

Iceland   
Liechtenstein  
Norway **Active  
citizens** fund

# The Active Citizens Fund 2014-2021

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## GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Fund operated by:



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## General information on ACF Malta 2014-2021

The Active Citizens Fund (ACF) is established under the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 and has a total budget of € 15 million that is granted by the Donor States of the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism - Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway - to 15 EU countries in Central and Southern Europe and the Baltics.

The objectives of the EEA and Norwegian Grants are **to contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area and to strengthen bilateral relations between the donor states and the beneficiary 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 also reflects the firm recognition of the sector's role as a fundamental building block of 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.

The overall objective of the ACF Malta Programme is to **strengthen civil society and active citizenship and to empower vulnerable groups.**

The programme provides flexible and accessible funding with the aim of fostering an enabling environment for the civil society sector, strengthening its capacity, strengthening support for human rights and social inclusion and increasing citizen participation in civic activities. Projects are funded through open calls for proposals.

The ACF Malta is established through the Memorandum of Understanding between the Donor States and SOS Malta. The Fund Operator for the ACF Malta is Solidarity Overseas Service Malta (SOS Malta). The total amount designated for grant support for Malta is € 369,000.

**These guidelines regulate the terms and procedures to applying for funding from ACF Malta.**

## 1. ACF Malta 2nd call for project proposals

### 2.1 Objectives and areas of support

The overall objective of the ACF Malta Programme is to have **civil society and active citizenship strengthened and vulnerable groups empowered**.

The four areas supported by the ACF Malta Programme under this objective 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.<sup>2</sup>

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

Voluntary Organisations (NGOs)<sup>3</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.

## 2.2 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**

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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> *Protection of the environment and climate change shall only be supported as part of measures to promote civic participation, advocacy, social innovation and active citizenship.*

<sup>3</sup> *Under Maltese Law referred to as a Voluntary Organisations.*

**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>4</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

## 2.3. Expected project 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.**

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 |
|--|----------------------------|-----------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
|--|----------------------------|-----------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|

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<sup>4</sup> *Provision of welfare and basic services shall only be supported as part of wider actions addressing awareness-raising, advocacy, empowerment and reform initiatives.*

|                                     |   |   |        |  |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|--------|--|---|
| <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>5</sup> (disaggregated by age, gender, migrant status) | Number | Project Promoters' records, Attendance sheets, Petition signatures                               | ✓<br><br><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             | ✓<br><br><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>                               |

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.

|                 |                               |  |        |   |   |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|--|--------|---|---|
| <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> |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|--|--------|---|---|

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

|                 |  |   |        |   |  |
|-----------------|--|---|--------|---|--|
|                 |  | 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>6</sup> (disaggregated by gender, migrant status)  | Number | Attendance sheets or online enrolment records                             | <i>(To be reported upon if applicable to the project)</i><br><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>  |

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<sup>6</sup> Disaggregation "Migrant status" to be tracked in FO's system.

## 2.4. Eligible 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>7</sup>

Lead applicants must have **at least one legally employed member of staff**<sup>8</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 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.

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<sup>7</sup> For details: <http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lom&itemid=8958&l=1>

<sup>8</sup> Staff member needs to be on the lead applicant organisation's payroll.

- 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>9</sup> that they are legally registered with the Voluntary Organisations Commissioner in Malta.

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/).

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.

## **2.5. Project partnerships**

The ACF Malta supports and encourages the formation of partnerships to enhance the value and impact of project applications. 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.

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<sup>9</sup> Copy of their registration certificate

Partners<sup>10</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>11</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.

**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>12</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

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<sup>10</sup> Meaning **not** the Lead Partner but the Co-Partner/s.

<sup>11</sup> Beneficiary states of EEA Grants: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

funds.<sup>13</sup>

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

Guidance on drafting of Partnership Agreements can be provided by the Fund Operator.

Project partners have to provide proof that they are legally registered in the country they reside in.

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/).

## 2.6. 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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<sup>12</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>13</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.

## 2.7. Duration and location of projects

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.

## 2.8. Communication

The project promoters must communicate the achievements of their project and must acknowledge the support received from the ACF Malta to the relevant audiences at national, and/or local levels. Thus, the following steps should be followed:

- Develop a communication plan as part of the project application (to fill in template in Appendix III – Project Communication Plan). The aim of this plan should be to create awareness of the project and its objectives, highlight any bilateral cooperation with entities in Iceland, Liechtenstein and/or Norway and provide information on the implementation, results and the impact of the support from the donors of the project, mentioning target group activity, such as an event or a press conference, on progress achievements and results.
- Make information about the project available to the FO to include on the dedicated ACF Malta website including updates and achievements of the project throughout the implementation phase.
  - Create a landing page on an already existing organisation website.

The communication plan shall also include the following elements:

1. The main **channels of communication** that will be used to reach the target audience(s). These communication channels should include a webpage(s) on the applicants'/partners' website(s). Every project will be featured on the dedicated ACF Malta website.
2. What are the **key messages** your project seeks to communicate? This can be updated during project implementation.
3. How will the applicant/partners **assess the effectiveness** of the communication activities? Here the applicant is expected to describe how will they assess the effectiveness of the communications plan in terms of reaching the project objectives and target groups. For example, how will they know if the communications activities have contributed to increasing the awareness of the ACF and the contribution of the donors? What other criteria will they use to assess the effectiveness of their communications activities?



## 2. Financial parameters

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 project.

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

### 3.1 Double funding

The project being proposed for funding shall not be funded from other sources, either national or international. Double-funding of activities is not permissible. Should there be an indication of double-funding of project activities, the project promoter will be obliged to refund the funds in question to the Fund Operator and the agreement between the project promoter and the Fund Operator will be automatically terminated.

### 3.2. Eligible expenditure

Eligible expenditure refers to the expenditure incurred between the first and final dates of the project time-frame as per signed grant agreement. The expenditure must be incurred by the project promoter and the project partners (in case of partnerships) when implementing the actions of the projects and that can be charged to the project in line with the Project Budget presented with the application which must be drafted based on the principles and conditions listed below.

#### 3.2.1. General principles on the eligibility of costs in projects

The principles set forth in this article shall apply in full to all eligible expenditures unless otherwise stated.

Eligible expenditures of projects are those actually incurred by the project promoter or the project partner, which meet the following criteria:

- a. they are incurred between the first and final dates of eligibility of a project as specified in the project contract;
- b. they are connected with the subject of the project and they are indicated in the detailed budget of the project;
- c. they are proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the project;
- d. they are used for the sole purpose of achieving the objective of the project and its expected outcome(s), in a manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- e. they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular through being recorded in the accounting records of the project promoter and determined according to the

applicable accounting standards and generally accepted accounting principles; and

- f. they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation.

Expenditures are considered to have been incurred when the cost has been invoiced, paid and the subject matter delivered (in case of goods) or performed (in case of services and works). Exceptionally, costs in respect of which an invoice has been issued in the final month of eligibility are also deemed to be incurred within the dates of eligibility if the costs are paid within 30 days of the final date of eligibility. Overheads and depreciation of equipment are considered to have been incurred when they are recorded on the accounts of the project promoter and/or project partner.

The project promoter's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the expenditures and revenue declared in respect of the project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

### **3.2.2. Direct expenditures**

The eligible direct expenditures for a project are those expenditures that are identified by the project promoter and/or the project partner, in accordance with their accounting principles and usual internal rules, as specific expenditures directly linked to the implementation of the project and which can therefore be booked to it directly. The following direct expenditures are eligible provided that they satisfy the principles set out under clause 3.2.1 above:

- a. The cost of personnel assigned to the project, comprising actual remuneration including social security charges and other statutory costs as applicable, provided that this corresponds to the project promoter's and project partner's usual policy on remuneration.

Internal Staff costs are to be calculated on the basis of the following formula:

**Eligible staff costs = project hourly rate<sup>14</sup> X number of hours worked on the project**

- Project Hourly Rate = Annual Salary / Total number of hours worked in a year

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<sup>14</sup> Project Hourly Rate is different from Payroll Hourly Rate

- Annual Basic Salary = annual basic gross salary pre-tax + employer's share of national insurance + maternity benefit + statutory bonuses
  - Total number of hours worked in a year = [(52 weeks per year X number of working hours in a week<sup>15</sup>) – (hours of vacation leave<sup>16</sup> + hours of public holidays not covered from vacation leave)]
- b. Travel and subsistence allowances for personnel taking part in the project, provided that they are in line with the project promoter's and project partner's usual practices on travel costs:
- a.i. Travel Costs: Only the amount equivalent to economy tickets may be claimed, hence travelling which occurs in business class is requested to be backed by a quotation for an economy ticket for reimbursement purposes.
  - a.ii. Subsistence Allowance known also as Daily Allowance: This consists of a fixed subsistence allowance based on number of nights abroad. The amount of daily allowance must be in line with the relevant national legislation and internal rules of the entity when applicable; in the absence of such internal policy, the amount be in line with the rates stipulated by the European Commission applicable for the period in question.<sup>17</sup>
  - a.iii. Budget Categorisation for Travel and Subsistence: (1) Travel and Subsistence Allowance for personnel should be budgeted for and reported under "*Travel and subsistence allowances for personnel*". (2) Travel and Subsistence Allowance for participants of training/events should be budgeted for and reported under "*Costs of consumables and supplies*". (3) Travel and Subsistence Allowance of external experts and service providers should be budgeted for and reported under "*Costs entailed by other contracts awarded by a project promoter for the purposes of carrying out the project.*"

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<sup>15</sup> Being pro-rata to employment of staff in question based on employment status and not hours contributed to the project; i.e. if an individual is employed on a 20-hour basis per week thus number of working hours per week shall read 20 in above equation

<sup>16</sup> Being pro-rata to employment of staff in question based on employment status and not hours contributed to the project; i.e. if an individual is employed on a 20-hour basis per week thus vacation leave shall read 50% of total vacation leave application for full-time basis

<sup>17</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement/rules-implementation/thresholds\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement/rules-implementation/thresholds_en)

- c. Cost of new or second-hand equipment provided that it is depreciated in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles applicable to the project promoter and generally accepted for items of the same kind. Only the portion of the depreciation corresponding to the duration of the project and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the project may be taken into account by the Fund Operator. In case the Fund Operator determines that the equipment is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project, the entire purchase price of that equipment may be eligible.
- d. Costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the project.
- e. Costs entailed by other contracts awarded by a project promoter for the purposes of carrying out the project, provided that the awarding complies with the applicable rules on public procurement.
- f. Costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the project contract for each project.

Costs related to reconstruction, renovation, or refurbishment of a real estate shall not exceed 50% of the total eligible direct cost of the project.

Where the entire purchase price of equipment is eligible in accordance with point (c) of paragraph 1, the Fund Operator shall ensure that the project promoter:

- a. Keeps the equipment in its ownership for a period of at least five years following the completion of the project and continues to use the equipment for the benefit of the overall objectives of the project for the same period.
- b. Keeps the equipment properly insured against losses such as fire, theft or other normally insurable incidents both during project implementation and for at least five years following the completion of the project.
- c. Sets aside appropriate resources for the maintenance of the equipment for at least five years following the completion of the project.

The specific means for the implementation of this obligation shall be specified in the project contract. The Fund Operator may release any project promoter from the above obligations with respect to any specifically identified equipment where the Fund Operator is satisfied that, having regard to all relevant circumstances,

continued use of that equipment for the overall objectives of the project would serve no useful economic purpose.

The provisions listed above shall apply entirely to all eligible expenditures incurred by all the parties concerned and involved in the implementation of the Project.

### **3.2.3. Indirect expenditures**

Indirect costs are all eligible costs that cannot be identified by the project promoter and/or the project partner as being directly attributed to the project but which can be identified and justified by its accounting system as being incurred in direct relationship with the eligible direct costs attributed to the project. They may not include any eligible direct costs. Indirect costs of the project shall represent a fair apportionment of the overall overheads of the project promoter or the project partner.

Project promoters and project partners may apply a **flat rate of up to 15% of direct eligible personnel costs to cover the indirect expenditures.**

In the case of project promoters or project partners that are international organisations, or bodies or agencies thereof, indirect costs may be identified in accordance with the relevant rules established by such organisations; in such cases, the ruling policy/ies shall be referred to and briefly explained in the budget.

### **3.2.4. Financial management capacity**

Applicants are required to allocate a minimum of 5% of the overall total of the direct and indirect budget of their project (**i.e. 5% of total budget proposed**) for financial management capacity. This budget category shall cover the costs of project financial management with the aim of supporting the project promoter with the necessary bookkeeping of project costs and financial reporting thereof. The person/s engaged for this task can either be employed with the organisation or subcontracted. Procurement regulations (Clause 3.2.7 below refers) must be adhered to.

### **3.2.5 Excluded expenditures**

The following costs shall **not** be considered eligible:

- a. Interest on debt, debt service charges and late payment charges.
- b. Charges for financial transactions and other purely financial costs, except costs related to accounts and financial services imposed by the project contract.
- c. Costs related to purchase of land or real estate.
- d. Provisions for losses or potential future liabilities.
- e. Exchange losses.
- f. Recoverable VAT.
- g. Costs that are covered by other sources.

- h. Fines, penalties and costs of litigation, except where litigation is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project.
- i. Excessive or reckless expenditure.

### **3.2.6. Procurement regulations**

Notwithstanding provisions of national law that exempt NGOs from public procurement, any procurement procedures related to amounts above the European Union thresholds for procurement shall be undertaken in accordance with the applicable laws on procurement without regard for such an exemption.<sup>18</sup>

However, in cases of purchases related to an amount of €5,000 or higher but below the relevant European Union thresholds, the project promoter shall invite at least three suppliers/service provider to submit offers.

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<sup>18</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement/rules-implementation/thresholds\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement/rules-implementation/thresholds_en)

### 3. Development of bilateral relations - donor partnership

Bilateral relations between beneficiary states and donor states are mandatory within the ACF Programme. The aim of the Bilateral Outcome is to strengthen relations between civil society organisations and other entities in Malta and in the donor states and contribute to the objectives of the programme.

ACF Malta is encouraging project applicants 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 person that is actively involved in, and effectively contributing to, the implementation of a project and whose primary location is in one of the donor states. 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 degree of involvement and the content of the partner's contribution will vary but only projects implemented in close co-operation between beneficiary and donor state partners will be considered to be donor partnership projects.

The project level cooperation shall be mutually beneficial to the involved partners and the partnership is expected to have a positive impact on the project. They should be joint initiatives where input from both partners is necessary to achieve the project objectives. Donor project partners should be involved as early in the planning stages of the project cycle as possible. The donor project partner should be consulted on and given the opportunity to contribute to the relevant aspects of the project application.

The bilateral partnership component must be clearly described and integrated in the project application and the foreseen costs clearly outlined in the budget.

**Projects that have a bilateral partnership component will be positively assessed during the evaluation process.**

The FO will assist the applicants by facilitating the identification of the donor state partner, making use of available donor state information tools and channels to facilitate bilateral cooperation.

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>)

**Eligible bilateral activities**

The ACF Malta shall aim to strengthen the sector and its contribution to key challenges. In this respect, the following activities are suggested for support under **all the ACF Malta outcomes**:

- Fostering active citizenship and participatory democracy, including grassroots/local level.
- Advocacy, watchdog and monitoring activities.
- Awareness-raising activities.
- Multicultural dialogue activities.
- Participation in policy and decision-making processes.
- Harnessing citizens participation in decision-making processes.
- Mutual learning and dissemination.
- Education and training activities, in particular development or curriculum and informal learning activities.
- Cultural initiatives to promote the key thematic areas mentioned above.
- Provision of welfare and basic services.

## 4. Application process

An applicant can only submit one application. A project proposal can however focus on more than one output.

A lead applicant cannot apply as a partner in any another ACF Malta project.

Application forms (including Annexes I, II and III) can be **downloaded** from the [activecitizensfund.mt](http://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**.

**2 bound hard copies** of the application and supporting documentation and a **pendrive** containing a soft copy of the same are to be submitted.

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 scanned, stamped, signed and initialised copy of the application and supporting documentation (as described above) to [acfmalta@sosmalta.org](mailto:acfmalta@sosmalta.org) using [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 following supporting documentation is to be annexed to the application and represent administrative criteria in the selection process:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Audited accounts/financial statements <sup>19</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>20</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   |  |

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<sup>19</sup> According to the requirements of the Voluntary Organisations Act

<sup>20</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.

## 5. Evaluation and Selection Procedure

All submitted applications are reviewed for compliance with all three types of selection criteria:

- administrative criteria
- eligibility criteria; and
- evaluation criteria.

Administrative and eligibility compliance check will be made by administrative staff of SOS Malta, whilst the evaluation criteria will be assessed by an Evaluation Committee.

### 6.1. Administrative criteria

- The project application has been submitted by the deadline: 23 July 2021 by noon (12:00pm)
- The project application has been submitted in accordance with the permissible method(s) of delivery (with the right signatures etc.)
- All requested supporting documents have been submitted.<sup>21</sup>

### 6.2. Eligibility criteria

- Eligibility of applicant (refer to Section 2.4)
- Eligibility of partner/s (refer to section 2.5)
- 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 more applications have been submitted by the same applicant.
  - A minimum of 5% of the grant is allocated to financial management capacity.
  - The allocation of indirect costs is equal or less than 15% of direct eligible personnel costs.

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 the correct information. 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

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<sup>21</sup> See section 5

applications, and they have the right to appeal this decision within 3 working days of being notified about the rejection (see appeal procedure below).

### 6.3. Evaluation criteria

Projects which are in compliance with administrative and eligibility criteria are subject to evaluation assessment, which is undertaken by two impartial experts appointed by SOS Malta.

| Evaluation Criteria <sup>22</sup>   | Max Score <sup>23</sup> |
|---|-------------------------|
| <b>1. Relevance and coherence between the project and the Programme objective, outcomes and outputs</b>   | <b>45</b>               |
| <b>1.1 Coherence between the proposal and the outcomes and the thematic areas of the programme.</b><br><br><i>Under this sub-criterion, the points will be allocated according to the number of outputs and thematic areas reflected in the project application.</i>  | 14                      |
| <b>1.2 The proposal includes verifiable and measurable indicators for the outcome of the action in line with programme indicators.</b><br><br><i>Under this sub-criterion, the points will be allocated according to the number of indicators corresponding to the relevant outputs of the project.</i>   | 10                      |
| <b>1.3 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.</b><br><br><i>Evaluation breakdown:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>The target groups are clearly identified and defined.</i></li> <li>2. <i>Asylum-seekers and migrants are included as target group.</i></li> <li>3. <i>Youth is included as target group.</i></li> </ol> | 10                      |

<sup>22</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>23</sup> The minimum total score required for an application to be recommended for funding shall be 55 points.

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <p><b>1.4 The project is relevant to the needs of direct and indirect target groups and beneficiaries. The needs have been clearly defined and the proposal addresses them appropriately.</b></p> <p><i>Evaluation breakdown:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>The project relevance to target groups.</i></li> <li>2. <i>The needs of the target groups are defined.</i></li> <li>3. <i>The needs of the target groups are addressed.</i></li> </ol>   | 10        |
| <p><b>2. Implementation of the project, feasibility of the suggested activities and measures</b></p>  | <b>10</b> |
| <p><b>2.1 The activities proposed are feasible, practical, and consistent with the objectives and expected results. The log frame is clear and feasible.</b></p> <p><i>Evaluation breakdown:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Activities are specific.</i></li> <li>2. <i>Activities are measurable.</i></li> <li>3. <i>Activities are achievable.</i></li> <li>4. <i>Activities are realistic.</i></li> <li>5. <i>Log-frame is clear and feasible.</i></li> </ol>  | 5         |
| <p><b>2.2 The communication plan is comprehensive and includes direct reference to the target groups and the means of communication selected to reach them.</b></p> <p><i>Evaluation breakdown:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>The communication plan includes a clear target audience.</i></li> <li>2. <i>The communication means are identified.</i></li> <li>3. <i>Media/channels to be used are appropriate for the target audience.</i></li> <li>4. <i>Appropriate timeframe for communication.</i></li> <li>5. <i>Enough resources allocated for the communication activities.</i></li> </ol> | 5         |
| <p><b>3. Partnership</b></p>  | <b>10</b> |
| <p><b>3.1. 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.</b></p> <p><i>Evaluation breakdown:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>The project is implemented as a partnership.</i></li> <li>2. <i>Project Partnership Framework is relevant.</i></li> <li>3. <i>The choice of partners is justified.</i></li> </ol>  | 5         |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <p>4. <i>Partners have relevant roles assigned in the project.</i></p> <p>5. <i>Monitoring of the performance of staff from partner organisations planned by the applicant.</i></p> <p><b>3.2 The project includes a bilateral partnership with a donor project partner.</b></p> <p><i>Evaluation breakdown:</i></p> <p>a.i.1. <i>Bilateral component included in the application and appropriate costs allocated in the budget.</i></p>  |           |
| <b>4. Experience of applicant and capacity to implement the project</b>   | <b>10</b> |
| <p><b>4.1. The applicant and partners (where applicable) have enough experience of project management.</b></p> <p><i>Evaluation breakdown:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>The applicant has implemented previous projects under different funding schemes.</i></li> <li>2. <i>The partner/s have implemented previous projects under different funding schemes.</i></li> </ol>                                      | 5         |
| <p><b>4.2 The applicant and partners (where applicable) have sufficient technical expertise (notably knowledge of the issues to be addressed).</b></p> <p><i>Evaluation breakdown:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>The applicant has worked on the topic addressed in the project proposal.</i></li> <li>2. <i>The partners carried out relevant work on the topic addressed in the project proposal.</i></li> </ol> | 5         |
| <b>5. Sustainability of the intervention</b>  | <b>5</b>  |
| <p><b>5.1 The project describes how the results shall be maintained after end of project time-frame.</b></p> <p><i>Evaluation breakdown:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Outline of how the project impact will continue after the end of the project.</i></li> <li>2. <i>The target group is involved in the implementation of the project.</i></li> </ol>  | 5         |
| <b>6. Economic efficiency (reasonable and justifiable budget, coherence with the proposed activities)</b>   | <b>20</b> |
| <p><b>6.1 The proposed costs are proportional, realistic and necessary for the proposed actions and expected results.</b></p>   | 10        |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <p><i>Evaluation breakdown:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>The proposed costs are connected with the subject of the project and they are indicated in the detailed budget of the project.</i></li> <li>2. <i>The proposed costs are proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the project.</i></li> <li>3. <i>The proposed costs are realistic.</i></li> <li>4. <i>The proposed costs include an allocation for monitoring and evaluation.</i></li> </ol>   |     |
| <p><b>6.2 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).</b></p> <p><i>Evaluation breakdown:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>The staff costs allocated are sufficient for the project activities to be implemented.</i></li> <li>2. <i>5% of the overall total of the direct and indirect budget of the project is allocated to financial management capacity.</i></li> <li>3. <i>The allocation of costs is proportionate between partners according to their allocated role in the project.</i></li> <li>4. <i>Allocation of indirect costs is equal or less than 15% of direct eligible personnel costs.</i></li> </ol> | 10  |
| <b>Total</b>  | 100 |

### **6.3. Evaluation process**

SOS Malta, as Fund Operator, shall appoint two impartial external experts to be part of the **Evaluation Committee** that will be independent from the Fund Operator itself, its partners and the applicants and their partners. The Committee members will score projects according to the evaluation criteria, justifying their scores in writing. The average of the scores awarded to each project shall be used to rank the projects.

If the difference between the scores given by the two experts is more than 30% of the higher score, a third expert shall be commissioned by the Fund Operator to score the project independently. In such cases the average score of the two closest scores shall be used for the ranking of the projects.

### **6.4. Selection process**

Following the scoring given by Evaluation Committee, a **Selection Committee** shall review the ranked list of projects. It 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 on/with working with 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 Financial Mechanism Committee or its representatives as well and the National Focal Point 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 after 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.

### **6.5. 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 after a week from submission of application, and they have the right to appeal that 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 reasoned not later than a week after the submission. The rejected applicant will be informed about the appeal's resolution via email.

## **7. Conflict of interest**

A conflict of interest situation is deemed to be present when a person involved in the selection process (e.g. independent experts, members of Selection Committees, members of the Board, staff involved in reviewing compliance with administrative and eligibility criteria, or decision-makers for the Fund Operator) has direct or indirect interests that are, or appear to be, incompatible with the impartial and/or objective exercise of the functions related to the selection process. Such interests may be related to economic interests, political or national affinities, family or emotional ties, other shared interests with the applicant or its partner, or any other interests liable to influence the impartial and objective performance of the person involved in the selection of projects.

SOS Malta shall take every reasonable measure to prevent a conflict of interest situation from occurring in the selection process. If such a situation arises, SOS Malta must take all the necessary measures to prevent such a situation affecting the integrity of the selection process.

## **8. Notification and awarding of the grant**

All applicants will be notified of the results of the application process by email within 10 working days following the final decision.

SOS Malta will sign a project contract with all selected Project Promoters and the list of selected projects will be published on the ACF Malta website.

## 8.1 Payment of the grant

The grant will be paid to the successful project promoters 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.

## 9. Complaints procedure

Any complaints specifically relating to selection process or the ACF Malta programme in general should be submitted via [acfmalta@sosmalta.org](mailto:acfmalta@sosmalta.org) using the text subject: Complaint. The complaint will first be assessed by the SOS Malta staff and, if it remains unresolved, will be passed on to the Complaints Committee set up by SOS Malta. The Complaints Committee will include one member of the board of SOS Malta, the Chief Executive Officer of SOS Malta and a person that is external to the organisation. If requested, a meeting may be held with the FO and the unsuccessful grantee to discuss their proposal and the reason it was not selected in more detail.

**The Complaints Committee will not address issues related to the administrative and eligibility criteria of the applications that were rejected. Such issues will only be dealt with through the appeal procedure.**

## 10. Further information

The main reference documentation for the present Call for Proposals is the *Guidelines for Applicants* (the present document) and the *Application Form* and its annexes which can be downloaded from <https://activecitizensfund.mt/>

Any questions 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.

## 11. Glossary

**Activity:** Action taken or work performed through which inputs, such as funds, technical assistance and other types of resources, are mobilised to produce specific outputs.

**Assumption:** A condition necessary for the success of an intervention.

**Baseline:** The situation before the start of an intervention – the reference point for measuring change. More specifically, it is the value of a particular indicator at the beginning of an intervention against which variations that occur are measured.

**Data collection methods:** The modality of collecting achievement data. Some examples of data-collection methods are observation; analysis (of media, records or documents); survey; interview; focus groups; collection of anecdotal evidence.

**End beneficiaries:** Individuals or groups expected to reap tangible benefits of an intervention. In service provision programmes some outputs are delivered directly to the end beneficiaries. In that case, no intermediary target groups are necessary.

**Evaluation:** A systematic, objective and independent assessment of the design, implementation and/or results achieved in programmes and projects with the aim of determining the relevance, coherence, consistency, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and/or sustainability of the financial contribution. Builds on data collected through *monitoring*.

**Impact:** Effects of an intervention on society or the environment (positive or negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended).

**Indicator:** A quantitative or qualitative variable that specifies what is to be measured along a scale or dimension. It should always be expressed in neutral terms: it should neither indicate the direction or change nor embed a target.

**Input:** The financial, human, material, technological and information resources used for interventions (projects and/or programmes).

**Intermediaries:** A target group the programme seeks to influence in order to achieve results for the end beneficiaries.

**Intervention logic:** The explicit and or/implicit logical link between the different levels of results (outputs, outcomes, and programme objective). It shows the conceptual link from an intervention's outputs to its outcomes, and ultimately the impact (programme objective). It is usually presented in the form of a results framework.

**Monitoring:** The observation of programme and project implementation in order to ensure that agreed procedures are followed, to verify progress towards agreed outcomes and outputs and to identify potential problems in a timely manner so as to allow for corrective action. It is conducted by *data collection* and analysis.

**Objective:** See *Impact*

**Outcome:** Outcomes are the (short and medium-term) effects of an intervention's outputs on the intermediaries or end beneficiaries. Outcomes are rarely under the direct control of a programme/project.

**Output:** Outputs are the products, capital goods and services delivered by a programme to the intermediaries. Outputs are easy to attribute directly to the resources used and the activities performed. They are usually within the greatest control of the implementing organisation.

**Project:** An economically indivisible series of works fulfilling a precise technical function and with clearly identifiable aims related to the programme under which it falls.

**Programme:** A structure setting out a development strategy with a coherent set of measures to be carried out through projects with the support of the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021 and aimed at achieving agreed objectives and outcomes.

**Resources:** Inputs and activities towards achieving results. See *input* and *activity*.

**Result chain:** An illustration of the anticipated causal relationship between resources and results over time.

**Results:** Results are the outputs, outcomes and impact of an intervention or a programme.

**Results-Based Management (RBM):** Results-based management is a management strategy by which all actors, contributing directly or indirectly to achieving a set of results, ensure that their processes, products and services contribute to the achievement of the desired results. The approach focuses on achieving specified outputs and outcomes, measuring performance, learning and adapting, as well as reporting on achievements.

**Results framework:** An explicit tabular articulation of the intervention logic showing the causal sequence for an intervention that stipulates the necessary sequence to achieve desired results – beginning with outputs, culminating in outcomes, and leading to impacts.

**Risk:** An event or circumstance that may affect the achievement of expected results.

**Risk management:** A continuous, proactive and systematic process of identifying, assessing and managing risk in line with the accepted risk levels to provide reasonable assurance as to achieving the expected results.

**Source of verification:** Source (location) of the data to be collected for a particular indicator.

**Target:** A particular value for a performance indicator to be accomplished by a specific date in the future. It is what the intervention would like to achieve within a certain period of time in relation to one of its expected results (outputs, outcome and/or impact).

**Target group:** See *intermediaries and end beneficiaries*