

Terms of Reference (ToR) for Strategic Planning Consultants

1. Description of the project

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Kyrgyzstan are considered active, especially when compared to their counterparts in other Central Asian countries. Many NGOs have been cooperating with government actors at different levels for many years, supporting them with experience and capacity building as well as contributing to the solution of the socio-economic problems in the country. They also raised concerns about underrepresented and vulnerable groups and provided services to them. However, negative attitudes and rhetoric against them are intensifying among the authorities and the general public. NGOs have been portrayed as "grant eaters" promoting "foreign" values and have been criticised for being non-constructive and confrontational. This negative attitude towards them can be partly explained by their institutional and / or strategic weaknesses: dependency on donor funding; lack of support and active supporters/advocates; limited capacity in strategic planning, public relations and communications, partnership building, and organisational and financial sustainability, especially in rural areas.

It is widely recognized that a strong civil society is a fundamental building block of democratic governance. The role of civil society, including NGOs, is especially vital in giving a voice to citizens and promoting social inclusion, raising issues of public concern, advocating for democratic changes, and holding the government to account.

In line with the new Swiss Cooperation Programme for Central Asia 2022-2025, the **Civic Engagement for Development (CED)** project will support civil society in playing its full role as an independent development actor and a partner of the authorities. The project will promote higher participation and influence of citizens and NGOs on the political decision-making processes, and NGOs will be strengthened to advocate for democratic reforms and social change, hold the government to account and give a voice to citizens, especially to the left-behind groups.

The project will provide core contributions and institutional strengthening to selected NGOs, and promote stronger links with their constituency and other NGOs. The overall goal of the project is to **strengthen citizens' influence on policy- and decision-making through their representation by and mobilisation in NGOs.**

The project's main target groups are local NGOs working at the national and local level in Kyrgyzstan. The ultimate beneficiaries of the project are citizens, especially left behind groups. Despite improvements in the mechanisms for enhanced participation of citizens in political and community processes, especially at the local level, the awareness of citizens of their rights and opportunities for influencing decision-making remains low.

Specifically, the project targets NGOs working to promote democratic governance (based on internationally recognized principles) and focusing on the three thematic areas: (1) civic education, (2) civic engagement for social accountability and (3) local governance/local democracy.

- **Civic education:** formal and informal training to develop the knowledge, skills, and virtues needed for competent and active citizenship in a democracy (including human rights

education), and for effective participation in the political process and the civil society, including critical thinking skills;

- **Civic engagement for social accountability**: individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern and aimed at holding the state institutions to account;
- **Local governance/local democracy**: promotion of the key rights of communities to enjoy autonomy and self-government, and the right of citizens to participate in managing public affairs.

2. Background

In Kyrgyzstan, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played an indispensable role in addressing pressing socio-economic challenges, championing democratic reforms, and providing vital services to marginalized and vulnerable populations. Their contributions to civil society are undeniable. However, these NGOs confront a series of formidable challenges, including heavy reliance on donor funding, deficiencies in various aspects of their operations, and the presence of negative perceptions among both governmental authorities and the public. It is evident that enhancing the capacity of these NGOs is not merely beneficial but essential to their sustained effectiveness and long-term viability.

Strategic planning emerges as a crucial imperative within the context of the Civic Engagement for Development Project. The project's overarching objective is to empower NGOs, transforming them into effective development agents and active collaborators with governmental authorities. Strategic planning serves as the guiding compass that allows organizations to crystallize a lucid vision, delineate well-defined objectives, and chart an enduring trajectory toward realizing their long-term goals. A well-executed strategic planning process ensures the judicious allocation of resources, amplifies the impact of their initiatives, and upholds their alignment with their core mission and values.

3. Objectives of the assignment

The primary objectives of engaging strategic planning consultants for the six selected NGOs are as follows:

1. Facilitate a comprehensive and participatory strategic planning process for each NGO that actively engages respective board members, staff, and key stakeholders.
2. Develop a well-defined strategic plan for each NGO, including purpose, clear goals, objectives, and actionable steps for a 3–5-year period.
3. Foster a shared vision, consensus, and ownership / buy-in among all stakeholders as a result of the strategic planning process.
4. Provide guidance and support during the implementation phase, including the development of an implementation plan aligned with the strategic plan.

4. Scope of Work

The selected strategic planning consultants will be responsible for the following tasks:

1. Developing a customized workplan (including milestones) and timeline for each NGO's strategic planning process.
2. Facilitating stakeholder engagement processes, including workshops, retreats, and feedback sessions.
3. Guiding the organizations in building consensus and alignment around their future direction.

4. Supporting the NGO in putting in place accountability / representativity processes to ensure alignment of the NGO leadership (board members, key stakeholders) and constituencies/members.
5. Supporting NGOs in preparing a written strategic plan, including goals, objectives, and key performance indicators.

5. Deliverables

The consultants will provide the following deliverables:

1. Comprehensive Strategic Planning Process Outlines tailored for each NGO.
2. Facilitated Stakeholder Engagement Sessions and Workshop Reports.
3. Written Strategic Plans for each NGO, fully endorsed by each NGO and encompassing clear goals, objectives, and key performance indicators.
4. Detailed Implementation Plans for each NGO, delineating the steps and responsibilities for executing the strategic plan.

6. Consultants Selection Criteria

Consultants will be selected based on the following criteria:

1. **Experience:** Demonstrated experience in facilitating successful strategic planning processes for NGOs in Kyrgyzstan and/or other post-soviet countries.
2. **Sector Familiarity:** Knowledge of the non-profit sector and experience working with organizations of varying sizes, budgets, and development stages.
3. **Proposed Scope:** Clarity and completeness of the proposed scope of work, including timelines, process description, and expected outcomes.
4. **Strategic Planning Models:** Proficiency in various strategic planning models and evidence-based approaches, with the ability to explain and justify the chosen methodology.
5. **Language:** Proficiency in Russian is an asset. At least, one consultant from the proposed team of consultants shall be fluent in Russian.
6. **Track Record:** Positive references from previous clients who can vouch for the consultants' work and approach.
7. **Fees:** Transparent fee structure and payment schedule outlined in the proposal.

7. Selection Process

The selection of strategic planning consultants will involve the following steps:

- a. Interested consultants should submit a detailed proposal that addresses the criteria mentioned above.
- b. A review panel will evaluate the proposals and shortlist candidates for interviews.
- c. Shortlisted consultants will be invited for interviews to further assess their qualifications, approach, and fit with the project's goals.
- d. Based on the interviews and proposal evaluations, the project evaluation committee will make the final selection.

8. Timeline

The timeline for the consultant selection process is as follows:

- Deadline for consultant proposals: October 19th, 2023

- Shortlisting and interview invitations: October 25th, 2023
- Consultant interviews: 1st week of November 2023
- Final selection and contract negotiation: 2nd week of November 2023

9. Submission of Proposals

Interested consultants should submit their proposals by 6pm, October 19th, 2023 (Bishkek time) via email to akylai.kulaeva@gfa-group.de .

10. Contact Information

For inquiries or additional information, please contact Aigul Dogdurova, CED Expert on institutional strengthening and constituency building at aigul.Dogdurova@gfa-group.de

By agreeing to these Terms of Reference, consultants acknowledge their commitment to supporting the strategic planning needs of the participating NGOs and contributing to the success of the Civic Engagement for Development Project.