



**Connecting
Spheres**

Management and Reporting Guidelines

“Connecting Spheres” Action

Call for proposals
GA 101139923



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INTRODUCTION

These Guidelines are an integral part of the Call for Proposals and describe the methods governing the granting of funding, the start and management of activities, the possible amendments, the reports, and the accounts of costs incurred for implementing the projects funded under the “Connecting Spheres” action. Costs are eligible according to the criteria set out in this document. Further details, methods of disbursement of funds, and the supporting documentation required for reporting will be indicated in the contract. Please note that the awarded organisations will receive specific training on the implementation of these Guidelines.

The following terminology is used in these Guidelines:

Lead applicant (proposing entity, or applicant): the organisation which submits the application for a grant. In case of a partnership/consortium, the lead applicant is the responsible entity and must be the only one in the Consortium authorised to submit a proposal. If awarded the grant, it is responsible for implementing activities, submitting periodic reports, monitoring, and communicating with Oxfam and FGB.

Co-applicant: An organisation other than the Lead applicant, responsible for implementing one or more of the proposed activities and managing an implementation budget. It shall fulfil the same eligibility criteria as the Lead applicant. A maximum of 2 Co-applicants are admitted for each proposal.

Grant Beneficiaries: The lead applicant of the consortium or the applicant (in the case of a single applicant), along with co-applicant(s), who are selected as grant recipients under this call and will sign the agreement with Oxfam Italia (OIT).

TSEs: Third Sector Entities

V.2 - CORRIGENDUM 05.11.2024

- In paragraph “7. Eligibility of Costs”, the following words have been deleted from the list of eligible costs: “Website: Costs incurred to create a website are only eligible if it is solely dedicated to the project activities”

- In paragraph “7. Eligibility of Costs”, the words “not exclusively dedicated to project activities” are deleted from the sentence “Costs for the creation of the organisation's new websites not exclusively dedicated to project activities”.

1. Lead applicant, Co-applicant, and Associated partner roles

1.1 Lead Applicant

The lead applicant is responsible for properly implementing the activities covered by the agreement. The main tasks of the lead applicant's role may in no way be delegated to the other contracting parties (Co-applicants):

- a) Verifying that the implementation of activities complies with the contractual agreement and ensure coordination with the Co-applicant(s).
- b) Acting as an intermediary for all communications with Oxfam Italia (OIT), Oxfam Italia Intercultura (OII), and Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini (FGB).
- c) Ensuring the transmission of all documents and information required by OIT, OII and FGB, especially those concerning descriptive and accounting reports. The Lead applicant or applicant is also responsible for collecting, checking, and transmitting the required information to the Co-applicant(s). Any information provided, as well as any request by the lead applicant or applicant to OIT, OII and FGB, is considered to be agreed with all Consortium members.
- d) Keeping OIT, OII and FGB informed about any events that could influence or delay the implementation.
- e) Keeping OIT, OII and FGB informed about any change at legal, financial, technical, and organisational level, including those concerning the Co-applicant(s), as well as any change in the personal data of the legal representative of each consortium member (Lead applicant, Co-applicant).
- f) Being responsible for monitoring, controlling, and verifying the transmission of all administrative and accounting documents of each Consortium member.
- g) Being responsible for payment requests according to the Contract.
- h) Acting as sole recipient of OIT payments on behalf of all Consortium members.

If the project is submitted in partnership with one or more Co-applicants, the project documentation attached to the project may include, if useful to the applicants (Lead applicant and Co-applicant), a "Letter of Undertaking to form a Consortium" signed by their respective legal representatives. This document is optional, and a template is contained on the [Connecting Spheres website](#) at the "Resource" section.

1.2 Co-applicant

The **Co-applicant** is an organisation other than the Lead applicant, responsible for implementing one or more of the proposed activities and managing part of the implementation budget. It shall fulfil the same eligibility criteria as the Lead applicant. If awarded the grant, Co-applicants may be required to sign a Consortium agreement with the Lead applicant when stipulating the contract. When submitting the project proposal, Co-applicants may also be required to sign a Letter of undertaking to create a consortium (see the template at the "Resource" section of [Connecting Spheres website](#)). A maximum of 2 Co-applicants are admitted for each proposal.

The Lead applicant will assign Co-applicant(s) its budget share to manage for the implementation of the project activities.

1.3 Associated partner

The **Associated partner** is an organisation (a not-for-profit organisation, public body, or university) other than the Lead applicant and the Co-applicant that is not subject to the same eligibility criteria as the aforementioned. It shall participate in the project activities without managing any budget share (that is, without receiving funding nor incurring expenses in its own name). Costs incurred by Associated partners CANNOT be classified as eligible costs. Associated partners may participate because they are interested in contributing to the objectives of the action, or to gain visibility, or because they are engaged in an ongoing cooperation with one of the partners. The Associated partner:

- Shall not sign any grant contract (they are not part of the Consortium).
- Perform tasks assigned to them in the project document attached to the Contract.
- Participate at their own expenses (without receiving funds from the Action).
- Are not necessarily linked to the lead applicant or applicant from a property or legal point of view, but they may be.

The Lead applicant is responsible towards OIT, OII, and FGB for the work performed by Associated partner.

When submitting proposals, the Associated partner shall:

- Fill in a section of the project document (Narrative Application Form - Annex 1) specifying its expertise in the intervention area and its role within the proposal (Section B, par. 1.7).
- Certify the fulfilment of eligibility criteria by filling in and signing the Checklist (Annex 3).

2. Grant disbursement, start of activities, and contract duration

2.1 Grant disbursement

Funds will only be disbursed by means of a bank transfer from OIT to a current account made out in the Lead applicant or applicant's name at various stages that vary according to the project duration. Details, amounts, and conditions will be set out in the contract. The disbursement is generally divided as follows:

- a) First instalment (advance payment): 50% of the grant established in the contract.
- b) Second instalment: 30% of the budget, disbursed upon verification of a technical and financial report if the ascertained eligible costs amount to at least 60% of the advance received. A template of the technical and financial report will be provided when signing the contract.
- c) Third instalment (balance): 20% of the total funding. The exact balance will be calculated based on the eligible expenses actually incurred reduced by the previously received instalments. Should the total reported budget be less than the amount already received, the

sum not spent will be returned to OIT. The instalments following the first one will be disbursed upon approval of the technical and financial reports. For each instalment, OIT will deliver the funds directly to the Lead applicant or applicant. In case of a Consortium, the lead applicant will in turn transfer the funds to the Co-applicant(s) according to the agreement signed by the Consortium members.

2.2 Start of activities

The start of activities and the cost eligibility period shall be established in the contract upon receipt of the first instalment by the lead applicant or applicant.

2.3 Contract duration

The Contract is binding until OIT, OII and FGB's approval of the final report and the consequent:

- balance disbursement;
- request for refund of the grant portion that was not spent.

3. Presentation and approval of technical and financial reports

Timely and accurate periodic reports are essential to ensure that the funds made available are spent in an effective, efficient and transparent way. The acquisition of objective reports highlighting strengths and weaknesses of the action is also fundamental to learn from experience and improve future planning.

Reports shall be written in Italian for Stream 1 and 2, in Italian or English if they fall even partially under Stream 3. The report templates, one for the descriptive part (Word) and one for the financial part (Excel), are attached to the contract. The reports should provide a clear comparison between progress made and expected results of the approved project; accurately describe how the pre-planned activities were actually developed on the ground; and provide an evaluation of the activities implemented in the reporting period as well as their impact on the beneficiaries of the action. The financial reports shall include a list of expenses incurred and an overview of the progress in relation to the action budget and the grant instalments already disbursed. The reports must necessarily be as clear and complete as possible since the proof of activity implementation and achieved results (including with the support of attached documentation as established in par. 4) is instrumental in the payment of the funding instalments.

The reports and any supporting documents shall be sent per e-mail to info.connectingspheres@oxfam.it under the terms and conditions established in the contract with the grant beneficiaries. OIT, OII, and FGB are entitled to request explanations and additional documents.

In case of more in-depth verifications, OIT may request supporting documents proving the expenses incurred (e.g. receipts, see par. 4 "Documentation") even after the end of the project. Should OIT request supporting documents, the Lead applicant must e-mail the full documentation (both the Lead applicant and the Co-applicant(s)) within 10 working days

from the request date. **The lead applicant or applicant, the co-applicants shall keep all original documents, in particular accounting and tax records, at its premises for a period of six years from the balance disbursement date.** The lead applicant or applicant shall ensure the availability of at least one true copy of the documents and information contained in the reports, including in electronic or digital form, at its premises. It shall also ensure that all necessary and relevant information be available for the purpose of carrying out verifications, checks, and audits at all times. In case of ongoing verifications, reviews, audits, investigations, litigations, or other claims under the Contract, the lead applicant or applicant shall retain all original documentation until the conclusion of these procedures. All grant beneficiaries will have responsibility for keeping the original documentation. Upon OIT, OII, and FGB's request, the lead applicant or applicant shall provide any information which is necessary to check the eligibility of the reported expenses, the correct implementation of the action, and the fulfilment of other obligations under the Contract. The provided information must be accurate, correct, complete, and in the requested format including the electronic form. The requested documents shall be delivered within 10 working days from OIT's request. The instalments following the first one will be disbursed upon approval of the corresponding descriptive and financial reports, net of any non-eligible costs and residual amounts.

4. Supporting documentation

4.1 Annexes to the technical report

The technical report must be accompanied by supporting documents proving the implementation of the planned activities and the achievement of the outputs specified in the proposal. The following items shall therefore be attached to the descriptive reports where relevant:

- Photo/Video/Graphic material
- Attendance lists at events and meetings, signature sheets
- Evaluation questionnaires concerning events, services, activities and/or training
- Training programmes and/or materials
- Activity reports
- Any other documents which is useful to prove the implemented activities

Further details, templates, and instructions are part of the contract.

4.2 Annexes to the financial report

The reporting for each grant instalment may only concern fiscally valid expenses proved by receipts and actually incurred by the Lead applicant or Co-applicant(s). Scanned copies of the supporting documents including proofs of payment, and any other documents shall be stored at the lead applicant or applicant's premises and may be requested in accordance with the terms and conditions of the contract.

Proofs of expenses:

- a) Shall be made out to the Lead applicant or Co-applicant(s).
- b) Shall be recorded in the Lead applicant's or Co-applicant(s)' general accounting.

The main documents that may be requested are listed below. Further details for each macro-category of costs (see par. 5) will be provided to the awarded organisations before signing the contract.

- Easily readable and fiscally valid proofs of expenses, such as invoices, receipts, payrolls, and F24 forms¹. Each proof of expense shall clearly indicate the kind of cost concerned and may only be made out to the Lead applicant or the Co-applicant(s).
- Proofs of payment: All payments must be traceable and recognizable, including by means of bank statements made out to the Lead applicant or Co-applicant(s). Depending on the kind of payment (bank transfer, credit card, cheque, cash), proofs of payment shall be accompanied by different documents proving the payment and clearly showing that the amount has been debited. More details will be provided when signing the contract.

We recommend to possibly avoid cash payments as they do not ensure traceability. If used, cash payments will only be possible for expenses lower than 500 EUR per supplier/person. In no case shall professional services (both from organisations' employees and external consultants) be paid in cash or alternative forms of payment.

- Supporting documentation: The full supporting documentation, which is necessary to prove expenses, e.g. staff contracts, contracts for the provision of services, employment contracts, hiring letters, cost estimates, etc. Precise instructions will be provided when signing the contract.

Proofs of expenditure relating to project costs may be submitted within and no later than the deadline for final reporting established in the contract, together with any social security and tax charges.

Indirect costs relating to the project are allowed at a fixed percentage rate of max. 10% of the total reported costs. When paying the instalments, the percentage indicated in the approved budget for each stream will be applied.

The full documentation relating to the project and the expenses incurred shall be available at the lead applicant or applicant's premises in order to allow for possible onsite checks within 6 years from the payment of the balance. Upon explicit request, the lead applicant or applicant must produce the original expenditure documentation collaborating with the co-applicants

5. Envisaged cost categories (Annex 2 - Application Form - Budget)

- **Human resources (internal staff)**

This cost category includes all costs concerning human resources (staff hired by the organisation) taking part in the project activities and cannot exceed 80% of direct costs. It

¹ F24 forms are used in Italy to pay taxes and tributes to state and local entities

is allowed to employ human resources with contract types that clearly indicate the nature and duration of the collaboration. This kind of cost is eligible provided that the function described in the project is consistent with the function described in the contract. When submitting the project proposal, 2 (two) curricula vitae of two persons employed in the project are requested. If any documents are required to be filed and submitted for this category, they will be specified in the contract and its annexes.

- **Travel, Food and Accommodation**

This cost category includes expenditure pertaining to travel, food and accommodation for human resources (employees, volunteers, and consultants), for beneficiaries and/or other people taking part in the project activities and whose trip is essential for implementing the project. Travel, food and accommodation expenditure must be reported as established in the contract.

- **External Services/Consultants**

“External services” means that the implementation of a specific activity can be entrusted to legal entities external to the consortium. Entrusting the provision of services to third parties is allowed only if explicitly established in the approved project budget and according to legality, economy, efficiency, and impartiality criteria. In no case may the provision of services for the implementation of whole activities or project components be entrusted to external entities. Services or materials in connection with building renovations exclusively pertaining to the project activities may not exceed total 5% of direct costs. If any documents are required to be filed and submitted for this category, they will be specified in the contract and its annexes. This depends on the cost limits indicated in par. 6 “Procedural methods”.

- **Purchase of material**

Materials include:

- Consumer goods: All items that are used and consumed in the project. They may include various purchases such as computer tools and materials (mouses, cables, USB sticks), laboratory items (whiteboards), rakes, fabrics, candles, and other small items.
- Goods and equipment: This cost category includes all instrumental goods purchased in the framework of the project. They include durable production goods and equipment, IT and audio-visual appliances, furniture pertaining to real estate property, vehicles, and other technical equipment which are specifically essential to implement the project activities. This category may also include ancillary costs to material purchase, such as transport, delivery, and installation.

Materials or services for building renovations exclusively pertaining to the project activities may not exceed total 5% of direct costs. If any documents are required to be filed and submitted for this category, they will be specified in the contract and its annexes. This depends on the cost limits indicated in par. 6 “Procedural methods”.

- **Indirect costs (administration, fixed expenses)**

Indirect costs are expenditure incurred by the lead applicant or applicant's and Co-

applicants' premises for managing the project after signing the contract (management and administration, equipment jointly used by various offices, rent, and utilities). These costs do not have to be reported, but their value must not exceed 10% of the total costs actually incurred for the project (in the categories HU, TFL, etc.) and approved in the reporting. Within the same project proposal, different percentages can be indicated for each Stream, ensuring that each partial percentage is 10% or lower.

Further supporting documentation

OIT reserves the right to randomly request further supporting documents, including but not limited to proof of payment of social security charges, bank statements, internal policies, calculations of hourly costs, curricula of human resources, attendance lists, activity reports, copies of communication materials.

6. Procedural methods

The Grant beneficiaries (lead applicant or applicant and co-applicant) must follow the procedures for buying goods, services and work established in the contract. As to what generally concerns the cost categories "Travel, Food and Accommodation", "External Services/Consultants" and "Purchase of material", if the unit cost is 1,000 EUR or higher, at least 3 valid quotations shall be requested. These must be made out to the consortium member submitting the request, which will select the best quotation and specify its evaluation criteria in a comparative chart. A single quotation is required for amounts ranging from 500 to 999,99 Euros.

7. Eligibility of costs

Costs related to the project implementation are eligible if they are:

- Actually incurred.
- Clearly indicated in the approved budget.
- Necessary for the implementation of the approved project and clearly connected to project activities and the achievement of goals.
- Chronologically pertaining to the project implementation period (from the start date to the end date of the project).
- Reasonable, justified, and in compliance with the requirements of sound financial management (economy and efficiency).
- Incurred by consortium members (Lead applicant and Co-applicant(s)) mentioned in the approved project attached to the contract. No funding to third parties is permitted.
- In line with the requirements of the fiscal law in the implementation country(ies).
- Travel expenses: transport, food and accommodation only concerning participants in the approved project initiatives.
- VAT: The value added tax may only be included if it represents a cost for the Lead applicant or Co-applicant(s) and is totally or partially non-deductible.
- Bank fees for bank transfers related to the project.

- Reimbursement of volunteers' documented expenses up to max. 10 EUR per day and 150 EUR per month.

The following costs related to the project implementation **are not eligible**:

- Costs related to real estate refurbishment not exclusively pertaining to the project
- Financial contributions (e.g. for funding other projects or setting up companies or other organisations).
- Costs for the creation of the organisation's new websites.
- Financial costs, bank fees not exclusively pertaining to the project, agency fees, amortisation, contract registration fees, taxes, leasing.
- Food vouchers, donations and monetary prizes, and more generally, all expenses not supported by a payment receipt.
- Invoices between consortium partners.
- General expenditure (e.g. office rent, utilities, stationery, condominium, etc.) other than those included in indirect costs (max. 10% of direct costs).
- Any costs not implying a monetary disbursement (e.g. valorisation of goods and services and of voluntary work, buildings provided for project activities).
- Costs for the purchase and/or construction of real estate infrastructure.
- Lump or self-certified sums, not proved by clearly readable and fiscally valid invoices or similar documents.
- Lump sum reimbursements to volunteers pursuant to Art. 17 par. 4 of the Third Sector Code
- Travel costs (transport, food and accommodation) of persons not involved in project initiatives.
- Costs reported and reimbursed in other project initiatives and/or to other funders.
- Costs incurred prior to the formal start of the project or after its closing date.
- Costs incurred by entities other than the approved consortium members including entities associated to the project partners.
- Planning costs of the submitted proposal.
- Cash expenditure of 500 EUR or higher.
- Fines or refund of damages caused by staff members.
- Penalties for wrong calculation, late payment or non-payment of taxes.
- Costs pertaining to categories not envisaged in the approved budget and/or not consistent with the project.

8. Amendments and extension

If the need arises to amend the initiative, the lead applicant may choose between two different methods depending on the type of changes required.

a) Unilateral amendments, not subject to prior request and authorisation, in case of:

- Adjustments to the financial plan of the project which involve expenditure items

within the same category (1. Human Resources, 2. Travel, Food and Accommodation, 3. External Services/Consultants, 4. Purchase of material), whereby the total value of the category is unchanged.

- Amendments implying cost adjustments between categories not exceeding 15% (fifteen per cent) of the amount originally planned for each category. As a result, any cost increase in a category shall not exceed 15% of its originally planned value and shall result from residual amounts in other categories whose value will be reduced by no more than 15% of its originally planned value.

These changes must in any case be indicated in the periodic reports (intermediate/final report).

b) Amendments to be submitted to OIT, OII and FGB for approval:

- Changes implying cost adjustments exceeding 15% (fifteen per cent) of the amount originally planned for each category. In this case, the lead applicant shall submit a duly justified variation request containing details of the time and mode of the initiative's implementation. This request must be submitted to OIT no later than 30 (thirty) days before the deadline for the initiative's completion. OIT, OII and FGB shall examine the amendment request and communicate the results to the lead applicant. The budget amendment request must necessarily be made ex-ante and only becomes effective once the positive decision has been communicated by OIT, OII and FGB.
- Requests to extend the project duration. The lead applicant may possibly consider extending the project duration up to a maximum of 1 month. The duly justified request for a non-costly extension (i.e. without any additional contribution) must be submitted to OIT, OII and FGB no later than 30 (thirty) days before the end of the project. Please note: No request to extend the project duration can be accepted for project proposals submitted at the third and last deadline.

In these cases, specific needs to amend the project or the budget may be discussed with the reference persons of OIT, OII, FGB, who will provide the lead applicant with the most appropriate tools for submitting the adjustment requests. Amendments of a technical nature concerning the duration and implementation of activities, the number and type of partners involved, the locations, and the envisaged beneficiaries must always be formally approved by OIT, OII and FGB.

General rule:

- Changes must be non-costly (in no case a higher grant than that established in the contract is envisaged) and the objectives and aims of the project must remain unchanged.

- In no case may amendments modify the maximum possible percentages for the specified categories (e.g. 80% Human Resources, 5% building refurbishment, 10% indirect costs), as set out in the call for proposals.

9. Grant revocation

In the cases envisaged in the contract, OIT reserves the right to revoke the awarded grant, not to disburse the approved amounts, or to request the return of any sums previously paid. The awarded contribution may be reduced in the following cases: ineligibility of the reported expenses, failure to implement specific project components, failure to submit the technical check documentation, and only partial achievement of the intended results and objectives.

The awarded contribution may be totally revoked in the following cases: failure to start the activities, major non-conformity between the approved project and its implementation, serious non-fulfilment by the Lead applicant or the Co-applicant(s).

If the Lead applicant or Co-applicant(s) are unable to progress in the implementation of the activities, the lead applicant shall immediately notify OIT, OII and FGB. Together they will discuss the possible options including the possibility of suspending the project, in which case all unspent sums must be returned to OIT.

10. Confidentiality and privacy

OIT, OII, FGB, and the Lead applicant

undertake to govern the handling of information related to the project. The parties are committed to confidentiality of data, documents, or other material (in any form) identified in writing as sensitive ("sensitive information") during the implementation of the project and up to 6 years thereafter. The lead applicant shall not use confidential information for any other purposes than those established in the contract, except as otherwise freely stipulated by the parties.

The processing of data provided by the lead applicant, its purposes and methods, the data controller, and the data processor are governed by the Call for Proposals in compliance with the applicable legislation.

11. Compliance with the Code of Ethics, prevention and notification of conflicts of interest

11.1 Conflicts of interest

All Grant Beneficiaries shall be guided by principles of impartiality, transparency, and the prevention of conflicts of interest deriving from economic, political, family, or sentimental interests or from any other relevant connection or common interest whereby the private interest is likely to influence the impartial and objective execution of the initiative. They will

take all necessary measures to prevent or cease any situation that may compromise the impartiality of the contract.

If any situation arises during the implementation of activities that may lead to a conflict of interest, OIT must be notified in writing. The Lead applicant must take all necessary measures to resolve such conflicts.

OIT reserves the right to verify if the adopted measures are appropriate and to request further determined action.

If any violation is ascertained, OIT can reduce or cancel the grant in accordance with the stipulated contract.

11.2 Code of Ethics

The action must be implemented in accordance with the highest ethical standards and with the applicable EU, international, and national legislation on ethical principles. The grant beneficiaries must commit to guaranteeing compliance with the EU core values such as the respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights including those of minority groups.

If the Grant Beneficiaries do not have a Code of Ethics of their own, they will be requested to sign and endorse Oxfam's **Code of Ethics and Conduct** which will remain in force until the conclusion of the grant contract.

12. Visibility, dissemination, and information

12.1 Visibility

The Lead applicant shall take all necessary measures to guarantee the visibility of the activities, beneficiaries, and results of the initiative, except for cases where the specific contract conditions include OIT's derogation clauses concerning security and protection of the project staff, beneficiaries, and assets. The lead applicant will ensure a clear reference to the European Union funding also by means of its logo and according to the instructions and templates contained in the *Visibility and Communication Guidelines* attached to the contract. More specifically, project-related communication activities (including media relations, conferences, seminars, information material such as brochures, leaflets, posters, presentations, etc.), dissemination activities and any infrastructure, equipment, vehicles, supplies, or major outcomes funded with the grant must mention the EU support and display the EU logo and the funding statement.

The information, communications, and publications issued in connection with the project, in whatever form and medium used including the Internet, shall contain an additional disclaimer where the Lead applicant explicitly states that the views expressed will not reflect the EU's official position, and that the EU is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained in the communications and publications.

The lead applicant will report on these activities in the final report. Further instructions will

be provided in the Guidelines attached to the contract.

12.2 Communication of events and circumstances affecting the action

The grant beneficiaries shall immediately inform OIT, OII and FGB if any of the following events occur:

- Events that may influence or delay the implementation of the action, e.g. changes in their legal, financial, technical, organisational, or property situation, including any of the exclusion criteria contained in the Checklist)
- Circumstances that may influence:
 - The decision to award the grant
 - the fulfilment of the requirements established in the contract

If the Grant beneficiaries violate any of the obligations contained in this article, the grant may be reduced or revoked.