

TERMS OF REFERENCE

for experts (“external evaluators”) to assist in the evaluation of grant applications received in the framework of the Call for Proposals for:

National call: Supporting Local Impact of the Civil Society Initiatives in the Western Balkans

Project: BOOST - Balkans for Optimizing Opportunities, Sustainability and Transformation of Civil Society; Call Reference Number: 001/25

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

ALDA – the European Association for Local Democracy – is implementing a 3-year project entitled BOOST - Balkans for Optimizing Opportunities, Sustainability and Transformation of Civil Society. This project is being carried out in six Western Balkan countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. It is financially supported by Agence Française de Développement - AFD.

The project aims to support the democratic, economic, and social development of the Western Balkans within the context of EU enlargement, by empowering civil society actors and enhancing their capacity in areas such as youth and entrepreneurship, environmental protection, rural development, cultural heritage, and community engagement.

A core component of the BOOST project is the implementation of a comprehensive sub-granting scheme across the region, delivered through regional and national calls. These grant schemes aim to strengthen local-level collaboration, encourage citizen participation in policymaking, and promote sustainable development, thereby contributing to the broader goal of European integration.

To ensure a high-quality and transparent selection process of sub-grant recipients, **ALDA is recruiting six external evaluators – one from each of the six Western Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia)**. These evaluators will support the assessment of project proposals received through the National Call for Proposals (Reference: 001/25). External evaluators will be engaged to assess proposals based on pre-defined quality and financial criteria outlined in the official Guidelines for Applicants.

2. OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE & EXPECTED RESULTS

Overall objective

The overall objective of the assignment is to ensure a fair, impartial, and high-quality evaluation process for project proposals received under the National Call for Proposals. The evaluator is expected to uphold the integrity and credibility of the sub-granting process by applying professional expertise in assessing the relevance, coherence, feasibility, and financial soundness of each proposed project.

2.1. Results to be achieved by the experts

- › External evaluators will carry out quality and financial assessment of full applications in accordance with guidelines provided by the contracting authority which are based on the published evaluation criteria.
- › Contribute to the identification of projects that align with the BOOST initiative's thematic priorities and demonstrate strong potential for local impact, innovation, and sustainability;
- › Ensure that the evaluation process reflects EU standards and best practices in civil society support;
- › Ensure the evaluation process is open and fair by carefully and neutrally reviewing all project proposals.

3. SCOPE OF WORK

3.1. Overall engagement

The 6 evaluators are expected to:

- › Carry out the quality and financial assessment of the project applications and related annexes, in accordance with the BOOST Guidelines. Evaluation Units will include 3 evaluators (two internal and one external), whereas the External Evaluator should remain committed to perform independently also in a team.
- › Remain engaged to carry out detailed evaluation of all those applications that after submission are considered as administratively compliant under the national BOOST Call for Proposal, by completing evaluation grids with scores and narrative justification.
- › Familiarize themselves with the documents related to the call for proposals such as the Guidelines for Grant Applicants, their annexes and the FAQs published for the Calls for Proposals within BOOST.
- › Be professional and strict with confidential information, since all parties involved are bound to adhere to the principles of confidentiality, impartiality, and no conflict of interest. All members of the Evaluation Units must sign a declaration on confidential information.
- › Accept the fact that only ALDA representatives are authorized to have contact with an applicant during and after the evaluation process. This includes communication related to clarifications, announcement of the results of each phase as well as dealing with requests for information and questions raised by any applicant about the results.
- › Be fluent in English language since the application and evaluation is conducted in English language.
- › Conduct project evaluation processes impartially, in a totally independent and confidential manner, in their personal capacity and apply to the best of their abilities and professional skills, knowledge and ethics, in accordance with the guidelines and time-schedules provided by ALDA.

NOTE*

External Evaluators must sign a declaration of impartiality and confidentiality before starting the evaluation work. If they believe there may be a conflict of interest with any applicant or project partner, they must report it immediately. In such cases, the evaluator will be required to withdraw from evaluating that particular proposal and provide a written explanation to the Project Coordinator. All evaluators are required to uphold the integrity of the evaluation process. No information about any aspect of the assessment may be disclosed to any third party outside the panel evaluation unit.

3.2. Specific tasks for External Evaluators to:

- › Professionally provide coherent and exhaustive comments and scores, implying that comments must reflect the scores given, illustrating the scores per question and section of the evaluation grids.
- › External Evaluators are expected to participate in an introduction meeting prior to the evaluation process conducted by ALDA team where the evaluation guidelines and evaluation instruments will be introduced. Also, actively participate in meetings and/or specific sessions organized for the execution of the evaluation tasks.
- › Ready to provide additional comments in exceptional and justified cases at the request of the Contracting Authority.

3.3. Deliverables

The External Evaluators shall be responsible for carrying out the following tasks, which will result in the submission of the required deliverables:

Task	Content	Time of implementation
Individual Evaluation	Evaluate all assigned projects with accurate scoring and detailed justifications by completing evaluation grids with both scores and narrative explanations	Agreed upon contract signature following the starting date/ending date
Evaluation Panels	Participating in the Evaluation Panel for the Shortlisted Project, shortly presenting reasons on the potential project to be funded.	

4. LOGISTICS AND TIMING

4.1. Location

The External Evaluators are expected to work remotely during the phase when the individual evaluation process takes place, as well the Evaluation Panels will be held online.

4.2. Start date and period of implementation.

The estimated start date is 16th of June 2025. (Subject to change by the Contracting Authority based on Call Timeframe, Number of Applications received, etc.) The precise timetable of the assignment will be defined after the selection process.

Each evaluator will be informed in advance of the number of applications assigned and the deadline for submission.

Evaluators are expected to be available to perform their tasks during July - August 2025. Each external evaluator must ensure exclusivity and availability for the period of implementation of this assignment at the moment of signing the contract.

In case the External Evaluator does not remain available for the inquired period, the Contracting Authority (ALDA) will replace them with another candidate ranking at the top of reserve list compiled after the recruitment process.

5. REQUIREMENTS

5.1. Technical Requirements

- › Experience in project assessment and project evaluation, ideally in initiatives of regional cooperation and development in the Western Balkans.
- › Experience in donor funded projects, ideally Civil Society Sector.
- › Extensive knowledge of the local context in the specific country whose applications the evaluator will assess — including regional development challenges, the civil society landscape, and relevant policy frameworks
- › Proven track record in project proposal development.
- › A strong knowledge of the civil society sector and existing regional and national initiatives, of governmental policies in the relevant sectors (youth and entrepreneurship, environmental protection, rural development, preservation of cultural heritage and community development), and of donor giving strategies in the WB Region.
- › All tasks are to be completed in a qualitative, timely and professional manner, in close cooperation and consultation with the Project Manager.

5.2. Necessary Qualifications

- › Advanced university degree in Political Science, Public Administration, Law or other relevant fields.
- › At least five (5) years of professional experience in the Civil Society sector, preferably with a focus on capacity-building.
- › Fluency in English language.
- › Be a citizen of WB6 Region.
- › Professional approach in teamwork and precise in communicating with others;
- › Demonstrated ability to produce high quality evaluations with clearly justifiable recommendations.
- › Ability to work in complex, multi-stakeholder environments.
- › Demonstrated gender and ethnic awareness and sensitivity.
- › Non-bias attitude towards any kind of presented project themes/initiatives or target audiences.
- › Punctual with deadlines since the process involves three members.
- › Teamwork skills, capacity to respond positively to critical feedback, and a consensus- oriented approach to work.

5.3. Application procedure

Required documents to be provided:

- a. Curriculum Vitae (CV) in English with detailed information on relevant experience.
- b. Further documents proving their skills and expertise i.e. for example a list of previous assignments where proposal assessment skills were applied, including former supervisors/colleagues in the respective organizations who may be contacted as references (please include name, function, email, phone number)
- c. Statement of availability during the evaluation period.
- d. Separate Financial offer indicating the proposed unit cost per evaluation, specifying the Level of Effort (LoE) required per application and unit price in EUR, Gross Value.

Applications should be submitted electronically to boost@aldaintranet.org, by **27th of May 2025**, with the subject line: "Application – External Evaluator – BOOST National Call"

Please note that only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

5.4. Selection and Payment

External Evaluators will be selected based on their professional and technical ability to perform the assessment tasks. ALDA is committed to achieving workforce diversity in terms of gender, nationality, and culture. Individuals from all WB6 parties are equally encouraged to apply. All applications will be handled with the strictest confidence.

The selection criteria include the following:

- ✓ **Eligibility Condition:** Submission of all required documents.
- ✓ **Relevant Experience:** Evaluation of relevant professional background.
- ✓ **Financial Offer:** Assessment of the proposed financial offer.

Evaluators will be compensated **based on the number of evaluations completed**. The rate per evaluation will be agreed upon before the start of the assignment. Payment will be made upon the submission and acceptance of all deliverables, in accordance with the terms defined in the contract.

Remuneration will be determined by the qualifications and experience of the candidates, as well as the proposed offer, which will align with current ALDA consultancy rates.