

UNHCR BELARUS 2024-2026 STRATEGY

CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST – HCR/BLR/2023/001

Submission Guidance

The purpose of the Call for Expression of Interest is to solicit interest from existing or prospective partners for project implementation in Belarus in 2024 and potentially beyond as outlined in ANNEX A – Call for Expression of Interest (CEI). **The Call is open to NGOs (non-governmental organizations and other non-profit entities), preferably national NGOs, that wish to bring complementary resources (human resources, knowledge, additional funding, in-kind contributions) for the delivery of common strategic objectives.** The partner(s) to be selected through this Call for Expression of Interest are expected to manage the daily operational project activities under UNHCR’s overall guidance and supervision.

UNHCR reserves the right to accept a proposal in whole or in part. Conclusion of a Partnership Agreement (PA) with UNHCR is subject to availability of funds. The selection of a partner through this Call for Expression of Interest does not constitute a commitment on behalf of UNHCR to conclude a PA with the selected partner. UNHCR may select to fund all or parts of the proposed activities. Subject to performance, need and funding, partnership may be considered for renewal for subsequent years of the strategy (2025, 2026). Pre-selected partners may also be activated at a later stage in the strategic period.

Organizations that are interested to apply in the Call are required to register on the UN Partner Portal, at <https://www.unpartnerportal.org/registration> and submit their applications via the UN Partner Portal.

Organizations that are already registered in the UN Partner Portal <https://www.unpartnerportal.org/login> must ensure that their profiles are fully completed/updated and relevant documents uploaded (*inter alia* HR, Procurement, anti-fraud, protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, Code of Conduct and other internal controls and governance documents). Please note that **Organizations with incomplete profiles cannot apply to opportunities on the UN Partner Portal.**

Legal status in Belarus is a requirement for all applicant organizations as follows:

- Legal registration at the location of the NGO’s Headquarters.
- Authority to operate in Belarus, if registered in another country.
- Authority to operate a bank account in Belarus.

The Call provides for a project-focused selection process targeting prospective partners able to demonstrate specific technical expertise and capacity to implement projects under pre-defined key areas. The Call describes “Projects” under the section *Expected Outputs and Main Activities*. Applications can be submitted for one or more Projects. If the partner wishes to be considered for more than one Project, they should submit multiple Concept Notes and Budgets (one per project).

Applicant organizations should **clearly indicate the Project under which they wish to apply** in the relevant sections of respective Annexes (**ANNEX B - Concept Note and ANNEX C - Budget**).

Only full and duly signed submissions (i.e., Annex B - Concept Note(s), Annex C – Budget(s) submitted through the UN Partner Portal will be accepted for review. To ensure a fair and transparent process, no submissions to UNHCR individual e-mail addresses will be accepted as this may lead to disqualification of the proposal.

Upon receipt of the submissions, UNHCR’s Implementing Partnership Management Committee (IPMC) will review submissions in accordance with the pre-defined weighted criteria (ANNEX A - Call for Expression of Interest). The applicant organizations will receive notification of the outcome by **10 November 2023**.

You can submit questions with regards to this Call **through the UN Partner Portal from 29 September to 9 October 2023**. UNHCR will publish replies to all anonymized queries in the UN Partner Portal.

Questions and Answers

1- WHICH DOCUMENTS HAVE TO BE SUBMITTED AND IN WHICH FORMAT?

To apply to the Call, Organizations are required to submit the following documents:

- ✓ **ANNEX B - CONCEPT NOTE**, both in Word document and PDF duly signed by the legal representative of the submitting organization.
- ✓ **ANNEX C - BUDGET** both in Excel and PDF signed by the legal representative of the submitting organization.

Please use the correct templates, as applications submitted using the incorrect template may be disqualified. In case of discrepancies between the soft and scanned copy, the latter (signed document) shall prevail.

Submissions are required to comprise all the above-mentioned documents and formats and should be **uploaded in one zipped folder on the UN Partner Portal**.

Furthermore, applicants are required to ensure that their **UN Partner Portal profiles are fully completed/updated** and relevant documents uploaded; and their **PSEA self-assessment** is initiated through the UN Partner Portal (see question and answer further below).

2- WHEN DO THE DOCUMENTS HAVE TO BE SUBMITTED?

Submissions must be **uploaded on the UN Partner Portal** no later than **18 October 2023, 23:59 (Minsk time zone GMT+3)**.

IMPORTANT: Only full and duly signed submissions through the UN Partner Portal will be accepted for review.

3- HOW SHOULD THE CONCEPT NOTE BE COMPLETED?

Concept notes should be submitted using the template **ANNEX B - Concept Note**. Instructions on how to complete each section are included in the Concept Note template. The Concept Note should be **no longer than 3-4 pages**.

One Concept Note should be submitted per Project. The Project under which the applicant wishes to be considered should be clearly stated in the Concept Note by ticking the box for the relevant Project (and if applicable, for the addition of basic needs assistance).

The intervention strategy should endeavour to address core activities (listed in the Call for each Project) but may include supplemental activities relevant to achieving the objective. Scope of coverage of the core activities will be considered in the selection. For certain Projects, applicants may opt to focus on a particular work objective/set of core activities. These should also be clearly stated in the Concept Note.

You may wish to take into consideration the following **tips on drafting** your Concept Note:

Your Concept Note should include a brief description of your organization; a clear link to documented needs (Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment, MSNA or other survey/data collection/evaluation); clear, compelling information centered around project activities requested in the Call (covering core activities as well as other project ideas); clear link between activities and expected result and a theory of change; rough costs of the planned intervention.

Your Concept Note should not include a fully developed project proposal; detailed background information or a detailed budget. In case you are selected for a PA, UNHCR will request a more detailed project proposal and budget later on in the process.

Your Concept Note should highlight your unique advantage & added value, contribution of resources and how you propose to tackle age, gender & diversity (AGD), accountability to affected populations (AAP) and other good programming principles (see question and answer further below). Make sure you cover the project activities requested in the Call, you clearly show the need and the impact, and you respond to the selection criteria. Also ensure to outline your organizational experience and compliance and control measures including with regards to financial, human resource and procurement capacity where relevant.

Further drafting tips and a quality proposal checklist (page 26) can be found here:

https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/C3.-Proposal-Writing-Guide_FINAL-.pdf/

4- HOW SHOULD THE BUDGET BE COMPLETED?

Budgets should be submitted using the template **ANNEX C - Budget**. One Budget should be submitted per Project. The Project under which the applicant wishes to be considered should be clearly stated in the Budget by ticking the box for the relevant Project (and if applicable, for the addition of basic needs assistance). The Budget should include high-level, lump sum budget lines with a short description, indicating the budget type (staffing, activities, operations, overheads budget – available in a drop-down menu in the Excel template). Budget items, units and unit costs may be indicated (following examples given in the budget template).

While the Excel template serves as the template for submitting the project budget, **the “Resources” section of the Concept Note** should indicate the estimated total cost of the project, including funding to be requested from UNHCR, the organization’s own contribution (financial and/or in-kind) as well as any contributions by other donors. Here, you should also provide the number of projects and resources currently managed, describe how cost effectiveness should be prioritized, ensuring resources are optimized and effectively allocated.

While there is no limitation on the budget to be submitted, applicants are encouraged to submit proposals with costing ranging between BYN 165,000 and BYN 1,000,000. UNHCR reserves the right to accept a proposal in whole or in part. Conclusion of a PA with UNHCR is subject to availability of funds.

5- WHAT IS THE UN PARTNER PORTAL?

The UN Partner Portal is an online platform for UN agencies and NGOs, established as an inter-agency initiative to achieve commitments at the Grand Bargain, strengthen engagement with all civil society organizations and harmonize partnership processes. Apart from UNHCR, four other United Nations entities are currently present on the portal: UNICEF, WFP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Secretariat and all its offices and departments. The United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC) is providing technical support.

The UN Partner Portal can be reached here: <https://www.unpartnerportal.org/>

Prospective partners should **register** their organization on the UN Partner Portal by creating a login, completing their partner profile, and uploading key documents about their organization (*inter alia* HR, Procurement, anti-fraud, protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, Code of Conduct and other internal controls and governance documents). Fully completed partner profiles are verified by UNHCR Headquarters (Implementation Management and Assurance Service (IMAS)).

Upon registration, Partners will be able to see **partnership opportunities** on the UN Partner Portal (including opportunities from UNHCR and other UN agencies from all around the world). UNHCR publishes its Calls for Expression Interest through the UN Partner Portal. Interested organizations may ask questions and submit Concept Notes through the UN Partner Portal. The review and evaluation of submitted proposals is also administered through the UN Partner Portal.

Partners also have access to UNHCR guidelines, policies, documents, templates and frequently asked question via the **Resource Library** section of the UN Partner Portal: <https://supportagency.unpartnerportal.org/hc/en-us/categories/360000084113-UNHCR-Partnership-Guidelines>

As UN Partner Portal registration is the first step towards submitting your proposal, you are encouraged to **start the process as soon as possible**. In case of any **technical difficulties**, you can reach out to us via the following email address: Aliaksandr Velikarodnau velikaro@unhcr.org.

You are reminded that only submissions through the UN Partner Portal will be accepted for review. To ensure a fair and transparent process, no submissions to UNHCR individual e-mail addresses will be accepted as this may lead to disqualification of the proposal.

6- WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS?

The Call is open to NGOs (non-governmental organizations and other non-profit entities), preferably national NGOs. **Legal status in Belarus is a requirement for all applicant organizations as follows:**

- Legal registration at the location of the NGO's Headquarters.
- Authority to operate in Belarus, if registered in another country.
- Authority to operate a bank account in Belarus.

The official language of the partnership is **English**. All documents submitted for the Call must be prepared in English. The primary language of communication between UNHCR and Partners is English, and all project documentation (agreement, annexes, reports) shall be prepared and signed in English.

7- HOW DOES UNHCR SELECT PARTNERS?

The selection Partners is governed by UNHCR/AI/2023/05 Administrative Instruction on Procedures on Partnership Management. The process involves the following steps:

1. Establishment of an Implementing Partnership Management Committee (IPMC);
2. Publication of a Call for Expression of Interest to invite interested partners;
3. Submission of Concept Notes by partners;
4. Preparation of documents for IPMC review;
5. IPMC review (using pre-defined selection criteria, see question and answer further below) and recommendation;
6. Final selection, acceptance or rejection by UNHCR Representative;
7. Communication to applicant organizations.

You can find out more about UNHCR partner selection process and rules on the UN Partner Portal: <https://supportagency.unpartnerportal.org/hc/en-us/articles/360011915734-Frequently-Asked-Questions-FAQ-on-the-Selection-and-Retention-of-Partners>

UNHCR partnerships are based on the UN Principles of Partnership: <https://supportagency.unpartnerportal.org/hc/en-us/articles/360011915714-Principles-of-Partnership>

8- WHAT ARE THE SELECTION CRITERIA?

UNHCR uses pre-defined selection criteria to ensure transparency, objectivity and due diligence. The selection criteria are also included in the Call for Expression of Interest:

Sector expertise and experience: leading technical expertise in required sector.

Local experience and presence: strong local experience and geographical presence / coverage.

Relevance of proposal to achieving expected results: submission addresses services and guidance outlined in the Call.

Clarity of activities and expected results: clear, realistic and technically sound program methodology with clear theory of change.

Project management:

- clear & robust considerations for Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), Age, Gender & Diversity (AGD), Feedback and Complaint mechanism;
- capacity to deliver outputs as expected in a timely manner & can adapt to changes;
- clear & sufficient internal control and procurement systems;
- active participation in inter-agency coordination fora & information sharing;
- prior experience with UN or EU funding instruments & unmodified audit opinions.

Cost effectiveness: maximum resources directed to project outcomes while equally managing project risks.

9- HOW DOES UNHCR COMMUNICATE WITH PARTNERS DURING THE SELECTION PROCESS?

Any questions during the call phase should be communicated through the UN Partner Portal to ensure transparency. Queries will be accepted only via the UN Partner Portal from 29 September to 9 October 2023. UNHCR will publish replies to all queries (anonymously) on the UN Partner Portal.

Upon finalization of the selection procedure, it is mandatory for UNHCR to communicate results of selection process to all applicants. Partners informed in writing by the UNHCR Representative whether their proposal was selected or not. Selected partners will be later contacted by the UNHCR team for bilateral discussions and the submission of a detailed project proposal and budget.

In case of any concerns about the fairness and transparency of the selection procedure, Partners can escalate issues to UNHCR Headquarters using the following email addresses: epartner@unhcr.org or inspector@unhcr.org

10- WHAT ARE THE GOOD PROGRAMMING PRINCIPLES?

Partners are encouraged to highlight how they propose to tackle good programming principles in the Concept Note. These include:

Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) Mainstreaming: The AGD Policy is at the core of UNHCR's work with forcibly displaced and stateless persons. Applying an AGD approach in the work of UNHCR and its partners enables the organizations to identify and consult with people of different age, gender and diversity groups. It is not exclusively focused on the most vulnerable groups within the population. The ultimate goal of an AGD approach is that all segments of a population that UNHCR and partners work with have equal access to and enjoyment of rights. You can read more about UNHCR's AGD policy here: <https://www.unhcr.org/media/policy-age-gender-and-diversity-accountability-2018>

Disability inclusion: Partners should commit to make all their activities accessible for people with disabilities. When accessibility is not possible, they need to apply reasonable accommodation to ensure the rights of people with disabilities.

Accountability to affected populations (AAP): Being accountable to affected people is to ensure that UNHCR's and partners' responses include continuous and meaningful engagement with forcibly displaced and stateless persons,

understand their needs and protection risks, build on their capacities and reflect their perspectives and priorities. This includes setting up Feedback and Complaints Mechanisms (FCM) under each project to enable project beneficiaries to provide feedback. Partners should commit to make forms and information materials available in a child friendly format as well as versions accessible for disabled people. You can read more about UNHCR's AAP guidance here: <https://www.unhcr.org/aap-operational-guidance> .

11- WHAT IS PSEA SELF-ASSESSMENT?

PSEA stands for Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse. As of 2021, PSEA assessments are mandatory for UNHCR PAs to ensure that partners have the capacity to include adequate preventive and risk mitigation measures against sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) while implementing a project; as well as the ability to investigate allegations of SEA against their personnel or sub-contractors and take corrective actions when SEA has happened. PSEA self-assessment requires prospective partners to provide information and supporting documentation on the 8 core standards: organizational policy, organizational management, HR/recruitment, training, reporting, assistance/referral, investigations and corrective action. You can find out more about PSEA and the process for partners here: <https://supportagency.unpartnerportal.org/hc/en-us/sections/360003556494-Protection-from-Sexual-Exploitation-and-Abuse>

All potential partners who have not previously undergone a PSEA assessment with the UN shall initiate their PSEA Self-Assessment process via the new PSEA Module on the UN Partner Portal as part of the submission to the Call.

Organizations that have previously been assessed on PSEA capacity by another United Nations entity shall first check if their previous assessment has been migrated into the PSEA Module on the UN Partner Portal or not. Otherwise, they can initiate the process by uploading their previous assessment on the UN Partner Portal by providing the date of the assessment, the UN Organization and the PSEA capacity rating, along with all supporting documentation.

Current partners who are undergoing the PSEA capacity strengthening implementation plan (CSIP) with UNHCR shall continue implementing the activities outlined in the CSIP in cooperation with UNHCR and must have reached full capacity by 2023. They shall also agree to upload the current assessment and reflect the CSIP on the UN Partner Portal.

12- WHAT ARE UNHCR'S RULES FOR PROCUREMENT BY PARTNERS?

Any partner who is entrusted with funds donated to UNHCR to implement procurement activities, should have comparable policy and procedures to the principles of UNHCR for procurement. UNHCR Procurement Guidelines for Partners will be shared with selected partner prior to concluding PA.