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EC CALL FOR PROPOSALS

HOW TO WRITE A GOOD PROJECT?

INTRODUCTION

Many ACP local government are interested in applying for EC call for proposals. However, very few succeed in having their project funded. This section tries to explain how to write a good project. One should know that the base of the EC grant application form is the same for any call for proposals (either for the 'Non-state actors and local authority' programme, or 'investing in people' programme, 'European instrument for democracy and human rights' programme, etc.) and can be downloaded from the DEVCO website¹. This base is adapted to each call for proposals by the service in the Commission in charge of the call.

GENERAL RULES

In general, applicants have to only submit the concept note in the first phase (system of restricted call for proposals). Only those who have their concept note pre-selected, will be invited to submit the full application form. Therefore, let us concentrate on how to write a good concept note.

First rule

Strictly follow the instructions for the drafting of the concept note. It should not exceed 5 full pages (A4 size). In order to give a chance to your application to be selected, take into consideration the scores in the evaluation grid. The size of each section should reflect the relative importance of each heading. The concept note contains two headings: relevance of the action (30 points out of a total of 50) and description of the (20 points). Therefore, priority should be given to the section on 'relevance of the action' which should also be longer.

Second rule

Reply to questions raised in the instructions. These are:

1. Relevance of the Action (maximum 3 pages)
 - a. *Relevance to the specific priorities of the call for proposals*
 - Describe the relevance of the action to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposal
 - Describe expected particular results
 - b. *Relevance to the needs and constraints of the target country(ies)/region(s) and/or relevant sectors*
 - Identify clearly the specific pre-project situation in the target country(ies), region(s), include quantified data analysis where possible.
 - Provide a detailed analysis of the problems to be addressed by the action and how they are interrelated at all levels.

1

- In addressing the point above, refer to any significant plans undertaken at national, regional and/or local level relevant for the action and describe how the action will relate to such plans.
- Where the action is the continuation of a previous action, clearly indicate how the proposed action is intended to build on the activities/results of this previous action; refer to main conclusions and recommendations of evaluations that might have been carried out.
- Where the action is part of a larger programme, clearly explain how it fits or is coordinated with this programme or any other planned project. Specify the potential synergies with other initiatives, in particular from the European Commission.

c. Describe and define the target groups and final beneficiaries, their needs and constraints and how the action will address these needs

- In case of an association of local authorities, describe briefly the members of the platform or the association of local authorities concerned.
- Describe each of the target groups and final beneficiaries (quantified where possible), including selection criteria.
- Identify the needs and constraints of each of the target groups and final beneficiaries.
- Demonstrate the relevance of the proposal to the needs and constraints of the target groups and final beneficiaries.
- Explain any participatory process ensuring participation of target groups and final beneficiaries.

2. Description of the action (maximum 2 pages)

Provide **all** the following information:

- General information on the background of the action.
- Describe the objectives of the action (elaborate here on the objectives mentioned in the table ‘summary of the action’).
- Describe the key stakeholder groups, their attitudes towards the action and any consultation undertaken with them.
- Provide information on the type of activities foreseen and specify related outputs and results.
- Indicate the broad timeframe for the action and describe any specific factor that has been taken into account.

Budget

The concept note should not contain any budget. However applicants have to indicate an estimate of the total eligible costs of the action together with the amount of contribution and percentage requested from the European Commission. Only applicants invited to submit a full proposal in the second phase will be required to present a detailed budget. This detailed budget may not vary from the initial estimate by more than 20%. Therefore, in order not to exceed the 20%, it might be prudent, in the first phase, to already prepare the budget without submitting it but indicating only the total amount.

How to write the budget? You have to fill in the form that can be downloaded from the DEVCO website² and break down costs according to the following items:

² http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/implementation/grants/documents/e3_c_budget_en.xls

- Human Resources:
 - Salaries (local)
 - Technical
 - Administrative/support staff
 - Salaries (expatriated/international staff)
 - Per diems for missions/travel
 - Abroad
 - Local
 - Seminar/conference participants
- Travel
 - International travel
 - Local transportation
- Equipment and supplies
 - Purchase or rent of vehicles
 - Furniture, computer equipment
 - Machines, tools ...
 - Spare parts/equipment for machines, tools
 - Other (please specify)
- Local office
 - Vehicle costs
 - Office rent
 - Consumables – office supplies
 - Other services (tel/fax, electricity/heating, maintenance)
- Other costs, services
 - Publications (only indicate here when fully subcontracted)
 - Studies, research (only indicate here when fully subcontracted)
 - Expenditure verification
 - Evaluation costs
 - Translation, interpreters
 - Financial services (bank guarantee costs, etc.)
 - Costs of conferences/seminars (only indicate here when fully subcontracted)
 - Visibility actions (communication and visibility activities should be properly planned and budgeted at each stage of the project implementation)
- Other
- Subtotal direct eligible costs of the action (A)
- Provision for contingency reserve (maximum 5% of A)

- Total direct eligible costs of the action (B)
- Administrative costs (maximum 7% of B)
- Total eligible costs
- Taxes
- Total accepted costs

Example of successful project that got European Commission grant: the pilot project “Water and Sanitation in four precarious housing areas in the city of Douala”

The rapid urban growth which results in the explosion of infrastructure and urban service needs is at the heart of concerns in most cities in ACP countries. As a result of the decentralisation process, these cities have to incur more substantial expenses as regards infrastructure, economic development and essential urban services.

Drinking water supply and sanitation are two crucial development problems in the city of Douala counting more than 2 millions inhabitant. Like in many other cities in Africa, drinking water supply is insufficient: only 110.000 m³ per day against an estimated need of 250.000 m³.

As far as sanitation is concerned, it is the ‘urban disorder’, namely: degradation of urban landscape by irresponsible discharge of waste in inappropriate areas; drain obstruction due to various types of waste, with its consequences; etc.

Context:

In the course of 2004, the city of Douala became an endemic city of cholera with a concentration in four main areas. This is the result of various factors, such as: fast growing and uncontrolled urbanisation; lifestyle and hygiene practice incompatible with urban area; lack of water and extremely limited sanitation conditions; etc.

The population was aware of the seriousness of the situation and was willing to make individual and collective efforts that will improve their access to drinking water, secured access to running water and disposal of liquid and solid waste.

An opportunity:

The urban community of Douala, joined by GTZ, took the opportunity of the ACP-EU Water Facility to submit a request for grant.

The qualification process lasted six months and was made up of two phases. Firstly, the community of Douala, with the support of GTZ, expressed its interest in participating in the Facility programme. The expression of interest focused on: i) presentation of the state of play and the challenges of the city in line with the programme; ii) presentation of the national sectoral policy in the field of water and sanitation, allowing to assess the integration of the project within the overall macro economic and institutional framework of the country.

Secondly, following the notice of pre-selection, a more elaborated dossier was submitted. The dossier revolved essentially around the ‘logical framework’ which includes: i) global and specific objectives of the Action; ii) proposed activities; iii) expected results; iv) monitoring indicators; v) detailed provisional budget of the Action; vi) sources of financing; and vii) planning and mechanism for procurement procedure for works, supplies and services.

In line with the 9th EDF rules of procedure, the National Authorising Officer endorsed the project vis-à-vis the Commission.

The project, approved, allowed the city of Douala to benefit from a grant of Euro 1.049.905, covering 75% of the total eligible cost of the project.

Reasons for success: prerequisite and arguments

- *Information: a prerequisite.* One had to be informed that, according to the revised Cotonou Agreement, local government are eligible for EDF resources and that the Commission released the Water Facility.
- *Guidelines scrupulously respected: it is capital.* The project proposal should bring clear and precise responses and relevant analysis, with a particular attention to the description of the logical framework.
- *Action presented as a capitalisation of experience in the mobilisation of communities.* This shows the great potential for mobilising communities on development issues that concern them directly.
- *Involvement of population and civil society in all phases of the Action.* The project wants to show that it is possible to improve people's life by involving them in the planning of activities, construction of public works and monitoring of operations. The success of the project could be a trigger for other bigger action involving other areas of the city.
- *Precise justification of the role and level of involvement of each partner of the Action, notably civil society.* As regards financing, the level of financial contribution of the primary beneficiary (Community of Douala) and GTZ is fixed at Euro 150.000 and 200.000 respectively, representing 10,7% and 14,3% of the total cost of the Action.
- *Procedure and mechanism for internal monitoring and evaluation of the Action.* A mechanism for internal monitoring and evaluation is foreseen in order to guarantee the efficiency and effectiveness of interventions and ensure the technical and financial monitoring. The mechanism involves key actors and partners, including the final beneficiaries (civil society and populations). The various mechanisms for monitoring to be foreseen are: a Steering committee, to ensure the overall supervision of the Action; internal communication, through quarterly and annual reports and monthly financial reports; management and financial review, done by the project team with GTZ support and which reports are submitted to the Steering committee; annual administrative and financial audit, by an independent auditor; internal evaluation after six months, external mid-term and final evaluation.
- *Presentation of the expected results linked to verifiable and/or measurable indicators.*
- *Presentation of multiplier effects and short term and long term sustainability of the Action.* The Action is presented as pilot. It is also foreseen, as regards sectoral policy in the field of water and sanitation, to serve check strategies and models of capacity strengthening and of upgrading of the quality of hygiene and sanitation services, in order to decrease at medium term the impact of disease on communities. Finally at institutional level, the Action is presented as an element ensuring the sustainability of sectoral policies in social development, health, water, from the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

Conclusion:

The factors allowing the Action to be successfully granted are multiple:

- Search for sustainable solutions to crucial problems severely affecting the population, especially the poor;
- Effective involvement of civil society and the population in the different phases of the Action;
- Adoption of a 'multi-actor' approach by involving, alongside with civil society, interested development partners; and
- Promotion of transparency and the culture of objectively verifiable result and evaluation.