

# **Advance information on call for project support applications open to Finnish civil society organisations for 2025–2028**

In January 2024, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs will open a call for project support applications for Finnish civil society organisations (CSOs). The call for applications will be open from 22 January to 8 March 2024. Applications can be submitted for discretionary government grants for development cooperation projects in 2025–2028. The notice for the call for applications and the assessment criteria will be published on the opening day of the call on 22 January 2024. The project support is awarded from the development cooperation appropriations for Finnish CSOs' development cooperation.

Project support for Finnish CSOs is part of the implementation of Finland's development policy and of the Government Programme. CSOs' development cooperation projects increase the diversity and impact of Finland's development cooperation. With project support, Finnish CSOs and their partners strengthen the capacity of civil society actors in developing countries and support the civic space, endorse an enabling environment for civil societies and strengthen the democracy of civil societies in accordance with [Guidelines for Civil Society in Development Policy](#) (2017).

Project support seeks to promote the objectives of Finland's foreign and development policy. The projects support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN 2030 Agenda. The readmission of nationals and support for the international rules-based order are conditions for Finland's development cooperation. Finland will not give development aid to governments or entities that support Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Finland will support the EU's efforts to encourage third countries to readmit their nationals by means of development cooperation instruments and visa policy, for example.

In future, the terms and conditions for project support will comply with the Ministry of Finance's new standard terms and conditions for government grants. The contents of the terms and conditions for project support will also be specified and amended. The standard terms and conditions will be published when the call for applications opens. A new feature of this call for applications is that own contribution can include public funding granted by non-ODA countries. As a rule, the minimum requirements for own contribution will remain unchanged, despite the amended calculation method.

The call for project support applications will be open from 22 January to 8 March 2024. On the opening day of the call for applications, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs will publish the notice for the call for applications and the finalized assessment criteria and application instructions in the [Applyforgrants.fi](https://applyforgrants.fi) service. Instructions on how to use the service are available at the [State Treasury's website](https://www.valtioneuvosto.fi) (in Finnish).

The applications for discretionary government grants will be assessed on the basis of the minimum requirements, qualitative criteria and an overall consideration, which are based on the Government Programme. The applications that meet the minimum requirements will proceed to the qualitative assessment and the overall consideration. The preliminary criteria for the 2024 call for project support applications are presented below. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is not obliged to award a discretionary government grant to all applicants or to award a grant equal to the amount indicated by an applicant.

# Preliminary criteria for the 2024 call for project support applications

## Minimum requirements

- a) A discretionary government grant can be awarded to an association or foundation registered in Finland which has been registered for at least two years by the opening date of the call for applications.
- b) The application contains all the mandatory appendices. The mandatory appendices will be specified in the call for applications.
- c) The project promotes at least one of the priorities of Finland's development policy as specified in the Government Programme. These priorities are improving the position and rights of women and girls; education; sustainable economy; democratic societies; and climate change. The outcome charts and indicators of Finland's development policy are available on the [website of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs](#).
- d) The application presents the required share of own contribution in accordance with the standard terms and conditions for the use of discretionary government grants.
- e) The project is carried out in a developing country/developing countries [listed among ODA recipients by the OECD Development Assistance Committee \(DAC\)](#).
- f) The project strengthens the local civil society in accordance with the [Guidelines for Civil Society in Development Policy](#) (2017).
- g) The project is at minimum human rights sensitive as defined in the [Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation: Guidance note](#) (2015).
- h) The application indicates a readiness to fulfil the 'do no harm' principle, stated as the minimum level of the Foreign Ministry's cross-cutting objectives. These cross-cutting objectives are gender equality; non-discrimination; climate-resilient and low-emission development; and environmental protection, with an emphasis on safeguarding biodiversity. The guidelines are available on the [Foreign Ministry's website](#).

## Applications will be assessed against the following qualitative criteria, if they meet the minimum requirements:

1. The participation and ownership of the project actors (both rights holders and duty bearers) in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the project and the ensuring of its sustainability are clearly indicated. The project is based on the objectives of the local partner and it supports the partner's strategy, advocacy and mutual learning. Decision-making and other roles and responsibilities between the partner in the target country and the Finnish CSO are clearly indicated in the application.
2. The project takes into account clearly and concretely the realisation of the rights of women and girls and the rights of persons and groups in vulnerable position subject to multiple discrimination.
3. The project plan clearly indicates the realistic change that the project aims to achieve. The project has clearly defined and appropriate objectives and functions as well as indicators for measuring the achievement of the objectives. The application includes a plan, with means and schedule, for determining the baseline for project objectives. Additional information: [Results Based Management \(RBM\) in Finland's Development Policy : Managing for Sustainable Development Results - Guiding Document](#) (2023).
4. The applicant and/or its partners have special expertise in the project's field of activity and operating environment. The application includes an analysis of the operating environment and of the state of the civil society. The analysis describes the partner's position in the local civil society and the civil society's operating conditions relevant to the project.
5. The project's risk analysis and risk management plan are comprehensive and realistic from the point of view of the project's implementation. The application identifies the external and internal risks relevant to the project and recognises their likelihood and impact. The application indicates the roles and responsibilities of the applicant and the local partner and how risks are prevented and how provisions are made for corrective measures. Risk

management takes into account the key risks related to environmentally and socially responsible activities in accordance with the standard terms of the Ministry's project support, especially with regard to the prevention of corruption and sexual harassment and abuse. Read more about the Foreign Ministry's [risk management policy for development cooperation](#) (in Finnish).

6. The project includes a clear and appropriate monitoring and evaluation plan.
7. The application includes a realistic and comprehensive analysis of the sustainability of the results and factors affecting them as well as an exit strategy.
8. The project covers communications about the results both in Finland and in the target country.
9. The project schedule, budget and human resources are realistic in terms of its objectives and implementation and the capacity of the applicant and its partner. The cost structure indicates Finland's share and the local partner's share, and the application includes clear justifications for both the cost structure and the costs.

## Overall consideration

In addition to the above-mentioned minimum requirements and qualitative criteria, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs will exercise its overall consideration in relation to individual applications, the set of projects awarded support and the available appropriations. Elements of the overall consideration include:

- Implementation of projects in countries classified by the OECD as least developed countries (LDCs) and/or [fragile states](#).
- The objectives, target groups and geographical area of the project support the implementation of the Government Programme and Finland's foreign and security policy objectives.

- Stakeholder cooperation and multi-actor cooperation that brings added value to the objectives of the project in Finland and the target country. This may mean, for example, cooperation with the private sector, other organisations, municipalities or educational institutions.
- The project's objective to support the conditions of sustainable economy by increasing the employment and business opportunities of the local population.
- The integrity and relevance of the application.
- The project's added value in relation to:
  - [Description of project support \(2023\)](#)
  - The fundamental rights<sup>1</sup> determined in the Constitution of Finland, especially with regard to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.
- In its overall consideration, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs will also use its previous verifiable experiences and assessments on the applicant and the applicant's previous use of government grants.

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<sup>1</sup> Read more about the fundamental rights at the [Human Rights Centre](#), for example.