

# Guidance Note and Q&A

## Strategic Partnerships with Norwegian Humanitarian Organisations

This guidance note provides further information about:

- 1) What a Strategic Humanitarian Partnership means and entails;
- 2) The application and the application process;
- 3) Questions and answers section, where we, in the interest of full transparency, will respond to all questions received from applicants between the launch of the call for proposals and the deadline for applications (list will continuously be updated).

### 1) Aim and Nature of the Strategic Humanitarian Partnerships

The Strategic Humanitarian Partnerships are broad collaborative engagements that include regular strategic dialogue and substantial funding arrangements. A response mechanism for new and/or deteriorating crises is built into the partnerships.

Strategic partners are expected to have sufficient implementation capacity to deliver on the overall strategic goals in Norway's Humanitarian Strategy, and to be able to adapt their operations in a changing humanitarian landscape. The Strategic Humanitarian Partnerships will entail:

- *Predictability and stability.* The strategic partners will be offered 5-year grant agreements for the period 2025-2029, with annual commitments (subject to annual parliamentary approval).
- *The partnership agreements will be based upon clearly defined, high-level strategic outcomes* (i.e. not detailed activity or output-based workplans and results frameworks). Annual plans will merely consist of an updated budget overview with a brief explanation of significant changes. The strategic outcomes will, in addition to Norway's Humanitarian Strategy 2024-2029, form the basis for regular dialogue and coordinated engagement between Norad and the partner. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs will also engage in parts of this dialogue.
- *Flexibility to address changing needs.* The strategic partnerships will provide enhanced budget flexibility so that partners can respond to changing needs on the ground in a timely manner.
- *Rapid response.* The partnership agreements include unallocated response funds (previously called "flexible funds") that can be released on short notice for immediate response in new and/or deteriorating humanitarian crises.
- *Knowledge and learning.* Norad expects to engage in regular dialogue with strategic partners to strengthen evidence use, learning and innovation in the humanitarian field.

Partners should note that Norad may initiate a revision of the strategic partnership agreements, including the grant amount and strategic focus, based on a review or evaluation of achievements at the country level as well as the partners' approach to learning with the view to constantly improve programming.

### 2) The Application Form and Process

Simplified application for Norad's Strategic Civil Society Partners (*Plusspartner*) and organisations having undergone an ex-ante assessment to become an ECHO partner

The application template has been designed to offer a simplified application process for Norad's Strategic Civil Society Partners and ECHO certified organisations. Many questions are not applicable for these applicants as Norad will be able to rely on the assessments made earlier. Applicants that want to rely on the results of the ECHO ex-ante assessment will have to share the independent external auditor report with Norad (unless this has been done previously).

### Qualifying questions and minimum requirements

The YES/NO questions in the section called *Internal Policies and Procedures* are qualifying questions, and hence absolute requirements. If the answer is NO to any of these questions, the applicant is not eligible to enter into a Strategic Humanitarian Partnership agreement with Norad. Note also that no applicants are automatically entitled to a grant under this scheme, even if they meet all the formal criteria.

### Humanitarian experience, competency and capacity

The questions under this section will be important in Norad's assessment of the applicant's humanitarian capacity and competency. Note that the information related to annual humanitarian costs/expenses as well as number of countries and regions/continents where the applicant has implemented programmes, constitute absolute requirements. Applicants who do not meet these requirements will be considered not eligible for a strategic partnership agreement. As mentioned above, no applicants are automatically entitled to a grant under this scheme, even if they meet all the formal criteria.

### Programmatic approach

The questions under this section will help Norad assess the applicant's approach to deliver on key principles and objectives as outlined in Norway's Humanitarian Strategy.

### Description of the project/programme sub-components

In this section, applicants are asked to upload attachments that describe the various sub-components (programmes). Applicants are free to decide the number of sub-components, however, in line with past experience it has proven appropriate to have one sub-component per country/region and/or each global, thematic area.

Any global/thematic sub-components are required to be directly linked to and informed by country and/or regional programmes/projects.

### Budgets

The applicant must submit a budget according to Norad's budget template for this call for proposals. The budget template consists of two sheets:

- 1) The **Summary budget**, specifying overall cost types and the financing plan. The unallocated response funds should be calculated as a 20 % share of the total proposed direct project costs (a formula is provided in the budget template). In the Summary budget, applicants should fill in the same amounts for years 2-5 as they apply for in year 1, in the respective budget lines.
- 2) A **detailed budget**, specifying thematic activity (sector/outcome) per country/region. The purpose of this budget is to give Norad an overview of the amounts applied for different thematic areas and countries where humanitarian operations are implemented.

Note that during the appraisal of applications, Norad will request samples of underlying budgets (at sub-component level) on a test basis.

The grant agreements will describe budget flexibility between countries and outcome areas and provide more details regarding the unallocated response funds (“flexible funds”). Please also see further information in the Q&A section below.

### Result framework

A result framework, or similar, should be presented in a separate attachment. This must include clearly defined objectives at all levels in the results hierarchy, i.e. impact, outcomes and outputs. Note that for very large and complex applications, Norad does not require that all expected outcomes and outputs are included in the attachment. Instead, the applicant may choose to present a number of key outcomes and outputs. Partners are, nevertheless, expected to have more detailed results frameworks, or similar, in place for the individual sub-components. Norad may request samples of these in the application appraisal process or later during implementation.

Indicators are only required at outcome level, although indicators at impact level are also welcome.

Detailed annual work plans shall not be submitted, however, Norad expects partners to have such plans and may request samples.

### Assessment of the applications

We refer to the call for proposals for information on the criteria and elements which Norad will assess applications against in the appraisal process.

Relevant embassies may be invited to provide input to Norad.

Norad will furthermore consider whether the total portfolio of strategic partnership agreements meets the Government’s strategic objectives as outlined in the humanitarian strategy, and whether there is a satisfactory balance in terms of geography and thematic areas.

[All questions received by Norad will be responded to through updating this Q&A page. We therefore advice all applicants to revisit this Q&A section regularly.](#)