

SMART Balkans  
Civil Society for Shared Society in the Western Balkans

REFERENCE NUMBER NO 002 09/2023

TERMS OF REFERENCE

For Regional Pool of Evaluators

## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

SMART Balkans Project is implemented by consortium of organizations: Centar za promociju civilnog društva (CPCD) from Bosnia and Herzegovina as a Lead Applicant, in partnership with Center for Research and Policy Making (CRPM) from North Macedonia, and Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) from Albania.

These are the Terms of Reference for expert evaluators, prepared by the Consortium partners.

The Consortium is responsible for all aspects of the grant management process and will ensure that all grants are managed in compliance with the donor regulations and each partner's internal procedures.

The main focus of the SMART Balkans Project is the distribution of more than 450 grants, capacity building of CSOs and campaigns, all related to two thematic areas: Security and stability and Governance, with strong regional cooperation aspect.

The next call for grant applications will be published by the end of 2023. Grants will include a focus on local, national and regional level, and they will have different grants value ranges. First evaluations of grant applications are expected in February 2024.

## 2. OBJECTIVE & EXPECTED RESULTS

The goal is to have a pool of regional evaluators to support grants management decision-making processes for:

- Different **types of grants**
- in **6 countries** in the region
- planned **38 Calls for Application** until the end 2025

**External evaluators** are experts that will be engaged by the project to evaluate received applications. External evaluators are responsible for evaluation of the quality of the application in areas of the relevance of the organization to the areas of the call, the capacity of the organization and the annual budget.

It is expected that all evaluations are performed on principles of fairness and impartiality, excellence, confidentiality and efficiency.

**The Regional Pool of Evaluators** will be created from all six countries in the region as a pool of recognized experts in the topics related to technical evaluation of applications received in response to public calls for grants application.

The Regional Pool of Evaluators shall ensure an impartial, transparent and consistent review process of applications for grants award.

Upon selection, evaluators will be registered in our Regional Pool of Evaluators, to be available for specific engagement on Calls for Applications. Once the evaluators have been selected to evaluate the applications for a particular Call for Application, a service contract will be signed with them. The service

contract will also contain standard provisions that guarantee that there is no conflict of interest and that complete confidentiality is ensured, as well as special statements of non-conflict of interest before each individual evaluation.

Evaluation will be carried out entirely remotely, in online format (Grants Management Platform or email), where access right for Grants Management Platform will be granted to selected evaluators, with the clear instructions on subject of evaluation and respective evaluation forms.

### 3. DELIVERABLES

The evaluation process will be executed remotely and will involve a preparatory online session, individual evaluation of the applications received, participation in remote consensus Selection Committee meetings as well as in the panel meeting if needed. They may also assist in the process of creating feedback to unsuccessful applicants, explaining areas for their improvements.

After selection and contract signing, evaluators will attend **preparatory online session(s)** with the SMART Balkans Project Team, where standards in evaluation process and the selection criteria will be agreed, to have equal treatment of applicants. Preparatory online sessions will be considered a prerequisite for performing the service of evaluating received applications and this time of the online session will not be paid separately in case evaluator is not able to provide required service. During the preparatory session evaluators will be given guidelines for evaluation on how to review the proposals and complete evaluation form for each applicant based on predefined criteria.

Services will be provided remotely via GMP / email and will include an evaluation of applications received in response to open calls for specific grants. Two evaluators will perform evaluation of applications independently of each other. The result of evaluations are individual evaluation reports for each applicant and a final list of all evaluated applicants with scores. The number of applications that will be short-listed is at least twice the number of applications that will be supported through the project (with the cup of double total value of applications than planned grants disbursement).

### 4. SCOPE OF THE WORK

Each evaluator will be assigned a call on a case-by-case basis. The SMART Balkans Project team will ensure a regular change of evaluators to ensure both a spread of expertise and diversity. Upon closure of respective Call for Applications. Considering that they may not have any conflicts of interest or the appearance of such regarding the organizations whose applications are under evaluation, selection of evaluators for each Call for Application and for each country will be made by the Grants Manager, considering their expertise and geographical residence.

All applications will be evaluated by 2 evaluators who attended preparatory session and who will perform evaluation of application independently of each other. Results of evaluation are individual evaluation report for each applicant and final list of evaluated applicants with scores. The number of

applications that will be short-listed is at least twice the number of applications that will be supported through the project.

Applications will be review based on specific aspects selected for each grant from the list below:

1. Technical and administrative capacity
2. Relevance
3. Design of the project
4. Budget
5. Added value
6. Regional/National impact
8. Outreach
7. Cross-cutting issues (gender, environment, human rights, anti-corruption)

Evaluators will qualitatively and quantitatively evaluate the awarded applications and assign grades from the proposed rank (from 1-5 or from 1-10) with a clear explanation of the given grade with a qualitative statement in English and/or in local language. They will also give an evaluation conclusion, and propose recommendations, i.e. conditions.

## 5. CODE OF CONDUCT

The evaluators shall perform their tasks fairly and impartially, adhering to the rules on impartiality, confidentiality, and prevention of conflict of interest. The evaluators are bound by a Declaration of Impartiality and Confidentiality and it shall be signed before starting the evaluation. If an evaluator believes there might be a situation of conflict of interests concerning one or more applicants, they must inform the contracting authority immediately. Also, strict confidentiality is required from the evaluators involved in the implementation of this contract, notably on the assessments of individual applications.

## 6. SELECTION OF EVALUATORS

Evaluators will be identified and selected based on their area of expertise and availability.

Received applications for Evaluators will be considered upon receipt, and initial review of applications will be performed in November 2023. Selected candidates will be invited for interviews and 1st preparatory sessions will be organized in each country in December 2023. In accordance with the plan for publishing calls for grant applications, the evaluators' engagement is planned for February 2024 on the evaluation of received applications.

The final selection and actual engagement of the evaluators will be decided later, depending on the specific type of grant, the area of expertise of the evaluator, the number of grant applications received and the number of available evaluators. After signing the service contract and the Declaration of Non-

Existent Conflict of Interest, the evaluator will be assigned applications for which he will prepare evaluation reports.

To ensure that no conflict of interest exists in their duties in capacity of evaluators, prior actual evaluation task assignment, candidates have to confirm following:

- They did not participate in preparation of application for the specific call (as a legal representative of the applicant)
- They have no a close family or personal relationship with the applicant or the applicant's organization
- They would not benefit directly or indirectly if the grant application is accepted

## 7. EVALUATOR PROFILE:

Successful applicants for evaluators should:

- a) Hold of at least a BA /BSc degree
- b) Have demonstrated and recognized expertise and insight relevant to the scope of work and tasks described in the terms of reference
- c) Previous experience as an evaluator for the EU, USAID, WB and other funding bodies / agencies is **obligatory**. Relevant experience, skills and competencies shall be documented in the attached Application Form (Annex 2)
- d) Proven capacity to perform evaluator job, such as good analytical, writing, and reporting skills
- e) Active participation and engagement in projects with similar goals over the last 12-18 months, such as security and good governance and policy management will be considered an added advantage
- f) Experience and a good understanding in grant management processes and procedures and CSO development will be considered an added advantage

Applications for joining the Regional Pool of Evaluators are open to all permanent or temporary residents from all 6 countries.

## 8. DATA PROTECTION

Personal data which are submitted for the purpose of applying to the Call for Evaluators (names, email addresses, etc.) will be stored by the project consortium for the purpose of processing applications, to match the details of evaluator and to contract them regarding potential assignments related to the public calls, or to notify them about future opportunities similar to the specific role for which they initially applied.

The personal data will be stored with the utmost care and in accordance with data protection requirements. Applicants may at any time request to see the personal data that we hold relating to them and request their deletion.

## 9. FACILITIES AND SUPPORTS REQUIRED

The Contractor will ensure that experts are adequately administratively supported and that they have access to the relevant information and application documents, to enable evaluators to perform their tasks.

Required interpreting provision (if evaluation reports shall be made in English or in other official languages in SMART Balkans 6 countries), as well as technical support and equipment (computer, printer, internet) required for the evaluation engagement is responsibility of the engaged evaluator.

## 10. FEES & PAYMENTS

The fee for evaluators per evaluation of application (including preparatory online session time, individual evaluation report of the applications received, participation in remote consensus meetings, support with feedback letters to unsuccessful applicants) is 40 - 50 EUR gross (subject to relevant tax deduction) which equals a fixed number of 0.3 working day, and will be paid based on the number of evaluated applications, regularly and in a timely fashion within timeframe agreed in advance.

In some, exceptional, cases applications may require more time and experts will be notified in writing of this when contacted for evaluation duties.