Regional Youth Cooperation Office

Call for Project Proposals 2025

YPS Granting Scheme

Guidelines for Grant Applicants

Deadline for submission of project proposals: 10 May 2025.

Table of Contents

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 About RYCO

The Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) is an intergovernmental organization that stewards and promotes regional, cross-border, and intercultural cooperation within and among its   six Western Balkan Contracting Parties (WB6) – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* , Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. Its Local Branch Offices ensure RYCO is represented in all the six Contracting Parties, while its Head Office is the organizational hub.

1.2 RYCO's vision

Young people are creating a culture of mobility, intercultural exchange, and reconciliation. They actively contribute to democratic development, social and economic prosperity, and European integration in an increasingly open WB6. *Contracting Parties (CP)* in the WB6 are providing proactive support to youth exchange and youth engagement within the CPs and across the region.

Young people play a pivotal role in fostering reconciliation and building a culture of understandingand dialogue. They are active contributors to democratic development, social and economic prosperity, and European integration in an increasingly open Western Balkan region. CPs in the Western Balkans provide proactive support to youth exchange and youth engagement within the CPs, and across the region. RYCO believes that building true and enduringreconciliation involves a process that brings together individuals, groups, and societies burdened by past or present conflicts. It also aims to address negative representations and perceptions of "theothers" through shared experience, cooperation, and ongoing exchange, therefore, new pathways can be built to reconcile people who would otherwise remain trapped in the past.

This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

RYCOgnizing YPS: Meaningful Youth Participation in the Western Balkans

The Rycognizing YPS is a project implemented by the Regional Youth Cooperation Office and funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. The project aims to empower Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the   Western Balkans to advance youth-led initiatives directly aligned with the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda. Specifically, RYCO supports CSOs in scaling up efforts across the five pillars of YPS: *Participation, Protection, Prevention, Partnerships, and Disengagement and Reintegration*

It is recognized that the vision and mission of RYCO directly align with the UN Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda. Since 2015, young people's essential role in peace and security has been increasingly recognized and documented. This landmark resolution identifies five key pillars for action: participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, and disengagement and reintegration. Some of these pillars (participation, partnerships) are integral to RYCO's own guiding principles. Overall, the role of RYCO is to help contextualize the YPS in the Western Balkans 6. In this sense, RYCO acts as a bridge between international policy goals and local realities, ensuring that the global vision for youth participation in peace and security is fully realized in the Western Balkans 6 context.

According to the RYCO Strategy 2025-2027 the YPS Granting Scheme is set to make a direct and impactful contribution across main strategic priority:
  a. *fostering youth opportunities;*
  b. *supporting multipliers;*
  c. *advocating and raising awareness.*

This Call for Proposals aims to support youth-led, youth-responsive, and civil society-driven initiatives that create tangible, localized impact on peace and stability. The focus is on municipality-level interventions that contribute to improving the security of young people while also fostering engagement in governance and policy processes.

The grant will prioritize first three of the five YPS pillars, while still allowing applicants to test innovative approaches for the other two pillars. By prioritizing these areas, the grant seeks to empower young changemakers in the Western Balkans, ensuring they have the resources and opportunities to build a more peaceful, inclusive, and prosperous future for the region.

Main Focus Areas *(Mandatory for Applicants)*

    i.   *Participation* – Empowering young people to have a voice in shaping policies and decisions that affect their lives, ensuring they are active contributors to democratic processes.

    ii.   *Protection* – Strengthening mechanisms to safeguard youth from violence, discrimination, and human rights violations, fostering safer and more inclusive communities.

    iii. *Prevention* – Addressing key drivers of instability in the region, such as extremism, corruption, and socio-economic inequalities, by supporting youth-led initiatives that promote resilience and positive change.

Additional Areas (Optional but Encouraged)

    iv. **Partnerships** – Building stronger connections between young people, local and/or state institutions, and international organizations to create sustainable, long-term solutions for regional challenges.

    v.   **Disengagement & Reintegration** – Providing support for at-risk youth, former combatants, and other vulnerable groups, helping them reintegrate into society and contribute positively to their communities.

2. GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF THE CALL AND THEMATIC AREAS OF THE CALL

2.1 General Objective

The project focuses on providing *targeted support to youth-led and youth-responsive initiatives that advance peace and stability in the Western Balkans*. Specifically, it will empower selected youth actors, organizations, and multipliers that have the potential to make a local impact and contribute to the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda. Through a competitive call, CSOs and youth organizations that meet specific criteria for local impact will be identified and supported.

The project's core objective is to equip young leaders and organizations with essential tools for human rights advocacy and political participation, demonstrating how democratic engagement and human rights are integral to effective peacebuilding. By enhancing the competencies of youth in these areas, the initiative aims to strengthen their capacity to contribute meaningfully to peace and security efforts at the local level. This approach concretely supports increased youth participation and engagement in peace and security processes within the region.

RYCO believes that empowering young people to learn, grow, and express their voices benefits entire communities in the long run. This call aims to support actors committed to this vision, whether they are initiating new efforts or expanding existing work.

All funded projects must align with RYCO's core values: *accountability, inclusion, reconciliation, regional cooperation, and transparency*. All initiatives should foster dialogue, mutual understanding, and sustainable peace, while actively avoiding any actions that may deepen divisions.

2.2   Thematic Areas

This call is structured around the five pillars of the **Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda**, providing applicants with the flexibility to tailor their project proposals to the most pressing needs in their local communities. While each project should primarily focus on at least one pillar, applicants are encouraged to integrate elements from multiple pillars, preferably the first three, to ensure a more comprehensive and impactful approach to peace and stability at the local level.

To ensure meaningful and lasting change, projects should be rooted in the local context, actively involving municipalities, local government institutions, and public bodies. Concrete interventions and policy measures should be developed in partnership with these stakeholders, ensuring that efforts go beyond short-term initiatives and contribute to long-term systemic change. Each proposal should include clear mechanisms for youth participation, institutional engagement, and policy advocacy, ensuring that young people are actively involved in decision-making processes that shape their communities.

The Five YPS Pillars & Areas of Intervention

This initiative supports projects that align with the YPS agenda, focusing on strengthening youth participation, protecting their rights, preventing conflicts, fostering partnerships, and supporting reintegration efforts.

1. **Participation** – Young people must have a seat at the table in municipal governance, policy-making, and civic engagement. Projects under this pillar should aim to increase youth influence in decision-making processes and governance structures.
   o Youth-led consultations with municipal authorities to co-design local policies and action plans.
   o Establishing or strengthening local youth councils and advisory groups to institutionalize youth participation.
   o Training programs for young leaders on public policy, democratic engagement, and advocacy.

2. **Protection** – Ensuring that young people live in safe environments is crucial, particularly in fragile areas affected by violence, discrimination, or human rights violations. This pillar focuses on youth-centered safety measures and rights protection initiatives.
   o Community-based security initiatives where youth collaborate with law enforcement and local authorities.
   o Advocacy campaigns pushing for stronger policies that protect youth from violence, abuse, and exploitation.
   o Workshops on youth rights and legal protections, equipping young people with knowledge on how to safeguard themselves.

3. **Prevention** – Preventing conflict requires addressing the underlying causes, such as extremism, corruption, and discrimination. This pillar supports youth-led initiatives that actively counter these threats at the local level.
   o Conflict resolution & mediation training for youth to foster nonviolent approaches to disputes.
   o Anti-corruption youth forums & watchdog initiatives to promote transparency and accountability.
   o Community dialogues addressing interethnic, interreligious, and social tensions, strengthening mutual understanding.

4. **Partnerships** – Sustainable change requires collaboration between youth, municipalities, civil society, and international actors. This pillar supports cross-sectoral partnerships that enhance youth engagement in peace and security efforts.
   o Joint projects between youth organizations and municipal institutions to co-develop peacebuilding initiatives.
   o Networking events and forums that connect youth, CSOs, and government representatives for better cooperation.
   o Involvement of international partners and experts to bring global best practices to local peace efforts.

5. **Disengagement & Reintegration** – Many young people face challenges in reintegration due to past conflict involvement, marginalization, or social exclusion. This pillar promotes community-driven programs that support at-risk youth in rebuilding their lives.
   o Mental health and psychosocial support programs helping youth cope with trauma and reintegration challenges.
   o Vocational training and employment programs providing young people with skills and economic opportunities.
   o Social inclusion activities that foster reconciliation, such as intercultural exchanges and community-building programs.

Youth Mobility & Collaboration

To further strengthen **regional cooperation and exchange of best practices**, applicants should incorporate **youth mobility components** into their projects. If a proposal focuses on one or two specific YPS pillars, it should also include **a youth exchange activity** involving young participants from another CP. These exchanges will enable youth to learn from successful interventions in other municipalities and **apply shared knowledge** to their own communities. By prioritizing youth mobility, projects will not only address local issues but also contribute to a more interconnected and resilient Western Balkans region.

Expected Results & Institutional Partnerships

Each grantee will be required to:

- Organize a **minimum of 1 collaborative events or joint initiatives** with relevant stakeholders (CSOs, local authorities' international organizations or other relevant actors working on YPS agenda) .

- Develop at least **one policy recommendation** addressing youth participation in peace and security at the municipal level.

- Ensure that at least **30% of participants are women/girls**

- An added value will be the establishment of a structured collaboration with local municipalities or government agencies within 4 to 8 months through dialogue events, thematic sessions in municipal councils, or formal agreements such as a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance youth participation in peace and security efforts.

- Regional Component on having one jointly activity on the mobility event sharing best practices among different diverse group and different perspective on the proposed solutions and measures.

This call seeks to create **tangible local impact** by empowering youth to lead initiatives that **foster peace, stability, and security among young people** in the Western Balkans 6. By engaging young people, and civil society, these projects will **promote sustainable peacebuilding efforts that contribute to democratic resilience.**

Prerequisites Capabilities

a. Strong, established relationships and credibility with the relationships and credibility with the relevant local authorities institutions and front liners (ex, CSOs, municipalities and international organizations etc) and other stakeholders in YPS

b. Experience and capacity in financial management, including overseeing donor grant funding and ensuring compliance with relevant accounting practices.

Please, note that during the assessment and selection processes, RYCO reserves the right to categorize your project under a thematic area other than the one you stated in your application, should RYCO find it more closely related to your project design. This, however, will not impact RYCOs assessment in terms of decreasing the potential of your proposal for success in this call.

RYCO is committed to fostering inclusion and diversity through all of its work. When organizing youth activities, it is of utmost importance for RYCO to ensure that every person has equal opportunity as a prerequisite, regardless of their origin, age, race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, educational level, socioeconomic status, capabilities, etc.

3. PROGRAM

What is a YPS Project?

A YPS project is an initiative designed to empower young people as active contributors to peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and security efforts within their communities. Rooted in the framework of the YPS agenda, these projects focus on youth involvement across five key pillars, *Participation, Protection, Prevention, Partnerships, and Disengagement & Reintegration* ensuring youth play a meaningful role in shaping and sustaining peace.

Key Characteristics of a YPS Project:

1. **Youth-Centered Approach:**
   o Young people are at the center of the initiative, not just as beneficiaries, but as leaders, decision-makers, and implementers. This approach ensures that young people are empowered to take ownership of peacebuilding efforts within their own communities.
   o The project provides training and skill-building opportunities that enable youth to develop leadership, advocacy, conflict resolution, and other critical competencies. These skills prepare them to engage meaningfully in peace and security processes, both locally and regionally.

2. **Focus on Peace & Stability:**
   o The project directly addresses peace and security issues that affect youth, such as violence, discrimination, marginalization, and political exclusion. The project aims to create safer, more inclusive environments where young people can thrive.
   o It strengthens youth engagement in decision-making at different levels (municipal, local, and regional). This engagement helps young people become active participants in democratic governance, ensuring their voices are heard in shaping the policies that affect their lives.

3. **Engagement with Institutions & Local Communities:**
   o A critical aspect of YPS projects is collaboration with local governments, public institutions, CSOs, and other community stakeholders. This collaboration ensures that the project has a lasting impact and that its efforts are integrated into broader community development goals.
   o The project emphasizes interventions at the municipal level, engaging young people in efforts that improve community safety, social inclusion, and the well-being of local populations. By involving local authorities and institutions, YPS projects are more likely to achieve sustainable, long-term outcomes.

4. **Regional Components:**
   o Youth mobility and regional exchanges are encouraged to foster dialogue, reconciliation, and the sharing of best practices between different communities or CPs. These exchanges provide opportunities for youth to learn from each other's experiences, share best practices, and engage in dialogue and reconciliation efforts.
   o The project can include regional cooperation between youth groups in the Western Balkans to address common security and stability issues. This strengthens the collective capacity of youth to address shared issues like extremism, corruption, and interethnic tensions.

5. **Tangible & Measurable Impact:**
   o YPS projects are designed to produce tangible results. These must include policy recommendations for local governments, awareness campaigns on youth rights, youth-led peace initiatives, or dialogue sessions between youth and local authorities.
   o Each project is preferable and expected to develop partnerships with municipalities or institutions and contribute to sustainable change at the community level.

Examples of YPS Projects:

➤ **Youth Empowerment and Civic Engagement Initiatives:**
   o Training young people to actively participate in municipal decision-making, including creating youth councils or advisory groups that advise local governments on youth-related issues such as education, employment, and social inclusion. For example, a project might involve setting up a youth council in a municipality where young people can directly collaborate with local authorities to address some issues.

- o Organizing campaigns to educate young people about their rights and responsibilities as citizens, how to engage in local governance, and the importance of active participation. This might include school workshops, community meetings, or media campaigns promoting civic participation and democratic values among youth.

➢ **Community-Based Conflict Resolution Programs:**
- o Training young people in conflict resolution techniques and facilitating community dialogues to mediate local conflicts or address interethnic tensions. For instance, a YPS project could train youth leaders to act as mediators in disputes between different community groups, offering a safe space for open dialogue and mutual understanding.

➢ **Youth-Led Policy Advocacy:**
- o Supporting youth groups in drafting and submitting policy recommendations on issues such as youth violence prevention, education reform, or the protection of youth rights in peace processes. A project could involve organizing advocacy training workshops for youth leaders to develop and present proposals to local or national governments, promoting youth inclusion in security policies or peace negotiations.
- o Engaging youth in the creation of regional or local/national action plans that focus on addressing the root causes of conflict in their communities. Youth-led advocacy campaigns could focus on tackling issues like extremism, gender-based violence, or corruption through public demonstrations, online campaigns, or policy roundtables with decision-makers.

➢ **Social Inclusion & Reintegration Activities:**
- o Supporting youth who have been marginalized or affected by conflict (e.g., ex-combatants, displaced persons) through vocational training, mentorship, and educational support. A project might include providing career training programs for young people returning to civilian life or supporting mental health and psychosocial counseling to help them reintegrate into their communities.
- o Establishing youth-led forums or safe spaces where young people can openly discuss issues related to peace, security, and their role in society. A project could set up regular community dialogues where youth and local authorities come together to address challenges such as youth violence, unemployment, or exclusion from peacebuilding processes.

A YPS project is ultimately a youth-driven effort that enhances peace, security, and democratic participation, ensuring that young people have a voice, role, and impact in shaping their societies.

3.1 Incorporation of YPS methods

The **Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda** uses various methods to empower young people as active contributors to peace and stability. These methods focus on youth participation, protection, conflict prevention, partnerships, and reintegration. Below are some of these methods and examples of how two or more pillars can be combined, which can inspire innovative approaches to addressing peace and security challenges in local and regional contexts:

1. Participatory Dialogue and Mediation *(Combining Participation & Prevention Pillars)*
- Youth-Led Peace Dialogues;
- Community Mediation Initiatives;
- Inter-Ethnic and Inter-Religious Exchanges

2. Youth-Led Advocacy and Policy Influence *(Combining Participation & Partnerships Pillars)*
- Youth Councils and Advisory Bodies
- Policy Recommendation Papers
  Public Awareness Campaigns

3.Capacity-Building and Skills Development *(Combining Participation & Protection Pillars)*
- Conflict Resolution and Leadership Training;
- Civic Education and Human Rights Training;
- Youth-Led Research and Documentation

4. Community-Based Security and Protection Mechanisms *(Combining Protection & Prevention Pillars)*
- Early Warning and Response Networks
- Safe Spaces for At-Risk Youth
- Digital Security and Countering Hate Speech
- Mentorship and Coaching Programs

5. Digital and Innovation-Based Peacebuilding *(Cross-Cutting Across Pillars)*

- Online Peacebuilding Platforms
- Gamification and Interactive Learning
- AI and Data-Driven Peace Monitoring

3.2 Suggested type of activities

➢ **Youth-Led Policy Dialogues** – Organize platforms where young people can directly engage with local, and international decision-makers on issues related to governance, human rights, and peacebuilding. These dialogues can focus on developing youth-driven policy proposals and influencing decisions that affect their communities.

➢ **Conflict Mediation & Peer Support Networks** – Provide training programs for youth in conflict mediation, non-violent communication, and peer support. These initiatives help young people develop essential skills to manage local disputes, prevent violence, and foster mutual understanding, while building supportive networks within their communities.

➢ **Safe Spaces for Youth** – Establish community-based centers that offer a safe environment for young people to access mental health support, mentorship programs, rights awareness sessions, and conflict resolution workshops. These spaces serve as a foundation for youth empowerment, helping them navigate challenges and build resilience.

➢ **Media Literacy & Countering Disinformation** – Conduct workshops and campaigns to enhance youth awareness about the dangers of misinformation and propaganda. Equip young people with the skills to critically assess media, promote fact-based communication, and use digital platforms responsibly to combat hate speech and disinformation.

This list is not exhaustive, and applicants are invited to be creative and integrate innovative approaches. This call will also support new and innovative approaches to regional cooperation. RYCO welcomes new ideas and new types of activities, different from the ones typically funded by other donors in the region.

Particular attention will be paid to the innovation component on the local context and concrete measures and solutions in project design and approach, especially for the first 3 pillars, during the evaluation of submitted applications.

3.3 Inclusion of youth, diversity and stimulating active youth participation

At RYCO, youth are not just beneficiaries—they are **active agents of change**. Our mission in the Western Balkans is rooted in **empowering and including young people**, recognizing their potential to shape the future through innovative perspectives and meaningful participation. Rather than viewing youth as passive recipients, we aim to **amplify their voices and provide them with opportunities to lead and influence change**.

3.3.1 Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

Young people are not a homogeneous social group. The connecting factor is mainly age and age-related experiences. Socially, young people are a heterogeneous group defined by a number of other factors. The diversity of young people should be taken into account when creating a project proposal since meaningful participation requires the involvement of diverse groups of young people. Projects we support must be inclusive and responsive to the needs of marginalized and underprivileged youth, including:

- NEET youth (not in education, employment, or training)
- Youth with disabilities
- Ethnic minorities (Roma, Ashkali, Egyptians, etc.)
- Religious minorities
- LGBTQ+ youth
- Youth from rural/remote areas with limited access to services
- Youth facing economic or educational disadvantages
- Youth without parental care
- Young refugees, migrants, or those affected by conflict and violence

3.3.2 Creating Spaces for Meaningful Youth Participation

RYCO supports projects that go beyond engagement and *actively integrate youth in the design, implementation, and evaluation of activities*. We believe the most impactful solutions emerge when young individuals take ownership of initiatives that shape their communities.

By placing youth *at the center of all our efforts,* RYCO seeks to *ignite their enthusiasm, unlock their potential, and inspire lasting social change* across the region.

4. YPS GRANT SCHEME

4.1 The scope of Grant

As key expected results, each project must deliver:

➢ A **Policy Paper Document**, providing concrete policy recommendations based on project findings, engagement with local institutions, and youth participation in decision-making processes.

➢ **Local Partnerships will be considered an added value and inclusive reach of the local context**, where each grantee will establish at least **one formal partnership** with a local municipality or government agency within 6 months under the same Contracting Party.

➢ **Collaborative Events including youth exchange component,** where at least **2 joint initiatives or knowledge-sharing sessions** will take place across all funded projects during implementation with different local CSOs or international CSOs that works on YPS agenda to create synchronization for the proposed solutions or measures.

Social Inclusion & Diversity, with at least **30% of participants being women/girls**, to ensure **impactful local interventions** while balancing **regional representation**, the grant scheme will have **two funding LOTs:**

➢ RYCO foresees that approximately 6 projects will be awarded

➢ **At least 35 young people** should be involved during project implementation

4.2 Financial Allocation: LOT 1 & LOT 2

SIZE OF GRANTS

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must fall under two LOTs:

➢ **LOT 1: EUR 40 000**

➢ **LOT 2: EUR 60 000**

LOT 1: Local CSOs (Projects that will target one municipality within the same Contracting Party as the applicant s with a strong focus on the local impact). LOT I is dedicated for CSOs with a previous-year income up to € 60,000 .(95% covered by RYCO, 5% co-funded by applicants)

LOT 2: Established CSOs with municipal and inter municipal target and reach (multi stakeholder initiatives fostering wider impact and measures on YPS Pillars) . LOT 2 is dedicated for CSOs with a previous-year income above €60,000 , (85% covered by RYCO, 15% co-funded by applicants)

RYCO foresees that approximately at least 6 projects will be awarded within both lots
Depending on the quality of submitted project proposals, RYCO reserves the right to award less projects than envisaged by the specific LOTs or to reallocate the remaining funds to another LOT

4.3   ELIGIBILITY OF ACTORS: LOT 1 & LOT2

4.3.1   LOT 1

Lot 1 is dedicated for CSOs that they will implement at least one pillar on YPS agenda on the local context and at   least one partner on the municipality level interventions, public institutions or other relevant stakeholder. Financial Support for LOT 1 is up to **40 000 EURO.**

Applicants:
  - CSOs working with young people on the YPS AGENDA.
  - Proven Records of YPS projects.
  - At least 2 years registered prior to the publication of the call.
  - The Applicant (Lead Applicant) and partners involved must be established in the same Contracting Party.
  - CSOs with last year's income up to EUR 60,000.

Partners:
The focus of this LOT 1 is on local community engagement and the regional aspects. Potential partners can be;
  - Public Institutions;
  - Municipalities;
  - CSOs;

- ➢ Local Authorities;
- ➢ Youth Offices/Centers;
- ➢ Mayor's Office;
- ➢ OTHER.

Their engagement could provide and secure more effective and meaningfullocal community engagement throughout the implementation of the supported project.

4.3.2 LOT 2

LOT 2 is dedicated to civil society organizations working with youth/youth organizations working in the field of YPS up to **60 000 EURO** that will implement more than 1 pillar on the YPS agenda and wider focus on local level with involvement of partners from municipality level more than one.

Applicants:
- ➢ CSOs working with young people on the YPS AGENDA.
- ➢ Proven Records of YPS projects.
- ➢ At least 2 years registered prior to the publication of the call.
- ➢ The Applicant (Lead Applicant) and partners involved must be established in the same Contracting Party.
- ➢ CSOs with last year's income more than *EUR 60,000.*

Partners
- ➢ Municipalities
- ➢ CSOs
- ➢ Local Authorities,
- ➢ Youth Office,
- ➢ Mayor's Office,
- ➢ Other.

Checklist for Grant Applicant for LOT 1& LOT 2 *(Before applying, make sure you are ELIGIBLE on the application form on the platform)*

- ➢ *Exclusion criteria for LOT 1 & LOT 2:*

Potential applicants may not participate in RYCO's calls for proposals or be awarded grants if they are in any of the situations indicating that they are bankrupt, subject to insolvency or winding-up procedures; where their assets are being administered by a liquidator or by a court; where it is in an arrangement with creditors; where their activities are suspended; or where they are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for under national laws or regulations; they are in breach of its obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions, in accordance with the law of the Contracting Party in which they are established. CSOs that employ or are represented/overseen by members of the RYCO statutory bodies (i.e., Governing Board or Advisory Board) are not allowed to apply for this Call for Project Proposals. These applications will be subject to conflict-of-interest policy and rejected.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities of the Grant Applicants

The applicant will be in charge of:
- the application;
- signing the grant agreement on behalf of the other group member(s);
- receiving the grants;
- managing all envisaged project-related expenses;
- reporting on the project outcomes;
- all communication towards RYCO.

Grants to individuals will not be considered.

The Lead Applicant **must act with partner(s).**

If awarded a grant contract, the Lead Applicant will become a Beneficiary. It represents and acts on behalf of any other partners and coordinates the design and overall implementation of the project activities.

Role and Responsibility of Partners.

The **Lead Applicant** holds full accountability to the donor for the total allocated funds and the successful implementation of all project activities, including those carried out by its partners. For both **Lot 1 and Lot 2**, partners must either share the same legal status as the Lead Applicant (**CSOs/NGOs**) or be legally established as **public institutions/government agencies** contributing to project implementation. While the Lead Applicant is responsible for overall project execution and grant management, strong collaboration with public institutions at the local level will be **highly valued during the evaluation process**, ensuring impactful and sustainable interventions.

Collaborators for both lots (added value within the project implementation)

Role of Collaborators: Collaborators are those CSOs or international CSOs or other relevant institutions, universities etc contributing to the implementation of project activities, but who do not benefit from the transfer of a part of the project's funds disbursed through this Open Call for Proposals, meaning that they cannot be held responsible for the implementation of project activities. Collaborators will contribute to a wider impact on the local level for the measures and proposed solutions on achieving pillars of YPS Agenda with the Lead Applicant

The distinction between the partners and collaborators is the following:

a. Collaborators are not required to submit Declaration of Partnership;
b. Collaborators can contribute to the implementation of project activities, but they are not responsible for the actual execution of the project's activities;
c. Collaborators do not partake in the fund allocation stemming from this Open Call for Proposals;
d. Collaborators are welcomed to make contributions in terms of goods and services towardproject implementation.

If the engagement of collaborators is necessary, their involvement must be specified and their role should be clearly explained in the designated place within the project proposal.

6. NUMBER OF PROJECT PROPOSALSAND GRANTS PER APPLICANT

For both **LOT 1 and LOT 2**, each applicant may submit **only one (1) application** as a **Lead Applicant** under this Call for Proposals.

The number of applications and grants per Lead Applicant:
- ➢ A Lead Applicant may submit only one (1) application under this Call for Proposals.
- ➢ A Lead Applicant (in 1 application) may be a partner in only one (1) other application under this Call For Proposals.

Thus, at maximum, a single applicant can only appear in two applications, given it appears in one as a Lead Applicant and another as a partner.

In case a Lead Applicant or a partner appears in more applications than allowed, either as Lead Applicant or as a partner, all project proposals in which they participate will be automatically disqualified. RYCO values sustainable networks but will be particularly keen on supporting first-time applicants and/or new partnerships.

RYCO values sustainable networks but will be particularly keen on supporting first-time applicantsand/or new partnerships.

7. IMPACT

The expected impact of projects supported within both LOTs revolves around fostering positive change and meaningful youth participation in YPS Agenda across the Western Balkans region. These projects and initiatives should encompass direct needs ofthe local communities involved while having also a perspective of regional landscape.

Implementation of activities for both lots mandates the active inclusion of youth in their implementation. At least 35 young people should be involved in implementation of the project supported within this LOT (among them at least 30% women /girls).

Mobility opportunities for individuals RYCO Contracting Party are the key RYCO

methodology to embark on such experience and embrace regional dimension. Applicants will be required to explain how mobility will allow them to achieve the objective they chose above (to learn, to create,to connect, to explore), why it is important they include this aspect in their project proposal, and how mobility will help them reach the objectives stipulated in the project proposal.

Tips on how to secure regional dimension within project proposals for both LOTs:

While developing project proposal, have in mind the following:
 ➢ Current measures on the local context;

 ➢ topic connected with RYCO mission in the Western Balkans region;

 ➢ incorporating aspects of mobility of individuals within the Western Balkans region.

Duration of the awarded projects

LOT 1

The duration of the project must be a minimum of 4 months and a maximum of 8 months.

LOT 2

The duration of the project must be a minimum of 4 months and a maximum of 8 months.

7.1   Location(s)

All the project activities financed by RYCO must take place in the Western Balkans 6 ContractingParties (WB6): Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

7.2   Visibility

The results of the Open Call should be strongly promoted. Applicants should write a brief communication plan as part of the Application Form. If supported, the applicants will promote the

results of the projects, financial support of RYCO, while following and respecting RYCO Visibility and Communication Guidelines that will be provided.

Applicants will have the support of the RYCO Communication Team in that part. For the best quality of materials, grantees, and partners, when developing them, could contact theRYCO Communication team for inputs on design, photo selection, wording and terminology, layout, and use of logos of RYCO and German Federal Foreign Office. We recommend the grantees to send draft materials by email for comments and approvals to the RYCO Communication Team before publishing. RYCO keeps the right to use all the materials created within a supported project for its promotional purposes.

7.3   Safety and Protection

If supported, the applicants and partners will have to align their activities with the RYCO Safety and Protection Guidelines. RYCO strongly believes that with quality safety procedures and responsible organization of activities, risks can be mitigated and even neutralized. Likewise, it is very important to emphasize the core values of safety and protection for youth involved in any kind of process. Some young people could be more vulnerable to abuse and other forms of discrimination and marginalization based on any of their characteristics. RYCO stands firmly against such violations and empowers its employees, collaborators, and partners to prevent them, speak up against them, and when noticed, immediately report them to the respective authority.

8.   BUDGET AND FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

In case you have already received the financial support for this project from other sources of funding/donors, please note that you are not eligible for this RYCO OC, as it will be considered as double funding.

8.1 Eligible expenditures under this Open Call for proposals

Eligible Direct Costs

The following direct costs of the Grantee and/or Partner(s) shall be eligible:

i. Costs of staff assigned to the project, corresponding to actual gross salaries including social security charges and excluding performance-based bonuses. Salaries and costs shallnot exceed those normally borne by the Grantee and/or Partner(s). RYCO may request timesheets of the staff involved per each month when submitting the monthly and final report (slips, timesheets, basis for calculation of monthly or daily rates and working days);

ii. Travel and subsistence costs for staff and other people taking part in the project, whichare in line with the Grantee's/Partner's travel rules and regulations and in accordance withthe applicable legislation. In case of private car usage, the rates indicated in the instructionsfor budget of the project should be used;

iii. Rental costs for equipment (new or used) and supplies dedicated to the purpose of the project, if it is rented or written off in accordance with the applicable legislationand beneficiary's usual accounting practices;

iv. Costs of consumables;

v. Costs of service, supply and contracts awarded by the Grantee/Partner serving the purposes of the project;

vi. Costs deriving directly from RYCO's contractual requirements such as visibility and dissemination of information, monitoring and evaluation, translation, reproduction, insurance, etc.) including financial service costs;

vii. Duties, taxes and charges and VAT

viii. Bank fees.

Indirect Costs

Indirect project costs are those which may not be identified as specific costs related directly to project implementation but are related to the running costs of the Grantee/Partner.

A maximum of 7% of the direct eligible costs of the project can be claimed to cover all indirect overhead costs towards the Grantee/Partner's running costs such as stationery, photocopying, mailing, telephone, internet, fax, heating, electricity, use of office furniture, rent of office. This overhead contribution is a flat rate, meaning it does not need to be supported by proof of payment in the financial report. However, if this 7% overhead contribution is claimed, no such costs can beclaimed in addition to the flat rate.

8.2 Non-eligible expenditures under this Open Call for proposals

The following expenditures and/or activities are **ineligible** under this Open Call for Proposals: The following costs are not eligible for funding by RYCO:

   a. customs and import duties, or any other related charges;
   b. purchases of land, any means of transport, or buildings;
   c. fines, financial penalties, and expenses of litigation;
   d. contributions in kind;
   e. debts and debt service charges (interest);
   f. provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
   g. currency exchange losses;
   h. any leasing costs;
   i. depreciation costs;
   j. credit to third parties;
   k. performance-based bonus staff costs.

9. PROJECT DURATION

The timeframe of project implementation within LOT 1 and LOT 2 is **from 4 to 8 months,** which is calculated from the date of signing the agreement until the approval of the final project report.

10. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND LEARNING

OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS

Applicants will be invited to provide in the platform a brief description of the outcomes and outputsof the project. For more information, please refer to the LogFrame Matrix listed among supportive   documents for grant applicants - Annex III, LogFrame of Project Proposal.

11. PROJECT & SUPPORTINGDOCUMENTATION

PROJECT DOCUMENTATION.

All applicants shall submit through RYCO ONLINE PLATFORM the following documentation:

- ➤ Annex 1: Project Proposal
- ➤ Annex II: Project Budget
- ➤ Annex III; Log Frame
- ➤ Annex IV; Supporting documentation for CSOs
- ➤ Annex V: Theory of Change (general guide to facilitate applicants for submitting the project proposal)

11.1   Supporting documentation for CSOs

- ➤ **Copy of valid legal entity's registration form** (applicable for the Lead Applicant). The organizers of this Open Call for Proposals reserve the right to request the original documentation. Please note that the Lead Applicant and partner/s must be established at least 2 years and with tracking record on project implementation
- ➤ **Copy of the statute** (for Organizations) or other document confirming the mandate of the organization (applicable for the Lead Applicant).
- ➤ Complete, sign, stamp, scan and compile the **Declarations by the Applicant**, by using the templates provided by RYCO
- ➤ Complete, sign, stamp, scan and compile the **Declarations by the Partner(s),** by using the templates provided by RYCO
- ➤ Copy of the **balance sheet** and income statement for last two years certified by a chartered accountant or authorized person/institution, or equivalent. Certificate from the relevant
- ➤ **Bio of the current project.**
- ➤ **Verification from the tax authorities that the legal entity** (Lead Applicant) has paid all due taxes in accordance with the local legislation. This certificate should be issued in April 2025 or later within the deadline of the application

11.2 Supporting Documents Requested from Partner(s)

For each of the partners (applicable to all the types of partners as defined in the Guidelines for Applicants, section 2.2.2.), the applicant must submit the following documents on behalf of the partner(s):

- ✓ **Scanned Confirmation of Registration** (in PDF format) issued by a relevant public authority confirming that the partner is a legal entity established in one of the WB6,

minimum one year prior to the launch of the Call for Proposals.

- ✓ **Scanned Declaration by the Partner** (in PDF format). The Declaration is available for print below.

If the projects will be shortlisted will be invited to submit:

- ➢ Administrative Identification Form
- ➢ Financial Identification Form (Bank Account)
- ➢ Handwritten form submissions will not be accepted.

12.   HOW TO SUBMIT PROPOSAL

Where to submit a proposal?

- ➢ The Applicant will be required to register at the platform which you find in the official RYCO'swebsite.
- ➢ Upon registration, they will have access to the Application Form. They will have to fill out theApplication.
- ➢ Applicants are required also to upload the scanned Supporting Documents in PDF format.
- ➢ Applications sent by any other means (e.g., by fax or by mail), or delivered to other addresses, willbe rejected.
- ➢ Applicants must verify that their application is complete by using the checklist of the InformativeGrant Application Form. Incomplete applications will be rejected.

Deadline for Submission of Applications

The deadline for submission of applications is **10 MAY 2025.** The submission of your applicationswill not be possible after the deadline for this open call.

Further Information About Application Process

Information sessions on this Call for Project Proposals will be held in each of the RYCO contracting parties before the deadline for submissions of proposals. The date and the schedule of the information sessions will be published on the RYCO website www.rycowb.org

Questions to RYCO may be sent ONLY via email, no later than **5 days** before the deadline for the submission of applications, to the following e-mail address: YPS **grants@rycowb.org.**

RYCO will not be able to provide clarifications to questions received after the respective deadline. Questions should be specifically related to the clarifications of the Guidelines for the Grant Applicants and not individual project proposals. RYCO will not be able to respond to any phone or mail queries. During the evaluation procedure, all important notices for applicants will be posted on the RYCO website: *www.rycowb.org.* It is therefore recommended to visit the website regularly, to stay informed about the grant evaluation process.

13. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF THE PROPOSALS

The eligibility and administration check will be conducted by RYCO staff. The assessment is conducted by the established Selection Committee, who prior to the call will go through the application documents and criteria for selection in order to harmonize their assessment approaches. On the basis of the scores of the established Selection Committee's in each CP, the final decision-making responsibilities are given to the RYCO Secretariat. The projects will be funded upon final approval of the RYCO Secretary General and informing the Governing Board about the final results of the selected applicants.

Applications will be examined and evaluated by RYCO with the assistance of external assessors. All applications will be assessed in accordance with the steps and criteria described below.

If the examination of the application reveals that the proposed project does not meet the administrative and eligibility criteria, the application will be rejected on this sole basis.

Deadline for the submission of the project ideas is the **10th May 2025**

Evaluation process
- ➢ Evaluation of the project proposals will be conducted in three steps: Administrative and EligibilityCheck, Assessment and Selection process, Final Selection and Approval of List.
- ➢ Assessment of whether the application satisfies all the criteria specified in these guidelines and thechecklist outlined in the Informative Grant Application Form.
- ➢ The proposals that do not pass the administrative check will not be further assessed.

YPS Evaluation Grid	
1. Relevance to Peace and Reconciliation (Local Level Impact) This criterion evaluates how well the proposed project contributes to peace and stability within the applicant's local context.	20
2. Methodology & Alignment with YPS Pillars This section evaluates the overall strategy, intervention logic, and approach of the project, ensuring it aligns with the YPS pillars.	30
3. Feasibility & Sustainability This criterion measures the practicality of the project, ensuring that its goals can be realistically achieved and sustained over time.	15
4. **Youth Mobility & Exchange Component** A critical aspect of the YPS agenda is the exchange of knowledge, perspectives, and best practices across the region. **Strong proposals** will clearly define how youth mobility will be integrated, ensuring meaningful engagement and learning outcomes.	10
5. Experience & Capacity of the Applicant This section evaluates the ability of the applicant to successfully implement and manage the project.	10
6. Cost-Effectiveness Ensuring efficient use of resources is crucial.	10

7. Inclusion & Diversity This criterion measures how well the project fosters inclusivity and equal representation of youth, especially from marginalized groups.	5
TOTAL	**100**

Step 1: Opening and Administrative and Eligibility Check

Assessment of whether the (Lead) Applicant and partners satisfy the eligibility criteria from the Guidelines for Applicants.

The proposals that do not pass the preliminary eligibility check will not be further assessed.

The applicants who didn't provide supportive documents as set out in the list of documents (Annex1) will not be considered for further evaluation phases.

Please note: Applications should be following all the mentioned criteria and all supportive documents should be uploaded into the system and will be informed by official email for this step.

Step 2: Assessment and Selection Process

All eligible applications are assessed by independent experts along the criteria outlined in the grids below.

13.1 Selection Criteria: LOT 1 & LOT 2 (grants for CSOs)

Criteria's set on the evaluation grid provide complementary perspectives, giving a holistic picture of the intervention, its implementation and results. Together they describe the desired attributes of all development interventions (policies, projects): they should be relevant to the local context, coherent with other interventions, achieve results in an efficient way and have positive, lasting impacts for sustainable development on implementing YPS Pillars.

The assessment results lead to the establishment of a shortlist (top-scored projects *per* Contracting Party).

Step 3: Final Assessment

As a final step of the assessment process, RYCO's Selection Committee reviews the shortlist in light of the strategic criteria outlined below.

13.2 Strategic Evaluation Criteria Aligned with YPS Pillars

The **RYCO Selection Committee** evaluates project proposals based on their potential to create meaningful and lasting change in alignment with the **Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda**, particularly focusing on the first three pillars: **Participation, Protection, and Prevention and combination of two other pillars.**

Priority consideration is given to projects that will create impact and concrete measures on implementing YPS Agenda on the local context including engagement of public institutions policies, or local governance frameworks that support youth engagement on peace and security.

13.3 Strategic Relevance of the Project for RYCO's Portfolio

The Selection Committee ensures that the projects selected align with RYCO's **strategic goals and thematic priorities**, creating a balanced mix of actors, themes, and approaches. Factors considered include

Strategic criteria of RYCO's Selection Committee	
Likelihood of positive impact and multiplier effects *The Selection Committee appraises whether the project is likely to make a lasting positive impact for the target groups and looks at the project's prospects for multiplier effects.*	25
Strategic relevance of the project for RYCO's portfolio *The Selection Committee ensures that the preliminary list consists of a compelling mix of different actors, themes and approaches that contribute to RYCO's key strategic goals and alignment with YPS Pillars.*	25
TOTAL	**50**

14. SUBMISSION OF THE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit the other supporting documents as listed in the"List of supporting documents". **The deadline for submission of the documents will be 5 working days from the day of notification.** The applicants who fail to submit the documents as requested will not be considered for funding by RYCO.

If at any point in the selection process, RYCO notices that the applicant does not fulfill the eligibility criteria as set by this CfP, the application will be rejected.

15. NOTICE OF RYCO'S DECISION

After the submission of relevant documents, RYCO will notify all applicants of the final results in writing, as well as of the next steps to be undertaken, including the signing of the contractual document and specificities of the financial transfer to an indicated bank account.

The final list of approved proposals will be published on RYCO's website once the selected applicants have been contracted

16. INDICATIVE TIMELINE

Activity	Date	Time
Launching of the Call for Project Proposals	**10 APR 2025**	14:00
Online Info sessions	14 APR-25 APR 2025	TBC
Deadline for requesting any clarifications from RYCO	25 APR 2025	17:00
Deadline for submission of the applications	**10 MAY 2025**	**23:59**
Step 1: Administrative and Eligibility Check	12 MAY – 16 MAY	17:00

Step 2: Assessment and SelectionProcess	23 MAY – 20 JUNE	17:00
Budget Clearance & Contracting	22 JUNE-30 JUNE	17:00
Step 3: Publishing Final List on RYCO website	30 JUNE	17:00

Important: All applicants will be informed regarding the status of their application in STEP **In case they have any questions they should be addressed to the Contracting Authority not** **t**he Contracting Authority/RYCO reserves the right to update the **Indicative Timeline** in case the decision making process takes longer than initially envisaged.

Applicants who have not successfully passed Step 1, **can lodge a complaint** no later than 5 days from the date when the written notification announcing the result of an evaluation Step 1 is sent by the Selection Committee.

A Complaints Committee will check if the complaint is substantiated with relevant arguments in light of the provisions of the Guidelines for Grant Applicants and relevant domestic legislation.

The complaints will be answered within 5 (five) days from their receipt.In order to be considered, a complaint must:

➢ be submitted by the Lead Applicant and not by partners or collaborators;

➢ be submitted in written to the following email address: grants@rycowb.org no later than 5 days from the date when the written notification announcing the result of an evaluation Step 1 is sent by the Selection Committee;

➢ be written in English;

➢ be addressed to the Complaints Committee;

➢ be signed and stamped *(if applicable)* by the legal representative of the Lead Applicant;

➢ clearly outline the nature of alleged infringement considered as being made by the Selection Committee and make clear references to the corresponding provisions of the Guidelines for Applicants with pertinent reasoning.

The complaint that does not follow the above-mentioned criteria will not be taken into consideration. The reply to the complaint represents the final decision regarding the application in question.

The Contracting Authority/RYCO reserves the right to update the Indicative Timeline in case the decision-making process takes longer than initially envisaged. All information will be available at the RYCO website: www.rycowb.org or contact us at **grants@rycowb.org**

17. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Following the decision to award a grant, the grantee will be offered a contract. By submitting the full Application Form, the Lead Applicant agrees, if awarded the grant, to accept the contractual conditions of the grant contract Prior to the signing of the contract, the applicant must submit two additional documents requested by RYCO in due time – Financial Identification Form and the Legal Entity Form *(if applicable)*.

17.1 Reporting

During the project implementation, the grantee (Lead Applicant) is expected to regularly report on the project progress to RYCO as laid down in the contract. For means of monitoring and coaching.

The grantee will be required to submit a final narrative and financial report, no later than 15 days after the official project completion, using RYCO templates annexed to the grant contract.

17.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular reporting will be mandatory and a crucial part of the project monitoring and evaluation. Grantees should perform their internal monitoring and evaluation process as described in their Application Form.

The grantee will also take part in RYCO's monitoring and evaluation processes as defined in the contract. The grantee will provide all available documentation regarding the project implementation to RYCO upon request. RYCO will also assess the follow-up and dissemination of the project results.

The grantee will also document all visibility activities (e.g. newspaper articles, TV appearances, campaigns, etc.) and be obliged to send information about visibility activities implemented throughout the project implementation to RYCO on a regular basis, including any communicationproducts produced in the project: leaflets, posters, publications, photos, testimonials, etc.

The grantee might also be asked to be part of research projects that RYCO is implementing with its partners. Grantees must use evaluation forms (for both participants and organizers) for their activities. Thoseforms will be provided by RYCO.

Participation in the activities organized within a project shall be recorded through participants andstaff lists. These lists need to have the following info: name and surname of the participant, address/CP, email address, and signature (if it is a physical meeting) including the date, name, andvenue of the activity, consent for pictures and videos, etc. Grantees will need to insert logos and adisclaimer in both participant and staff lists stating that participants allow and agree that these datacan be used by the donor of the activity and RYCO.

18. LIST OF DOCUMENTS

All the documents listed below are available on the RYCO website.

18.1 Documents for Application Stage

➢ Informative Grant Application Form

➢ Guidelines for Grant Applicants

➢ List of Supporting Documents (only **PDF** format) refer to Annexes

18.2 Documents for Later Stages

➢ Financial Identification Form

➢ Legal Entity