



## **Active Citizen Fund NGO Malta Programme 2014 – 2021 Open Call for Proposals**

### **Call #2**

*Increased citizen participation in civic activities*

[www.activecitizensfund.mt](http://www.activecitizensfund.mt)

Fund operated by:



*This is an open call for VOs registered with the Commissioner of Voluntary Organisations to submit project proposals under the ACF Malta Programme with the theme*

## **Increased citizen participation in civic activities**

*Project grant: max of € 25,000*

*Duration: 12 – 18 months.*

### **The Active Citizens Fund**

Solidarity Overseas Service Malta (SOS Malta) acting as the Fund Operator (FO) for the Active Citizens Fund NGO Programme in Malta (ACF Malta) is announcing **an open call for proposals** to increase citizen participation in activities fostering human rights and social inclusion.

The Active Citizens Fund is implemented within the EEA and Norway Grants 2014–2021 and has a total budget of € 15 million granted by the Donor States of the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism: Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The total amount designated for grant support for Malta is € 369,000.

The overall objective of the ACF Malta is to **strengthen civil society and active citizenship and to empower vulnerable groups**. ACF Malta shall also contribute to the achievement of the objective of the EEA and Norway Grants, that is, **to reduce economic and social disparities and to strengthen bilateral relations between Malta and the donor states**.

The Active Citizens Fund recognises the fundamental role that the civic sector plays in ensuring democratic governance, human rights and social cohesion across Europe. ACF Malta, thus, financially supports citizens' initiatives to boost collaboration, education and further development of the capacities of the civic sector.

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## Programme areas

The four areas supported by the ACF Malta NGO Programme are: <sup>1</sup>

**Democracy, active citizenship, good governance and transparency.**  
**Human rights and equal treatment through combating any discrimination.**  
**Social justice and inclusion of vulnerable groups.**  
**Environment and climate change.**

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## Focus of the call

This call is for project proposals that support the outcome **increased citizen participation in civic activities** of the ACF Malta Programme.

Voluntary Organisations (NGOs)<sup>2</sup> are encouraged to come up with innovative approaches, activities and solutions under the following **thematic areas**:

- Facilitation of civic participation at local and national level: access to information, access to justice in environmental matters in accordance with the Aarhus Convention etc., citizen activism, volunteering.
- Education initiatives in media literacy, critical thinking and healthy debate education.
- Advocacy for increased citizen involvement in public decision-making.

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<sup>1</sup> *Provision of welfare and basic services shall only be supported as part of wider actions addressing awareness-raising, advocacy, empowerment and reform initiatives.*

<sup>2</sup> *Under Maltese Law referred to as a Voluntary Organisations.*

## Call priorities

- **To strengthen the capacity and sustainability of the civil society sector.** All projects shall be required to set aside a minimum of 5% of the grant for Project Financial Management to improve their financial management capacity.
- **To improve outreach to under-served target groups and ensure that the programme supports hard-to-reach target groups.** The focus of the projects shall be on advocating for the rights of under-served groups rather than on providing services.<sup>3</sup>
- **To support projects that focus on asylum-seekers and migrants** as one of the target groups of the programme.

## Supported activities (shall include but not be limited to):

- involving the public in public policy decision-making
- lobbying on good governance and responsible citizenship
- training in critical thinking
- training in media literacy
- strengthening efforts against violation of human rights
- campaigns strengthening civic participation
- community mapping on civic participation
- support of volunteering and active interest in civic life

## Output indicators



The ACF Malta Programme takes a results-oriented approach. Therefore, it seeks to support projects that have clearly defined aims and measurable results that fit in with the Project Results Framework (presented below). The Fund Operator will monitor the success of the funded projects by the beneficiaries' ability to achieve and report upon these results.

Each project must contribute towards the overall aim of the ACF Programme, i.e. **Civil society and active citizenship strengthened and vulnerable groups empowered.**

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<sup>3</sup> *Provision of welfare and basic services shall only be supported as part of wider actions addressing awareness-raising, advocacy, empowerment and reform initiatives.*

Each project must also contribute towards the specific outcome of the Programme i.e. **Increased citizen participation in civic activities.**

	Expected programme results	Indicator	Unit of measurement	Source of verification	Project must fulfil
<b>Overall aim of ACF Programme</b>	<b>Civil society and active citizenship strengthened, and vulnerable groups empowered</b>	Number of people engaged in civil society organisation activities <sup>4</sup> (disaggregated by age, gender, migrant status)	Number	Project Promoters' records, Attendance sheets, Petition signatures	 <i>(All projects will report against this indicator during implementation)</i>
<b>Outcome of ACF Programme</b>	<b>Increased citizen participation in civic activities</b>	Number of incidents of human rights violations identified and reported	Number	Project promoters' records; Formal acknowledgement of human rights violation reports	 <i>(All projects will report against this indicator)</i>
		Number of national policies and law influenced	Number	Formal responses, acknowledgement of input to consultations, Informal feedback, Survey responses	<i>(To be reported upon if applicable to the project)</i>
		<b>Number of public institutions directly involving citizens in the decision-making process</b>	Number	Project promoters' records	<i>(To be reported upon if applicable to the project)</i>

<sup>4</sup> Disaggregation "Migrant status" to be tracked in FO's system.

Each project shall contribute to the achievement of **at least one of the outputs** listed below quantified according to the nature and objectives of the project. Applicants can choose to add an output that is directly relevant to their project.

More details can be found in the *Guidelines for Applicants*.

<b>Output 1</b>	Civic participation supported	Number of civil society education initiatives on civic participation supported	Number	Project promoters' records; Fund Operator's records	<i>(To be reported upon if applicable to the project)</i>
		Number of supported civil society education initiatives on critical thinking and healthy debate	Number	Project promoters' records; Fund Operator's records	<i>(To be reported upon if applicable to the project)</i>
<b>Output 2</b>	General public and CSOs educated in media literacy	Number of CSO staff trained in media literacy (disaggregated by gender)	Number	Project Promoters' records, Attendance sheets or online enrolment records	<i>(To be reported upon if applicable to the project)</i>
		Number of people educated in media literacy <sup>5</sup> (disaggregated by gender, migrant status)	Number	Attendance sheets or online enrolment records	<i>(To be reported upon if applicable to the project)</i> <i>(To be reported upon if applicable to the project)</i>
<b>Output 3</b>	Advocacy for increased citizen involvement in public decision-making supported	Number of advocacy initiatives on increased citizen involvement in public decision-making supported	Number	Project promoters' records; Fund Operator's records	<i>(To be reported upon if applicable to the project)</i>

<sup>5</sup> Disaggregation "Migrant status" to be tracked in FO's system.

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## Grant amount

The total available funds to be distributed as grants under this call are **€174,932.59**.

The project grant rate may be up to 100% of the eligible expenditure of the projects.

The minimum amount of grant applied for shall be **€15,000** and the maximum **€25,000**.

## Eligible expenditure

Expenditures must be linked to project activities and be paid within the project period (as specified in the project contract). Eligible expenditures include staff costs, travel costs, costs of services or equipment necessary for project implementation. A detailed list of eligible and non-eligible costs can be found in the *Guidelines for Applicants*.

Projects cannot generate any profit.

## Indirect costs

A flat rate of up to 15 % of direct eligible staff costs can be claimed under the project to cover necessary costs related to the realisation of the project.

## Financial management

A minimum of 5% of the grant is to be allocated to the financial management of the project.

## Payment of the grant

The grant will be paid by instalments (defined in the project contract) as follows:

- Up to 40 % of the grant support will be transferred to a bank account dedicated to the project as an advance payment prior to the commencement of the project;
- Interim payments (their number depends on the length of the project) will be paid on submission and approval of interim monitoring report(s); and
- A final payment of 20 % of the grant support will be paid following approval of the final monitoring report.

## Duration of the project

The duration of the projects supported under this call shall **not be less than 12 months** and **not more than 18 months**. Projects are to commence in **January 2022**. The duration is counted from the date of commencement stated in the project contract.

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## Eligibility of applicants

This call is open to **Voluntary Organisations (VOs)** that are **enrolled and compliant with the Commissioner of Voluntary Organisations and in compliance with the Maltese Voluntary Organisations Act.**<sup>6</sup>

Lead applicants must have **at least one legally employed member of staff**<sup>7</sup> as of May 2021.

Applicants must also meet the following criteria:

- They are a non-governmental organisation (NGO), i.e. a non-profit, voluntary organisation established as a legal entity, having a non-commercial purpose, independent of local, regional and central government, public entities, political parties and commercial organisations. Religious institutions and political parties are not considered to be NGOs.
  
- They meet the following principles:
  - Have members who do not have any direct commercial interest in the outcome of the work of the organisation or of its commercial activities and should not pursue the commercial or professional interests of their members. This requirement therefore excludes trade- and professional associations, where the aims and purposes of the association is to further the specific interests of its members only.
  
  - Are non-profit, being organisations that have not been created nor operate to generate personal profit. Although they may have paid staff and may engage in revenue generating activities, they do not distribute profits to their members nor to their board. Where

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<sup>6</sup> For details: <http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=8958&l=1>

<sup>7</sup> Staff member needs to be on the lead applicant organisation's payroll.



revenue generating activities are undertaken, these should not represent the purpose of the NGO, but should be a means to support its mission and values.

- Are voluntary in nature, formed voluntarily by groups or individuals and usually involving an element of voluntary participation in the organisation.
- Act in the public arena and for the public good on concerns and issues related to the well-being of people, groups or society as a whole.
- Have some degree of formal or institutional existence, unlike informal or ad hoc groups, involving formal statutes or other governing document(s) defining their mission, objectives and scope.
- Have transparent structures and elected chair/board and are accountable to their members and donors.
- Are independent of local, regional and national government and other public authorities.
- Are independent of political parties and commercial organisations.
- Abide by the principles of democratic values and human rights.

Applicants shall have to provide proof<sup>8</sup> that they are legally registered with the Voluntary Organisations Commissioner in Malta.

Successful applicants will be asked to register for the **ACF Malta Capacity Building online course** which will be launched in **January 2022** and must be fully completed by **March 2022**. More information about the course can be found on [activecitizensfund.mt/capacity-building-courses/](http://activecitizensfund.mt/capacity-building-courses/)

Applicants shall be **directly responsible** for the implementation of the project for which they are seeking a grant and must not act merely as intermediaries.

**Applicants are encouraged to download the *Guidelines for Applicants* prior to filling out the application from [www.activecitizensfund.mt](http://www.activecitizensfund.mt)**

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<sup>8</sup> Copy of their registration certificate.

## Eligible partners

**Partnerships are strongly recommended.** Project proposals that will be implemented through partnerships will be awarded extra points during the evaluation phase.

Partners shall share a common economic or social goal with the applicant, which is to be realised through the implementation of the project. They should have the will to contribute to the outcome/s of the project and their participation should be needed to reach the aims of the project. Partners should be actively involved in the preparation, implementation and evaluation phases of the project.

Partners<sup>9</sup> in projects may include public or private entities, commercial or non-commercial, as well as non-governmental organisations established as a legal person, whose primary locations are:

- Malta or any other beneficiary states of ACF Grants<sup>10</sup>; or/and
- Donor States: Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein.

Partners in projects may be:

- A. **Recipients of funds**, including:
- enrolled and compliant voluntary organisations (as per eligibility criteria)
  - public or private, commercial or non-commercial entities.

Examples of Project Partners that are eligible to have a share of the budget proposed include:

- Think-tanks and academic institutions that can contribute expertise to a project, particularly where a project is innovative and where research into the outcomes/results of a project would be valuable for wider learning, dissemination and replication.
- Statutory bodies and agencies, (local governments, national government agencies etc), in building cross-sectoral partnerships.

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<sup>9</sup> Meaning **not** the Lead Partner but the Co-Partner/s.

<sup>10</sup>Beneficiary states of EEA Grants: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

**B. Non-recipients of funds, including:**

- Informal, ad-hoc and self-help organisations (including grassroots organisations) that are not registered legal entities in the beneficiary state.

They, nonetheless, must meet the following requirements:

- not for personal profit
- act for public good
- are voluntary and non-discriminatory in nature
- are independent of local, regional and national government and other public authorities
- are independent of political parties, religious institutions and commercial organisations.

Informal groups shall be represented by one single person, who signs the project partnership agreement on behalf of the group.<sup>11</sup> The partnership agreement shall limit the role of the informal group/s solely to participation in project outputs with no monetary compensation for input of human resources, thus, as a non-recipient of funds.<sup>12</sup>

Project partnerships shall be established through partnership agreements with the partners and will be written in English.

Project partners have to provide **proof** that they are **legally registered** in the country in which they are established.

Project partners of projects that have been accepted for funding will also be required to register for the online ACF Malta Capacity Building course which will be launched in January 2022 and must be fully completed by March 2022. More information about the course can be found on [activecitizensfund.mt/capacity-building-courses/](http://activecitizensfund.mt/capacity-building-courses/).

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<sup>11</sup> A commitment declaration signed by at least two representatives of the informal group (one being the representative eventually signing the project partnership agreement) shall be presented to the lead applicant and the latter should submit such declaration with the proposal under section "Project Partnership Framework / Organigram."

<sup>12</sup> An informal group cannot be a direct recipient of the project grant. Expenditure related to the involvement of the informal group shall be managed and borne by the project promoter

## Bilateral relations - donor partnerships

Applicants are encouraged to include a bilateral partnership with ‘a donor project partner’ as part of their project application. Such a partnership could include networking, exchange, sharing and transfer of knowledge, technology, experience and best practice and should be reflected in the development and establishment of cooperation at project level within the project application.

A ‘donor project partner’ is a legal entity actively involved in, and effectively contributing to, the implementation of a project, and whose primary location is in one of the donor states (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway). Both public and private entities, commercial and non-commercial, as well as non-governmental organisations may participate as donor project partners in a project.

### **The inclusion of a bilateral partnership in the project will be considered an asset.**

The following Donor Contact Points have been set up to assist applicants to identify potential partners from the donor states. Questions on potential partnerships can also be submitted to these contact points:

- the Norwegian Helsinki Committee ([www.ngonorway.org](http://www.ngonorway.org)). This site also includes a database (<https://ngonorway.org/partners/>) to facilitate the identification of partners
- the Icelandic Centre for Human Rights (<https://www.humanrights.is/en>)

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An applicant may submit **only one application**. A lead applicant cannot apply as a partner in any other ACF Malta funded project.

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## Application, deadline and submission

Application forms (including Annexes I, II and III) can be **downloaded** from the <https://activecitizensfund.mt/> website.

Applications and supporting documentation (see list under administrative criteria) are to be **submitted:**

- By **hand / post** to the SOS Malta offices, 10 Triq il-Ward, Sta Venera. SOS Malta staff will be available at the offices between **09:00 – 12:00 noon** every day from **Monday 19 July - Friday 23 July 2021**.

Please submit **2 bound hard copies** of the application and supporting documentation and a **pendrive** containing a soft copy of the same.

The first page of the application should be **stamped and signed in blue ink** by a legal representative of the organisation. The rest of the application (including the Annexes and organigrams) and all supporting documentation **should be initialised on each page also in blue ink**.

OR

- By sending a **stamped, signed and initialised copy** of the application and supporting documentation (as described above) to [acfmalta@sosmalta.org](mailto:acfmalta@sosmalta.org). Please send files through [www.wetransfer.com](http://www.wetransfer.com).

Applicants will receive a confirmation via email upon receipt of submission.

The **deadline** for applications is the **23 July 2021 at 12:00pm (noon)**.

The main reference documentation for this Call for Proposals are the *Guidelines for Applicants* and the *Application Form* and templates: *Annex I Project Work Plan*, *Annex II Project Budget Breakdown* and *Annex III Communication Plan*. All applications must be filled in English using the forms provided.

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## Evaluation of projects

All the applications received will be reviewed for compliance with three types of selection criteria: **administrative, eligibility** and **evaluation** criteria. The administrative and eligibility compliance check will be made by administrative staff of SOS Malta. Applications that do not meet the administrative and eligibility criteria will be subject to rejection and will have the right to appeal.

Projects which are in compliance with the administrative and eligibility criteria will be evaluated by two impartial experts appointed by SOS Malta.

### Administrative criteria

- The project application has been submitted by the deadline: **23 July 2021 by 12:00pm**.
- The project application has been submitted in accordance with the permissible method(s) of delivery (electronic copy, signatures, etc.)
- All requested supporting documents, as listed in the table below, have been submitted:

Audited accounts/financial statements <sup>13</sup> of the last financial year <b><i>[obligatory also for Project Partners in case of partnership]</i></b>	
Latest certificate of compliance with VO Office <b>[obligatory for Project Applicant and Project Partners in case of voluntary organisations]</b>	
Copy of Voluntary Organisation Certificate <sup>14</sup> <b>[obligatory also by Partners in case of voluntary organisations]</b>	
Copy of VAT Certificate if applicable	
JobsPlus employment history up to December 2020 making sure no personal data of employees or employer is disclosed	

The application is automatically excluded from further evaluation if one or more administrative criteria are not met. If an application is missing one or more of the above mentioned documents / information requested in the application, the applicant will be invited to submit the missing

<sup>13</sup> According to the requirements of the Voluntary Organisations Act

<sup>14</sup> In the case of a newly established NGO, a copy of the receipt of enrolment would suffice. As soon as the certificate is received, a copy must be submitted.

documents / information by the FO. If the applicant fails to provide the missing information within the period stipulated by the FO, the application will not proceed to the next step of the evaluation.

Rejected applicants will be informed within a week of the deadline for submissions of applications, and they have the right to appeal this decision within 72 hours of being notified about the rejection (see appeal procedure below).

## Eligibility requirements

**Documents required to prove eligibility of applicant** to include:

- Proof of employed staff up to December 2020.
- Audited accounts/financial statements of the last financial year.
- Copy of Voluntary Organisation Certificate.
- Certificate of compliance with VO Office.

**Eligibility of partner/s** (refer to Section 2.4 of the *Guidelines for Applicants*), to include:

- Audited accounts/financial statements of the last financial year.
- Copy of Voluntary Organisation Certificate.
- Certificate of compliance with VO Office.

## Eligibility of application

- The requested grant amount is within the permissible limits provided in the call.
- The proposed implementation period is within the permissible limits provided in the call.
- No other applications have been submitted by the same applicant.
- A minimum of 5% of the grant has been allocated to a financial management capacity.
- The allocation of indirect costs is equal or less than 15% of direct eligible personnel costs.



**Successful applicants will be required to register for the online ACF Malta Capacity Building course which will be launched in January 2022 and must be fully completed by March 2022. More information about the course can be found on [activecitizensfund.mt/ capacity-building-courses/](https://activecitizensfund.mt/capacity-building-courses/)**

The application is automatically excluded from further evaluation if one or more eligibility criteria are not met. However, prior to an application being rejected, the applicant will be given the opportunity to clarify and resubmit the application with correct information. If the applicant fails to provide the missing information within this period stipulated by the FO, the application will not proceed to the next step of the evaluation.

Rejected applicants will be informed within a week of the deadline for submissions of applications, and they have the right to appeal this decision within 3 working days of being notified about the rejection (see appeal procedure below).

## Evaluation criteria

Projects which are in compliance with the administrative and eligibility criteria are subject to an evaluation. As Fund Operator, SOS Malta shall appoint two impartial external experts to be part of the Evaluation Committee that will be independent from the Fund Operator. The external experts shall score the applications according to the evaluation criteria listed in the table below. The maximum total score shall be 100 points. The final score is an average of the points given by each of the evaluators.

The experts shall justify in writing the scores they award against each criterion they evaluate. For the purposes of ranking the projects, the average of the scores awarded by the experts shall be used. If the difference between the scores given by the two experts for a project is more than 30% of the higher score, a third expert shall be commissioned by, and be independent of, the Fund Operator to score the project. In such cases the average score of the two closest scores shall be used for the ranking of the projects.

Evaluation criteria <sup>15</sup>	Maximum score <sup>16</sup>
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<sup>15</sup> The selection criteria are divided into sections and subsections. Each subsection will be given a score between 1 and 5 or 10 relevant to the subsection, in accordance with the following guidelines: 1 = very poor and 5 or 10 = very good.

<sup>16</sup> The minimum total score required for an application to be recommended for funding shall be 55 points.



<b>1. Relevance and coherence between the project and the Programme objective, outcomes and outputs</b>	<b>45</b>
Coherence between the proposal and the outcomes and the thematic areas of the programme.	15
The proposal includes verifiable and measurable indicators for the outcome of the action in line with programme indicators.	10
The target groups are clearly identified, including end beneficiaries and intermediaries, if the case. Asylum-seekers and migrants and youth are included as target groups	10
The project is relevant to the needs of target groups . The needs have been clearly defined and the proposal addresses them appropriately.	10
<b>2. Implementation of the project, feasibility of the suggested activities and measures</b>	<b>10</b>
The activities proposed are feasible, practical, and consistent with the objectives and expected results. The log frame is clear and feasible.	5
The communication plan is comprehensive and includes direct reference to the target groups and the means of communication selected to reach them	5
<b>3. Partnership</b>	<b>10</b>
The project is implemented by the lead applicant in collaboration with one or more project partners and the partners' level of involvement and participation in the action is satisfactory and clearly outlined in the application	5
The project includes a bilateral partnership with a donor project partner.	5
<b>4. Experience of applicant and capacity to implement the project</b>	<b>10</b>
The applicant and partners (where applicable) have sufficient experience of project management.	5
The applicant and partners (where applicable) have sufficient technical expertise (notably knowledge of the issues to be addressed).	5
<b>5. Sustainability of the intervention</b>	<b>5</b>
The project describes how the results shall be maintained after end of project time frame	5

<b>6. Economic efficiency (reasonable and justifiable budget, coherence with the proposed activities)</b>	<b>20</b>
The proposed costs are proportional, realistic and necessary for the proposed actions and expected results.	10
The applicant and partners (where applicable) have or are proposing sufficient management capacity (including staff, equipment and ability to handle the budget for the action).	10
<b>Total number of points</b>	<b>100</b>

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## Selection Process

Following the scoring given by Evaluation Committee, the Selection Committee shall review the ranked list of projects and may modify the ranking of the projects in justified cases.

The Selection Committee will consist of at least three persons possessing the relevant sector expertise and experience working within civil society. Such experts shall have no direct or indirect interests that are, or appear to be, incompatible with the impartial exercise of their function. At least one of them shall be external to SOS Malta.

The Selection Committee shall operate in an open, transparent and accountable manner, and its composition will ensure that due attention is paid to possible areas of conflict of interest. The selection procedure must provide equal treatment of all applicants.

The FMO, the National Focal Point and the Royal Norwegian Embassy shall be invited to participate in the meetings of the Selection Committee as observers.

The board of SOS Malta takes the final decision on the projects to be supported based on the Selection Committee's recommendation, not later than 8 weeks following the deadline for applications. Modifications to the recommendations of the Selection Committee shall be justified. SOS Malta shall keep a record of the selection process and decisions taken.

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## Appeal procedure

If an applicant, activities or costs planned for the project do not fall under the administrative and eligibility criteria, the application will be subject to rejection. Rejected applicants will be informed within a week of the deadline for submissions of applications, and they have the right to appeal

this decision within 72 hours of being notified about the rejection. The appeal should be submitted via email using as subject text: 'Appeal' and sent to [acfmalta@sosmalta.org](mailto:acfmalta@sosmalta.org).

Appeals are reviewed by a board member of SOS Malta and the Chief Executive Officer and should be resolved not later than a week after the submission. The rejected applicant will be informed about the appeal's resolution via email.

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## More information

Any question may be sent by email on [acfmalta@sosmalta.org](mailto:acfmalta@sosmalta.org). Answers will be published as a Q & A list on the ACF Malta website. The deadline for submitting questions shall be 10 working days prior to the deadline for applications.

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