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Standardized Approach for the Management of Technical Assistance Platform and cascade funding mechanism

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Foreword

This CEN Workshop Agreement (CWA XXXX:YYYY) has been developed in accordance with the CEN-CENELEC Guide 29 “CEN/CENELEC Workshop Agreements – A rapid way to standardization” and with the relevant provisions of CEN/CENELEC Internal Regulations - Part 2. It was approved by the Workshop [CEN/WS NESOI “NESOI – Standardized Approach for the Management Optimization of a Technical Assistance Facility”, the secretariat of which is held by “UNI”] consisting of representatives of interested parties on YYYY-MM-DD, the constitution of which was supported by [CEN] following the public call for participation made on YYYY-MM-DD. However, this [CEN] Workshop Agreement does not necessarily include all relevant stakeholders.

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The following organizations and individuals developed and approved this CEN Workshop Agreement:

- name organization and individual
- name organization and individual
- ...

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Introduction

The EU Island Facility NESOI (New Energy Solutions Optimised for Islands) was a four-year Horizon 2020 project funded under call topic LC-SC3-ES8-2019 (European Islands Facility – Unlock financing for energy transitions and supporting islands to develop investment concepts). It started on October 1st, 2019, and finished on February 29th, 2024, and was managed by a multi-disciplinary consortium consisting of ten partners from seven EU Member States. It had a total budget of 10 million € of which approximately 3 million € were dedicated to a cascade funding mechanism to provide direct financial support for technical assistance to EU Islands.

Together with consortium capacity building activities, the EU Island Facility NESOI project initially aimed at mobilising more than 100 million € of public/private investment in sustainable energy projects to an audience of 2,400 inhabited EU islands by 2023, giving the opportunity to test innovative energy technologies and approaches in a cost-competitive way and leading to expected energy savings for 440 GWh/year and to avoided GHG emissions for 160,000 tCO₂e/y.

The two-round open call received 166 applications from 16 Countries and selected 54 projects from 70 islands, potentially able to trigger 567 million € of public/private investments and to avoid 440,000 tCO₂e of GHG emissions. As a consequence, NESOI technical assistance has been crucial for islands to develop effective energy transition planning, feasibility studies, publish public tender, triggering sustainable investments, activating both private and public funds.

In the context of the NESOI project, procedures were developed for the selection of projects to be supported, for the normalization of technical/financial/legal assistance to energy transition projects and for the management of cascade funding initiatives. Currently, energy transition projects are not following a specific standardized structure and cascade funding initiatives are managed in different ways according to the needs of the funding entity and of the involved stakeholders. The aim of the present CWA is to fill this standardization gap and, leveraging on the experience developed in the NESOI project, to standardize procedures to be replicated in other cascade funding initiatives on any energy transition projects, not necessarily just islands.

1 Scope

This document specifies procedures for the management of technical/financial/legal support to any energy transition projects implemented through a cascade funding approach. This includes procedures for the selection of projects to be supported, the standardization of support provided to energy transition projects and the management of cascade funding initiatives.

This document is intended to be used by public institutions at local, regional, national and international level, as well as by donors and International Financial Institutions.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at <http://www.iso.org/obp/>

— IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

technical assistance

consulting services provided to Beneficiaries selected through Open Calls, in order to support the structuring and implementation of investments

3.2

cascade funding mechanism

financial support for third parties whereby the platform, endowed with financial resources, manages and disburses them to selected beneficiaries for the development of specific activities

3.3

technical assistance platform

initiative aiming at providing Technical Assistance and/or Financial Support to Beneficiaries selected through Open Calls

3.4

guidelines for applicants

document prepared by the Platform, presenting the instructions to organizations willing to apply to the Open Calls

3.5

project impact

measurable quantitative result achieved, or expected to be achieved, with the implementation of a project provided with technical assistance and/or financial support by the platform

3.6

open call

public procedure launched by the platform to select beneficiaries of technical assistance and/or of financial Support

3.7

application form

form that each proponent is asked to fill in to apply to the open call organized by the platform

Note 1 to entry: This is the document on which the selection and evaluation process is based.

3.8

evaluator

individual who is appointed by the platform to carry out an individual evaluation of one or more applications to the Open Call

3.9

weakness

problem in the way an application to the open call addresses one or more evaluation criteria, making the whole application inappropriate for selection.

Note 1 to entry: This includes for instance projects with topics, impacts or benefits not aligned with the minimum requirements of the Open Call

3.10

shortcoming

problem affecting an important aspect of an application to the open call

Note 1 to entry: A shortcoming can be defined “minor shortcoming” in case it only affects a marginal aspect of the proposal.

3.11

maturity area

development level of a project applying to the Open Call.

Note 1 to entry: A project which is still at a low maturity level does not have analyses available, and the technical details needs to be defined. A project is mature when it's close to implementation: final design is available, together with a risk analysis; the subsequent step is construction

3.12

beneficiary

organisation selected through the Open Call to be provided with technical assistance or financial support

3.13

technology readiness level (TRL)

type of measurement system, scoring from 1 to 9, for estimating the maturity of technologies during the acquisition phase of a program

Note 1 to entry: TRL 1 – basic principles observed

TRL 2 – technology concept formulated

TRL 3 – experimental proof of concept

TRL 4 – technology validated in lab

TRL 5 – technology validated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)

TRL 6 – technology demonstrated in relevant environment (industrially relevant environment in the case of key enabling technologies)

TRL 7 – system prototype demonstration in operational environment

TRL 8 – system complete and qualified

TRL 9 – actual system proven in operational env

3.14

replication readiness level (RRL)

indicator, scoring from 0 to 15, specifically designed to measure the replicability potential of a technical solution/project

Note 1 to entry: The indicator combines the evaluation on five different indicators, each scoring from 0 (Replication not doable) to 3 (Replication is doable in all cases). The sum of the scoring assigned to the 5 indicator constitutes the overall RRL. Thus:

RRL = 0 means that the project is not replicable at all

RRL = 15 means it is fully replicable, and no conditions need to be met

3.15

project manager (PM)

appointed employee of the platform who bears the responsibility of the management of the project and the relation with the beneficiary, on behalf of the Platform

3.16

technical assistance expert (TAE)

expert, employed by the platform, specialised in technical, economic, financial and/or legal matters to support the development of energy transition projects

3.17

support team

the group of technical assistance expert working on a project

3.18

external technical assistance expert (ETAE)

experts, not directly employed by the platform, but procured by the beneficiaries who contribute to project development through technical, economic, financial and/or legal advisory

3.19

kick-off meeting

first meeting between the support team and the beneficiary in which objectives and activities are shared

3.20

kpi

Set of indicators chosen to assess and measure project performance and actionable impacts

3.21

grant agreement (GA)

contract signed between the grant office on behalf of the platform and each selected beneficiary, to define and agree on all terms and conditions, as well as the obligations and responsibilities of the parties

3.22

quality management board (QMB)

board consisting of at least 3 members that supports the Grant Office in evaluating the deliverables produced by the selected projects and ensures a uniform quality of the deliverables supported by the platform

3.23

energy transition project

project leading to a reduction of GHG and/or pollutant emissions associated to energy uses, through the reduction of energy consumption and/or the increased penetration of renewable energy or low-carbon energy sources

EXAMPLE: production of energy from renewable sources, energy efficiency interventions on assets (buildings, lighting systems, etc.), realization/improvement of energy storage systems, improvement of the existing electricity grid, realization/improvement of district heating and cooling networks, energy-related waste and water management actions, implementation of sustainable mobility solutions, improvement of energy monitoring and management, energy audits/assessments, energy planning studies.

3.24

open call coordinator

person appointed to lead the Open Call process, whose duties include the collection of the received proposals, the assignment of reviewers, the calculation of average scores and the creation of the ranking

4 Management of Open Call

4.1 The process

The methodology described in this Clause applies to the management of open calls for platforms targeting the provision of technical assistance and/or financial support to beneficiaries. Typically, these procedures are meant to select the beneficiaries of technical assistance platforms, both funded by public or private resources. These include EU, national or regional funds, private funds such as from local banking foundations.

When organizing an open call, the process implies at least the following three stages:

1. the open call itself, thus the definition of the objectives as well as the requisites and eligibility criteria (see 4.2);
2. the evaluation stage, when the applications received are evaluated on determined criteria (see 4.3);
3. ranking of the applications and selection of the beneficiaries (see 4.4).

4.2 Stage 1 – Open call and eligibility criteria

The objective of the open call and the support provided to selected applicants shall be defined and publicly communicated, typically in dedicated Guidelines for Applicants.

The Guidelines for Applicants include:

- the characteristics and legal form of eligible beneficiaries (public, private, etc.) and the possibility of consortiums to apply;
- the maximum grant and the maximum amount of person-days of technical assistance that can be provided to each project and/or beneficiary;
- the possibility for a beneficiary to apply with multiple projects or receive more than one grant;
- the location of eligible projects and/or of the eligible beneficiaries;
- the type of eligible projects (specific technologies/applications, end-uses, objectives);
- the timing of eligible projects, potentially depending on their maturity level;
- the minimum impacts that shall be achieved by eligible projects according to measurable KPIs;
- any legislation to which the projects and the beneficiaries shall be compliant;
- the legitimacy/honorability requirements for beneficiaries;
- the rules for the management of the potential conflicts of interest.

In addition, the structure, language and minimum contents of the application form to apply to the open call shall be defined and communicated. The application form shall include the following sections:

- proposal at a glance (or executive summary, summarizing the main objectives and the expected impacts of the project);
- project description and main features: project promoter, location, maturity of the project, investment size, leverage factor;
- project impacts (expected results of the project expressed in terms of measurable KPIs);
- beneficiary and local ecosystem (roles of project partners, engagement of key stakeholders, governance of the project, risk matrix);
- project execution and requested support (tasks to be covered with the requested grant or the requested assistance) including project timeline;
- attachments - as defined in the Guidelines for applicants - to provide additional information on the project and relevant details for the evaluations. These can include: support letters, available preliminary studies, proofs of secured financing/licenses.

4.3 Stage 2 – Evaluation Process

4.3.1 General

The evaluation shall be fair, transparent and clearly communicated.

The evaluation process foresees the following steps:

- distribution of responsibilities (see 4.3.1);
- assessment by individual evaluator (see 4.3.2);
- discussion among evaluators (see 4.3.3)

4.3.2 Distribution of Responsibilities

An Open Call Manager shall be Appointed. The Open Call Manager shall gather the submitted applications, assign a unique project proposal number to each, and conduct an initial screening to check for any major inconsistencies or errors in eligibility before forwarding the proposals to individual evaluators (see 4.3.2).

The Open Call Manager shall then assign each proposal to different evaluators – typically three evaluators, which is considered an appropriate number to ensure a fair evaluation – based on their competencies, technical background, nationality, and absence of conflicts of interest.

4.3.3 Assessment by Individual Evaluator

Upon receipt of an application for review, the individual evaluator shall check for any conflict of interest and immediately notify the Open Call Manager if a conflict is identified.

The individual evaluator shall first assess the structure and contents of the proposal and highlight any relevant error or gap against the required contents, then proceed with a detailed analysis and score the proposal according to the Guidelines for Applicants.

The methodology to define a scoring system implies:

- 1) Identification of the sub-areas of evaluation, as part of the application form. These shall include:
 - project description and main features;
 - project impacts;
 - beneficiary and local ecosystem;
 - project execution and requested support.
- 2) The scoring system itself, meaning the marks and the range of the evaluation. In order to avoid ambiguity and difficulties in the assessment process, it is recommended to utilise a scale from 1 to 5 (with 0.5 resolution) and to avoid wider score ranges:
 - 1 – Poor - the criterion is not addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses;
 - 2 – Fair - the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses;

3 – Good - the proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present;

4 – Very Good - the proposal addresses the criterion very well, but less than 3 shortcomings are present;

5 – Excellent - the proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcoming is not affecting the soundness of the proposal.

In addition to the scores, each evaluator could assign each proposal one of more “bonuses”, whose presence shall be considered in the elaboration of the final ranking. Bonuses can be related to the following topics:

- for innovation, each evaluator shall give “1” if the project is highly innovative (lower TRL technologies, i.e. below 5), “0.5” if the project is innovative (technologies demonstrated only in few cases, TRL between 5 and 7) or “0” if not;
- for “replicability topics”, each evaluator shall give “0” if the proposal is too specific for the local context, “0.5” if the proposed solution is replicable only in less than 5 similar contexts, “1” if the proposed solution is significantly replicable in more than 5 other contexts;
- for “quality of supporting documents”, each evaluator shall give “0” if supporting documents are not provided or do not provide relevant details to the proposal, “0.5” if the documents provide a sufficient added value to the proposal in terms of understanding of the proposal or support from stakeholders to the project, “1” if the documents provide a significant added value to the proposal in terms of understanding of the proposal or support from stakeholders to the project.

Minimum scores shall be defined, on pain of disqualification. This applies both to sub-areas of evaluation and to the overall score.

In order not to disqualify the proposal, for each evaluator the minimum scoring thresholds are:

- 2.0 (included) for sub-areas of evaluation (“project description and main features”, project impacts, “beneficiary and local ecosystem”, “project execution and requested support”);
- 12.0 (included) for the total score calculated as the sum of the scores given for the four sub-areas of evaluation – not including bonuses.

The individual evaluator shall insert the outcomes of the individual evaluation (mark from 1 to 5 with 0.5 resolution) for each of the four areas of evaluation and total mark out of 20 (resulting from the sum of the four marks) into a database, without seeing the marks given by other individual evaluators.

4.3.4 Discussion among individual Evaluators

The database of individual evaluations shall compare marks given by different reviewers. If the marks assigned by different reviewers in more than one evaluation area differ by more than 1.0 from the average mark, the database shall flag the proposal for a discussion among individual evaluators.

For each proposal requiring discussion among evaluators, the Open Call Manager shall organize a conference call involving all the three individual evaluators.

Each individual evaluator shall provide an explanation for the score they assigned and a discussion shall take place to reach a consensus on the most suitable mark.

Minutes of the meeting shall be recorded, and any necessary corrections to the given marks shall be made directly in the database during or immediately after the discussion session, ensuring that the updated scores are available for the next phase of the ranking process.

4.4 Stage 3 – Ranking and Selection

After the completion of the individual evaluation process, the Open Call Manager shall calculate the average marks for the subsequent creation of the ranking.

For each proposal and each area of evaluation, an average mark shall be calculated as the arithmetic average of the marks given by the three evaluators. Average marks shall be calculated with two decimals, rounding with following rules:

- values with decimals up to 0.24 shall be rounded to the lower integer number;
- values with decimals from 0.25 to 0.74 shall be rounded to the lower integer number plus 0.5;
- values with decimals between 0.75 and 0.99 shall be rounded to the higher integer number.

Based on the received bonuses, up to 3 additional points may be awarded. For each bonus, based on the three marks given by the individual evaluators, the proposal shall receive the average bonus score. This is determined by calculating the arithmetic average of the marks given by the evaluators and rounding the result as follows:

- to 0 points if the average is lower than 0.24,
- to 0.5 points if the average is between 0.25 and 0.74,
- to 1 point if the average is higher than 0.75.

The total mark shall then be calculated as the sum of the average marks obtained in the four areas of evaluation plus any bonuses. Therefore, the maximum value is 22.

The ranking shall be created by ordering all the received applications in descending order of their total score. As mentioned above, proposals with a score lower than 12.0 shall be disqualified and will not receive support.

For projects having the same total score, precedence in the ranking shall be given according to (by decreasing order of importance):

- highest financial leverage;
- expected impact (measured according to one of the impact KPIs described in Clause 4.2).

In the unlikely event that two projects are ranked equally according to these criteria, and only one can be selected, the project that submitted the application first shall be given precedence.

This may result in the final ranking of the proposals and selection shall occur until the available budget is exhausted.

Based on the ranking of project applications, the final selection of projects shall be carried out, considering i.e. the geographical location and the maturity of the projects.

5 Management of the Technical Assistance

5.1 Projects clustering

Depending on the call, its objectives and criteria, selected projects may differ significantly. This occurs especially when dealing with technical assistance platform where the support provided is meant to be customized and fit different project needs, technologies and maturities. As a result, the award in terms of financial and/or technical support, may vary and projects clustering may be necessary to identify homogeneous applications.

To do so, key features to be mapped shall include:

- Geographical area
- Maturity level
- Financial support requested
- Expected investment
- Technical assistance menu and activities requested
- Sector of intervention and technologies involved

Dedicated and bilateral meetings with the applicant shall be scheduled to get a deeper understanding of the initiative and ensure a correct clusterization.

5.2 Allocation to dedicated support teams

Estimating the effort to be allocated to the single initiatives is also a cornerstone of technical assistance platform. Typically, resources (both financial and human) are limited, and planning is fundamental to ensure the effectiveness, efficiency and adherence to the time schedule.

The effort allocation shall be decided upfront, and the call shall already specify the support (financial and/or technical) that is granted to the beneficiaries. However, given the variety of the technical assistance platforms, finetuning may be needed after the selection and project clustering.

When technical support is foreseen, different competences need to be involved as well as different Technical Assistance Experts (TAE), constituting the support team. Competences and roles include: project manager, technical advisor, economic-financial advisor, and legal-procedural advisor.

To properly allocate projects to dedicated support team, the following criteria shall be considered.

- a) **Language:** if applicable, the preference in the selection of the experts involved (in particular the project manager) is given to those able to speak the same language of the beneficiary. This is so to ease the relationship between the TAE and the beneficiary;

- b) **Geographical macro area:** in the case assistance is expected to be provided locally, the geographical distribution shall be taken in consideration to make support effective even from a logistic point of view;
- c) **2 or 3 experts per project:** to avoid the involvement of too many experts in the project, and the fragmentation of the activities, two or three experts shall be allocated per each project. Each expert is in charge to provide specific technical assistance, thus covering only one competence (technical/economic and financial/legal and procedural). Appointed experts result in the support team;
- d) **Technical expertise:** the allocation shall exploit the specific expertise of the experts, who can provide a wide range of competences covering different technologies and practices;
- e) **Planned effort:** finally, the effort foreseen is coupled with the capacity to deliver of the organizations and experts involved, to ensure consistency.

5.3 Set up of common management tools

Due to the multiple ongoing activities involving each project and the dedicated support teams, monitoring activities are crucial to keep track of the overall progress and impacts.

To do so, tools and metrics shall be developed to monitor and assess the project efficiency not only with respect to the timeframe but also in terms of involvement and allocation of the different types (financial, technical, human) of resources.

The purpose is two-fold: on one side, to provide the beneficiaries with a roadmap, based on proper indicators and milestones, to efficiently orient efforts and resources in the implementation of the specific project; on the other side, to apply a useful control mechanism not only to closely monitor the development of the activities of the support team and the achievements of the objectives, but also to promptly and efficiently intervene to make the necessary adjustments when needed.

The monitoring strategy shall be based on 5 principles:

1. Continuous reporting
2. Standardization and systematization
3. Commitment and involvement of all stakeholders
4. Looking-forward approach
5. Quantitative and qualitative reporting.

Monitoring activities shall include:

- Before the deployment of Technical Assistance, a project **detailed workplan** shall be drawn, defining the activity as well as the reporting and monitoring schedule as agreed among the project stakeholders, which is aimed at assessing the impacts of the projects, as to monitor the projects status and verify any relevant issue.
- **Monthly project meetings** shall be organized, to update on the ongoing technical assistance, but also review the deliverables. The aim is to perform a “fitness check”, focusing on both

strategic and operational aspects of project implementation. Project reviews complement information collected through continuous monitoring and periodic reporting and help to reach a common view on the state of play of project implementation. The review shall also assess the effective capacity of the project to achieve its objectives and targets as defined in the approved application form, also in light of possible external factors.

- During the implementation, **interim and final reporting** obligations shall be agreed with beneficiaries, including financial targets.
- To monitor the impact, specific **Key Performance Indicators** (KPI) shall be developed. Indicators shall reflect the relevant aspects in which a contribution of the project is expected. The identification of environmental, social, economic and financial indicators shall be encouraged.
- Concerning the effort and the equivalent cost-value of the technical assistance provided by the support team, a specific project **financial spreadsheet** shall be completed by the experts responsible for the technical assistance.
- In case the platform also implies financial support, the use of **the cascade funding** shall be monitored.

5.4 Provision of Technical Assistance

From a methodological perspective, each selected project shall be organised according to a common set of practices and schedule, with the goal of standardising the approach and obtaining a similar final output. These include:

- At the beginning of the project, a **Kick-Off meeting** shall be organised, where all the experts involved in the project (including beneficiaries, support team, any relevant stakeholder) present themselves. The beneficiary is asked to give an overview of the goals of the project and the status of the performed activities (if any); the PM briefly explains the activities concerning the economic, technical and legal field to be executed and presented the workplan;
- After the Kick-off, a **common repository** (typically online) shall be created, where all the parties involved could exchange files and information;
- **Update meetings** shall be arranged by the parties involved, taking place regularly. In the meantime, the exchange of information occurs via email;
- When the activities are completed, the final output is shared between all the parties, to gather further suggestions and inputs;
- Halfway through the project, a **first review meeting** shall be held to validate the progress made so far;
- If possible and relevant for the success of the project, site visits and in person meetings are encouraged;
- A **second review meeting** shall take place close to the end of the project, to validate the work conducted with the beneficiary.

6 Management of the Cascade Funding

6.1 Grant Agreement Preparation

6.1.1 Grant Agreement Model

To manage beneficiaries of the open call, a Grant agreement shall be defined and signed detailing all terms and conditions, as well as the obligations and responsibilities of the beneficiaries and the granting authority. A Grant Agreement template should be used with the following structure to cover essential aspects of the proposed methodology:

Terms and Conditions

- Annex 1 – Description of the Action: application form submitted by the applicant.
- Annex 2 – Additional Information: Details on activities and estimated budget.
- Annex 3 – Guidelines for Applicants: Additional terms and conditions of the open call.
- Annex 4 – Bank Account: Information for making aid payments to beneficiaries if they comply with the terms and conditions.
- Annex 5 – Interim and Final Monitoring Reports: Reports on the status of activities and results obtained, complementary to the results obtained in the form of deliverables.
- Annex 6 – Mandate to Coordinator: Provided to the coordinator of other beneficiaries in the event of signing consortia.

6.1.2 Grant Preparation Meetings

Although beneficiaries are selected for offering the best proposals in terms of quality and content under the selection criteria, one or more meetings should be held with the following objectives:

- Clarify any doubts or questions that may arise from the proposal sent to the granting authority.
- Agree between the granting authority and the beneficiary on the list of technical assistance activities, their scope and expected results, which would result in Annex 2 of the Grant Agreement.
- Inform beneficiaries about the main terms and conditions, as well as the process for accessing aid or payments, among other things.

From the beneficiary's side, it is advisable for members of the administrative, financial and technical offices or departments to participate, with the aim of covering all related aspects. Separate meetings shall be scheduled to address the more technical aspects of the proposal, including correcting any deficiencies identified in the evaluation summary report or clarifying the scope of the technical assistance activities.

6.1.3 Supporting Documentation

To prepare the Grant Agreement, in addition to the preparation meetings, all beneficiaries shall provide the following legal, financial and administrative information to verify each entity and prepare the contracts:

- **Administrative information:** Data of the main contact persons, official name of the organisation, legal form, CIF, type of organisation, registration number, registration date and official address. The European Commission's Legal Entity Form template should be used.
- **Legal documents:** Official documents supporting the provided administrative data, such as the commercial register, official bulletin, VAT identification, etc.
- **Financial information:** All bank data to proceed with aid payments. Official documents supporting the provided data shall also be provided. The European Commission's Financial Identification Form template should be used.
- **Declaration of Honour:** Receive signed Declarations of Honour to ensure that all beneficiaries comply with the rules and are not in a situation that excludes them from receiving aid (e.g. bankruptcy).

6.1.4 Signature

An **electronic signature** that complies with current European regulations [1], [2], [3], [4] shall be used. Only advanced electronic signatures based on a qualified certificate, as defined by [5] shall be accepted.

6.2 Monitoring of grant spending and control measures

6.2.1 Assignment of Responsibilities

To ensure a smooth and controlled process, each of the actor involved shall be assigned with clear responsibilities defined in the subclauses 6.2.1.1 to 6.2.1.5.

6.2.1.1 Project Managers (PMs)

- Manage and control technical assistance activities.
- Monitor detailed planning and progress of activities.
- Ensure the technical quality of the work to achieve expected outcomes.
- Foster collaboration between the technical team and external technical experts, if any.
- Coordinate and supervise the work carried out by the technical team and external technical experts.
- Collect Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- Review or collect deliverables and milestones.
- Report promptly to the Grant Office.

- Immediately inform the Grant Office of any event that may significantly impact the project's implementation.

6.2.1.2 Technical Assistance Experts (TAE)

- Carry out assigned activities and tasks as per Annex 2 of the Grant Agreement.
- Ensure timely execution of tasks.
- Prepare or collect deliverables and milestones.
- Promote an environment of discussion, interaction, and collaboration between the support team and external experts.
- Advise and support PM decisions on project operational issues.

6.2.1.3 External Technical Assistance Experts (ETAE)

- If applicable, carry out assigned activities and tasks as per Annex 2 of the Grant Agreement.
- Prepare reports and deliverables.
- Work in close cooperation and coordination with the team: the Beneficiary, the Project Manager, and the Technical Assistance Experts.
- External Technical Assistance Experts shall provide all the required information to the team and ensure the delivery of agreed results and deliverables.

6.2.1.4 Quality Management Board (QMB)

- Create a QMB to carry out quality control of external experts.
- Review outputs and verify technical consistency with external technical assistance activities defined in Annex 2 of the Grant Agreement.
- Verify deliverables produced by external entities contracted by the beneficiaries.
- Consist of a limited number of senior experts from Technical Assistance organisations.

6.2.1.5 Grant Office:

- Gather and evaluate interim and final reports delivered by beneficiaries in collaboration with the QMB.
- Collect beneficiary information based on KPIs.
- Responsible for approving interim and final reports, following technical verification and completion of deliverables by the QMB.

6.2.2 Payment Procedure

According to the length of the project, interim payments may be foreseen. For example, whether the project duration exceeds 6 months, an interim payment may be agreed halfway. The request shall be accompanied by the Interim Monitoring Report as per Annex 5 of the Grant Agreement.

6.2.2.1 Interim Payment Request (optional)

6.2.2.1.1 General

For projects with interim payments, the beneficiary shall submit an interim payment request by the date specified in the Grant Agreement. The request shall be accompanied by:

- The Interim Monitoring Report as per Annex 5 of the GA.
- Supporting Documents: To substantiate the work done and interim results of technical assistance activities carried out by the external entity.

Roles in the Interim Payment Process

- The Granting Authority shall provide the interim report template and send reminders to applicants one month before the end of the interim reporting period, at the end of the interim reporting period, and one week before the deadline, if the beneficiary has not yet submitted the Interim report.
- The PM shall assist the applicant with the interim report and the collection of deliverables from external entities.
- The QMB shall review deliverables to verify technical consistency with activities.
- The Granting Authority shall gather and evaluate interim reports delivered by beneficiaries in collaboration with the QMB.

Final approval shall be provided by the three bodies: Granting Authority, QMB, and PM.

6.2.2.2 Final Payment Request

The beneficiary shall submit a final payment request upon project completion by the date specified in the Grant Agreement. The request shall be accompanied by:

- The Final Monitoring Report as per Annex 5 of the Grant Agreement.
- Supporting Documents: To substantiate the work done and results of technical assistance activities carried out by the external entity.
- KPIs: Beneficiaries shall complete and submit the list of applicable KPIs agreed upon with the PM at the end of the project.

Roles in the Final Payment Process:

- The Granting Authority shall provide the final report template and send reminders to applicants one month before the project ends, upon project completion, and one week before the deadline if the beneficiary has not yet submitted the final report.

- The PM shall assist the applicant with the final report, the collection of deliverables from external entities, and the compilation of KPIs.
- The QMB shall review deliverables provided by the beneficiary to verify the technical consistency with the activities and deliverables defined in the grant agreement .
- The Granting Authority shall gather and evaluate final reports delivered by beneficiaries in collaboration with the QMB.

Final approval shall be provided by the three bodies: Granting Authority, QMB, and PM.

6.2.2.3 QMB meetings

QMB meetings may be proposed by any member of the QMB or Granting Office to address any discrepancies or conflicts in the assessment or in cases of significant deviations. Alternatively, emails can be utilized as a tool for clarification or for making minor decisions. During QMB meetings, issues shall ideally be resolved by consensus. Should consensus not be achieved, the matter shall be put to a vote. Decisions shall be made by a simple majority vote. Voting shall be open (non-secret), with each QMB member having one vote. In the event of a tie, Granting Office shall have an additional casting vote.

Examples of potential discrepancies or deviations could be

- Discrepancies on the consistency of technical assistance activity(-ies) carried out
- Lack of means of verification
- Budget reduction, if necessary

7 Replication Assessment of Supported Projects

7.1 Replicating successful initiatives

The methodology herein illustrated in managing and delivering proven and effective technical assistance also comprises methods to assess the replication potential of supported projects.

The replicability denotes the property of a project that allows it to be duplicated at another location or time. The assessment and outline of the replicability potential aims at stimulating replication by encouraging and facilitating collaboration, open innovation, and visibility of investment opportunities.

In this context, the evaluation of the replicability also facilitates the promotion of the service towards targeted stakeholders. To evaluate the added value created by technical assistance platform, it's recommended to evaluate the replicability potential of supported projects. Evidences shall result in a report, which contains:

- Description of each supported project
- Geographical, technical and financial key data of each supported project
- Outline of the activities/support provided by the platform

- Assessment of the replication potential, based on Replicability Readiness Levels (RRL)
- Replication strategy, based on the outcome of the TRL measurement

Specific and distinctive indicators of supported projects shall be identified in order to build a guidebook of best practices and lesson learned. The goal is to assess the replicability of their results under different/similar conditions, sectors, contexts, etc.

The assessment shall also point out the replicability criteria and potential barriers to overcome to ensure higher replication. The report shall illustrate practically the conditions to be met to replicate similar interventions.

To maximize the potential users of the report for replication, it is recommended to make it available in multiple languages.

7.2 A standard methodology to assess replicability

The methodology entails a collective process to gather key data from supported projects and from the teams engaged in providing direct assistance.

The first step in the development of the report for replication is to define a factsheet template to collect key information for each project. These shall include:

- Project introductory data
- Focused description (implied technical intervention, financial status, stakeholders and communities involved)
- Outline of the assistance provided
- Impact and results (e.g., KPIs)
- Timeline in relation to the phase during which the technical assistance support intervenes
- Replication criteria and strategy.

The “Replication criteria and strategy” results from a specific analysis based on five indicators and Replicability Readiness Levels (RRL). More in details, each project shall be evaluated against the following indicators:

1. Geographical (definition of the geographical, morphological and climatic conditions to meet)
2. Technological (definition of the technical and technological implications to be met)
3. Legal (definition of the legal, regulatory and legislative features to be met and barriers to consider)
4. Societal (definition of the social acceptance and level of community engagement required)
5. Fundraising/investment attractiveness (definition of the economic and financial viability, bankability, fundability and local economic context required)

Each indicator is measured with a RRL, to assess how they impact on the replicability potential: higher indicator means higher replicability potential under different conditions and contexts.

High RRL are assigned to projects which have a high level of flexibility to be replicated in contexts not necessarily similar. This means that all the five indicators do not objectively prevent from replicating the same project in other contexts not necessarily similar. Projects with low RRL require that all the five indicators to be basically the same to guarantee replication in other contexts.

A score between 0 and 3 (0 min and 3 max) is assigned to each indicator:

- Score 0 – Replication not doable
- Score 1 – Replication is limitedly doable when the indicator's conditions described and assessed are critical to guarantee an effective replication
- Score 2 – Replication is doable if similar conditions are met when the indicator's conditions described and assessed are recommendable to be met to ensure an effective replication
- Score 3 – Replication is doable in all cases

The average score of all five indicators represents the overall RRL for the project.

As a consequence of the overall RRL, a replication strategy is defined to overcome any barriers identified in the process.

7.3 Structure of the report for replication

The report, following the information gathered from the factsheets, shall be prepared by making an extensive use of graphs, pictures and bullet points to facilitate the usability. A simple and concise language should be used to guarantee the usability for a wider range of stakeholders from different backgrounds.

The report shall have the following structure:

1- "General Information on the Project" outlining the description and objectives of the initiative, the reasons why the technical assistance was requested, the typology of assistance provided. This part which shall be concise and clear shall help stakeholders to immediately understand the project contents and if it can be taken as a reference for local replication.

2- "Project Timeline" indicates where/how the support is included within the entire project lifetime. I.e. the support can happen in the very initial stages of a project or in an advanced maturity phase. This implies a rough description of the actions already carried out before the support starts and those actions that shall be left to be implemented after the end of the support (e.g., full funding, launch of the works and expected completion).

3- "Project Replicability" describes the replication potential and the conditions to be met for each project. Replicability potential is measured by the RRL.

4- "Project Replication Strategy and Recommendations" illustrates the final assumptions regarding the key aspects that make the project highly replicable or limitedly replicable. The main barriers and bottlenecks, drivers, facilitators and stimulators. The purpose is to provide a practical recommendation to interested stakeholders willing to replicate a supported project.

Bibliography

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- [2] *Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2016/650 of 25 April 2016 laying down standards for the security assessment of qualified signature and seal creation devices pursuant to Articles 30(3) and 39(2) of Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market*
- [3] *Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2015/1506 of 8 September 2015 laying down specifications relating to formats of advanced electronic signatures and advanced seals to be recognised by public sector bodies pursuant to Articles 27(5) and 37(5) of Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market (Text with EEA relevance)*
- [4] *Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2015/1505 of 8 September 2015 laying down technical specifications and formats relating to trusted lists pursuant to Article 22(5) of Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market*
- [5] *Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market and repealing Directive 1999/93/EC.*