

“Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Enhanced Roma Inclusion”
Programme financed by EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021

CALL NO. 3 “POVERTY ALLEVIATION”

- *RESTRICTED CALL FOR PROPOSALS* -

Launched on December 06, 2018

Deadline for projects submission March 28, 2019

BUCHAREST, 2018



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Preamble

This document aims to provide the necessary information for potential applicants (Project Promoters – PP) under the call for proposals “Poverty alleviation”, a call launched on **December 06, 2018**, by the **Romanian Social Development Fund (RSDF)**, under the Programme “**Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Enhanced Roma Inclusion**” (hereinafter referred to as the Programme).

Before filling-in your application, we recommend that you make sure you have gone through all the information presented in this document and in the Applicant’s Guide, and that you have understood all the aspects related to the specificity of the projects financed by EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 and the manner of their implementation¹.

1. General information on the Programme

The Programme is financed by means of EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 and is implemented by RSDF (as Programme Operator – PO) in partnership with the **Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS)**, as Donor Project Partner and with the **Council of Europe (CoE)**, as International Partner Organization.

The objectives of the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021 are to contribute to the reduction of economic and social disparities in the European Economic Area and to strengthen the bilateral relations between the Donor States (**Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway**) and the beneficiary states by financing five priority areas:

1. Innovation, research, education and competitiveness
2. Social inclusion, youth employment and poverty reduction
3. Environment, energy, climate changes and an economy with low carbon emissions
4. Culture, civil society, good governance and fundamental rights and
5. Justice and home affairs

The programme covers 5 of the 23 Programme areas covered by the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021, respectively:

- Area no 7 Roma Inclusion and Empowerment
- Area no 8 Children and Youth at Risk
- Area no 10 Local Development and Poverty Reduction
- Area no 16 Good Governance, Accountable Institutions, Transparency
- Area no17 Human Rights – National Implementation

The overall objective of the programme is to actively contribute to strengthening the economic and social cohesion at national and local level in Romania and to strengthening the bilateral relations with the Donor States. In this respect, the PO facilitates and encourages the establishment of partnerships between entities from Romania and the Donor States Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

The programme has a total value of **82,352,941 Euro**, out of which:

- 25,000,000 Euro financing from EEA Grants 2014-2021
- 45,000,000 Euro financing from Norway Grants 2014-2021
- 12,352,941 Euro financing from the State budget (15% co-financing)

During the implementation of the programme, the principles of cost-effectiveness, transparency and responsibility in the management of the funds should be observed to the highest degree, and also the principles of good governance, sustainability of results, ensuring equal opportunities and of gender, must be observed. All the projects shall apply the values and fundamental principles of the European Union and the Council of Europe (e.g.: *respect for human dignity, freedom,*

¹ An indicative list of documents is presented at the end of this call text, as well as the addresses of the web pages where these documents can be consulted.

democracy, equality, respect for the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities etc.). The program will be conducted in accordance with applicable national and European law, as well as the specific rules applicable to the EEA and Norway Grants 2014-2021.

2. The call “Poverty alleviation” for project proposals

The present call provides support for the implementation of measures to reduce the poverty and social exclusion, developed at national and/or local level, measures aiming at developing the results of the previously financed projects under the RO25 Programme “Poverty Alleviation” financed from Norway Grants 2009-2014.

2.1 Expected results

This call for project proposals falls under the **programme area no. 10 “Local development and Poverty reduction”**.

It is expected that the projects financed under the call “Poverty alleviation” shall contribute to one or more of the following results:

Number	Expected programme results	Indicator	Unit of measurement	Source of verification	Target value at the programme’s level
Outcome ² 4	Increased use of social services ³ by disadvantaged groups	Number of individuals that have received personalised social services (disaggregated by gender, Roma)	Number	PP’s records	15,000
		Level of satisfaction with the social services provided	Scale 1-10	Survey results made by PP	6.5
Output ⁴ 4.1	Intervention models applied in working with vulnerable groups	Number of interventions models applied in working with vulnerable groups	Number	PP’s records	5
Output 4.2	Social services provided to people from vulnerable groups at local level	Number of municipalities/ towns where social services were provided	Number	PP’s records	200

The proposed measures and actions have to be adapted to the specific local/regional/national conditions, as appropriate, to take into account the provisions of European and national strategic documents on social inclusion, to be developed in a participatory and integrated manner to produce the outputs at the level of the final beneficiaries⁵, both during the project implementation and on medium and long term (depending on the size and complexity of the project).

² Short and medium term effects of an intervention on the target groups or end beneficiaries.

³ The term is used in the broad sense and includes both social services as defined in the national legislation and services in the areas of education, health, employment, housing, which contribute to the fulfilment of the objectives of the call.

⁴ The products, capital goods and services delivered by a programme to the direct target group.

⁵ Final beneficiaries are persons and/or groups who will benefit from the action of project in the long term (in this case, the individuals who are part of the main target groups).

2.2 Financial allocation

The total amount allocated to this call is **20,000,000 Euro**, including Norway Grants 2014-2021 (85%) and public co-financing (15%).

The minimum amount that can be requested for the implementation of one project is **500,000 Euro**, and the maximum amount is **5,000,000 Euro**.

2.3 Grant rate and private co-financing

The grant rate shall normally be 100% of the project eligible expenses except where the PP is a non-governmental organization⁶ (NGO), when the grant rate is **maximum 90%** of the project eligible expenses (minimum 10% to be provided by the applicant and/or partners, in accordance with the Partnership Agreement concluded).

In compliance with Art. 6.4.5 of the Regulation on the Implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 (Regulation), **contribution in-kind** in the form of voluntary work is possible for the projects implemented by NGOs. This contribution may not exceed 50% of the co-financing the PP and/or partners have to provide (*for further details on the basis for calculating the unit prices for voluntary work, please refer to the Applicant's Guide*). The rest of the contribution is in cash.

When deciding on the grant rate of the project, as the case may be, the PO shall, in line with the Regulation, take into account economic benefits that are expected to be generated in the course of the project, as a result of receiving a financial contribution. The PO shall develop a methodology to calculate the expected economic benefits for the income generating projects.

2.4 Project duration and implementation period

In determining the duration of the project, the PP shall take into account the limits set by the programme (the estimated duration of a project, the latest date for finalizing the implementation of the project), the application of procurement procedures, the specificity of the reporting and payment system, but also the individual aspects of the project (types of activities, types and level of estimated costs etc.).

The latest date for finalizing the implementation of projects financed under the programme is December 31, 2023 and the expected duration of a project is between 12 and 36 months.

2.5 Eligible Project Promoters

In compliance with the provisions of the Programme Agreement, the eligibility of applicants is restricted to PPs involved in the implementation of the projects financed under RO25 programme on poverty and the partners of the City of Oslo. As a result, the eligible applicants under this restricted call for proposals are:

- The Christian Mission Salvation Army in Romania (NGO)
- The Association for Intercommunity Development Metropolitan Area Cluj
- Roma Education Fund Romania Foundation (NGO)
- The Institute for Studying the Problems of National Minorities
- The Representation in Romania of the United Nations Children's Fund - UNICEF
- The Community Public Social Assistance Directorate of Craiova Municipality
- The Community Public Social Assistance Directorate of Timișoara Municipality

⁶ According to Art. 1.6.1 (n) of the applicable Regulation, a non-governmental organization is a legal, voluntary, non-profit, non-commercial entity, independent of local, regional and central government, public entities, political parties and trade organizations. Religious institutions and political parties are not considered as NGOs.

The eligible PPs may submit a single application for financing under this call for proposals⁷. At the level of the entire programme, the same PP may receive financing for maximum two projects.

2.6 Eligible Partners

The programme aims to support initiatives to strengthen the cooperation at different levels between public entities and the civil society, between entities in Romania and from the Donor States (Norway in this case). In this respect, partnership projects with entities from Norway are encouraged.

Entities with legal personality, public or private, are eligible as Partners under this call, as follows:

- a. from Romania: public entities, associations of local authorities (including intercommunity development associations) and non-governmental non-profit organizations established as legal persons in Romania
- b. from Norway: any public or private entity, whether commercial or non-commercial, as well as non-governmental organizations established as legal persons in Norway

In the case of partners from Romania, the same entity may be project partner in maximum two projects submitted under this call and in up to three projects submitted under this programme (in these cases, it must prove that it has the necessary capacity to carry out the assumed tasks, with the available resources).

The partners (national partner and/or donor project partner) shall be actively involved and shall effectively contribute to the implementation of the project, sharing with PP a common goal which is to be achieved through the implementation of the project. In this respect, it is recommended that partners have the capacity to act in the project's area, in accordance with the role assumed and in accordance with their legal responsibilities or status.

Partners' selection

The creation and implementation of the partnership will comply with the applicable national and EU legislation on public procurement, Article 8.15 of the Regulation, as well as the provisions of Chapter V, Article 14 of Government Emergency Ordinance No. 34/2017.

Article 14 of Government Emergency Ordinance No. 34/2017 foresees that Romanian public entities acting as PPs must, when selecting Romanian NGOs to act as project partners, apply a transparent and non-discriminatory partner selection procedure. The selection methodology has to be prepared by the PP and approved by the legal representative of the PP. The PP is entirely responsible for the partner selection process and will have to declare to the PO that it has complied with the applicable legal provisions.

Partnership agreement

The PP will sign a *Partnership Agreement* with the project partners (recommended template provided in the Applicant's guidelines). The partnership agreement must clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of the parties, financial arrangements between the parties etc. (see Article 7.7 of the Regulation). The Partnership Agreement will be submitted in draft as an appendix to the project proposal. For donor partners, a letter of intent is required when submitting the application (see the recommended template provided in the Applicant's guidelines).

Collaboration agreement

If there are other entities that do not have the status of partners and do not receive a budget from the project grant, but support the project and are to be involved in the implementation (e.g. local or central public authorities, decentralized public services, schools etc.), the PO recommends the conclusion of a *Collaboration agreement*, either prior to submitting the application (to be annexed to the application) or during the project, after identifying/selecting them.

⁷ If the PP has submitted more than one project under this call, PO shall ask PP to choose (within 3 work days) which one shall stay in competition.

Funds for bilateral relations

During the project proposal preparation period, the PO can provide, upon request, funds for the organization of bilateral activities with the purpose to facilitate partnership relations between entities from Norway and entities from Romania that are eligible under the call, respectively to prepare and/or conclude a partnership agreement for the project, and to effectively and jointly prepare the financing application/the project. The bilateral activities may be organized in Norway or in Romania. The maximum amount that may be claimed is 5,000 Euro. More details on how to access these funds can be found on PO's website: <http://www.frds.ro/>

2.7 Eligibility of target groups and beneficiaries

The projects submitted under this call shall necessarily address the needs of at least one of the following **main target groups**:

- Persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion⁸
- Children (aged between 3-15 years) and young people (aged between 16-24 years) at risk of poverty and social exclusion
- Parents/tutors/other family members of the children/youth at risk of poverty and social exclusion

Secondary target groups may also benefit from the project's activities. For example:

- Professionals and volunteers working or interacting with disadvantaged groups (such as professionals and volunteers, teaching staff, staff and volunteers in the sphere of social services, policemen, gendarmes, local government employees etc.)
- Community members interacting with the main target groups
- Other categories of people who can help increase the impact of the project (employers, members of neighbouring communities etc.)

In determining the number of project beneficiaries, the PP should take into account that the project must have a satisfactory ratio between the outcomes and the estimated costs, as this ratio is taken into account for the project evaluation. Therefore, it is recommended that the PP takes into account the number and complexity of the interventions, the type/complexity and duration of the intervention for the same beneficiary, the expected impact of the interventions etc., in correlation with the requested budget and contribution to the expected results of the programme.

2.8 Eligible activities

Examples of eligible activities are as follows:

- Measures for increasing the access to **basic social and medical services**;
- Measures aiming at increasing the access of disadvantaged children and youth at **formal education** (ante-pre-school, pre-school, primary, secondary) and **non-formal education**;
- Measures aiming at increasing the access to the **labour force market**;
- Measures to improve the **living conditions**⁹;
- **Other measures** to support the efforts to combat poverty and reduce the social exclusion, such as activities for exchange of experience and transfer of best practices for the professionals from Romanian and Norway entities (if PP has a donor project partner).

⁸ According to EUROSTAT, at risk of poverty or social exclusion people are those who are at risk of poverty or are experiencing severe material deprivation or living in a household with a very low work intensity.

⁹ Consistent working methodology and conditions to be accomplished by the target group/ beneficiaries shall be provided.

2.9 Eligible costs

As a general implementation rule, the costs are eligible if they were made from the start date of the project (the date of signing the project financing contract) to the date of its closure (as defined in the financing contract, with the subsequent amendments and additions, as might be the case). At the end of the project, all the project activities will be completed and all the expenses will be incurred / committed. Further information on the general eligibility of costs can be found in the applicable Regulation (Chapter 8) and the Applicant's Guide.

The same rules on eligibility of costs apply to both PP and partner. All non-eligible costs shall be borne by the PP and/or its partners, as the case may be.

The budget of the project will be expressed in LEI with reference to the Infor Euro course from the date of budget preparation and will include only eligible costs (direct costs, indirect costs and unforeseen costs).

The main categories of eligible costs are:

Direct costs

- The cost of staff assigned to the project, comprising actual salaries plus social security charges and other statutory costs included in the remuneration, provided that this corresponds to the PP's and project partner's usual policy on remuneration. The corresponding salary costs of staff of national administrations are eligible to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the project concerned were not undertaken;
- Travel and subsistence allowances for staff taking part in the project. Having regard to the principle of proportionality, travel costs, including subsistence allowance, may be calculated as a lump sum, on the basis of defined rules approved by the PO;
- Cost of new or second hand equipment. In case the PO determines that the equipment is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project, the entire purchase price of that equipment may, by way of exception from the rule contained in paragraph 4 of Article 8.2 of the Regulation, be eligible;
- Purchase of land and real estate under the conditions set in Article 8.6 of the Regulation;
- Costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they are identifiable and assigned to the project;
- Costs entailed by other contracts awarded by a PP for the purposes of carrying out the project, provided that the awarding complies with the applicable rules on public procurement and the Regulation; and
- Costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the project contract for each project.

The investment costs include equipment¹⁰ costs, construction works costs, land and real estate purchasing costs. Depending on the objectives and complexity of each project, the investment costs shall be reasonable and proportionate to the effectiveness of objectives achievement (usually not exceeding 60% of the project total value).

In the project budget, it is recommended to include proportionate, necessary and accurate costs in relation with its planned objectives, activities and results. In this respect, in support of the project proposed budget, the PP shall mandatorily present a justification of the estimated costs (detailed by type of costs and unit prices). The manner of drawing-up the budget shall be subject of the project evaluation and, if they deem as necessary, the evaluators may propose a budget revision.

¹⁰ Equipment include fixed assets (tangible and intangible, with an individual acquisition value greater than 2,500 lei and a service life longer than one year), inventory items of the nature of fixed assets (which have a value of acquisition up to 2,500 lei and a service life longer than one year) and means of transportation.

Indirect costs¹¹

For the entities from Romania, the indirect costs of the project shall be determined either on the basis actual costs and shall be justified by the analytical accounting system (Art. 8.5, lit. a) of the Regulation), or on the basis of a flat rate calculation (Art. 8.5, lit. c)). The indirect costs calculation method shall be stipulated in the project financing contract and in the Partnership agreement (if applicable). The entities from Norway and the international organisations may identify their indirect costs according to one of the methods mentioned in the Regulation (Article 8.5. Indirect costs in projects (overheads)). The indirect costs calculating method cannot be changed during the project implementation.

Contingency

The maximum amount for these costs is 5% of the eligible direct costs. The contingency can only be used with the prior approval of the PO, and the available amounts shall be re-distributed to the other budget headings as their utilization is approved.

2.10 Excluded costs

Costs such as the following are not considered eligible:

- Interest on debt, debt service charges and late payment charges;
- Charges for financial transactions and other purely financial costs, except costs related to accounts required by the FMC, the National Focal Point or the applicable law and costs of financial services imposed by the project contract;
- Provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- Exchange losses;
- Recoverable vat;
- Costs that are covered by other sources;
- Fines, penalties and costs of litigation, except where litigation is an integral and necessary component for achieving the outcomes of the project; and
- Excessive or reckless expenditure.

2.11 Durability of projects

PP will have to demonstrate the capacity to use the results also after the financing closing and, where applicable, to bear the cost of support services created/ developed by the project. In this regard, a plan on the sustainability of the project results shall be developed, according to the specific of the project. PP shall be guided by the aim of promoting sustainability of ensuring that the financial support provided to the project generates the maximum benefits to its target group and final beneficiaries. PP will also take into account the requirements of the Regulation (Art. 8.3.2, 8.6, 8.14).

3. Projects verification, evaluation, selection and contracting

As PO, RSDF is responsible for collecting applications, selecting projects to be funded and signing project contracts.

All projects selection and approval operations shall observe the principles of confidentiality and impartiality.

Project proposals received during the call will be analysed against specific criteria, following two steps: formal (administrative) verification and content evaluation.

¹¹ Costs that cannot be directly attributed to the project and cannot be identified by the PP and/or project partners as directly attributable to the project but can be identified and justified by the accounting system as being committed in direct relation with the eligible direct costs of the project.

3.1 Formal verification

At the formal verification stage, it is checked:

a) Administrative compliance

Compliance criteria¹² refer to:

- compliance with the announced deadline;
- compliance with the required submission method;
- all requested documents are attached and comply with the form requirements.

b) Compliance with eligibility criteria

The eligibility criteria¹³ refer to:

- eligibility of the PP;
- eligibility of the partners;
- the requested amount falls within the set limits;
- the duration of the project is within the established limits¹⁴.

The projects proposals must fulfil all administrative and eligibility criteria in order to pass to the contents evaluation stage.

In case the provided information is not sufficient and clear enough to be able to make an objective decision as to whether a certain administrative conformity or eligibility criterion is fulfilled or not, the PO may send the PP requests for clarification and/or submission of additional documents. The PP will respond within 5 days of receipt of the PO (any document / clarification arriving after this deadline cannot be considered).

If one or more of the above criteria have not been met, the project proposal is rejected ((either as administrative non-compliant or ineligible) being excluded from subsequent stages of the selection. The applicants of these projects proposals shall be notified within maximum 30 working days after the deadline for projects submission with regard to the results of the formal evaluation. The project proposals and all the documents related to the verification/clarifications shall be kept by the PO and some of the relevant data shall be recorded in the database (SMI).

The formal evaluation is performed by the PO's specialists.

3.2 Content evaluation

The content evaluation (desk evaluation) is performed by independent experts, selected and contracted by the PO, with the approval of the Selection Committee¹⁵ (SC) members. The selection of these experts shall be performed based on criteria related to their qualification, competence and expertise in the social field and in projects evaluation in this area.

The evaluators and members of the SC will be asked to sign conflict of interest statements.

Each project proposal that fulfils the administrative and eligibility criteria is evaluated by two independent and impartial experts. If the difference between the scores given by the two evaluators is more than 30% of the highest score, a third evaluator shall be appointed by the PO to perform an independent evaluation of the project. In such cases, the average of the nearest scores shall be considered for ranking the projects.

The main criteria on which the projects shall be evaluated are:

¹² The first criterion is eliminatory, without the PO asking for clarification.

¹³ The first criterion is eliminatory, without the PO asking for clarification.

¹⁴ The planned project duration does not exceed the communicated limit (December 2023).

¹⁵ The Selection Committee approves the projects proposals to be financed, on the basis of the conclusions of evaluations carried out by independent evaluators. The SC consists of five members: one representative of the National Focal Point (NFP) from the Ministry of European Funds, one representative of the PO, one representative of FMO and one representative from each Programme partner (KS and CoE).

No.	Evaluation criteria	Maximum score
1.	Relevance of the project	25
1.1	Relevance to the programme <i>The project is relevant to the objectives of the call /programme area and to the European and national strategic documents¹⁶ in the field</i>	5
1.2	Contribution to achieving the programme's results <i>The project addresses the main target group directly and has a significant number of beneficiaries from this group, contributing to the achievement of the quantitative indicators of the programme</i>	5
1.3	Relevance of the project to the needs of the target group/groups <i>The nature of the problem the project proposes to approach is clearly identified and described. The main target group and its needs are clearly identified, defined, described and quantified. Complementary activities are provided for the secondary target groups. The proposed activities/services are easily accessible to the target groups.</i>	5
1.4	The need for the project implementation <i>The proposal clearly explains and proves the need for the project implementation; it explains and argues the proposed approach (strategy, methods etc.), demonstrating the integrated and systemic character of the intervention</i>	5
1.5	Context/coherence/synergy with other initiatives <i>The project identifies and describes other initiatives in the field, addressing the target groups, clearly demonstrates their correlation and complementarity and proves that there are no overlaps</i>	5
2	Technical consistency/methodology	35
2.1	Project objectives <i>The project objectives are properly identified and stated (SMART¹⁷)</i>	5
2.2	Project activities <i>The activities are well chosen, realistic, feasible and contribute to the achievement of the project objectives, are clearly described in detail, and their planning is logical/adequate; the working methodologies are clear and coherent</i>	5
2.3	Project results <i>The outcomes are quantified and measurable through the provided indicators, the targets are realistic and describe real and achievable benefits during the project implementation; are correlated with both project objectives and activities, as well as programme indicators</i>	5
2.4	Stakeholders consultation <i>The project demonstrates that it was developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders (e.g. members of the target groups, professionals, Roma experts, members of communities) and envisages a consultation / information plan of these stakeholders for the implementation period</i>	5
2.5	Visibility of the project <i>The promotion and visibility activities are clearly described, adapted to the specificity of the target audience, project objectives and programme requirements</i>	5
2.6	Innovation and added value <i>The project contains elements of new and/or innovative approaches and clearly demonstrates the added value that it brings (the extent to which the project contributes to improving the access to services/measures corresponding to the needs of the target groups and produces effects on medium and long term)</i>	5

¹⁶ See also the Strategic and Legislative Framework on the PO's website <http://www.frds.ro/>

¹⁷ A SMART objective should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.

2.7	Risks <i>The project contains a pertinent risk analysis (determined by the organization's external or internal environment – e.g. technical, financial, managerial, etc.) and the risks do not jeopardize the achievement of the project's estimated results (the measures to prevent or mitigate their impact are appropriate)</i>	5
3	Economic efficiency and sustainability	25
3.1	Budget justification and correlation with the planned activities <i>The proposed costs are directly related to the activities and outcomes – it clearly and explicitly presents how the expenditure is calculated (unit costs and number of units, frequency and total expenditure are mentioned, there are no calculation mistakes etc.); complies with the applicable rules on wage policy, indirect costs, depreciation etc.</i>	5
3.2	Costs proportionality and necessity <i>The proposed costs are realistic, not excessive in relation to the objectives, are indispensable for the achievement of the estimated results and the cost/benefit ratio is positive (there are no cost over- or under-evaluation and the unit costs/budget prices are within reasonable limits for the profile market at the time, but also for the project specificity)</i>	5
3.3	Material resources/spaces <i>The allocated material resources and spaces are appropriate as nature, structure and size relative to the proposed activities and outcomes.</i>	5
3.4	Sustainability of the results/project <i>The project describes how the results shall be maintained (e.g. identify which activities will be continued, mention the capacity of the service after the end of the financing, targets accreditations/licensing of the services, identify resources for taking over the services, including for insurance and maintenance of the equipment and buildings etc.).</i>	5
3.5	Development/multiplication of the results <i>In addition to maintaining project results, the project application identifies and describes opportunities for developing and / or multiplying these outcomes after funding has ended (e.g. offers feasible / realistic solutions to broaden the sphere of intervention in terms of target groups, number of beneficiaries, geographical area, proposal for public policies at local/ county/ national level etc.)</i>	5
4.	Implementation capacity and partnership	15
4.1	Qualification and experience of specialized project staff <i>The structure of the specialists team is appropriate for the project implementation (number, types of jobs, functional relationships); there are clearly defined responsibilities for each job, satisfactorily describing each role, and the allocated working time is appropriate; the specialized staff proposed for the project has the qualification/competencies and experience required for the activity to be carried out</i>	5
4.2	Management experience and capacity <i>The structure of the management team is described; clear responsibilities are identified for each coordination team member, satisfactorily describing their role, and the allocated working time is appropriate; The proposed persons have relevant training and experience for the respective positions; There is a feasible plan for the financial management of the project, as well as for activities monitoring and reporting; the role and responsibilities of each partner are clearly confined in the Partnership agreement; The partners have previous experience in projects with external financing</i>	5

4.3	Added value of the partnership <i>The project is developed in partnership and the partner/partners significantly contribute(s) to the accomplishment of the project, proving relevant experience and/or expertise in the project area (e.g.: have carried out similar activities, have involved experts with relevant competencies and experience, each one acts in complementary areas and in synergy with the other partners)</i>	5
Total score		100

Each criterion is divided into sub-criteria. For each sub-criterion, the independent expert may award a score between 0 and 5 points, corresponding to one of the following qualifications:

Score	Qualifier
0	Unfulfilled
1	Deficient
2	Poor
3	Satisfactory
4	Good
5	Very good

In order to be eligible for funding, the project proposal must meet cumulatively the following conditions:

- to obtain under criterion no. 1 Relevance of the project minimum 3 points to each sub-criterion¹⁸;
- to obtain under criterion no. 3 Economic efficiency and sustainability at least 3 points to each sub-criterion;
- to obtain under criterion no. 4 Implementation capacity and partnership at least 3 points for each sub-criterion;
- to achieve a total score¹⁹ of at least 65 points out of the 100 possible.

For ease of use, the final score obtained by each project shall be divided by 10.

After finalizing the desk evaluation, the *List of projects* (outlined in descending order of final scores), together with the most relevant evaluators' observations, will be drawn up. The PO will transmit the list to the SC members and the SC will decide on the need for on-sight verification.

3.3 Projects selection and approval

The SC approves the projects to be financed and may modify the projects ranking in justified cases. The justification for the change shall be detailed in the minutes of the meetings and all the affected applicants shall be informed in writing on the justification for the change.

The PO shall verify that the selection process has been carried out in compliance with the provisions in Regulation and the SC recommendations and complies with the programme's rules and objectives. Grants shall be awarded by the PO to the projects as approved by the SC and subsequently conclude the financing contracts with the PP.

The list of selected projects is also sent to the EEA Financial Mechanism Office (FMO).

Until the final decision is taken, all the documents related to the projects evaluation shall be confidential.

¹⁸ If, after verifying the first Criterion Relevance of the project, the funding proposal does not meet the requirements, the project is rejected at this stage.

¹⁹ The average of the two independent appraisers' scores.

3.4 Applicants notification

All the applicants (except for those who submitted projects that were rejected during the formal verification stage and who have already received notifications) shall be notified on the results of the projects evaluation *within maximum 15 working days after the final decision of the PO*. In the case of projects approved for financing, the notification shall also comprise the conditions to be fulfilled for signing the project financing contract. If there are projects rejected as a result of SC's decision to change the initial or final ranking of the projects, the applicants affected by this change shall be informed in writing on the justification.

After finalizing the contracting stage, the final list of projects to be financed shall be published on RSDf's website at <http://www.frds.ro/>.

3.5 Appeals procedure

The applicants may appeal the rejection of their project proposal only during the formal evaluation stage, in which case they may file an appeal within maximum 30 days from the date of receiving the notification. There is no appeal procedure as concerns the SC's decision.

3.6 Projects contracting

For each project approved for funding, the PO will conclude a *project financing contract*.

During the project implementation, if necessary, the provisions of the financing contract/its annexes may be mutually amended (without causing substantial changes to the initially approved proposal). The amendments might be subject of addendums to the financing contract, as the case may be.

3.7 Reporting and payment system

As a rule, the PP shall submit interim reports to the PO, twice a year (for a period of 6-8 months). After finishing the project implementation period, the PP shall send the final report. For each project, the reporting planning shall be mentioned in the project financing contract.

The programme applies the pre-financing system. The payments to the PPs shall be made by the PO in the form of advance payments, interim payments and final payment. Depending on the duration of the project, the PP may require an advance between 20 and 40% of the project grant. The following payments shall be performed after the approval of the interim reports based on the supporting documents submitted by the PP (technical and financial), based on the estimate of expenses for the following period. The project funds (in Lei) shall be transferred to the accounts specifically opened by the PP for the project at the local treasury (in the case of public entities) or at a commercial bank (for NGOs/ international organisations). In case of Euro project contracts concluded with international organizations, the PO transfers the due amounts in Euro.

4. Preparation and submission of the project proposal

If the PP calls on the services of a consultant for the preparation of the application/preparation of the application file, the consultant's name shall be mentioned in the application form, in the specific field of the form.

4.1 Help-desk services and information seminars

During the period when the call for project proposals is open, the PO provides the PPs and their partners, upon request, with help-desk services (information and clarifications). These services are provided in the main office and in the two branch offices.

The applicants can send questions and requests by phone (available telephone lines can be found at <http://www.frds.ro/>), by e-mail (at info@frds.ro) or in direct meetings with PO representatives agreed upon in advance with help-desk operators.

Requests for information and clarifications related to the call may be submitted to the PO no later than 10 working days before the deadline for submission of projects within the call. Subsequent requests will no longer be considered for settlement.

Answers to questions received by the PO can be provided immediately (in the case of a telephone conversation) or within 3 working days after receiving the message if the question is received by e-mail or on the site or if the question received over the phone requires a more elaborate response.

The most frequent and relevant **Questions and Answers** on the call papers shall be published on the PO's website at <http://www.frds.ro/>. These shall be updated periodically, depending on the questions received from potential applicants. We also recommend periodic consultation of RSDF's site in order to provide access to additional and/or updated information.

Also, after launching the call, PO will organize an informative seminar (in Bucharest) for potential applicants to this call and their partners. The estimated timetable for the organization of the seminar is December 2018-January 2019. The exact date and place will be communicated to the PPs by the PO.

4.2 Project proposal file preparation

The application form must be filled-in according to the requirements described in the Applicant's Guide (both documents are published at the following address: <http://www.frds.ro/>).

The application will be drafted in English, on the template provided by the PO. A Romanian translation of the documents shall be provided.

The application will be accompanied by a package of additional documents (*e.g.: activities implementation schedule, budget justification, partnership agreement, communication and promotion plan, PP's and project partners' eligibility statements, documents proving the legal status of PP and partners, staff CVs, technical documentation for construction works etc.*). The list of documents to be submitted together with the application is available in the Applicant's Guide.

4.3 Project proposal submission

The project proposal file (respectively a hard copy and an identical copy in electronic format) shall be sent to the PO's office in Bucharest, the deadline being **March 28, 2019, 16:00**, either personally or by courier / mail (with receipt acknowledgment).

In case the project proposal is submitted by mail or courier services, the postal date or date of takeover by the courier service must be the announced deadline at the latest.

The files submitted by fax or e-mail, as well as files sent at addresses other than the mentioned one or after the announced deadline, shall be rejected.

After the deadline for submitting the projects, the PP can no longer make corrections or revisions of the project proposal file.

The documents for the project proposal and the electronic copy of the file will be presented in a sealed envelope / package, and the envelope / package shall bear the following information:

Norway Grants 2014-2021

Program "Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Enhanced Roma Inclusion"

The Call: "Poverty alleviation"

Project title:

Applicant's name:

The envelope / package will be sent to the PO's office at the address below:

Romanian Social Development Fund

Mailing address: Bucharest, sector 3, #1, Eugeniu Carada Street, 3rd floor

Telephone: 021 315 34 40; Fax: 021 315 34 15

E-mail: office@frds.ro

Web page address: <http://www.frds.ro/>

At any time before the PO's approval, the PP may choose to withdraw the project proposal from the competition. In this case, the PO shall return, upon request, the original file of the financing application and keep the electronic copy.

5. Further useful information

For a better understanding of the specificities of Norway Grants 2014-2021 and the overall project framework, we recommend consulting the following documents (the list is not limited):

- Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Kingdom of Norway and the Government of Romania on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021
http://www.frds.ro/uploads/files/RO99_LEGISLATIE/1.%20Memorandum_NORWAY.pdf
- Regulation on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021
<https://eeagrants.org/Results-data/Documents/Legal-documents/Regulations-with-annexes/Norway-Grants-2014-2021>
- Program Agreement signed between the NFP and the donor states' representatives for the implementation of the programme <http://www.eeagrants.ro/acorduri-de-program>
- Regulation (EU) 2016/679 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data
[http://www.frds.ro/uploads/files/RO99_LEGISLATIE/6.%20Regulamentul%20\(UE\)%202016\(279\)%20.pdf](http://www.frds.ro/uploads/files/RO99_LEGISLATIE/6.%20Regulamentul%20(UE)%202016(279)%20.pdf)
- Government Emergency Ordinance no. 34/2017 on the Financial Management of the Non-Reimbursable External Funds related to the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021, as subsequently amended and supplemented http://www.frds.ro/uploads/files/RO99_LEGISLATIE/OUG34.pdf
- Law 98/2016 on public procurement published in the Official Monitor no. 390 of 23 May 2016, as subsequently amended and supplemented
http://www.frds.ro/uploads/files/RO99_LEGISLATIE/Law%2098-2016.pdf
- Government Decision 395/2016 for the approval of the Methodological Norms for the application of the provisions regarding the award of the public procurement contract / the framework agreement in Law 98/2016, as subsequently amended and supplemented
http://www.frds.ro/uploads/files/RO99_LEGISLATIE/9.%20HG%20395%20din%202016.pdf
- Law 101/2016 on remedies and remedies in connection with the award of public procurement contracts, sectoral contracts and works concession and services concessions contracts, as well as for the organization and operation of CNSC, as subsequently amended and supplemented
http://www.frds.ro/uploads/files/RO99_LEGISLATIE/10.Legea%20101%20pe%202016.pdf
- Order of the Minister of European Funds no. 1284 regarding the approval of the competitive procedure applicable to the private applicants / beneficiaries for the award of services or works supply contracts, financed from European funds, published in the Official Monitor no. 618 of August 12, 2016, as subsequently amended and supplemented
http://www.frds.ro/uploads/files/RO99_LEGISLATIE/Order%201284-2016.pdf
- Order MDRAPFE / ANAP no. 6.712 / 890/2017 regarding the approval of the procurement procedures for the projects with European financing implemented in partnership
http://www.frds.ro/uploads/files/RO99_LEGISLATIE/ORDIN%20%206712.pdf
- Order No 348/2018 on the approval of the rules for the application of lump sums for travel expenses financed from the Bilateral Relations Fund and Technical Assistance Fund of the EEA and the Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021
http://www.frds.ro/uploads/files/RO99_LEGISLATIE/12.%20Ordinul%20384%20privind%20sume%20forfetare%20.pdf

- Decision of the PO Steering Committee no. 4/X/ST/26.10.2018 related to the rules for the application of lump sums for travel expenses at programme and projects level financed from the EEA and the Norwegian Financial Mechanisms 2014-2021
http://www.frds.ro/uploads/files/HCD4_VII.pdf
- Government Emergency Ordinance 66/2011 on the prevention, detection and sanctioning of irregularities in the obtaining and use of European funds and / or related national public funds, as subsequently amended and supplemented
http://www.frds.ro/uploads/files/RO99_LEGISLATIE/14.%20OUG%20nr.%2066-2011.pdf
- Government Decision 875/2011 for approving the Methodological Norms for the application of the provisions of Government Emergency Ordinance no. 66/2011 on the prevention, detection and sanctioning of the irregularities in obtaining and using the European funds and / or the related national public funds
http://www.frds.ro/uploads/files/RO99_LEGISLATIE/14.%20OUG%20nr.%2066-2011.pdf
- Government Decision 519/2014 regarding the setting of the rates related to the percentage cuts / financial corrections applicable for the deviations provided in the Annex to GEO 66/2011, as subsequently amended and supplemented
http://www.frds.ro/uploads/files/RO99_LEGISLATIE/14.%20OUG%20nr.%2066-2011.pdf
- Guides adopted by FMC / NMFA in accordance with applicable Regulations (For more details, use the following link: <https://eeagrants.org/Results-data/Toolbox-for-programmes/Toolbox-2014-2021/Guidelines-and-Manuals>)