INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND ELECTORAL ASSISTANCE

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FOR THE CALL FOR GRANT PROPOSALS

Reference No: 2026-11-103

STEP-EU: Strengthening the Albanian Parliament for EU Integration

According to the Guidelines for Applicants, clarifications may have been requested via e-mail no later than 24 November 2026 at the email address tender@idea.int. Additionally, an Information Session was conducted on 20 November 2026. The below responses are consolidated questions on the Call from both the written requests for clarification and Information Session questions. Questions have been anonymized and grouped by topic. The responses provide general information and do not constitute an assessment of any individual organization or proposal.

Applicant eligibility and geographical coverage

1. **May an organisation based in Tirana apply for a Single Organisation Grant, including under Lot 1?**

Yes, an organisation based in Tirana can apply for a Single Organisation Grant, including under Lot 1. Single Organisation Grants are designed to encourage application of and reach smaller organisations based and working outside Tirana. Nevertheless, this is a target group for the instrument rather than an additional exclusion criterion. Organisations based in Tirana may also apply if they meet the eligibility requirements in section 2.3 and all other applicable Call requirements. The same approach applies across the three lots; no separate exception is required for national policy research or parliamentary monitoring.

2. **How should applicants demonstrate their geographical presence and links to the communities they intend to reach?**

Applicants should explain their operational presence, relevant experience, previous activities and connections with the communities or institutions targeted by the proposal. Relevant evidence may include previous project results, local partnerships and information on operational offices. An organisation with a registered address in Tirana may describe an established operational presence elsewhere. Assessment will consider both office location and the geographical reach of activities, in relation to the proposed intervention. The relevance of a local presence will depend on the nature of the proposed activities and is particularly important for proposal that focus on community engagement and regional outreach.

3. **Is the branch of a foreign organization that is registered in Albania for more than 36 months eligible to apply?**

No, foreign organizations, including their branches registered in Albania are not a target of this Call for Proposal.

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4. **Will awards be distributed equally across the different regions of Albania?**

The Call does not establish regional quotas or guarantee awards to particular regions. Applicants must identify where they will work, whom they will reach and how the proposal responds to their needs. Applications will be assessed against the published criteria, including relevance to target groups, relevant experience, feasibility and value for money. International IDEA seeks to support inclusive participation, including engagement outside Tirana, without introducing additional regional scoring criteria.

5. **Does a previous parliamentary role held by an organisation's representative make the organisation ineligible?**

A previous parliamentary role does not, by itself, make an organisation ineligible. Eligibility is assessed at organisational level against the requirements in sections 2.3 and 2.5, including non-profit and non-governmental status, relevant experience, capacity and the Declaration on Honour. Political parties are ineligible. Proposed activities must serve the objectives of the Call and support inclusive participation rather than party-political interests.

However, where political independence is essential to the credibility and successful implementation of the proposed activities, current or recent political affiliations of the organisation's representatives or key staff may be considered when assessing the proposal's feasibility, risks and capacity to engage the intended stakeholders impartially. Such affiliations do not automatically result in exclusion, but their relevance will be assessed in relation to the proposed activities and the measures presented to safeguard independence and inclusive participation.

6. **May Single Organisation Grants support activities under Lot 2, and is one consortium award reserved for each lot?**

Eligible applicants may apply for either grant type under any one of the three lots. Single Organisation Grants may therefore support Lot 2 activities. The tentative maximum of four consortium grants and four Single Organisation Grants applies across the Call as a whole. No number of grants or funding amount is reserved for an individual lot.

7. **Is structured dialogue with Members of Parliament representing a region sufficient, or must activities engage parliamentary committees or take place in Tirana?**

The Guidelines expressly envisage regional citizens' events with Parliament beyond the capital and do not require all activities to involve parliamentary committees or take place in Tirana. Activities that bring Members of the Parliament outside Tirana are eligible. Applicants should select the parliamentary actors whose responsibilities are relevant to the issues addressed and explain how the dialogue will contribute to parliamentary processes and the project's expected results.

8. **May one organisation participate in more than one application, or may consortium members apply under different lots?**

An organisation may participate in only one application under this Call, whether as lead applicant, consortium partner or Single Organisation Grant applicant. A consortium submits one application under one lot; its members cannot divide that application between different lots. Please also refer to the answer to Question 9 for further clarification on the implementation of activities across different lots.

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Project activities and cooperation

9. **Can an applicant propose activities targeting elements outside the lot they applied for? Can one proposal cover activities under two different lots?**

Each application must be submitted under one Lot only and demonstrate clear primary alignment with that lot. Applicants may propose a coherent, integrated intervention combining activities and outputs that also contribute to the objectives of other Lots. Such a combination will not, by itself, lead to exclusion. However, the application must fulfil the eligibility and assessment criteria of the selected lot. Such activities and outputs shall be considered eligible if they are clearly justified as contributing to the specific objectives and expected results of the Lot under which the application is submitted, fall within the eligible activities of that Lot, and form part of a coherent and integrated project intervention.

10. **What cooperation with Parliament is expected under Lot 2? Are there specific requirements for presenting and following up citizens' recommendations?**

Lot 2 supports structured engagement connecting citizens and under-represented groups with Parliament's role in EU accession. While there is no prescribed type or list of ways of expected cooperation with the Parliament, in principle applicants are expected to identify the relevant Members of Parliament, committees or parliamentary services, explain their expected involvement and describe how the proposed cooperation will contribute to the project's results.

The Guidelines do not prescribe a single format for submitting citizens' recommendations or securing institutional follow-up. Proposals should explain how recommendations will reach the relevant parliamentary actors, how responses or subsequent developments will be monitored, and how participants will be informed of the results.

11. **Is a letter of support or formal cooperation agreement with Parliament required at application stage?**

It is not a general requirement for applications. Applicants should explain the cooperation needed and the arrangements envisaged to secure it. Additionally, applicants can demonstrate, through other relevant evidence (such as previous experience of cooperation with Parliament, established institutional relationships or similar arrangements), their capacity to secure the necessary cooperation for the proposed activities. Where activities can be implemented without formal parliamentary participation, a formal cooperation agreement is not required solely for the purpose of applying.

12. **Could an initiative on disability inclusion and access to cultural or natural heritage be relevant under Lot 2? How can persons with disabilities participate in a project?**

International IDEA is not in the position to provide assessment on the eligibility of specific types of activities. In principle, the proposals must explain how they connect to the parliamentary work or engagement on relevant EU accession commitments and establish a clear connection between citizens' participation and the Parliament's role in Albania's EU accession process. Eligibility and quality will be assessed against the complete application and the published criteria.

Persons with disabilities may participate directly in project design, implementation and monitoring, including through consultations, accessibility assessments, advisory groups and other suitable activities. Their involvement should be decided by the applicant(s) and explained in the project proposal.

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13. **May a project finance detailed technical designs for accessibility interventions, obtain the necessary approvals and transfer the designs to a municipality for future implementation?**

International IDEA is not in the position to provide assessment on the eligibility of specific types of activities. In principle, the proposals must explain how they connect to the parliamentary work or engagement on relevant EU accession commitments and establish a clear connection between any specific area of work with citizens' participation and Parliament's role in Albania's EU accession process. Applicants proposing technical design work must justify its direct contribution to the Call's objectives, its expected use and its cost. Eligibility and quality will be assessed against the complete application and the published criteria.

Budgeting and eligible costs

14. **Where should fees for external experts be budgeted, and do they count towards the 40% ceiling?**

The Staff (Human resources) heading covers remuneration of the organisation's own staff assigned to the project, including related social security charges. Neither staff assigned to the project nor other staff of the organization can be paid as external experts for the project.

Fees for external trainers, facilitators and other experts engaged through service contracts to deliver project activities should be budgeted under Activities, heading 1.3 of Annex C. Genuine external service fees do not fall within the combined staff and administrative cost ceiling. They must be necessary, reasonable and consistent with market rates and the work required.

15. **May an applicant engage an expert or non-profit organisation based outside Albania as a service provider, and how should their fees be budgeted?**

The Albania registration requirement applies to applicants and consortium partners. It does not, in itself, prohibit the procurement of necessary services from an expert or organisation based outside Albania. Such services must be justified by the project, comply with applicable procurement requirements and meet the cost eligibility conditions. The applicant must remain directly responsible for preparing, managing and implementing the project. Engaging a trainer or other specialist does not, by itself, make the applicant an intermediary. However, transferring responsibility for the project to another entity would not meet the direct-management requirement.

Fees for external experts engaged through service contracts to support project activities should be budgeted under Activities, heading 1.3 of Annex C.

16. **Is there a ceiling on the proportion of the budget used to purchase services such as event logistics or content production?**

The Guidelines do not establish a separate percentage ceiling for purchased services. Each purchase must be necessary for the proposed activities, properly budgeted, cost-efficient and procured in accordance with the applicable requirements. The applicant must retain direct responsibility for the project, and consortium partners must retain meaningful roles and the required budget share. Service purchases cannot be used to circumvent those requirements, the staff and administrative cost ceiling or the prohibition on double funding.

17. **May a proposal identify a particular external expert, and which procurement rules and thresholds apply?**

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An applicant may describe the expertise required and may identify a proposed expert in its application. Naming an expert does not constitute approval of a direct award or exempt the applicant from procurement requirements. The contracting of experts, consultants, suppliers and service providers must comply with the applicable International IDEA Procurement Policy and Procedures and the Cooperation Agreement. The Guidelines do not specify procurement methods or financial thresholds. Successful applicants will receive the applicable requirements as part of grant contracting and must apply them before entering into service contracts.

18. **Are international travel and subsistence costs for an external expert travelling to Albania eligible?**

Yes, provided that the travel is necessary for the project, directly linked to its activities, included in the approved budget and compliant with applicable policies and cost eligibility requirements. Applicants must justify the travel arrangements and estimates. The exclusions in section 3.2 of the Guidelines continue to apply, including passports, visas, travel permits, vaccinations, medication and travel insurance. The same travel or subsistence expense must not be charged both within an expert's fee and separately.

19. **May the budget cover subsistence costs for Members of Parliament attending regional citizens' events?**

No, the budget funded by the International IDA may not cover subsistence costs for Members of Parliament or any other public official in performing their official duties, including attending regional citizens' events. However, necessary and reasonable costs directly associated with organising and conducting the activity, including travel, meals and accommodation where required, may be covered as eligible direct costs, including for participating Members of Parliament, provided they are duly justified, included in the approved budget and comply with the applicable grant requirements.

20. **Is co-financing compulsory, and is there a maximum contribution from other sources?**

Co-financing is possible but is not required. No fixed co-financing percentage is specified. International IDEA must remain the principal source of project funding, and the co-financing amount must not exceed the International IDEA contribution. Applicants must identify each funding source and show clearly which costs it will cover. The grant requested from International IDEA must remain within the limits for the selected grant type.

21. **Does staff time spent on narrative and financial reporting count towards the 40% ceiling if it is entered under Reporting, evaluation, audit?**

Yes. Remuneration of the organisation's own staff assigned to the project, including time spent on narrative and financial reporting, remains a human resources cost and counts towards the combined 40% ceiling. Entering such staff costs under another heading does not change their nature or remove them from the ceiling.

Application documents and submission

22. **Which application forms and capacity questionnaires must Single Organisation Grant applicants, consortium leads and consortium partners complete?**

The correct annex numbering is as follows:

Annex B1: Application Form for Consortium Grants.

Annex B2: Application Form for Single Organisation Grants.

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Annex D1: Full Capacity Self-Assessment Questionnaire.

Annex D2: Basic Capacity Self-Assessment Questionnaire.

A consortium lead submits Annex B1 and completes Annex D1. Each consortium partner completes Annex D2. The lead submits the consortium's complete application package, including all partner questionnaires.

A Single Organisation Grant applicant submits Annex B2 and completes Annex D2.

Other

23. When is the expected start date of the awarded grants?

The indicative start date for the awarded grants is 1 March 2027, within the indicative implementation period set out in the Guidelines for Applicants. This date is indicative and depends on the number of applications received, and the duration of evaluation and contracting process. The exact start date will be confirmed upon contract signature with awarded grantees.

24. Will International IDEA publish a list of interested organisations or arrange consortium partner matching?

International IDEA will not publish a list of interested organisations or a partner-matching service. Applicants should identify and agree their own partnerships.

25. May a grant recipient purchase a technology platform or related services from a commercial provider?

Yes, where the platform or services are necessary and directly related to the approved project activities and meet the applicable eligibility, budget and procurement requirements. The proposal should explain the purpose, scope and cost of the technology and how it will contribute to the expected results. Where a purchase includes equipment or assets, the relevant equipment eligibility conditions also apply. However, a specific supplier cannot be approved through a clarification response.

26. How can prospective suppliers learn about future International IDEA procurement opportunities?

This Call concerns grants to eligible organisations and is not a supplier registration or procurement process. Prospective suppliers should consult the procurement opportunities published on International IDEA's website and follow the contact and submission instructions for each opportunity.

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