



## Grant Award Guide

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This guide is intended to trace the stages from the launch of the call for proposals to the signature of grant contracts.

## 2. Definition

A grant is a direct financial contribution, by way of donation, paid to a beneficiary entity aiming at an objective relating to a mission of general interest falling within the framework of a policy of sequa. A grant is intended to finance actions implemented by an entity called a “beneficiary”. These actions may fall within its usual activity program or be specially designed to meet objectives set by sequa.

The entity (ies) signing a grant contract is/are designated as “beneficiary (ies)” of the grant and should not be confused with the partner country, the final beneficiary of the action nor with the target group. **The entity receiving the grant remains solely responsible for its implementation.**

A grant can only be paid for an action of a non-commercial nature and must not allow the beneficiary to generate any profit. The recipients of the grant generally come from the non-profit sector: non-governmental organization, civil society organization, international organization, public establishment, local authorities and other non-profit entities.

The standard procedure for awarding grant contracts is called a “call for proposals” and does not follow a threshold trigger logic. The call for proposals can be open or restricted, include or not a phase dedicated to the selection of applications in order to establish a short list of applicants invited to submit a full project proposal.

## 3. Key principles

### 3.1 Non-profit

The grant may not have the object or effect of producing a profit for the beneficiary. Profit is defined as the excess of all receipts over the costs of the action in question when the request for final payment is presented.

When a profit is made, sequa must deduct from the balance of the grant the percentage of profit corresponding to its final contribution to the eligible costs actually incurred and approved.

### 3.2 Transparency

The selection of candidates for a call for proposals procedure must be carried out under conditions of transparency. To this end, sequa publishes all the relevant information necessary to enable potential candidates to obtain accurate and timely information. To ensure the transparency and the traceability of the exchanges between sequa and the various candidates, the questions as well as the answers transmitted must be formulated in writing and made accessible. At all stages of the call for proposals procedure, sequa notifies preselected applicants as well as all other applicants of the rejection of their application, indicating the reasons for this rejection.

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<sup>1</sup> For better readability, only the masculine form is used in this document. This naturally includes all genders.

### 3.3. Equal treatment

In the case of funding from sequa, the allocation of grants must be impartial. This means in particular that an evaluation committee must select the projects, with experts where appropriate, on the basis of the eligibility and evaluation criteria (selection and award) published.

In any event, in the context of a call for proposals, all the information relating to the procedure and the objectives to be achieved is made accessible in a fair manner to all interested applicants. The eligibility, capacity assessment and selection criteria in particular, will be clearly specified in the guidelines. sequa ensures the publication of calls for proposals and will make the guidelines accessible via the Internet and by any other appropriate means of information.

### 3.4 Co-financing and non-cumulation

The beneficiary justifies the amount of co-financing provided, either from its own resources or in the form of financial transfers from other parties. There is co-financing when the beneficiary makes a contribution in financial form.

This means that in particular salaries or parts of salaries of permanent staff assigned to the project cannot be considered as co-financing provided by the beneficiary.

Please note, the co-financing provided by the beneficiary is entered in the budget and in the grant contract; it therefore commits the beneficiary. These funds are also subject to the same eligibility principles as the funds allocated by sequa.

A beneficiary may not obtain more than one grant per action as lead. In their application form, applicants must specify whether they have made several applications or received several grants for the same action or the same work program.

### 3.5 Non-retroactivity

The contracts shall enter into force on the date specified in Article 2.2 of the Special Conditions if and when both parties have effectively signed the Contract. As a general rule, a grant can only cover costs incurred after the date specified in Article 2.2 of the Special Conditions.

It is in fact prohibited to order the start-up of any activity without it being the subject of contractual cover. As contracts or riders do not apply retroactively, any disbursement occurring before the signing of the contract or the corresponding rider is ineligible. Thus, a grant cannot be used to finance actions which have already been completed and which have therefore proved to be feasible without the financial assistance of sequa.

### 3.6 Archiving, confidentiality, and protection of personal data

sequa undertakes to guarantee the confidentiality of the proposals sent to it and ensures the security and storage of these proposals. sequa keeps and must guarantee the confidentiality of documents relating to all award procedures and contracts over a period of 5 years from the payment of the balance. These documents must include the complete set of files of all applications submitted, the call for proposals files and related correspondence.

In addition, sequa undertakes to comply with the regulations in force applicable to the processing of personal data and, in particular, Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 applicable from 25 May 2018. To do this, any personal data must be processed solely for the purpose of processing grant application files. Applicants must be able to have a right of access and rectification of personal data concerning them (<https://www.sequa.de/en/privacy-statement/>).



## 4. Code of Conduct and conflict of interest

### 4.1 Code of conduct

Any contractual commitment of sequa is made in strict application of sequa's Code of Business Conduct („Code of Conduct“ or „Code“). Thus, sequa requires its own employees, applicants and Beneficiaries of grant contracts, to comply with the ethical rules described on this code (<https://www.sequa.de/en/sequa/code-of-conduct/>).

Failure to comply with one or more of the ethical clauses may result in the applicant/beneficiary's exclusion from other contracts financed by sequa. Their respect is considered to be a contractual obligation. The obligations referred to in this section also apply to all members of a consortium (lead applicant, co-applicants) all subcontractors and all entities providing capacity.

### 4.2 Prevention of Conflict of interest

Applicants for a grant must refrain from any relationship likely to give rise to a conflict of interest compromising their independence or that of their staff. The grant applicant and his staff must refrain from carrying out any activity or receiving any benefit which conflicts with the obligations incumbent on him. When a conflict of interest arises either during the Call for Proposals or during the execution of the Contract, it must be reported without delay and in writing to sequa. In the event of a conflict of this nature, the applicant / coordinator immediately takes all necessary measures to put an end to it. sequa reserves the right to verify that said measures are appropriate and proportionate and to require, if necessary, that additional measures be taken.

## 5. Ethic clauses

### 5.1 Compliance with anti-corruption and anti-fraud standards

There is fraud when the impartial and objective performance of the contract results from an act carried out through unfair means intended to obtain an undue material or moral advantage or carried out with the intention of evading the execution of the laws.

The applicant for a grant as well as his (their) sub-contractors, agents or members of the personnel cannot receive or accept to receive from anyone nor offer or propose to give or procure to anyone a present, a gratuity, a commission or remuneration by way of incentive or reward for performing or refraining from performing acts relating to the performance of the grant contract or to favour or disadvantage anyone in connection with the grant contract.

Consequently, any attempt by an applicant to obtain confidential information or to influence the evaluation committee or sequa during the examination, clarification or project evaluation procedure results in the rejection of his application.

The grant applicant is aware that the payments which will be received under the grant contract will constitute the only income or benefit which he can benefit from in connection with the contract. Extraordinary commercial costs are prohibited, relating to any commission not mentioned or any commission which does not compensate any effective legitimate service, any commission paid in a tax haven, any commission paid to a recipient not clearly identified or to a company which has all the appearances of a shell company.

When an award procedure or the execution of a contract is vitiated either by errors or substantial irregularities, or by fraud, sequa suspends the execution of the said contract. If these errors, irregularities or fraud are the fault of the contractor, sequa may, moreover, refuse to make the payment or recover the amounts already paid, in proportion to the seriousness of the said errors, irregularities or fraud. sequa can carry out any check, on documents or

on the spot, that it deems necessary to gather evidence on a presumption of extraordinary commercial costs.

## 5.2 Exclusion situations

It should be noted that the applicant or beneficiary undertakes that any person, group or entity participating in the implementation of the action does not appear on any of the Financial Sanctions Lists (including in particular the fight against financing terrorism) and not to buy, supply or finance equipment in the services or sectors under the embargo of the United Nations, the European Union or Germany.

The verification of exclusion situations by sequa comes under the application of the principle of due diligence.

This control and exclusion system aims to facilitate the detection of people and entities that represent a risk to the interests of sequa. Its aim is to prevent entities or persons who find themselves in specific situations of exclusion from receiving funds from sequa or from participating in grant award procedures. Exclusion is decided on the basis of a final judgment or a final administrative decision or, in the absence of such a judgment or decision, on the basis of established facts or findings and their preliminary legal qualification.

If the applicant for a grant or the recipient of a grant contract is in one of the situations described above, sequa and, where applicable, the EU, can use this information in their early detection and exclusion system.

The applicant or beneficiary informs sequa when he notices that the information transmitted must be rectified, updated or deleted; they ensure that the entity concerned is informed of the transmission of its data to whom it may concern and of their possible inclusion in a rapid detection and exclusion system, as well as of their publication on the sequa website or, where applicable, the original donor. These requirements end when the grant contract implementation period ends.

## 5.3 Participation in a criminal organization

sequa is determined to fight against behaviour linked to a criminal organization. If it turns out that a grant applicant or beneficiary of a contract is in one of the two situations described below, this will result in his exclusion or termination of the grant contract:

- a. the fact that any person actively participates, intentionally and with knowledge either of the aim and general activity of the criminal organisation, or of its intention to commit the offenses in question, in its criminal activities, including by providing information or material means, by recruiting new members, as well as by any form of financing of its activities, knowing that this participation will contribute to the realization of the criminal activities of this organisation;
- b. the fact that any person concludes with one or more persons an agreement aimed at carrying out an activity which, if successful, would amount to committing the offenses referred to in this article, even when that person is not participating in the actual execution of the activity.

### Money laundering

For the purposes of this point, the acts listed below, committed intentionally, are considered to be money laundering:

- a. the conversion or transfer of property known to be the result of criminal activity or participation in criminal activity, which is known to the person engaged in it, for the purpose of concealing or disguising the illicit origin of such property or to help any



- person involved in such activity to escape the legal consequences of the acts he has committed;
- b. concealing or disguising the real nature, origin, location, disposition, movement or ownership of property or related rights, which the person indulging in it knows to come from criminal activity or participation in such activity;
  - c. the acquisition, possession or use of property, of which the person who engages in it knows, at the time he receives it, that it comes from a criminal activity or from a participation in such an activity;
  - d. participation in any of the acts referred to in points a), b) and c), joining together to commit it, attempting to commit it, aiding or inciting someone to commit it or to advise him to this effect, or to facilitate the execution of such an act.

There is money laundering even if the activities which gave rise to the property to be laundered were carried out on the territory of another Member State or on that of a third country.

### **Financing of terrorism**

For the purposes of this point, “terrorist financing” means providing or raising funds, by any means, directly or indirectly, with the intention of seeing them used or with the knowledge that they will be used, in whole or in part, for the purpose of committing any of the offenses referred to in Articles 1 to 4 of Framework Decision 2002/475 / JHA of the Council of the European Union.

### **Zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and sexual abuse**

sequa applies a “zero tolerance” policy with regard to all faulty behaviour having an impact on the professional credibility of the applicant. Corporal punishment or physical violence, threats of physical violence, sexual abuse or exploitation, harassment and verbal violence, and all other forms of intimidation are prohibited.

## **5.4 Respect for Human Rights, environmental legislation and labour standards**

The grant applicant and his staff respect human rights, the ten principles of the United Nations Global Compact, applicable environmental legislation, in particular multilateral environmental agreements. He undertakes to respect international recommendations in matters of ethics, in particular respect for the person, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice.

In particular, applicants who are awarded a grant comply with environmental legislation, in particular multilateral environmental agreements, as well as the applicable core labour standards, as defined in the relevant conventions of the International Labour Organization (in particular the conventions on freedom of association and collective bargaining, on the elimination of forced and compulsory labour and on the abolition of child labour).

## **6. Award procedures**

Calls for proposals are open, i.e. all applicants are free to submit a full application. In this case, a concept outline must still be submitted with the complete application and the evaluation is carried out in three steps, in accordance with the Call for Proposals Guidelines.

### **6.1 Contents of the call for proposals**

The Call for Proposals Guidelines (which include an application form and other annexes) will specify:

- The subject of the call for proposals;
- The eligibility rules applying to applicants, actions and costs;
- The evaluation criteria (selection and award);



- The administrative procedures to follow to submit an application;
- The evaluation procedure (in particular an indicative timetable) and on the contractual conditions which will be applied to the successful applicants.

Where applicable, they provide instructions on how to complete the application form and specify the documents to be attached to it.

The application form to be completed by applicants is annexed to the Call for Proposals Guidelines (Annex I), it includes the following components:

- Information about the applicant;
- Information on the co-applicant(s);
- Information on the proposed action, including its budget.

The application form includes, among other things, a sworn declaration (declaration of honour) to be completed by the applicant (and any partners) attesting their eligibility with regard to nationality and situations of exclusion, its financial and operational capacity. The supporting documents are attached to these declarations.

## 6.2 Publication

The Call for Proposals is published on the AL-INVEST Verde programme's website (<https://alinvest-verde.eu/>) and/or in any other appropriate media. It can also be published locally when needed.

## 6.3 The rule of Nationality

Participation in calls for proposals is open to any legal person established in one of the eligible States in accordance with the financial instrument used (see Guidelines for Applicants).

To verify compliance with the nationality rule, the call for proposals file requires requesting entities to indicate the country of which they are nationals by presenting the usual proofs in the matter according to their national law (extract from the registration of entity).

If sequa suspects that an applicant only has a simple office registered in an eligible country and that the applicant's nationality is ineligible, it is up to the latter to provide proof of the existence of real and continuous links with the applicant with the economy of this country. This is to avoid awarding contracts to entities that are ineligible because of their nationality but which have established a "letterbox" entity in an eligible country for the sole purpose of circumventing the nationality rule.

## 6.4 Eligibility and evaluation criteria

The eligibility criteria cover three different aspects:

1. **Eligibility of the applicant:** this aspect concerns the legal and administrative situation of the applicant. If a call for proposals relates to actions to be carried out in partnership, the nature of the partnership, the minimum number of partners and the eligibility criteria applicable to each of the partners of the lead applicant are specified in the Guidelines.
2. **Eligibility of the action:** this aspect concerns the types of activities, the sectors or themes and the geographical areas covered by the call for proposals.
3. **Eligibility of costs:** this aspect specifies the types of costs that can be financed. Basically, these must be real costs, which will actually be incurred and necessary for the execution of the project.



The published award criteria make it possible to assess the projects submitted with regard to the objectives and priorities set, and to award grants to actions which maximize the overall effectiveness of the call for proposals. They make it possible to select projects that ensure sequa will respect its objectives and priorities and guarantee the visibility of its funding.

The award criteria concern, in particular, the relevance of the action vis-à-vis the objectives of the program within the framework of which the call for proposals is funded, the quality (logic, consistency, adequacy of resources, implementation schedule, etc.), the expected impact and sustainability of the action, as well as its cost-effectiveness.

All the eligibility and evaluation criteria specified in the call for proposals must be applied as they are during the evaluation procedure and cannot under any circumstances be modified during this procedure. These criteria must be precise and non-discriminatory and must not harm fair competition.

### 6.5 Additional information during the procedure

Between the publication and the deadline set for the submission of proposals, and in addition to the information sessions mentioned in the Guidelines for Applicants, applicants should be able to ask useful questions to complete the form and finalize their application. Consequently, sequa indicates a point of contact to receive any questions. Applicants can ask substantive questions in writing no later than 21 days before the deadline for submission of proposals. sequa must answer all these questions no later than 11 days before the deadline for submitting proposals.

In the interest of transparency and equal opportunities, any response provided to an applicant on matters which may be of interest to other applicants should be communicated to all other applicants as well. The simplest - and recommended - way to do this is to publish on the Internet a table of relevant questions and answers together with the Call for Proposals Guidelines for applicants. This information must be updated regularly, up to 11 days before the deadline for submitting proposals.

### 6.6 Deadline for the submission of proposals

All documents requested must be sent according to the instructions made and at the latest on the date indicated in the Guidelines for Applicants by electronic means.

The concept outline and the full project proposal are sent at the same time and the time between the publication of the Call for Proposals Regulations and the date limit set for sending all documents is 90 days minimum.

### 6.7 How to apply

Each concept outline / full proposal must be sent according to instructions as defined and published in the Call for Proposals Guideline.

Concept outline / full proposal files must be written in English, Portuguese or Spanish and must include the documents below:

- The complete Grant Application Form (according to the model provided in Annex I)
- The logical framework of the project (according to the model provided in Appendix 2 of Annex I)
- Indicative Plan of Action (according to the model provided in chapter 3.5 of Annex I)
- The budget (Annex III)

To be complete, the file must include the aforementioned documents (bullet points) as well as all the requested annexes. Only complete files will be examined by the evaluators.

## 7. Evaluation steps

The detailed evaluation steps below might be done in a digitised system or tool generating reports automatically. However, they will be verified and signed accordingly.

### 7.1 Reception of applications and administrative check

The evaluation procedure begins with the receipt of applications by sequa and ends with the decision of award of grants to successful applicants.

The assessment takes place in confidentiality, and all parties involved are required to adhere to the principles of confidentiality, impartiality and absence of conflict of interest. The evaluators must sign a declaration to this effect.

The chairperson/president of the evaluation committee is the only one who can authorize contact with an applicant during and after the evaluation procedure. These contacts may take the form of communications regarding details, the announcement of the results of each phase, as well as the handling of information requests and questions posed by an applicant about the results.

A designated evaluation committee (of at least two persons including chairperson) must communicate its recommendations relating to the projects to sequa.

Evaluators work under the supervision of the chairman of the evaluation committee. The course of the evaluation phase is as follows:

- Reception and registration of applications;
- Applications must be submitted to sequa as indicated in the Call for Proposals Guidelines;
- It should be noted that if an electronic sending system is made compulsory, it is still possible for reasons of equal treatment to accept a paper version;
- Opening and administrative control.

All applications received on time must be opened during an opening session, during which the registration information is checked and completed and the applications numbered.

The registration of applications should include the following information:

- Concept outline / proposal registration number;
- Arrival date;
- Name and address of the applicant.

**Applications that have met the deadline for receipt are then subject to an administrative check**, which will assess whether they meet all the criteria mentioned in the checklist. The observations made within the framework of the opening are recorded in the opening report.

#### **Incomplete files are eliminated from the assessment.**

At the end of the opening session and the administrative verification, the members of the opening committee sign a report. This must indicate:

- The date, time and place of the session;
- The people present;
- The names of applicants who submitted projects before the stipulated deadline;
- The names of applicants who submitted projects after the stipulated deadline;
- The names of the applicants who submitted incomplete applications, with mention of the missing documents;
- The names of applicants to whom a request for clarification has possibly been sent.

Any missing supporting document or any inconsistency between the declaration and the supporting documents may lead to the rejection of the proposal on this basis.

However, if some of the criteria are not met, the applicant may be invited to submit a clarification within five working days. In the latter case, the evaluation committee uses its discretion to decide whether or not the request is to be considered during the remainder of the evaluation, while ensuring equal treatment of the projects. Whatever the decision of the evaluation committee, this decision must be recorded and justified in the evaluation report.

In order to facilitate the review of the evaluations by the evaluation committee, the secretary of the evaluation committee should ensure that a list is drawn up containing the projects which did not meet the administrative criteria mentioned in the checklist. For each entry on the list, the criteria not met must be identified.

In order to ensure the transparency of the procedure, the secretary of the evaluation committee must ensure that a list containing the projects which are ineligible is drawn up and appears in minutes signed by the members of the evaluation committee. For each entry on a list, the reasons for ineligibility are identified.

## 7.2 Evaluation of the operational and financial capacity

This evaluation must be carried out using the information provided by the applicant in chapter 2 of the application form and the criteria defined in the Call for Proposals for applicants.

The members of the evaluation committee cannot change this declaration under any circumstances. At the end of this phase, a letter is sent to the candidates to inform them whether or not their request has been taken into account at this stage.

After the administrative evaluation, the operational, technical and financial capacity will be evaluated by at least 2 evaluators.

If the total score is less than 12 or if the application received one point in one of the four categories, the proposal is rejected. If the evaluation differs and one evaluator assigns more than 12 points whereas the other does not, a third evaluation will be done which will be added to obtain the final result as the arithmetic mean.

The applications which obtained more than 12 points are preselected and qualify for the evaluation of the concept outline.

## 7.3 Evaluation of the concept outline

Concept outlines having successfully passed the administrative and eligibility check are then assessed with regard to the relevance and design of the action on the basis of an evaluation grid.

The quality of all application forms must be assessed by at least two members of the evaluation committee on the basis of a grid containing the criteria relating to the relevance and design of the action. For each sub-heading, a score is assigned. The overall assessment is based on the scores obtained for each sub-section, added up by section. The final mark is the mathematical average of the marks awarded by the people examining each proposal.

The secretary will prepare a list of all Concept outlines, sorted by score. In a first step, only the concept outlines having obtained at least a mark of 12 points during the evaluation will be preselected.

For proposals that receive a score below 12 points it is established that the score of a third evaluator will be used to check whether the application will be accepted or rejected in case that one of the evaluators has accepted while the other has rejected the application. The result of the third evaluator will be added to the scores of the other two evaluators and the overall sum will be divided by three to obtain the final result.

After having drawn up the list with the applications that qualify for the evaluation of the full proposal, the number of applications will be reduced, taking account of the ranking, to the number of concept outlines and capacity whose total aggregate amount of requested contributions is equal to 400 % the available budget for this call for proposals.

#### 7.4 Evaluation of the full proposals

The quality of all application forms must be assessed by at least 2 evaluators on the basis of a grid containing the selection and award criteria. For each sub-heading, a score is assigned. Each section should be commented on based on the section's questions and criteria. Certain sub-headings must also be commented on in special cases. The overall assessment is based on the scores obtained for each sub-section, added up by section. The final mark is the mathematical average of the marks awarded by the people examining each proposal.

- (1) The average score obtained for the full proposal must be equal to or greater than 65 points.
- (2) The minimum score of a proposal obtained by each evaluator must be equal to or greater than 60 points.
- (3) For those proposals with a difference of 10 or more points and for which one of the evaluators has given between 60 and 64.5 points and the other one at least 65 points, this difference will be discussed between the representatives of the partners or the respective evaluators in a special meeting of the committee exclusively to agree on the criteria for recommending or not the respective proposal. Only in the case that the contradiction is maintained, a third evaluation will be carried out and a new average score will be calculated. The same applies in the case that one of the evaluators rejects the proposal and the other approves it if both scores are above 60 points.

The secretary of the evaluation committee ensures that the completed evaluation grids are collected for each proposal. He then prepares a table classifying all the projects according to the marks obtained and appends the evaluation grids to it.

In the CfP for AL-INVEST Verde a limit of projects per country per lot is imposed. Per lot not more than five projects will be approved for one country.

At the end of this phase, a letter is sent to the candidates to inform them whether or not their application has been preliminarily selected for funding.

#### 7.5 Conclusions of the evaluation committee

The decisions of the evaluation committee are taken independently. The committee must, at the end of its meetings, draw up the list of projects selected for financing, indicating the score obtained by each proposal, the amount of the proposed grant and the rate of financing of the eligible costs proposed. Subject to the following points, this list is made up of the projects having obtained the best ratings, ranked in order and within the limits of the funds available under the call for projects.

The final evaluation report is drawn up after the last meeting of the evaluation committee. It includes the evaluation grids and the minutes of the evaluation sessions and must be signed by all the members of the evaluation committee.

It must indicate:

- The date, time and place of the session or the digital platform used;
- The persons present or electronically involved;
- The average score obtained by each proposal;
- Successful applicants, recommended grant amounts and proposed eligible cost funding rate;
- Unsuccessful applicants and the reasons why they were unsuccessful.

The final evaluation report is (e-)signed by all the evaluators who participated in the analysis and is annexed to the minutes of the Evaluation Committee. The minutes of the Evaluation Committee are signed.

It is then submitted to the competent sequa service which, after approval of the report, recommends the award of the contract.

The award decision includes the object and the overall amount of the decision, as well as the approved appraisal report and, where applicable, the reasons why sequa decides to deviate, for a given proposal, from the committee recommendations contained in this report.

The entire procedure, from the drafting of the call for projects to the selection of successful applicants, is strictly confidential. The decisions of the evaluation committee are collective, and its deliberations are kept secret. Committee members have an obligation to respect confidentiality.

## 7.6 Award and signature of the grant contract

### Notification to Applicants

After formal approval of the final list of grants to be awarded by the competent services of sequa, the latter notifies the Beneficiaries that their request has been accepted.

In addition, sequa informs the other applicants in writing that their application has not been accepted, indicating the reasons for this decision.

Letters to successful applicants must be sent within fifteen calendar days of the award decision, and letters to unsuccessful applicants within fifteen days of notification to successful applicants.

### Discussion phase with the Beneficiaries

At this stage, the budget for the action proposed by the applicants selected at the call for projects stage must be corrected to remove any obvious arithmetical error and any ineligible cost, before the contract is signed.

If necessary, the description of the action is corrected accordingly.

**sequa may decide that other minor clarifications or corrections may be made to the description of the action or to the budget, provided that they do not call into question the decision to award the grant or the equal treatment between applicants and:**

- **that they relate to aspects clearly identified by the evaluation committee;**
- **or that they aim to take into account changes that have occurred since the date of receipt of the application.**

In addition, this phase makes it possible to specify, verify consistency and standardize all the project documents that will be annexed to the grant contract: the indicative plan of action, the logical framework, the budget, etc. and also to confirm the management capacities of the Project Leader.

In this regard, it is advisable to keep a record of the exchanges with the applicants.

**Any other modification of the successful applicant's proposal or negotiation regarding that proposal is prohibited.**

Preparation and signature of the grant contract

When preparing the grant contract for each beneficiary appearing on the final list, sequa must follow the following steps:

1. Prepare a general information file for all the grant contracts to be concluded following the call for projects, according to the following structure:
  - explicative note;
  - copy of the Call for Projects Regulations, the opening report and the administrative verification of projects, the evaluation report, the list of grants to be awarded, the award decision and other relevant information.
2. Prepare a file for each grant contract to be concluded following the call for projects, according to the following structure:
  - One electronic copy of the specific parts of the proposed contract, drawn up on the basis of the standard grant contract;
  - The standard annexes of the contract relating to the general conditions, to the financial and administrative procedures and, where applicable, the models to be used by the beneficiary (for example, for technical and financial reports) which must be reproduced without modification in each grant contract;
  - The description of the action;
  - The specific conditions and the budget for the action, which must be completed by the lead applicant and revised by sequa.

The budget for the action proposed by the beneficiary during the call for proposals must, before signing the contract, be corrected to remove any arithmetic error and any ineligible cost that may be there. The description of the action is corrected accordingly, if necessary. Other minor clarifications or corrections may be made to the description of the action or to the budget, insofar as they relate to aspects clearly identified by the evaluation committee and do not call into question the award decision of the grant or equal treatment between applicants and:

- relate to aspects clearly identified by the evaluation committee;
- aim to take into account changes that have occurred since the date of receipt of the proposal.

**These modifications may not result in an increase in the amount of the grant or the percentage of co-financing set by the evaluation committee.**

**Any other modification of the beneficiary's proposal or negotiation with him is prohibited.**

- Date and sign all copies of the contract and initial the pages of the special conditions.
- Send a signed copy of the respective contract to the beneficiary concerned, who must date and countersign a copy within 30 days of their receipt and return it to sequa



accompanied by a request for payment and any financial guarantee required within the contract.

- Upon receipt of the signed copy sent by the beneficiary, check that it conforms strictly to those initially sent.

## 7.7 Cancellation of the award procedure

sequa may, until the contract is signed, cancel the grant award procedure, without the applicants being able to claim any compensation.

Cancellation can occur in the following cases:

- When the call for proposals is unsuccessful, that is to say that there were no requests meeting the administrative formal requirements and meeting the eligibility criteria of the call for proposals;
- When exceptional circumstances or force majeure make the normal execution of the project impossible;
- When there have been procedural irregularities.

In the event of cancellation of a procedure, all applicants are notified in writing, as soon as possible, of the reasons for the cancellation. After the procedure has been cancelled, sequa can decide to either launch a new call for proposals or not to enter into any contract. In any event, the final decision rests with sequa. sequa will under no circumstances be required to pay any compensation due to the cancellation of a call for proposals.

## 8. Complaints and appeals

### 8.1 Complaints

If an applicant considers himself aggrieved by an error or irregularity committed within the framework of a call for projects procedure, he refers it directly to sequa within 15 working days after receiving the official notification. sequa must respond within 30 days from the date of receipt of the complaint.

### 8.2 Whistleblower

Whatever the situation observed in connection with the actions described in this section, any sequa employee, any applicant, any beneficiary and any implementing partner of a grant has the option of making a report to the initiator referent of the grant. sequa alert at the following coordinates: Ombudspoint

PRO HONORE e.V.  
 c/o HUTH DIETRICH HAHN  
 Neuer Jungfernstieg 17  
 D-20354 Hamburg  
 Tel.: +49 (0)40 41 52 51 72  
 Fax: +49 (0)40 41 52 51 11  
 E-Mail: info@pro-honore.de  
 Contact Point: Dr. Malte Passarge