**ANNEX K**

**GUIDELINES for SIMPLIFIED COST OPTIONS**

**For Union financed GRANT CONTRACTS
awarded through Call for Proposals**

**1. Introduction**

In the context of grants awarded through calls for proposals, only the following SCOs can be proposed by applicants:

- **unit costs:** these cover all or certain specific categories of eligible costs which are clearly identified (as indicated in the budget at proposal stage) and are expressed in amounts per unit.

*Example:* *unit cost per brochure produced and delivered to participants in the context of a seminar; unit costs for small local transportation or other expenses in the context of specific activities such as a vaccine distribution (often in expense categories with many small value items and/or with poor documentation), etc.*

**- lump sums:** thesecover in global terms all or certain specific categories of eligible costs which can be clearly identified (as indicated in the budget at proposal stage).

*Example: global cost for the organisation of an opening event, global cost for the production of information videos etc.*

**- flat rate financing:** this covers specific categories of eligible costs which can be clearly identified (as indicated in the budget at proposal stage) and are expressed as a percentage of other eligible costs. Please note that flat-rate financing is input based and therefore can only be proposed by applicants in the context of grants awarded through call for proposals when already accepted by national authorities under comparable funding schemes.

**🡪 a combination of these forms**

Simplified cost options can apply to one or more of the direct cost headings of the budget (i.e. cost headings 1 to 6), or to sub-cost headings or to specific cost items within these cost headings.

Simplified costs options (SCOs) are divided in two categories:

1/ "output or result based SCOs": this category includes costs linked to outputs, results, activities, deliverables in the framework of a specific project (for example the determination of a lump sum for the organisation of a conference, or for the realisation of a determined output/activity). Where possible and appropriate, lump sums or unit costs shall be determined in such a way to allow their payment upon achievement of concrete outputs and/or results. Flat rates cannot be used for output or result based SCOs. Output based SCO can be proposed by the beneficiary (no threshold is applicable) at proposal's stage (Grant application form – Full application). In case the evaluation committee and the contracting authority are not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided, reimbursement on the basis of actually incurred costs is always possible.

2/ "other SCOs": this second category entails simplified cost options embedded in the cost accounting practices of the beneficiary, if they have been accepted by national authorities under comparable funding schemes. In this case, the grant beneficiary shall demonstrate that the national authority accepted the cost accounting practices and will have to specify in which context this acceptance is given. The evaluation committee will assess if the funding scheme is comparable. To obtain reimbursement of this category of SCOs, the beneficiary shall refer to the comparable funding schemes of national authorities in the budget justification sheet (annex B). In case the evaluation committee and the contracting authority are not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided, reimbursement on the basis of actually incurred costs is always possible.

Applicants can propose simplified cost options at the full application stage[[1]](#footnote-2). The evaluation committee and the contracting authority will decide whether such costs can be accepted during the contracting phase on the basis of the budget submitted. The contracting authority will base its decision on an analysis of the budget presented against the conditions set in these guidelines.

In case the evaluation committee and the contracting authority are not satisfied with the quality of the justification provided, reimbursement based on actually incurred costs is always possible. In this case, the budget shall be adapted accordingly.

Other SCOs that were accepted by national authorities in comparable funding schemes still need to be reflected in the budget and mentioned in the budget justification sheet; the evaluation committee and the contracting authority will verify the positive result of the assessment and assess if the budget includes the appropriate level of detail.

**2. Provisions applicable to both output and result based SCOs and other SCOs:**

In line with Article 181(4) of the 2018 Financial Regulation the authorisation of SCOs can be granted if the following elements are present:

a) Justification concerning the appropriateness of such forms of financing with regard to the nature of the supported actions, as well as to the risks of irregularities and fraud and costs of control;

b) Identification of the costs or categories of costs covered by lump sums, unit costs or flat-rate financing, which shall be considered eligible in accordance with Article 14.1 and 14.2 of the GC and which shall exclude ineligible costs under Article 14.11 of the GC;

c) Description of the methods for determining lump sums, unit costs or flat-rate financing. For SCOs that are not output or result based, those methods shall be based on one of the following:

- statistical data, similarly objective means or an expert judgement provided by internally available experts in the Commission or procured in accordance with the applicable rules; or

- beneficiary-by-beneficiary approach, by reference to certified or auditable historical data of the beneficiary or to its usual cost accounting practices;

d) Where possible, the essential conditions triggering the payment, including, in case of output or result based SCOs, the achievement of outputs and/or results;

e) for other SCOs where lump sums, unit costs and flat rates are not output based and/or result based, a justification on why an output based and/or result based approach is not possible or appropriate;

The methods referred to in point (c) shall ensure:

- the respect of the principle of sound financial management, in particular the appropriateness of the respective amounts with regard to the required outputs and/or results taking into account foreseeable revenues to be generated by the actions or work programmes;

- compliance with the principles of co-financing and no double funding.

The authorisation decision shall apply to the specific contract concerned in case of output or result based SCOs.

**3. Provisions applicable to other SCOs only:**

The responsible contracting authority may consider that the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary are compliant with the conditions set out at point 2, if they have been accepted by national authorities under comparable funding schemes. In this case, the grant beneficiary shall demonstrate that the national authority accepted the cost accounting practices and will have to specify in which context this acceptance is given.

The contracting authority will then assess if the funding scheme is comparable and in case of positive outcome will consider these practices as if they were ex-ante assessed by an external auditor.

**4. Provisions applicable to output or result based SCOs only:**

- Once simplified cost amounts (as specified in the action budget) have been assessed and approved by the evaluation committee and the contracting authority such costs will not be subject to an ex post verification of actual underlying cost data. Hence, auditors will not be required to check supporting documents to verify the actual costs incurred but they will verify the correct application of the method and formula for the calculation of the cost based on related inputs and relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

- Beneficiaries shall keep adequate records and documentation to prove that the costs are declared according to the agreed method and formula and that the qualitative and quantitative conditions have been respected.

- If a verification/audit reveals that the calculation methods used by the beneficiary(ies) or its affiliated entity(ies) to determine unit costs, lump sums or flat-rates are not in line with relevant conditions or factual information (e.g. the generating events have not occurred), the contracting authority may establish such costs as not eligible and recover up to the amount of the simplified cost options used.

**Example of a Budget for an action with some output-based SCOs:**

**NB: Information to be included in the action budget in case of simplified cost options**

Applicants proposing output or result-based simplified cost options must clearly indicate in the first worksheet of the action budget, each heading/item[[2]](#footnote-3) of eligible costs concerned by this type of financing, i.e. state in capital letters ‘UNIT COST’ (per output/activity, etc.) or ‘LUMP SUM’ in the Unit column, as in the example below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  **Budget for the action** | **All years** |
| **Costs** | **Unit** | **# of units** | **Unit value (in EUR)** | **Costs(in EUR)** |
| **1. Human resources** |  |  |  |  |
| 1.1 Salaries (gross salaries including social security charges and other related costs, local staff) |   |   |   |   |
|  1.1.1 Technical staff |  |  |   |   |
| 1.1.1.1 Event managers in charge of the final conference organisation | **UNIT COST** (per conference organisation) | 3 | 3.500 | 10.500 |
|  1.1.2 Administrative/ support staff |  |  |  |  |
| ***Subtotal Human resources*** |  |  |  |  |
| **2. Travel** |  |  |  |  |
| 2.1. International travel | LUMP SUM |  |   | 5.000 |
| 2.2 Local transportation | LUMP SUM |  |  | 2.400 |
| ***Subtotal Travel***  |  |  |  |  |
| **5. Other costs, services** |  |  |  |  |
| 5.1 Publications |   |   |   |  |
| 5.2 Studies, research | **LUMP SUM** |   |   | 8.000 |
| 5.5 Translation, interpreters | **UNIT COST** (per conference organisation) | 2 | 800 | 1.600 |
| 5.7 Cost of conferences/seminars |  |  |  |  |
| 5.7.1 Room meeting/ rental | **UNIT COST** (per conference organisation) | 4 | 500 | 2.000 |
| 5.7.2 Room meeting/equipment | **UNIT COST** (per conference organisation) | 4 | 375 | 1.500 |
| ***Subtotal Other costs, services*** |  |  |  |  |
| **6. Other**  |  |  |  |  |
| 6.1 Other services |   |   |   |  |
| 6.1.1 Vaccine distribution (Activity X) | **UNIT COST** (per vaccine) | 20.000 | 40 | 800.000 |
| ***Subtotal Other*** |  |

*In the above example:*

* *The costs for Event managers (subheading 1.1.1.1) and interpreters (subheading 5.5) exclusively working for the final conference (example of activity), will be reimbursed only on the basis of the results achieved (final conference organisation) and defined by the Action. The same applies for costs related to the rental and equipment of room meeting dedicated to the final conference (subheading 5.7.1 and 5.7.2). Once the result is achieved, the reimbursement is possible.*

*The costs for the vaccine distribution (subheading 6.1.1) will include for example: the purchase, the logistics, management and delivery, the storage, the medical staff administering vaccination, and related costs, etc. Once the output, previously described in the Action, related to the activity X is achieved, the reimbursement of subheading 6.1.1 is possible.*

*The beneficiary should determine the amount per unit on the basis of statistical data, expert judgment, beneficiary’s accounting practice etc. In case the evaluation committee rejects the methodology presented, these costs can be reimbursed as actual costs incurred. Additional information should be provided in the justification sheet.*

* *The cost for Travel (heading 2) and studies, research (subheading 5.2)* *if carried out in accordance with the conditions agreed in the description of the action and in the justification of the budget (number and details of flights; studies according to the terms of reference), will be reimbursed as lump sum once the specific output is achieved. Additional information on the calculation method should be provided in the justification sheet.*

Moreover, applicants must in the second column of the justification sheet and for each corresponding budget item or heading:

- describe the information and methods used to establish the amounts of unit costs or lump sums for the costs to which these refer, for output or result based SCOs.

- explain the formulas for calculation of the final eligible amount.[[3]](#footnote-4)

- in case of other SCOs the reference to the comparable funding schemes of national authorities shall be mentioned.

1. In case of open calls, with the submission of the application form. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Use different lines for each type of simplified cost options and per beneficiary. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. *Example:
- Specific costs related to the organization of an event: number of participants at the event \* total cost per participant etc.* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)