



SELECTION AND RETENTION OF PARTNERS FOR PROJECT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

The objective of UNHCR’s policy on the selection and retention of partners for Project Partnership Agreements is to ensure the most suitable process for the implementation of Projects, in order to provide quality protection and assistance to refugees and other persons of concern. The new selection procedure is designed to ensure that the selection is done in a consistent and transparent manner.

What is a call for Expression of Interest? What is the purpose of issuing a “Call for Expression of Interest”?

“Call for Expression of Interest” means soliciting interest from prospective or existing partners that wish to participate in a UNHCR-led operation and contribute complementary resources (human resources, knowledge, cash, in-kind contributions, supplies and/or equipment) to achieve common objectives as agreed in a Project Partnership Agreement.

The purpose of issuing a “Call for Expression of Interest” is to broaden opportunities for all interested organizations to express their interest in implementing a specific project in a given location/operation. The “Call for Expression of Interest” should inform interested partners about UNHCR goals, project objectives and specifications; criteria for selection; deadlines for submission of interest; date of selection decision; and other particularities of the operation and/or Project. The same information will be provided to all existing and potential partners at the same time, in order to ensure fairness and objectivity of the process.

How can an organization express its interest in having a partnership with UNHCR?

Partners that are interested in undertaking a specific Project Partnership Agreement (partially or fully funded by UNHCR) may initiate their interest or respond to UNHCR’s Call for Interest through the submission of a Concept Note. They are encouraged to inform UNHCR about their organization and its distinctive added value.

Prospective partners that are not registered with UNHCR Headquarters will be required to declare that their organization meets the basic compatibility eligibility criteria for establishing a partnership with UNHCR before the organization can be considered for selection for a Project Partnership Agreement (Partner Declaration - Annex A).

How do I prepare a Concept Note?

“Concept Note” means submitting, in a UNHCR-specified format (Annex D), a statement to: express interest in undertaking a Project; demonstrate complementariness to UNHCR’s efforts and demonstrate the unique advantage and value added brought partnership to realizing the desired outcome of the Project. Please bear in mind that the concept notes cannot be changed or amended after their submission.

What should the Concept Note cover and how is it different from a fully developed project proposal?

The Concept Note is to clearly spell out the objectives for undertaking the Project, describe the implementation approach, expected outputs, and demonstrate abilities to meet the selection criteria and

UNHCR - SELECTION AND RETENTION OF PARTNERS FOR PROJECT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

project requirements. As mentioned above, the concept note should illustrate the unique advantage a partner brings to the partnership, and its complementariness with UNHCR.

The Concept Note should not be a fully developed project proposal: It should be concise with an indicative budget; it is important that UNHCR and the selected partner participate in the full design and detailed budgeting of the Project Partnership Agreement.

The budget outline should include the estimated total cost, the total funding to be requested from UNHCR, the organization's contribution plus any other donors' contribution. There should be a clear breakdown of operational costs and administrative costs imposed on the project in relation to project deliverables. If the concept note covers more than one sector, a budget breakdown by sector is recommended, but not mandatory.

Can potential partners who are not registered in the country of operation (Jordan) submit Concept Notes following UNHCR's "Call for Expression of Interest"?

Registration of a partner in Jordan is a pre-condition for selection. Partners are responsible for meeting government requirements for registration and operation in Jordan.

Is the selection and retention policy applicable to Project Partnership Agreements with all partners?

This policy applies to all UNHCR Offices where project implementation requires entering into a Project Partnership Agreement with non-governmental organizations, Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies or other non-profit entities. The process for the selection of partners is not applied when the partner is a United Nations agency or a governmental institution (designated entity by the authority such as Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Ministry of Interior) with a unique mandate that cannot be assumed by another organization.

All organizations interested in a partnership with UNHCR must submit a concept note irrespective of whether or not they have already partnered with UNHCR.

The competitive selection process also applies to activities and projects that can be considered a continuation of 2014 interventions.

How will Concept Notes be reviewed, analysed and evaluated?

An Implementing Partnership Management Committee (IPMC) will examine and evaluate all the Concept Notes and other information submitted by all applicant organizations. The Concept Notes will be reviewed according to the selection criteria and project specifications outlined in the "Call for Expression of Interest". The Committee will consider all factors in identifying the 'Best Fit Partner' who is most suitable and provides the most added value in a given operating environment.

How will the outcomes of the selection process be announced?

In order to demonstrate transparency, the UNHCR Office will inform applicant organizations of the outcome of the selection/retention process within three working days of the date of the decision in writing.

Can applicant organizations that were not selected request clarifications on the selection decision from UNHCR and, if yes, should UNHCR respond?

Should an applicant organization request clarification on the selection decision, the UNHCR Office is required to provide a response explaining the selection/retention process. However, the UNHCR Office may not be in position to disclose the details or rationale of decisions if operationally sensitive, e.g. confidentiality related to protection of persons of concern or security. The feedback must be provided within 15 working days of the request.

UNHCR - SELECTION AND RETENTION OF PARTNERS FOR PROJECT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

Applicant organizations that are not satisfied with the feedback provided by the Office in the field may raise their concerns to UNHCR's Implementing Partnership Management Service (epartner@unhcr.org). IPMS will then assess and relay the information to the appropriate senior management for follow up.

What happens if my organization is selected? Is the retention of a partner for the second year automatic?

While the selection of a partner is for a period of two UNHCR programme cycles, prior to entering into the second year of the Project Partnership Agreement, a desk review by the Programme Unit (or other designated unit) will be conducted to ensure that it is required by the operation and the partner performance is adequate. If the desk review determines that the partner should not be retained, the matter will be referred to the Committee. Upon the recommendation of the Committee, the Office may decide to retain the partner or not. Such decision will be communicated in writing to the partner. If the desk review concludes that the partner should be retained, the Office can proceed with signing a new Partnership Agreement with the same partner for a second year.

Can a partner be retained for more than two years? How is the decision to retain a partner beyond two operational consecutive years made?

After two UNHCR programme cycles, the Committee is required to determine whether it is in the best interest of the operation to further retain the selected partner for an additional two programme cycles. The review is to be conducted and documented taking into consideration the performance of the partner and quality of delivery; whether a change of partner may negatively impact on resources, continuity and/or effective response to the persons of concern; whether UNHCR's contribution in the capacity development of the partner may be lost or not yield its desired outcome in case of changing partner; the contribution of the partner (in cash or in-kind); willingness of the partner to continue with project implementation; and availability and interest of alternative partners.

Each UNHCR Office is required to ensure that for each project a complete and comprehensive selection process is undertaken no less than every four years. If there is a substantive change to the project from one programme cycle to the next, a complete selection process must be undertaken.

What type of changes in the Project would warrant a new selection process?

Examples of substantive changes include: change in needs of the population group (i.e. repatriation vs. asylum seeking); changes in the operation (i.e. from emergency to maintenance), change of sector (i.e. from health to education); or substantial variation in project size and budget (i.e. increase of the project budget by about over 40-50%).

For any additional guidance please feel free to contact the Programme Unit:

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