



Grant Manual

Voice in Lao PDR

October 2020

Table of Content

- 1. Letter from3
- 2. What types of grants will be awarded?..... 4
- 3. How to make an application? 5
- 4. How will your application be assessed?.....9
- 5. If your application is not successful 15
- 6. After a grant is awarded.....15
- 7. Fraud and Corruption.....18



Most –if not all- the information is available via www.voice.global/laos including all Calls for Proposals and relevant information regarding the grantees.

This grants manual is meant to help (potential) grantees to decide on whether and how to make a grant, and what the reporting requirements are. As with all documents in Voice, it is a ‘living’ document. If you have any feedback on how Voice can improve its grant-making, you are very welcome to do so via laos@voice.global.

Thank you for joining us on this exciting journey!

The Voice family



2. What types of grants will be awarded?

The Voice grant facility is designed to support informal groups as well as formal organisations, coalitions, and networks although the applicant needs to be legally registered or recognised and have a bank account in the applicant's name. The grant types are as follows:



Empowerment grants: Targeting (informal) groups or organisations to raise awareness, to work on leadership skills, build confidence and skills and work against discrimination of the most marginalised groups. Smaller grants with a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 36 months, which are accessible for informal groups⁵ through for example a partnership with formal organisations. Empowerment grants can be up to €25,000.



Influencing grants: Targeting organisations and networks to strengthen their influencing, lobby and advocacy capacities to amplify the voices of rightsholder groups. Influencing grants that are country specific can be up to €200,000 for a duration of between 18 and 36 months.



Innovate and Learn grants: Innovate and Learn grants focus on organisations that want to learn from innovation and/or to test and scale new approaches with a focus on human-centred innovations that are context-specific and relevant to **empowering, amplifying and/or influencing the voice of rightsholders** to participate fully in society. Innovate and Learn grants can be up to €250,000 for a minimum duration of 12 and a maximum duration of 36 months.



Sudden Opportunity grants: Creating flexibility to undertake joint action to address specific rapid opportunities to influence policy or practice in dealing with a reduction of civic space. The opportunity impacts one or more of the Voice rightsholders in one or more of the impact themes. Grants responding to a sudden opportunity are available from €5,000 to €200,000 for a duration between 6 and 12 months.

In 2020, only **Influencing** grants will be available in Laos.

For each grant type, there are different approaches related to making proposals, assessing applications and reporting against grants. Empowerment grants are flexible and contain fewer requirements. Influencing, and Innovate and Learn grants have more requirements to mitigate risk and increase accountability. We strongly urge you to review the Frequently Asked Questions available via: <https://www.voice.global/f-a-q/>.

Voice stands out from other grant-making programmes by developing a grant application and reporting process that is accessible, user-friendly and innovative adapted to the rightsholder groups and grant type.

⁵ Groups which emerge naturally due to the response and common interests of the members of an organisation who can easily identify with the goals or independent activities of the group.



3. How to make an application

Steps	Task	Activities
<i>Step 1</i>	Preparation for calls for proposals.	Based on Country Contextual Analysis, the Global Voice Advisory Board –through the Annual Plan- will provide guidelines for themes and subjects that the Call for Proposals could focus upon. This process will be repeated on an annual basis for each subsequent call for proposals. We also use an analytical tool using PowerBi to analyse the applications received in Smartsheets.
<i>Step 2</i>	Calls for proposals	Advertising the Call for Proposals as approved (at least 6-weeks for applicants to respond). Outreach and communication activities will be designed to reach the groups and are announced on social media.
<i>Step 3</i>	Support	The application process should be viewed as a capacity building exercise and applicants should receive useful feedback after the application is assessed. Oxfam in Laos organises information sessions on the proposal using creative settings.
<i>Step 4</i>	Screening	Voice is designed as a competitive application-based grant-making programme. Therefore, for an organisation to receive funding, it must submit an application, which is reviewed using an open and transparent assessment method. For Laos, empowerment grant applications can be submitted in Lao or English and in addition to submission of a written proposal, through audio and/or video. All other proposals need to be submitted in English Voice screens proposal applications against the eligibility and criteria requirements (six weeks for screening with extension depending on number of applications received). Proposals which pass these requirements will be subjected to a project check. This assesses each proposal's objectives and activities, how these respond to the rightsholder groups' needs, the monitoring plan, and the soundness of the budget.
<i>Step 5</i>	Selection	Once the screening is complete, recommendations for grant awards plus recommendations for capacity development will be submitted to Oxfam in Laos and the Voice Global Coordination Team for final approval. Each short-listed application will be rated and ranked using the selection criteria provided below.



Step 6 Agreements Voice provides selected applicants with feedback to further improve and refine their proposed project and budget. Site visits may be undertaken to ensure that applicants have minimum governance and accounting protocols and/or to review existing programming.

The pre-contracting stage does not mean a grant has been awarded to the applicant. Voice reserves the right to reject an applicant if they do not pass an organisational assessment and/or no mutually agreeable proposal and budget can be arrived at.

When proposals are finalised, Voice enters into a Grant Agreement with successful organisations. The Grant Arrangement applies for the period of time required to complete the project. The time plan and approved budget is an integrated part of the Grant Agreement. The Grant Agreement outlines the requirements under the grant and other terms and conditions.

When should your organisation submit an Application?

Calls for proposal will be published annually at a minimum via www.voice.global/laos, twitter.com/voicetweetz and www.facebook.com/voice.global.online. Applications for Empowerment grants, Sudden Opportunity and Innovate and Learn grants will be accepted on a rolling basis (i.e. applicants can send their applications anytime). However, the review and feedback process will only be done during a specific timeframe (see schedule below). This means that proposals submitted before the deadline of the first review cycle will be reviewed during that cycle, anything after those dates will be reviewed in the next cycle. For Influencing grants, applications will be accepted in accordance with the deadlines.

Here is the schedule of applications submission in 2020:

Type of grant	Open Call for Proposals date	Submit By / Deadline	Response Date	Contract Signing
INFLUENCING GRANTS	18 th October 2020	4 th December 2020 5 PM (Lao time)	February 2021	February – March 2021

This means that Oxfam in Laos has at least 6 (six) weeks to review all proposals against eligibility and project criteria. After six weeks, the rejected applicants will receive a response. Those proposal that are taken to the final stage (“*organisational assessment*”) will have up to 6 weeks more for proposal and budget revisions, organisational assessments, donor checking and contracting. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application, but only those that have undergone a project check will receive detailed feedback.

Regarding outreach, the country team will conduct targeted outreach corresponding with the above cycle.



Who can make applications?

Applications can only be submitted by organisations which possess local legal registration, or which are officially recognised by for example a commune chief. They need to have and/or open a bank account in the applicant's name. Organisations can independently submit a grant application or form part of a consortium in a joint application. A consortium is a cooperative of two or more civil society organisations, which implements a joint, integrated project in which all parties contribute to the total. They draw up a cooperative agreement for this purpose. In this case, a consortium representative (known as the 'lead party') submits the grant application on behalf of the consortium as a whole. Only the lead party needs to be legally registered, not all consortium members. If the application is granted, the lead party is responsible for implementing the consortium's project. Applicants may form a partnership with other not-for-profit organisations or social enterprises to implement the project or its components, however, such partnerships must be identified within the grant application. Applications may also include activities to strengthen the capacity of the organisation, please refer to the relevant sections below.

International organisations are not eligible to apply as a lead applicant. They can be part of a consortium or play a supporting role in a project. Local organisations who have annual incomes of more than 2 million euros are not eligible to apply.

For Empowerment grants, informal groups can apply through a hosting agreement with a registered organisations. Host organisations can play a variety of roles such as building the capacity of the informal groups or only managing the project's finances. In any case, host agreements need to be submitted when proposals reach the pre-contracting stage. These will clearly describe the roles each group or organisation will take.

Where should we send our application?

Applications for grants from Voice must be submitted using the forms included in the Call for Proposals. Applications should be complete and without reservations and submitted via the appropriate page and Smartsheet link on voice.global/laos. Please note the maximum file size of documents that can be received is 10 MB.

On Smartsheets, please tick the box: "Send me a copy of the responses." This will assure you that the application has indeed been submitted. Upon completion of the selection process we will send you an Email to inform you whether your application has been successful. We only provide detailed feedback for the shortlisted proposals that were rejected after a project check.

Only complete applications will be screened for eligibility. Only eligible applicants who reach the project check will be given feedback. All applicants can however, request for feedback from Voice Laos regarding their application.



What if you have questions about the process?

Questions about applying for a Voice grant may be submitted via email or during consultative sessions. Before doing so, we urge you to review the Frequently Asked Questions via <https://www.voice.global/f-a-q/> to see whether your question has already been answered. If it hasn't please contact laos@voice.global. We will strive to give a quick response and if relevant will also upload your question to the website.

When will funding decisions be made?

If you are applying for a Voice grant, Voice will make a decision within six weeks of the deadline according to the schedule above. This doesn't apply for Sudden Opportunity grants which follow a different process. Please note that an organisation can apply for multiple grants but can only be contracted with one grant. Please note this only applies to the lead applicant; you can be a co-applicant in a reasonable number of proposals.

What makes a successful application?

The following factors are provided as a guide to inform potential applicants of whether or not their application is focused on issues that are encouraged and therefore likely to be considered:

- Activities support and compliment the **Voice impact themes** and **rightsholder groups**.
- Communication and engagement approaches that contribute to awareness, influencing understanding, cooperation and collaboration.
- Demonstration of links and/or coordination with relevant organisations, communities and government;
- Promotion and participation of women at all levels in activity implementation.
- Demonstration that benefits created by the project will be properly or widely disbursed.
- Activities that demonstrate long-term benefits for constituents and/or marginalised and discriminated people.
- Demonstration of skill and experience in the community/civil society/sector and geographic area.
- Demonstration of project management understanding and approach to grant use.
- Promotion of inclusive and accountable transparent processes.
- Co-contributions proposed by organisation and/or Voice target groups i.e. labour, office, materials and funds.
- Experiences, lessons learned, methodologies will be documented and shared with rightsholder groups and other stakeholders.
- Innovative approaches to empowerment and influencing processes of rightsholder groups.
- Demonstration of synergies and collaboration with other civil society organizations/community led-groups
- Demonstration of a community-led, VOICE rightsholder-led initiative/project

Unsuccessful Factors:



- Application does not meet criteria.
- Application not in Voice format or key questions left unanswered.
- Activities with an unreasonable high proportion of administrative support costs and asset acquisition.
- Funding for freight, paid transporting costs to have big goods transported
- In general, purchase of motor vehicles, land, or buildings.
- Lack of competitive costing detail, and charges for application preparation.
- Funding of commercial services, investment, or other commercial activities.
- Over emphasis on staff training.
- For Influencing Grant, budget proposed is more than 50% of the annual income of the consortium.
- Proposed project is not responding to the VOICE thematic areas

Linking and Learning

The Linking and Learning component provides an exciting opportunity to link to other stakeholders and to learn together. Voice promotes and supports linking and learning throughout. Also within the grants. All grantees are encouraged to include linking and learning activities in their proposal and ways of working.

Therefore Voice invites you:

- To plan for involvement of the rightsholder group(s) and main stakeholders in all project phases and relevant decision making
- To develop a change agenda for the project in particular and if relevant, for your organisation in general
- To develop your own learning agenda or learning questions
- To join one of the existing and/or new groups or events focusing on shared learning and innovation.⁶ that will work on different learning questions
- Propose innovative approaches or solutions that can be tested and if successful, be scaled up
- To document all the learning and changes happening within your project
- To engage in gathering stories of change as part of the monitoring and evaluation of the project
- To engage actively with other grantees and the Voice team to overcome challenges and to learn from successes but even more, from 'failures' and challenges

4. How will your application be assessed?

Voice uses a 3-step assessment process. These are:

1. Eligibility or threshold criteria: minimum standards that all applications must meet. If an application does not meet all of the threshold criteria, it will be rejected.

⁶ Internationally this is known as a Community of Practice.



2. Criteria relating to the quality of the project proposal (project check).
3. Criteria relating to the quality of the applicant organisation or the lead party of the consortium (organisational check).

For the small grants (empowerment grants up to €25,000) a lighter / adapted version of these types of criteria apply.

Step 1: Threshold Criteria

The threshold criteria are minimum standards that all applications for Voice grants must meet. The criteria are as follows:

- a.** Applications can only be submitted by organisations which possess legal registration/recognition and a bank account in the applicant's name -even if just opened for the purpose of Voice.
- b.** Applications are only open to locally registered entities in Laos⁷. Empowerment grants are also open to informal groups and non-registered organisations.,
- c.** The project needs to address one or more of the impact themes:
 - improving access to (productive) resources (finance, land and water) and employment
 - improving access to social services, health and education in particular
 - fostering space for citizen participation:
- d.** The project benefits one or more of the following rightsholder groups:
 - The elderly/senior citizens and young people
 - Women facing exploitation, abuse, violence
 - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-gender, intersex (LGBTI) people
 - People living with disabilities
 - Ethnic minorities group

Voice emphasises the intersectionality among groups and prefer to see projects that tackle more than one barrier to inclusion. Voice in Laos focuses on the elderly and women as cross-cutting identities, and is especially welcomed in all projects.

⁷ For the purposes of Laos this means registration as an NPA with the Ministry of Interior or as a (social) enterprise or as a locally recognised organisation. The non-negotiable element is a bank account in the organisation's name.



Grant Modality	Maximum Amount	Length in between
Empowerment	€25,000	12 to 36 months
Influence	€200,000	18 to 36 months
Innovate & learn	€250,000	12 to 36 months
Sudden Opportunity	€200,000	6 to 12 months

- m.** The proposed grant cannot fund activities undertaken in the past.
- n.** The proposed grant does not relate to the funding of commercial services, investment or other commercial activities.

Step 2: Project Check

If the quality of the project is insufficient, the application will not be considered. The project check assesses the quality of the project on the basis of the following generally quality criteria and with specific criteria listed for each type of grant:

General Criteria

1. *Context analysis*: the extent to which the proposal, especially the defined problem and objective, reflects context analysis findings.
2. *Project Success analysis*
 - The extent to which the project provides a description of outcomes, outputs, proposed activities and resources, and a clear link has been established between the outputs to be achieved and the resources necessary to do so.
 - Risks, monitoring and corrective action: satisfactory risk management is in place, consisting of a satisfactory risk analysis and a satisfactory system for monitoring and corrective action.
3. *Value-for-money*: the degree to which the project will efficiently utilise resources to undertake the activities and attain the outputs.
4. Please note that in case INGOs are invited to join as a co-applicant or technical partner by the lead applicant, only direct activity costs can be included in the budget and no management costs or costs of their HQ. In addition for INGO that are in a consortium with local entities, please note that the Annual Income can only be the in-country income and not at global level.

Empowerment grants

In addition to the general criteria, Empowerment grants will be assessed with the following criteria:



1. *Rightsholder Group Representation*: the degree to which the project and organisation involves, represents and effectively raises awareness, develops transformative leadership, builds confidence and skills of the rightsholder group.

Influencing grants

In addition to the general criteria, influencing grants are assessed with the following criteria:

1. *Rightsholder Representation*: the degree to which the project and organisation involves, represents and effectively amplifies the voices of, and builds the influence of rightsholders.
2. *Advocacy and Lobby*: the degree to which the project supports rightsholders to influence stakeholders to implement new procedures and policies, and create new and unexpected connections and partnerships.

Innovate and Learn grants

In addition to the general criteria, Innovate and Learn grants are assessed with the following criteria:

1. *Rightsholder Representation*: the degree to which the project and organisation involves and represents the Voice rightsholder groups.
2. *Innovation and scalability*: The degree to which an idea is new, given the context, and leads to the empowerment and amplification of one or more Voice rightsholder group(s). Includes an analysis of the applicants' capacity to implement, scale up and sustain.

Sudden Opportunity grants

1. *Rightsholder Representation*: the degree to which the project and organisation involves and represents the Voice rightsholder groups.
2. *Meeting Opportunities*: the degree to which the project analyses and responds to a new opportunity to raise awareness, develop transformative leadership, build confidence and skills of one or more Voice rightsholder groups and/or amplify the voices and build the influence of the rightsholders.

3. Step 3: Organisational Check

For organisations to be awarded a grant within Voice (except Empowerment grant), the organisational assessment needs to be satisfactory in terms of quality and completed in its entirety. Deficiencies found through the organisational check will be communicated to the applicant to develop a capacity development plan that may be funded by the Voice grant. Organisations which are determined to be high risk as a result of the organisational check are ineligible for funding.

The organisational assessment will be a review of the following: Governance and Integrity, Financial Management and Procurement, Human Resources and Program and Project Management. The scope of organisational assessment is dependent upon the type of grant applied and there are specific ones for Voice developed.



Organisations should be open and motivated to learn and interested in the key Voice principles. The answers to their self-assessment could be discussed. The Voice country team could compare the organisation's assessment with their impressions and agree on possible capacity strengthening needs to be included in the grant.

The assessment process is a moment to promote inclusion of linking and learning elements in the grant proposals. When needed, the Voice country team can organise a (brainstorm) session with several grantees to come up with areas of common interest and possible activities to bring people together around a common aim or theme. It is also an opportunity to promote the inclusion of creative actions in the proposals.

Empowerment Grants

Applicants for Empowerment grants will be assessed with the following criteria:

1. *Governance and Integrity*

- The applicant has a clear purpose and acts on decisions collectively.
- The degree to which the leadership is respected by the rightsholder group.

2. *Financial Management:*

- The quality of financial and administrative management is adequate to safeguard payments and purchases.

Influencing Grants and Sudden Opportunity Grants

In addition to organisational assessment criteria of applicants of empowerment grants, applicants of influencing or sudden opportunity grants are assessed with the following criteria:

1. *Governance and Integrity*

- The applicant has a coherent and realistic strategic plan. (review of the quality of formulation of objectives, intended results and indicators; explanation of strategic choices)
- The applicant is accountable to and communicates effectively with its primary constituents/beneficiaries. The applicant (management) encourages and supports internal learning and reflection processes.

2. *Procurement and Finance Management*

- The quality of financial and administrative management is adequate to ensure financial accountability. (Budget, funding plan, financial management, financial report)

3. *Programme and Project Management*

- The applicant has an appropriate monitoring and evaluation process (documentation & data collection, involvement of stakeholders, quality of analysis and learning)

4. *Human Resources*



5.

5. If your application is not successful

You will receive written notification or email if your organisation has not been approved for funding. Detailed feedback is only given to shortlisted proposals (project check) -where possible. As part of the grievance process, you have an opportunity to seek clarification from the Voice Laos team. Often, this feedback process can assist an unsuccessful applicant to identify weaknesses in their application, to re-think their proposal and possibly to re-apply for the next call for proposals.

6. After a grant is awarded

What happens if my organisation is approved for funding?

Voice will invite you to discuss and finalise the project. This will provide an opportunity to review any changes that may have taken place since writing the application. It also provides an opportunity for Voice and your organisation to review the project risk and make small revisions to the activities, timeline and outputs as needed. From the review of the application, Voice may also have some questions or concerns that we will ask your organisation to review and consider.

Approval is only conditional upon a mutually agreed upon final narrative and budget proposal as well as passing the organisational assessment. Voice can withdraw its approval at anytime.

Grant Agreement

Once the project is finalised, Voice enters into a Grant Agreement with your organisation. The Grant Agreement is based on the mandate provided by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Oxfam in Laos.

Grant Agreements are concluded with organisations for well-defined and described proposal. The Grant Arrangement applies for the period of time required to complete the project/research. The time plan and approved budget are an integrated part of the Grant Agreement. An *organisational capacity assessment* is concluded with grantees and plans to improve a grantees capacity can be incorporated within the final Grant Agreement.

The Grant Agreement outlines the requirements under the grant and other terms and conditions that your organisation will need to adhere to. The Grant Agreement covers among other things performance standards and terms of release of funds that may be in tranches. Voice provides a copy of the Grant Agreement. The person with signing authority in your organisation needs to sign the Grant Agreement prior to proceeding with financial management arrangements. Projects approved for funding are normally required to begin within one month of the signing of the Grant Agreement (execution).

How will the Grant be Monitored & Evaluated by Voice?



Voice management and staff monitors the integrity and performance of all grants approved. Voice conducts site visits, financial audits and compliance inspections on a periodic basis.

For all projects, grantees are required to safe keep financial records and receipts for inspection as needed. All grantees are subject to periodic and regular review and unannounced spot-checks by Voice. Annual audits are required of all grants valued at more than €100,000. The costs of the audit needs to be included in the budget proposal. Apart from this, a number of other grants are subject to audit, the selection of which are based upon recommendations of the Voice country team.

How will your organisation communicate with Voice?

The Voice country and coordination team wants you to succeed. If your organisation has any questions or concerns about the Grant Agreement or how to report, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are happy to answer your questions and help you with fulfilling the requirements under the Grant Agreement. Your first contact will be outlined in the Grant Agreement. You are also welcome to contact us to talk about improving your organisations ability (operational, management and technical); the Voice team may have some suggestions on this.

If your organisation is not able to meet the requirements under the Grant, then you must contact Voice. The Voice team will try its best to work with you to come up with solutions to help your organisation move forward and learn from setbacks. In some cases, especially as a result of events that are not in your control, you can request a modification of the Grant. As soon as you think that circumstances may require a change to your Grant, please speak to the Voice Laos team to receive guidance before submitting the request. It is recommended that Grant Modification requests be made 3-6 months before the end of the project.

How will your organisation report to Voice?

There are 2 main type of reports: narrative and financial. Reports are submitted in accordance to a reporting schedule, payment schedule, and monitoring requirements agreed during the contracting period. These are enumerated in the Grant Agreement. In general, reports are due every 6 months.

Narrative reporting

There are 3 different ways of delivering such reports depending on the reporting period. There are Progress Reports (6-month period), Annual Reports (12-months period) and the End of Project Report (entire project period).

- *Progress Reports:* These capture progress within short time periods and is based on a conversation with the Voice team. The conversation or meeting with the Voice team can be arranged to be done face-to-face or virtually. The Voice team will moderate the semi-structured conversation to cover the following points:
 - The external environment. To identify any significant (positive or negative) changes happening in the local, national, regional, or global context (e.g. changes in existing legislation) that relates to your project and rightsholder group(s).
 - Project implementation update and engagement with stakeholders. How was the implementation? What type of activities are you using to engage with the relevant rightsholders targeted through your project? Which one(s) of these activities did you



find particularly successful? Have you encountered any difficulties reaching out to / working with those groups?

- External Communications and Amplification. Are there any interesting stories do you want Voice to highlight? How are you engaging with other stakeholders or sharing your story?
 - Risk analysis and mitigation strategies. To check if these risks are likely to materialise or if there are new risks that we need to address or prepare for.
 - Linking & Learning. To jointly explore what have you learnt from the implementation of your project thus far. How are you documenting your learning? What are you and/or the rightsholder groups doing differently as a result the project? Has Voice enabled you (and/or other organisations working with you as part of this project) to use new ideas and/or innovative approaches to your work?
- *Annual Report:* This report cover one whole year of project implementation and is submitted annually via an online online form.
 - The Annual Report is designed to help you capture more detailed insights into the change that your project is bringing about, and how this change happens. It covers the same topics as the progress report with a few additional questions:
 - Evidence of contribution of your project results to the global Voice outcome areas
 - Stories of Change. Which depict the change on an individual or a group that your project has contributed to. The way that you will narrate the story is completely open: It could be in a narrative form, audio, video, etc. We have classified the categories of change that we would like to zoom in, on the report itself.
 - *End of Project Report:* This report covers the whole project period and is submitted via an online form a month after your project is complete.
 - It's an opportunity for you to highlight key achievements, moments, outcomes and results from your work. It will be good to also reflect on the brilliant failures you learned from.
 - Voice will want to hear more about how you are planning to continue the project or how will you build on your successes.

Financial reporting

- *Financial Report:* The financial report are also submitted every 6 months. They need to be completed against the approved budget. It is expected that a ledger is kept (i.e. summarising all financial transactions related to the project) and shared.
 - Financial reporting also depends on the size and the life span of the grant and will therefore be included in the grant agreement. Financial reports need to be delivered in the template provided.
 - Your organisation will maintain a separate ledger for the Voice grant that includes all project expenses. Based on this ledger you will calculate the project expenses per budget line, register this in the appropriate column in the template and calculate in a separate column how much is money is left for that budget line and percentage. You may shift funds from one budget line to another within the same budget heading, but only to a maximum of 10% and you will always inform the Voice team about such changes. If you required changes over 10% you will have to obtain approval of the Voice team beforehand.
 - Supporting documents, that prove that you made the expenditures, need to be kept on file for a period of 10 years after the project ended for a possible audit. More details on which



