SMC's Guidelines for Communication Project Grants

Introduction

These guidelines are for member organisations of SMC who are applying for a grant within SMC's communication programme, with funding from Sida's aid appropriation for information and communication activities in Sweden. The guidelines are intended to facilitate cooperation between the SMC secretariat and SMC's member organisations by describing the criteria for grant forwarding and the information that applications and reports are to contain. SMC's Board of Directors has approved the guidelines and they apply until further notice. In this document *SMC* or *we* refer to the SMC secretariat.

While these guidelines provide guidance, there are contractual rules for grants and these are found in the Grant rules, an annex to the grant agreement between SMC and each member organisation (you can find them in our system, the Lime-Portal).

Purpose

Through its communication programme, SMC forwards grants for communication projects and advocacy work carried out by our member organisations in Sweden aimed at promoting a society that is environmentally sustainable, just, equal and democratic. Through this programme we also aim to support our member organisations to ensure that their communication and advocacy work is clear and strategic.

Guidelines and framework

As one of Sida's strategic partner organisations, SMC is tasked with helping to inform the public about Swedish development cooperation and to promote an open debate, popular support, stronger commitment and broad participation in Sweden for just and sustainable global development.

SMC's communication programme is

- governed by the Swedish Government's [Strategy for information and communication activities 2016–2021](#) (in Swedish)
- guided by Sida's [Guidelines for strategic partner organisations within the information and communication activities appropriation](#) (in Swedish)
- guided by SCM's Communication Policy

The programme is also guided by

- SMC's [value foundation](#)
- SMC's strategic focus (in Swedish)

Important frameworks:

- [The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) – and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals
- [The Paris Agreement](#) – global climate agreement
- Framework for human rights

SMC's various thematic policies, for example the Gender Equality Policy, Policy for a Human Rights Perspective and Climate and Environment Policy, may also provide guidance when planning a project. These are available at [our website](#).

Only SMC's member organisations may apply for a grant within the communication programme.

Goals for SMC's communication programme

Communication projects within SMC's communication programme as a whole are to contribute to achieving the overall goal for the development cooperation initiatives supported by SMC:

To support civil society actors in partner countries so that they can freely work to promote a sustainable, just, equal and democratic society in which people are empowered to influence the conditions of their lives and where human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled (see [Guidelines for Development Cooperation Grants](#)).

Based on this goal we have produced two communication goals:

- The target groups at which the communication projects are aimed understand the work that civil society actors do to promote a society that is environmentally sustainable, just, equal and democratic.
- The target groups at which the communication projects are aimed take action themselves and in cooperation with others to promote a society that is environmentally sustainable, just, equal and democratic.

These goals are intended as a basis to assess the relevance of projects and how they can contribute to the overall goal, and to identify and compile the outcomes. Member organisations must also produce their own project goals.

The communication programme is also intended to promote the Swedish Government's information and communication strategy.

We would like to see more projects focusing on and including:

- the environment, climate and biological diversity
- [religious literacy](#)
- [freedom of religion or belief](#)
- opinion forming
- advocacy aimed at decision-makers and politicians

We also want to encourage cooperation between member organisations on an entire or parts of a communication project.

Sida's appropriation for information and communication

In June 2016 the Swedish Government adopted its [Strategy for information and communication activities, including through civil society organisations, 2016–2021](#) (in Swedish). The strategy governs the information and communication activities funded through Sida and carried out by both Sida and civil society actors. Based on this strategy, Sida has produced [guidelines](#) (in Swedish) for its strategic partner organisations. These guidelines are intended to provide support for strategic partner organisations, including SMC, in their approach to managing the appropriation, application preparation and reporting.

According to the strategy, the purpose of information and communication activities is to inform the public about Swedish development cooperation and to promote an open debate, popular support, stronger commitment and broad participation in Sweden for just and sustainable global development. The projects implemented should therefore help to facilitate the achievement of sustainable

development for people living in all aspects of poverty, and increase respect for human rights.

All communication projects are to contribute to at least one of the following strategy goals:

- Awareness of how Swedish development cooperation is implemented and the results achieved.
- Dissemination of knowledge and opinion forming to help reduce poverty and promote just and sustainable global development.
- Independent review and analysis of the role of development cooperation and the contribution of other policy areas to promote just and sustainable global development.

Application

Applications for a project grant exceeding SEK 250,000 are to be received by SMC no later than 31 May the year before the project is set to start. Applications for a project grant of SEK 250,000 or less can be submitted at any time during the year.

Planning your application

If you are planning to apply for a communication project, we request that you contact your organisation's contact person at SMC or our communication programme coordinator as soon as possible.

Things to consider during the planning process:

- What do you want to achieve?
- Why is your project relevant?
- When will you carry out the project?
- Who are your target groups?
- What methods will you use to achieve your goals?
- How will you monitor and assess whether you have achieved your goals?
- What is the approximate cost of the project?

Before processing the application we will provide you with a preliminary answer on whether we can support the project and an approximate framework for the budget based on your requests, the secretariat's assessment of your organisation and results from any previous projects.

Application sections

The following must be included in the application:

- a written application

- a summarised budget
- a detailed budget
- an outcome matrix
- job descriptions and wage policy or similar information for positions budgeted for
- other relevant annexes, such as a communication strategy, advocacy plan, environmental policy, media strategy, social media strategy and anti-corruption policy

All documents are to be uploaded to SMC's system (the Lime-Portal). The application and summarised budget (budget first page) are to be signed and the originals sent to the communication programme coordinator no later than 31 May unless another date has been agreed upon.

The written application

You may choose a format for your application, but it must contain the information we require in order to assess whether the project has the necessary components to contribute to our goals and that it follows our guidelines. We encourage you to use SMC's application template, which can be found in the Lime-Portal.

The following are to be included in your written application (also included in our application template)

- background information on the communication project showing:
  - how relevant it is based on your identity, knowledge, role and focus areas
  - how the project links to your regular communication activities
  - how it relates to SMC's goals, your context analysis and one or more of the Sustainable Development Goals in the 2030 Agenda
  - experiences, lessons learnt and results from previous initiatives (self-funded or funded by SMC)
  - international partner perspective, for example if an international partner was involved in producing the application or will be involved in the project's implementation
- a description of how you planned the project and who participated in that process
- a description of actors you will be working with
- any networks that you are part of and that may be of significance for the project
- how you intend to leverage the capacity of your members and your context
- goals or outcome statements that are realistic based on what the project can achieve during the project period
- a description of how the project is expected to contribute to SMC's overall goals
- your message and what you want to achieve in the longer term (impact)

- a description of the project methods
- examples of activities
- context analysis
  - covering aspects such as climate, environment and biological diversity, gender equality, conflict, religious literacy, and freedom of religion or belief
- actor and target group analysis
- risk analysis – an analysis of both internal and external factors that may prevent implementation of or make it difficult to implement the project, and a plan to prevent and manage these risks
- sustainability analysis – an analysis of how the achieved outcomes can be sustainable in the long term and a phase-out plan for the project
- an explanation and justification of the budget
- a description of your financial control system
- an analysis of cost efficiency linked to methods and expected goal achievement
- synergies with international development projects, internship activities and humanitarian programmes (with SMC funding or other resources)

The application is to show that the project:

- maintains a rights perspective throughout
- maintains a gender equality, conflict, and environment and climate perspective throughout
- can be adapted based on lessons you learn during the project
- is implementable based on your capacity, resources, budget, and schedule

General and detailed budget

The application is to contain a general budget, which you fill in directly in the Lime-Portal, and a detailed budget for the entire project. If other donors are co-funding the project, the application is to clearly state what they are funding or what proportion of the project they are funding.

SMC grants funds for the following expenses:

- **Operating expenses** that are directly related to the communication project, such as the cost of communication activities, personnel, monitoring outcomes and audits.
- **Administrative expenses** for anything that indirectly supports project activities. This may include expenses for accounting personnel, management, office materials, IT, rent etc. It may also include the cost of producing a written and financial application and reports, including an annual audit of overall financial reporting.

Limitations and unapproved expenses

It is not permitted to use funds for activities and channels that can be regarded as basic communication functions or the main purpose of which is to profile your organisation or carry out fundraising campaigns and commercial activities.

The following expenses require special justification:

- larger-scale production of materials
- capital-intensive equipment
- trips/travel programmes.

Funds for projects of SEK 250,000 or less

SMC has funds available for projects with a budget of SEK 250,000 or less for which applications may be submitted at any time. These may be projects that are smaller in scope, such as a campaign or a pilot project to test new methods. The application for this type of project is to contain everything that is included in a multi-year application but adjusted for the project size.

Supplementary applications for ongoing projects

SMC may accept supplementary applications relating to ongoing projects. We will make our assessment based on the supplementary application's relevance, availability of funds and the secretariat's practical capacity to process applications at the specific time.

Processing and decision process

When we receive an application we process it according to our rules and guidelines, and initiate a dialogue with you about any additional information required or any changes. When this process is complete we prepare a document on which to base a decision.

We make decisions regarding the projects in consultation with the development committee appointed by our Board.

We inform member organisations applying for a grant of our decision and provide final approval once Sida has approved our application.

Member organisations whose applications are denied can submit a request to have their application reconsidered no later than 30 days after they receive the decision. This request is to contain a clear explanation of why the application should be reconsidered and any information not available previously or that may have been misunderstood.

SMC's application to Sida

SMC submits a general application to Sida the autumn before a new application period begins. Sida will normally provide its decision at the end of December,

which we then communicate to the member organisations. After SMC and Sida have signed an agreement, we in turn sign an agreement with the respective member organisation. If Sida grants a smaller amount than was applied for, the development committee will decide on principles for lowering the project's approved budget.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

SMC strongly emphasises the importance of member organisations having systems and routines in place for monitoring, evaluating and learning. While you can decide which methods to use, they must be appropriate for the project and include both qualitative and quantitative monitoring processes. We recommending using the Outcome Harvesting approach to monitor quality as this is a useful method to track behavioural changes. See SMC's Policy on Learning and Evaluation and our Fabo page on Outcome Harvesting.

SMC has systems and routines in place to monitor projects through ongoing dialogue and by participating in the member organisations' communication activities. We also arrange meeting places and workshops for member organisations who have ongoing communication projects or who plan to apply for a grant within SMC's communication programme.

Reporting

In the case of multi-year projects, the member organisation is to submit a learning report (previously interim report) to SMC regarding the communication project. This is to consist of a written report, a financial report and an audit report.

You are to submit a final report to SMC no later than 15 March the year after you conclude your project. If the project is for one year or less, only a final report is required.

Annual learning report

The learning report is to be structured in a way that facilitates comparisons with the application, project goals, risk analysis and other relevant annexes. You can use SMC's template or another format that meets our criteria.

The report must

- be no more than five pages long
- be signed by the member organisation's authorised signatory
- be uploaded directly to SMC's system (the Lime-Portal) (no originals sent by post)
- focus on lessons learnt during the year

- provide examples of and comments on important outcomes or indications of change relating to the project goals (these may be good or not so good, planned or unplanned)
- describe other important changes, such as those relating to the context, and how they have impacted the project
- describe any changes to planned activities and the budget during the reporting period, and what was learnt from these changes
- inform about systematic efforts to update the project's risk assessment – When was the last update carried out and who participated in the process?
- comment on questions raised in dialogue with SMC and any recommendations
- reflect on how any past communication projects contributed to outcomes during the reporting period

The report may also contain examples of other outcomes within your organisation that are relevant to the project, such as if you have carried out any specific initiatives focusing on resilience, the environment and climate. We welcome any video, audio, images, and illustrations etc.

Final report

The final report is to be structured in a way that facilitates comparisons with the application, project goals, risk analysis and other relevant annexes. You can use SMC's template or another format that meets our criteria.

The final report must

- be signed by the member organisation's authorised signatory
- be submitted no later than 15 March the year after the project was concluded
- be uploaded directly to SMC's system (the Lime-Portal)
- be sent in the original or with a digital signature to the SMC secretariat
- focus on outcomes and learning
- describe and analyse outcomes – planned or unplanned
- describe the most important lessons learnt from the implementation of the project and whether it has led to any changes
- describe and explain any budgetary amendments
- outline the project's risk analysis and risk management
- comment on questions raised in dialogue with SMC and any recommendations

Financial reporting

Annual financial report and final report

A financial report is to be prepared annually and uploaded in the Lime-Portal. It is also to be prepared in connection with the final report. The report is to provide information relating to the approved overall budget (attached to the agreement).

The financial report is to be prepared in a format that enables a comparison between outcomes and the overall budget for the same period. The report should be based on SMC secretariat's template or an equivalent format. The financial section of learning and final report is to contain financial statements showing how much was spent during the period. This section is to be prepared in accordance with the terms of the agreement. The financial section of the learning report, which is to be submitted no later than the last day of February each year, may be based on preliminary outcomes.

The financial section of the annual report and the final report are to:

- contain a comparison between all actual costs for activities during the reporting period in question and the budgeted costs for the same period;
- contain information on any unused SMC funds/grants, exchange rate gains and any accrued interest;
- include all sources of funding for the project/programme; amounts that are not part of SMC's grant or the organisations' own contribution are recognised as other general funding;
- state the grant received, both in the transfer currency and the equivalent amount in the local currency;
- report the annual exchange rate gain/loss; • state which accounting principles were used (cash principle or accruals accounting) and any deviations from these accounting principles;
- state the total costs per reporting period as well as cumulatively for the whole project period. If the member organisation has any payroll costs, the notes should indicate which principle was used to allocate these costs.

Annual audit

No later than 31 May each year originals of a financial yearly report and accounting documents signed by an auditor are to be submitted (see the section *Grant audit* in Rules for the grant/contribution, that can be found in the Lime-Portal). For projects lasting several years, no separate financial report signed by an auditor for the last financial year is required since this is included in the financial final report for the whole project period.

Final audit

In connection with the final year of the project a final audit is to be performed including a summary of all years. The final audit can be performed in conjunction with the annual audit or in connection with the preparation of the written/narrative final report. The audit report is to contain an assurance on whether the financial report was prepared in accordance with the organisation's accounting system and with the agreement between SMC and the member organisation. A management letter (ML) is to contain any observations made during the audit. It is also to contain an account of measures taken in response to

previous audits and which measures have been taken to deal with reported shortcomings.

In certain cases, a member organisation may obtain approval from SMC's secretariat to perform an audit of a period longer than 12 months, for example if a project started late in the calendar year or was granted a brief extension. A separate agreement is required between SMC and the member organisation for any other deviating audit periods.

Repayment

When a project is concluded any unused funds or funds that have been used incorrectly are to be repaid to SMC. SMC's secretariat sets the final grant amount when assessing and approving the final report. If at the end of an intervention it becomes apparent that the actual costs are lower than the budgeted costs, SMC is only responsible for compensating the actual costs. The member organisation is to repay any surplus to SMC.

The member organisation is also responsible for repayment:

- when disbursed funds have been used in a manner that deviates from what was agreed upon by SMC and the member organisation in the grant intervention and agreement;
- if the member organisation or its cooperating partner breaches the terms of the agreement;
- when disbursed funds have not been used within the timeframe for which they were granted and SMC's secretariat has not approved an extension;
- when unused disbursed funds exceed SEK 500;
- when there is accrued interest on income that has not been used for the intervention;
- if Sida requires repayment from SMC for the intervention in question and the repayment obligation is based on a circumstance attributable to the member organisation or its cooperating partner.

Repayment to SMC is to take place no later than 30 days after we issues the repayment requirement. The intervention number is to be clearly indicated in connection with repayment.

SMC's report to Sida

In May every year SMC submits a report to Sida for the communication program. When a contract period is concluded, we make a more substantial report for the whole period.

Incorrect use of funds and inappropriate behavior (corruption)

SMC considers corruption as the abuse or improper use of resources, trust, power and/or position by individuals, related parties or groups for their own gains. Gains may be financial in nature or constitute other benefits. Corruption may also involve failure to act, for example not reporting a suspected person. See also SMC's Anti-Corruption Policy.

The member organisation must take proactive steps to avoid, prevent and identify all forms of corruption within its organisation and the activities the organisation takes part in including, but not limited to, the programmes or interventions that are covered in the agreement and funded by an SMC grant. In planning and carrying out its activities the member organisation is to consider the risk of corruption and irregularities, and to identify risks and risk-mitigation measures.

The member organisation is to have its own up-to-date anti-corruption policy and action plan, and in contractual relationships ensure that cooperating partner/s also have these in place. The member organisation and cooperating partner should have a complaints management system for the specific project and take steps to prevent exploitation, abuse and discrimination against rights-holders.

If any suspicion of corruption or financial mismanagement arises, the member organisation is to inform SMC of this without delay and work with SMC's secretariat on a plan of action to address the situation. Consultation on this continues when the member organisation reports the matter to SMC. Under its agreement with Sida, SMC must inform Sida immediately.