MAY 2021
VERSION 2.0

PROGRAMME GUIDELINES FOR THE CIVIL SOCIETY FUND

CISU CIVIL SOCIETY IN DEVELOPMENT

Programme Guidelines for the Civil Society Fund

CISU CIVIL SOCIETY IN DEVELOPMENT

CONTENTS

OBJECTIVE 4

SUPPORT MODALITIES 6

PRECONDITIONS FOR PROGRAMME APPLICATIONS 6

- Reflections prior to programme application 6
- Strategic focus 7
- Countries 7
- Nexus and fragile contexts 8
- Sustainability 9
- Partners 9
- Strategic framework and Theory of Change (ToC) 10

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA 10

- Adaptable requirements 11
- Assessment and scoring system 12

APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS 13

- The application process 13
- First-time programme applicants 13
- Current programme organisations 15

START-UP AND INITIAL PROCESS TO ASSESS PROGRAMME ELIGIBILITY (FROM 1 FEBRUARY TO MAY/JUNE) 15

FINAL PROGRAMME APPLICATION PROCESS (FROM MAY/JUNE TO DECEMBER) 17

BUDGET FRAMEWORK, GRANT CEILINGS AND PRINCIPLES FOR COMPETITION FOR FUNDS 17

- How much funding is available? 17
- How and when can a new budget be applied for? 18

BUDGET 19

- Self-funding 19

FORMATS AND PROCEDURES 20

- Application 20
- Reporting and results framework 20

LEARNING AND EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES 21

- CISU's inspections and reviews 21

Photos by Pernille Bærendtsen

▶ Amount: from DKK 3 million to 15 million per year (the maximum is set by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Support for programmes is an option for organisations whose cooperation and projects with partners in developing countries has a track record of results and proven capacity to manage large grants. A programme grant expands an organisation's scope for engaging in focused, flexible and long-term partnerships. This serves to ensure a far-sighted strategic approach to development cooperation.

OBJECTIVE

Support for programmes should contribute to fulfilling the Civil Society Fund's overall purpose:

The Civil Society Fund supports cooperation between a multiplicity of actors in order to achieve:

- Sustainable improvements in poor people's living conditions, participation in society, fulfilment of rights and securing of equal opportunities.
- Strong, independent and diversified civil societies through interventions at all levels, from organising the community to cooperating globally.
- Strong popular participation and volunteering in Danish development cooperation in terms of Danes getting directly involved in development interventions and in the pursuit of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The objective of support for programmes is to assist the recipient Danish organisation and its partners in contributing constructively as active civil society actors in their respective contexts, drawing upon their proven professional capacity, while they make efforts towards greater financial sustainability by strengthening their financial capacity with diversified funding of activities and organisations.

This objective can be achieved through programme grants that pave the way for integrated interventions, leading to greater impact, more synergy effects and better cooperation with partners. Support for programmes is to be applied for by organisations whose work has a strategic focus (geographically, thematically and/or sector-wise) that makes it relevant to combine their activities, or parts thereof, into a single programme rather than carrying out a string of piecemeal projects.

Thus, a programme is expected to have a strategic focus that brings together an array of specific interventions within a shared framework. For instance, a geographical focus may entail better utilisation of knowledge built about special conditions in a particular country or in several countries of a certain region. This may concern the climate for organising civil society, or it can be an insight into the plight of particularly vulnerable and marginalised groups.

A thematic focus may aim to make the most of experiences and methods from special areas of intervention (e.g. mobilising rural workers or supporting and meeting the special educational needs of children with disabilities). This serves to improve activities, as it becomes easier to identify and use professional knowledge. Such a strategy may well be based on experiences and contacts accumulated in connection with previous individual project grants.

In terms of **the Development Triangle**, this implies that a programme will often be strategically focussed towards 'organisational capacity' and 'advocacy'. Since the Danish organisations' local partners will typically have developed capacity to manage funds for projects and activities prior to

the approval of programme grant, it is quite possible that they can rely increasingly on other sources of finance and initiatives for their strategic deliveries. In such circumstances, other donors may acknowledge and trust the capacity built earlier in the partnership.

A programme approach allows for greater attention to what can be called "the role as a catalyst", i.e. the Danish organisation's ability, when acting alongside partners from developing countries, to innovate and deepen the following:

- **Partnership relations**: enhancing the local partner's role in civil society and/or expanding its web of relations together with and in favour of other civil society actors. This might consist of developing new approaches to advocacy or social accountability, or of entering new national or international networking or forums, where relevant authorities (duty bearers) can be held to account for the issue being addressed. Rather than devoting the lion's share of partnership energy to day-to-day project implementation, attention can thus be gradually shifted to wards wider strategic subjects related to the role of civil society, as the partners have come to build mutual trust and understanding. A programme approach also makes it viable to work with a somewhat wider array of partners, some of which will have more experience and capacity, while others will take on a range of more fundamental tasks. A programme can enable dynamic learning across such a diversity of partners. CISU's **thematic papers** elaborate on the development of partnerships.

- **New strategic approaches**: developing new strategic, professional and innovative approaches within the field of work. At this stage, both the Danish organisation and its local partners have acquired professional and practical experiences by virtue of their hands-on project work, and they have become capable of building upon this foundation to innovate their methods and continuously improve their programme endeavour.

The above sets out the expectations both to the Danish organisation and its partners. In addition, acting as a catalyst entails a series of more direct obligations for local partners, where a programme approach may, for instance:

- Boost partners' will and capacity to mobilise, build relations and cooperate with other actors in society around them. These can be fellow civil society organisations, businesses run for profit or with social aims, foundations, institutions, training centres, authorities etc.
- Strengthen partners' and other actors' capacity to take part in joint activities, campaigns, social movements, networking, alliances and virtual communities.
- Support partners in refining their strategic and organisational approach to getting involved in society around them.
- Carry out joint activities that promote citizen participation, mutual trust, popular mobilisation and engagement, as well as formation of new communities.
- Exchange knowledge, experience and learning with other actors.

Moreover, acting as a catalyst encompasses efforts to obtain complementary resources, including financial support. This applies both to the Danish organisation and to local partners around the world. The catalytic effects should help boost both the impact and the sustainability of the partnership and its activities. This also concerns partners' and other actors' capacity to carry on pursuing their goals and visions after an intervention to that effect has been completed. For example, they may have succeeded in entering into networking, forging alliances, building strong ties to authorities or receiving financial support elsewhere.

The approval of a programme grant is based on the Danish organisation and its partners having demonstrated, through their project work, that donor funds are clearly managed as per the signed agreements and the guidelines in force. Accordingly, a programme grant is an expression of trust that fundamental working procedures and management systems are in place, thus sending an important signal to other donors who might want to co-finance the

development work of the applicant organisation and its partners. Likewise, a programme grant demonstrates that partners in the South have a proven track record of handling advocacy.

Thus, taking on a programme modality should contribute to the applicant organisation assuming greater responsibility for planning its own development work, developing its own solid professional foundation and forging strong partnerships. Similarly, the organisation in charge must establish the systems required to administer, monitor and report on the development interventions to be contained within the programme (see below under 'assessment criteria').

SUPPORT MODALITIES

The ways in which programme support differs from project support include:

- PREDICTABILITY: Four-year strategic framework with annual funding commitments.
- FLEXIBILITY: Ample scope for adjusting the strategic approach and parts of the budget in response to changes in the context.

A programme does not per se imply a higher amount of funding from the Civil Society Fund, but the applicant organisation gets the opportunity to plan its combined cooperative undertakings with partners in a more focused manner, and to implement more flexibly, thanks to no longer being under the more stringent obligations derived from a series of project grants.

It is possible to apply for a programme either for the first time or as the continuation of an ongoing programme.

- **A first-time programme** is for organisations that have administered a sizable project portfolio for some years, largely with the same partners. Against the background of such experiences, it is possible to apply for a programme with a four-year horizon. The programme must be based on a Theory of Change that explains how the activities and partners involved are interconnected and synergistic. There is also a requirement for gradual phase-in of a certain level of self-funding.
- The **continuation of an ongoing programme** is for organisations that have a programme grant currently being implemented under the Civil Society Fund and wish to continue the programme, building upon the experiences gained. It is possible to apply for a four-year extension of a programme based on a Theory of Change that enhances and refines the activities, as well as documentation that the required self-funding has been phased in, in addition to a plan for future self-funding.

PRECONDITIONS FOR PROGRAMME APPLICATIONS

CISU's support for programmes forms part of the Civil Society Fund as a whole. Accordingly, applicants must live up to this fund's general requirements, those set out on pages 6-18 in **Guidelines for the Civil Society Fund**. In addition to those, the following preconditions apply in the case of programmes:

- An average of at least DKK 3 million in annual grants approved by the Civil Society Fund, or the equivalent, over the two full financial years preceding the application.
- Proven capacity to implement, monitor and manage project grants awarded by the Civil Society Fund, or the equivalent (see below about Track Record).
- An organisational plan for how to comply with the self--funding requirement.

If the conditions are met, it is possible to apply for a programme Capacity Assessment/Appraisal (CapApp).

Reflections prior to programme application

A programme application will often follow the structure presented in the chart below. A string of different interventions must fit within a single overall framework with some clear and connecting goals. Sometimes they can be organised into a small number of outcomes, as illustrated in the

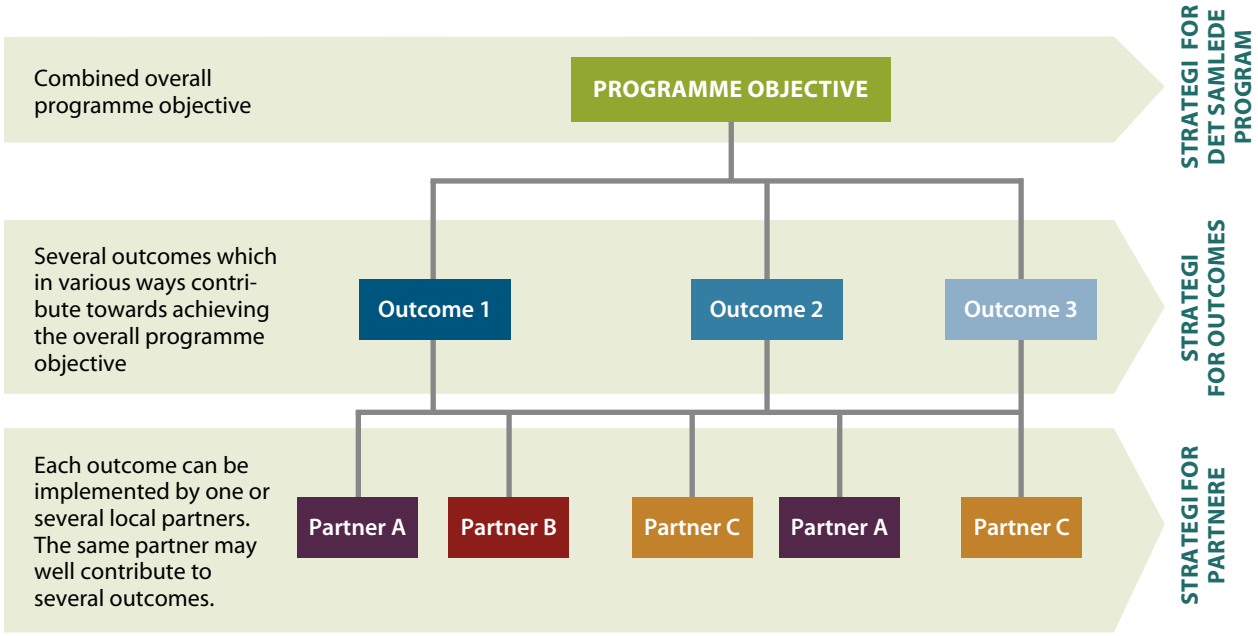


figure. What matters is that the applicant and partners invest efforts in mapping out and continuing to chart a meaningful overall course for their interventions.

Strategic focus

Organisations that have thus far implemented a sequence of individual projects should consider whether there is a sufficiently strong common denominator that cuts across all of those. A programme application will typically contain a number of outcomes, and these will be expected to contribute clearly towards overall objectives that are pursued throughout the programme. Likewise, it must be evident how each of the participant partner organisations stand to gain professionally and strategically from the cooperation contained within the programme.

A clear strategic common denominator will make it easier to design meaningful indicators and a monitoring system, which – spanning the whole range of outcomes – can measure how the programme is advancing towards the defined objectives. Furthermore, a programme approach makes it possible to apply for global and/or thematic interventions, where local activities are complemented by wider efforts to ensure that the interests of the poor and marginalised are championed in international forums. All programme partners are expected to be engaged at the overall programme level, though it must be acknowledged that partners differ in their strategic aims, geographical coverage and capacity. Accordingly, it is natural if they get involved to varying extents.

Countries

A programme will often build upon existing experiences of partners and countries. This serves to ensure that the Danish organisation and its local partners can incorporate what they have learned from previous interventions, both as regards the country context and intervention methodologies. This is a good starting point for designing a more strategic approach, but it is not obligatory to carry on all ongoing partnerships and countries of cooperation in a programme setup. In some cases, it makes sense to invite new partners to join in to improve outreach to priority target groups and to unleash new dynamics by drawing on other experiences and methods.

New countries and/or partners can thus be included in the programme application if the applicant can demonstrate good knowledge of the new context and/or partner. When

breaking new ground in this manner, it is important to address the challenges regarding financial sustainability. If the share of spending on new countries/partners exceeds 25 percent of total programme costs, special justification is required. Examining whether such an expansion is warranted must feature as a subject in the Terms of Reference for the external consultancy to be conducted prior to the actual programme application, and the conclusion must have been in the affirmative.

The country context may be a major factor in choosing the local partner and in designing the implementation of interventions. It is essential that the application demonstrates thorough knowledge of local conditions for civil society organisations, and that the programme strategy/Theory of Change (ToC) stems from the reflections that have preceded the choice of areas of intervention in the country context at hand.

Nexus and fragile contexts

The Civil Society Fund can support interventions taking place both in stable and in fragile contexts. Since there is a continuum rather than a clear-cut distinction between a stable and a fragile context, an applicant to the Civil Society Fund may struggle to describe what the fragility consists of. The five dimensions indicated in the table below may serve to analyse and describe how fragility is manifested in various ways in a given context. It is possible to apply for support for all countries on the OECD/DAC's list of ODA recipients.

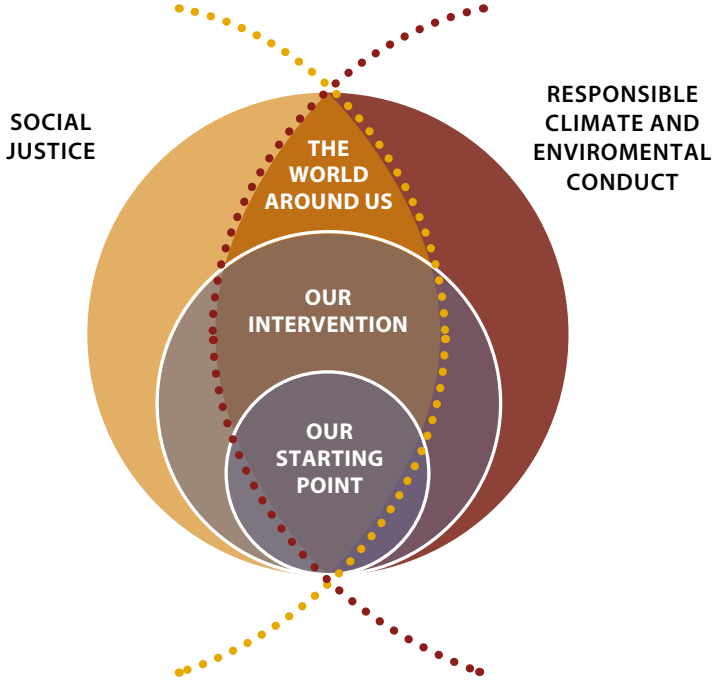
The **Guidelines for the Civil Society Fund** as well as the **Thematic Paper on Nexus** elaborate on the special conditions that apply when taking the Nexus approach and conducting interventions in fragile contexts, including greater flexibility in the assessment of proposed interventions in fragile contexts, which is also explicitly stated under some of the assessment criteria, see **Annex 1**.

In the assessment of applications for programmes that aspire to work in fragile contexts, a significant area of scrutiny will be the applicant's capacity and the relevance of partner relations in view of the context at hand. This means that the applicant and partner organisations must be prepared to adjust their interventions to circumstances, which can change rapidly, and they need to be well-versed in ways of forging links between long-term development cooperation and more short-term humanitarian aid.

DIMENSIONS	DESCRIPTION
ECONOMIC FRAGILITY	Encompasses vulnerability to economic risks, unemployment and unequal growth, among other factors.
CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL FRAGILITY	Encompasses vulnerability to climate and environmental risks, including exposure to natural disasters and consequences of climate change.
POLITICAL FRAGILITY	Encompasses vulnerability associated with political conflict and oppression, including risks related to political events and lack of participation in decision-making processes.
SECURITY FRAGILITY	Encompasses citizens' vulnerability to security risks, such as war, other armed conflict and terror. It springs from social or political violence.
SOCIAL FRAGILITY	Encompasses vulnerability to risks affecting social cohesion. It springs from inequality in society and limited access to human rights.

Read more about the dimensions of a fragile context on the **OECD website on the Fragility Framework**.
There is also a link to the OECD's website and further information on CISU's nexus approach at **www.cisu.dk/nexus**.

SUSTAINABILITY MODEL



The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic may continue to exert major influences in the years to come. If this is considered in the analysis behind the programme design, the applicant may benefit from using the Nexus approach to describe how the pandemic affects the programme, and how the partners are capable of agile adaptation of their interventions to a context in flux.

Sustainability

Sustainability, defined as social justice and responsible climate and environmental conduct, is a cross-cutting issue within the Civil Society Fund. The Sustainability Model illustrates CISU's approach and how to work with sustainability at three levels.

The **Guidelines for the Civil Society** and **Thematic Paper on Sustainability** details the special conditions in force regarding sustainability and how they substantiate the assessment criteria for social justice and responsible climate and environmental conduct.

Partners

The aspiration to take on a programme approach must start from the needs, capacities and interests expressed by partners. Compared to projects, a programme may entail changes in tasks and working modalities for local partners, which will often place greater emphasis on cooperation with other organisations and actors.

A programme will typically encompass an assortment of partner organisations, who will often have varying capacities and whose organisational structures and areas of intervention will diverge. It is important that partners see the programme approach as being clearly to their own benefit, and that cooperation modalities have been thought through and designed to take account of partners' differences, including how to settle disagreements and conflicts if they arise.

Unless the local partners have shared values and common interest in programme cooperation from the outset, there is a risk that their programme participation is primarily motivated by cooperation with the Danish organisation rather

than by forging closer and wider contacts to the other programme organisations. This could be detrimental to the programme's sustainability and chances of creating synergy.

This makes it important that programme partners have discussed and clarified each other's expectations, roles and responsibilities beforehand, so as to be able to confront challenges and obstacles, with partners rallying around a shared undertaking. All partners are expected to become engaged in the programme, each organisation with its unique contribution corresponding to its professional capacity and geographical coverage. Project-implementing organisations that consider applying for a programme grant have the option of applying for a minor project intervention along with their partners in order to prepare the programme strategy and how to work together across the programme.

All programme organisations and partners are required to have incorporated and implemented PSHEA (Protection against Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse) by 1 January 2024, including training and ensuring partner-level implementation, in order to prevent, expose and actively follow up any kind of sexual exploitation, abuse and/or harassment at all levels, both internally and externally. In addition, in the period until 1 January 2024, the Danish organisation is required to work actively to strengthen its own and its local partners' capacity as regards policy implementation and the required PSHEA mechanisms.

Strategic framework and Theory of Change (ToC)

A programme involves an ambition to blaze new trails and try out more flexible methods regarding partnerships, strategy and funding. Compared to projects, a programme approach calls for placing greater emphasis on how partners cooperate and on how the different interventions are interconnected so that the various individual contributions carry greater weight in pursuit of the overall programme objectives.

To confirm that the scope and direction match the ambitions, and to ensure connectedness and understanding of the logic throughout, a programme application must set out a strategic framework in terms of a Theory of Change (ToC), see **Annex 3 Guidance Note: Theory of Change and Results Framework**. A ToC starts from a thorough context analysis and stakeholder analysis. It can be conceived as a way to map out the cause-and-effect chain on how activities are foreseen to create immediate outputs which, in turn, lead to long-term outcomes.

The Theory of Change must also clarify the roles of the various partners and stakeholders in each of the planned interventions. And it must be stated which resources (such as financial support and professional advice) are at stake in each area, also with a view to securing greater donor diversification for partners. Moreover, a Theory of Change can also help communicate the programme rationale to a wider audience.

A Theory of Change must be in place both for the overall programme and for its constituent components. CISU does not insist on any particular format for a Theory of Change but has drawn up the aforementioned Guidance Note (**Annex 3**) to provide an advisory framework for the application process. Regardless of how the programme's strategic framework is presented, CISU sets store on local partner organisations being involved and contributing to preparing it. It is important to explain how the Theory of Change can be periodically adjusted and updated in light of experiences gained and new reflections.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

All programme applications will be assessed according to the same criteria, albeit with some variations for first-time applicants. The criteria revolve around three main areas, each of which has a professional focus. These are derived from CISU's criteria for development interventions and elements from the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' criteria for "Strategic Partnerships".

Accordingly, they are, on the one hand, an extension of the criteria that first-time programme applicants will already

AREA	PROFESSIONAL FOCUS
Strategic relevance	Why is this programme relevant to civil society? The strategic relevance criterion looks at what a programme wishes to achieve and how this is strategically relevant to civil society in the contexts of intervention. This includes how the programme relates to relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A key factor is how the work is embedded within relevant local partner organisations and/or networks capable of sustaining the results achieved.
Capacity	What is the applicant capable of already? The professional focus in the area of capacity is on the Danish organisation's competencies, roots in the population, practices and systems, learning and innovation, as well as the experiences, capacities and resources of participant partners and other possible actors. This also means looking at the results achieved thus far, either in previous projects or during a preceding programme phase.
Programme approach	How will the programme be implemented? This involves a more specific examination of how the programme is to be implemented, and on the extent to which the planned interventions will, in the aggregate upon completion, lead to synergies and greater scope for working with topics and issues related to the Theory of Change. At the centre of attention is the strategy, including how the programme addresses the SDG agenda taking a rights-based approach, for example, by applying the Development Triangle and sustainability model to the areas of intervention and to the defined long-term objectives. Moreover, the programme design is assessed as regards the composition of the target group, monitoring setup, risk management, innovation, cost-efficiency and programme-related information work.

The assessment criteria and explanatory notes for each criterion are available in **Annex 1**.

know in relation to project grants, and, on the other, designed so as to match the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' criteria for a Strategic Partnership, which is of interest to those who, over time, want to become eligible for this support modality provided by the ministry.

Adaptable requirements

The principle of assessing applications as a whole, which applies to other support modalities under the Civil Society Fund, will also be in force for programme proposals. Adaptable requirements imply that the assessment will take account of the intervention's financial scale, the capacity of the applicant organisation, local partners and other actors, as well as the applicant's track record of previous grants from CISU and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Accordingly, a programme application will be assessed in view of the budget size. The larger the budget, the stricter the requirements. Likewise, more will be demanded of organisations that have longer experience and have administered more grants from CISU and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs compared to those that have less experience and have received fewer grants from CISU and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Thus, the assessment criteria are in force for a first-time programme application as well as for an application to extend an ongoing programme, but the principle of adaptable requirements means that a less experienced applicant can, in principle, obtain a higher relative score than a more experienced applicant, even when their respective programme designs are assessed to have the same quality on a given criterion. First-time applicants are exempted from the sco-

	LEADS STANDS FOR	SCORE	THE SCORE IS GIVEN WHEN THERE IS
L	Little action/evidence	1	Weak indication that supports the criteria
E	Some Evidence	2	Some indication that supports the criteria
A	Action taken	3	Indication that supports the criteria
D	Developed	4	Solid indication that supports the criteria
S	Sustainable	5	Comprehensive indication of implementation and/or indication of an established approach/system in supporting the criteria

LEADS scoring method.

ring exercise, but the same criteria are used to assess and comment upon their applications.

Assessment and scoring system

The assessment and scoring are carried out based on the programme application, complemented, whenever relevant, by foregoing analyses/reviews and other documents, including, for instance, progress and final reports that have been drawn up in connection with the applicant's previous interventions. The exercise is undertaken by CISU's Assessment System, which is described in more detail on **CISU's website**.

The Assessment Committee draws up an Assessment Note based on the aforementioned criteria. A Recommendation Letter, based on the Assessment Note and Danida's assessment format, is presented to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which takes the final decision to approve or reject a grant.

Applicant's remarks

As part of the assessment process, a draft of the filled-in assessment table (prior to scoring) is presented to the applicant, who then gets a chance to submit written remarks to further substantiate the assessment. Such comments enter the overall body of material that is examined for the purposes of assessing the application. To the extent that these comments are relevant, they will also be considered in the final assessment of the application and in determining the score for individual criteria.

Scoring procedure

The three overall areas (strategic relevance, capacity and programmatic approach) are assessed with a score pertaining to each of twelve criteria on a scale from 1 to 5 according to the LEADS method. This has been developed by the World Bank and is used in an adapted version by Danida too.

Each of the twelve criteria is broken down into various subpoints in **Annex 1**, though these are not used for separate scoring. Thus, the assessment is expressed in terms of a general score for each of the twelve criteria, in which the corresponding subpoints are considered. **Annex 5** on how to draw up the programme document indicates how applicants can make sure their application contains the information required to assess each criterion.

The Assessment Committee calibrates the use of the scoring system to make it fair across the board, ensuring that scores are awarded based on a common interpretation of each criterion and of the standards that should be aimed for.

FUTURE APPLICATION ROUNDS (2021-2028)								
Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Group A								
Application process	X				X			
Programme commencement		1 Jan. 2022				1 Jan. 2026		
Group B								
Application process			X				X	
Programme commencement				1 Jan. 2024				1 Jan. 2028

APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Programme applications are submitted together and processed on a regular basis every two years.

The idea behind everyone applying together in rounds is to avoid programme proposals being assessed one by one, instead favouring simultaneous commencement and renewal of a number of programmes. This makes it possible to compare the programme proposals to one another and to ensure that applications are assessed and judged according to uniform standards.

Since each programme phase lasts four years, individual programme holders need only to re-apply every two rounds. Programmes are thus divided into two groups according to the time at which renewal of their four-year period is due. For newcomers, the timing of their first application will determine which group they belong to.

The application process

The following chart above shows the application process for first-time applicants and for current programme organisations, respectively.

First-time programme applicants

Applicants that meet the requirements listed in the section "Preconditions for programme application" should, at the very beginning of the programme process, become familiar with all the elements of which a programme application is composed. Even though the actual application is not drawn up until later, it is recommended to enter a dialogue with partners early on about the programme contents, and possibly even prepare preliminary suggestions for individual chapters in an eventual programme application. First-time applicants are encouraged to plan their programme application by means of advice from CISU to fit into one of the future application rounds

The start-up phase, running until 1 February in the year prior to planned programme commencement, consists of two main elements:

- The Track Record document (TRD), which is prepared by a CISU advisor in cooperation with the applicant.
- The applicant's proposed Concept Note for the programme (see **Annex 6**), which is drawn up by the applicant.

The TRD and Concept Note serve to substantiate the preparation of the Terms of Reference (ToR) for a capacity assessment-cum-appraisal (CapApp). The CapApp is carried

	FIRST-TIME APPLICANTS	CURRENT PROGRAMME ORGANISATIONS
START-UP (PRIOR 1 FEB.)	• Track Record Document (TRD) (CISU) • Terms of Reference for CapApp (CISU) • Draft Concept Note (programme applicant) • Financial examination (CISU)	• Track Record Document (TRD) (CISU) • Terms of Reference for Review (CISU) • Financial check-up (CISU)
PREPARATION FOR PROGRAMME ELIGIBILITY FEB.-MAY/JUNE	• CapApp carried out (external consultant) • Final Concept Note and Management Response (programme applicant) • Concept Note is shared with Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including relevant embassies (CISU) • Assessment Committee decides on applicant's programme eligibility • Any conditions and advice are replied to (programme applicant)	• Review carried out (external consultant) • Progress report is submitted and annual consultation carried out (programme applicant) • Concept Note and Management Response (programme applicant) • Concept Note is shared with Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including relevant embassies (CISU) • Assessment Committee decides on applicant's programme eligibility • Any conditions and advice are replied to (programme applicant)
POSSIBLE REJECTION OF PROGRAMME ELIGIBILITY		
PROGRAMME APPLICATION IS DRAWN UP MAY-SEPT.	• Final programme application (programme applicant)	• Final programme application (programme applicant)
ASSESSMENT AND SCORING OCT.	• The Assessment Committee's decision and assessment of the programme proposal is sent to applicant for comments (Assessment Committee) • The Assessment Committee's final assessment and scoring of the programme application (Assessment Committee)	• The Assessment Committee's decision and assessment of the programme proposal are sent to applicants for comments (Assessment Committee) • The Assessment Committee's final assessment and scoring of the programme application (Assessment Committee) • Grant buget is calculated and adjusted based on the score (CISU)
FINAL APPROVAL NOV.-DEC.	• Final approval by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	• Final approval by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs • Applicant adjusts the budget to match the total amount granted (programme applicant)

Annex 4 lists the deadlines for each element within the application process.

out by an external consultant in accordance with the ToR. The latter document is written by a CISU advisor with the possibility of comments from the applicant and from CISU's Assessment System. The ToR must be approved by the CISU Head of Secretariat before a contract is signed with an external consultant. If a capacity assessment of the applicant organisation has already been carried out within the past two years, this may serve to inform the application assessment, and in that case only an appraisal of the Concept Note will take place. Moreover, CISU will examine the financial system of the Danish organisation, so that the conclusions can be included in the overall assessment of the programme proposal.

Current programme organisations

For organisations with a current programme grant, CISU draws up an up-to-date TRD and ToR for an external consultant, who conducts a Review of the ongoing programme. The Review includes an up-to-date capacity assessment of the Danish organisation and its partners. The Danish organisation submits its progress report for the preceding programme year no later than 1 March, and an annual consultation is held with CISU before the Concept Note is submitted in April. In addition, CISU will examine the finances of the Danish organisation to let the conclusions inform the overall assessment of the programme proposal.

Organisations engaged in a Strategic Partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, due to be transferred to CISU, may enter into an ongoing application process towards a programme with an adjusted format and timeframe upon agreement with CISU and the said ministry.

START-UP AND INITIAL PROCESS TO ASSESS PROGRAMME ELIGIBILITY (FROM 1 FEBRUARY TO MAY/JUNE)

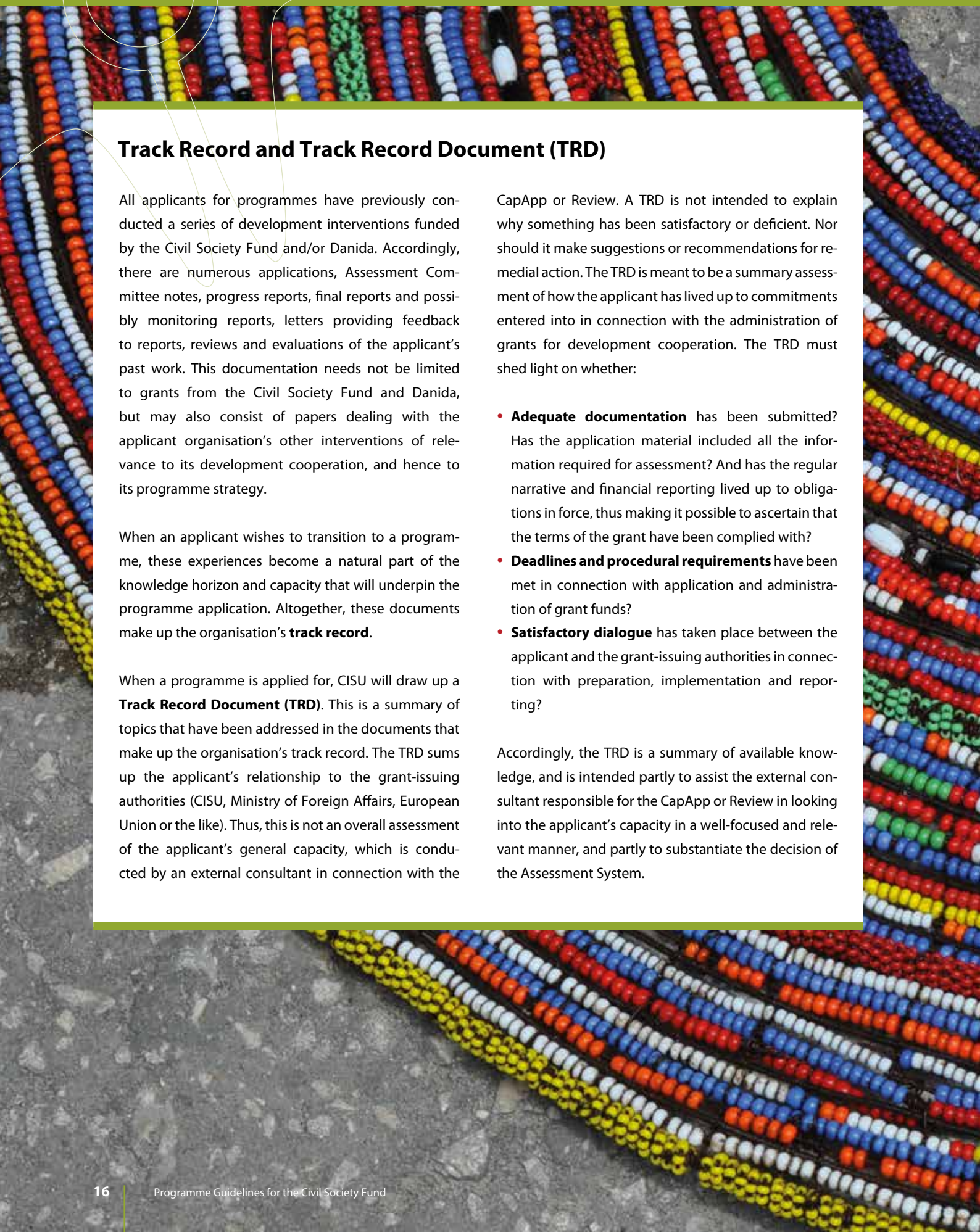
An external consultant carries out the CapApp of first-time programme applicants or a Review of current programme holders wishing to prepare a new application. Subsequently, the Assessment Consultant conducts an overall assessment and issues a recommendation to the Assessment Committee, stating, against the background of the consultancy report, the Concept Note, the management response and any other relevant documents, whether it is relevant for the organisation's portfolio to turn into, or remain as, a programme. The decision thus made is, in principle, definitive as to whether the organisation is eligible to submit a final programme application in the coming round.

The Assessment Committee has the option of setting **conditions** as well as giving **advice**. The conditions refer to aspects of the Concept Note, which the applicant must remedy within maximum two weeks, to make the document comply with the conditions. The advice concerns whatever ought to be enhanced in the programme concept and be set out in the final programme application.

If programme eligibility is rejected

Applicants who are turned down in their request for programme eligibility have the option of applying for new projects under the other support modalities of the Civil Society Fund, or the possibility of an extension of ongoing development interventions until the closing date for the Civil Society Fund in September, as well as later deadlines. Applicants who are already running a programme but are declared ineligible to apply for another programme grant, can apply for projects due to be launched once the ongoing programme period has been completed.

Such applicants may choose to re-apply for programme eligibility at a later stage. If so, they are encouraged to take advantage of the conclusion and recommendations from the last CapApp/Review and from the Assessment Committee's rejection of the last application for eligibility submitted.



Track Record and Track Record Document (TRD)

All applicants for programmes have previously conducted a series of development interventions funded by the Civil Society Fund and/or Danida. Accordingly, there are numerous applications, Assessment Committee notes, progress reports, final reports and possibly monitoring reports, letters providing feedback to reports, reviews and evaluations of the applicant's past work. This documentation needs not be limited to grants from the Civil Society Fund and Danida, but may also consist of papers dealing with the applicant organisation's other interventions of relevance to its development cooperation, and hence to its programme strategy.

When an applicant wishes to transition to a programme, these experiences become a natural part of the knowledge horizon and capacity that will underpin the programme application. Altogether, these documents make up the organisation's **track record**.

When a programme is applied for, CISU will draw up a **Track Record Document (TRD)**. This is a summary of topics that have been addressed in the documents that make up the organisation's track record. The TRD sums up the applicant's relationship to the grant-issuing authorities (CISU, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union or the like). Thus, this is not an overall assessment of the applicant's general capacity, which is conducted by an external consultant in connection with the CapApp or Review. A TRD is not intended to explain why something has been satisfactory or deficient. Nor should it make suggestions or recommendations for remedial action. The TRD is meant to be a summary assessment of how the applicant has lived up to commitments entered into in connection with the administration of grants for development cooperation. The TRD must shed light on whether:

- **Adequate documentation** has been submitted? Has the application material included all the information required for assessment? And has the regular narrative and financial reporting lived up to obligations in force, thus making it possible to ascertain that the terms of the grant have been complied with?
- **Deadlines and procedural requirements** have been met in connection with application and administration of grant funds?
- **Satisfactory dialogue** has taken place between the applicant and the grant-issuing authorities in connection with preparation, implementation and reporting?

Accordingly, the TRD is a summary of available knowledge, and is intended partly to assist the external consultant responsible for the CapApp or Review in looking into the applicant's capacity in a well-focused and relevant manner, and partly to substantiate the decision of the Assessment System.

FINAL PROGRAMME APPLICATION PROCESS (FROM MAY/JUNE TO DECEMBER)

If the applicant's programme eligibility is approved, an actual programme application must be drawn up in terms of a programme document, for which **Annex 5** may serve as a guiding format.

Follow-up to the Assessment Committee's recommendations

If the Assessment Committee has approved the applicant's programme eligibility giving one or several pieces of advice, any shortcomings in adhering to this may lead to a low score for one or several assessment criteria. However, deficient follow-up to advice from the Assessment Committee may lead to rejection only in highly exceptional cases when the full-fledged programme document deviates in significant respects from the approved Concept Note on which it was supposed to be based. In other words, already at the time of approval of programme eligibility through the process described above, the organisation can start preparing for a programme, since the focus of the Assessment Committee's subsequent processing of the actual programme document will be on deciding the size of the grant.

The Assessment Committee's final recommendation and score (from October to 1 November)

CISU's Assessment System examines the final application and applies a score, using the twelve assessment criteria in **Annex 1**. The total score determines the size of the final grant, as it is compared to the scores of other programme applications from the same group of applicants.

However, first-time programme applicants will not be exposed to this competitive exercise, as their total programme grant will remain equal to the average sum of total grants from the Civil Society Fund over the preceding two years.

Danida's approval (period after 1 November)

Processed and approved applications from the round concerned are submitted together to obtain Danida's final grant commitment. The programme will commence on 1 January the following year. If the final total amount granted to a programme has been changed because of the competitive scoring exercise, the programme organisation will draw up a new budget to match.

BUDGET FRAMEWORK, GRANT CEILINGS AND PRINCIPLES FOR COMPETITION FOR FUNDS

The funding of a programme can be increased, firstly, through the 'basic grant' that is approved (every four years) and, secondly, by means of 'additional grants' in the course of the programme period (see below). Accordingly, a programme can be gradually expanded or scaled back from its current level. The minimum for a programme under the Civil Society Fund is DKK 3 million, and the maximum follows the minimum for Strategic Partnership agreements with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. If a CISU-funded programme lives up to the ministry's criteria, it is possible to apply for transitioning to a Strategic Partnership in one of the ministry's future application rounds.

A programme is applied for with a four-year horizon. However, the binding funding commitment issued upon approval is limited to one financial year at a time. Applications are for an average amount per year, and it is possible to transfer up to 15 percent of funds from one financial year to another in case of underspending.

How much funding is available?

Every year, CISU's Board determines, upon approval by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, what share of the total Civil Society Fund can be spent on programmes, as the following applies:

- In principle, annual funding commitments for individual programmes will not be reduced if the total allocation to the Civil Society Fund is unchanged in the new financial year.
- If the total amount allocated to the Civil Society Fund is reduced, or if the foundation for managing grant commitments undergoes radical change, all ongoing programmes will, in principle, have their budgets reduced by the same percentage as the overall cut.

When extending a programme, the applicant may request an annual budget equivalent to the average programme grant over the two preceding financial years. Accordingly, in principle, the total amount is based on the size of the basic grant, not including additional grants or any grants from other CISU support modalities, unless something else has been in force for the additional grant (see explanation in next section). In the case of a new programme, it is possible to request an annual budget equivalent to the average amount granted in the two preceding financial years.

Programme grant recipients cannot apply for any other support modality under the Civil Society Fund, except for "Co-Financing" and special thematic support modalities, such as the "Rebuilding Civic Space Fund."

Organisations that have been awarded a programme grant yet continue to run unfinished projects under the Civil Society Fund may choose to either carry on these projects in parallel with the phase-in of the programme period or terminate the project grants immediately and incorporate the corresponding activities into the programme as per the programme commencement date. If the first option is chosen, the amounts disbursed towards these project budgets will be deducted from the annual programme funding commitment.

How and when can a new budget be applied for?

A programme grant can be adjusted in two ways, depending on whether it is a basic grant or an additional grant.

Basic grant (four-year horizon)

Each basic programme grant is determined every four years. Programme proposals will be assessed in competition with one another within group A or B in view of the twelve assessment criteria (**Annex 1**). How much programme funding is applied for in competition with others depends on the total allocation to the Civil Society Fund.

Each applicant's score will be translated into a percentage of the average score, which will then serve to calculate the next basic grant. The rule in force is that the scoring from assessment of the application can only reduce or add up to a maximum of 20 percent of the grant. However, upward or downward regulation of grant size will also have to take place in view of the total Civil Society Fund allocation available for programme grants. A revised budget with amendments must then be submitted to CISU. In the case of a large and profoundly changed budget, a revised application, showing "track changes" in the sections concerned, must also be submitted to CISU for re-approval. Significant changes in objectives, partnerships and target groups must be approved by the Assessment Consultant. After each programme round, CISU will draw on analyses of the whole exercise and conduct a dialogue with users to assess if there is any need to adjust the principles and practices regarding competition between applicant organisations.

Additional grant

When CISU receives additional funding, it enables programme organisations to apply for an increase in their programme budget in addition to their four-year basic grant. Such additional resources allow the Civil Society Fund to boost programmes that are particularly good at promoting significant objectives and innovative measures in development cooperation within specific thematic fields.

The amount available depends partly on decisions taken by CISU upon agreement with the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and partly on whether the Civil Society Fund gets a raise in the overall allocation in the annual National Budget Act or has unspent funds left over from completed programmes. Since the availability of such resources is hard to foresee during the ongoing programme work, CISU wishes to set them aside to promote special priority measures. Requirements and assessment criteria apply to these funds, as in the case of basic grants, and additional grants will also be awarded in competition between applicants based on how well they live up to the criteria defined.

The spending of additional grants will be an integral part of annual progress reporting as an annex to the progress report. All programmes can request an additional grant, though there is no obligation on the programme organi-

BUDGET SIZE CATEGORY	FUNDS RAISED IN DENMARK	CO-FINANCING	COMBINED MINIMUM
1. Budget up to DKK 4.5 million a year	0% - 5%	0% - 5%	5%
2. Budget of DKK 4.5-7 million a year	Min. 2.5%	Min. 7.5%	12.5%
3. Budget above DKK 7 million a year	Min. 5%	Min. 12.5%	20%

Calculation of self-funding in relation to budget size category

sation to do so. The specific conditions and guidelines for each type of additional grant will be published in due time, including whether an additional grant will count towards the calculation of the basic grant in the next application round.

BUDGET

The budget must be drawn up in the corresponding format, adhering to the indications in **Guide to Programme Budget 2021**.

Self-funding

Self-funding is a requirement that will be phased in and increased along with the budget size of the programme. All programme applications must be accompanied by a self-funding plan for the Danish organisation. Furthermore, a list must be submitted of existing and expected co-funding for all partners.

Self-funding covers two types that can be combined:

- **Liquid funds raised in Denmark** (for example contributions from supporters, grants from foundations for relevant interventions under the programme, membership fees, private funds from collections or inheritance), which are directly channelled to partners in support of long-term development cooperation that falls within the framework of the Civil Society Policy published by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This is called 'liquid funds' in the budget format, and it is considered a part of the programme budget, to be included in reporting and auditing.
- **Co-financing of activities** (from other donors, foundations, the EU or the organisation's international partners) that are within the framework of the Civil Society Policy published by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the case of joint interventions/programme/activities implemented by one of the local partners or within the applicant's international alliance, such funds from other donors can be counted as co-financing too, provided that the Danish organisation is also playing a formal role as a partner, or otherwise cooperating in the undertaking. Co-financing must be set out in the self-funding plan and be subsequently documented.

CISU's approach will be based on the same flexible practice as the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the assessment of which specific funding modalities can be included as, respectively, "funds raised in Denmark" and "co-financing".

Self-funding is calculated as a percentage of the total budget for PPA (programme and project activities). The required level of self-funding depends on the size of the total programme budget for the basic grant. The percentages express the minimum to be raised within each of the two types of self-funding:

In the case of applicants meeting the self-funding requirement for the first time (first-time applicants) and of those who, due to receiving a grant higher than requested pass on to a higher budget size category, self-funding can be gradually phased in over the first three years, so that the requirement in force is fully met in the fourth programme year.

YEAR	PROGRESS REPORTING	DEADLINE
1		
2	Progress report and programme consultation. Preparation of ToR for midterm review.	Progress report by 1 March
3	Progress report followed by written feedback. Realisation of midterm review.	Progress report by 1 March Midterm review report by 1 May
4	Progress report and programme consultation. Focus on possible extension of programme grant.	Progress report by 1 March

Reporting program grant period

FORMATS AND PROCEDURES

Application

- **Preparation of programme.** A standard format must be used for the Concept Note, the Track Record Document, the budget and the draft Terms of Reference for either CapApp (first-time applicant) or Review (programme extension).
- **Final application**. A programme document must be submitted with a results framework annexed as per the current format. The programme document contains a number of supplementary annexes, which have to be submitted, even if the applicant chooses not to use the guiding programme document format (see **Annex 5**). The budget must be prepared in the standard format for programme budgets.

A list of obligatory annexes is available on CISU's website **www.cisu.dk/puljer/program**.

Reporting and results framework

Annual **progress reporting** must be submitted with an up-to-date results framework annexed to it. The Results Framework is continuously updated to make it possible to follow, throughout the programme period, to what extent the defined outputs are being achieved. The reporting format also requires an annex with journalistic presentation of cases that can be used to communicate results on the internet.

Progress reporting is undertaken by the Danish organisation involving its local partners, and it reflects on methods used and compliance with objectives. Moreover, experiences of testing new and innovative methods are described. In addition, the follow-up to any advice and conditions for approval expressed by the CISU Assessment System must be discussed. The reporting is based on the organisation's own monitoring systems, as these have been listed and described in the application approved by CISU.

Moreover, the annual audited programme accounts must be submitted along with the corresponding audit report. The accounting period corresponds to the calendar year and must be submitted to CISU via vores.cisu.dk no later than on 1 July. At the same time, the programme organisation must submit its overall organisational accounts and the corresponding audit report.

In the course of a four-year programme grant period, the Danish organisation must attend two programme consultations, one in the second and another in the fourth year. The annual progress report serves to substantiate this exercise, just as the organisation will be asked to draw up a brief presentation of the programme's current status, based on the Theory of Change and the updated aggregate Results Framework. For the other years (in the third year as well as after submitting the final report following programme completion), the organisation will receive written feedback on its reporting.

In the third year, the organisation must carry out a midterm review of the programme, whose report replaces the progress report that would otherwise have been due. If the midterm review gives rise to questions, these will be dealt with separately. The issues to be addressed in a midterm review are the same as in a progress report, but with a chance to discuss two-three special topics (see format for midterm review in **Annex 2**). There is no requirement for the consultant to be external, and the design and scope of the midterm review are determined in dialogue with CISU on the second-year consultation. The cost of the midterm review may be entered into the budget. It is presumed to be more expensive to hire an external consultant compared to the use of an internal consultant. Conversely, there is no obligation to carry out a final evaluation of programme grants, since CISU initiates and finances a Review during the last year of the programme period as part of the organisation's application for a new programme grant.

In addition to their annual progress reporting, the organisations are obliged to inform CISU promptly at any time in case of significant changes to or deviations from approved plans or budgets.

LEARNING AND EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES

CISU wants organisations with programme grants to benefit from each other's experiences. For this reason, in addition to programme consultations held with each organisation, CISU will convene joint programme workshops, selecting a common theme for every occasion.

CISU's inspections and reviews

CISU may, as part of its overall monitoring planning and as per need, carry out inspections at the Danish organisation and its partners to become more acquainted with and assess the organisation's administrative and technical set-up, including financial management, monitoring of development interventions, professional competencies etc. This is to gather more knowledge of how the partnership serves as a framework for the programme, to assess the objectives and strategic framework (e.g. the Theory of Change), as well as to take advantage of learning potentials for other CISU-funded development interventions.

Provided that the grant holder wishes to carry on in a new programme period, CISU will, during the fourth and final year of an ongoing programme, commission an external programme review, which will include an updated capacity assessment of the applicant and its partners. The ToR and timetable are drawn up to enable the review report to feed into a possible application for CISU funding of yet another programme period (see the section on the application process).

STRATEGIC RELEVANCE

Assessment of strategic relevance of the programme and partners for civil society

Criteria 1	Strategic orientation: strengthening civil society in the global South and relevance to the Sustainable Development Goals agenda
Criteria 2	Relevance of civil society partners and their local, national and/or global networking partners

CAPACITY

Assessment of track record and demonstrated organisational capacity (applicant organisation and partners)

Criteria 3	Organisation capacity and popular involvement
Criteria 4	Financial management and administrative capacity
Criteria 5	Analytical capacity and learning
Criteria 6	Delivering and documenting results

PROGRAMMATIC APPROACHES

Assessment of the programme content and how methods and approaches are applied

Criteria 7	Theory of Change and programme synergy
Criteria 8	Result Framework and M&E system
Criteria 9	A human rights-based approach (HRBA)
Criteria 10	Sustainability
Criteria 11	Financial resources and cost level
Criteria 12	Popular engagement and development education

CISU CIVIL SOCIETY IN DEVELOPMENT

CISU – Civil Society in Development · Klosterport 4x, 3rd floor · DK-8000 Aarhus C, Denmark
Tel: +45 8612 0342 all weekdays from 10am to 3pm · email us at cisu@cisu.dk