

Terms of reference for external consultancy support

Assignment to design and support roll-out of the Western Balkans Fund's monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system

About WBF

The Western Balkans Fund (WBF) is an international organization located in Tirana, Albania, founded by the governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo¹, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

As a grant-making organization, WBF provides direct support to joint regional projects aiming to further strengthen skills of civil society in the Western Balkans and pursue regional cooperation and reconciliation via a people-to-people approach. WBF began its first investments in the Western Balkans in November 2017 with one Call for Proposal in Western Balkans region. Through the first two Calls for Proposals, WBF supported 43 regional projects. WBF continued with next calls in the years 2019 and 2020, while the call scheduled for 2021 is expected to be diversified and responsive to the challenges facing civil society. The grants have been supported through steady commitments of the six Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Western Balkans Fund is a vision-based and value-driven organization that works to translate the commitments of its founders to peace, cooperation and European integration into reality for their constituents and societies through promotion of and support to regional cooperation across various sectors.

Background of the Assignment

WBF is committed to pursue its organizational development and strengthening, supported by the PeaceNexus Foundation. The WBF's work is guided by its founding documents and the Strategic Development Plan 2020-2024.² To deliver on its strategic ambitions, WBF has decided to invest in the development of a tailored monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) system. This direct support intends to contribute to WBF's programmatic development by informing about the effectiveness of its grant-making programming and investments in view of its strategic ambitions. Including a close revision of the organization's institutional reality, capacity and the ability to support an MEL practice, not only from the perspective of WBF itself, but assuring that any developing practice is not burdensome for WBF's grantees.

The MEL system shall:

- Enable WBF to ensure that its grant scheme is responsive, needs-based and based on constant learning and development process.
- Enable WBF to measure and articulate its results, including vis à vis its Council of Senior Officials and its funding partners.
- Strengthen WBF's ability to serve as a bridge between the civil society and governments by providing its founders with relevant, evidence-based policy inputs that contribute to democratic development, regional cooperation and European integration, as well as to a better understanding of the role and contributions that civil society organizations have in those social processes.

The development of the MEL shall be accompanied by:

- An investment in WBF's capacity to use the MEL system and draw analytical insights from it.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

² See: <http://westernbalkansfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/WBF-Strategic-Development-Plan-2020-2024.pdf>

- The development of user-friendly reporting, data collection and analysis tools.

-Role and deliverables of the consultant

To help WBF achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the consultant is expected to:

1. *Gain an in-depth understanding of WBF's organizational strategy and impact ambitions and review WBF's current MEL practice.*

Deliverables: Based on a review of key documents and preliminary conversations with WBF's team, the consultant is expected to

- a. **facilitate a participatory session to help WBF identify and summarise key lessons learned about its grant-making results to date**
- b. deliver an **inception report** articulating the envisaged components (outline) of the future MEL system and his/her detailed workplan to get there.

2. *Draft a sound and user-friendly MEL framework based on participatory work with WBF.*

Based on reviews including inception report and feedback provided by the WBF, the consultant is expected to design a participatory process of consultations with WBF staff in order to design the MEL framework deriving from these discussions and the analysis. This development process is expected to be both participatory and iterative, to ensure alignment with WBF's needs and capacities, and its programmatic ambitions. Key elements shall be: objectives, inputs, results and indicators and how they could contribute to effectively capture its results and how WBF could learn from them.

Deliverables: Based on the participatory and iterative process of consultations, the consultant is expected to design a **MEL framework**³ aligned with WBF's demonstrated needs and available capacities. The consultant is expected to **finalise the MEL framework** based on WBF's feedback.

3. *Develop user-friendly tools and guidance to support the effective implementation of the MEL framework.*

Deliverables: After the endorsement of the MEL framework, the consultant shall develop the **data collection and analysis tools (including reporting template for grantees)**, which will support WBF to integrate the MEL framework optimally. He/she is also expected to provide **manual on the use of the overall framework** including tools in order to better understand how feedback and learning loops vis-à-vis grantees should work in practice.

4. *Tailor made capacity development support on MEL system, and mentoring for WBF roll-out*

To enhance WBF's capacities needed to support the effective implementation of the MEL system, the consultant is expected to facilitate a tailor-made training for WBF's staff, aligned with specificities of the MEL framework and WBF's needs. With the completion of the training for WBF staff, the consultant is expected to provide final recommendations related to potential additional/long-term capacity development investments to fully embed MEL in WBF's daily practice.

Deliverables: **Training/mentoring sessions** to strengthen WBF's capacities on MEL system; **support to WBF during the roll-out phase** (e.g., feedback on first round of data analysis)

Timeframe and Coordination

³ MEL Framework shall contain: objectives, inputs, results and indicators

The assignment period is expected to take up to approximately 25 consultancy days. The commencement date of the assignment is April and last over a period of 6-8 months. Due to the participatory and iterative nature of the assignment, the consultant is expected to combine online and onsite work at the WBF Secretariat in Tirana, Albania.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the consultant should also plan for alternative options in case onsite meetings are not possible.

A detailed work-plan shall be submitted by the consultant as part of the inception report and endorsed by the WBF. The consultant will have a designated WBF team member engaged in WBF's organizational development. Likewise, as this assignment is supported by the PeaceNexus Foundation, its representatives will have a supportive role throughout the assignment.

Required Qualifications

We invite applications from local and international consultants or teams. We require that the consultants have:

- A proven track-record in developing MEL frameworks and systems,
- Extensive experience in external consultancies and advisory roles,
- Prior experience in supporting organizational change processes,
- Outstanding analytical skills and extensive experience in capacity development for MEL,
- Strong facilitation, interpersonal and communications skills in English,
- Demonstrated familiarity with and understanding of the Western Balkans context,
- Prior experience with grant-making organizations or processes will be considered an asset,
- Experience with regional cooperation and/or reconciliation will be considered an asset,
- In depth knowledge with bilateral and multilateral donors' reporting frameworks will be considered an asset.

Application Process

Applications should be submitted to wbfapplications@westernbalkansfund.org by April 5th 2021, while the application should include:

- CV(s) of the consultant(s),
- Cover letter presenting the motivation and demonstrating the required qualifications,
- Proposed tentative methodology (with division of roles in case of application by teams of consultants) and timeframe for the assignment,
- Financial proposal for the full assignment with specification of fee per consultancy day and estimation of travel costs to and from Tirana, Albania
- Two references from previous clients on similar/relatable mandates.

*Shortlisted candidates will be invited for an interview.

*Incomplete proposals shall be deemed ineligible and will not be considered.