Salient One analysis

SPIRIT-II: Selection of the Programme Administrator for the Small-Scale Grants mechanism for social services for children and families

Donor: UNICEF

Location: Ukraine

Deadline: 8 December 2026

Open | Last updated 2026-11-12

Call description

UNICEF is seeking a programme administrator for the SPIRIT-II Small-Scale Grants mechanism for social services for children and families in Government-controlled territory of Ukraine. The focus is social services and child protection, alongside grant management and capacity strengthening. The administrator supports a government-led procurement mechanism; selected providers, not the administrator, deliver services in selected hromadas, or local communities. The lead applicant must be a legal entity registered as a non-profit organisation, eligible to operate in Ukraine and not undergoing termination proceedings. These are requirements for the administrator applicant, not a determination of any organisation's eligibility.

The assignment lasts 18 months from its start date. Direct service delivery by each grant recipient lasts no more than 12 months; the remaining time is for competitive procedures, contracting, provider mobilisation, monitoring, evaluation and completion of programme and financial reporting.

Priorities and eligibility

Eligibility is screened before scoring. In addition to legal status, the applicant must demonstrate grant-administration experience, experience in social services or child protection in Ukraine, capacity to support participants across Government-controlled territory, appropriate financial and risk systems, safeguarding and complaint arrangements, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse capacity, and experience cooperating with state or local authorities. Regional offices are not required.

The applicant must have an emergency response mechanism and capacity for rapid scale-up. The terms of reference also state that capacity to deploy it, or prior experience of such work, is mandatory. Activation depends on crisis circumstances and available funding and is not guaranteed. Applicants must describe the procedure, indicative decision-to-payment timelines and personnel available for rapid scale-up.

What eligibility and funding conditions will apply to downstream social service providers? The administrator call requires outreach to under-represented provider types, including registered business entities, but does not establish in the supplied extracts that every such entity is eligible for a grant. Provider participation should not be confused with the non-profit registration requirement for the administrator applicant.

Funding and application requirements

Applications must be submitted by a single organisation. Consortia and subcontracting of organisations are not permitted; the applicant may engage individual experts under individual contracts and remains fully accountable to UNICEF.

The announcement directs applicants to the UN Partner Portal to apply. The UNICEF template encourages use of the electronic concept note platform; if it is used, the completed concept note is exported as a PDF and submitted through the UN Partner Portal. The encouragement to use that platform is not stated as a universal obligation.

The terms of reference permit the beneficiary feedback channel to be delivered through a contractor, but elsewhere prohibit subcontracting organisations. The relationship between these provisions is unresolved. Confirm whether an organisational contractor for feedback is permitted before relying on that arrangement; individual experts under individual contracts are expressly allowed.

The UNICEF concept note template is to be used for concept notes responding to a UNICEF call. It requests a programme rationale using disaggregated data, an implementation strategy, population focus, capacity development and risk information, and practical measures for gender, equity and sustainability. It also requests results, indicators, activities, implementation periods and activity-level budgets.

Does UNICEF require any application documents or file formats beyond the concept note, and are there call-specific language restrictions? The announcement lists the terms of reference and concept note template as attachments; listing an attachment does not itself make it a completed application document. The template permits English, Arabic, French, Russian or Spanish versions, but the supplied call extracts do not resolve whether a call-specific language rule applies.

What is the available funding for the administrator, and are there separate allocations or ceilings for the downstream grants? The extracted announcement shows no indicative budget amount, although the template asks for costed partner and UNICEF contributions. These are not evidence of a stated ceiling or a mandatory contribution amount.

The terms of reference give an indicative grant count of 200-225, whereas the call announcement extract appears to state 225-250. The announcement text is truncated around that figure, so verify the original announcement and seek clarification before using either figure for staffing or budget planning.

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The application deadline in the call announcement is 8 December 2026. The terms of reference say the deadline is to be confirmed, so the announcement supplies the more specific date in the available package.

The call announcement lists the same start and end date, 1 January 2027, while its assignment description specifies 18 months. Confirm the intended dates with UNICEF before finalising the implementation schedule; the supplied evidence does not resolve the discrepancy.

Recommendations

This is an administration and systems-strengthening assignment, not a direct service-delivery opportunity for the lead applicant. A credible application needs to connect grant administration, provider accompaniment, government capacity transfer and analysis rather than present them as separate activities. Demonstrate how staffing, remote support, monitoring and continuity arrangements can deliver the combined workload across Government-controlled territory, including remote and front-line communities.

Eligibility screening and comparative assessment are distinct: meeting the mandatory conditions does not establish selection. The assessment considers comparable grant experience, management and continuity, cost justification, coherence across the components, access and security, and government engagement and legal compliance. Regional partnerships and networks are an advantage, not a requirement. Substantiate each relevant criterion with the applicant’s own experience and a feasible delivery plan.

Provider support must lead to independent readiness for social service procurement, not just attendance at training. This matters particularly for first-time providers and organisations transitioning from humanitarian response. Describe an accompaniment pathway with entry and exit points, mentoring and practical support on costing, safeguarding, inclusion and financial management, as well as how local communities will be supported to plan and oversee services.

The concept note requires activity-level amounts for the prospective partner and UNICEF, plus a supply contribution plan. Programme-management costs are to be allocated in proportion to their contribution to the programme. Distinguish direct implementation, grant-administration and management costs clearly and justify the allocation and unit costs, while first confirming the available funding and any downstream grant limits.

The call’s indicator list is indicative and the full monitoring framework is to be agreed after selection, but the concept note still needs measurable outputs. Link the result statement to the call’s expected results and provide an indicator baseline, target and means of verification for each programme output; retain the template’s exception for the standard programme-management output.

Sources

unpartnerportal.org - Official call

Salient One analysis. Official call documents and amendments govern the funding conditions.

Sources

UNICEF_Concept_Note_Template_with_Guideline_P7JZcNs.docx: DOCX body text and supported embedded XLSX cells are read. Headers, footnotes, comments, other embedded objects and rendered pagination are not read. Tracked insertions are included; deleted text is omitted. Embedded worksheet formatting, dates and formula results are not verified.

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