



STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

GRANTS

INTRODUCTION

The ECOWAS Vision 2050: 'ECOWAS of the Peoples, Peace and Prosperity for All' which defines aspirations and expectations of ECOWAS States and serves as blueprint for the regional development of the Member Countries, considering both the significant achievements and progress, and the challenges to be addressed are built on 5 pillars: Peace, Security and Stability, Governance and Rule of Law, Economic Integration, Inclusive and Sustainable Development and Social Inclusion.

By nature of their operations, ECOWAS Institutions need to cooperate with other International/ regional/ local organizations/ donors in many aspects. Part of this cooperation involves the ECOWAS Institutions receiving and giving Grants.

At the ECOWAS Commission, Grants are disbursed from both Community Levy and donor funds.

The ECOWAS Institutions designed and operationalized a Grant Code and Grant Manual for the sole purpose of efficiently and effectively managing Grants that they disburse.

Therefore, the purpose of these Standard Operating Procedures is to establish a step-by-step process starting from when an ECOWAS Institution receives a grant to its execution and reporting.

Therefore, these Standard Operating Procedures shall apply to all Grants received by any ECOWAS Institution/ Agency/ Office.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
1. ANNUAL GRANTS WORK PROGRAMME	4
2. BEFORE CALL FOR PROPOSALS	4
3. CALL FOR PROPOSALS	5
4. SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS	6
5. EVALUATION COMMITTEE	7
6. EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS	8
7. REVIEW COMMITTEE.....	10
8. COMMUNICATION FOR INTENTION TO AWARD THE GRANT	10
9. CONTRACT PREPARATION AND SIGNING	10
10. APPROVAL FOR DISBURSEMENT	11
11. MONITORING AND EVALUATION	11
a) Contracting Stage	11
b) Tranche Payment	12
c) Reporting.....	12
d) Financial Reports.....	13
12. RIGHT OF ACCESS	13
13. RECOVERY	13
14. COMPLAINTS	14
15. SANCTIONS COMMITTEE.....	14

1. ANNUAL GRANTS WORK PROGRAMME

- a) All the ECOWAS Institutions, Agencies and User Departments send information about their potential Grants to the Directorate of Administration and General Services/equivalent function before end of the calendar year. These Grants should have been approved in their respective Institutions/ Departmental Budget.
- b) The Directorate of Administration and General Services of the ECOWAS Commission then compiles the information to form one Annual Grants Work Programme for all ECOWAS Institutions.
- c) The Directorate of Administration and General Services of the ECOWAS Commission forwards the compiled Draft Annual Grants Work Programme to the President for approval before end of January of the following year.
- d) Once approved, the Directorate of Administration and General Services of the ECOWAS Commission engages the Directorate of Communications to publish the approved Annual Grants Work Programme for that year, before end of March of the following year. Then the process for the Call for Proposals commences.
- e) However, there are some exceptions to be met before publishing, and these include:
 - (i) The award for the grant is below 50.000 UA
 - (ii) Confidentiality and security reasons
 - (iii) Publication would threaten the rights or civil liberties of individuals; or
 - (iv) Publication would harm the recipient's financial interest.
- f) These exceptions shall change as and when the Procedure for the Publication of Information on Recipients changes

2. BEFORE CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Before initiating any procedure for a Grant;

- a) The funds for that specific Grant must be available.

- b) The grant to be considered must have been published on the Annual Grants Work Programme.
- c) The Directorate of Administration and General Services/ equivalent function then notifies the following persons about the Programme:
 - i. User Institution/ User Department/ Directorate
 - ii. Directorate of External Relations
 - iii. Directorates of Financial Reporting and Grants/ Budget and Treasury/ equivalent function for other Institutions and Agencies.
 - iv. Directorate of Administration and General Services.
 - v. Directorate of Legal Affairs.
 - vi. Directorate of Information Technology Services.
 - vii. Directorate of Strategic Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.
 - viii. Any other relevant Directorate.

The purpose of this notification is to ensure that the relevant Directorates prepare adequately so as to meet the targets of the Approved Grants Work Programme.

- d) At the discretion of Management, there may be revisions of the Grant Work Programme during the course of the year.

3. CALL FOR PROPOSALS

- a) The User Institution/ Department/ Directorate appoints a Grant Coordinator who will be the focal person for the grant, on behalf of the Contracting Authority.
- b) Using the approved templates, the Grant Coordinator of the User Institution/ Department/ Directorate/ Agency fills in the relevant information for the Call for Proposal and sends the information to the Directorate of Administration and General Services of the ECOWAS Commission.
- c) Procurement/ Grants Officer reviews the Call for Proposal for completeness.
- d) Procurement/ Grants Officer and the representatives below meet to finalize the Call for Proposal:
 - i. User Institution/ Department/ Directorate.
 - ii. Directorate of External Relations.
 - iii. Directorate of Financial Reporting and Grants/ Budget and Treasury/ equivalent function for other Institutions and Agencies.

- iv. Directorate of Strategic Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.
 - v. Directorate of Legal Affairs.
 - vi. Any other relevant Directorate.
- e) The Head of Procurement/ Grants Division of the ECOWAS Commission informs the Communications Directorate to publish the Call for Proposal in the Grants section on the ECOWAS website and regional/ local press (i.e. 2 publications per Member State in 2 most widely circulated newspapers). The published Call for Proposal should refer to the ECOWAS website for download of the relevant documents.
- f) The Head of Procurement/ Grants Division of the ECOWAS Commission or equivalent function in another Institution/ Agency engages the Communications Directorate to initiate information sessions with the potential applicants where the Procurement/ Grants Officer provides more detailed information to the participants on the expectations. This should be held at least 30 days before the deadline of submission. The information session should be designed to suit the potential applicants.
- g) Any request for clarification in regard to the Call for Proposal must be received via the specified mode of communication at least 21 days before the submission deadline.
- h) Responses to the clarifications must be sent by the Procurement/ Grants Officer of the ECOWAS Commission or another Institution and the Directorate of Communications at least 11 days before submission deadline.

4. SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

- a) All submissions shall be sent to a dedicated email set up by the ITS Directorate or a dedicated platform or hard copies submitted to a specified ECOWAS office in the Call for Proposal.
- b) The ITS Directorate takes charge of the integrity of the email. The email address of the Grant Coordinator shall be copied in all submissions.
- c) For hard copy documents, the receiving entity shall acknowledge receipt of the documents by completing the Acknowledgement of Receipt document.
- d) At the discretion of an ECOWAS Institution, proposals sent by courier before the deadline date, but received after the deadline date may be accepted.

- e) For email submissions, applications may be in pdf format. However, these documents should be password protected.
- f) At the time of evaluation, the applicants shall be asked to send their passwords.
- g) The Communications/ ITS Directorate should ensure that:
 - i. For a one-stage call, (submission without a Concept Note), deadline for submission shall not be less than 90 days after publication of Call for Proposals, and therefore emails should be automatically deactivated at the expiration of 90 days. Hard copies shall also cease to be received.
 - ii. For a two-stage call, submitting a Concept Note should not be less than 45 days after publication of Call for Proposals, therefore the email should be automatically deactivated at the expiration of 45 days. Hard copies shall also cease to be received.
 - iii. After positive evaluation of the Concept Note by the Evaluation Committee, the successful applicants have not less than 45 days to submit the final application, therefore the email should deactivate once the 45 days elapse. Hard copies shall also cease to be received.
- h) The Procurement/ Grants Officer of ECOWAS Commission/ other Institution then communicates to the Applicants. Communication of result from the evaluation is fixed as follows:
 - Maximum of 6 months from final date of submission to all participants.
 - Maximum of 3 months from date of informing applicants that they have been successful.

5. EVALUATION COMMITTEE

The President/ Delegated Authority facilitates by requesting for nominations from the Heads of Departments to form an Evaluation Committee, made up of 3 or 5 evaluators:

- i. User Institution/ Department.
- ii. Procurement/ Grants Division (Secretary/ Member)/ Directorate in charge of Procurement for other Institutions.
- iii. Respective Directorate of Finance

- iv. Odd number of evaluators.
- a) These evaluators must possess the technical capacity about the subject matter necessary to give an informed opinion, as well as having a reasonable command of the language in which the proposals were submitted.
- b) The Evaluation Committee must attend all meetings, any substitutions with alternatives must be communicated and reported. These members are collectively and individually responsible for any decisions/ recommendations.
- c) President/ Delegated Authority may authorize observers, who do not vote and are bound by the same obligations of impartiality and confidentiality.
- d) President/ Delegated Authority may also engage Internal (ECOWAS staff) and External assessors (Experts), who are under the supervision of the Committee and are bound by the same obligations of impartiality and confidentiality.
- e) In cases where the Committees/ experts/ observers are not physically available, the Committee engages the Procurement / Grants Division to provide a reliable platform for virtual meetings, provided evidence can be available.
- f) The Evaluation Committee has to report using the already approved Evaluation Report template.

6. EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS/ APPLICATIONS

The Committee evaluates based on:

- i. Opening and Administrative checks as well as Concept Note evaluation.
- ii. Full proposal/ application evaluation (including technical and financial capacities)
- iii. Eligibility checks.

For technical subjects, the Committee, taking into consideration the technical experts' assessment, then makes its recommendations.

7. EXCLUSION FROM FINANCING BEFORE CONTRACTING

The Evaluation Committee should ensure that the applicants in the following categories are excluded from financing:

- i) Bankruptcy, insolvency, or winding-up procedures.
- ii) Breach of obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions.

- iii) Grave professional misconduct, including misrepresentation, fraud, corruption or conflict of interest or any of the conducts contained in the ECOWAS Code of Ethics as well as paragraph 9 of the ECOWAS Grants Manual.
- iv) Conduct related to a criminal organisation.
- v) Money laundering or terrorism financing.
- vi) Terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities.
- vii) Child labour and other trafficking in human beings.
- viii) Grave irregularity in accordance with ECOWAS rules, Member States rules or international criminal law.
- ix) Creating a shell company.
- x) Being a shell company.

However, the Authorizing Officer may derogate under the occurrence of following circumstances:

- (i) Environmental protection situation.
- (ii) Public health situation.
- (iii) Force majeure or any other exceptional circumstances.

8. COMMUNICATION OF EVALUATION RESULTS

The Procurement/ Grants Officer then communicates to the Applicants about the results from the evaluation is fixed as seen below:

- Communication to all applicants on the results of the evaluation (both applicants cleared for the next evaluation stage, and those who are unsuccessful) within 6 months from final date of submission to all participants.
- Communication of the successful grantee within 3 months from communication in i) above.

Communication to both the successful and unsuccessful proposals have to be made through the approved One Stage Call for Proposals Letter and Two Stage Call for Proposals letter.

9. REVIEW COMMITTEE

- a) The President/ Head of Institution Delegated Authority appoints a Review Committee for the grant.
- b) Within 15 days of receipt of the report from the Evaluation Committee this Committee must sit.
- c) The role of the Review Committee is to give a 'NO OBJECTION' or 'OBJECTION' on whether the Grant Code and Manual were adhered to through the whole process. They do not approve/ reject the recommendations of the Evaluation Committee.
- d) For an 'OBJECTION', the Evaluation Committee has to respond to the raised concerns, until a 'No OBJECTION' is attained from the Review Committee.

10. COMMUNICATION FOR INTENTION TO AWARD THE GRANT

- a) The President/ Delegated Authority approves the final list of Grantees.
- b) The Procurement/ Grants Division sends official communication, in writing, to the successful applicants within 15 days of the award decision.
- c) The Procurement/ Grants Division also communicates to the unsuccessful applicants simultaneously, who have 15 working days (standstill period) to accept or reject the decision.
- d) Publication of successful grantees is made in the Grants section on the ECOWAS website.

11. CONTRACT PREPARATION AND SIGNING

- a) The Procurement/ Grants Officer commences the Contract documentation using the templates approved, with input from the relevant Directorates.
- b) The contract is reviewed and vetted by the Legal Directorate.
- c) After vetting, the Procurement/ Grants/ Legal Officer sends the signed contract to the successful applicant.
- d) Successful applicant must countersign on the original contract documents within 30 days of receipt.

12. EXCLUSION FROM FINANCING AFTER CONTRACTING.

Where the Contracting Authority is provided with evidence that a grantee has incurred into any of the circumstances listed in no.7 above, the procedures for contract termination shall commence in accordance with Article 48 of the Grant Code and the relevant “ad hoc” contract clauses.

The grantee shall be awarded a reasonable time (not more than 90 days) to provide evidence establishing that they are not in breach.

13. APPROVAL FOR DISBURSEMENT

- a) The Procurement/ Grants Officer sends the signed contract documents and approved Grant Disbursement Request to the relevant Directorate for commitment in ECOLink (Purchase Requisition).
- b) There should be a Grant orientation by ECOWAS to the grantee to explain exclusively the implementation modalities and terms and conditions of the grant.
- c) Both Directorates of Finance together with the Directorate of Administration and General Services/ other relevant Directorates meet to harmonise and update the Annual Grants Work Programme.

14. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

a) Call for Proposal Stage

At inception, the User Institution/ Department/ Directorate/ Grant Coordinator should provide a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, which should be part of the Call for Proposals.

b) Contracting Stage

- i. While documenting the contract, the User Institution/ Department/ Directorate should ensure the availability of a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for the grant.
- ii. User Institution/ Department/ Directorate/ Grant Coordinator involves the M&E Directorate to ensure the development of the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for the implementation of the grant.

- iii. The skills and human resources of the Directorate in charge of Grants shall be strengthened to efficiently manage grants.

c) Tranche Payment

- i. Beneficiary sends a payment request to the Grant Coordinator, who forwards the same to the Directorates of Financial Reporting and Grants/ Budget and Treasury for payment with the relevant approvals/ justifications.
- ii. For the first tranche, the disbursing Directorate makes payment within 30 days upon receiving the payment request from the beneficiary. The Grant Coordinator should forward such documents to the relevant paying Directorate 5 days from receipt by the Grantee.
- iii. Further payments are made within 60 days upon receiving the payment request from the beneficiary. The Grant Coordinator, after making the relevant checks, forwards such documents within 15 days to the relevant paying Directorate, with a recommendation for payment.
- iv. If the Directorate responsible for payments does not intend to meet the deadlines above for whatever reason, it should write to the beneficiary, through the Grant Coordinator, to explain the reasons for the late/ non- payment. These reasons include:
 - a) Lack of sufficient supporting documents
 - b) Need to amend the financial reports
 - c) Need to carry out extra checks on the eligibility of expenditures.
 - d) Spot checks, as applicable.
 - e) Presumed breach of obligations/ irregularities/ fraudulent activities, consider involving the OAG.

d) Reporting

i. Progress of the Implementation of the Grant

For an **Action Grant**, the beneficiary shall provide the Grant Coordinator with the relevant reports. These will include:

- Baseline Reports
- Activity Reports
- Midterm Review Reports

- Endline/ Closing Reports
- Any other reports relevant to the Grant

For an **Operating Grant**, Activity Reports as well as any expenditure reports.

- ii) The beneficiary sends Final Project Reports no later than 3 months after implementation period.
- iii) After a specified period, the M&E Directorate and the Grant Coordinator then have to facilitate/ conduct an Evaluation exercise on the Grant and communicate to the Contracting Authority on the outcome of the Grant, including challenges and recommendations.
- iv) Management decides on the way forward based on the recommendations.

e) **Financial Reports**

- i) Using the templates provided, the beneficiary shall provide financial/ expenditure reports to the Grants Coordinator for review and reconciliation. The reporting timelines shall be stipulated in the Contract.
- ii) The Contracting Authority then compiles this information and communicates to the donors/ and other stakeholders.

15. **RIGHT OF ACCESS**

The contract should establish that the Contracting Authority has rights to:

- a) Access sites and locations of implementation.
- b) Books of Accounts
- c) Spot checks
- d) Audits

16. **RECOVERY**

In instances where the beneficiary does not satisfy the conditions of the Contract, the Contracting Authority can ask the beneficiary to repay some amounts as may be determined.

17. COMPLAINTS

- a) Any complaint by an applicant shall be investigated by the appropriate investigating arm as will be determined by the Contracting Authority. However, only those with a basis for protest shall be entertained by the Contracting Authority.
- b) Complaints shall be sent to the Director of Administration and General Services/ Directorate in charge of Grants/ equivalent function for other Institutions.
- c) Complaints on selection sent to the Contracting authority within the 15-day standstill period will be accepted.
- d) Any other complaints can be sent as and when the need arises.
- e) For ECOWAS Commission, any responses to the aggrieved applicant are prepared and sent by the Director of Administration and General Services/ Directorate in charge of Grants/ equivalent function for other Institutions within 15 working days. For any other ECOWAS Institution, this is addressed by someone with an equivalent function.
- f) Within the 15 working days, Contracting Authority shall:
 - i. Acknowledge in writing to the aggrieved applicant
 - ii. Initiate a review of the allegations
 - iii. Respond to the aggrieved applicant.

18. SANCTIONS COMMITTEE

1. Set up by the President, 3 or 5 members.
2. Director of Administration and General Services is the secretary, or Head of Procurement, in his absence.
3. The Sanctions Committee makes recommendations to the Commissioner Internal Services.
4. Commissioner Internal Services communicates to the President and other Head of Institution and if applicable to the sanctioned party.
5. The sanctioned party has 90 days to appeal to the President of the Commission.
6. President may establish an ad hoc committee for recommendations into his/her decision.