

CALL FOR MICROGRANTS TO ADVANCE EMERGING ORGANISATIONS

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The Operator of the Active Citizens Fund – Regional Programme (ACF Regional, ACFR), *i.e.* the consortium made up of the Foundation in Support for Local Democracy (leader), the Education for Democracy Foundation, and the Information Society Development Foundation, issues this call for microgrants to advance emerging organisations. The Active Citizens Fund – Regional Programme is funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Grants and Norway Grants.

The legal framework for the Programme is provided by:

- Protocol 38C of the EEA Enlargement Agreement on the EEA Financial Mechanism (2014–2021),
- Agreement between the Kingdom of Norway and the European Union on the Norwegian Financial Mechanism (2014–2021),
- Memorandum of Understanding on the Implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014–2021 between Iceland, the Principality of Liechtenstein, the Kingdom of Norway and the Republic of Poland,
- Memorandum of Understanding on the Implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014–2021 between the Kingdom of Norway and the Republic of Poland,
- Programme Implementation Agreement on the implementation of the Active Citizens Fund – Regional Programme in Poland financed from the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014–2021 and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014–2021 between the Financial Mechanism Office affiliated with the European Free Trade Association and the Foundation in Support of Local Democracy,
- Manual for Fund Operators of the Active Citizens Fund.

The total allocation earmarked for this call is EUR 360,000 and comes from Norway Grants.

The entire call envelope will support actions related to Outcome 4: Supporting the development of civic sector.

All grant applications should contribute to achieving the [planned Programme outcomes](#) in Outcome 4 and allow reporting upon one (or more) indicators of the outcome..

The Programme supports microgrant-funded actions implemented across Poland. However:

- activities aimed directly at external project beneficiaries cannot take place in the city of Warsaw,
- and the external project beneficiaries cannot be based in Warsaw.¹

NOTE: Applicants can be based in Warsaw and can take mandatory Actions 1 and 2 (contributing directly to advancing their organisation) in Warsaw.

The total allocation for the call for microgrants covers all Poland, and is not divided by region.

The Programme seeks to promote sustainable support for implementing actions across all Polish regions, enhance the chances of smaller (local and regional) organisations for receiving a microgrant, and support key Programme actions by ensuring that individual regions are represented as proportionally as possible in the application evaluation process.

Final funding decisions of the Selection Committee and the Executive Board depend among others on the score awarded by experts and the general principle of proportionally for distributing funds across regions.

The prerequisite condition to obtain the grant is receiving from evaluating experts a score equal to or exceeding 50% of the total possible score. Nonetheless, not all proposals awarded a score above this threshold will receive funding.

There is one type of microgrant available:

- minimum grant amount: EUR 10,000
- maximum grant amount: EUR 12,000
- implementation period: 6 to 8 months,
- co-financing: optional,
- for organisations registered not earlier than on 28 February 2020 and not later than on 28 February 2023 (a day before call announcement) whose objectives (as listed in their founding documents) are aligned with at least one of the four outcomes (support areas) of the ACF–Regional Programme (Increased support for human rights, Empowerment of vulnerable groups, Strengthened democratic culture and civic awareness, and Support for civic sector development);
- for organisations who have never been awarded an ACF-Regional or ACF-National grant.²

Each proposal must contain **four mandatory actions**, i.e.

1. actions aligned with a given organisation's **resource development and management plans**,
2. actions aligned with an **organisation's communication and image building plans**,

¹ This exception applies to activities aimed at external beneficiaries, i.e. two of the four mandatory actions (i.e. Actions 3 and 4).

² By "receive a grant" we mean "sign a grant agreement with the ACF-Regional Operator or the ACF-National Operator".

3. **two actions aimed at external beneficiaries**, aligned with at least one Programme support area.

Applications will only be accepted via the Electronic Grant Application and Management System (EGAMS), available at: <https://generator.aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/>.

Application timeline:

- from 12.00 (noon) CET on 1 March 2023 to 12.00 (noon) CET on 8 May 2023.

Announcement of call results:

- administrative and eligibility evaluation: by 19 May 2023,
- content-related evaluation: by 20 July 2023.

ABOUT THE ACTIVE CITIZENS FUND – REGIONAL PROGRAMME

Active Citizens Fund – Regional is a programme funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway (hereinafter referred to as ‘Donor States’) under the European Economic Area Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism (so-called ‘EEA Funds’ and ‘Norway Grants’) open to 15 EU Member States in Central and Southern Europe.

EEA Funds and Norway Grants have allocated funding for civil society organisations. EUR 59,2 mln has been set aside for supporting civil society organisations in Poland. This amount has been broken down into two parts: EUR 33,2 mln for the Active Citizens Fund – National Programme³ and EUR 26 mln for the Active Citizens Fund – Regional Programme.

The Fund aims to strengthen civil society, promote active citizenship and empower vulnerable groups at risk of exclusion.

Furthermore, the Programme seeks to develop bilateral relations between civil society and entities based in Poland and Donor States, and to promote regional exchange and networking, with particular emphasis on sharing knowledge and good practices in strengthening civil society.

The Programme supports actions conducted by organisations based across Poland, **however, project activities cannot take place in the city of Warsaw**. In particular, the Programme seeks to fund actions taken by less experienced organisations operating outside of large agglomerations and in areas with limited access to aid programmes or infrastructural support, as well as organisations which target groups exposed to discrimination and exclusion.

The Programme shall be based on the common values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. The Programme shall follow the principles of good governance; it shall be

³ Active Citizens Fund – National Programme is being carried out by a consortium made up of the Stefan Batory Foundation (leader), the Shipyard Foundation, and the Academy of Civic Organizations Foundation (for more, go to: <https://aktywniobywatele.org.pl/>).

participatory and inclusive, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient. There will be zero-tolerance towards corruption. The Programme will be consistent with sustainable development, long-term economic growth, social cohesion and environmental protection. The Programme will follow a results and risk management approach.

WHAT ARE MICROGRANTS FOR EMERGING ORGANISATIONS?

Microgrants are funds awarded to less experienced organisations for on-going activities connected with team building and work organisation, recognisability, and cooperating within local communities. The objective behind this call is to provide optimal conditions for the development and proper functioning of emerging organisations and entities which have yet to adopt internal rules and procedures, agree on workplace culture, and find ways to effectively reach out to the recipients of their activities.

AREAS OF SUPPORT IN THE CALL FOR MICROGRANTS FOR EMERGING ORGANISATIONS

All initiatives financed from microgrants for emerging organisations should contribute to achieving Area 4 outcomes, that is they should foster the development of the social sector.

Area 4. Support for social sector development.

Area 4 actions ought to aid organisations in:

- clearly defining their mission (what they intend to change by taking grant-funded actions, how they intend to implement change, and how their actions differ from those of other organisations) in response to diagnosed needs of specific beneficiary groups, development plans of local governments or specific sectors (e.g. social services, education, etc.);
- fulfilling their mission in a flexible way which allows for adjusting to evolving conditions, basing their mission on an ongoing reflection about long-term goals which exceeds the timelines of individual projects;
- diversifying their budgets, i.e. reducing dependence on a single source of financing/a single funder to the highest degree possible; decreasing the share of citizen donations in the overall budget so as to ensure that the organisation has the resources for ensuring stable operations, as well as independent formulation of goals and the methods of their achievement;
- implementing effective fundraising strategies – increasing financial independence by pursuing business activity, for-profit public benefit activity and establishing non-profit Polish limited liability companies (sp. z o.o.);
- improving management by effectively using digital tools for project implementation, team work, and communications with beneficiaries;

- enhancing partnerships and cooperation networks which bring together other organisations, informal groups, as well as public institutions and business;
- offering staff and volunteers stable and attractive work conditions, along with opportunities for continuous competence improvement, boosting their motivation to become involved in a given organisation's mission by giving them a say about the organisation's future development;
- ensuring transparency; strengthening the efficiency of advocacy measures that help others understand the benefits ushered in by a given organisation's activity and the role it plays in advancing civil society;
- communicating effectively to spread information about its actions, reach selected beneficiary groups, and successfully satisfy their needs.

Under this call, microgrants for emerging organisations will be awarded only to entities whose founding documents list activities aligned with at least one of the ACF-Regional outcomes. Microgrant-funded mandatory actions aimed at external beneficiaries must also be congruent with at least one of the four support areas discussed herein.

Area 1. Increased support for human rights.

In Area 1 – actions aiming to:

- raise awareness about human rights and equal treatment;
- counteract and prevent human right violations and all other forms of discrimination;
- provide support to those suffering from human right violations and/or discrimination.

Area 2. Vulnerable groups empowered.

In Area 2 – actions aiming to:

- raise awareness about the needs of minority group members and those at risk of social exclusion;
- raise awareness of social inequalities;
- accelerate social integration;
- empower minority group members and people at risk of social exclusion.

NOTE: In the context of implementing the general objectives of Area 2, using microgrants to provide basic social services, such as payments of cash benefits, is excluded. Other forms of material assistance may be financed from the Program funds only in a very strong and justified connection with activities related to raising public awareness, advocacy, empowerment or reform initiatives. All activities aimed at counteracting exclusion should focus not only on direct support of vulnerable groups / individuals, but also on integration processes with the participation of the

entire community, i.e. building visibility, acceptance and participation in social life. Moreover, it is paramount to take initiatives and include persons and organisations who represent groups exposed to discrimination and exclusion to empower these groups and individuals.

Area 3. Strengthened democratic culture and civic awareness.

In Area 3 – actions aiming to:

- show how non-governmental organisations impact the development of local communities and democratic culture;
- strengthen and build trust towards civil society;
- increase the significance of citizenship education;
- expand cooperation and partnerships at local level;
- enhance critical thinking skills;
- strengthen watchdogs;
- disseminate knowledge on climate change;
- facilitate advocacy for social causes.

For a detailed discussion of the support areas, visit the Programme website and go to tab <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/mikrogranty> (*Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of Active Citizens – Regional Fund. Call for microgrants to advance emerging organisations*, i.e. Attachment 1 to call announcement). The ACFR results framework is described in Attachment 12 at <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/rezultaty/>.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants, *i.e.* entities who intend to submit applications, must meet the following criteria:

- they are registered with the National Court Register (KRS), entered into the register of ordinary associations or the register of Rural Housewives Circles maintained by the President of the Agency for Restructuring and Modernisation of Agriculture (ARiMR);
- they have **not been registered before 28 February 2020 or after 28 February 2023**;
- **the objectives stated in their founding documents are aligned with at least one ACF-Regional support area** (Increased support for human rights, Vulnerable groups are empowered; Strengthened democratic culture and civic awareness; Support for social sector development);
- **they have not received any grant under calls organised by the Active Citizens Fund – Regional Programme or the Active Citizens Fund – National Programme**;
- they are capable of presenting their financial statements prior to signing the grant contract or, if they are not required to draft financial statements, a comprehensive summary of revenue and expenditure for the last reporting year. Applicants registered in H2 2022 or in 2023 whose financial years ends after this call's application deadline are required to

submit a declaration concerning the revenue and expenditure they generated between the registration date and the date of submitting their application;

- they are independent⁴ of local, regional and central authorities, public entities, political parties and for-profit entities;
- they do not seek to generate profit, and – if they pursue business activity – any profit made is allocated to the objects and aims listed in their memorandum of association;
- they act for the common good, not only to the benefit of its members;⁵
- they act for the public interest, are driven by democratic values, and respect human rights;
- no application for declaring bankruptcy has been filed against the Applicant, the Applicant is not in liquidation or receivership, has not suspended activity and there are no similar proceedings pending against the Applicant;
- they are not in arrears with public-law payments payable to the Tax Office (US) or Social Insurance Institution (ZUS);
- no governing body member has been convicted of an intentional crime prosecuted by public indictment or a tax offence;
- they declare willingness to sign a grant contract, along with a blank promissory note with a declaration;
- if they work with children and/or families and/or minor volunteers, they shall implement a child safeguarding policy within three months from signing the grant contract (if they have no such policy in force).

Applicants can have the following legal form:

- **associations, including ordinary associations**, acting as associations pursuant to the Associations Law Act of 7 April 1989 (references to Polish Journal of Laws: Dz. U. z 2020, poz. 2261, as amended). Before signing the grant contract, ordinary associations will be asked to present:

⁴ An entity is defined as dependent when local, regional or central authorities, public entities, political parties and/or for-profit entities have the direct or indirect right to appoint at least half of that entity's governing or supervisory body. If public authorities or a public entity (e.g. theatre or university) or a for-profit entity (e.g. bank or company) enjoy the right to determine at least half of the composition of the given entity's governing or supervisory body, then that entity is considered to be dependent on said institutions, which precludes that entity from standing as applicant for a grant. If an entity associates only public authorities, public and/or for-profit entities, such an entity is dependent on those public and for-profit entities, which precludes that entity from standing as applicant for a grant. If most members of a given entity represent public authorities, public and/or for-profit entities, this means that those representatives have the casting vote on the composition of that entity's governing and/or supervisory bodies. If an entity is identified as dependent on such entities, it cannot apply for a grant.

⁵ Grants are not available for professional associations who aim solely to support and protect the interests of its members. Entities whose activity is limited to supporting only one entity, e.g. a specific school, university, theatre, are not eligible for grants.

- a written consent/resolution of all members to enter into the grant contract,
- a power of attorney for the association's management board / representatives to sign the grant contract on behalf of the association;
- **foundations**, acting under the Act on Foundations of 6 April 1984 (references to the Polish Journal of Laws: Dz. U. z 2020 r. poz. 2167, as amended); foundations with a single-member management board and no supervisory body are not eligible for a grant;
- **unions of associations**, acting under the Associations Law Act of 7 April 1989 (references to the Polish Journal of Laws: Dz. U. z 2020, poz. 2261).
- **social cooperatives**; a social cooperative is eligible for grants if it is composed only of natural persons and/or non-governmental organisations and/or church legal persons⁶ as defined in the Social Cooperatives Act of 27 April 2006 (references to the Polish Journal of Laws: Dz. U. z 2020, poz. 2085).
- **non-profit companies** (Polish joint stock and limited liability companies who do not seek profit, who allocate any and all of their profit to the implementation of the objectives listed in their memorandum of association, and who do not distribute profit between their shareholders and employees. These conditions must be specified in the company's founding documents: memorandum or articles of association. Moreover:
 - a company is eligible for a grant if its shareholders are only the following entities (one or more): associations, unions of associations, foundations, social cooperatives, rural housewives circles, faith-based organisations, which belong to the group of entities eligible for a grant,
 - companies with only one organisation as its shareholder, and with a single-person management board, are not eligible for a grant;
- **rural housewives circles** established under the Rural Housewives Circles Act of 9 November 2018 (references to the Polish Journal of Laws: Dz. U. z 2020 r. poz. 553, 932), acting as associations under the Associations Law Act of 7 April 1989 (references to the Polish Journal of Laws: Dz. U. z 2020, poz. 2261) or acting as independent agricultural cooperatives based on the Act of 8 October 1982 on Socio-occupational Organisations of Farmers (references to the Polish Journal of Laws: Dz. U. z 2019, poz. 491); the grant cannot exceed the amount determined by the circle members as the highest liability amount which their entity can incur;
- **faith-based organisations**, if they meet the principles identified above and if the funded activities do not directly or indirectly promote a religious doctrine, mission or proselytism related to the beliefs of a particular faith (beyond basic religious/cultural awareness raising), on condition that:
 - the objectives listed in their memorandums of association include public benefit activity,

⁶ Social cooperatives combined of church legal persons must meet the same criteria as the faith-based organizations applying for funding.

- they are registered with the National Court Register (KRS);
- they may incur liabilities on their own behalf.

The actions presented in the application must be compliant with the memorandum of association, bylaws and other documents detailing the mission, aims and methods of the Applicant. The Applicant's activity described in the application cannot consist in religious practices or leading a religious cult (including proselytising and spreading faith), political party activity or election campaigns. Moreover, a grant cannot be allocated for business or for-profit activity. A grant cannot be used to implement actions involving the collection of any fees from participants, e.g. applicants may not charge a fee for tickets to any events financed from a microgrant or sell grant-funded publications.

NOTE: Please check if the Applicant actually meets the above criteria. We do not require documentation confirming the above declarations upon application submission. While evaluating the applications, we will rely on the Applicant's declarations. Once a grant is awarded, the Applicant will be requested to present documents confirming the declarations made. The detailed list of required documents can be found in *Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of Active Citizens – Regional Fund. Call for microgrants to advance emerging organisations* (Chapter 9.1.1). If the Applicant fails to produce such proof or if it is revealed that the Applicant made false statements in the application, it will not be possible to sign the grant contract or the signed grant contract will be terminated.

CO-FINANCING

Project Promoters (successful Applicants) are not required to provide co-financing.

However, if the Applicant declares co-financing, then it can be made as a contribution in kind (only in the form of voluntary work) or a financial contribution – irrespective of the grant amount.

NOTE: The project grant rate applies equally to all expenditure. It means that any co-financing should be specified proportionally for all budget lines.

TIMELINE FOR MICROGRANT USE

The implementation timeline for microgrant use must fall within 6 and 8 months.

Grants may be used no earlier than 01 August 2023 and all activities funded under this call must start by 01 October 2023 at the latest. Signing a grant contract and submitting a guaranteed blank promissory note is prerequisite to cost eligibility.

In exceptional and well-justified cases it is possible to extend or alter the implementation period within the Programme timeline after microgrant implementation has started. Such an extension requires the consent of the Operator and the signing of an annex to the grant contract.

All grant-funded activity must be completed by 31 March 2024.

LIMITS ON APPLICATION AND GRANT NUMBER

A single eligible organisation may submit only one (1) application in the call for microgrants launched by ACF-Regional.

Only entities who **had not received any grant from ACF-Regional or ACF-National** by the deadline for application submissions are eligible applicants.

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS AND APPLICATION EVALUATION TIMELINE

Applications can be submitted **from 12.00 (noon) CET on 1 March 2023 to 12.00 (noon) CET on 8 May 2023.**

Applications will only be accepted via the Electronic Grant Application and Management System (EGAMS), available at: <https://generator.aktyniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl>.

Applicants are required to attach to applications submitted via the EGAMS the Communication Plan (in PDF, RTF, MS Word or Open Office format). A CP template is available in Attachment 3 (also on the Programme website: <https://aktyniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/mikrogranty>). More information on CP-related requirements is available in the *Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters. Call for microgrants to advance emerging organisations* (Chapter 7.1).

Instructions for Use are available in the EGAMS (also on the Programme website <https://aktyniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/mikrogranty/>, Attachment 4).

Applications submitted without using the EGAMS will not be examined.

Deadline for announcing the results: **20 July 2023.**

The Operator will post a list of all successful applications on the Programme webpage. Applicants will also be notified by e-mail when evaluation results are published (to the e-mail address linked with their Generator account) and will have access to their evaluation cards via the Generator.

Application forms, together with instructions for their completion, are available on the Programme website at: <https://aktyniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/mikrogranty/> (Attachment 2).

COST ELIGIBILITY

Eligible costs

Eligible expenditures of projects are those actually incurred by the project promoter which meet the following criteria:

- they are incurred between the first and final dates of grant eligibility as specified in the project contract;
- they are directly connected with the subject of the grant contract and they are indicated in the detailed budget;
- they are proportionate and necessary for the implementation of the grant;
- they are used for the sole purpose of achieving the objective of the grant 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).

The project promoter's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the expenditures and revenue declared in respect of the project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

Please bear in mind that entering a cost into the budget presented in the grant application is not sufficient to recognise that cost as an eligible cost. In the course of grant implementation, budgeted and anticipated costs must be verified in terms of their principles of economy (minimising the cost of resources used or required), efficiency (the relationship between the output from goods or services and the resources to produce them), and effectiveness (the relationship between the intended and actual results of spending).

Excluded costs

The following costs shall not be considered eligible:

- interest on debt, debt service charges and late payment charges;
- charges for financial transactions and other purely financial costs, except grant implementation costs related to bank accounts;
- 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;
- costs of litigation, except where litigation is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the grant; and

- fines and penalties,
- excessive or reckless expenditure.

Excluded costs also include costs of such barred actions as:

- transferring monies or in-kind benefits to natural or legal persons (except for in-kind prizes and gifts, incl. gift vouchers and cards for the purchase of such in-kind prizes and gifts, whose value does not exceed PLN 200 per person),
- regrating, i.e. disbursing funds to third parties under a separate grant procedure,
- actions consisting in financing religious practices or religious cults (including proselytising and spreading faith), political party activity and election campaigns,
- actions pursued as part of business activity or for-profit public benefit activity.

DIRECT COSTS

Direct costs encompass all eligible costs incurred as a result of implementing the actions listed in the application, incl. costs of communications (if applicable).

ATTENTION: In total, the share of planned costs of personnel who will implement (coordinate) tasks, as well as costs of supplies and equipment purchase, office refurbishment, office space rental and office supplies may, in principle, not exceed 40% of the overall requested grant amount. Should these costs exceed the 40% cap, the budget score during the content-related assessment will be decreased by three (3) points (see below).

Direct costs subject to the above 40% limit:

a) **Grant coordinator (accountant) costs**, i.e. wages of natural persons assigned to the project and employed pursuant to the Polish Labour Code or under civil-law contracts pursuant to the Polish Civil Code, on condition that these costs comply with the remuneration rules and rates applied by the Applicant. Personnel costs include i.e. the social and health insurance contributions paid by the employer, Labour Fund contributions, advance payments towards tax and, if applicable, payments towards the Guaranteed Employment Benefit Fund (FGŚP) and Employee Capital Plans (PPK).

NOTE: Under this cost item, please remember to define contract type (contract of employment or mandate) and specify weekly working times or number of working hours. Such information will streamline checking whether the planned compensation complies with the statutory minimal wage for part-time staff.

b) **Costs of real property renovation – up to 40% of eligible direct costs;**

Renovation costs cannot exceed 40% of the budget. Any costs above the 40% threshold will not be considered eligible costs.

c) **Costs of purchased tangible and intangible assets** must be categorised in line with the following rules:

- depreciation write-offs and write-downs on fixed assets/intangible assets can be categorised as direct costs, in whole or in part, proportionately to the usage of those assets for project implementation during grant duration;
- depreciation value for different groups of tangible and intangible assets is subject to the rates presented in Appendix 1 to the Corporate Income Tax Act of 15 February 1992;
- direct costs may include all costs of purchasing tangible and/or intangible assets, if such assets are deemed by the FO to be an integral element of the grant, and to be indispensable to project implementation and are of vital significance to achieving the planned outcomes (must be purchased at an initial grant stage), will be insured (applies to fixed assets listed in the grant contract), and will be used throughout grant duration and for five years⁷ after the date of grant completion, and will not be used to conduct business activity, and will not be sold for profit; such costs can be categorised as eligible costs if a given tangible or intangible asset is specified in the grant contract.

d) **Costs of office space maintenance or rental, costs of office supplies and equipment** – only those office operating costs which are directly linked with grant implementation.

Direct costs which are not subject to the above 40% limit:

a) **Costs of personnel who perform substantive tasks** (e.g. hold workshops or render graphic design services) – individuals hired in compliance with the Polish Labour Code to perform one-off short-term tasks in the grant. Personnel costs include i.e. the social and health insurance contributions paid by the employer, Labour Fund contributions, advance payments towards tax and, if applicable, payments towards the Guaranteed Employment Benefit Fund (FGŚP) and Employee Capital Plans (PPK).

b) **Costs of project-related trips and daily allowances for personnel and volunteers** involved in grant implementation, provided that they comply with the Regulation of the Minister of Labour and Social Policy of 29 January 2013 on Business Trip Allowance Amounts and Calculation for Employees of State and Local Government Budget Units, arise from signed agreements and/or adhere to the internal regulations of the Project Promoter as defined in its accounting policy, payroll regulations, employment contracts or other internal documents, and are not higher than those specified in the above Regulation; it is standard practice to travel second class or economy.

Costs of travel, accommodation, and catering incurred by participants, contractors and trainers in connection with grant-related training sessions, workshops, and other events fall within the category of 'costs of purchasing materials, goods, and services, incl. subcontracting.'

c) **Costs of purchasing materials, goods, and services, incl. subcontracting**

This category comprises mainly purchases of any materials (e.g. materials for the participants of events funded from the grant), small equipment (which is not classed as fixed assets), as well as purchases of services indispensable to performing a planned action (rental of event space,

⁷ After the grant implementation / cost eligibility period lapses, project promoters shall cover insurance costs from sources other than the awarded grant.

catering, participant accommodation and travel, workshop hosting), save for costs of action coordination. Irrespective of the legal status of the natural person, coordination costs are eligible only up to the 40% limit (above).

This category also encompasses outsourced services (based on a contract) to individuals, companies or other entities, for the purpose of performing a part of a grant-funded action;

d) Costs arising directly from grant implementation requirements.

Action implementation gives rise to costs which the Applicants must bear: creating a new social media profile or a project website/subpage to inform about the implementation of grant-funded actions, travel costs, incl. costs of travel to events organised by the Operator as defined in Chapter 10 of the Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters, and – if applicable – costs of opening a separate bank account/sub account or grant-related bank operations. These costs can be carried in the budget.

INDIRECT COSTS

Under this call, it is not possible to allocate part of your budget to the separate category of indirect costs.

PROCUREMENT PROCEDURE

When purchasing goods or services whose value exceeds EUR 5,000 (approx. PLN 21,500), the Project Promoter must collect at least three offers (market research). The Project Promoter must select the best offer in terms of value for money or lowest price. The selection procedure must be documented. These principles aim to guarantee transparency, equal treatment, and fair competition.

Offers collected for market research purposes must be made for goods or services whose parameters are similar to those specified in the application. Offers may be collected in different forms, e.g. published price lists or replies to price inquiries. Collected offers do not have to be binding as defined in the Polish Civil Code. The Project Promoter must store documents confirming the collection of at least three offers together with grant-related financial documentation.

Collecting offers is not required for: costs connected with hiring personnel, purchasing municipal services, fuels, electricity, and costs capped by valid legal regulations, e.g. daily allowances, lump-sum allowances for transportation services, accommodation).

PROCEDURE OF APPLICATION EVALUATION

Applications will be subjected to the administrative, eligibility and content-related evaluation.

Administrative and eligibility evaluation of applications

When evaluating administrative compliance and eligibility of applications, we check whether the Applicant:

- is an entity eligible for a grant, incl. whether the Applicant's name and registry/identification number complies with the numbers actually entered into the relevant registers, we also check whether the date of Applicant registration does not fall before 28 February 2020 or later than 28 February 2023, as well as whether the Applicant's activity – as stated in its founding documents – is aligned with at least one of the four ACF-Regional outcomes (Increased support for human rights, Vulnerable groups empowered; Strengthened democratic culture and civic awareness; Support for social sector development);
- did not submit more applications than the call for microgrants to advance emerging organisations permits;
- had not received any ACF-Regional or ACF-National grant by the deadline for application submissions in this call;
- enclosed a communication plan in the correct format. We also check whether the file opens and is not empty;
- has applied for a grant whose amount is within the limits specified for this call;
- completed all form fields correctly.

Applicant eligibility will be determined based on the declarations enclosed to the application. A template of the administrative and eligibility evaluation sheet is available in Attachment 5 on the Programme website: <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/mikrogranty/>.

If the Applicant makes one of the following errors when completing the form:

- incorrect data is entered into application fields A1 to A19,
- the communication plan is an empty file,
- the format of the attached file is correct, but the file won't open,

the Applicant may introduce corrections the Application within 3 (three) working days from receiving the Operator's e-mail notification about an error. Failure to correct such errors results in application rejection.

Applications which fail to fulfil at least one of the above-listed administrative and eligibility criteria, including any additional time granted to correct minor errors, will not be accepted for administrative and eligibility evaluation.

Appeals against administrative and eligibility evaluation results

The Operator will notify Applicants via e-mail if their applications are rejected on administrative and eligibility grounds. After receiving the Operator's notification about application rejection, the

Applicant may appeal the decision within 5 (five) working days from notification dispatch. The Applicant may lodge an appeal via e-mail (scan of signed document) using the dedicated address: odwolania.aofr@frdl.org.pl. Please enter the word “appeal” and the number of your application as the subject of your e-mail. Appeals delivered upon the lapse of the three-day period will not be examined. The Operator will examine appeals against rejection decisions within 10 working days from appeal receipt. Decisions on accepting or rejecting appeals against administrative and eligibility evaluation results are taken by the Programme Director after consulting with the Operator’s team for administrative and eligibility evaluation. Once the administrative and eligibility evaluation is complete, we will publish lists of all applications accepted for content-related evaluation.

Content-related evaluation of applications

The process of content-related evaluation involves:

- independent experts,
- the Selection Committee composed of two representatives of the Operator and three independent experts,
- the Executive Board composed of presidents of consortium organisations.

The content-related evaluation consists in:

- independent experts evaluating each application, and then discussing evaluation results at a meeting of experts who assessed applications,
- an analysis and discussion of the Selection Committee on the ranking lists created on the basis of independent expert evaluations, followed by formulating lists of recommended applications for the Executive Board,
- an analysis and discussion on the Selection Committee's recommendations, followed by the Executive Board’s approval of the lists of funded applications.

Ranking lists will be based on the average score awarded by the experts, provided that both evaluating experts consider a given application congruent with Programme objectives and the assumptions of at least one support area, and they both find that the application contains mandatory actions. If one expert assesses an application as non-compliant with Programme goals and the assumptions of at least one support area or determines that an application does not contain all mandatory actions, but the other expert adopts a contrary opinion that the given application fulfils these criteria, or if the difference in expert opinions exceeds 30% of the higher score and, at the same time, at least one score exceeds 50% of the maximum score, the application will be subjected to additional evaluation by a third expert. In such cases, the ranking position will be based on the average of the two nearest scores or – if the difference between the scores is as indicated above – the two higher scores.

Application evaluation is a multi-stage procedure.

At first, projects are evaluated by independent experts who analyse application quality.

The experts evaluate the applications assigned to them and formulate an initial evaluation. Next, once the individual expert evaluation of applications is complete, meetings are held to bring together experts evaluating applications. At the meetings, experts discuss submitted applications to assess the feasibility of achieving the planned Programme outcomes.

During the meetings, the experts formulate final application evaluations which form the basis for ranking lists. The ranking lists, which are based on expert evaluations, and the minutes of expert meetings on applications, are put forth to the Selection Committee, which reviews them and decides which applications it recommends and does not recommend for a grant.

When creating lists of projects recommended for funding, the Selection Committee seeks to distribute funds as evenly as possible between regions, provided that such decisions have no negative impact on the quality of grant-funded actions.

Detailed information on funds division is available in Chapter 3.8 of the *Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of Active Citizens – Regional Fund. Call for microgrants to advance emerging organisations*.

Only applications whose average expert score is at least 50% of the total possible score will be entered into the list of applications recommended for a grant. The Committee may introduce modifications to the ranking of individual applications, on condition that it justifies such a decision in the minutes of its deliberations on a given decision. Each decision of the Selection Committee should be justified. The Selection Committee may recommend that the grant be decreased for applications where barred actions⁸, ineligible costs or overestimated budgets have been identified. The Selection Committee may also create a back-up list of applications recommended for a grant. The reserve list is intended only for applications where the average expert score is at least 50% of the total possible score and which did not win the Selection Committee's recommendation.

Representatives of the following institutions are invited to participate in Selection Committee meetings in the capacity of observers: Financial Mechanism Office in Brussels, Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy (National Focal Point), Embassy of the Kingdom of Norway, and the Operator of Active Citizens Fund – National programme.

Decisions on awarding grants are taken by the Executive Board. Grant-awarding decisions are based on the list of recommended applications prepared by the Selection Committee. The Executive Board checks whether application evaluation was performed in compliance with Programme procedures. In justified cases, the Executive Board can introduce changes to the list of recommended applications prepared by the Selection Committee, provided that it presents the grounds for such a decision in the minutes of its deliberations.

NOTE: Before signing the grant contract, the Operator reserves the right to ultimately determine application (incl. budget) compliance with Programme guidelines. Grant contracts will only be signed when the Operator's team gives their final approval to the contents of the Application.

⁸ See above: the list of barred actions enumerated under *Excluded costs*

Appeals against content-related evaluation results

Applicants may not appeal content-related evaluation results nor Executive Board decisions.

If you have any questions related to the content-related evaluation of an application that has not received funding, please contact us by e-mail at: wyniki.aofr@fed.org.pl.

Complaint procedure

In the cases described in the Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters (Chapter 16), i.e.

- encountering any breaches of good governance principles (openness, transparency, accountability, zero tolerance for corruption) in the Active Citizens Fund – Regional Programme,
- encountering any failures to hold onto the Programme's guiding values (respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, human and minority rights),
- noticing any irregularities in the implementation of actions funded under the Programme or the use of Programme funding,

you may file a complaint with the Operator.

When lodging your complaint, please provide the following information:

- description of the reported violation (please be as accurate as possible),
- the best way to contact you about the case (e-mail, phone).

The address for reporting violations is skargi.aofr@frdl.org.pl.

The Fund Operator will reply to your complaint within 30 days from the date of its receipt. If you find the reply unsatisfactory, you may report your case to the Complaint Committee appointed by the Operator at skargi.aofr@frdl.org.pl. The Committee will reply to your complaint within 30 days from the date when the Committee received your complaint.

Criteria of content-related evaluation

The criteria and rating scale used by experts are also presented in the content-related evaluation sheet, available in Attachment 6 on the Programme website: <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/mikrogranty/>.

Criteria	Score
Compliance with Programme	

inclusion of mandatory actions ⁹	YES/NO
alignment with Programme aims and the assumptions of at least one outcome ¹⁰	YES/NO
<i>NOTE: Meeting both these compliance criteria is a prerequisite for the project to be evaluated further.</i>	
Evaluation of ORGANISATION WORK PLAN (re: information presented in Part B of the application form)	
mission and vision	0-2
strategic goals	0-2
resources, analysis of stakeholders and organisational work environment	0-2
actions and outcomes	0-2
organisation management	0-2
communication	0-2
Evaluation of MANDATORY ACTIONS 1 & 2	
need for action – quality of needs assessment (part 1)	0-3
target groups (part 1)	0-2
outcomes and products (part 1)	0-3

⁹ Have all four mandatory actions been included in the grant application? The four mandatory actions are 1) actions aligned with an organisation's resource development and management plans, 2) actions aligned with an organisation's communication and image building plans, 3) two actions aimed at external beneficiaries and aligned with at least one Programme outcome.

¹⁰ Queries concerning application alignment with support area assumptions may be submitted to regional Program consultants at the application preparation stage: <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/kontakt/>.

actions (part 1)	0-4
Evaluation of MANDATORY ACTIONS 3 & 4	
need for action – quality of needs assessment (part 2)	0-2
target groups (part 2)	0-2
outcomes and products (part 2)	0-2
actions (part 2)	0-2
Risk and sustainability analysis	
risk and sustainability analysis	0-2
Evaluation of the budget	
Budget	0-3
proportion of costs	0 or 3
TOTAL:	0-40

GRANT DISBURSEMENT AND SUPPORT FOR APPLICANTS

Grants will be disbursed in tranches: the initial and the final payment. The initial payment will equal 95% of the grant amount. Initial payments will be made within 15 working days from the date of placing the last signature on the agreement and submitting a guaranteed blank promissory note with a promissory note declaration. The final payment of 5% of the grant amount will be made within 15 working days from the Operator's receipt of a print-out of an approved final report signed by the Project Promoter's authorised representatives and upon the delivery of examples of grant outputs.

Upon completion of grant-funded actions, the Project Promoter must return the unused portion of the grant within 15 working days from the date of final report approval to the bank account indicated by the Operator.

Payments will be made to the Project Promoter's separate PLN bank account or sub-account used solely for bank operations related to implementation of grant-funded actions.

In line with call assumptions, project promoters can implement microgrant-funded actions with the support and under the guidance of Programme experts. Among other things, experts will monitor proper implementation of grant-funded actions, consult financial issues, and unlock a given organisation's potential for cooperation. **Project promoters will thus participate in three training sessions (to improve their managerial and communication skills, and capacity for the effective preparation and implementation of actions benefiting external recipients) and networking events for all project promoters.**

All the above actions are mandatory for project promoters and will be included in the grant contract.

SUPPORT FOR APPLICANTS

The microgrant call will provide the following support to prospective applicants:

1. an information webinar with a Q&A session on, among others, the rules of the call.
2. a cycle of training webinars in filling out specific application sections:
 - organisation work plan;
 - working with target groups and building local relations;
 - designing actions adjusted to recipient needs.
3. an open day with one-to-one consultations during the call.

The *Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of Active Citizens – Regional Fund* is available at <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/mikrogranty>. The *Call for microgrants* tab contains other useful documents on application submission: including a guide to using the EGAMS, application forms with instructions, suggested budgeting tools (MS Excel), and document templates. The guidelines presented in all these materials apply to all project promoters. The recordings of webinars and all materials used during those meetings are available at <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/biblioteka/>.

CONTACT

If you have questions or doubts concerning applying for a grant, please contact our consultants. They will provide you with answers to questions about the Programme: rules for applying for grants and the formal preparation of an application. You will find their contact details here: <https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/kontakt/>.

We will publish answers to most frequently asked questions on the Programme website (<https://aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/faq/>).

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS (available in Polish)

1. Guidelines for Applicants and Project Promoters of Active Citizens – Regional Fund. Call for microgrants to advance emerging organisations
2. Application form with instructions
3. Communication plan outline form with guidelines
4. Instructions for use of EGAMS
5. Administrative and Eligibility Evaluation Sheet
6. Content-related Evaluation Sheet
7. Project Contract Template
8. Template of promissory note with declaration
9. Programme logotypes
10. EGAMS address: <https://generator.aktywniobywatele-regionalny.org.pl/>
11. Budget planning tool
12. ACFR Results Framework
- 12a. ACFR Results Framework with explanations