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UNDP – GEF Project

“Conservation of globally important biodiversity and associated land and forest resources of Western Tian Shan mountain ecosystems to support sustainable livelihoods”

Guidelines

For the Low-Value Grant Projects for target communities

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Executive summary

These Guidelines set out the procedure for the issuance of low-value grants in the framework of UNDP GEF “Conservation of globally important biodiversity and associated land and forest resources of Western Tian Shan mountain ecosystems to support sustainable livelihoods” (hereinafter “the Project”). Low-value grants are aimed at implementation of activities jointly with NGOs, with aim to create alternative livelihoods for local communities, and to demonstrate and implement land and forest management practices that support livelihoods and that are beneficial to biodiversity.

Support and implementation of low-value grant projects will be carried out in accordance with these Guidelines, based on UNDP rules and regulations, which define the basic principles for submitting applications for participation in the competition, as well as criteria and procedures for the selection of low-value grant projects and reporting requirements.

All procedures for the implementation of low-value grant projects described in this document are in accordance with existing UNDP rules and procedures and must be followed by all stakeholders.

I Objectives and expected results of low-value grant projects

TARGET COMMUNITIES OF THE PROJECT

Target communities are four ayil aimaks: Cholpon-Ata and Kyzyl Ozgorush of Toktogul rayon, Kok-Irim and Atai of Toguz-Toro rayon. These two ayil aimaks had been determined as project pilot territories, as they were close to the newly established State Natural Parks “Alatai” and “Kan Achuu”.

About 56% of population of pilot territories are poor. Agriculture is main sphere of economic activity in the region, especially in Cholpon-Ata and Kyzyl-Ozgorush ayil aimaks, as the industrial activity of the region is in bigger city – Toktogul.

OBJECTIVES OF LOW-VALUE GRANT PROJECTS

Objectives of low-value grant procedures are:

- Demonstration of the ability to reduce stress on ecosystems by enabling local communities to increase income without increasing livestock;
- Implementation of sustainable land use and sustainable forest management practices in arable, pasture and forest lands;
- Raising awareness of the local community and understanding of the critical issues of sustainability of land and natural resources;
- Increase the interest and support of local communities in the creation of protected areas, demonstrating that protected areas can contribute to sustainable development.

GRANT

The total amount of grant funds allocated under this Project for successful NGOs will be no more than USD 15,000.00 (fifteen thousand US dollars). The contribution of NGOs to the project should be at least 20% of the grant amount. This contribution of 20% can be expressed in cash at the disposal of NGOs or as the in-kind contribution of applicants (for example, property, personnel, inventory necessary for the implementation of the low-value grant project, physical work to be done by the applicant).

APPLICANT

All NGOs with proven experience in the above target communities (Cholpon-Ata, Kyzyl-Ozgorush of Toktogul rayon, Kok-Irim and Atai of Toguz-Toro rayon) have the right to submit applications for implementation of low-value grant projects. Local NGOs (registered in pilot communities and rayons), NGOs with branches or having partners in pilot communities will have advantage in the following directions:

- ecotourism and recreation;
- collection of medicinal plants and non-wood forest products (mushrooms, berries, etc.);
- beekeeping, recycling of honey and beeswax products;
- secondary processing of agricultural products;
- transition to highly profitable and sustainable forms of agriculture;
- income-generating activities that reduce the load on ecosystems;
- preservation of the environment and local flora and fauna;

PERIOD OF IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation period is no more than 5 months, tentatively from October 2021 to February 2022.

DEADLINE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS FOR LOW-VALUE GRANT PROJECTS

The Applications must be received by UNDP at the mailing address or email indicated in the Clause on the Sealing and Marking of Proposals, not later than the set time, 18:00 pm local time, 08/10/2021.

Please refer to the Appendix1 (Instruction to Applicants) for further instructions.

II GENERAL PROVISIONS ON THE COMMITTEE FOR THE EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF LOW-VALUE GRANT PROJECTS (GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION)

In order to ensure transparency in the process of consideration and approval of low-value grant projects, the Grant Evaluation Commission.

1. The GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION is a body that reviews, evaluates and recommends applications received from local nongovernmental organizations for a low-value

grant projects (hereinafter referred to as a low-value grant projects) for further funding by UNDP. In prior to selection, the GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION must review applications to ensure they pass the basic eligibility screening on defined criteria, including entity legal documents of the applicant, relevant project implementation experience, staff and team of the organizations.

2. The main principles of the GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION activity are the creation of equal conditions for the applicants, as well as the unity of the requirements for them, the comprehensiveness and completeness of the study of the documents submitted, the objectivity of the decisions made. The GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION is formed to ensure openness, transparency in the selection and implementation of low-value grant projects.

3. The GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION consists of:

- Representatives of the UNDP Country Office;
- Representative of the State Committee on Ecology and Climate under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic;
- Representatives of Toktogul and Toguz-Toro rayon state administrations;
- Secretariat, representatives of the UNDP Project.

Subject matter specialists who do not have voting rights, but whose opinion will be of a recommendatory nature for the GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION members, may be involved in the GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION meetings for expert evaluation of the applications received.

Decision-making on low-value grant projects requires, at least, 2/3 of the Commission members. The **GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION Chairperson** is the Representative of the UNDP Country Office in the Kyrgyz Republic, who has a decisive vote with an equal number of votes and is responsible for the work of the GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION, the quality and transparency of the processes for considering proposals and allocating resources.

All decisions of the GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION are advisory to UNDP. Based on the evaluations and recommendation provided from GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION, UNDP will decide and inform beneficiaries of the low-value grant projects.

SELECTION AND APPROVAL OF LOW-VALUE GRANT PROJECTS AT THE GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION LEVEL

Within the framework of this Project, a 2-level selection of low-value grant projects is expected:

1. At the first level Secretariat of the Grant Evaluation Commission (UNDP Project) together with 2-3 members of the Grant Evaluation Commission conducts preliminary evaluation of the applications to see applicant's minimum eligibility and criteria and makes a preliminary evaluation minute to ensure eligibility check.

2. The selection at the second level is carried out by the GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION in accordance with the principles and criteria established by this Guideline.

Low-value grant projects are approved with the consent of the majority of the GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION members according to specially developed criteria specified in Section IV. The Commission members give a final opinion on each of the projects “Approved”, “Rejected”, “Approved with revision” in a Minutes to be signed by all GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION members.

Applicants will be informed of the decisions within a week after the decision is made.

The UNDP project (Secretariat) will carry out all the organizational and technical work, including the collection of applications, the technical verification of the completeness of the documents submitted, checking for discrepancies and errors in the documents, paperwork, organization of the GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION’s work and providing it with the necessary ones (meeting place, consumables, transportation, if necessary, field visits, etc.), communication between applicants and the GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION. Also, UNDP is responsible of quality insurance of the project by field monitoring, reviewing feedback from community, providing technical support to NGOs.

III CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS FOR LOW-VALUE GRANT PROJECTS

An application for a low value grant may include the implementation of activities aimed at creating alternative sources of livelihood for local communities, as well as demonstrating and introducing land use and forest management practices that are favorable for biodiversity:

- Reducing the load on ecosystems (collection of medicinal plants and non-wood forest products; beekeeping, recycling of honey and beeswax products; recycling of agricultural products; income-generating activities that reduce the load on ecosystems, etc.)
- Sustainable land use and sustainable forest management (combating land degradation, transition to more highly profitable and sustainable forms of agriculture, seed funds, horticulture, nurseries, etc.)
- Increasing the interest and support of local communities in the creation of protected areas (the development of ecotourism and recreation, the creation of public micro-reserves, the dissemination of the CBT concept, the development of tourist packages, etc.)

MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION shall examine the applications to determine whether they are complete with respect to minimum documentary requirements, whether the documents have been properly signed, whether or not the applicant is in the UN Security Council 1267/1989 Committee’s list of terrorists and terrorist financiers, and in UNDP’s list of suspended and removed vendors, and whether the applications are generally in order, among other indicators that may be used at this stage.

For further evaluation, all applications will be carefully screened against the following eligibility criteria (minimum qualifications):

- Availability of a certificate (registration with the Ministry of Justice);
- A group for the implementation of a low-value grant project (organizational structure, including the positions and roles of each member of the group)

Prescreening (application will be disqualified while prescreening if the below conditions are not met)

- the low-value grant project is contrary to applicable law;
- the low-value grant project rights of others (inadmissibility of any kind of discrimination and restriction of human rights);
- the low-value grant project directly or indirectly has a negative impact on the environment;
- the low-value grant project is aimed at the production and sale of tobacco, alcohol, drugs or other products prohibited by law;
- the low value grant project previously approved and implemented by other donors;
- the low value grant project affiliated with the Commission members and having a conflict of interest;
- the low value grant project negatively affects directly and indirectly the environment, health, and violates human rights of the beneficiaries and communities (discrimination, restriction of movement, freedom of speech, right of residence, etc.);
- the requested funds cannot be used to purchase real estate, land and as a rental fee.
- the low-value grant project with expenditure items for the payment, using UNDP funds, of salaries of applicants' employees, various administrative expenses, floating assets, food products, office equipment, construction of buildings/premises for business.

Only selected applications after prescreening will be evaluated based on the following criteria by GRANT EVALUATION COMMISSION.

#	Assessment criteria	Weight
1	The relevance of a low value grant project in the creation of alternative livelihoods for local communities, as well as in the demonstration and implementation of land use and forest management practices favorable to biodiversity	25%
2	The goals and objectives of the proposed application are relevant for the local community, which is confirmed by the relevant documents (copies of minutes of meetings / gatherings, letter of support of ayil okmotu)	10%
3	The number of beneficiaries benefiting from the implementation of the low value grant project, including vulnerable groups of the population - (children, women, the elderly and people with reduced mobility) i.e. improving the living conditions	25%

	of the majority of residents of the village or community	
4	A description of the sustainability of the low value grant project or the existence of an action plan to ensure the sustainability. Application must provide clear measures to ensure the sustainability of the results of the low value grant project after the completion of the project cycle.	20%
5	The realistic budget of the low-value grant project and own contribution (at least 20% of the total project cost), i.e. the budget of the application should contain realistic financial calculations and a specific indication of the budget articles for which low-value grant project funds are requested, budget articles that will be funded from other sources (community contribution).	20%