



GRANTS MANUAL

FINANCING SCHEME FOR BUSINESS PLANS AND YOUTH/SOCIAL INITIATIVES WITHIN THE PROJECT

“NEXTGEN LEADERS – Leadership and Entrepreneurship Development Programme”

Granti Agreement: NaEPF2025-022

21 April 2026



ABBREVIATIONS

CA	Contracting Authority
CODE Partners	Consulting and Development Partners
NaEPF	Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	National Registration Center

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This Manual for the support of business plans and social initiatives defines the procedure for applying for grants under the financing scheme within the project “NextGen Leaders: Leadership and Entrepreneurship Development Programme”, Grant Agreement No. NaEPF2025-022, funded by the Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation and implemented by CODE Partners.

The requirements presented in this Manual, including the applicable rules, agreements, operational practices, and provisions for financial support, shall be used by applicants throughout the entire process: from registration, preparation of business plans/projects, submission of applications, to the management and implementation of the plans by the selected beneficiaries.



1. INTRODUCTION – Project Overview

CODE Partners is implementing the 3-year project “Next Generation Leaders – Leadership and Entrepreneurship Development Programme”, funded by the Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation (NaEPF).

The project aims to strengthen the entrepreneurial skills of young people in the project area by providing support across several components. These include training youth through the Start-Up Academy, Leadership Academy, Academy Talks, as well as financing at least three selected business plans with grants of up to €5,000, and youth/social initiatives with grants of up to €2,000.

The project adopts a multi-stakeholder approach, integrating national experts, local communities, central and local authorities, civil society, and other relevant actors.

Project Impact and Results

The long-term impact of the project is to contribute to:

- Reducing unemployment
- Enhancing the integration of young people into social and economic life
- Strengthening their role in society
- Promoting the socio-economic development of the project area

Overall Objective

The overall objective of the project is:

“To strengthen youth engagement and entrepreneurial initiatives in the Shkodra region.”

Specific Objective 1:

To enhance the entrepreneurial skills and competencies of young people by providing sustainable solutions for the development of micro and small businesses.

Specific Objective 2:

To develop leadership skills among young participants, emphasizing key attributes such as vision, integrity, resilience, and communication.



Expected Results

Project activities will be implemented to achieve the following results:

- Entrepreneurial skills and mindset among youth—including ideation, innovation, financial literacy, risk management, and business planning—are developed.
- The sustainability of youth-led business initiatives is supported.
- A culture of social responsibility and ethical entrepreneurship is promoted, encouraging business models that prioritize social impact alongside profit.
- Social and community initiatives addressing local challenges, with a focus on community impact, are created.

Key Project Indicators (3-year period)

- 90 young people will participate in the Start-Up and Leadership Academy.
- Në total, 9 biznes plane (3 për çdo vit) do të finanohen me një fond maksimumi prej €45,000 (15,000 për çdo vit)
- 9 iniciativa sociale/rinore do të mbështeten (3 për çdo vit) me një fond maksimumi prej of €18,000 (6,000 € për çdo vit)

Available Funds for Support

1. Total Amount for Business Plans

The total maximum amount allocated to support business plans for young entrepreneurs within this project is **€45,000 over three years**.

Each business plan may request funding of up to **€5,000**.

2. Total Amount for Social/Youth Initiatives

The total maximum amount allocated to support project ideas for youth social initiatives within this project is **€18,000 over three years**.

Each project idea may request funding of up to **€2,000**.



Funds Available for This Call

For this call, the available budget is:

- **€15,000 for business plans**
- **€6,000 for social/youth initiatives**

3. GRANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The financing scheme for business ideas/plans within the project “Next Generation Leaders – Leadership and Entrepreneurship Development Programme” will support initiatives and businesses operating within the Project Area, which is limited to the Municipality of Shkodra.

Eligible applicants are young people registered as participants who have attended the training programme implemented under the project.

All registered youth/entrepreneurs in the project may apply for support under the grant scheme with only one (1) project idea/business plan.

3.1 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

A. General Eligibility Criteria (for all applicants)

- Applicants must be registered in the project and have participated in project activities.
- Applicants may apply for only one grant under this call.
- All submitted documents must not be older than 6 months (except documents issued by the National Registration Center (NRC) and the Court, which must be valid within 30 days).
- The proposed concept must follow the format provided in the respective annex.
- Applicants who have participated in the project training programme will receive additional points for each training day attended.
- Grant beneficiaries must carry out their activities in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and the signed grant contract.
- All beneficiaries must meet activity requirements based on results and monitoring, as described in the call.



- Applicants must provide evidence that the proposed business idea/plan has not received non-repayable funding from national/local institutions or other donors for the same costs (investments, operational costs, etc.).
- Selected beneficiaries will be monitored by CODE Partners.

3.2 Eligibility Criteria for Existing Businesses

- Only businesses based in the Municipality of Shkodra are eligible to apply.
- The capacity to implement activities within the Project Area will be considered.
- There must be no conflict of interest with stakeholders in the field of business plan implementation.
- The business must be registered with the NRC no more than 1 year prior to the launch of this call and operate in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
- The business idea/plan must be submitted by the business administrator.
- Applicants must submit their Tax Identification Number (NIPT) and an NRC extract confirming business registration together with the business plan.

3.3 Eligibility Criteria for New Businesses

- Only entrepreneurs registered and based in the Project Area are eligible to apply.
- The capacity to implement activities within the Project Area will be considered.
- There must be no conflict of interest with stakeholders involved in project implementation.
- New businesses must register their NIPT upon being selected as winners and prior to signing the grant contract with the Contracting Authority.

3.5 SPECIFIC ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Conditions (for ranking purposes):

- The requested funding must cover 100% of eligible costs listed in the approved business plan for each beneficiary.



3.6 Additional Conditions (for ranking purposes)

- Business ideas/plans promote the development and promotion of rural tourism and agro-tourism.
- Business ideas/plans contribute to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage and traditions (including activities or crafts at risk of disappearing).
- Business ideas/plans support the development of agriculture and innovative agricultural/livestock production methods.
- Business ideas/plans demonstrate innovation.
- Business ideas/plans take into account environmental protection and sustainable development principles.
- Ideas consider social conditions and the legitimate ambitions of youth to express their voice in decision-making processes.

3.7 Financing Policy

- Grant beneficiaries will receive goods and services as defined in their approved business plan or project idea.
- Procurement procedures for goods and services included in the business plan and approved in the contract will be carried out by CODE Partners.
- Goods and equipment provided under this call/project will remain in use by the beneficiary until the end of the project. At project closure, they will be transferred to the beneficiary through a donation agreement signed between the Contracting Authority and the beneficiary.

4. ELIGIBLE COSTS

4.1 Eligible Costs for Businesses

The financial support scheme may cover specific and verifiable costs directly related to the development or improvement of the business. All costs must be supported by invoices and used solely for business purposes.

Eligible costs include, but are not limited to:



Equipment and Tools

- Purchase of equipment and tools necessary for business operations
- Production or processing equipment for local products
- Equipment for processing, drying, packaging, or storage

Furniture and Equipment for Tourism Services

- Furniture for accommodation facilities or reception areas (beds, tables, chairs, wardrobes, shelves, etc.)
- Equipment for guest rooms or tourism facilities
- Lighting equipment and decorative elements with a traditional character

Improvement of Business Premises

- Minor works for the renovation or improvement of business premises
- Sanitary equipment and functional elements for business facilities
- Materials for adapting spaces in line with local traditions

Equipment for Tourism and Nature-Based Activities

- Equipment for tourist tours or outdoor activities (e.g. bicycles, camping equipment, safety gear for guides)
- Equipment for interpretation and promotion of natural and cultural heritage

Business Promotion Materials

- Business signage
- Tourist or informational signage for visitors
- Roll-ups, display stands, and other printed promotional materials

Note: This is not an exhaustive list. Other activities may be considered eligible if fully aligned with the objectives of the project.

4.2 INELIGIBLE COSTS

- Purchase or rental of land
- Fines, penalties, and legal costs
- Bank charges, guarantee costs, and similar expenses
- Depreciation and maintenance costs
- Costs related to lease agreements, including lessor margins, overheads, and insurance costs
- Investments in processing or activities that may increase environmental pollution
- Supply of non-organic pesticides or activities requiring increased pesticide use
- Investments in state-owned companies



- Investments in land occupied or used (formally or informally) by third parties that would result in their displacement
- Investments that may negatively affect protected or important natural habitats, ecosystems, or biodiversity
- Losses due to exchange rate fluctuations
- Taxes (both national and local)
- Operational business costs such as salaries, rent, etc.

The Following Costs Are Not Eligible for Funding

The following expenses are not eligible for financing under this scheme:

- Purchase of land or buildings
- Construction of new facilities or major construction investments
- Salaries or honoraria
- Payment of debts or existing liabilities
- Personal expenses not directly related to business activities
- Vehicle-related expenses
- Travel and per diem costs
- Taxes, fines, or financial penalties
- Any expense that cannot be supported by a valid fiscal invoice

5. APPLICATION PROCEDURE, DEADLINES AND PROCESS

Support for young people will be implemented in one phase:

Phase One – Submission of Business Plans (Start-Up Academy) / Project Ideas (Leadership Academy)

The decision on fund allocation will be based on the **scoring of the business plans/project ideas and the final ranking** prepared by the Evaluation Committee and approved by the Contracting Authority.

5.1 Applications for Financial Support (Business Ideas / Project Ideas)

Applicants shall submit their business ideas/project ideas in accordance with the criteria and conditions of the call by **25 May 2026** (within 2 weeks from the date of publication).



The application procedure for this phase is as follows:

- The applicant submits the business plan/project using the **official application form (attached)** and the grant concept template, in line with the requirements described in this manual.
- The applicant is required to submit **all supporting documents** listed in the application form and described in the Call for Applications.
- Under this financial support scheme:
 - Projects are expected to be implemented over **3 months**
 - Business plans over **6 months**
- The available funds will be distributed through a **public call**, published on official electronic media (websites of the Contracting Authority).
- Selected applicants will continue working with **experts/mentors during the implementation phase**.

5.2 Evaluation Committee

Applications will be evaluated by a dedicated committee established by 3 members from CODE Partners.

The following shall be considered:

- Business ideas/project ideas submitted under the call will be evaluated based on **predefined criteria**, determining the allocation of grants. Applications that do not meet the requirements will not be considered further.
- Evaluation Committee meetings will be **closed**, and members must respect confidentiality.
- Applications that meet eligibility and compliance requirements will be evaluated based on the **award criteria**.
- Applications that do not meet eligibility requirements will be **rejected**.
- Evaluators must have **relevant technical expertise** in the field.
- The Evaluation Committee must be given **sufficient time** to carry out the assessment properly and in accordance with the rules.

The evaluation process is planned to take place starting from **25 May – 29 May 2026**.

5.3 Evaluation Report

- Once applications are evaluated, an **Evaluation Report** will be prepared.
- The report will include:
 - Information on applications received



- Assessment of eligibility and compliance criteria
- Evaluation of selection criteria for business ideas/projects
- Final grant allocation and ranking of applications

5.4 Preparation and Implementation of Business Plans

Selected applicants will receive **mentoring support during the implementation phase**. All selected applicants are entitled to benefit from this service according to a predefined schedule. Each applicant will work **directly with an expert** for the implementation of their business plan/project idea.

6. AUTHORIZATION AND SUSPENSION OF GRANT EXPENDITURE

Financial support is administered by **CODE Partners in Albania**. All beneficiaries must ensure that:

- Goods/equipment/services are procured in accordance with the **approved decision and contract**
- Conditions for **use and subsequent donation** are respected

If it is observed that goods, equipment, or services are not used in accordance with the agreement, the Contracting Authority (**CODE Partners**) may **suspend further support** until corrective measures are taken.

If misuse is confirmed:

- The goods/equipment/services will **not be transferred** to the beneficiary
- The beneficiary is required to **repay any misused funds** and compensate for damages

Goods and services are provided in accordance with contractual conditions.

- Upon receipt, the beneficiary signs a **Confirmation of Acceptance Form**
- At project closure, and after verification of compliance with the business plan and contract, the Contracting Authority and the beneficiary sign a **Donation Act**, transferring ownership of goods/equipment to the beneficiary

7. MONITORING AND REPORTING

CODE Partners is responsible for monitoring the grants under this project.

As part of the monitoring process, individual Grant Agreements will ensure that the Contracting Authority:

- Monitors investments carried out under the grant agreement
- Monitors operational performance



- Monitors the use of goods/equipment/products financed under the business plan

8. LIST OF REQUIRED DOCUMENTS FOR APPLICATION

All applicants must submit a **complete application file**, including:

- Business plan (for new and existing businesses)
- Project proposal (for social/youth projects)
- Copy of identification document (ID/passport)
- Certificate from the National Registration Center (NRC) – for existing businesses
- Updated NRC extract at the time of application – for existing businesses
- Proof of tax payments for the last fiscal year – for existing businesses
- Court certificate confirming that the applicant or legal representative is not under investigation (issued no more than 30 days prior to submission)
- Signed declaration confirming that the business plan/project has not received funding from other national/local institutions or donors for the same costs

9. RANKING CRITERIA

Applications that are not prepared in accordance with the standards defined in the call will be **rejected**.

Only **eligible and compliant proposals** will proceed to the ranking process.

1. Evaluation for Youth /Social Project.

	Categories for Evaluation	Maximal Score	Average scoring
1.	Clarity of the Project The project is clear, well-structured, and easy to understand. The problem and the proposed solution are clearly and accurately defined.	20	—
2.	Relevance The problem is real and significant for the community. The idea addresses a concrete and current need.	15	—

3.	Innovation and Originality The idea is new or introduces a different approach to solving the problem.	10	—
4.	Clearly Defined Target Group The target group is well defined. The idea is tailored to their needs.	5	—
5.	Sustainability Will the idea be sustainable? How will it continue after the funding ends?	10	—
6.	Team The leader/team demonstrates motivation and commitment. They have the skills to implement the idea.	10	—
7.	Budget Linked to Project Activities The budget is clearly aligned with and directly related to the project activities.	15	—
8.	Participation in Project Activities / Trainings	15	—
	Total Scoring	100	

2. Evaluation Table for the Business Plan:

	Categories for Evaluation	Maximal Score	Average scoring
1.	The business plan provides all the necessary information to start/manage the business, its duration, and its future success.	15	—
2.	The business plan includes elements ensuring the financial sustainability of the business idea.	15	—
5.	The innovative aspect of the business plan.	15	—
6.	The alignment of the business plan with activities and budget/expenditures.	15	—

7.	Information on the entrepreneur/company (number of employees, capacity development, achieved results).	10	—
8.	Participation in project activities and trainings.	15	
8.	Pitching day	15	—
	Total Scoring	100	

10. Deadline and Submission Method

Interested applicants must submit their business plan and youth initiatives in electronic format (signed) to the following email address: info@codepartners.org, in accordance with the deadlines specified below.

11. ACTIVITY CALENDAR

The indicative timeline for the preparation, selection, contracting, and implementation of business plans is as follows:

Nr	Activity	Date	Responsible
1	Publication of the Call	07.05.2026	CODE Partners
2	Information day	14.05.2026	CODE Partners
6	Submission of Business Plans & Projects	25.05.2026	CODE Partners
7	Evaluation of Business Plans & Projects	29.05.2026	CODE Partners
8	Announcement of results	30.05.2026	CODE Partners
9	Contracting of Winners	31.05. 2026	CODE Partners
10	Purchase of Goods/Services for Winners	30.06.2026	CODE Partners

