



THE 2nd CYCLE OF THE GRANTS PROGRAM FOR PROTECTED AREAS

Guidelines and Criteria for Applicants

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Introduction

The Guidelines for Grant Program for Protected Areas provide a detailed description of the Program and clarify the application procedures. The Grant Scheme is intended for protected areas in the Dinaric Arc region, and it is continuation of the first successful cycle of Grants Program implemented by the Parks Dinarides during 2018.¹

Besides the members of the Parks Dinarides - Protected Areas network, other participants are invited to take part in the categories of National Parks, Parks of Nature and Regional Parks.

In addition to the Applicant Guidelines, the Package of Grant Program for Protected Areas also includes other necessary documentation (See section 4.1.1.).

The Grant Program for Protected Areas is implemented under the Program “Protected Areas for Nature and People II” implemented by WWF Adria in partnership with Parks Dinarides as well as other partners from the Dinaric countries, financed by Sida - Swedish Development Agency.

The Parks Dinarides network comprises 90 protected areas from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo², North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. The organization “Parks Dinarides - the Network of protected areas of Dinarides” (orig. *Parkovi Dinarida - mreža zaštićenih područja Dinarida*) was established in Podgorica in late 2014, and it is headquartered in Podgorica. The network is dedicated to cooperation between the protected areas of the Dinaric Arch countries, in order to achieve improvement of natural and cultural values, their promotion and support, and application of good practices for sustainable development and management of protected areas.

1. About the Program “Protected Areas for Nature and People II”

The purpose of the project “Protected Areas for Nature and People II (PA4NP)”, implemented by WWF Adria and regional partners since October 2019, is contribution to improvement of management of protected areas through stronger involvement of local communities and civil society. The program helps protected areas to increase their role in local social and economy development and raise attention of citizens and motivation to be involved and support protection of these resources.

Specific goals of PA4NP II Project are the following:

- Improve national policies for management of protected areas, and also preservation of biological diversity.
- Raise awareness on biological diversity issues, through promotion of active citizenship.
- Strengthen responsibility of decision makers in the area of nature protection;

¹

http://parksdinarides.org/me/vijesti/vijesti_parkova_dinarida/odluka_o_procesu_selekcije_za_program_grantova_za_zasticena_podrucja_projekat_pa4np/

² This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

- Ensure that the local communities can participate in sustainable development of protected areas and have use of them; and
- Increase participation of local community in protected areas management.

The project also encourages further development of the Parks Dinarides – Network of Protected areas in Dinarides, and will seek to strengthen cooperation within the network, as well as the potential for learning and sharing good practices within the region to develop the possibilities for integrating the lessons learnt into national policies for nature conservation.

One of the key components of the “Protected Areas for Nature and People” Program is to improve cooperation between protected areas and local communities throughout the Dinarides. Greater involvement and action of local communities in management of protected areas and strengthening of local unions is the foundation of well-developed protected areas that are well managed, with economic, social and cultural benefits for the local community inside and outside the protected areas. Furthermore, effective and better interaction and community involvement will play a key role in influencing national nature conservation policies, which in the near future will significantly contribute to the real and effective transposition of EU legislation related to the nature within the region. The Program “Protected Areas for Nature and People” includes the Dinaric Arc region with the following countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia.

This component of the “Protected Areas for Nature and People” Program is designed to assist protected areas, agencies and institutions that conserve nature by providing/preparing a methodology that collects and processes information about interactions between protected areas and local communities, and to help protected areas in the Dinaric Arc region to build capacity for successful cooperation with local communities. In order to assess the current level of cooperation, the team of experts, in cooperation with WWF Adria and Parks Dinarides - Network of Protected Area of Dinarides, developed the Methodology for assessing the involvement of the local community in the work of protected areas. The methodology is tested through two circles on Indexation (assessment of involvement of the local community in the work of protected areas), in selected protected areas in Dinarides region.

The Grants Program was designed in 2018 for the purpose to assist protected areas and institutions to enhance cooperation with local communities, increase their role in local social and economic development, and to be more valuable and supported by their local communities.

The first cycle was realized in 2018 and it supported successfully 10 projects in total value of 100 000.00 EUR³.

The second cycle of grants which will be realized in 2021 represents continuation of support for protected areas to enhance cooperation with local communities in the area of

3

http://parksdinarides.org/me/vijesti/vijesti_parkova_dinarida/odluka_o_procesu_selekcije_za_program_grantova_za_zasticena_podrucja_projekat_pa4np/

Dinaric Arc countries, establish and strengthen permanent structures/mechanisms for communication and improvement of functionality of existing cooperation between competent institutions and civil society in protected area.

2. Objectives of the Program of Grants for Protected Areas

Grants Program for Protected Areas was created based on the assessment of 66 protected areas and is intended for protected areas in the Dinaric Arc region to improve relations and dialogue between protected areas and their local communities.

The main objective of the call is to build partnership and enhance level of cooperation between protected areas and representatives of local communities based on principles of accountability, transparency and participation.

The specific objectives of the call are:

- Improve the level of cooperation between protected areas and local communities for the purpose of improving monitoring illegal activities and unsustainable practices in protected areas;
- Establishment of permanent structures/mechanisms for communication and improvement of functionality of existing cooperation between competent institutions and civil society in protected area;
- Support for innovative approach for mitigation of secondary effects COVID 19 pandemic on protected areas;
- Support for resolution of negative effects of COVID 19 pandemic on vulnerable population (including, but not limited to, women, youth, minorities, elderly and persons with disabilities) in protected areas.

3. Application Process

3.1. Formal Requirements of Application

In order for the project proposal to enter the assessment process, it should meet the following requirements:

- **Lead applicant** is a legal entity responsible for managing a protected area from six countries of the Dinaric Arc region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo^{4*}, North Macedonia Montenegro and Serbia). Lead applicant is **main responsible entity** for the project implementation and reporting⁵.
- The project proposal **must** include a formal partnership between legal entity responsible for management of the protected area and the representative from

⁴ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

⁵ Protected areas from Slovenia and Croatia can participate in this call as regional partners (see 3.1.2)

local community, **local partner** (civil society organization, educational or scientific institution, business sector, local tourist agencies etc.)

- **Eligibility** of proposed activities and costs in relation to the objectives of the Grant Call.
- **Co-financing** by the protected area - minimum 30% of the total budget.
- All protected areas who are not members of the Parks Dinarides Networks and **manage national parks, nature parks or regional parks** are eligible to apply, both as Lead applicant and partner.

3.1.1. Partnerships and Acceptable Partners

The applicants are protected areas in the Dinaric Arc Region. Each project proposal **must** include a formal partnership between the protected area and the representative from local community (**as local partner**) in the design and implementation of project activities (see Application Form).

Examples of the local community (List is not exhaustive):

- Civil society organizations;
- Educational and scientific institutions;
- Representatives of the local business sector (small and medium-sized companies, businessmen, etc.);
- Local tourist agencies and organizations.

3.1.2. Partnerships of Several Protected Areas

The Grants Program supports **establishment of regional partnership** for the purpose of development and implementation of project proposals as a basis for long-term cooperation (see Application Form).

Beside compulsory partnership with local partner, the Lead partner can in addition collaborate with other protected areas from the Dinaric Arc region who will represent a **regional partner**. If regional partnership is getting established, the project proposal must include a formal partnership between the protected area and regional partner (see Application Form).

Although protected areas from Slovenia and Croatia cannot be lead applicant, this Grants Program encourages establishment of regional partnership for the purpose of exchanging experiences and best practices with some of the protected areas from these two countries. Besides Slovenia and Croatia, regional partnership can be established with protected areas from other Dinaric Arc countries eligible for this call.

Applications for participation in the Grants Program must be submitted by one protected area, as a Lead Applicant.

Lead Applicant of the project, if selected, will sign the contract and be the contracting party responsible for the implementation of the project.

3.2. Eligible Projects

The Grant Scheme for Protected Areas is intended for activities aiming at structural changes, improvement, raising levels and intensifying cooperation with local community, i.e. those activities that establish or improve existing permanent mechanisms for involving the local community in the following priority areas:

- Decision making and decision-influencing;
- Management planning and improvement;
- Communication between protected areas and the local community;
- Education and cooperation with local educational institutions and organizations;
- Economic development;
- Equal rights and opportunities.

3.2.1. Types of eligible activities

Applicants are required to propose projects that are consistent and/or complementary to some of the following activities according to following priority areas:

1. Decision making and decision influencing

- Establishment of joint decision-making bodies in a protected area (eg. socio-economic forums, stakeholders councils, etc.)
- Ensure that local community understands the process of decision making, as well as their rights and obligations in the decision-making process
- The activities to ensure that the decision-making process affecting local community is transparent, participatory and involves a significant number of stakeholders with special emphasis on vulnerable groups.

2. Management planning

- Creation and promotion of rules and procedures for public involvement in the processes of planning, realization, monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of management plans and other relevant documents/policies
- Design and testing of innovative channels for counseling and involving the public in decision-making processes
- Creating a “simplified” guide through management plans with information on the opportunities for public involvement in decision-making processes.
- Establishment of cooperation mechanism with local community for the purpose of improvement of monitoring illegal and unsustainable practices in protected areas.

3. Communication between protected areas and local community

- Design of the process for development of effective action plans in accordance with the priorities of the management plans
- Establishment of sustainable channels of communication with the local community
- Training of employees to act as contact persons with the local community
- Establishment of a mobile information section for members of the local community located in remote and inaccessible areas

- Creating mechanisms for resolving and preventing misunderstandings (conflict resolution) between the PA and the local community.
 - Establishment of new/innovative communication modes with stakeholders due to COVID 19 crisis.
4. Education and cooperation with educational institutions and organizations
- Launch of joint educational programs with education institutions and organizations
 - Development of volunteering and internship program in parks.
 - Training program for interpretation of nature.
5. Economic development and application of measures for mitigation of COVID 19 pandemic affects.
- Joint branding /marketing of products from a protected area
 - Development of a joint venture of management and local businesses in the field of sustainable tourism.
 - Realisation of measures for mitigation of COVID 19 pandemic affects.
6. Equal opportunities
- Preparation and application of anti-discrimination and equal opportunities policies
 - Finding new economic/entrepreneur models for inclusion of vulnerable groups.
 - Provide education and training for employees of protected areas in matters of transparency, non-discrimination and equal opportunities
 - Cooperation with organizations and institutions dealing with marginalized social groups.

The list of above mentioned activities is not exhaustive, other activities are eligible too, which contribute to the goals of PA4NP II and which are based on nature protection principles in accordance with above mentioned priorities.

Besides that, we encourage to look at the examples of projects from the region publishes on the page www.natureforpeople.org in order to find ideas for your projects. While preparing the project proposals you can refer to some of the projects or parts of the projects presented on natureforpeople.org platform, which served as inspiration.

3.2.2. Unacceptable Activities

- short-term/one-off activities and actions that do not offer system solutions to improve the relationship between the manager of the protected area and the local community
- activities that do not directly involve local community representatives

3.2.3. Number of Eligible Projects

The applicant can apply with more than one project, but with the possibility of two projects being approved: one as Lead Applicant and one as Regional Partner.

Parks from Slovenia and Croatia can exercise partnership as regional partners in more than one project with possibility for two projects to be supported.

3.3. Amount of the Grant Scheme and Co-financing

Total amount of financing from the Grants Program is 57,000.00 EUR.

Grant Amounts can be created from:

1. Minimum amount of requested grant/support per project: 3,000.00 EUR
2. Maximum amount of requested grant/support per project: 7,000.00 EUR

All submitted projects are obliged to contribute with minimum 30% of total budget.

Example: In case the Lead Applicant requests the maximum amount of 7,000.00 EUR with the proposed project, requested amount should represent 70% of the value of total budget, i.e. total value of the project should be 10,000.00 EUR. Value of the project can be higher, but amount of the grant cannot be higher than 7,000.00 EUR. Amount of co-financing for the maximum amount of the grant is minimum 3,000.00 EUR.

3.3.1. *Acceptable Costs*

Acceptable costs include costs that are necessary for the implementation of the project. Costs must be the actual costs of the Lead Applicant or its partner and must arise during the implementation of the project.

Costs must be recorded in the accounting and tax documents of the Lead Applicant or its partners, those must be detailed and easy to verify, the originals of the invoices and documents must be available for verification, at least five years after the finalization of the project.

When purchasing procurements of goods and services or signing employment and/or services contract, the followed procedure must be in accordance with the regulations and procedures from the annex (**Annex D**). The Lead applicant is obliged to respect the principles of transparency and equal treatment of all tenderers, taking into account the avoidance of conflicts of interest and corruption.

3.3.2. *Unacceptable Costs*

- Sponsorships for individuals for participating in workshops, seminars, conferences, congresses, studies and trainings;
- Ad hoc conferences (except if necessary for successful implementation of the project);
- Purchase of equipment (except if necessary for successful implementation of the project, for the maximum amount of 500,00€);
- Financing of the projects already in progress or completed;
- Projects exclusively for the benefit of individuals;

- Projects that support political parties;
- Primary financing of applicant and their partners;
- Works on reconstruction or rehabilitation (except if necessary for successful implementation of the projects, for the maximum amount to 20% of the value of proposed budget);
- Allocating grant to the third parties;
- Costs of renting office space and overhead costs;
- Costs of office material (except material for workshops);
- Audit of financial activities, costs of financial guarantees, covering loans, losses and debts, costs of interests, bank charges;
- Costs incurred outside the implementation of project activities timeframe.

3.4. Project Location

Projects under this Program can be implemented in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo⁶, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

3.5. Project Duration and Timeline for the Grants Program

Minimum duration of the proposed project is 6 months, while maximum project duration is 10 months. The projects under this Program should be implemented as of March 1, 2021, and no later than December 31, 2021.

Call for the Program of Grants for Protected Areas shall be opened from **November 25, 2020 and last until December 31, 2020.**

4. Application Procedure

4.1. How to Apply

Interested parties must submit the Application for financing from the Grants Program for Protected Areas in accordance with the rules defined in this chapter. When applying, applicants are required to complete all forms and provide all necessary documentation, as prescribed by these Guidelines.

All documents (Annexes A, B and C) must be submitted in English and sent to info@parksdinarides.org Handwritten documents will not be accepted.

Besides filled Annexes A, B and C, all applicants must submit Confirmation on Paid Taxes and Duties, issued by Tax Administration, not older than 30 days as of the day of publishing the call (the Contract on paying tax debt in installments with the Tax Administration will be recognized).

⁶ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Please be informed that any of the above documents is missing, the application will be considered incomplete and will be rejected.

The deadline for the submission of applications is **December 31, 2020. at 16:00 PM.**

Applications that have not been submitted in accordance with these rules will not be considered.

All Application Forms and Guidelines will be available at www.parksdinarides.org.

Questions related to the procedures and rules of this call can be submitted to info@parksdinarides.org no later than December 15, 2020. The Parks Dinarides are obliged to answer all questions in no longer than 5 days.

List of approved projects under this Program will be published at www.parksdinarides.org.

4.1.1. Application Package

The Application Package consists of the following:

- a) Annex A – Application form;
- b) Annex B – Project budget with guidelines;
- c) Annex C – Statement on Non-Existence of Double Financing and Statement on Non-Existence of Criminal Liability.
- d) Annex D – Procedures for Procurement of Goods and Services (for reference)

4.2. Selection and Evaluation Process

4.2.1. Selection Process

Applications will be considered and evaluated by the Evaluation Commission for the Grants Program for Protected Areas.

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

a) Administrative compliance:

Confirmation that the application forms are complete and properly filled in, and the necessary additional documents are submitted.

Applications that do not meet the prescribed requirements regarding the amount of funds and co-financing will be rejected.

b) Checking of the fulfillment of requirements relating to applicants:

Confirmation that the candidate and partners (if applicable) meet the criteria set out in the subsections 3.1. Formal requirements of application of this Program. Applications that do not meet the prescribed criteria will be rejected.

c) Checking proposed activities and costs

Confirmation that the proposed activities and costs are eligible in accordance with this Program (3.3.1. Acceptable costs, 3.3.2. Unacceptable costs). Activities and costs that do not meet the criteria will not be considered eligible. Unacceptable activities and costs will not be financed under this Grants Scheme.

d) Project quality assessment and financial evaluation

A project quality assessment, including budget, will be made in accordance with the criteria in the Project Assessment Table.

4.3. Grants Awarding and Payments

The signing of the contract⁷ and the allocation of funds under this Grant Program will take place in March 2021. All Lead applicants will receive the funds in two instalments. The first instalment in the amount of 70% after signing the contract and the other 30% after the approval of the Final Report.

If the Lead Applicant is not able to implement the project as stated in the contract, Parks Dinarides reserve the right to terminate the Contract. Grant can be decreased, and/or Parks Dinarides can ask for a full or partial reimbursement of the paid funds if the Lead Applicant fails to fulfil all the Contractual conditions.

Annex to the Contract must be in written and attached to the original contract.

In case of any kind of administrative changes (change bank account number etc.) a note should be sent to Parks Dinarides in written.

5. Evaluation of the Project Quality and Financial Evaluation

Evaluation of the project quality, including the budget will be made in accordance with the criteria from the Project Assessment table. The goal of the Project Assessment table is to help the evaluation of financial and operational capabilities in order to ensure:

- Sufficient financial means during period of project implementation in accordance with criteria from the call;
- Professional capabilities and qualifications for the successful implementation of the project. This also applies to partners.

Ranking is a list of proposals that are not rejected nor refused, ranked in accordance to the score that project proposals received.

Ranking must include:

- a) The names of applicants whose projects were evaluated with 70 or more points;
- b) The title of the project;

⁷ The Contract will be signed with Parks Dinarides members who met their statutory commitments.

- c) The total number of points awarded;
- d) The amount of the requested grant and co-financing ratio.

5.1. Project Assessment Table

NAME OF THE PROJECT:	Max. score
NAME OF THE LEAD APPLICANT:	
1. General Requirements	20
1.1 Is the Lead Applicant or regional partner member of Parks Dinarides Network	5
1.2 Does the application include partnership of at least two or more countries in the region?	5
1.3 Has the Lead Applicant involved any of the protected areas from Slovenia and Croatia as regional partner?	5
1.4 Do the applicant and partners have enough experience in project management and appropriate management capacities? (including personnel, equipment and capacity for budget management of the project)?	5
2. Relevance	20
2.1 How relevant is the project proposal in relation to the main goal – enhancing the role of local communities in the processes of protected areas management?	5
2.2 How relevant is the project proposal in relation to the specific objectives of the call?	5
2.3 Are stakeholders clearly defined and strategically selected?	5
2.4 The extent to which the project meets the needs of the local community.	5
3. Project Design	20
3.1 Are the objectives SMART (Specific – Measurable – Achievable – Relevant – Timely defined)?	5
3.2 Is the overall project design logical and consistent (identified problem/solution and activity plan)?	5
3.3 Are objectively verifiable indicators put in place with relevant source of verification?	5
3.4 Are the activities proposed adequate and in line with the expected results and objectives?	5

4. Additional Qualities of the Project Design	10
4.1 Target group of the project includes representatives of vulnerable groups (women, disabled persons, youth, elderly and/or other socially and economically deprived population). The proposed project builds new partnerships with association/s of vulnerable population from local community.	5
4.2 Does the project include innovative solutions or new mechanisms of communication between protected areas authorities and local community.	5
5. Sustainability	20
5.1 Will the activities proposed in the project be sustainable in the long-term and have a positive long term effect?	5
5.2 Will the project have clear impact at policy level? (regulations, code of conduct, accountability mechanisms).	5
5.3 Is it secured for mechanisms of communication with local community to continue functioning upon project realization (at institutional and financial level)?	5
5.4 Does the project have multiplication effect planned and visible or it referred to any of the projects on natureforpeople.org?	5
6. Budget and Rationality of Costs	10
6.1 Is the relation between estimated costs and expected results satisfying?	5
6.2 Is proposed cost necessary for the project implementation?	5
Total score	100

SCORING SYSTEM: Every subsection will be be scored between 1 and 5: 1 = poor 2 = inadequate 3 = adequate 4 = good 5 = very good	100
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6. Final Decision on Selection Process

Information about the approved project applications will be published at www.parksdinarides.org no later than **28 February, 2021**.

Selection Committee may reject application in the following cases:

- The application is received after the deadline;
- The application is incomplete
- The applicant or partner/s do not meet criteria for participation in public call;
- Project activities and/or costs are not eligible (e.g. proposed activities and/or costs are ineligible, project exceeds the maximum duration allowed, requested amount is higher than the maximum or lower than minimum amount defined by the public call for proposal etc.);
- Project proposal receives less than 70 points.

The selection of awarded grants is made from top-rated projects to lower-rated, until available resources are exhausted.

Decisions of the Committee are final.

7. Reporting

Lead applicant must prepare regular project Interim report and Final report. Interim report only includes information about the progress of activities as well as financial report for the previous period.

Final report includes description of the all implemented activities, and detailed information about all expenditures. The Lead applicant must submit copies of all invoices and receipts for financial reporting of expenditures, while the original invoices must be available for control upon the audit. Final report on the project must be submitted 30 days after completion of the project.

8. Use of Project Results

The results of the project can be available to the public, in reports and publications that are published during the implementation of the project “Protected area for Nature and People”, or during some public events related to the project. All approved projects will be obligated to disseminate results of project and share lessons learned, also including

- 1) Prepare material for articles on the Project for the website of the Parks Dinarides and PA4NP webpage (news and filled template for good practice example);
- 2) Provide pictures for the use on Parks Dinarides and WWF Adria web page;
- 3) Provide all other relevant information about project implementation upon request from Parks Dinarides.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Parks Dinarides will monitor realization of the projects and efficiency of the fund use in the purpose of achieving results. The purpose of monitoring and evaluation is to determine the validity of implementation and the effect of implementation of the project activities in order to assure effective and efficient use of the funds of the Grant. Success

of the project will be assessed based on the level of achieved project goal, and also the results indicators proposed by the project applicant.

Projects financed by this call, which at the end of implementation are assessed as very successful, will be included as example of good practices on www.natureforpeople.org.

10. ANNEXES

- a) Annex A – Application form;
- b) Annex B – Project budget with guidelines;
- c) Annex C – Statement on Non-Existence of Double Financing and Statement on Non-Existence of Criminal Liability;
- d) Annex D – Procedures for Procurement of Goods and Services