



Open call for proposal:

Partnerships for an Enabling
Environment for Civil Society
- Policy and Method Development

Guidelines for Applications
Sida CSO Policy & Method Development

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1. Introduction

These guidelines provide important information on the application process. Please read them carefully.

Applications are completed digitally in the application portal [Partnership for an Enabling Environment for Civil Society – Policy and Method Development | Calls for proposal](#)

Guidance are available in the [Documents and Guidelines](#) section in the portal.

Organisations that currently receive support under the CSO strategy may apply only if their existing project period ends before the proposed programme period begins.

The application will only be considered complete if all three sections in the portal are concluded.

Applications submitted to Sida are public records and may be disclosed on request. If an application contains sensitive information that should be treated as confidential, please contact csso@sida.se for advice on how to submit it.

2. Formal requirements for applicant organisations

- Not-for-profit civil society organisations , (including foundations, networks, or other types of civil society entities. Applicants may not be an individual, part of government/public sector or corporate sector.)
- Applicants must have been operational for at least 5 years.
- Applicants must be formally registered and democratically governed, have statutes and order of delegation.
- Applicants may not be listed in the European sanction list.
- Applicants must be financially stable, and be able to present at least two (unqualified) *Statutory Annual Reports* (including audited Financial Statement signed by an authorised Auditor).
- Applicants must have an accounting system that enables the separate accounting of project costs (the name of the system should be stated in the application).

3. Guidelines for applications

Proposals shall be written in **Swedish or English**.

The document **Programme Proposal Outline Format** can be found in the **Documents and Guidance** section in the portal, and outlines the aspect that should be included in the proposal and the areas that Sida will assess.

Sida will assess the proposals using a scoring model in which each response may be awarded between one and five points.

3.1 Sida's strategy for supporting Civil Society

Sida – the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency – is a government agency working to create better living conditions for people living in poverty and under oppression around the world.

Sida works on behalf of the Swedish government and parliament and the agency's activities are funded through Swedish tax revenue.

The **Strategy for Sweden's Development Cooperation with Civil Society 2025–2029** (the CSO strategy) has 2 Objective areas:

1. *Strengthening civil society capacity in developing countries, and*
2. *An enabling environment for civil society actors in developing countries to operate.*

The full strategy is available in the **Documents and Guidance** section.

The strategy stipulates that open call for proposals shall be used as the primary mode of selecting partners.

3.2 Proposal relevance, What can be applied for?

This call refers to Part 2 in the implementation model of the CSO strategy, and shall contribute to **Objective area 2 of the strategy**, by supporting civil society organisations working with policy and method development, with the aim of strengthening civil society.

Proposal will be assessed on the basis of their ability to contribute to results within Objective area 2:

2. An enabling environment for civil society actors in developing countries to operate

2.1 Strengthened civic space for an independent and pluralistic civil society

2.2 Improved conditions for dialogue and collaboration within civil society, and between civil society and other actors

2.3 Improved conditions for civil society actors to act independently and find diversified funding

With this call for proposals Sida aims to select the most strategic and catalytic partners and programmes to achieve results against the sub-objectives of Objective area 2.

Sida will prioritise programmes implemented at global and regional levels, that contribute to an enabling environment for civil society and strong local ownership.

Partners and programmes shall contribute to improving civil society's democratic space and development efficiency.

The selection will also take into account organisations' work to enhance internal democracy, including equitable structures and leadership, as well as their working methods, representativeness, legitimacy, and capacity for resource mobilisation.

The potential to contribute to learning and development of the portfolio as a whole will be taken into account.

The portfolio shall include activities that contribute to: innovative methods; opportunities of digitalisation; diversified funding for civil society; policy strengthening, respectful dialogue with civil society and learning.

The forwarding of funds or sub-granting beyond one agreement level may only be granted in exceptional cases following a specific assessment.

Forwarding of funds and sub-granting refer to situations where an organisation receives funding from Sida and subsequently forwards funds, whole or in part, to another organisation.

Proposed programmes should be firmly grounded in relevant knowledge and evidence; and outline the evidence base underpinning the intervention's focus, methods, and anticipated results. They should also summarise how a practical for monitoring, learning, and future evaluation will be established from the outset, taking into account the specific context, characteristics, and constraints of the intervention.

Sida aligns to the definition of an enabling environment and civic space as defined in the DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance (OECD, 2021). Civic Space in this definition is central to an overall enabling environment.

An enabling environment in this definition include support for CSO leadership and ownership, availability and accessibility of direct, flexible and predictable financial support, as well as dialogue and engagement, capacity strengthening and incentives for CSOs' own effectiveness, transparency and accountability.

Civic space is defined as "the physical, virtual, legal, regulatory, and policy space where people can, among other things, securely exercise their rights to the freedoms of peaceful assembly, association, and expression, in keeping with human rights" (OECD, 2021).

3.3 How much may be applied for?

Partners shall apply for an amount that can be justified in relation to the achievement of results. Typically a grant under part 2 of the CSO implementation model range from 10 – 20 million SEK per year.

The programme duration (activity period) may be up to 36 months. Applicants may indicate a preferred start date, no earlier than 1 October 2026, and no later than 1 January 2028.

Organisations registered outside of ODA recipient countries are required to contribute at least 15% of the programme 's total budget from their own funds .

Only one application per organisation is allowed under this call.

Note that organisations can only have receive support through one agreement under the CSO-strategy.

3.4 Application Format

Sida does not request a specific application format. The information that needs to be provided can be found in the **Narrative Proposal Outline Guide in the Documents and Guidance** section. An **Example Budget Format is** also attached for your convenience.

The application must be a stand-alone proposal, containing all key information.

Please note that **Narrative Proposal must not exceed 30 pages**, including Results Framework but excluding Budget.

The proposed agreement **Budget** shall be submitted as a pdf file, and as an excel version outlining the details per budget line.

Applicants shall submit full proposals. Sida will not receive concept notes.

3.5 What should be attached to the application?

The full Application consists of;

- Narrative Proposal (including Results Framework)
- Budget

And:

- Organisation registration number/certificate of registration.
- Organisation statutes (by laws)
- The two most recent Statutory Annual Audit Reports, including Financial Statements audited by an authorised auditor.

Only the requested amount of document can be uploaded in the portal.

In addition the **Declaration** section need to be filled in for the application to be considered complete.

3.6 Process

Overall, Sida assesses proposals based on the organisation's capacity, the programme's relevance and probability to achieve results, relevant evidence/knowledge of impact.

Sida also assess applications from a portfolio perspective to ensure a composition that contributes to the strategy's goals.

In the final step selected proposals will be assessed following Sida's general process for application appraisal.

Sida will only be able to enter agreements with a limited number of new partners (estimated at 10-20). Hence, it is possible that proposals that are relevant and of high quality may still be rejected.

For proposals selected for the last step: Full Proposal Appraisal

The selection of a proposal for a full appraisal is not a commitment of funding. A decision for funding, or rejection, is taken following the completion of a full appraisal process.

Sida will perform screening that screening includes a review of an organisation's external communications and presence in open sources. The purpose is to enable a comprehensive risk assessment of the organisation's compliance with requirements related to anti-democratic activities.

For proposal selected for a full appraisal process Sida may also conduct a full external review of internal control systems and request additional supporting documentation including for example:

- Office manual, including information on segregation of duties.
- Code of Conduct, including SEAH provisions
- Anti-corruption policy
- Travel policy, including information on hotel costs, flight tickets, per diems, etc.
- Procurement regulations

These documents are to be provided only upon request.

4. Other

Annex 1: Further Information & useful links

Here you may find some additional information and useful links:

According to the Swedish constitution and Swedish law, all documents received or sent by a government agency, e.g. Sida, are in principle available to the public. Before a document is made available to the public, an assessment is made whether any information is classified and should therefore not be disclosed. Read more here: <https://www.government.se/how-sweden-is-governed/the-principle-of-public-access-to-official-documents/>.

Sida requires all partners to publish open data on Sida-funded programmes in accordance with the standard from **International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)**. Guidance is available at; [Openaid – transparent development cooperation](#), [IATI guidelines for partners](#), and [IATI-web site](#).

The processing of personal data is governed by the EU General Data Protection Regulation (**GDPR**). Sida may process personal data relating to Sida's partners and their employees in order to carry out its mandate as a government authority. The legal basis for Sida's processing of personal data is the performance of tasks carried out in the public interest. Sida's website contains information on the rights of data subjects under the GDPR as well as contact details for Sida's Data Protection Officer: [GDPR och Sidas policy on integrity](#).

Other links and Guidance:

Sida assesses all programmes based on a number of key areas. For further guidance, please also refer to Sida's methodological support for partners, [Methods and materials | Sida](#). Including;

[Human Rights Based Approach, Sida](#)
[Sida's work for Gender Equality, 2020](#)
[Gender Toolbox](#).
[Green Toolbox](#).
[Toolbox för Peace and Conflict](#).

[Guideline Budget and Financial Reporting](#)
[Guidance on managing foreign exchange gains and losses](#)
[Sida's Requirements for Annual Audit](#)
[Countries - Official Development Assistance, ODA](#).
[Guidance for Sida's partner organisations | Sida](#)
[Partnership with Sida | Sida](#)

In order to support quality and transparency work, Swedish civil society organisations that receive funding within the CSO strategy within the framework of part 2 can apply for up to 80% of their costs for quality certification *Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative (HQAI)*.

Annex 2: CSO strategy Outcome Goals

Your organisation's activities must contribute to Objective area 2 of the CSO Strategy. The Outcome goals per sub-objective listed below reflect how Sida will follow up on the objectives and will guide Sida's reading of incoming reporting, and contribute to the aggregation of results across contributions receiving support from the CSO-strategy in Sida's internal reporting.

CSO-strategy Objective area 2:

An enabling environment for civil society actors in developing countries to operate

Strengthened space for an independent and pluralistic civil society.

- Outcome Objective 2.1.a: Decision-makers at global, national, and local levels adopt or reinforce laws and regulations that respect and protect civil society space.
- Outcome Objective 2.1.b: Civil society organizations conduct results-oriented advocacy work, with appropriate security measures, in order to influence decision-makers to respect and protect civil society space.

Improved conditions for dialogue and collaboration within civil society, and between civil society and other actors.

- Outcome Objective 2.2a: Decision-makers establish and maintain mechanisms for dialogue and consultation, which contribute to CSOs being included in policy and decision-making processes.
- Outcome Objective 2.2b: Civil society organizations strengthen and use alliances and networks for dialogue and collaboration between different CSOs and other relevant societal actors.

Improved conditions for civil society actors to act independently and diversify their financing.

- Outcome Objective 2.3a: Civil society actors implement new strategies for resource mobilization and financial sustainability to achieve a broadened and diversified funding base.
- Outcome Objective 2.3b: Increasing numbers of donors, including Sida, support CSOs in their own right and based on aid effectiveness principles