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**Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC**

CULTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT

CALL FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT GRANTS

**PROJECT SUBMISSION DEADLINE:
17 October 2025**

**PUBLICATION DATE OF THE CALL:
16 September 2025**

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This activity is supported by the Culture of Development project of the Government of Switzerland and is implemented by Heartefact Fund



Donor: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Implementation Partner: Heartefact Fund (HF)

Project: Culture for Development project, Republic of North Macedonia

Grant Scheme: Institutional Grant Scheme

Call Reference Number: INSG 2025-2

Maximum Amount per Project: up to **3,820,000 MKD**, disbursed over a maximum project duration of 2 years and 7 months.

Disbursement will consist of two annual installments of approximately **1,401,000 MKD** each, followed by a final installment of **1,018,000 MKD**

Program Duration: 1 January 2026 – 31 July 2028 (up to two years and seven months)

Call Scope: Support will be provided to a maximum of **five (5) different cultural and artistic organizations**.

Mentorship program: Each supported organization will receive mentorship support tailored to strengthen institutional and organizational growth.

Submission of Program Proposals: grantsnorthmacedonia@heartefact.org

Further information, details and application support: www.heartefact.org or

culturefordevelopment@heartefact.org

Program application deadline: 17 October 2025, by 5:00 PM

Objective of the Call:

The Culture for Development Institutional Grant Scheme aims to empower well-established cultural and artistic organizations by providing financial resources and infrastructural support to enhance their organizational capacities and ensure financial sustainability.

Expected Outcome of the Call:

Well-established cultural and artistic organizations will achieve greater institutional resilience, strategic stability, and financial sustainability. By enhancing their organizational and financial capacities, they will develop stronger programs, improve efficiency, and increase visibility and better positioning within the cultural sector. This will foster a more vibrant, diverse, and sustainable cultural landscape, promoting democratic values, social cohesion, and addressing key social and political challenges.

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. CULTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Culture for Development project is comprehensive, long-term intervention in the field of culture and arts in the Republic of North Macedonia. It is initiated and supported by the Swiss Agency for the Development and Cooperation (SDC) and will be implemented from the end of 2024 to the end of 2028.

As a key component of the Swiss Cooperation Programme in the Republic of North Macedonia for 2025–2028, the project contributes to Outcome 1: enhanced transparency, participation, accountability, responsiveness, and efficiency of public institutions and civil society, which improves the quality and accessibility of services and strengthens resilience to corruption. Additionally, the project supports Outcome 1.2 empowering civil society organizations and political parties to represent the interests of all citizens, especially youth, and engage in constructive dialogue that influences policy making and ensures the effective implementation of public policies and strategies. Within this framework, the project recognizes cultural rights, including access to art and culture, as fundamental human rights and powerful enablers of inclusive societal development, civic participation, and democratic engagement.

As the first comprehensive and long-term support instrument in the field of arts and culture in the Republic of North Macedonia, the Culture for Development project seeks to build upon existing cultural resources, enhance local knowledge, and unlock creative potential, particularly within the independent cultural scene. The project aims to contribute to the growth of the arts and the shaping of socio-political norms, recognizing culture as a vital tool for fostering a more open, democratic, and interconnected society. It also plays a crucial role in social cohesion and inclusive development, acknowledging the transformative power of culture in promoting democratic processes, encouraging social dialogue, and advancing societal change.

The overall objective of the Culture for Development project is to ensure that the independent, diverse and inclusive culture sector shapes and safeguards democratic values, promotes inclusive societal changes and strengthens social cohesion.

Objective 1: Cultural and artistic organizations are well-resourced, capacitated, strategically stable and financially secure.

Objective 2: The independent cultural scene has more favourable conditions to operate.

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Objective 3: Citizens, including vulnerable groups make use of the independent cultural scene to voice their concerns on socially relevant topics.

The project's purpose is to support an independent, diverse and inclusive cultural sector and its role in shaping and safeguarding democratic values, inclusive societal changes, and fostering social cohesion through arts and culture.

The project adopts a bottom-up approach, prioritizing and emphasizing inclusivity, local needs and socially engaged arts that foster human rights, cultural diversity and civil involvement, while offering citizens opportunities to actively engage with cultural content. Through these efforts, the project empowers citizens, particularly from marginalized groups, to participate actively in the independent cultural scene, using it as a platform to express their concerns and stimulate social dialogue.

The project also strives to reduce inequalities by promoting inclusive participation in cultural activities, particularly for communities that have historically been marginalized. It creates opportunities for citizens from diverse backgrounds, including women and youth, to engage with and influence cultural production, ensuring that all voices have a platform in public discourse. This approach helps create an environment where societal changes are not only discussed but also shaped by the active participation of all groups, particularly those whose voices are often overlooked.

Under the Specific Objective 1 within Culture for Development project, this Call focuses on initiation of a significant internal development process within North Macedonia's independent cultural scene by addressing the fundamental challenges that many cultural organizations face. This outcome focuses on building the capacities of cultural and artistic organizations, enabling them to become more resilient, strategic, and financially sustainable.

B. CULTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT - INSTITUTIONAL GRANTS SCHEME

The Culture for Development project has launched the Institutional Grants Scheme to support well-established cultural organizations in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The objective of this call is to strengthen the organizational and financial capacities of these organizations by providing financial resources, infrastructural support and capacity building activities. This intervention seeks to enhance organizational stability, ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience within the cultural sector.

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The Culture for Development **Institutional Grants Scheme** is designed for **well-established cultural organizations** that have been active for more than three (3) years and have demonstrated a lasting impact on significant social, political, and policy issues using distinct cultural strategies and methods.

Eligible organizations are those who contribute to high-quality cultural content in fields such as critical theory, feminism, visual arts, performance, and social activism, with the impact extending beyond local communities influencing national socio-political narratives and supporting cultural and democratic development in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The support is based on the organizations' annual reports and plans and strategic priorities, ensuring alignment with their areas of expertise and long-term goals.

The Institutional Grants Scheme will cover essential operational and infrastructural costs necessary for the daily functioning and growth of independent cultural organizations. The financial support will enable organizations to plan and implement their programs effectively, ensuring that they have the resources needed to maintain and expand their operations.

The Institutional Grants Scheme includes a **mandatory Mentorship program** provided by Helvetas, a subcontracted partner with extensive experience in organizational development. This mentorship is an integral part of the grant and is designed to support the long-term institutional and organizational development of each selected organization. The mentorship will be tailored to the specific needs and priorities of each grant recipient, focusing on strengthening governance, developing long-term strategies, and improving overall resource management. Areas of support may include organizational structure, partnership building, financial management, and strategic development.

The Culture for Development Project integrates environmental sustainability, social inclusion, diversity, and decentralization into all aspects of its activities and management. Emphasis is placed on fostering inclusive practices that support youth, women, and other marginalized groups, while gender equality remains an important driver of creativity and innovation.



II. GENERAL CRITERIA FOR SUBMISSION OF A PROGRAM PROPOSAL

A. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Who **CAN** apply:

- Cultural and artistic organizations registered in the Republic of North Macedonia with a proven track record in cultural and artistic fields in the period of three years.

Hereinafter: applicant(s)

Requirements:

- The applicant must be registered as a legal entity with the Central Registry of the Republic of North Macedonia.
- The organization must be registered under the Law on Associations and Foundations.
- The applicants must have prior 3-year long operational work and experience in the realization of cultural and artistic projects.

Who **CAN NOT** apply:

- The applicant and/or individuals who in any way support or have supported discriminatory, radical, violent, racist, or nationalist behaviors and views.
- The applicant who is not registered in accordance with the laws of the Republic of North Macedonia.
- The applicant who has not settled their legal obligations regarding public contributions, taxes, and fees
- Political, religious organizations and organizations founded by religious and faith-based organizations.
- Individuals.
- Cultural institutions founded by the Republic of North Macedonia or local self-government units.
- Representative offices of foreign organizations registered in the Republic of North Macedonia.

B. ACTIVITIES THAT CAN BE SUPPORTED

The Institutional Grant Scheme supports independent cultural and artistic organizations in the Republic of North Macedonia by covering operational and infrastructural costs that are vital for their ongoing

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activities and program work. The support helps address gaps in the current cultural funding landscape, where many organizations struggle to cover essential operational expenses.

The call seeks to ensure stability and sustainability of the cultural organizations and enable them to effectively address critical sociopolitical and cultural issues. Additionally, through the mentorship program, support aims at enhancing organizational growth and long-term sustainability focusing on areas such as strategic development, internal capacities and financial management.

The call seeks to support activities that include, but are not limited to:

- Improving organizational and financial management (organizational development, development or revision of strategic policies and procedures).
- Improvement of organizational strategy and program (program growth, new initiatives/themes).
- Innovative approaches in audience development and outreach.
- Advocacy and initiatives related to improvement of cultural policies and funding.
- Capacity building activities and initiatives that contribute to the strengthening of the program work.
- Other activities that directly help organizations to carry out their core organizations work and influence national socio-political narratives.

Important note: the Call will not support and fund organizations that have already been supported through other funding schemes of the Culture for Development Project.

Applications that promote or support discriminatory, radical, violent, racist, or nationalist behaviors and attitudes will be automatically disqualified from the selection process for the allocation of financial resources.

C. FINANCIAL GUIDELINES AND ELIGIBLE COSTS

The total grant amount per organization is up to 3,820,000 MKD which will be disbursed over a period of two years and seven months, in two annual installments around **1,401,000 MKD** each and final installment of **1,018,000 MKD**.

1. First installment upon signing of the Grant contract.
2. Second installment upon submission of the annual narrative and financial report and achievement of agreed milestones.

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3. Third installment upon submission of the annual narrative and financial report and achievement of agreed milestones.
(Financial resources may only be used during the approved program implementation period.)
4. Fourth and final installment (up to 10% of the total grant amount) upon approval of the final narrative and financial reports

Applicants must demonstrate readiness to provide a minimum contribution of at least 20% of the total project budget, which may include financial resources, in-kind support, co-funding from other donors, or funds raised independently by the organization. This contribution must be applied in each year of project implementation. Culture for Development support may not exceed 50% of the organization's total budget over an annual level.

If needed, the applicant may engage external collaborators, either individuals or legal entities, to carry out tasks outlined in the program proposal.

Supported applicants must be exempt from VAT. Therefore, the budget proposal should list all supplier costs in net amounts excluding VAT, while costs related to work contracts, service agreements, and author contracts must be presented in gross amounts (including mandatory taxes and contributions). Before incurring any project-related expenses, the project must be registered with the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and VAT-exempt status must be granted. Please note that obtaining a VAT exemption certificate takes 1-3 months. Please plan the timeline accordingly.

All supported applicants may be subject to an independent financial audit conducted by the donor, SDC, or the Culture for Development project.

Eligible Costs

Eligible costs are those directly related to the implementation of the program proposal. Allowed costs include all expenses on organizational level including staff costs, office costs and programmatic costs.

The eligible costs must be:

- Necessary for the implementation and achievement of the organizations' strategic goals and impact they want to achieve.
- Reasonable and justified, and in line with sound financial management principles.
- Must comply with tax legislation in the Republic of North Macedonia.
- Incurred during the implementation of the program.
- Included in the approved budget.

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The **Culture for Development** grant **does not impose specific spending limitations** on how awarded funds should be allocated on an annual level. However, all supported organizations are required to **demonstrate in their annual narrative reports** how the funds were utilized to advance their **strategic goals and objectives both in organizational and programmatic terms**, ensuring alignment with both the **Culture for Development** objectives and the specific goals of this call.

Eligible costs for institutional support include all organizational costs on an annual level, covering:

- Office costs such as rent, utilities, communication expenses, accounting fees, and bank charges.
- Staff costs, including salaries, taxes, benefits, fees, and honoraria, are also eligible.
- Costs related to the strengthening and development of the organization and its programs, such as strategic planning, capacity building, evaluation, or improvement of internal systems, are also eligible.
- Programmatic costs exceptionally can include fees and/or compensation for artists and experts engaged in the program.
- Audit costs.
- Costs for purchasing materials and products.
- Costs for renting spaces and equipment required for program activities.
- Catering costs (avoid single-use plastics).
- Printing costs, but minimal use is encouraged.
- PR and marketing expenses (use of digital tools is encouraged).
- Service costs (audio and video production, graphic design, and translation services).
- Local travel expenses (transportation - low-emission transport is recommended (public transport, bicycle, shared transportation), accommodation, and meals for individuals engaged in the program.
- Other necessary costs directly related to program implementation (reduce energy use).

Note: All programmatic costs must be in line with the organization's overall development strategies and strategic goals.

Ineligible Costs:

- Costs that are not necessary for the implementation of the program proposal.
- Costs incurred before or after the program's time frame.
- Grants to other organizations.
- Purchase, reconstruction, and/or adaptation of real estate.
- Fines, loans and borrowings from third parties.
- Leasing costs.
- VAT.

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III. APPLICATION PROCESS AND PROGRAM PROPOSAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE

All required documents must be submitted via grantsnorthmacedonia@heartefact.org no later than 17 October 2025 at 5:00 PM

Email subject: Name of the organization – Call Name - Call Reference Number

Required application documents:

1. Proposal (stamped and signed);
2. Budget proposal for 2026, 2027 and 2028.
3. Organizational Self-assessment questionnaire.
4. Organizational budget: a) breakdown of organization actual income and expenditures for two previous years, b) breakdown of organization's expected income/expenditure and organizational budget for 2026 of institutional support c) breakdown of organization's expected income and expenditure for 2027, and 2028 of institutional support.
5. Current Status (Tekovna Sostojba) not older than 6 months.
6. Statute.
7. Organizational Chart.
8. Organizational Strategy (if applicable).
9. Annual Narrative Reports for the last 2 years.

Application documents are available only in English and can be downloaded HERE ([Link](#))

Shortlisted applicants may be subject to verification during on-site visits by HF, where they will need to present supporting documents about their internal control mechanisms, management and governance structures, decision making process and financial management practices. After the initial assessment and approval of grant, HF and Helvetas will collaborate closely with selected organizations to develop Mentoring programs tailored to address specific development needs and organizational capacities.

**Please note:* documents should be submitted in ZIP file format.

IV. PROGRAM PROPOSAL SELECTION PROCESS

The grant selection process for the implementation of cultural and artistic programs is carried out **in three phases:**

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Once an application is received, it will be assigned a unique reference number. This number will then be communicated to the applicant along with a confirmation email.

- 1) **Pre-selection:** In the first phase, the internal HF committee evaluates and verifies the submitted program proposals. This phase typically lasts up to 10 days from the deadline for submission.
- 2) **Selection:** The second phase begins with the selection of a shortlist of program proposals to be recommended for funding by an independent program selection committee (composed of individuals with extensive experience and expertise in the fields of culture and the arts) which conducts the final assessment. If additional information is needed, a visit or interview with the applicant may be conducted. The second phase typically lasts up to 10-15 days.
- 3) **Final Approval:** In the third phase, the Culture for Development project team will submit the final list of program proposals to the donor, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and the Board of the Heartefact Fund for approval. SDC and the HF Board will then confirm and verify the decision regarding the programs to be awarded grants. This phase lasts up to 10 days.

Only applicants whose program proposals reach the second phase of the selection process will be notified of the results.

Applicants whose programs are approved for funding will be informed by email first, and the list of supported programs will then be published on the HF website.

Criteria for Evaluating Program Proposals

No.	Criteria	Description	Maximum points
1	Relevance of the proposed program	The relevance of the proposed program in relation to the objective and expected results of the Culture for Development project and this Call.	5
2	Organizational Capacity	The existing organizational capacities and previous experience, including its internal structure, governance and development level.	6
3	Coherence and the quality of the organizational objectives and proposed three-year organizational plans and programs.	Coherence: - Clear alignment between objectives, activities, and organization's long-term sustainability	8

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		- Clear connection of objectives and goals of the proposal with the vision and overall development direction of the organization - Organization's resources, structure and experience to successfully implement the proposed activities. Quality: - Organization's internal structure and ability to manage and implement the program efficiently. - Quality of proposed activities and programs strengthening the organization's operational, financial, and strategic sustainability.	
4	Strategy for communication and audience development	Relevance to the defined needs of the target groups. Quality of the Audience development strategy, with a particular focus on the utilization of various communication tools, reaching and engaging different types of audiences, and potential partnerships within the sector. Potential to reach larger and more diverse audience, especially young people and audiences in rural communities.	5
5	Budget	Financial feasibility of the program: - Relevance of the costs for the proposed programs; - Diversified organizational income	4
5	Transversal Themes of Priorities of the Culture for Development project	Quality of addressing the transversal themes priorities of the Culture for Development project. Adequacy of strategies for ensuring gender equality, inclusion, diversity, and representativeness either within the activities supported by the program or through the organization's management approach.	2
		Minimum number of points: 85%	Total 30

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Possibility of Reevaluation of the Program Proposal

If the applicant believes that a significant error or irregularity has occurred during the selection process, they may submit a **reasoned** request to the Heartefact Fund for a review of the evaluation within 5 days of receiving the notification, to the following address: grantsnorthmacedonia@heartefact.org

Conditions for considering the request:

1. Requests must be related to the evaluation process, eligibility check, or suitability. In this regard, the applicant's request should present the necessary elements that demonstrate a factual error or an obvious mistake in the assessment (such as a lack of coherence between the scores and comments), procedural irregularities (such as missing or inadequate justification of conclusions or the existence of a conflict of interest). Simply repeating the content of the program proposal, or disagreement with the result and/or justification of the evaluation, will not be considered.
2. The request will not automatically trigger a partial or full reevaluation of the program proposal. A reevaluation will only be conducted if the request provides evidence that the selection process was compromised due to procedural irregularities and/or factual errors, or an obvious mistake in the assessment that impacts the final decision on funding the proposal.
3. The request must be substantiated in a maximum of 2000 characters (1 page) and should include the applicant's contact information as well as the program proposal title.

V. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING

The Culture for Development project team is responsible for supporting the implementation of grants approved for funding, as well as for their evaluation and monitoring.

Applicants whose programs are approved for funding are required to participate in the Program Implementation Training organized by HF immediately after signing the Grant agreement. Failure to attend the training without a valid reason may result in the termination of the Grant agreement.

Applicants whose programs are approved for funding must adhere to the guidelines and rules for program implementation and management, which will be provided to them as part of the Grant contractual documentation.

Supported applicants will be required to submit periodic financial and narrative reports. Narrative and financial reports must be accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation (photos, participant

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lists, and other verification sources, as well as relevant financial documentation, in accordance with detailed instructions that will be provided later as part of the Grant contractual documentation).

VI. TIMELINE FOR THE CALL IMPLEMENTATION

Activity	Timeline
Call for applications published	16 September 2025
Consultations and assistance with project application preparation	Ongoing during the open call period, FAQ
Deadline for submitting questions	29 September 2025
Publishing the FAQ	3 October 2025
Deadline for project proposal submission	17 October 2025
Evaluation of received proposals	up to 20 - 30 days
Notification and contract signing	December 2025
Project implementation training	during the Grant Contract preparation and signature process
Earliest start of implementation for supported projects	January 2026

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