

CSO Initiatives Mechanism

Financing initiatives
by local civil society organizations

2024 Call for Expressions of Project Intentions

For financing in 2025

Partnerships Department
Civil Society Organizations Division (DPA/OSC)

Frequently asked questions for local CSOs

How can I know whether my organization is eligible for the current Call for Expressions of Project Intentions?

Your organization is eligible if it meets several criteria:

- It must be a non-profit association or non-governmental organization established in compliance with the current legislation in its country; it must be registered in a country that appears on the list of countries eligible for official development assistance established by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and must work within the field of sustainable development in a country eligible for official development assistance as established by the OECD DAC.
- It must be a non-political, non-profit, independent organization
- It must have established independent governing bodies (General Assembly, Board of Directors) and publish its activity report and its accounts approved by its governing bodies every year
- It must have existed for at least three years (from the date of filing articles of association or official registration)
- This year, locally governed CSOs (including unions) are eligible as long as they have been financed at least once for a completed project (either directly or via a French CSO) by an **entity of the AFD Group** regardless of the amount received :

- CSO Division (MPN/OSC),
- Operations Department, (SDD or local agencies AFD)
- Expertise France)

Or by a **French embassy** as part of annual funding of more than €100,000 (Fonds Equipe France (ex-FSPI) projects, for example).

- Projects for structuring the local CSO sector (SMA) and projects focusing on civic and international solidarity education (sometimes referred to as global education) implemented in countries will be encouraged and may therefore be supported
- Local CSOs may present **a single project intention** (on their own or as part of a consortium) with two possible options:
 - ✓ **A new phase of a project already supported** by the AFD group if the implementation of the previous project is considered satisfactory by the AFD group, with a geographic and thematic scope that are stable over time, and may be renewed when appropriate. In this case, in your Initiative Note you must specify the date, amount and title of the project already financed, as well as the AFD department that awarded the grant.
 - ✓ **A new project with a different thematic or geographic scope** than the previously financed project, which may be renewed twice at the most.

What is AFD's maximum level of co-financing authorized?

90%.

What do you mean by "completed project"?

The project financed by AFD or via the French partner CSO must be completed by 2025 at the latest. It may have been closed several years ago.

Is it possible to submit an application and maintain our partnership with the initial French partner in the project?

Yes, if the French partner previously led the project with you, it may remain a partner in the new phase of the project you are now leading and directly submitting to AFD. Maintaining partnership relations is encouraged.

Is it possible to submit an application while remaining a partner in another project submitted by the French partner in its name?

Yes, it is possible but the French partner's project must be different from the one you have submitted in your own name.

How can I submit a project intention?

You may submit your project intention and administrative file directly on the "Oscar" digital space dedicated to uploading documents for CSO initiatives: <https://oscar.afd.fr>

Log in or create an account if you do not already have one
(See Appendix 2 - Oscar User Guide and Appendix 1 - Authorization for Use of Oscar)

In the "CSO Information" tab in Oscar, enter the requested information and upload the **required documents** (see AMI text)

- Your organization's accounts for the last three years: the most recent accounts for 2023 (if they have been finalized), 2022 and 2021; or 2022, 2021, 2020 (if the 2023 accounts have not been finalized) and
- The last three activity reports/Chairman's reports: 2023 (if finalized) 2022 and 2021, or 2022, 2021, 2020 (if the 2023 report is not available).
- The make-up of the Board of Directors and your CSO's articles of association.

Download the "project intention" on the AFD website (<https://www.afd.fr/fr/les-financements-des-projets-des-ong>) or directly in Oscar, to be completed in English or French (one sheet per project). Complete the sheet and upload it to Oscar:

- You may save the information you have entered and return to it later. Please note that once you click on "Send project intention" your submission is validated and data about your organization can no longer be modified.
- Oscar will automatically generate an acknowledgment of receipt, but you will not receive an email confirming our submission. Should you encounter a technical problem with the Oscar platform, please send an email to: oscar_admin@afd.fr

Do the uploaded documents have to be in Word or PDF format?

The administrative file (most recent accounts and activity reports) must be in PDF format. The project intention must be in Word format.

Can the Intention Note be written in English?

Yes, the template is available in French and English, so you may choose.

Can a delegation or branch of a French or international CSO based in an eligible country submit an application?

Yes, as long as it is a non-profit organization and meets the eligibility requirements listed on p. 1.

Is there a minimum required amount for the project to be eligible?

The total project budget must be greater than or equal to €500,000 over a three-year period. Projects for a total amount of between €300,000 and €500,000 may only be declared eligible by AFD in highly specific and justified geographical and/or sectoral contexts.

Can a CSO submit more than one project proposal through this Call for Expressions of Project Intentions?

No, you may only submit a single project, individually or as part of a consortium (as the lead CSO).

Are projects carried out in Mali eligible?

Following recent decisions by Malian transitional authorities (see presidential decree no. 2022-0738 dated November 29, 2022) and in keeping with the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs' request to comply with these decisions, since that time we have been required to stop financing all projects carried out in Mali by French or Malian civil society organizations.

If a project is shortlisted, does it mean that it will be financed?

No. A project being shortlisted for potential financing for the following year through the Call for Expressions of Project Intentions does not mean that your project has been approved. This will be determined by AFD after it has closely reviewed the complete file provided by the CSO (administrative file and CSO Initiative Note - NIONG).

Can a CSO with an annual budget lower than €238,000 submit a project intention?

No. A project budget may not be lower than €500,000 and the annual project budget may not exceed 70% of the CSO's annual budget: **the CSO must therefore have an annual budget of at least €238,000.**

Can projects have a duration under three years?

Projects must have a duration of three years; they may be renewed twice. Projects with a duration of two years or four or more years are not accepted.

Projects referred to as "recurring"

What is a recurring project?

A project referred to as "recurring" is a project that has already been financed by AFD, either directly or through a French lead CSO; the previous project phase must have ended less than 12 months ago.

What is the maximum duration accepted by the MPN/OSC between two phases for a project to be considered recurring?

The phases must follow one another to ensure that it is really a long-term project. Therefore, there may not be more than twelve months between two phases. Beyond this twelve-month period, the project is considered a new project.

Must it be specified upon submitting a project that it is likely to give rise to a new phase?

Yes, if you have already anticipated this, you may mention it. If not, you will do so when writing your CSO Initiative Note - NIONG. This does not affect the shortlisting process.

When submitting an application for co-financing (CSO Initiative Note - NIONG) for a new phase, must the results of the evaluation of the previous phase be included?

Yes. This is why it is helpful for the evaluation process to be launched within six months of the end of the project at the latest, so that you may use the results to help you design and write the proposal for the following phase.

A new phase (following financing directly granted to the local non-profit association, or following the project financed through a French partner) may only be considered if the CSO has sent the evaluation report (or the draft report, along with the main conclusions/recommendations). Using the results of the previous phase and taking into consideration adjustments, improvements or corrections recommended by the evaluation is highly valued by the NGO committee to assess the need to reallocate funds for a new phase.

Timetable

When will the CSO be informed of whether or not its project has been shortlisted and included in the 2024 program?

By July 16, 2024 at the latest.

Can the amount of co-financing the CSO plans to request from AFD be revised after shortlisting of the project intention?

It may not be increased, but it may be decreased. The amount agreed upon at the end of shortlisting and announced in the email confirmation sent to CSOs whose projects have been shortlisted may not under any circumstances be increased when writing the CSO Initiative Note -NIONG and/or during project appraisal if it is selected. However, it may be decreased by the CSO if necessary.

When can CSOs submit the CSO Initiative Note - NIONG for a shortlisted project?

The NIONG (CSO Initiative Note) may be uploaded to Oscar **between 1st of December 2024, and until April 30, 2025 at the latest.**

Important: a new CSO Initiative Note (NIONG) format is available along with a new estimated budget template. Please download these templates on the AFD website.

The Methodology Guide was revised at the same time as this Call for Expression of Project Intentions. You must refer to it for this Call for Expression of Project Intentions

and in order to write the CSO Initiative Note (NIONG) if your project intention is shortlisted.

How long does it take between submitting an application and its being approved or not for financing?

MPN/OSC presents the project to the NGO Committee for the allocation decision (approving or rejecting the request for co-financing) based on the number of projects received and progress in the project appraisal process. Even though project proposals (CSO Initiative Note (NIONG) + complete administrative file) are reviewed in the order they are received, submitting an application at a certain date does not necessarily mean that it will be presented at the following NGO Committee meeting. Only DPA/OSC may decide to include a project on the committee's agenda. CSOs may not decide the date on which a financing request should be presented to the NGO committee.

The appraisal period varies, depending on the quality and complexity of the project. In some cases, the appraisal process calls for discussion and dialogue. You should expect the AFD appraisal process to last approximately six months (or more if needed due to exceptional circumstances) after you have submitted a CSO Initiative Note - NIONG.

What is the deadline for submitting a project (CSO Initiative Note (NIONG) + administrative file) to benefit from a grant in 2025?

The deadline is April 30, 2025. Projects will not be accepted after this date.

Will CSOs be informed individually or collectively about the results of the shortlisting announced in mid-July?

MPN/OSC will inform each CSO individually. Their project will then be included in the 2025 program.

Are the goals stated in the intention note (i.e. sector, goals and partners) binding?

Yes, they are binding, but minor adjustments are possible.

Must the administrative documents provided for the Call for Expressions of Project Intentions be submitted again in the administrative file requested along with the CSO Initiative Note (NIONG)?

No, the administrative documents are uploaded to your Oscar space when you register, or when you submit your project intention. You will no longer have to regularly update your administrative file (including new revenue, new accounts and financial statement, activity report, strategic documents). You must therefore update your file at least once a year.

Does DPA/CSO already know the overall financing budget available for 2025? And the budget reserved for local CSOs?

No, the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs will notify AFD of the overall budget in early 2025.

Projects presented as part of a consortium

What is the level of financing by AFD for projects led by a consortium?

It is the same as it is for projects led by a single CSO: 90%.

AFD seeks to encourage consortium-led projects. It will pay special attention to this aspect in the shortlisting process.

Is it possible to change a project based on a project intention submitted by a single CSO into a consortium-led project (when writing the CSO Initiative Note - NIONG, for example)?

Yes, but you must explain this in the NIONG and may not change the amount of the grant you are requesting from AFD, which has been confirmed in writing when announcing the results of the shortlisting process.

What exactly is meant by “consortium”?

A consortium is defined as:

- **A close alliance between at least two local partners** (one of whom is the lead CSO, who will represent the project for AFD); these partners may co-develop the project with French and international civil society stakeholders and implement, evaluate and report on it jointly.
- Partners committed to pooling financial resources and working together to raise complementary co-financing.
- This means that the lead CSO might not have control over the entire financing plan, since it may be funded by other members of the consortium. DPA/OSC will be particularly attentive to the soundness of the financing plan, in terms of reallocations between consortium partners, and the share of funds raised by each of the consortium members.
- Committed local partners who share their unique skills and expertise (such as sectoral experience, experience and knowledge of the field of activity) in conjunction with their local partners.

Other European or international CSOs or other organizations (such as research institutes, companies) may also be involved in a project led by local CSOs through a consortium.

The project intention must demonstrate the added value of the consortium, including aspects such as synergy effects, pooling of activities and scaling. It must explain the operational set-up for the project and the role of each CSO consortium member in an

additional note (1 to 2 pages) accompanying the project intention sheet provided in the Call for Expressions of Project Intentions.

During appraisal of the CSO Initiative Note - NIONG, if the consortium is not ultimately demonstrated, despite of what was announced in the project intention, AFD reserves the right to reduce the requested grant amount.

What budget is taken into account to analyze the lead CSO's financial capacity to lead the consortium project, especially in terms of calculating the 70% ratio: the lead CSO's budget or the combined budget of all consortium members?

Only the lead CSO's budget is taken into account for a consortium-led project.

Combating fraud, corruption, money laundering and the financing of terrorism - AML/CFT - New provisions decided on 21/09/2023
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What is Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) compliance?

It means complying with international requirements for combating fraud, corruption, money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

The United Nations, the European Union and France have agreed on measures to freeze assets and prohibit the direct or indirect provision of funds to individuals who appear on sanctions lists.

French and local CSOs supported by AFD must therefore comply with these requirements by applying due diligence measures to their board, executive committee, employees, suppliers/service providers and their partners financed by the project when financial transfers or economic assets that are convertible into cash are included in the project.

The CSO must therefore ensure that:

- Its equity and funds invested in the Project are not of illicit origin and
- The Project (especially in the negotiating, awarding and performance of contracts financed through the Grant) has not given rise to any Prohibited Practice and
- That it has neither committed nor taken part in any act in violation of Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) laws.
- It makes every effort not to provide material support or any other resource directly or indirectly to any individual or entity who would commit, attempt to commit, encourage, facilitate or take part in acts of terrorism, or who has committed, attempted to commit, encouraged, facilitated or taken part in such Acts.
- The Project (especially in the negotiating, awarding and performance of contracts financed through the Grant) does not give rise to any Prohibited Practice
- It will inform the Agency immediately as soon as it becomes aware of a Prohibited Practice or suspects such acts or practices

- In the above case or at the Agency's request if it suspects such acts, the CSO must take the necessary measures to remedy the situation to the Agency's satisfaction within the deadline it has set.
- It will notify the Agency immediately if it becomes aware of information raising suspicions that the funds invested in the Project are of Illicit Origin

Do these provisions apply to a locally governed CSO?

Yes, when it will potentially be financed by AFD. It must comply with the new AML/CFT provisions approved by AFD's Board of Directors in September 2023; please refer to work sheet 10 of the methodological guide and the FAQ published online alongside the guide.

CSOs are invited to screen their stakeholders (employees, service providers and partners) as well as their final beneficiaries (in the case of financial transfers or donations of goods with economic value).

What are the other AFD requirements?

Preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment

The CSO must equip itself with all necessary means to actively prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. It must implement measures to prevent, monitor and respond to such incidents. It must inform its local partners who directly implement activities with the final beneficiaries of these requirements.

Environmental and social responsibility

In order to promote sustainable development, we need to promote compliance with environmental and social standards recognized by the international community, including the fundamental conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and international environmental conventions in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations in the country where the Project is carried out.

CSOs supported by AFD must comply with international standards for environmental protection and labor rights, including the fundamental conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and international environmental conventions, in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations in the country where the Project is implemented.

Relations with the AFD office and the embassy in the country where the project is implemented

Do we need to contact the French embassy and the AFD office in the country where the project is implemented?

Yes, you are advised to contact the embassy and the AFD office before submitting your intention note.

If this is not possible, you are strongly advised to present your project to the French embassy and the AFD office in the country where the project is implemented before finalizing your CSO Initiative Note - NIONG. Presenting the project allows you to develop a constructive dialogue and if necessary, obtain advice or recommendations.