

The Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations

Call for Letters of Interest - Third Programming Round

This Call for Letters of Interest (LOI) should be read in conjunction with the Fund's [Terms of Reference](#) and the Fund's [Operations Manual](#). Where the documents differ, particularly in the case of this third programming round, this Call for Letters of Interest will take precedence.

The EIF can only accept one military LOI and one police LOI per country. Each LOI can seek funding for one or more projects.

The EIF can only accept fully completed LOI templates and annexes.

Background

Established by the United Nations, Canada, and Member States in 2019 and hosted by UN Women, the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations (EIF) is an innovative, [multi-donor United Nations trust fund](#) that seeks to accelerate progress toward achieving the United Nations gender targets in line with Security Council resolutions (SCRs), the United Nations (UN) [Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028](#) (UGPS).

By providing funding support and incentives to Troop and/or Police Contributing Countries (T/PCCs) to identify and overcome barriers to deployment, the Fund's activities also directly supports the Department of Peace Operations' (DPO) [Action For Peacekeeping](#) (A4P) and [A4P+](#) initiatives – and to encourage Member States to concretely increase the deployment of women in peacekeeping and advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

The EIF is one component of the Canadian Government's broader [Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations](#) launched in 2017. The Elsie Initiative is a 10-year, multilateral project which includes several other components, including the creation of a publicly accessible and comprehensive barrier assessment methodology - [Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations](#) (MOWIP), developed by the [Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance](#) (DCAF) and Cornell University [Gender and Security Sector Lab](#), and work with the United Nations to create more receptive environments in the context of United Nations missions, through the United Nations Department of Operations Support (DOS) [Elsie Initiative for Field Missions](#) project.

Introduction

This is the EIF's third programming round. Interested **T/PCCs**—current and prospective, and United Nations **organizations**¹ are invited to apply to the EIF for funding, using the EIF's LOI template and the EIF LOI Explainer on how to complete the LOI, available on the EIF website: <https://elsiefund.org/third-programming-round/>.

EIF Objectives

1. To support current and prospective T/PCCs in (i) undertaking a barrier assessment to identify the nature and extent of obstacles impeding their deployment of trained and qualified women peacekeepers within a particular national context, and (ii) to support T/PCC projects seeking to remedy specific identified obstacles.

¹ Other stakeholders, such as CSOs, cannot apply to the fund independently. CSOs can participate in funded activities, however, their activities must be undertaken in partnership with, and under a proposal from, a T/PCC or PUNO.

2. To allow T/PCCs to be reimbursed for some additional financial costs related to the deployment of women that are not covered by existing United Nations' reimbursement policies.
3. To incentivize T/PCCs to increase their meaningful deployment of trained and qualified women peacekeepers by offering a 'gender-strong unit (GSU) premium'. The focus on the deployment of GSUs, rather than individual women, is to ensure that women are deployed in a working and living environment that allows for their full meaningful participation in peace operations.
4. To support, in a limited manner, targeted pilot projects within United Nations missions aimed at enhancing deployment and living conditions for women peacekeepers.
5. To monitor and evaluate the contribution(s) of the above measures to advancing uniformed women's meaningful participation, and to share as possible, relevant insights.

This Fund recognizes that although the United Nations has an evolving financing system that is critical to the organization's ability to conduct peace operations, none of the existing measures focus specifically on increasing the deployment of uniformed women peacekeepers. Therefore, the EIF innovates and complements existing United Nations peacekeeping financing by specifically supporting the meaningful participation of uniformed women as peacekeepers.

Given its time and resource limitations, the EIF cannot fully remedy all barriers to uniformed women's participation in United Nations peace operations. However, it aims to accelerate the pace of change towards increased meaningful participation of uniformed women in United Nations peace operations, and it serves as a pilot initiative whose implications Member States may wish to consider over the longer term as they work towards their stated goal of enhancing the representation of women in United Nations peace operations.

Funding Modalities and Proposals

The EIF can consider a proposal and provide funding for the following three funding modalities: 1) barrier assessments; 2) flexible project funding; and 3) gender-strong unit premium.

1. Barrier Assessment

The EIF can provide funding for the conduct of a barrier assessment, which is designed to identify the main factors that impede the deployment of uniformed women peacekeepers to United Nations' missions, noting that the type and effect of barriers can vary amongst T/PCCs. The conduct of a barrier assessment provides a detailed empirical foundation for the identification and design of further projects aimed at increasing the meaningful participation of uniformed women in peace operations. It also generates a baseline assessment against which progress can be measured.

A barrier assessment methodology has been developed by DCAF and Cornell University, called the MOWIP - [Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations](#). The following resources are available:

- An overview of the MOWIP methodology is on the [EIF webpage](#).
- The [MOWIP methodology handbook](#) is on the [DCAF webpage](#) in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).
- The MOWIP toolbox including explainers and templates is also on the [DCAF webpage](#), with downloadable ZIP folders [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).
- Existing published MOWIP barrier assessments can be found on the [EIF webpage](#).

Applicants that wish to apply for barrier assessment funding may apply with the intention of:

- Using the MOWIP methodology (recommended), or
- Identifying and implementing a methodology similar in scope to the MOWIP methodology, and in line with the Barrier Assessment Criteria provided in the EIF [TOR](#) (Appendix 1). In this case the EIF management will need to be satisfied that the proposed methodology meets the requirements outlined in Appendix 1. Importantly, any assessment of barriers to women’s participation in peace operations should include both primary and secondary data collection and analysis, including but not limited to relevant legislation, the distribution of women and men in national military and police institutions, these institutions’ policies, and practices regarding peacekeeping, as well as perceptual indicators that analyze the attitudes and experiences of *both women and men* to better understand the barriers.

2. Flexible project funding

The EIF will finance, in whole or in part, projects aimed at directly increasing the meaningful participation of uniformed women peacekeepers in United Nations missions, or that take a longer-term view to increasing the number of women in the national pipeline for deployment. To encourage applicants to propose innovative solutions to the specific barriers identified, the EIF does not prescribe the exact nature of projects or activities.

For the third programing cycle, a barrier assessment is a requirement to apply for and receive project funding support. Proposals are required to use the barrier assessment report to identify and prioritize activities, and to propose innovative and sustainable solutions to address the identified barriers.

3. Gender Strong Unit (GSU) premium

The EIF can provide a premium to a T/PCC for the deployment of a GSU. Only T/PCCs are eligible to apply for the [GSU funding modality](#).

What is a GSU?²

*A gender-strong unit is a unit that includes substantial representation of women overall and in positions of authority, has provided gender-equity training to all unit members, and has adequate materiel to ensure parity of deployment conditions (including equipment, facilities, accommodation etc.) for women and men peacekeepers*³.

Proposal Specific Guidelines

In keeping with the Elsie Initiative’s intention to promote innovation, and to encourage transformational change regarding women’s meaningful participation in peace operations, the criteria for a proposal for incentive payments are not prescriptive; rather it is for applicants to the EIF to identify the nature, scope, and value of their proposal considering the following guidelines:

The proposal must:

- Demonstrably and substantially increase the number of uniformed women in, and their percentage of, a formed unit that will deploy on a peacekeeping operation (military unit or formed police unit). At a minimum, the percentages of women must exceed the targets set out in the [Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028](#) by 5 percentage points.⁴

² The term ‘GSU’ relates only to the Elsie Initiative Fund. It should not be confused with the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) Police Division’s (DP) gender-integrated Formed Police Unit (FPU). A gender integrated FPU is a mixed gender-integrated unit, in which at least 32 women are represented across all functions including command, have more operational impact, and as *such should be prioritized for deployment*.

³ [EIF TOR](#) – Page 16.

⁴ The 2023 target stated for FPU is 13%; therefore, the FPU must be at least 18%. Similarly, for troops, the stated target is 10%, therefore troops must be at least 15%.

- Demonstrate that the women deployed will be fully integrated into the unit and contribute to its mandate and all the tasks the unit will be asked to perform (including patrolling, security tasks, engagement, and response to incidents). This includes that all women are fully trained for the role(s) they perform in the unit and have participated in all pre-deployment training and preparation.
- Demonstrate that there are adequate procedures to deal with instances of sexual harassment and assault, and sexual exploitation and abuse. See the [United Nations Standards of Conduct](#).
- Demonstrate that appropriate contingent-owned (COE) equipment for both men and women peacekeepers will be provided, in accordance with the [COE Manual](#).⁵

Additionally, all members of the unit must meet, and ideally exceed, existing DPO requirements for pre-deployment training on gender in the military/police, sexual and gender-based violence, conflict related sexual violence, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse. See the [United Nations Peacekeeping Resource Hub](#) for information on the United Nations Peacekeeping Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials (CPTM).

Proposals for a GSU should also strive to demonstrate:

- Commitment to employing women across all ranks and across all sub-units. Optimally, women would be proportionally represented at all ranks in the unit.
- How the increased representation of women in peacekeeping will be sustained over time, including after the end of the project.

The proposal should be for the duration of the deployment of that unit (usually 12 months) and can be extended for two additional deployment periods (usually 12 months each) – a total of three years. The second-year premium would represent a 25% increase on the first-year formulation; the third-year premium would represent a 50% increase on the first-year formulation. The EIF [GSU calculator](#) located on the EIF website, can be used to calculate the GSU premium.

For proposals for GSU premiums, preference will be given to submissions that specify a T/PCC's intentions to reinvest the GSU premium in activities that further contribute to the EIF's objectives.

Proposals for the payment of the premium must be accepted by the EIF prior to the unit's deployment. The GSU premium will consist of a direct payment to the T/PCC at the completion of the unit's deployment, and after verifying that the unit met the guidelines for a gender-strong unit⁶. The EIF will not normally pay the premium for a fraction of a unit (a company or platoon in an infantry battalion).

Note: The amount of a GSU premium is an amount separate to project funding and is calculated on the size of the deployed unit. Refer to the [EIF GSU calculator](#) to calculate the GSU reimbursement amount.

Letter of Interest

Each LOI can seek funding for one or more of the activities and associated funding modalities described above, as follows:

- Barrier assessment only

⁵ The COE Manual is subject to review every three years by the [COE Working Group](#). 2023 Issue Papers to note: [Secretariat Issue Paper #23: Implementation of Recommendations by the Elsie Initiative for Field Missions' Facilities and Infrastructure](#); and Member State Issue Papers (i) [Gender-Responsive Improvements to the COE Manual](#) (inclusion of women's medical requirements) and (ii) [Gender-Responsive Improvements to the COE Manual](#) (inclusion of UGPS, abuse of authority, harassment and sexual harassment).

⁶ [EIF TOR](#) – Pages 16-17.

- Project funding – **available only where a credible barrier assessment has already been conducted**
- Project funding and GSU premium combined – **must be accompanied by a completed credible barrier assessment.**
- Barrier assessment and GSU premium – combined
- GSU premium only – **strongly recommended to conduct a barrier assessment if not already conducted.**

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for funding, a proposal and application to the EIF must contribute to at least one of the four outcomes in the EIF's [Monitoring and Evaluation \(MEF\) Framework](#)⁷ along with at least one indicator for the chosen outcome or outcomes.

EIF MEF outcomes

1. Expanded country-specific knowledge of barriers to deployment of uniformed women peacekeepers to United Nations peace operations
2. Increased meaningful deployment of uniformed women peacekeepers to United Nations peace operations
3. Increased pool of uniformed women eligible to deploy as United Nations peacekeepers
4. Improved working or/and living conditions for uniformed women peacekeepers in United Nations peace operations

Additional Eligibility Criteria for National Governments

National Governments must also meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Is a United Nations T/PCC, or has serious intentions⁸ to become one that is demonstrated in the LOI
- Demonstrates high-level commitment through the LOI being signed by a Minister or Chief of Defense, Minister of Interior or Police Commissioner, or equivalent
- Provides a detailed rationale for the proposed project in the LOI
- Meets the requirements of the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy ([HRDDP](#)) and the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers ([HACT](#)) assessment and remains eligible for United Nations support after the consideration of a risk assessment and the application of any necessary mitigating measures. These mandatory processes will be conducted by the EIF Secretariat after receipt of a detailed proposal, and during Step 5 of the Programming Cycle. They are not necessary for the submission of a LOI. However, T/PCCs should consider the requirements of those processes and be prepared to actively support and enable them.

National governments are required to report in accordance with the UNSDG (United Nations Sustainable Development Group) categories (guidance on this will be provided for projects that are approved for the development of a detailed proposal).

⁷ [EIF MEF](#) - Section 4.2.2.

⁸ For example, Ministerial commitments made at high-level / international peace and security forums

Additional Eligibility Criteria for Participating UN Organizations (PUNOs)

The EIF may support projects submitted by PUNOs designed to implement and test innovations aimed at enhancing the meaningful participation of uniformed women deployed in United Nations peace operations. It is understood that these projects would not ordinarily be financed from available budgetary and extra-budgetary resources, and the PUNO would need to commit to any further scaling of projects, to be undertaken within other resources at the end of the project as well as all ongoing and sustainment costs.

As a guideline, the allocation of funds to UN-led projects should not normally exceed 20% of total available funds⁹.

Prioritization Criteria

In addition to the requirement to meet the eligibility criteria described above, all LOI and detailed proposals will be assessed against the following established criteria; LOIs are therefore required to include information on how the proposal will address these criteria.

Innovation: The proposal needs to demonstrate innovative solutions and new approach to overcoming barriers in the national context or field mission environment.

Risk assessment: The proposal needs to identify the risks associated to the implementation of the project and strategies to mitigate them.

Sustainability and extension: The proposal must demonstrate how the increased deployment and representation of women in peacekeeping will be sustained over time, including after the end of the project and project funding. Preference will be given to projects that are likely to contribute to the sustained increased of the deployment of uniformed women by a T/PCC. This includes projects that demonstrate clear national ownership and are likely to yield insights and lessons that can be shared with other T/PCCs.

Engagement: Applicants must demonstrate how women, particularly uniformed women, will play integral roles throughout the project cycle including in the project design and implementation.

Clear and specific targets (number and percentage) for the increase of women peacekeepers and the roles they would deploy into (if applicable) within the project timeframe.

Current percentage of women in national armed forces and/or police service and at what levels; the provision of a baseline against which to measure progress and to substantiate project objectives is required.

Impact and strategic relevance: Preference will be given to projects that contribute to multiple outcomes; include baseline data and realistic targets; and are likely to result in the deployment of a significant number of uniformed women, including in strategic and leadership roles. Preference will be given to projects that are proposed by T/PCCs, and in particular those that are official development assistance (ODA) eligible.

Cost effectiveness: Applications must include reasonable costs and demonstrate an economical use of resources; financial and in-kind contributions from other parties are encouraged and should be noted in the LOI.

Project Management, Monitoring and Reporting: The proposed approach to project management, monitoring and reporting, and the extent to which applicants consider key risks and mitigation strategies will be assessed. All recipient organizations and implementing partners must ensure that robust monitoring and reporting procedures are established and included as part of the detailed project document, with attention paid to the EIF [MEF](#).

⁹ Projects where PUNOs receive funds in coordination with a T/PCC are not included in the 20 per cent of United Nations-led projects.

Proposal size

For Project Funding proposals, the maximum amount for each proposal for the third programming round is USD 1,500,000; the minimum amount for each proposal is USD 100,000.

GSU proposals are not included in this project funding proposal amount: a T/PCC may request a GSU premium, as well as up to USD 1,500,000 USD project funding, in one LOI.

Duration

The duration for project implementation will not normally exceed two years; the duration for a barrier assessment is approximately 12 months. For the GSU premium only, the duration is up to three years.

Governance

Due Diligence. Adequate due diligence of all proposals is fundamental to managing the programmatic risks of the Fund. In Step 5 of the Programming Cycle, the Secretariat is responsible for conducting due diligence of all proposals which includes a review of the project proposal including the included risk management strategy, conduct of the [HACT](#) micro assessment, the [HRDDP](#), and the application of the fund level risk management strategy to that proposal. The EIF Secretariat will contract international consultants to conduct these assessments.

Project Specific Risk Management. In Step 4 of the Programming Cycle, applicants are required to develop a specific risk management strategy for each proposal. Risks will be considered and provisions for the identification, monitoring, tolerances, and risk responses will be elaborated. While risks will be specific to each project in the proposal, each proposal is to explicitly address the safety and security of all women military or police personnel who are to be assisted through the proposal. After the application of mitigating measures or strategies, those personnel should not be subject to any more residual risk, to their physical safety, psychosocial well-being, and reputation, than their equivalent counterparts who are men.

3rd Programming Round Dates:

Step 1	Launch of a call for LOI	30 March 2023
Step 2	Submission of LOI to the EIF	31 July 2023
Step 3	Review of LOIs; EIF advises proposals selected for funding	August - September 2023
Step 4	Development and submission of detailed proposals to the EIF	October 2023 – March 2024
Step 5	Technical review of proposals	January – June 2024
Step 6	Steering Committee approval and fund disbursement	January – June 2024

To apply: T/PCCs and United Nations organizations are invited to complete the LOI template and email it to the EIF Secretariat: elsie.mptf@unwomen.org no later than **31 July 2023**.

Selection and Notification: after review, the EIF Secretariat will notify all applicants of the outcome for their LOI.