INTERREG ATLANTIC AREA

2021-2027

2nd CALL FOR PROPOSALS GUIDELINES

PRIORITY 4: A better governance for cooperation in the Atlantic area

PROJECT: The Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance Project

ERDF allocation: 3.750.000€

April 2024

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As a complement to the call's specific Terms of Reference (ToR), these guidelines provide a framework for completing and submitting your **Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance project** Application Form (AF).

Further to this document, you should also:

✓ Consult the Programme Manual on the programme website https://www.atlanticarea.eu/;

✓ Participate in the info session 11th April 2024 (the recording of the session will be available on the Programme's website).

✓ If any doubts arise, please contact the Atlantic Area Joint Secretariat (JS) or National Authorities (NA) in your country for more information.

✓ The online system runs several automatic validation checks that prevent a user from submitting the form if it is not correctly filled in.

Main aspects to consider in the project construction:

✓ Keep in mind the key position of the "Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance project" in the Programme governance as the operation of strategic importance (OSI) in this programming period;

✓ Ensure a broad coverage of the Atlantic Area and beyond;

✓ Identify what has been already produced in previous programming periods and the current programme period and provide proposals on how to capitalise /valorise on it;

✓ Provide inputs and support to the Atlantic Area Programme's implementation through the review of activities and results to feed ongoing and future programming orientations;

✓ Foresee resources (human and financial) for the coordination of activities between the governance project, the Atlantic Area projects providing results, the Monitoring Committee (MC), the Managing Authority (MA), and the Joint Secretariat (JS);

✓ Provide a detailed annual working plan for the activities that will be developed (specifications);

✓ Remain flexible to adjust to opportunities and constraints;

✓ Demonstrate the partnership capacities to implement the types of activities, as the workplan will have to remain adjustable to enable true coordination between projects or groups (e.g., relevant projects, programmes, and stakeholders);

✓ Involve the whole partnership in the proposal set-up, organising the distribution of the roles and tasks according to the relevant fitting between activities to be done, thematic or technical skills, institutional recognition and influence of each organisations involved.

Finally, a risk management plan should be developed, which is essential due to the novelty of this project and its main characteristics.

Project key dates:

✓ Project starting date: 2nd Half of 2024

✓ Project ending date: 30th June 2029

✓ Duration: Approximately 59 months

Within the AF, the following sections should be duly completed:

1. Project identification

The AF must be completed in English. However, the project Summary has to be provided in the 4 Programme's Languages. It should be a project overview starting with a simple sentence on what the project is and how innovative it is. Then you should describe:

✓ the project´s overall objective and the expected change to the current situation;

✓ the transnational challenge you jointly will tackle;

✓ the main outputs that will be produced and who will benefit from them.

2. Project description

2.1 Project overall objective

- Define the goals and objectives related to environmental capitalization and governance.

- Identify environmental challenges and opportunities (e.g., climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation, sustainable resource management) to be addressed.

- Identify areas for capitalization (e.g., knowledge transfer, innovation, investment attraction) to be addressed.

- Identify areas of governance to be addressed (e.g., public administration, policymaking, institutional capacity building).

- The overall objective should provide the general context for what your project aims to achieve.

2.2 Project relevance and context

- The territorial common challenges/opportunities/needs - Specify the environmental governance challenges or gaps to be addressed, the thematic focus areas for capitalization efforts, and the governance challenges or opportunities to be addressed. Make sure that the project clearly contributes to the selected programme specific objective. Describe the broader goal of the project for the benefit of its target group(s) and point out the results (change) to be achieved by the project. Also, describe the project approach chosen to address the challenges and needs described above.

  Include the approach/methodology to be used to achieve the project objectives. Detail any research methodologies, data and collection techniques. Detail any best practices, tools, or frameworks to be used.

- What is new about your project approach - Please explain the project novelty and explain how the approach goes beyond existing practice in the sector/Programme area/participating countries.

- Transnational cooperation needed - Please explain why the project's objectives can only be efficiently reached by acting through transnational cooperation and what the added value is.

- Who will benefit from your project outputs and results? - Outline plans for building institutional and human capacities related to capitalization and governance. Specify training programs, workshops or knowledge-sharing activities focused on capitalization and governance.

- <u>Project contribution to broader strategies and policies</u> - Please provide detailed plans for developing policy recommendations or guidelines based on project findings. Identify target audiences for policy recommendations and strategies for knowledge sharing.

- <u>Project build on available knowledge</u> - Describe the experiences/lessons learned that your project draws another available knowledge your project capitalises on. If relevant, please specify the projects (acronym) to be capitalised and which project partner(s) have been involved.

2.3 Project partnership

Describe the structure of your partnership and explain why these partners are needed to implement the project and achieve the project's objectives. The description should focus on the complementarities between partners and clearly explain the structure of the partnership, avoiding individual descriptions of partners. Moreover, describe how the associated partners will be involved. Individual roles and competences of partners are to be detailed in Sections 3 WP and 4 Partnership.

When constructing the project partnership, please keep in mind the information provided in the Call's ToR - section 2.4 «What are the suited partnerships and partners for the "Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance Project".

2.4 Long-terms effects and durability

- <u>Ownership/durability</u> - describe who will ensure the financial and institutional support, including maintenance for outputs and, if applicable, for the most important deliverables developed by your project. Outline plans for ensuring the sustainability of project outcomes beyond the project duration. Identify mechanisms for institutionalizing good practices in capitalization and Governance.

- <u>Lasting effects/dissemination</u> - Outputs and deliverables should be made available and used by the relevant target groups (project partners or other stakeholders) after the project's lifetime to have a lasting effect on the territory. Please describe how the outputs and deliverables will remain available and will be taken up or upscaled by the project partners. Identify potential long-term impacts and legacy.

- <u>Capitalisation/Transferability</u> - describe how outputs and deliverables could be adapted or further developed to be used by additional target groups or rolled out in other territories beyond the partnership. Explain how communication and capitalisation activities will ensure that relevant groups are aware of the outputs and deliverables:

✓ Describe strategies for engaging relevant stakeholders in capitalization and governance improvement efforts;

✓ Outline plans for building institutional and human capacities related to capitalization and governance;

✓ Specify training programs, workshops or knowledge-sharing activities focused on capitalization and governance.

3. Work packages

- Break down the project activities into manageable work packages (WP). No more than <u>4 WP are allowed, excluding WP0</u>.

- Each work package should have the following:
  - ✓ Title,
  - ✓ Duration: Start and end dates;
  - ✓ Implementation summary (Description of the activities to be developed);
  - ✓ Project specific objective (description of the WP specific objective),
  - ✓ Communication objectives and target audience;
  - ✓ Work package overall description and partners involved (clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each partner organization; specify the contributions expected from each partner);
  - ✓ Investment list for pilots - If applicable, they are only to be foreseen if necessary for the implementation of project activities linked to pilot actions. Investments shall have a demonstrative character. For each investment exceeding EUR 25.000 total cost, a clear and concise description needs to be provided. This shall include a justification of the investment, its physical location, information on its environmental sustainability and risks, technical and legal requirements, and ownership. To determine the total amount of the investment, only items falling under the cost categories "Equipment" and "Small Infrastructure and works" should be considered;
  - ✓ Project results - corresponding to the immediate effect and change compared to the initial situation, which the project intends to achieve through its outputs. It relates to the challenges tackled;
  - ✓ Activities list (no more than 4 activities by WP is allowed);
  - ✓ Outputs and deliverables.

    The workplan should include the activities set up in the dedicated ToR section, 2.2 "What types of activities are expected for the Lighthouse Atlantic Area Governance Project".

4. Partnership

General aspects to be considered when creating the partnership:

✓ Must be set up with partners from the 4 different Atlantic Area Member States (MS): France, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain;

✓ The roles and responsibilities of each partner organization and expected contributions should be clearly defined;

✓ Full partners (with ERDF contribution) should be between 10 and 15, at least 2 by each MS. The role of the Lead Partner can only be held by public organizations; Organisations governed by public law or Not-for-profit private organisations;

✓ One public authority by MS (as a full or associated partner) relevant in thematic addressed;

✓ Regarding the project team, the Lead Partner must provide a team, both in terms of number and skills, to carry out the activities set out in the ToR and in this document. The human resources allocated must have:

- o Prior experience in planning and conducting EU transnational cooperation projects/programes;

- In-depth knowledge of issues relating to EU transnational cooperation, particularly with regard to the political framework, cooperation projects and the management of cooperation at project;
- Strong data analysis skills;
- In-depth knowledge of the Atlantic Area regions and Member States (regional and institutional context);
- Relevant knowledge and technical competence in specific sectors, mentioned in the ToR;
- Proficiency in language skills, as well as cultural understanding and openness to deal with the Atlantic Area MS diversity.

✓ Profit making **private partners will not be allowed** to participate in this call.

4.1 Partner information

Please complete this section with accurate information. In this section, most of the mistakes identified are related to section 4.1.10. Vat Recovery, as the information provided generally corresponds to the information delivered in the statement included in documentation 4.1.16.

4.2 Contacts

In this section, keep in mind that:

The contact person must be the one who actually manages the project because all communication from the Programme will be done through that person.

The Legal representative is the person who is entitled to sign the documents (e.g., Partner declaration, state aid declaration, etc.) on behalf the organisation.

The financial manager is the person who financially manages the project.

4.3 Bank account

Please confirm that the information is correct and in accordance with the document available in the section 4.1.17 documentation.

Do not forget that this document must be duly completed in accordance with the instructions.

4.4 Partner motivation and contribution

✓ Which of the partner's thematic competences and experiences are relevant to the project? What are the institutional role and policy addressing capacity of the partner?

✓ Please demonstrate, clearly and in summary, the link between your budget and your role on the different project activities.

✓ Please describe the organization's experience participating in and/or managing EU co-financed projects.

✓ For the project Lead Partner - please describe the organization's capacity and experience in managing and coordinating EU co-financed projects or other international projects. For the project partner, coordinating communication activities (i.e., taking over the role of project communication manager), please describe here what are your organisation's relevant communication competences and experiences.

✓ If applicable, please describe the role of the associated partner in the project and why its involvement is important for achieving the project specific objectives.

✓ In the case of partners from outside the programme area: Which is the added value of including this partner outside the programme area in the partnership?

○ Please confirm that the partner is aware of the FLC Controller requirements in its country and the feasibility of their application for the AA area.

4.5 State Aid information

Please confirm that the information is correct and in accordance with the document available in section 4.1.20 documentation.

For more information on the subject, please refer to section 3.2 State Aid of the Programme Manual.

4.6 Partner co-financing

In this section, the most significant need for understanding relates to expenses incurred outside or by partners that operate outside the programme eligible area.

Expenditure incurred outside the Programme cooperation area and outside the EU should have been expressly included in the AF (workplan-activities and budget 4.6.6).

Costs in the category of infrastructure and works relating to a structure located outside the Programme cooperation area are not eligible.

4.7 Partner by budget line and year

Most of the information related to this point is available in the programme manual section 3.1.6 Cost categories.

However, we would like to stress that if you decide to use real costs in the cost category of travel and accommodation, they must be duly justified.

Moreover, due to the nature of the project, the Programme will allow full partners to take charge of the cost of travel and accommodation for associated partners, **exceptionally for this Call**.

4.8 Physical investment

All the partners that include costs of Equipment / Infrastructures and works in their budget must complete this section.

5. Project management and communication

5.1 How will you coordinate and manage your project?

Please describe how the project management on the strategic and operational levels will be carried out, including the set-up of management structures, responsibilities, and procedures. Please also explain how the internal communication within the partnership will be organised. Describe the reporting processes at the level of partners towards the lead partner. Describe the approach/methodology to be used.

5.2 Which measures will you take to ensure quality in your project?

Describe the planned approach and processes for quality management, i.e., how the quality of deliverables and outputs will be monitored and ensured, and indicate the responsible partner(s). If you plan to conduct any type of project evaluation, please describe its purpose and scope.

- Define the monitoring and evaluation framework;
- Specify the key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure project progress and success;
- Identify evaluation methods and tools.

5.3 How will you communicate your project?

Please describe how your project's communication objectives, as outlined in the work plan, will help achieving your project's main result(s). Why is communication important? Which common tactics, channels and tools will help the partnership to reach out to and involve its target audiences? How will the project communication coordinator ensure that all project partners are involved and contribute to communication? Is there a well-structured communication plan in place to raise awareness about the project and its outcomes? Please identify target audiences and dissemination channels and detail any planned events workshops or conferences.

5.4 How will your project risk management plan be set up?

Identify potential risks and challenges related to capitalization and governance activities. Has the project identified potential performance /schedule risks and developed strategies to mitigate them? Is there a monitoring plan allowing to make the necessary adjustments to ensure project success? Is there a contingency plan to address unforeseen circumstances without compromising project objectives? Has the project budget considered potential risks and uncertainties that may impact project costs? Is there a robust financial management system in place to ensure the proper use of project funds and compliance with Programme rules? Please develop a risk mitigation strategy to address identified risks. Also, please consult Programme Manual section 2.9 "Risk Management".

5.5 Cooperation criteria

Please select the cooperation criteria that apply to your project and include a brief explanation. Please note that the joint development, joint implementation, and joint financing criteria are mandatory.

5.6 Horizontal principles

Please describe the reporting processes at the level of partners towards the lead partner.

6. Time plan

- Provide a detailed project time plan with key milestones and activities development.
- Include start and end dates for each work package.

Project reporting and assessment exercises

To monitor project implementation, and as a condition for the ERDF reimbursement, a progress report must be submitted periodically to the programme, every project's 6 months, with the deadline for submission 2 months after the end of the reporting period. More information on this subject available on the Programme's Manual (section 5).

In addition to this, the project will be assessed regularly by the Programme's ISO1 working group in accordance with the table below:

Project starting date	From MC decision (foreseen beginning of July 2024)
Six months review	January 2025
1st assessment exercise	December 2025
2nd assessment exercise	June 2026
3rd assessment exercise	June 2027
4th assessment exercise	June 2028
5th assessment exercise	January 2029

One month before each assessment exercise period, the project must send to the Programme JS a summary report highlighting the progress of activities versus programming, and an activity plan for the following period. Any difficulties must be highlighted, and a plan to overcome them must be indicated. A report template will be provided after project approval.

All reports, records, communications, minutes and any other documents prepared by the Lead Partner or project partners must be written entirely in English.

Legal and Ethical Considerations:

- The project must ensure compliance with relevant laws, regulations, and ethical guidelines in activities.
- Address data protection and privacy considerations.