Preparation of project proposals for grants

This manual is designed to help applicants in applying for grants from the GrassRoots Action Support scheme. This manual explains the concepts used and instructions on how to answer the application questions.

1. Project Cycle Management

A project consists of a set of coordinated and controlled activities that are undertaken with a specific purpose, which have the cost, resources and time limits set. Every project generally reflects efforts to solve a problem or to meet the needs of any particular individual, group, or community.

The project itself represents a cycle / process that consists of several phases. There is a sequence of transition from one stage to the next, which means that the realization of a phase cannot begin before the previous phase is closed. The process of project management varies largely based on the nature and size of the project, and consequently, the number of project cycle phases may vary depending on these too. In theory, project cycle management consists of the stages of Programming, Identification, Formulation, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation. In practice, due to the nature of the problem the project seeks to solve / the needs it intends to meet, the size of the organization and the funding opportunities, some of the most similar phases may be merged into one another.

The activities included in each of these phases can be summarized as follows:

1. **Programming** - This stage consists of efforts to determine / establish the link between the proposed project and the overall strategy of the organization. In other words, how does the proposed project implementation contribute to the achievement of the overall goals of the organization? Typically, at this stage, involvement and contribution of project stakeholders is required to determine in what way the project will be implemented, where, with what resources, with what purpose, with what target group, and so on.

2. **Identification** – At this stage the project idea is initiated, it is assessed whether the proposed idea really solves the problem raised or meets the needs of the project target group. This phase should be based on a thorough analysis of the situation and the needs of the community. Therefore,

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involvement of the community and targeted beneficiaries is important at this stage. In other words, this stage should result in a draft that states what kind of activities will be carried out, what results will be achieved, for what purpose, and what impact will the project have in the long run.

3. **Formulation** - Once the concept of the project has been established, once the project has been placed within a strategic framework at the first stage, and after the project characteristics have been defined in the second phase, a detailed project proposal is created at this stage. Such a proposal consists of: Narrative proposal, detailing what is the situation of the beneficiaries (target group), who are the partners (if any), what are the objectives of the project, which activities will be carried out, what are the risks of the project, what is the form of partnership etc.; Proposed budget, where all the necessary expenditures for project implementation are provided; Logical Framework; Detailed action plan; and any other related documents.
To write a project proposal, organizations can use any format that suits them, however, in most cases they should use the predefined formats by the donors.

4. **Implementation** - Usually this phase begins once the necessary financing for the project is secured. At this stage, the real preparations for the project begin: staff recruitment, team building, purchase of materials and equipment, project promotion, establishment of the administrative system, registration and financial reporting system, monitoring and evaluation system, etc. Of course, the nature of the work being carried out at this stage depends to a large extent on the size of the organization and the project. During this phase, care should be taken to follow the implementation of the plans created in the preliminary stages and to adapt the plans to the situations encountered in reality.

5. **Monitoring** - Usually this is not a separate phase, but is conducted at the same time as the implementation phase. Monitoring means controlling whether the project's implementation is going according to the plan. There are three aspects looked at during the monitoring phase: Are the activities being implemented as planned, are the desired outputs being achieved, is the budget being used according to the plan? The information provided during the monitoring phase initially helps the organization to improve its project management and it also increases organization's accountability to donors / beneficiaries (target group of project).

6. **Evaluation** - Unlike monitoring, where it is only checked if the plan is being successfully implemented, during the evaluation, it is assessed whether the plan was appropriate. It is also

assessed whether the selected strategy has been effective and whether the community and target groups have been positively impacted by the project. Evaluation can be internal and external. However, the evaluation process depends to a large extent on the nature and the size of the project and the organization itself, so it can be done in different modalities or it can be limited to monitoring and control.

2. Project Proposal Formulation

As mentioned above, organizations can follow any format that suits them for writing their project proposals for internal needs. However, in the case of search for funding opportunities, the donor's suggested format should be used. For the purposes of applying for grants from the "GrassRoots Action Support-GRAS" scheme, the application form prepared by the contracting authority should be used, which can be downloaded from the project web site: www.grasks.com.

2.1. Project summary

1. Summary of the Action

Please provide basic information about the applicant (and co-applicants if applicable) and a brief description of their experience with similar projects; the overall goal of the project; the target groups; and estimated budget required.

The information presented in this section helps the donor to have a clear picture of what is the focus of the work of the organization, what is its vision for the future, what has been its work in the past and if the proposed project is in line with this vision and with previous experiences. In other words, in this section it is recommended to initially present the strategic orientation of the organization, the main parts of which are the vision and mission statements of the organization. Afterwards, the overall goal of the project, the problem it intends to address, the beneficiaries of the project and the total cost of the project should be implemented.

2.1.1. Mission and vision

The organization's strategy begins with the vision statement. The **vision statement** is a short phrase that reflects the hopes of the organization and the community for the future. The organization may have one

or more vision statements. However, all vision statements need to be understood and shared across the community, they should be broad enough to include different perspectives, motivating for everyone involved in those efforts, and easy to communicate.

Mission statements are similar to the statements of vision in terms of looking to the future. But in contrast, mission statements are more activity-oriented. They reflect what the organization will do and why it will do it. Mission statements should be concise, results-oriented and inclusive.

Defining the vision and the mission is useful and important to the organization because the two help presenting the organization's aspirations in a concise manner, they enable the organization to focus on the important issues that it has established, they create the basis for developing strategic plans and also help the public to easily recognize the organization and join it in achieving the established goals.

2.1.2. The activity and history of the organization

This section consists of a description of the work and the types of **activities** that the organization carries out in order to realize its vision. A description of the organization's activity helps the donor understand the nature of the organization and the type of activities that will be developed within the project. Due to the simplicity of the application, the vision, the mission, and the activity of the organization can be merged into one or two sentences in this section.

Organization's **history** in this section consists of a presentation of projects realized by the organization, focusing on the outputs and their impact. Their presentation is important because it allows the donor to understand if the organization has the capability to successfully carry out its proposed activities, that it has qualified and experienced staff and that it has the neccessary skills for sound financial management with the required tools. In this section can be mentioned the implemented projects, the donors, the concrete results achieved and the lessons learned.

2.2. Problem analysis and proposed solutions

This is one of the parts that needs to be given much attention as the foundations of the project are laid out here. Problem analysis and goals start to be considered at the programming and identification stage but are defined more in detail during the formulation phase.

2.2.1. Problem analysis

There are three basic elements to be considered in this section. They are:

a) **Current situation / problem** - This describes what is the situation that is intended to be changed through the project, explaining the reasons for not meeting the needs of the targeted community / identifying stagnations and parts of the system that are not functioning properly and the consequences it causes for the target community / groups. The problem should be presented as clearly and concisely as possible. A well-defined problem is a half-solved problem.

b) **Ideal Condition** – This describes what would the situation be if the problem in question did not exist, if there were no backlogs or if the system would work perfectly. In other words, how would the situation be if all the needs of the target community were met and what would be the benefits for them. The ideal situation is closely related to the vision and objectives of the organization, and in smaller projects and organizations they may be the same.

c) **Solution** - Once explained what the problem is, and what would be the ideal situation, a solution that would help move the current state with troubles into an ideal state without them should be presented. In essence, this represents the idea of the project. The solution, too, should be presented as clearly and concisely as possible.

Depending on the organization's preferences, these three elements can be put in different order.

2.2.2. Project goals and objectives

> ### 3. Project objectives
> Please provide a description of the objectives that when achieved will ensure the realization of the overall goal of the project.

The project's purpose / goal and objectives are similar concepts and are often mistakenly used interchangeably. Being able to distinguish these concepts is important for planning, implementing and evaluating project outcomes.

In principle, both, goals and objectives, are statements that express what the organization intends to achieve in the future. However, goals are statements of a higher level, expressed in a general way. Project goals must be consistent with the overall goals and overall strategy of the organization. While the objectives outline the tangible results that will be achieved and the realization of which will lead to the achievement of the overall goal. Also, goals are long-term, while the objectives refer to the short-term aspect. Another difference is that goals are more difficult to measure than objectives.

An objective formulation technique is following the SMART criteria, according to which the objectives should be:

- **S** - Specific
- **M** - Measurable
- **A** - Achievable
- **R** - Realistic
- **T** - Time bound

Determining objectives based on these criteria ensures easier tracking of their implementation.

2.3. Project activities

The purpose of the activity description is to identify and present the specific tasks that need to be accomplished in order to achieve the intended project outcomes. The description of the activities should be as detailed as possible in order to enable the assessment and identification of the resources and the time needed for their realization.

This section should list all activities planned to be implemented during the project. The description of the activities should include the type, time of implementation, the performer and the outputs of the activities. Outputs of activities need to be included to provide an overview of how each activity will affect the realization of project objectives.

2.4. Project results

This section should describe what will be achieved with each project activity. Care should be taken in not confusing the outcomes of the activity with the results. For example, if the foreseen activity is to create a handbook on the rights of disabled people, then the output of the activity is a handbook created and the result achieved is the fact that persons with disabilities are more informed about their rights.

2.4.1. Action plan

7. Work plan

In the table below, provide a tentative work plan for the duration of the project. Under the "Activity" field write the name of the activity of the project. Mark with "X" the month(s) during which that activity takes place. Note that month "I" represents the first month of the project implementation and not the first month of the year. Use "+" to add more fields.

	Activity	Months											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
I.													
II.													
III.													

This represents an annex of the GRAS application package. Here all the activities that were described under question 4 should be listed (with names and not explanations). For the donor(s) but also for internal project management needs it is important to make the sequence of activities clear, as the onset of some activities is closely related to the completion of some others. For this purpose, the schedule of activities or the work plan is used, in which the activities are ordered based on the time during which they will be carried out.

2.5. Project beneficiaries

6. Project beneficiaries

Please explain who the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the project are, in what way do they benefit from the project, and how are they engaged in its implementation.

Beneficiaries of the project are also known as the project target group and, as the name suggests, they represent the people / groups of people who will benefit from the project and whose condition will be positively affected by the project activities and outcomes. Accurate identification of beneficiaries and the

ways in which they will benefit from the project is a very important part of each project proposal because it helps the donor understand the importance, the relevance and the impact the project will have in the community. This section should identify who the beneficiaries are, how many of them are there, what their challenges are and how they will benefit from the project. Project beneficiaries can be direct and indirect. Also, for community-based initiatives it is important to engage the community in project implementation. If the community is involved in the implementation of your project, please explain what their role is.

2.6. Project sustainability

8. Project sustainability
Explain how the project focuses on long-term continuation of project activities. Describe what outcomes you are trying to sustain for the project, even after its implementation.

The Sustainability Plan refers to the organization's ability to continue fulfilling its vision in the future and to achieve results that continue to positively affect the community even after the project implementation is completed. The sustainability of the organization and the project can be viewed from a community, financial and organizational point of view. Therefore, the sustainability plan should show:

- Which organizational skills will help the organization to continue its work and efforts even in the absence of donor funding?
- How will the organization provide the financial means for carrying out the activities after the grant period from GRAS scheme ends?
- In what form will the community engage in the implementation of the project and how will it push forward the project activities once the grant period from GRAS scheme ends?

Of course, there are also projects that represent only a short-term intervention that does not need to be repeated. In this case, this should be made clear in the application and the sustainability plan should focus only on the needs for ongoing maintenance of project outcomes.

3. Project resources and budgeting

For the implementation of every project, different resources need to be used. Based on the foreseen activities of the project, it is first determined what kind of resources are needed to carry out each activity. Subsequently, the identified resources are allocated according to the categories presented in the budget form. In the end, all resources are described by the unit, the number of units required, the unit price of each resource, and the total amount of money to be spent on them. This process precedes the budgeting process and makes it easier and more accurate.

The organization should ensure that resources are available at the moment the project implementation begins, so that project failures, delays or failures do not occur due to lack of resources.

3.1. Filling out the budget form for applying for GRAS scheme grants

"GrassRoots Action Suport - GRAS" - Call for Proposals - Grants - Budget Form						
Costs	Unit description (month, day, item, kilometre, etc.)	# of units	Unit value (in EUR)	Total Cost (in EUR)	Total Cost financed by GRAS (in EUR)	Total Cost financed by the applicant (in EUR)
1. Human Resources						
1.1 Salaries (gross salaries including social security charges and other related costs, local staff)				- €	- €	- €
1.1.1 Technical				- €	- €	- €
1.1.2 Administrative/support staff				- €	- €	- €
				- €	- €	- €
				- €	- €	- €
Subtotal Human Resources				- €	- €	- €
2. Travel and Office costs						
2.1 Travel/vehicle Costs				- €	- €	- €
2.2 Office rent				- €	- €	- €
2.3 Consumables - office supplies				- €	- €	- €
2.4 Other services (tel, electricity/heating, maintanance)				- €	- €	- €
				- €	- €	- €
Subtotal Travel and Office costs				- €	- €	- €
3. Activities						
				- €	- €	- €
				- €	- €	- €
				- €	- €	- €
				- €	- €	- €
				- €	- €	- €
Subtotal of activities				- €	- €	- €
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET				- €	- €	- €

As a primary rule, the project budget must be drafted in the euro currency.

The budget form, named as Annex III, is divided into three categories: Human Resources, Travel and Office Expenses, and Activities. In drafting the budget, great attention is required because the budget being submitted is final and errors in the calculation or placement of budget lines across the wrong categories can reduce your application evaluation score.

In the Human Resources category, monthly payments of all the personnel involved in project management and realization should be included, such as Project Coordinator, Financial Assistant, etc. This category may not include reimbursements for transport or food of project volunteers - they are included in the category of activities.

In the travel and office expenses category, travel expenses for project management needs, rent, electricity, telephone, internet, office consumables such as paper, ink, etc. should be included.

In the category of Activities Expenditures, all other expenses directly related to the realization of the project activities, for example, training rooms and workshops, promotional materials, payments for contractors / service providers for the project (researcher, designer, trainer etc.), publishing costs, drinks and food for meetings etc. should be included.

Care should be taken that all budget items are encoded by order. For example, 1.1, 1.2, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 etc. The encoding facilitates tracking and reporting of expenses.

After the amounts are entered in the "Total Expenditure" column, the following two columns should state clearly which expenditures will be covered by GRAS and which will be covered by the applicant.