

ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND IN LITHUANIA

EEA Grants 2014 – 2021

#CALL 2

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

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1. EEA AND NORWAY FINANCIAL MECHANISMS 2014 – 2021

1.1. OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND

The EEA and Norway Financial Mechanisms 2014 – 2021 are funded by **Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway** with the aim to reduce economic and social disparities in Europe, and to strengthen the relations between Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and the Beneficiary States (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia).

According to the agreements between the EU and Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, at least 10 % of EEA and Norway Grants are allocated to the strengthening of civil society through the Active Citizens Fund (ACF). A total budget of €9,000,000 will be allocated for the ACF in Lithuania in the period of 2014 - 2021.

The general objectives of the ACF Program are to **strengthen civil society and active citizenship and empower vulnerable groups**. The Program also aims at **strengthening of bilateral cooperation** between civil society organizations from Lithuania and entities from the Donor states as well as **promoting regional exchange and networking**, with a view of sharing knowledge and best practice across civil society.

The objectives of the ACF are based on the common values of respect of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and the respect for human rights, including rights of persons belonging to minorities.

Areas of support of the ACF are:

- Democracy, active citizenship, good governance, and transparency
- Human rights and equal treatment through combating discrimination based on race or ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or identity
- Social justice and inclusion of vulnerable groups
- Gender equality and fighting gender-based violence
- Environment and climate change

1.2. EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND IN LITHUANIA

The ACF Program in Lithuania aims to achieve the following **outcomes**:

- **Outcome 1.** Increased citizen participation in civic activities
- **Outcome 2.** Strengthened civil society watchdog and advocacy role
- **Outcome 3.** Increased support for human rights
- **Outcome 4.** Vulnerable groups empowered
- **Outcome 5.** Enhanced capacity and sustainability of civil society
- **Bilateral Outcome.** Enhanced collaboration between beneficiary and donor state entities involved in the Program
- **Regional Civil Society Initiatives Outcome.** Strengthened regional (cross-border) cooperation in the civil society sector

Taking into consideration the needs and challenges of civil society sector in Lithuania, the following **country-specific concerns** have been identified:

- capacity and sustainability of the civil society sector

- outreach to under-served geographic areas and target groups
- inter-cultural integration with particular emphasis on national minorities

A set of **call 's priorities** addressing the country-specific concerns as well as Program area specifics have been established as a response to the needs identified and shall contribute. For further information regarding call 's priorities, please consult the Chapter 3.7 of this Guidelines.

The ACF Program in Lithuania shall be implemented through the following calls:

- **Open call 1** for small, medium, large and ad-hoc projects – December 2019
- **Open call 2** for small and medium projects – July 2021

Currently, NGOs are invited to submit applications for **the Call 2 for small and medium projects under the Outcomes 1-4**. Organizations implementing projects granted under the first call (including ad-hoc projects) may participate in the second call for proposals, provided that they have not breached the project contract (e.g., delay in reporting).

Each non-governmental organization can **submit only one project proposal per Call 2** and can **participate in two more projects as a project partner**.

The involvement of a Donor State entity as a project partner is a pre-requisite for the activity to be considered a bilateral cooperation activity. ACF Bilateral Fund for **Bilateral Cooperation Initiatives** is also reserved with the aim to strengthen bilateral relations between NGOs established in Lithuania and entities in the Donor States.

Measures offered by the Regional Civil Society Initiatives (RCSI), initiated and carried out by Fund Operator(s) of the beneficiary states, shall be also used with a view to strengthen the civil society sector, sharing knowledge, promoting mutual learning, adoption and use of knowledge and best practice across civil society.

1.3. MANAGEMENT OF THE ACF FUND IN LITHUANIA

The Fund Operator for the Active Citizens Fund in Lithuania is the **Open Lithuania Foundation** in consortium with the **OSFL Projects** and **Geri Norai LT**.

Open Lithuania Foundation (OLF) has substantial experience in re-granting and in running operational programs designed to strengthen civil society, active citizens and the CSOs at large. **OSFL Projektai** (OSFLP) possesses extensive re-granting experience and in-depth technical knowledge of audit and accounting practices applied in Lithuania and particularly in the NGO sector. **Geri norai LT** (GN) offers tailor-made support for early-stage social entrepreneurs, local action groups in the regions, linguistic and ethnic minorities, etc.

2. PROVISIONS OF THE CALL

2.1. INDICATIVE BUDGET OF THE CALL

Total indicative budget of the Call 2 is **€1,055,000**, which is divided among small and medium projects:

Outcome	Indicative budget for small projects in €	Indicative budget for medium projects in €
Outcome 1. Increased citizen participation in civic activities	50,000	290,000
Outcome 2. Strengthened civil society watchdog/advocacy role	30,000	165,000
Outcome 3. Increased support for human rights	30,000	165,000
Outcome 4. Vulnerable groups are empowered	50,000	275,000

Provisions for Bilateral Cooperation Initiatives are provided in the separate *Guidelines for Bilateral Cooperation Initiatives*, as published on the Program 's website.

2.2. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants for grants under the Active Citizens Fund in Lithuania are NGOs that are established in the Republic of Lithuania and fall within the following definition: "A non-profit voluntary organization established as a legal entity, having a non-commercial purpose, independent of the local, regional and central government, public entities, political parties, and commercial organizations. Religious institutions and political parties are not considered NGOs."

More specifically, eligible applicants should usually meet the following requirements:

- an Applicant is a legal entity that has been registered in Lithuania for at least one year.
- an Applicant fulfils the requirements set in the Art.2.3 of the Law on Development of Non-Governmental Organizations¹.
- An Applicant is self-registered as an NGO in the Register of Legal Entities prior the project/project concept's submission date².
- shareholders of an Applicant are not the consortium members of the Fund Operator.
- an Applicant is a non-profit organization that has not been created nor operates to generate personal profit. Although they may have paid staff and may engage in revenue-generating activities, they do not distribute profits to their members nor to their board. Where revenue-generating activities are undertaken, these should not represent the purpose of the NGO, but should be a means to support its mission and values.
- an Applicant must have members who do not have any direct commercial interest in the outcome of the work of the organization or of its commercial activities and should not pursue the commercial or professional interests of its members. Trade- and professional associations, where the aims and purposes of the association are to further the specific interests of its members only, are not eligible.

¹ <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/981e2c43682e11eaa02cacf2a861120c?jfwid=-o38n99b9s>

² <https://info.registrucentras.lt/node/104642>

- an Applicant must be voluntary in nature, formed voluntarily by groups or individuals, and usually involving an element of voluntary participation in the organization.
- an Applicant must act in the public arena and for the public good on concerns and issues related to the well-being of people, groups or society as a whole.
- An Applicant must have some degree of formal or institutional existence, unlike informal or ad hoc groups, involving formal statutes or other governing document(s) defining their mission, objectives and scope.
- An Applicant must have transparent structures and elected chair/board, and are accountable to their members and donors.
- an Applicant must be independent of the local, regional and national government and other public authorities.
- an Applicant must be independent of political parties and commercial organizations.

Lithuanian Red Cross Society is considered as eligible applicant, if it fulfils the above principles.

Political parties, religious institutions, social partners³ or profit-distributing cooperatives are not considered as NGOs and therefore are not eligible. SME and other profit generating organizations holding the status of social enterprise are not considered eligible applicant, whereas NGO having a status of social enterprise can be eligible applicant.

Faith-based organizations are eligible if they meet the principles identified above and if the funded activities do not directly or indirectly promote religious doctrine, mission or proselytism related to the beliefs of a particular faith (beyond basic religious/cultural awareness-raising).

Organizations that have not paid amounts due, following a final court decision in connection with the NGO Program 2009-2014 in Lithuania, shall not be considered eligible applicants.

Organizations implementing projects granted under the first call (including ad-hoc projects) may participate in the second call for proposals, provided that they have not breached the project contract (e.g., delay in reporting).

All eligible applicants, partners and project proposals shall follow the principles of common values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and the respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities⁴ (based on race or ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or identity). The applicants and partners will confirm this in the Applicant and Partner declarations accordingly. The Selection Committee will have the power to suggest a rejection of a project if it establishes that the applicants, partners and project do not follow the mentioned principles.

2.3. ELIGIBLE PARTNERS

A project may be implemented in partnership with one or more project partners whose partnership should not be mistaken for sub-contracting. Project partners, on the one hand, always share a common economic or social goal through the implementation of the project, and cooperate throughout the entirety of the project realization. Sub-contracting, on the other hand, is aimed at one (or perhaps several) specific deliverables, services or equipment to realize a particular activity within the project. Sub-contracting shall always be carried out based on an appropriate service or purchase contract, according to the applicable public procurement rules.

Eligible partner(s) must meet one of the following requirements:

³ Social partners are defined as trade unions and employers' organizations, as defined by the EU.

⁴ Article 1.2 of Protocol 38c on the EEA and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms (2014-2021)

- a Partner is **public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial, as well as non-governmental organization** established as a legal person in Iceland, Liechtenstein or Norway, or in a Beneficiary State (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia), or in a country outside the EEA that has a common border with Lithuania;
- a Partner is an **international organization or body or agency** thereof, actively involved in, and effectively contributing to the implementation of the project;
- a Partner is an **informal, ad hoc or self-help organization that is not registered legal entity in Lithuania** that is not registered legal entity in Lithuania⁵.

Organizations that have not recovered amounts due, following a final court decision in connection with the NGO Program 2009-2014 in Lithuania, shall not be considered eligible partners.

All Partners must share a common goal and actively contribute towards achieving the aim(s) of the project, as defined in the application. The role and specific obligations undertaken by each Partner must be clearly defined and justified in the application.

A Partner(s) declarations must be submitted to the Fund Operator together with the concept note and full project application. Before signing the grant contract with the Fund Operator, the Applicant shall sign a Partnership agreement with each of the project partners, clearly defining the objective of the partnership, activities, and tasks undertaken by each entity, budget share, reporting obligations and other commitments. If the partnership involves foreign entities, the Partnership agreement(s) can be in English. The template of the Partnership agreement will be provided by the Fund Operator.

Partnerships are encouraged, but not obligatory. Partnerships must be based on the qualitative, meaningful and timely contribution of all partners involved in the project. All partners shall be included in preparation as well as the actual and financial implementation of the project. In the projects evaluation and selection process, the capacity and quality of the whole partnership will be considered. In order to ensure appropriate involvement of the partners into project development and implementation, it is recommended to assign 20% - 50 % of project activities and budget to the partners.

2.4. ELIGIBLE APPLICATION

According to the grant size and project duration, there are two types of the projects in the call 2:

Type of project	Min duration	Max duration	Min grant size	Max grant size
Small projects	6 months	18 months	€5,000	€15,000
Medium projects	6 months	18 months	€15,001	€80,000

Each individual applicant can submit only one project proposal in this call (valid for all Outcomes 1-4 projects, not valid for *ad-hoc* projects and Bilateral Cooperation Initiatives). Same organization can participate in no more than two project proposals in a partner role.

⁵ Such organisations must however meet the requirements that they are not for personal profit, act for public good, are voluntary and nondiscriminatory in nature, independent of local, regional and national government and other public authorities, and are independent of political parties, religious institutions and commercial organisations. Informal groups shall be represented by one single person, who signs the project partnership agreement on behalf of the group. An informal group cannot not be a direct recipient of the project grant. Expenditure related to the involvement of the informal group shall be borne by the project promoter.

If the applicant is already implementing a project for the first call of the ACF program, the project submitted for the call 2 cannot be used to co-finance the previous project. The project submitted for the call 2 may be intended to ensure the continuity of the previous project, but this need must be based on the results of the ongoing project, proven and unsuccessful practices or methods.

3. FOCUS OF THE CALL #2 FOR OUTCOMES 1-4 PROJECTS

Each project must contribute to one of Program 's outcomes, correspond to the chosen output(s) and measure the achievement of the respective **outcome and output level indicators**. In case a project contributes to more than one outcome, the Applicant shall choose one outcome, i.e., the one to which the project contributes the most, and indicate it in the application form (concept note and full project proposal).

Applicants should specify the project outputs and output level indicators, **as well as outcome level indicators**, in the full project application form. For each selected project output, applicants must select at least one of the corresponding predefined indicators. If they wish, applicants can also specify additional indicators for measuring the achievement of the output(s). If the applicant organizations chose to include additional indicators, these indicators should also correspond to the specific outcome/project output chosen. Applicants are also required to define target values for each output indicator.

Projects contributing to the particular outcome of the ACF Program, additionally may include outputs and predefined indicators from other outcomes.

Projects contributing to the Outcomes 1-4 of the ACF Program, must also include pre-defined outcome indicator(s), output(s) and their pre-defined indicator(s) from Outcome 5 „Enhanced capacity and sustainability of civil society“.

In the tables below, expected outcomes, outputs and respective indicators on the level of the ACF Program in Lithuania are presented. This information should serve as a guide for the development of project ideas. For further information, please consult the ACF results framework published at <https://apf.lt/en/rezultatai/>.

A project can be set more comprehensive and also follow other objectives and outcomes beyond the ACF Program. In any case, projects should be coherent.

3.1. OUTCOME 1 - INCREASED CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN CIVIC ACTIVITIES

This Outcome aims at increasing civic participation, the involvement of citizens in public policymaking, and contributing to the improved quality of civic education.

The projects under this Outcome should encourage citizens to initiate and participate in civic activities; to address and consult public policy decisions, including those in the area of gender equality, environment and climate change, ethnic minorities; to create and develop infrastructure for public dialogue and participation in public policy decision making, e.g., digital tools and platforms; to offer innovative tools and partnership opportunities for education about civil rights and civic participation, creation of a civic narrative involving ethnic communities in Lithuania, and etc.

Outcome 1	Indicators	Requirements for the project
Increased citizen participation in civic activities ⁶	Share of target group demonstrating increased participation in civic activities ⁷	At least one indicator of this outcome
	Number of users of digital tools ⁸ to promote public participation in civic activities	
	Number of people participating in consultations with a public decision-making body	
Outputs	Indicators	Requirements for the project
Citizens' participation in civic activities promoted	Number of awareness raising campaigns led by supported CSOs	At least one indicator per each selected output
	Number of volunteers working in supported CSOs	
Citizens involved in public policy decision-making at national and local levels	Number of CSOs involving citizens in public policy decision-making	
	Number of digital tools developed to promote public participation in civic activities/involvement in public policy decision making	
Civic education supported	Number of partnerships between CSOs and educational institutions on civic education	
	Number of people educated about civic rights and participation	

A list of types of activities supported under the **Outcome 1 “Increased citizen participation in civic activities”**:

- Development and dissemination of policy proposals;
- Activities, fostering active citizenship and direct democracy mechanisms;
- Consultations and mentoring, other education activities on civic rights, media literacy, critical thinking, active citizenship, etc.;
- Development and dissemination of methodologies and good practices;
- Development and dissemination of digital tools and resources;

⁶ E.g., donation to charities or support to people and organisations in need in any other ways; participation in environment cleaning activities; participation in local community activities; participation in NGO activity or gathering; reports of violations of the law to the state controlling bodies, signing of petitions and boycotts of products; volunteering, etc.

⁷ The population whose attitudes the intervention aimed to change; or a sample of the target group if the group is too large to survey all. Measured by a survey carried out by the project promoter (Baseline value: to be established based on the results of an initial survey to be carried out after project contract signature. Achieved value: to be established based on the results of a second survey to be carried out at the end of project implementation).

⁸ Digital tools are programs, websites or online resources that can make tasks easier to complete.

- Awareness-raising campaigns that promote awareness of civic rights and responsibilities, encourage civic activism and leadership, volunteering;
- Civic initiatives, engaging grassroots and offering innovative methods for public dialogue and participation;
- Discussions, debates;
- NGO networking;
- Awareness-raising and capacity building on environmental issues including climate change and adaptation.

The lists of activities presented above is indicative and non-exhaustive.

3.2. OUTCOME 2 - STRENGTHENED CIVIL SOCIETY WATCHDOG/ADVOCACY ROLE

This Outcome aims at improving democratic governance, ensuring transparency and accountability of public institutions and empowering civil society sector through the projects that address citizens' and CSOs' engagement in and contribution to public policy decision-making at local and national level; promote and/or monitor transparency and accountability of public institutions, as well as reinforce CSOs' evidence-based advocacy (including those in the area of gender equality, environment and climate change, ethnic minorities) and watchdog role; research, analysis and initiatives affecting decision-making processes; develop digital tools and platforms and employ media for better public participation and involvement in public policy decision making.

Under this Outcome, the Program will encourage CSOs through their joint advocacy actions to actively contribute to the development of national, regional, and local public policies, legal regulations and public decisions.

It is expected that the projects under the Outcome 2 would fill a gap in the areas where the public sector or media do not fully perform their functions; they will also provide feedback and critical reflection on the government of national and local authorities. Under this outcome, the Program will encourage CSOs to actively contribute to the development of national, regional and local public policies.

Outcome 2	Indicators	Requirements for the project
Strengthened civil society watchdog/advocacy role	Number of national policies and laws influenced by CSOs	At least one indicator of this outcome
	Number of CSOs using evidence-based research to support their advocacy and policy work	
Outputs	Indicators	Requirements for the project
Policy input submitted by CSOs	Number of CSO policy submissions aimed at influencing polices, legal regulations and public decisions	
Transparency and accountability of public institutions promoted	Number of monitoring initiatives by supported CSOs promoting transparency and accountability of public institutions	

	Number of campaigns by supported CSOs promoting transparency and accountability of public institutions	At least one indicator per each selected output
	Number of CSOs actively using the media ⁹ to further their advocacy work	
	Number of digital tools developed to promote public participation in civic activities/involvement in public policy decision making	
Inter-sectoral CSO cooperation supported	Number of joint advocacy initiatives by supported CSOs	

A list of types of activities supported under the **Outcome 2 “Strengthened civil society watchdog/advocacy role”**:

- Advocacy campaigns and initiatives to promote transparency, accountability and good governance;
- Activities aiming to increase the watchdog role of NGOs, particularly in relation to transparency and accountability of public institutions;
- Monitoring and watchdog activities, in relation to the public decision-making;
- Participation in decision-making processes;
- Creating and developing strategies for monitoring public institutions by NGOs;
- Developing and disseminating of digital tools and resources;
- Initiatives with the aim to influence local and/or national policies and laws;
- Research, analysis and studies to support NGO advocacy work and policy decision making;
- Advocacy initiatives/campaigns conducted in partnership with the media;
- Investigative journalism projects to promote transparency and accountability;
- Developing mechanisms to foster contact between citizens and public authorities;
- Generating or improving systems to promote the importance of NGOs in decision making processes;
- Producing reports / papers / legal documents on issues related to public policies on local, national level or international level;
- Awareness-raising and capacity building on environmental issues including climate change and adaptation.

The lists of activities presented above is indicative and non-exhaustive.

3.3. OUTCOME 3 – INCREASED SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

This Outcome aims at increasing public support for human rights and equal treatment, sustaining positive developments in the human rights area, and improving adherence to international human rights standards.

The projects supported through this Outcome should be focused on human rights and equal treatment through combating discrimination based on race or ethnicity, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or identity; addressing the implementation gap between the legislation and

⁹ E.g., Internet, TV, movies, ads, music clips and video, newspapers, magazines, etc.

practice through strategic litigation and by monitoring and reporting violations of human rights, with more research-based and expert arguments. The Program will also support essential and vital human rights defending actions, including, but not limited to, advocacy/awareness-raising campaigns supporting freedom of expression, promoting ethnic minorities, refugees, migrants, Roma, LGBTI+ rights, anti-discrimination activities, work with gender-based violence victims; research and analysis, etc.

This outcome also provides an opportunity to implement strategic litigation activities.

The Program will also aim to educate citizens, including young people, volunteers, educators, members and staff of CSOs and public institutions, in human rights and equal treatment.

Outcome 3	Indicators	Requirements for the project
Increased support for human rights	Number of national policies and laws influenced by CSOs	At least one indicator of this outcome
	Share of target group ¹⁰ expressing favourable views to human rights	
	Share of target group ¹¹ disapproving of public statements that express negative views or hatred against vulnerable groups	
	Share of target group ¹² expressing favourable views to gender equality	
Outputs	Indicators	Requirements for the project
Implementation of international human rights standards promoted	Number of advocacy campaigns promoting human rights carried out	At least one indicator per each selected output
	Number of strategic litigation cases supported	
	Number of CSOs supported to monitor the implementation of international human rights standards	
Awareness-raising on human rights and equal treatment promoted	Number of awareness raising campaigns on human rights carried out	
	Number of people educated on human rights and equal treatment	
CSOs actively address gender equality and GBV	Number of CSOs working on gender equality	
	Number of CSOs working on gender-based violence	

¹⁰ population whose attitudes the intervention aimed to change; or a sample of the target group if the group is too large to survey all. Measured by a survey carried out by the Project Promoter (Baseline value: to be established based on the results of an initial survey to be carried out after project contract signature. Achieved value: to be established based on the results of a second survey to be carried out at the end of project implementation).

¹¹ Idem

¹² Idem

A list of types of activities supported under the **Outcome 3 “Increased support for human rights”**:

- Advocacy campaigns related to the promotion of human rights and equal treatment;
- Watchdog initiatives for the defence of human rights;
- Awareness-raising campaigns to promote respect and understanding of human rights;
- Recording of human rights violations;
- Educational activities on human rights and equal treatment issues;
- Strategic litigation;
- Partnerships between NGOs and media to raise awareness or tackle specific concerns around human rights and human rights violations;
- Development of digital tools and resources;
- Support to victims of human rights violations, especially of gender-based violence, aiming at empowering them and informing them about their rights;
- Countering hate speech, including support to networks working with hate crime victims;
- Activities, promoting LGBTI rights, anti-discrimination activities.

The lists of activities presented above is indicative and non-exhaustive.

3.4. OUTCOME 4 – VULNERABLE GROUPS EMPOWERED

This Outcome aims at promoting inclusion, empowering vulnerable groups and CSOs representing them in advocating for their interests, introducing new or improved services addressing needs of vulnerable people.

The Program will support projects that seek to help to empower vulnerable groups and focus on their participation in the decision-making processes and their access to information, the labour market, education and culture, etc. Specific attention will be given to those initiatives that aim to train vulnerable individuals to advocate for themselves and their communities’ needs, this includes also capacity building in participatory advocacy methods and awareness raising campaigns that aim to a better understanding of vulnerable groups, their needs and encourage their acceptance; to introduce new or improved services addressing the needs of vulnerable groups.

Vulnerable groups usually include groups that experience a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion than the general population, e.g., ethnic minorities, migrants, disabled people, the homeless, those struggling with substance abuse, isolated elderly people and children growing up in social risk environment, etc.

Outcome 4	Indicators	Requirements for the project
Vulnerable groups are empowered	Number of vulnerable individuals reached by empowerment measures	At least one indicator of this outcome
	Number of beneficiaries of services provided or improved	
	Share of target group ¹³ disapproving of public statements that express negative views or hatred against vulnerable groups	

¹³ Idem

Outputs	Indicators	Requirements for the project
Members of vulnerable groups trained or involved in advocating for their needs/the needs of their community	Number of vulnerable individuals trained in advocacy or involved in advocating for their needs/the needs of their community	At least one indicator per each selected output
New or improved services addressing the needs of vulnerable groups promoted	Number of new or improved services addressing the needs of vulnerable groups ¹⁴	
CSOs promote inclusion and awareness of vulnerable groups	Number of supported CSOs working to promote inclusion and awareness of vulnerable groups	
	Number of professional staff trained in working with vulnerable groups	

A list of indicative types of activities, eligible under the **Outcome 4 “Vulnerable groups empowered”**:

- Training vulnerable individuals to advocate for their needs and promote their social inclusion;
- Support for vulnerable groups to promote access to information about their rights and other relevant issues;
- Educational activities to promote inclusion and equal opportunities;
- Development of new or improved methods or services to address the needs of vulnerable groups;
- Support for vulnerable individuals to get involved in advocating for their rights;
- Introducing social innovations and development of social entrepreneurship;
- Initiatives for community development and activation;
- Intercultural dialogue, including platforms for minority/majority interactions;
- Inter-generational cooperation.

In addition to that, all types of activities shall contribute to supporting and enabling vulnerable individuals to participate in economic and social life more active and advocate for their rights.

Provision of welfare and basic services shall only be supported as part of actions addressing awareness-raising, advocacy, empowerment, and reform initiatives.

The lists of activities presented above is indicative and non-exhaustive.

3.5. OUTCOME 5 – ENHANCED CAPACITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF CIVIL SOCIETY

This Outcome aims to improve skills and competences of the civil society sector, introduce higher standards of management and implement up-to-date strategies contributing to their sustainability. To strengthen the capacity and sustainability of the civil society sector, a horizontal measure is planned: all projects under **Outcomes 1-4** must allocate minimum 10% and maximum 15% of the project budget to the capacity building activities aimed at increasing the capacity and organizational

¹⁴ New method in the context of the ACF Programme refers to a new tool of assistance or service introduced to a specific community, where it did not exist before.

sustainability of the project promoter organization(s). Capacity building activities may also be aimed at strengthening the capacity of the project team.

In the first phase of concept note for Outcomes 1-4 process applicants and partner organizations shall individually assess the capacity of their organization(s) and (or) project team and identify:

- improvement areas they need in their organisations (not necessary related to the project's content);
- capacity areas of the project team (including volunteers) that need to be strengthened (related to the project content).

The examples of such areas are the following: strategic planning, good governance, organization management, human resources management, volunteer's management, need and interests of stakeholders, financial sustainability; advocacy, communication, cooperation, inter-sectoral cooperation, etc.

In the second phase (full application), applicants together with their partners will have to specify these capacity building activities (e.g., training, seminars, conferences, workshops, exchange of good practice and information, educational counselling, mentoring, peer learning, etc.) along with Outcome 5 output and outcome level indicators.

Outcome 5	Indicators	Requirements for the project
Enhanced capacity and sustainability of civil society	Number of CSOs with at least two funding sources out of which at least one comprises at least 30% of their total budget	At least one indicator of this outcome
	Number of initiatives implemented through partnerships between CSOs and public/private entities	
	Number of CSOs that regularly disseminate information on their activities and results to the public	
	Number of CSOs with effective management procedures	
	Number of CSOs with transparent and accountable governance procedures	
Outputs	Indicators	Requirements for the project
Capacity building provided to CSOs	Number of CSOs participating in capacity building initiatives funded by the Program ¹⁵	
	Number of professional staff trained	
	Number of CSOs assessing their organizational capacity building needs and preparing action plans based on the assessment	

¹⁵ Provided within the ACF program in the areas of financial sustainability, organizational development and management, communication, governance, impact measurement, advocacy, etc.

	Number of CSOs developing financial sustainability plans	At least one indicator per each selected output
	Number of CSOs developing impact assessment plans	
CSO strategies to engage citizens in CSO activities developed	Number of CSOs with new or updated plans to engage their constituencies	
CSO partnerships with public/private entities developed	Number of CSO partnerships with public/private entities	

3.6. BILATERAL OUTCOME

Aiming to enhance the relations between Lithuanian NGOs and entities in the Donor States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway), the ACF Program will foster partnerships of high quality and mutual benefit for diverse Lithuanian NGOs and entities in the Donor states.

The projects involving partners from the Donor states must reflect the bilateral ambition throughout a focus on exchanging relevant experiences or building a new – common - experience between the donor and beneficiary state. Donor partners should be actively involved in planning and organizing the project and its activities.

The Applicants, looking for the partners in the Donor states, may use the support of Contact points for bilateral relations in the Donor States. Links to such organizations as well as Norwegian partner's database can be found on the ACF in Lithuania website in the Bilateral Cooperation section. Further information about possibilities for bilateral cooperation and partners' database can be found on the ACF in Lithuania website in the Bilateral Cooperation section: <https://apf.lt/en/dvisalis-bendradarbiavimas/>.

3.7. CALL PRIORITIES

Implementing the ACF Program's objectives and responding to the country-specific and thematic concerns, the following priorities for the 2nd call are established:

- *Regional priority.* This priority aims to strengthen the civil society sector in the regions of Lithuania. Regional NGOs are encouraged to increase their participation in the Program and strengthen their and capacity. Non-governmental organizations operating in the areas other than Vilnius city, are encouraged to initiate projects and apply for funding, as well as to join other projects initiated by NGOs and thus implement their goals and strengthen their organizational capacity. The priority shall be given to:
 - Project applications submitted by the NGOs, registered and operating in the geographic areas other than Vilnius city;
 - Partnerships that involve regional NGOs registered and operating in the geographic areas other than Vilnius city.
- *Intercultural priority.* This priority aims to contribute to the development of a civic narrative in Lithuania that involves ethnic communities. NGOs of ethnic minorities are encouraged both to initiate projects and submit applications for funding, as well as to join other projects

initiated by NGOs and thus achieve their goals and strengthen their organizational capacity. The priority shall be given to:

- Project applications submitted by the ethnic minorities' NGOs;
- Partnerships that involve ethnic minorities' NGOs.
- *Bilateral partnership priority.* Bilateral priority shall be given to the partnerships with partner entities from Donor states (i.e., Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway).

The compliance of projects with the call's priorities will be assessed by awarding additional scores.

3.8. FINANCIAL PROVISIONS OF THE CALL

3.8.1. PROJECT GRANT RATE

The ACF Program can provide funding of up to 90% of the eligible costs of the project budget. The co-financing shall be provided in the form of cash or in-kind contribution in the form of voluntary work. The in-kind contribution in the form of voluntary work may constitute up to 100% of the co-financing required for the project (10 % of the total project budget).

For the calculation of the in-kind contribution, the cost for each hour of voluntary work shall be defined on a case by case basis, depending on the character of work delivered. The unit prices shall be set in accordance with a usually paid salary for such work. They shall fall within the range between €3,93 per hour (minimum gross hourly wage in Lithuania) and €9,37 per hour (the average gross hourly wage in Lithuania), including the employer's social contribution.

3.9.2. ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE

Eligible expenditures of projects are those actually incurred by the project applicant (after signing the Project contract project applicants become project promoters) or the project partner, which meet the following criteria:

- they are incurred between the first and final dates of eligibility of a project as specified in the Project contract;
- they are connected with the subject of the Project contract and they are indicated in the detailed budget of the project;
- they are proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the project;
- they are used for the sole purpose of achieving the objective of the project and its expected outcome(s), in a manner consistent with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular through being recorded in the accounting records of the project promoter and determined according to the applicable accounting standards and generally accepted accounting principles; and
- they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation.

Expenditures are considered to have been incurred when the cost has been invoiced, paid and the subject matter delivered (in case of goods) or performed (in case of services and works). Exceptionally, costs in respect of which an invoice has been issued in the final month of eligibility are also deemed to be incurred within the dates of eligibility if the costs are paid within 30 days of the final date of eligibility.

Overheads and depreciation of equipment are considered to have been incurred when they are recorded on the accounts of the project promoter and/or partners.

The internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the expenditures and revenues declared with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

Project promoters and partners are obliged to keep a separate account evidence for the project.

3.9.2.1. Direct expenditure

The eligible direct expenditures for a project are those expenditures which are identified by the project promoter and/or the project partner, in accordance with their accounting principles and usual internal rules, as specific expenditures directly linked to the implementation of the project and which can therefore be booked to it directly. The following direct expenditures are eligible provided that they satisfy the criteria set out in the previous paragraph:

- the cost of personnel assigned to the project (employments contracts, civil law contracts, freelance contracts), comprising actual salaries including social security charges and other statutory costs as applicable, provided that this corresponds to the project promoter 's and partner 's usual policy of remuneration;
- travel and subsistence allowances for personnel and volunteers taking part in the project, provided that they are in line with the project promoter 's and project partner 's usual practices on travel costs;
- cost of new or second hand equipment, provided that it is depreciated in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles applicable to the project applicant and generally accepted for items of the same kind. Only the portion of the depreciation corresponding to the duration of the project and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the project will be taken into account. The equipment should serve the project related purpose for at least 5 years upon completion of the project, except if Fund Operator and project promoter agree differently in the project contract;
- costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the project;
- costs entailed by other contracts awarded by a project promoter for the purposes of carrying out the project, provided that the awarding complies with the applicable rules on public procurement; and
- costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the project contract for each project (e.g. dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the action, audits, translations, reproduction), including the costs of any financial services.

Costs related to reconstruction, renovation, or refurbishment of a real estate shall not exceed 50% of the eligible direct cost of the project.

In cases, the Fund Operator determines that the equipment is an integral and necessary component for the achieving outcomes of the project, the entire purchase price of equipment may be eligible. In that case, the project promoter shall:

- keep the equipment in its ownership for a period of at least five years following the completion of the project and continues to use the equipment for the benefit of the overall objectives of the project for the same period;
- keep the equipment properly insured against losses such as fire, theft or other normally insurable incidents both during project implementation and for at least five years following the completion of the project; and

- set aside appropriate resources for the maintenance of the equipment for at least five years following the completion of the project.

The specific means for the implementation of this obligation shall be specified in the Project contract.

3.9.2.2. *Indirect costs*

Indirect costs are all eligible costs that cannot be identified by the project promoter and/or the project partner as being directly attributed to the project but which can be identified and justified by its accounting system as being incurred in direct relationship with the eligible direct costs attributed to the project. They may not include any eligible direct costs. Indirect costs of the project shall represent a fair apportionment of the overall overheads of the project promoter or the project partner.

Indirect costs incurred in carrying out the project may be eligible for flat-rate funding, but the total must not exceed 15 % of the estimated total eligible personnel costs. Indirect costs do not have to be proven or evidenced in the separate account evidence of the project. The rate of indirect costs applies to the whole partnership; however, the rate can differ between partner organisations.

Project promoters have to be able to demonstrate that indirect costs of the project are proportionate to total administrative costs of their organisation. Upon request by the FO or external auditor project promoter or project partner shall grant access to the supporting documents on the basis of which the indirect costs were reported.

In case beneficiaries are international organisations or bodies or agencies thereof, indirect costs can be identified in accordance with existing rules of such organisation.

3.9.3. INELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE

The following costs shall not be considered eligible:

- Costs related to preparation of project application;
- Costs of construction work, e.g., building new facilities or premises;
- Costs of debt, interest on debt, debt service charges and late payment charges;
- charges for financial transactions and other purely financial costs, except costs and financial services related to accounts required by the contract with Fund Operator;
- costs related to purchase of land or real estate;
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- exchange losses;
- recoverable VAT;
- costs that are covered by other sources;
- fines, penalties and costs of litigation, except litigation is an integral and necessary component for achievement of project objectives;
- excessive or reckless expenditure;
- costs that do not comply with the eligibility rules.

3.9.4. VALUE ADDED TAX

Value added tax (VAT) is eligible cost only in case the applicant is not entitled for recoverable VAT. Applicants shall be aware of this rule when preparing their financial plan for the projects, and consider only those VAT costs that are non-recoverable by the state.

3.9.5. PROCUREMENT RULES

National and European Union law on public procurement shall be complied with at any level in the implementation of the projects.

Notwithstanding provisions of national law that exempt NGOs from public procurement, any procurement procedures related to amounts above the European Union thresholds for procurement shall be undertaken in accordance with the applicable regulations on procurement without regard for such an exemption.

In cases where contracts concluded as part of the implementation of the projects fall below the national or European Union thresholds set for public procurement or outside the scope of the applicable public procurement laws, the awarding of such contracts (including the procedures prior to the awarding) and the terms and conditions of such contracts shall comply with best economic practices, including accountability, allow a full and fair competition between potential providers, for example by way of effective price comparison, and ensure the optimal use of resources from the ACF in Lithuania. To this end, and in the absence of stricter national laws, in cases of procurement related to an amount of EUR 5,000 or higher but below the relevant European Union thresholds, the project applicant shall invite at least three supplier's/service providers to submit offers.

The highest ethical standards shall be observed during the procurement and execution of contracts. The project applicant shall ensure the application of adequate and effective means to prevent illegal or corrupt practices. No offer, gifts, payments, or benefit of any kind, which would or could, either directly or indirectly, be construed as an illegal or corrupt practice, e.g., as an inducement or reward for the award or execution of procurement contracts, shall be accepted.

4. APPLICATION, EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURES

All of the call documentation can be found at: <https://apf.lt/>

Call 2 documentation consist of:

- Call 2 text for Outcome 1 projects (pdf)
- Call 2 text for Outcome 2 projects (pdf)
- Call 2 text for Outcome 3 projects (pdf)
- Call 2 text for Outcome 4 projects (pdf)
- Guidelines for the Applicants (pdf)
- Application forms:
 - 1st phase: concept note for Outcomes 1-4 projects (word)
 - 2nd phase: full project proposal for Outcomes 1-4 small projects (word)
 - 2nd phase: full project proposal for Outcomes 1-4 medium projects (word)
- 2nd phase: project budget for small projects (excel)
- 2nd phase: project budget for medium projects (excel)
- Applicant declaration (word)
- Partner declaration (word)

4.1. APPLICATION, EVALUATION AND SELECTION

The application process is divided into two phases: in the 1st phase, concept notes prepared and submitted by the applicants will be evaluated by impartial evaluators. Based on the evaluation, the Selection Committee will select those with the highest scoring to be invited to the 2nd phase of the application process – preparation and submission of full project proposals.

INDICATIVE TIMELINE OF THE CALL

Phases	Deadlines and milestones	Timeline
Phase 1	Announcement of the call	July 2021
	Consultations to potential applicants	July – September 2021
	Information activities for potential applicants	July – August 2021
	Deadline for submission of concept notes	30th September 2021, 23:59 (Lithuanian time)
	Administrative and eligibility check	October 2021
	Evaluation of the concept notes by independent evaluators	October 2021
	Selection committee meeting	October 2021
	FO's Executive Board decision	October 2021
Phase 2	Consultations to potential applicants	November - December 2021
	Capacity building activities for potential applicants	November 2021
	Indicative deadline for submission of full project proposals	31 st January 2022, 23:59 (Lithuanian time)
	Administrative and eligibility check	January 2022
	Evaluation of the projects by independent evaluators	January – February 2022
	Selection committee meeting	March 2022
	FO's Executive Board decision	March 2022

4.2. 1st PHASE – CONCEPT NOTE

Preparation of the concept note

Applicants submit the filled-in concept note following the instructions provided in the application form. In the form, applicants will also have to indicate title of the project, total value of the project, main outcome area addressed by the project, description of problem/needs and target group(s); description of suggested idea to solve the problem; partners involved. In addition to the application form, applicants will also have to submit the Applicant declaration and Partner declaration (if applicable).

Submission of the concept note

Complete application of the concept note consists of:

- completed project concept note signed electronically with a certified signature or a scanned copy of a completed, signed, stamped (if applicable) project concept note in pdf format;
- concept note in Word format;
- Applicant declaration signed electronically with a certified signature or a scanned copy of the Applicant declaration signed and stamped (if applicable);
- Partner declaration signed electronically with a certified signature or a scanned copy of the Partner declaration signed and stamped (if applicable).

If application is signed not by the head of the organization, an authorization signed electronically with a certified signature or a scan of signed and stamped (where applicable) authorization to sign the application must be enclosed.

The application shall be submitted only in the electronic form to the following e-mail address projektai@apf.lt (this e-mail is intended exclusively for submission of applications and will therefore not be checked before the deadline for submission of project proposals. In case of questions regarding the call, the ACF Program, etc., organizations may contact Fund Operator at info@apf.lt or check the F.A.Q. section at <https://apf.lt>).

Concept notes must be delivered to the e-mail provided above **not later than 30th September 2021, 23:59 Lithuanian time.**

Applications delivered to the respective e-mail past the deadline will be rejected. Date and time of the arrival of the e-mail with a completed application and all necessary attachments will be considered based on the records of the Fund Operator's server, regardless of the date and time of when it was sent and regardless of the date and time of sending recorded by the sending server. Fund Operator assumes no responsibility for any delays in the delivery of application e-mail (for example, due to large attachments and server occupancy or network disruption, etc.). Therefore, applicants are recommended to not delay the submission of their applications until the last day.

Applicants will receive an automatic response on the delivery of their e-mail to their sending e-mail address. In case such a response does not arrive at Applicant's e-mail inbox or spam within 2 hours after sending the application e-mail, the Applicant should contact Fund Operator at info@apf.lt, so the Fund Operator can check the status of the application on their side.

Applications submitted in any other form or way (for example, via fax, regular mail, etc.) or to any other e-mail, shall be rejected.

Concept note administrative and eligibility criteria

After the concept note is received, Fund Operator will carry out an initial administrative check of its eligibility based on the information submitted in the application form and Applicant's declaration on the compliance with the administrative and eligibility criteria.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	YES/NO/NOT APPLICABLE
The following criteria are elimination criteria, meaning an automatic elimination of the application from further evaluation if it does not comply with even one of these criteria:	

Application is submitted as instructed (filled in in Lithuanian language, submitted at the designated email, submitted signed electronically with a certified signature or signed and scanned copy).	
Application is submitted within the deadline.	
Organization is not in situation of not paid amounts due, following a final court decision in connection with the NGO Program 2009-2014 in Lithuania	
Project duration is between 6 and 18 months.	
Grant amount corresponds to determined frames of €5,000 and €15,000 for small projects, €15,001 and €80,000 for medium projects.	
This concept note is the first application (according to the date and time of delivery) submitted by the same Applicant.	
This concept note is one of the first two delivered applications (according to the date and time of delivery) where same organization is in the role of partner.	
The Applicant is registered as NGO at the Registry of Legal Entities prior the submission of the project concept note.	
The Applicant has not breached the project contract signed with the FO in connection with the ACF program 2014-2021 in Lithuania (applicable if the Applicant is implementing project granted by the 1 st call).	
If needed, the Applicant will be asked to provide missing information for the following criteria:	
All required annexes and documents are submitted with the application form in the formats indicated by the Fund Operator	
Application is signed by the head of NGO or other authorised person (in this case, letter of authorisation is enclosed)	
Applicant declaration, signed and stamped (where applicable), is submitted.	
Partner declaration (for each partner), signed and stamped (where applicable), is submitted.	

In case the application is lacking certain parts (documents or information) that can be supplemented according to the above criteria, applicants shall be asked to provide respective missing parts within three (3) working days. An invitation to provide the missing parts of the application will be sent to the e-mail address of the applicant listed in the application form (e-mail address of the contact person). If the application does not meet one of the criteria, it will be rejected as ineligible.

After the administrative and eligibility checks are completed, ineligible applicants will be notified of the rejection of their concept notes from further evaluation. Applicants of ineligible project proposals will have five (5) working days available for appeal against the eligibility decision. Appeals will be considered by the Appeals Committee. The decision of the Committee is final. Appeals can be submitted at info@apf.lt.

Evaluation of the concept note

Two impartial evaluators will assess concept notes passing evaluation process. If the difference between the scores given by the two experts will be higher than 30 % of the highest score, a third evaluator will score the project independently. In such cases, the average rating of the two closest scores shall be used for ranking the project concepts. The latter shall not be used in cases where scoring of the third evaluator does not, in any way, contribute to granting the project proposal.

After the evaluation of all project proposals is concluded, a ranking list of applications for each Program's Outcome (Increased citizen participation in civic activities; Strengthened civil society watchdog and advocacy role; Increased support for human rights; Vulnerable groups empowered) and type of the project (small, medium) will be prepared by the Fund Operator, based on received

scoring. In justified cases, based on transparent criteria, the Selection Committee may modify the ranking of the project applications.

Concept note evaluation criteria for Outcomes 1-4 small and medium projects (max. total points - 100)

No.	Criteria	Description of criteria	Score
1.	Justification of problem and its relevance for the target group* *eliminating criterion: If 0, the project is automatically rejected	<i>How clear and detailed is the justification for the problem?</i> <i>How clearly is the choice of the target group justified?</i> <i>To what extent is the problem relevant to the selected target group?</i>	20
2.	Relevance of proposed solution for the problem addressed* *eliminating criterion: If 0, the project is automatically rejected	<i>To what extent is the solution proposed by the project suitable for solving the problem?</i> <i>To what extent is the solution proposed suitable for addressing needs of the target group?</i> <i>How clearly is the intended change identified?</i> <i>To what extent does the proposed solution contribute to the expected change?</i>	20
3.	Relevance of the project aims for the problem addressed and expected changes* *eliminating criterion: If 0, the project is automatically rejected	<i>To what extent are the project objectives relevant for solving the problem?</i> <i>To what extent do the project objectives take into account the needs of the target group?</i> <i>To what extent do the project objectives contribute to the expected change?</i>	15
4.	Relevance of the project concept for the ACF overall objectives and outcomes *eliminating criterion: If 0, the project is automatically rejected	<i>To what extent does the Project contribute to overall objectives and expected outcomes of the ACF Program?</i>	15
5.	Adequacy and feasibility of proposed activities in terms of expected outcomes	<i>To what extent do the project activities allow to achieve the project objectives and expected results?</i> <i>To what extent are the project activities feasible?</i>	15
6.	Capacities of the Applicant (and Partners) required to implement the project	<i>To what extent is the Project applicant's (and Partner's) team capable of delivering optimal solutions to problems?</i>	10
7.	Capacity building of the organization	<i>Are the activities for organizational development or project team capacity building clearly identified?</i>	5

		<i>How clearly are the activities of organizational development or capacity building of the project team justified?</i>	
			100

Compliance with priority criteria

Criteria	Description of criteria	Score
1. Project complies with the regional priority	1.1 Priority is given to project applications submitted by NGOs registered and operating in geographically under-served areas other than Vilnius city.	<i>4 (if project complies with both 1.1 and 1.2 priorities, the score is given for compliance with 1.1 priority only)</i>
	1.2 Priority is given to partnerships involving regional NGOs, i.e. registered and operating in the regions other than Vilnius city.	3
2. Project complies with the intercultural priority	Priority is given to: 2.1 project applications submitted by national minority NGOs; 2.2 partnerships involving national minority non-governmental organizations.	5 (if project complies with one or both priorities)
3. Project complies with the bilateral cooperation priority	Priority is given to bilateral partnerships with the entities from Donor countries.	5

Only projects that are awarded an **overall average score equal to or greater than 60 points** shall be discussed at the Selection Committee. However, if the project scores 60 and more, it does not mean that it passes automatically – the Selection Committee shall examine the lists and make recommendations to the Fund Operator which concept notes shall be shortlisted for the second phase of the application process.

The Fund Operator shall, based on the recommendation of the Selection Committee, make a final decision on which concept notes shall be further developed. Selected applicants shall be given at least two months from the announcement of the shortlisted concept notes to submit a full project application.

Notification on selection

Applicants will be notified on the selection of their project proposals to enter the second phase of the application process via e-mail indicated in the application form in November 2021, not later than five (5) working days after the final decision is made by the Fund Operator. The final results of the selection shall be announced at the Program's website.

4.3. 2nd PHASE – FULL PROJECT PROPOSAL

Applicants invited to submit full project proposals in the second phase of the application process shall prepare and fill in the form of the project application following instructions. The full proposal shall be based on the concept note submitted in the first phase of the application process. The applicants should take into consideration that outcome area of the project should remain unchanged in the second phase; and the elements of the concepts note, such as the problem/needs identified, solution to the problem proposed (project idea), shall remain unchanged in the second phase, unless it is extended, enlarged or increased, or the Fund Operator has provided specific recommendations for changes, increase or improvement.

Changes in an existing partnership are possible only exceptionally. In case a change is inevitable due to objective reasons, partner shall be replaced with another partner of similar nature and characteristics (for instance, if the partner that needs to be replaced was a municipality, it can be replaced only by another municipality or another appropriate public institution of the municipality; it cannot, for instance, be replaced by an NGO). Reasons for change will have to be justified in the application form. Nevertheless, expansions of partnerships are welcomed (for example, in cases when the applicant did not manage to set a partnership by the time of submission of the concept note, this can be done in the second phase).

Deadline and submission process for the second phase

Complete application in the second phase of the application process consists of:

- completed project application signed electronically with a certified signature or a scanned copy of a completed, signed, stamped (if applicable) project application in pdf format;
- project application in Word format;
- completed project budget form in Excel format;
- Applicant declaration signed electronically with a certified signature or a scanned copy of the Applicant declaration signed and stamped (if applicable);
- Partner declaration signed electronically with a certified signature or a scanned copy of the Partner declaration signed and stamped (if applicable).

If application is signed not by the head of the organization, an authorization signed electronically with a certified signature or a scan of signed and stamped (where applicable) authorization to sign the application must be enclosed.

The Fund Operator reserves the right to request additional information or documents during the whole assessment and evaluation process, if necessary.

The deadline for submission of full project applications shall be set **at least two months from the announcement of the shortlisted concept notes**. Application shall be submitted only in electronic form at the following e-mail address projektai@apf.lt.

In case of questions regarding the call, Fund, etc., the Applicants may contact Fund Operator at info@apf.lt or check the F.A.Q. section at <https://apf.lt>).

Applications must be delivered to the e-mails provided above by the deadline indicated in the invitation for participation in the second phase of the application process, which will be received by all applicants whose concept notes will be selected into the second phase.

Applications delivered to the respective e-mail past the deadline will be rejected. Date and time of the arrival of the e-mail with a completed form and all necessary attachments will be considered based on the records of the Fund Operator's server, regardless of the date and time of when it was sent and regardless of the date and time of sending recorded by the sending server. Fund Operator assumes no responsibility for any delays in the delivery of application e-mail (for example, due to large attachments and server occupancy or network disruption, etc.). Therefore, the Applicants are recommended to not delay the submission of their applications until the last day.

Applicants will receive an automatic response on the delivery of their e-mail to their sending e-mail address. In case such a response does not arrive at the Applicant's e-mail inbox or spam within 2 hours after sending the application e-mail, they should contact Fund Operator at info@apf.lt , so Fund Operator can check the status of your application on their side.

Applications submitted in any other form or way (for example, via fax, regular mail, etc.) or to any other e-mail, shall be rejected.

Full project proposal assessment procedure and criteria

After the delivery of project proposals, Fund Operator will check their eligibility based on the administrative and eligibility compliance criteria. Fund Operator can request additional information or clarifications referring to the compliance criteria.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	YES/NO/NOT APPLICABLE
The following criteria are elimination criteria, meaning an automatic elimination of the application from further evaluation if it does not comply with even one of these criteria:	
Submitted project proposal was selected at the first phase of the application process for further development.	
The outcome indicated in the Application is the same as in the concept note.	
Application is submitted as instructed (filled in in Lithuanian language, submitted at the designated email, submitted signed electronically with a certified signature or signed and scanned copy).	
Application is submitted within the deadline.	
Project duration is between 6 and 18 months.	
Requested grant amount corresponds to determined frames of €5,000 and €15,000 for small projects, €15,001 and €80,000 for medium projects.	
This application is one of the first two delivered applications (according to the date and time of delivery) where the same organization is in the role of partner.	
Applicant complies with the Applicant eligibility criteria as specified in the Guidelines for Applicants	
Applicant is a legal entity that has been registered in Lithuania for at least one year.	
Partner(s) complies with the Applicant eligibility criteria as specified in the Guidelines for Applicants.	
The Applicant has not breached the project contract signed with the FO in connection with the ACF program 2014-2021 in Lithuania (applicable if the Applicant is implementing project granted by the 1 st call).	
If needed, the Applicant will be asked to provide missing information for the following criteria:	
All required annexes and documents are submitted with the application form in the formats indicated by the Fund Operator	

Application is signed by the head of NGO or other authorised person (in this case, letter of authorisation is enclosed)	
Applicant declaration, signed and stamped (where applicable), is submitted.	
Partner declaration (for each partner), signed and stamped (where applicable), is submitted.	

In case the application is lacking certain parts (documents or information) that can be supplemented according to the above criteria, applicants shall be asked to provide respective missing parts within three (3) working days. An invitation to provide the missing parts of the application will be sent to the e-mail address of the applicant listed in the application form (e-mail address of the contact person). If the application does not meet one of the criteria, it will be rejected as ineligible.

After the administrative and eligibility assessment process is completed, ineligible applicants/applicants of ineligible projects will be notified of the rejection of their project proposals from further evaluation. Ineligible applicants/applicants of ineligible project proposals will have five (5) working days available to appeal against the eligibility decision. Appeals will be considered by the Appeals Committee. The decision of the Committee is final. The appeal can be submitted at info@apf.lt.

Evaluation of full project proposal

All eligible and administratively compliant project proposals will be evaluated by two impartial evaluators in accordance with the criteria set below. If the difference between the scores given by the two evaluators will be higher than 30 % of the highest score, a third evaluator will score the project independently. In such cases, the average rating of the two closest scores shall be used for ranking the project. The latter shall not be used in cases where scoring of the third evaluator does not, in any way, contribute to granting the project proposal.

After the evaluation of all project proposals is concluded, a ranking list of applications for each respective Program's outcome (Increased citizen participation in civic activities; Strengthened civil society watchdog and advocacy role; Increased support for human rights; Vulnerable groups empowered) and type of the project (small, medium) will be prepared by the Fund Operator, based on received scoring.

In justified cases, based on transparent criteria, the Selection Committee may modify the ranking of the project applications. The final decision is made by the Fund Operator.

Full project proposal evaluation criteria for Outcomes 1-4 SMALL projects (max. points: 100)

No.	Criteria	Description	Score
1.	Relevance and importance of the project	Eliminating criterion: If less than 10, the project is automatically rejected	
1.1.	Coherence of the project with the objectives, outcomes and outputs of the ACF Program	<i>To what extent does the project contribute to objectives and expected outcomes of the ACF Program?</i> <i>To what extent does the project contribute to the outputs of the ACF Program?</i>	10
1.2.	Relevance of the project to the addressed problem	<i>How clearly is the addressed problem justified and relevant to the target group (s)?</i>	15

		<i>To what extent does the project contribute to the solution of defined problem/ addressing the target group's need?</i>	
1.3.	Long-term impact of the project for the target group, project promoter and wider community	<i>To what extent does the project bring more sustainable solutions, i.e. they remain after the project is implemented, for the target group, project promoter and wider community?</i>	5
2.	Quality of the project implementation	Eliminating criterion: If less than 10, the project is automatically rejected	
2.1.	Coherence between objectives, activities, results of the project (solid internal logic)	<i>To what extent are the objectives, activities and expected outcomes logically interconnected?</i> <i>To what extent do the planned activities lead to realisation of project outputs and allow to achieve the expected outcome?</i>	15
2.2.	Feasibility of planned activities	<i>To what extent are activities planned logical and feasible?</i> <i>Is project feasible within planned timeframe?</i> <i>How flexible can project activities take into account the constraints caused by the Covid-19 pandemic?</i>	10
2.3.	Adequacy of project results	<i>To what extent are planned target values of indicators adequate and realistic?</i>	5
2.4.	Quality of communication actions	<i>To what extent are the actions planned for communication relevant for reaching out the target group(s) and ensuring expected dissemination of the project results?</i>	5
3.	Value for money		
3.1.	Adequacy of budget with proposed activities	<i>To what extent are proposed costs compliant with action plan? Are costs presented sufficiently enough for realization of respective activities and outputs?</i> <i>Are the estimated costs sufficient to collect and analyze the data needed to assess the baseline value and achieved value of the outcome indicator (if relevant)?</i>	5
3.2.	Reasonable and justifiable budget	<i>To what extent does cost justification make evident what the cost entails and at what price? To what extent are cost estimations based on realistic assumptions?</i> <i>To what extent are indicated costs needed for project implementation?</i>	5

4.	Capacity building and sustainability		
4.1.	Sustainability of project outcomes and usability of project outputs after conclusion of the project	<i>To what extent is made evident which activities and in what way are going to be continued after the project conclusion?</i> <i>Is it already planned how the outputs and outcomes of the project will continue after the conclusion of the project?</i>	5
4.2.	Coherence of capacity building needs with the activities planned	<i>To what extent are the capacity building needs of the applicant and / or partner organizations adequately defined?</i> <i>To what extent will the project contribute to capacity building of organization and / or partner organization (s)?</i> <i>Are the resources planned for capacity building in line with the requirements of the ACF Program implementation (10-15%)?</i>	10
5.	Capacity of the project promoters		
5.1.	Capacities and experience of the project team (applicants and partners) in relation to the project	<i>To what extent are experiences of the project team (key personnel) relevant for the proposed project?</i> <i>To what extent does applicant (and partner, if applicable) demonstrate financial and organizational capacities for implementation of the project?</i> <i>To what extent is the share of project related responsibilities, tasks and budget between the applicant and partners adequate and justified (if applicable)?</i>	10
			100

Full project proposal evaluation criteria for Outcomes 1-4 MEDIUM projects (max. points: 100)

No.	Criteria	Description	Score
1.	Relevance and importance of the project	Eliminating criterion: If less than 10, the project is automatically rejected	
1.1.	Coherence of the project with the objectives, outcomes and outputs of the ACF Program	<i>To what extent does the project contribute to objectives and expected outcomes of the ACF Program?</i> <i>To what extent does the project contribute to the outputs of the ACF Program?</i>	10
1.2.	Relevance of the project to the addressed problem	<i>How clearly is the addressed problem justified and relevant to the target group (s)?</i>	15

		<i>To what extent does the project contribute to the solution of the problem identified / addressing the target group's needs?</i>	
1.3.	Long-term impact of the project for the target group, project promoter and wider society	<i>To what extent does the project bring more sustainable solutions, i.e. they remain after the project is implemented, for the target group, project promoter and wider society?</i>	5
2.	Quality of the project implementation	Eliminating criterion: If less than 10, the project is automatically rejected	
2.1.	Coherence between objectives, activities, results of the project (solid internal logic)	<i>To what extent are the objectives, activities and expected outcomes logically interconnected?</i> <i>To what extent do the planned activities lead to realisation of project outputs and allow to achieve the expected outcome?</i>	15
2.2.	Feasibility of planned activities	<i>To what extent are activities planned logical and feasible?</i> <i>Is project feasible within planned timeframe?</i> <i>How flexible can project activities take into account the constraints caused by the Covid-19 pandemic?</i>	10
2.3.	Adequacy of project results	<i>To what extent are planned target values of indicators adequate and realistic?</i>	5
2.4.	Quality of communication actions	<i>To what extent are the actions planned for communication relevant for reaching out the target group(s) and ensuring expected dissemination of the project results?</i>	5
3.	Value for money		
3.1.	Adequacy of budget with proposed activities	<i>To what extent are proposed costs compliant with action plan? Are costs presented sufficiently enough for realization of respective activities and outputs?</i> <i>Are the estimated costs sufficient to collect and analyze the data needed to assess the baseline value and achieved value of the outcome indicator (if relevant)?</i>	5
3.2.	Reasonable and justifiable budget	<i>To what extent does cost justification make evident what the cost entails and at what price?</i> <i>To what extent are cost estimations based on realistic assumptions?</i> <i>To what extent are indicated costs needed for project implementation?</i>	5

4.	Capacity building and sustainability		
4.1	Sustainability of project outcomes and usability of project outputs after conclusion of the project	<i>To what extent is made evident which activities and in what way are going to be continued after the project conclusion?</i> <i>Is it already planned how the outputs and outcomes of the project will continue after the conclusion of the project?</i>	5
4.2	Coherence of capacity building needs with the activities planned	<i>To what extent are the capacity building needs of the applicant and / or partner organizations adequately defined?</i> <i>To what extent will the project contribute to capacity building of organization and / or partner organization (s)?</i> <i>Are the resources planned for capacity building in line with the requirements of the ACF Program implementation (10-15%)?</i>	10
5.	Capacity of the project promoters		
5.1.	Capacities and experience of the project team (applicants and partners) in relation to the project	<i>To what extent are experiences of the project team (key personnel) relevant for the proposed project?</i> <i>To what extent does applicant (and partner, if applicable) demonstrate financial and organizational capacities for implementation of the project?</i> <i>To what extent is the share of project related responsibilities, tasks and budget between the applicant and partners adequate and justified (if applicable)?</i>	5
5.2.	Risk management	<i>To what extent are project implementation risks identified and adequate?</i> <i>To what extent are measures for identified risk mitigation or elimination adequate?</i>	5
			100

Compliance with the priority criteria

Criteria	Description of criteria	Score
1. Project complies with the regional priority	1.1 Priority is given to project applications submitted by NGOs registered and operating in geographically under-served areas other than Vilnius city.	<i>4 (if project complies with both 1.1 and 1.2 priorities, the score is given for compliance</i>

		<i>with 1.1 priority only)</i>
	1.2 Priority is given to partnerships involving regional NGOs, i.e. registered and operating in the regions other than Vilnius city.	3
2. Project complies with the intercultural priority	Priority is given to: 2.1 project applications submitted by national minority NGOs; 2.2 partnerships involving national minority non-governmental organizations.	5 (if project complies with one or both priorities)
3. Project complies with the bilateral cooperation priority	Priority is given to bilateral partnerships with the entities from Donor countries.	5

Only the project proposals that are awarded an **overall average score equal to or greater than 60 points** shall be discussed by the Selection Committee. However, if the project scores 60 and more, it does not mean that it passes automatically – ranking lists will be examined by the Selection Committee, that will make recommendations to the Fund Operator on project proposals to be funded.

Acceptance of an application does not imply an obligation to award it up to the amount requested by the Applicant. The amount requested may be decreased by the Selection Committee based on the evaluators' findings on the adequacy of the financial plan. Based on the findings of the evaluators on the relevance of the activities for achieving the project objectives, the Selection Committee may reject financing of activities that do not contribute to the objectives. The final design of action and financial plans is subject to the contract between Fund Operator and Applicant.

Notification on selection results

Applicants will be notified on the selection of their project proposals via e-mail indicated in application form not later than five (5) working days after the final decision is made by the Fund Operator. The results of the selection shall be announced at the Program's website.

5. PROVISIONS ON PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

After the final decision on the selection of a project for co-financing by the ACF, the Applicant will receive a Project contract based on the standard contract template. Before the signature of the contract, negotiation between the Applicant and Fund Operator to determine the final definition of project activities and costs are possible.

5.1. PROJECT CONTRACT PROVISIONS

After notification on the co-financing decision, applicants will set the project start date. The Fund Operator will conclude Project contract with all the selected Applicants, who duly comply with the Selection Committee's and Fund Operator's comments related to the content and budget of the projects, and which aims at ensuring effective distribution of the Program's funds.

Project contract will cover the following aspects:

- Final grant amount – maximum grant amount and rate will be determined with the contract based on the financial plan of the project representing planned amount of costs. However, this amount will become final only after the conclusion of the project and after submission of the final financial statement of the project account.
- Failure to meet project objectives – In case the beneficiary will not realize project in accordance with Project contract’s obligations and provisions, Fund Operator reserves the right to stop payments or terminate the contract. The ACF contribution can be reduced, and Fund Operator can demand a total or partial refund of already paid contribution in case beneficiary does not comply with the contractual provisions.
- Changes to the project – In the event of significant changes to the project, an amendment to the contract has to be prepared and signed, while smaller-scale changes can be authorized by the Project Supervisor. In case a delay in project implementation occurs due to objective reasons, the beneficiary can request for a prolongation of the project for a maximum of 3 months, even if the project duration was planned for the maximum period (i.e., 18 months for small and medium projects, 36 months for large projects). The request will be considered by the Fund Operator. Prolongation of the project does not impact the financial plan of the project.
- Changes to the financial plan – Original amounts of the categories in the financial plan may change under the following conditions:
 - when the change does not impact the original purpose of the project; and
 - transfers of budget between cost categories of up to 10 % of total project budget and up to 25% of the cost category are possible without consent of the Project Supervisor on the side of the Fund Operator; for the transfers of budget between cost categories that are higher than 10 % of total budget and 25% of the cost category project promoter will have to get Fund Operator's written consent, and an amendment to the contract will be signed.

5.2. REPORTING AND PAYMENTS

The submission of narrative and financial reports is a mandatory condition for the execution of the interim and final payments. The number of project reports due by the project promoters depends on the project size and duration. Reports have to be approved by the Fund Operator before payments are made. Fund Operator can request for additional information on implementation progress at any time.

Within 10 calendar days after the signature of project contract the project promoter shall submit an **advance payment claim. Interim narrative and financial reports** have to be submitted by the project promoter within 30 calendar days after the half of project duration.

Interim financial report supporting a payment claim can to be submitted to the Fund Operator after project promoter of small and medium projects disburses 80% of the advance payment.

The final narrative and financial report supporting the final payment claim shall be submitted by the project promoter within 45 calendar days after the completion of the project.

Payments of the project grant shall take the form of advance payments, interim payments and a final payment. The level of advance payment to projects shall be set out in the project contract. The maximum level of advance payment shall be linked to the project budget and duration as follows:

Grant size	Project implementation duration	Advance payment	Interim payment(s)	Final payment
Small projects: from €5,000 to €15,000	up to 18 months	65% - 75%	25% - 15%	Minimum 10% or the remaining balance
Medium projects: from €15,001 to €80,000	up to 18 months	40% - 50%	50% - 40%	Minimum 10% or the remaining balance

Advance payments are to be paid up to 15 working days after the date of last signature of the project contract.

Interim payments are to be paid up to 15 working days after date of approval of the interim financial report.

Final/balancing payments are to be paid up to 15 working days after the date of approval of the final financial report.

The approval of project interim/final financial report shall take place within 30 calendar days from the submission of all required information.

In cases where projects have been assessed as posing a high risk for the Program¹⁶, the Fund Operator may make a justified decision to change the payments scheme (reducing pre-financing or exceptionally, applying a scheme without pre-financing under which the Fund Operator reimburses project promoters only the amount of grant expenses verified by the Fund Operator).

Rights and obligations of the project promoter and the Fund Operator regarding the monitoring and control of the use of the grant funds are detailed in the Project contract.

The project promoter and partner(s) must allow the FO/FMO/EFTA Board of Auditors/Office of the Auditor General of Norway to carry out audits and on-the-spot verifications and to examine supporting documents, accounting documents and any other documents relevant to the financing of the project. The supporting documents and records must be kept available for inspections and audits for a three-year period following the FMO's approval of the Final Program Report.

If the project is implemented with a partner(s) from Donor states, exceptionally, with reference to expenditures incurred by project partners whose primary location is registered in one of the donor states or project partners that are international organisations or bodies or agencies thereof, the proof of expenditure may take a form of a report by an independent auditor, qualified to carry out statutory audits of accounting documents, certifying that the reported costs are incurred in accordance with the guidelines, bilateral cooperation initiative contract, the relevant law and national accounting practices. In such a case:

- The cost of the report is considered an eligible cost, providing that it complies with the eligibility rules defined in the guidelines, Project contract and it is included in the budget;
- Upon request by the FMO, EFTA Board of Auditors/The Office of the Auditor General of Norway a project promoter or project partner shall grant access to the supporting documents on the basis of which the report was issued;

¹⁶ This shall be based on a risk assessment prepared and documented by the FO, taking into account, inter alia, the project promoter's previous experience and/or its administrative and financial capacity.

- The certification process can be governed by the International Standard on Related Services (ISRS) 4400 “Engagements to perform agreed-upon procedures regarding financial information” as published by the IFAC (International Federation of Accountants).

The annually audited financial statement of an entity cannot replace the specific auditor's certificate confirming that the claimed costs are incurred in accordance with the guidelines, Project contract, the relevant law and national accounting practices.

5.3. PUBLICITY

Project promoters are obliged to inform the public on receiving a grant from the ACF, publicize the results of the project and properly indicate the funding of the EEA or Norwegian Financial Mechanism. In all written publications, communications and products, at publication of project products, public events, such as conferences, seminars, fairs or exhibitions, related to project activities, project promoters are obliged to make explicit and visible the support of the Donor States.

Each project receiving a grant from ACF must organize at least two information activities on progress, achievements and results in the project, such as a seminar or a conference with stakeholders, a press conference or press event, including a launch activity and/or a closing activity for the project. For projects whose grant size is less than EUR 50 000, one information activity is sufficient and can be of smaller scale.

Guidelines for informing and communicating shall be published before the beginning of project implementation period on the website of the ACF in Lithuania <https://apf.lt/> and sent to all project promoters. Project promoter will also have a wide pallet of communication support activities at their disposal.

5.4. INFORMATION CONCERNING THE PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA SUBMITTED BY THE APPLICANTS TO THE ACF IN LITHUANIA

With personal data submitted (included) in application to open calls of the ACF in Lithuania and reporting documentation by the applicants, OLF as a leading partner of Fund Operator 's Consortium and OSFL Projects and Geri Norai LT as partners of Consortium will be acquainted. Hence, Fund Operator enter the role of common personal data controllers. Submitted personal data will be used for the purposes of implementation of open calls (application assessment, informing of applicants) and in applications rewarded with grants also for preparation of project contract, for monitoring, control of co-financing and for related informing of beneficiaries or for other related business communication (request for additional information, informing on financial means) as well as for the purpose of proving of eligibility for funding.

Co-financing of a project selected means establishing a contractual relation between the OLF and the Applicant in which OLF assumes the liability of co-financing party and has therefore, together with its partners, the right to monitor and control the implementation of the project. Such contractual relationship as well as submission of application to an open call (as a request for such contractual relationship) represent legal basis for all personal data processing by OLF, OSFL Projects and Geri norai LT as noted in this information.

With whole application, including personal data submitted with it, also third persons can get acquainted, and that is Financial Mechanism Office (Financial Mechanism Office, Rue Joseph II 12-16, 1000 Brussels, Belgium), donor states and their authorized persons.

In accordance with GDPR and respective national legislation, individuals whose personal data is included in application to open call have the right to be acquainted with all of their personal data, to correction, in the case of conditions as laid down by applicable regulations also the right to deletion, restriction of processing and to their portability. Individuals concerned can address their requests or questions regarding their personal data processing to the OLF.

6. COMPLAINTS' COMMITTEE

In accordance with the requirements for the ACF in Lithuania, the Fund Operator has established a Complaints Committee to review complaints regarding the Program. All complaints are first assessed by the Fund Operator. A complainant, who is not satisfied with the conclusion made by the FO, has the right to take the case to the Complaints Committee, which includes one member who is external to the Fund Operator and its Executive Board and does not include Program's staff responsible for assessing project applications. Complaints regarding the ACF Program should be addressed to pranesejai@apf.lt.

7. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR THE APPLICANTS

Applicants will be offered a wide range of support activities and services at their disposal:

- **Information workshops** for potential applicants will be organized in July - August 2021;
- **Practical workshops** for the applicants from small local organizations will be organised in August - September 2021;
- **Working seminars** for applicants of selected concept notes for small projects will be organized in November 2021.
- **Counselling via e-mail** will be provided during the office hours (9:00 – 17:00 Monday – Friday).
- **Counselling via phone** + 370 5 2685511 will be provided since August 16 during the office hours (9:00 – 17:00 Monday – Friday).
- Answers to the applicants' questions will be published on the ACF in Lithuania website <https://apf.lt> (**F.A.Q. section**).

Information about the support events planned, registration details shall be announced on the ACF in Lithuania website <https://apf.lt> and FB public group „NVO džiunglės“.

With brief questions, applicants can contact Fund Operator by e-mail info@apf.lt.
