local stakeholders.

The level of detail will be appropriate to the nature, extent and cost of the activities envisaged. This section is subject to evaluation and scoring.

Guiding Principles for maximizing communication impact:

- a) Timeliness – applicant must ensure that activities are conducted in a timely manner to enhance effectiveness.
- b) Accuracy – applicant must utilize accurate information to maintain credibility and trust.
- c) Targeted Audience – the applicant must direct communication efforts towards the appropriate audience(s) for optimal reach and engagement.
- d) Engaging Messaging – the applicant shall craft messages that are captivating and relevant to the target audience(s).
- e) Resource Efficiency – the applicant shall ensure that communication and visibility activities are well-balanced in terms of resources allocated, timing, and anticipated impact.

The applicant shall clearly identify the channels and means of communication in the project application. The WBF uses social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn) and strongly encourages applicants/beneficiaries to make references to the Fund's active accounts:

- Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/WesternBalkansFund/>
- Twitter https://twitter.com/balkans_fund
- Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/westernbalkansfund/>

⁴Clarification: Goods or services offered free or at less than the usual charge result in an in-kind contribution. Similarly, when a person or entity pays for services on the project's behalf, the payment is an in-kind contribution.

- LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/westernbalkansfund/>
- YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLuEaTSASEoaUu4ez5DIvnmw>

The allocated budget for communication and visibility actions should be clearly outlined in the work plan of any project funded or co-funded by the Western Balkans Fund. This budget should emphasize the communication activities that are essential at decisive stages throughout the project's lifespan. The level of detail provided should align with the nature, scope, and cost of the envisaged communication activities.

The Fund reserves the right to make use of the project results for its promotion.

5.2 Monitoring Project Actions

To ensure effective project action oversight and progress, the WBF conducts monitoring visits during their implementation. These visits are generally done at least once, but the frequency may change based on project needs and challenges.

The WBF shall notify the Lead Applicant (LA) and Project Partners (PPs) in advance about these visits, and the date and time will be agreed upon via email. Both LA and PPs should be prepared to provide necessary information and documents.

During these visits, the focus will be on activities' progress, timely execution, reported costs, progress towards project goals, project management, and addressing any issues or delays. The aim is to foster a constructive dialogue between program management and project partners for direct feedback on the project's status and prospects.

6. ETHICS CLAUSES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

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.

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 and sexual abuse - The Western Balkans Fund 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.

Anti-corruption and anti-bribery - The applicant shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations and codes relating to anti-bribery and anti-corruption. The WBF 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.

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 Western Balkans Fund are liable, depending on the seriousness of the facts observed, to have their contracts terminated or to be permanently excluded from receiving WBF funds.

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 is discovered after the award of the contract, the contracting authority may refrain from concluding the contract.

7. WHERE AND HOW TO SEND APPLICATIONS

Lead applicants shall submit project applications on behalf of their established partnerships in English through the user-friendly Online Grant Management System (OGMS). This system has been designed to streamline the application process for your convenience.

Lead applicant shall create e user in <https://www.wbfportal.org/applicant/> to proceed with completion of the information.

This system is developed to further facilitate the application process and is user friendly.

The online system provides detailed information about the Annex which is incorporated to the system Annex C. Declaration by the lead-applicant (Download, Sign, Scan and Upload in the OGMS).

Applications sent by other means (e.g., by fax, mail or by email) will be rejected. (In case of a system breakdown the applicants will be notified for further application instructions from the WBF Secretariat).

Upon submission of the project application online, the lead applicant shall receive a confirmation of receipt with the link for the survey to be completed by the applicant. Should the confirmation of the receipt be not received within 7 days after the deadline please contact the WBF in writing by using the following email address:

info@westernbalkansfund.org

*Please note that incomplete applications will be rejected automatically by the OGMS.

*Hand-written applications will not be accepted.

* Note: During the dissemination of the Call more detailed information about OGMS will be provided.

7.1 Deadline for submission of full applications

The deadline for the submission of project applications is: 27/12/2023, 16:00 CET (time).

The lead applicant is advised to avoid waiting until the last day to submit the full application, since heavy Internet traffic or a fault with the Internet connection (including electricity failure, etc.) could lead to difficulties in submission.

7.2 Additional Information

Inquiries pertaining to this Call for Proposals can be sent by e-mail no later than 15 working days before the deadline for the submission of project proposals to the following e-mail address:

info@westernbalkansfund.org

WBF has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date. Only the questions sent in written will be answered (no phone inquiries). Replies will be summarized and published no later than 10 working days before the deadline for submission of project proposals at the WBF website. Please note that the replies to the questions asked during the Information Sessions will also be published on the WBF website www.westernbalkansfund.org

Note: During the implementation of previous Calls for Proposals, the WBF has collected and published on its website the questions received which may be useful for the development of project action. The applicant is encouraged to find the FAQ on the following link:

<https://westernbalkansfund.org/fag/>

8. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF PROJECT PROPOSALS

Project proposals will be examined and evaluated by the WBF Secretariat.

The approval of the awarded projects is made by the WBF Council of the Senior Officials⁵ followed by the final endorsement of winning projects by the WBF Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

The WBF strives to award projects in equal and balanced proportions across the WB6 Contracting Parties.

All applications are evaluated according to the steps and criteria enclosed in Section 2, 3 & 4.

If the examination of the application reveals that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria stated in Section 2, 3 & 4, the application is automatically rejected on this sole basis.

8.1 Administrative and eligibility check

During the administrative and eligibility check the following will be assessed:

- If the deadline has been met. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
- If the project proposal satisfies the eligibility criteria specified in Section 2, 3 & 4 of these Guidelines.
- If the project has minimum 3 project partners coming from three different WB6 Contracting Parties
- If the project application was submitted through Online Grant Management System
- If the Declaration by the Lead applicant has been filled in and has been signed
- If the application is typed and is written in English
- If the Budget is completed in the format requested, and stated in EUR.
- If the duration of the action does not exceed 10 months nor is it less than 3 months.
- If the requested WBF contribution (amount) is not exceeding 15,000 EUR
- If the lead applicant is legal entity established in the WB6
- If the project partners are legal entities established in the WB6
- If the project partners are non-profit organizations/institutions (or privately owned faculties)
- If any of the requested information/document is missing or is incorrect, the application may be rejected on that sole basis and the application will not be evaluated further.

8.2 Evaluation of Applications

The project applications that pass the administrative and eligibility check will be evaluated on the relevance and design of the proposed action. The project applications will receive an overall score out of 100 in line with the evaluation grid below.

Each section is assessed on basis of different criteria with each being scored from 0 (not present / missing) to 5 (very good).

Scoring Description

Score	Description
5 – Very good	The information provided is outstanding in its details, clearness, and coherence.
4 – Good	The information provided is adequate with sufficiently, outlined details.
3 – Fair	The overall information provided is adequate, however some aspects are not clearly or sufficiently detailed.
2 – Poor	The information provided lacks relevant quality and contains strong weaknesses.
1 – Very poor	The information is provided has minimum relevance.

⁵ Clarification: The Council of the Senior Officials of the Western Balkans Fund is composed by the appointed officials from the Ministries of the Foreign Affairs of the WB6 members.

0 – None	The information requested is missing (either not filled in or not provided in the text). The information provided is not relevant for the criterion.
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Evaluation Grid

Name of the project:		
Protocol number:		
Scoring sections:	Specific Criteria	Section in Application
Partnership: (upto10points)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The regional partnership is needed to achieve the project action's objective/s and results. The project action's objectives and results cannot be achieved without regional cooperation. Benefits for the project partners are clearly described. 2. The project action involves relevant Partners, and they prove the necessary experience and competence in the field concerned. 	<i>Project Partners and Project Methodology section in OGMS</i>
Relevance of the project: (upto25points)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The project action clearly addresses relevant topic and areas of intervention. 2. The project action clearly identifies and involves target groups throughout the project implementation. 3. The project clearly proves to make a positive contribution to the horizontal principles of the Cfp/cross-cutting issues (e.g. the project action contributes to reconciliation, increase regional cooperation (quality or scale) or people-to-people links) 4. The project clearly addresses constraints and challenges of the target audience – there is a real need for the project action. 5. The project action objectives, outputs and results are linked to the Cfp in a clear and coherent way. 	<i>Project Relevance section in OGMS</i>
Methodology, Implementation Approach and Risks (upto30points)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The project action consists of a proposal with clear description of activities and are linked with outputs/deliverables. 2. The project action consists of the activity or time-plan (how, where, when and by whom they will be undertaken). 3. The project action consists of clear implementation methodology and partners involvement in the action. 4. The project action provides clear description on potential risks and mitigation measures. 5. Monitoring efforts listed and verification measures in the project actions are clearly explained and developed. 6. The project action has the potential to be sustainable and have a continuation at regional level and/or become a good practice/model of cooperation at regional level. 	<i>Methodology, Implementation Approach and Risks section in OGMS</i>
Visibility: (up to 10 points)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The communication objectives are clearly linked to the project action objectives. 2. The project action utilizes a diverse range of visibility and communication tools, channels, and platforms. The proposed visibility plan is of high quality and has the potential for widespread dissemination and a positive impact in the region. 	<i>Visibility section in OGMS</i>
Budget and cost-effectiveness of the project (up to 25 points)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The project action did not exceed 30% of costs in Human Resources? 2. The project action's budget reflects appropriately the activities and deliverables. 3. The project action has clearly outlined the co-financing and the funding sources. 4. The project actions costs are clearly explained in the justification box. 	<i>Project Budget section in OGMS</i>

*Applications which had obtained less than 55 points as score in the ranking list will not be considered for Evaluation Panel.

9. SUBMISSION OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

For WBF to verify the eligibility of the lead applicant and the project partners, shortlisted applicants will be required to provide the following documents:

Supporting documents must be provided through OGMS system:

1. Scanned statute and the registration certificate
2. Partnership Agreement
3. A financial statement of the lead applicant's latest bank accounts (the profit and loss account and the balance sheet for the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed).

The declaration by the lead applicant will be cross-checked with the supporting documents provided by the lead applicant. Any missing supporting document or any incoherence between the declaration by the lead applicant and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the application on that sole basis.

Any rejected application will be replaced by the next best placed application on the reserve list that falls within the available budget for this call for proposals.

Please see the provisions of Section 2.1.1.2 above for more details.

After verifying the supporting documents, the WBF Evaluation Committee will make a final recommendation to the WBF Council of the Senior of Officials as the decision-making body for awarding the grants.

10. NOTIFICATION OF THE WBF'S DECISION

10.1 Content of the decision

The lead applicants will be informed in writing and can follow their status of the application by the dedicated online grant management system. The decision will be disseminated through OGMS System/Email.

Letters to successful lead applicants must be sent within 5 working days after the decision is made. Unsuccessful lead applicants will be informed that they have not been selected.

Unsuccessful applicants will have the right to enquire further clarifications within 10 working days of the notification.

10.2 Indicative timetable

The exact day, hour, and venue for the information sessions will be provided in due time and published on the website. www.westernbalkansfund.org

Applicants shall be notified about the final decision on their application by the end of the evaluation period.

The grant contract shall be signed within 1 month following the notification of the award decision.

Implementation of the project shall begin on the day following the signing of the Grant Contract:

	DATE	TIME
Dissemination Period (if any)	20/11/2023 – 20/12/2023	N/A
Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the WBF	15 working days before the submission deadline <12/12/2023>	COB
Last date on which clarifications are issued by the WBF	10 working days before the submission deadline <17/12/2023>	COB
Deadline for submission of full applications	<27/12/2023>	16:00 CET
Information to lead applicants on the evaluation of the full applications	< Refer to OGMS >	N/A

Notification of award (after the eligibility check)	< Refer to OGMS>	N/A
Contract signature	Spring 2023	N/A

**All times are in the time zone of the contracting party of WBF.*

This indicative timetable refers to provisional dates and may be updated by the WBF authority during the procedure. In such cases, the updated timetable will be published on the WBF web site as well as OGMS System.

LIST OF ANNEXES

DOCUMENTS TO BE COMPLETED

All annexes are foreseen to be incorporated on the Online Grant Management System. The applicants will find all related documents on the system.

- Annex A:** Grant application form (OGMS)
- Annex B:** Partnership Agreement
- Annex C:** Declaration by the lead-applicant (Download, Sign, Scan and Upload in the OGMS)