

TERMS OF REFERENCE

for Engagement of Independent Evaluators

Project “Protecting Civic Space – Regional Civil Society Development Hub”

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1. Contracting Authority

The contracting authority is the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) Executive Office, Skopje.

1.2. Legal Basis

The legal basis for this assignment derives from the Grant Agreement No. 12715 01 signed between the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN), where SIDA has agreed to provide financial support to the project “Protecting Civic Space – Regional Civil Society Development Hub”.

1.3. Relevant Background

Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) is a network of civil society organizations from countries in southeast Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia, and Turkey). Our mission is to empower the civil society and influence European and national policies towards a more enabling environment for civil society development to ensure sustainable and functioning democracies in the Balkans.

Our goals and objectives are the following:

1. To increase the role of civil society by strengthening its voice in policy- and decision-making at the national, regional and EU level;
2. To promote the civil dialogue between the civil society actors, state institutions and the European Union to influence the public policies;
3. To develop advocacy knowledge and skills among civil society actors as a base for greater impact; and
4. To strengthen communication, coordination, and cooperation between the civil society actors in the Balkan region.

BCSDN’s target groups are CSOs working on civil society development in the Balkan region. The direct beneficiaries are local civil society development and resource organizations. With its activities, the network targets stakeholders such as national institutions and international governmental organizations (IGOs), national public bodies and/or offices for cooperation with CSOs in member countries, EU institutions, Council of Europe, the Regional Cooperation Council, the Western Balkan Fund and related inter-governmental initiatives in the Balkan region.

Following BCSDN’s and its members’ common vision to strengthen a vibrant, pluralistic and rights-based civil society in the Balkans, SIDA has granted significant financial support to BCSDN for

implementation of the project “Protecting Civic Space – Regional Civil Society Development Hub” (hereinafter referred to as the Project) which was initiated in September 2019.

BCSDN through this Project aims to establish a Regional Civil Society Development Hub that will serve as a regional center with a global impact that creates and shares knowledge and innovation on the role of CSOs in promoting democracy and supporting the development of civil society in the Western Balkans in the long term. The Hub will support effective, transparent, and accountable CSOs that will contribute to protecting civic space by enabling the use of new and established funding mechanisms, working methods, and means of cooperation.

In this respect, BCSDN will provide funding for regional multi-country action grants that will be awarded through a competitive procedure to regional networks and initiatives submitting the most promising proposals, against agreed quality criteria, on how to advance the civic space in their region. The Project’s objective is to enhance the regional cooperation and resilience of CSOs in their efforts to promote civic space and provide for long term prosperity for civil society in the Western Balkan countries, by addressing the discrepancies and bottlenecks identified in the development of civil society in this region.

This will be achieved by addressing the following specific objectives:

- CSOs contributed to a conducive environment for civil society development that enables them to be influential actors in society;
- CSOs contributed towards effective, transparent, and accountable work in protecting civic space.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT

2.1. Specific activities

The purpose of this contract is to recruit evaluators who will assist BCSDN in the selection of the best project’s applications (FULL APPLICATIONS) received under the Call for Project Proposals published¹ recently, in line with the criteria set in the respective Call and the Guidelines for Applicants.

The purpose of this engagement is to achieve a high-quality, complete, and coherent evaluation process.

The administrative and eligibility compliance check will be conducted by BCSDN, and only the applications that will pass this check will be provided to the evaluators for assessment. The assessment of the applications performed by the evaluators will be used by BCSDN in the process of selecting the best proposals.

Before the commencement of the evaluation procedure, the evaluators should have become acquainted with the Guidelines for Applicants for the respective Call, and the guidelines for evaluation that BCSDN will provide to them.

The evaluators shall provide an unbiased assessment of the substance of the project’s applications evaluated. They will provide scores for each application evaluated. Based on the scores assigned to each application form, BCSDN will be able to identify the best applications that may be considered for funding. Each evaluator shall fill in and sign a detailed evaluation grid for each application proposal evaluated. They must provide a comment for each subsection of the evaluation grid and a summary of the assessments, including comments on the strengths and weaknesses of each full application.

¹ <http://www.balkancsdn.net/bcsdn-announces-a-call-for-proposals-for-regional-multi-country-action-grants/>

Each application must be assessed on its own merits and not by comparing different applications. Evaluators are expected to bring their own experience of the sector and project implementation in the evaluation of each proposal.

2.2. Code of conduct

The evaluators shall perform their tasks fairly and impartially, adhering to the rules on impartiality, confidentiality, and prevention of conflict of interest.

The evaluators are bound by a Declaration of Impartiality and Confidentiality² to be signed before starting the assessment. If an evaluator believes there might be a situation of conflict of interests concerning one or more applicants, they must inform the contracting authority immediately.

Also, strict confidentiality is required from the evaluators involved in the implementation of this contract, notably on the assessments of individual applications.

3. SELECTION CRITERIA

- Experience in evaluation of at least two (2) call for proposals for grants, as evaluator/ assessor,
- At least five years of relevant working experience in the field of the civil society sector, working with or in the civil society organizations in the Western Balkan (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, and Serbia) on the thematic area(s) covered with the Project, and in particular on advancing the civic space and contributing to an enabling environment for the CSOs, and strengthening the CSOs capacities with a specific focus on accountability and transparency,
- Proficient knowledge of the English language,
- No conflict of interests with regards to BCSDN and the Project, meaning individuals who are already involved in BCSDN governing bodies, in the entities related to the Hub's functioning or are somehow involved in the work of the network are NOT eligible to apply for this assignment.

4. LOCATION AND DURATION

4.1. Starting period

The tentative start date will be the beginning of October 2020.

The actual commencement of the assignment will be officially notified by the contracting authority.

4.2. Foreseen finishing period or duration

The duration of the assignment depends on the number of applications that will be submitted under the referenced Call. The total duration of the assignment shall not exceed one month from the commencement date.

Indicatively, up to 15 working days are foreseen for the evaluators, where they are expected to evaluate 3-4 full applications per day.

4.3. Location(s) of assignment

The work carried out by the evaluator will be home-based.

² A standard document will be made available by the contracting authority.

5. PAYMENT TERMS

5.1. Type of Contract: fee-based contract.

5.2. Payment:

The compensation for the assignment is EUR 120,00 per working day (gross amount).

Payment will be made upon the approval of the respective evaluation report that will be prepared by BCSDN based on the evaluation grids.

6. HOW TO APPLY

Individuals are invited to send the following documents:

- Letter of Interest and CV,
- Two recommendations letters for similar work engagements as evaluator/ assessor,

in English to this mail address: regionalhub@balkancsd.net, with the subject: **Application for Independent Evaluators.**

However, the applicants should be aware that BCSDN may request the provision of other supporting documents to confirm the statements given in the respective CVs.

Deadline for application:

24:00 Central European Time on 11 September 2020.