

CALL FOR PROPOSALS**Terms of Reference****EVALUATION SERVICES**

for the project:

**Balkan optimizing opportunities for sustainable transformation –
BOOST**

The Contracting Authority:

European Association for local democracy - ALDA

1. THE ACTION TO BE EVALUATED AND STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED

1.1. *About ALDA*

ALDA – European Association for Local Democracy, is a French-registered association dedicated to the promotion of good governance and citizen participation at the local level in the European Union, its Neighborhood and beyond.

ALDA is a key stakeholder in the field of local democracy, active citizenship, and cooperation between local authorities and civil society in Europe, its Neighborhood, and all around the World, mainly acting through participative methods and decentralized cooperation.

ALDA was established in 1999 at the initiative of the Council of Europe to coordinate and support the network of the Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs), which are self-sustainable, locally registered NGOs acting as promoters of good governance and local self-government, with which ALDA collaborates in many activities.

ALDA is a membership-based organization gathering over 300 members, including local authorities, associations of local authorities, and civil society organizations, coming from more than 54 countries in the enlarged Europe. As a core element, ALDA supports citizens and groups of citizens in their initiatives aimed at improving their local context, building bridges with local authorities to make the change real.

ALDA is a wide, consolidated network, made of 300 members from 54 countries, 16 Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) and 2 Operational Partners (OPs).

The Association is led by a Governing Board elected every four years, composed of its members' representatives and engaged in fulfilling the mission, while daily operations are ensured by a staff made of 50 people working from 6 offices over Europe, from Strasbourg (FR), Brussels (BE), Vicenza (IT), to Skopje (MK), Chisinau (MD) and Tunis (TN).

1.2. *Background of the BOOST project*

Balkan optimizing opportunities for sustainable transformation – BOOST is a 3-year project that is implemented in 6 Western Balkans countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia supported by Agence française de développement.

The programme of BOOST project aims to strengthen democratic, economic and social development of the WB region while targeting Western Balkans CSOs and young people. This will be achieved through long-term program support for empowering civil society capacities in different thematic pillars:

Pillar 1: Youth and entrepreneurship;

Pillar 2: Rural development and environment;
Pillar 3: Cultural heritage and community development.

The cross-cutting priority of the project is to promote active citizenship through participatory approaches and tools, and to encourage a gender perspective in all the programme's activities.

The programme aims to strengthen the capacities of civil society organisations through activities of capacity building, financial supporting activities to CSOs in the three key thematic pillars and promoting networking within civil society and with other key actors such as local authorities.

The specific objectives of the BOOST project are:

- Strengthen the role and the capacities of civil society organizations in the Western Balkans countries, which work for the democratization and sustainable development of the region.
- Set up a network of relevant stakeholders (civil society, local authorities, universities and others) committed to the stable and democratic, economic, cultural and social development of the region.
- Promote and strengthen a shared narrative among civil society and decision-makers that reinforces European values of peace, democracy, and inclusion of young people (men and women, boys and girls) at regional level.

2. THE EVALUATION

2.1. *Rationale for evaluation*

The evaluation, requested by the BOOST project team and agreed upon with Agence Française de Développement (AFD) as donor of the project, aims to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the BOOST. It seeks to provide insights, recommendations, and lessons learned to enhance project implementation and inform future projects and programs.

The donor expects the evaluation to assess the relevance and coherence of the project design and its alignment with target group needs. It should also evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of implementation strategies and activities. Additionally, the evaluation aims to measure the project's impact on target groups and broader communities, as well as assess the sustainability of project outcomes and the likelihood of continued benefits post-completion. The donor anticipates actionable recommendations for improvement. The evaluation is expected to yield learning and qualitative changes in the donor's approaches, strategies, institutional systems, and practices related to gender integration.

The partners in the project share the same expectations as the sponsor, the evaluation to provide insights, recommendations, and lessons learned to enhance their own roles and contributions to the project. As well the partners' expectations include understanding the effectiveness and impact of their partnership and the project's outcomes, and improving

their practices and approaches in future collaborations. Partners also seek to learn how the project has influenced gender integration and active citizenship.

It is anticipated that an external evaluation will ensure objectivity and impartiality in assessing the project's performance. Further, the external evaluators can provide an unbiased perspective, which is crucial for identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that internal stakeholders might overlook. An external assessment also enhances the credibility and validity of the evaluation findings, which is important for stakeholders, including donors, partners, and beneficiaries.

2.2. Purpose of the Evaluation

The evaluation aims to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of results to the BOOST project. The evaluation also will provide insights, recommendations, and lessons learned to enhance project implementation and achieve the project's objectives. The Evaluation will also serve as a base for project partners and stakeholders to use in improving the design and implementation of further related projects and programs. The evaluation should focus on the entire BOOST project implementation over a 3-year period (April 2024 to March 2027).

Objectives of the Evaluation:

1. Assess the relevance and coherence of the project design and its alignment with the needs of the target groups (CSO's and young people) in the Western Balkans.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the project's implementation strategies and activities by ALDA and the partners of the project.
3. Measure the impact of the project on the target groups and the broader communities affected by BOOST project.
4. Assess the sustainability of the project outcomes and the likelihood of continued benefits after project completion.
5. Provide actionable recommendations for improving project implementation and outcomes.

The project is based on the hypothesis that enhancing the capacities of CSOs and promoting active citizenship will foster democratic, economic, and social development in the Western Balkans. Key operational principles focus on thematic pillars: youth and entrepreneurship, rural development and environment, and cultural heritage and community development. Additionally, the project incorporates a gender perspective in all activities, with the goal of advancing gender equality.

Time frame:

Project Duration: April 2024-March 2027

Evaluation Duration: 2024-2027

2.3. Methodology

- The evaluation will follow these steps:

1. Inception Phase:

- Conduct an initial review of BOOST project documents, including the project proposal, logical framework, work plans, and progress reports.
- Establish the baseline by identifying and selecting objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs) to assess the current state and enable measurement of progress towards the desired societal change.
- Develop a comprehensive M&E plan, including methodology, data collection tools, performance indicators, and a detailed work schedule.

2. Intermediate Evaluation:

- Conduct field visits to WB and engage with stakeholders, including beneficiaries, CSOs, local authorities, and project partners.
- Assess the progress towards achieving project objectives and outputs.
- Identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities related to project implementation.
- Provide recommendations for mid-course corrections and improvements for the project implementation.

3. Final Evaluation:

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment report of the project's overall performance against the set objectives and indicators.
- Measure the impact of the project on the target groups and the broader community in WB.
- Conduct an Effect Study to assess causal impacts and determine changes directly attributable to the project.
- Evaluate the sustainability of project outcomes and the capacity of CSOs to continue benefiting from the project beyond its lifetime
- Document lessons learned and best practices for future projects.

- The evaluation will use a mixed-methods approach, including but not limited to:

- Desk review of project documents and relevant literature.
- Quantitative data collection through surveys and questionnaires with the stakeholders
- Qualitative data collection through interviews, focus group discussions, and case studies.
- Field visits to project sites in the Western Balkans (Local authorities, Partners of the project and sub-granted CSOs, final beneficiaries/citizens reached by sub-granting projects)
- Stakeholder consultations and participatory evaluation techniques.

- Specific Tasks by Work Package:

WP1: Project Management & Coordination

- Review the project management structures and communication plans.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of regular coordination activities with the partners of the project and progress reviews.
- Monitor and assess program performance and financial management.

WP2: Capacity Building

- Evaluate the effectiveness and impact of training sessions and workshops.
- Assess the quality and relevance of technical assistance and mentorship provided to CSOs.
- Review and analyze the resource materials and toolkits developed for capacity building.

WP3: Sub-granting Scheme

- Review the design and launch process of the sub-granting scheme.
- Evaluate the selection process and funding of CSO projects.
- Monitor and assess the implementation and outcomes of sub-granted projects.

WP4: Networking & Advocacy Initiatives

- Evaluate the regional and national networking activities conducted.
- Assess the organization and outcomes of the Strategic Forum and final program event.
- Review the effectiveness of advocacy activities and promotion of policy measures.

WP5: Communication & Visibility

- Review the development and implementation of the communication and visibility plan.
- Evaluate the marketing campaigns for the sub-granting scheme.
- Assess the creation and management of the program website and sub-grants management platform.
- Monitor and analyze the visibility of all program actions through various digital channels.

• Expected Deliverables:

1. Inception Report: containing a baseline Report detailing the current state of the project context, based on selected objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs); Detailed M&E plan and methodology, including list of performance indicators, with baseline values and target values; data collection tools and work plan.
Due date: March 2025
2. Delivering a training on usage of M&E tools for the BOOST project staff
Due date: April 2025
3. Intermediate Evaluation Report: Findings, analysis, and recommendations for improving project implementation
Due date: September - October 2025
4. Specific intermediate report on the implementation of WP2 to assess the progress, challenges, and achievements of capacity-building activities. It will evaluate the effectiveness of training sessions, workshops, and the overall capacity-building support provided to CSOs.
Due date: September - October 2025
5. Specific intermediate reports in implementation of WP 3 focused on the implementation phases of the sub-granting scheme, including the selection process, the progress of sub-granted projects, and an evaluation of the outcomes achieved during the reporting period.
Due date: August 2026
6. Final Evaluation Report consisted of these parts: Comprehensive performance assessment report of project, Impact assessment, Effect study report, sustainability, and lessons learned.
Due date: February - March 2027

7. Presentation of Findings: PowerPoint presentations summarizing key findings and recommendations for the intermediate and final evaluations.

Due date: February March- 2027

For each deliverable as listed above, a draft version will be shared and validated with the Project Manager at least two weeks before the due date.

- The role of project team

The role of the BOOST project team during the process of evaluation is to oversee the evaluation process, provide necessary documents and information to the evaluator, and ensure communication and coordination with partners and stakeholders. The partners are expected to collaborate with the evaluation team and provide feedback and input during the evaluation process.

The evaluator will report to the BOOST Project Coordinator and will work closely with the project team and partners. Regular updates and progress reports will be required throughout the evaluation period.

- Data protection

In carrying out the evaluation of this project, the evaluator must respect the following confidentiality rules:

- All data relating to this project are confidential.
- The information is only accessible to those whose access is authorized.
- The BOOST manager will authorize the external expert to list the data in paper or electronic media intended to carry out the activities entrusted to him. However, the BOOST project manager does not give the evaluator any right to use, disclose or publish the data or results obtained in the course of his/her activity.

8. TECHNICAL DETAILS

- Period of Performance

The contracted period will extend from the date of contract signing to March 2027, with exact dates specified in the contract. The timeline for specific activities will be agreed upon with the chosen service provider.

- Payment

Payment for the assignment will be made upon the execution of each deliverable as outlined in the assignment.

9. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

4.1. Qualifications and Experience

To ensure the comprehensive evaluation of the BOOST project, we invite applications from both individual experts and consortiums of companies and individuals. Given the extensive scope of work and the geographical coverage across multiple countries in the Western Balkans, it is essential that applicants demonstrate a robust combination of expertise, experience, and resources. This approach allows for the pooling of diverse skills and knowledge necessary to meet the project's demands effectively. Below are the qualifications and experience requirements for potential applicants:

- For Individuals(Consortia) Submitting Offers:

- Advanced degree in social sciences, development studies, public administration, or related fields.

- The team leader should demonstrate at least 7 years of experience in external project evaluation, particularly in areas such as civil society development, youth empowerment, and community development, and CV's of members of the consortia

- Show a proven track record of conducting evaluations for multi-country projects in the Western Balkans or similar contexts.

- Exhibit strong analytical, research, and report-writing skills.

- Proficiency in English; knowledge of at least one language of the Western Balkans countries and French is an asset.

- Possess excellent communication and interpersonal skills to engage effectively with diverse stakeholders.

- Have the availability and ability to work independently and on a flexible schedule.

- For Companies Submitting Offers:

- Demonstrate a minimum of 7 years of experience in providing project evaluation services, with a focus on civil society development, youth empowerment, and community development.

- Present a team of qualified experts with diverse backgrounds in the relevant fields, including detailed CVs and roles of team members.

- Provide evidence of successfully completed evaluations for multi-country projects in the Western Balkans or similar contexts, including references and case studies.

- Show the company's capacity and resources to manage and conduct large-scale evaluations, including logistical and administrative support.

- Outline the company's quality assurance processes to ensure the delivery of high-quality evaluation reports.

- Provide evidence of the company's legal registration, financial stability, and compliance with relevant regulations.

9.2. Application Process

To apply for this call, companies and consortia of individuals should submit the following documents:

1. Cover Letter: A brief introduction of the applicant(s), highlighting the motivation for applying and suitability for the evaluation assignment.
2. Technical Proposal: Detailed methodology and approach for conducting the evaluation; Work plan and timeline for completing the evaluation; and roles and responsibilities of team members (if applying as a consortium).
3. Financial Proposal: Detailed budget, including professional fees, travel expenses, and other costs related to the evaluation divided by the implementation phases and deliverables should be stated in the proposal. The evaluator is responsible for covering all expenses aroused during the assignment implementation, including professional fees, travel expenses, and other costs.
4. Company Profile (for companies): Background information about the company, including years in operation, key areas of expertise, and previous relevant projects; and Proof of legal status and registration.
5. CVs of Key Personnel: Detailed CVs of all individuals proposed to be involved in the evaluation, highlighting their relevant experience and qualifications.
6. Past Performance and References: Examples of previous evaluations conducted, particularly those relevant to civil society development, youth empowerment, and community development in the Western Balkans or similar contexts.
9. Statement of Availability: Confirmation of the availability and ability to work independently and on a flexible schedule for the duration of the project.
10. Additional Certifications or Accreditations: Any relevant certifications or accreditations that demonstrate the applicant's qualifications and expertise in the field of project evaluation.

9.3. Delivering the proposals

Please submit your proposal to: boost@aldaintranet.org by 31.12.2024, 5:00 PM CET.

Upon final selection of the External Evaluator, a contract will be signed between the selected Evaluator and the Lead Organisation of the project: ALDA - the European Association for Local Democracy (more information about ALDA: <https://www.alda-europe.eu/>). ALDA will have the final decision on the choice of the external evaluation and its verdict will be unappealable.