FUNDING ACCESS FOR REFUGEE-LED ORGANIZATIONS (RLOS):

CHALLENGES AND GUIDANCE

Report Version
October 2025

FUNDING ACCESS FOR REFUGEE-LED ORGANIZATIONS (RLOS):

CHALLENGES AND GUIDANCE

Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table (R-SEAT)
Report Version
October 2025

INTRODUCTION

Refugees Seeking Equal Access at the Table (R-SEAT) is an international refugee-led organization working to enhance the effectiveness of global refugee responses by engaging, amplifying, and connecting the global **refugee leadership ecosystem**. Supporting **refugee-led organizations (RLOs)**[1] across diverse international fora and in achieving their institutional goals is central to this mission. Recognizing the irreplaceable role RLOs play, R-SEAT envisions a system where they are adequately resourced to scale essential programs.

RLOs face unique challenges in accessing funding at scale in the manner that other traditional aid and humanitarian actors might manage. In an effort to amplify the global refugee leadership ecosystem, we seek to provide best practices for RLOs seeking to scale their operations, or to begin accessing funding in a more structured manner. This note serves as a tool to better understand the funding sphere—from overall landscape to organizational preparations— to assist in drafting applications and appeals for funding. In this scope, this note also offers an opportunity for RLOs to engage in an internal assessment of their organization and operations, with the intent of boosting their organizational health.

While this note equips RLOs with practical tools, it also recognizes that equitable access to funding requires systemic changes in the humanitarian financing landscape. Until those shifts are achieved, this guidance aims to empower RLOs within current constraints.

1. At R-SEAT, we utilize the term refugee as a reclaimed title to encompass all people who have experienced forced displacement and statelessness. Please see page 10 our report "We Were Seen, but Were We Heard?" to read more on our utilization of the term.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE FIELD

RLOs remain chronically underfunded despite being increasingly recognized for their essential role in maintaining the wellbeing of refugee communities and reaching those most in need. In 2020-2021, amidst the global lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic, the essentiality of RLOs became even more pronounced as international organizations remained unwilling or unable to provide their standard services. After seeing a short-lived influx of funding in response to this, we saw international funders pull back their support or rever to their old approaches.

Recent developments have complicated funding access for all actors. In January of 2025, the world's largest humanitarian and development funder, the United States, cut all foreign assistance programming with few exceptions. This resulted in stop-work orders for existing operations on the ground, and has continued to cause confusion, layoffs, and in some cases, the closure of programs. This is in addition to a growing trend of donor governments cutting their budgets for aid, humanitarian assistance, and development projects, instead increasing defense and security budgets. Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Switzerland have all announced plans to reduce their spending and cut their aid budgets. These changes have threatened the progress made on localizing humanitarian finance and will continue to have an impact across all levels of the humanitarian-development-peace (**HDP**) nexus.

SITUATING RLOS

RLOs are often categorized broadly under the term “local actor”, but this phrase does not always encapsulate the unique niche filled by RLOs, and the willingness of the global refugee system to group all actors working at the community-level as “local” misses the point. RLOs continue to struggle to access quality funding sustain their programs leave alone to scale-up their impacts, often being left to operate with minimal budget for essential overhead costs or even appropriate salaries. The Grand Bargain has defined **quality funding** as being “multi-year and flexible in nature”, and refers to it as a priority for global humanitarian needs.

Across intersections of identities within different displacement contexts, these deficiencies become even more pronounced. RLOs face unique barriers to quality funding that are not present for their non-displaced counterparts. Moving past narratives on the benefits of localization, there must be more significant interrogation of the role of RLOs within the refugee leadership ecosystem, and the larger humanitarian system it operates within.

Firstly, bureaucracy remains a trenchant barrier for RLOs. The practical limitations of registration, opening a bank account, legally employing others, or even renting an office space can create massive barriers that keep forcibly displaced people from operating as legally registered entities. While other community-led or locally-led organizations may have access to these options, refugees and RLOs often do not. Secondly, there is a broad range of different funding types and streams, and the time it takes to both find and decide what funding pathway is most suitable to sustain the work takes time and research. While the issues of bureaucracy are varied and cannot be solved in one fell swoop, we provide here some strategies to make the most of these conditions.

This document does not address the existing power imbalances which are embedded in many funding practices. Considerations on the legitimacy of tracking and reporting, translating impact in figures, and modes of proving the value of the work must continue across the sector. This document is designed in recognition of these limitations and intends to assist RLOs in navigating these difficult conditions. Power imbalances will not be solved in the immediate term, and while these conditions persist, we believe that this guide can assist RLOs with existing financial infrastructure to scale up their funding streams and maximize their impact. It also provides some guidance for RLOs looking to begin building their own independent financial architecture.

ACTORS IN THE FIELD

The funding accessible to RLOs and organizations working on forced displacement can be considered its own subset of global **humanitarian finance.** Much like how working on the ground with communities can be considered **"in the field"**, the funding landscape is its own field too. This segment identifies three primary funding actors in this field, and the benefits and drawbacks of working with each of them.

Governments and Government-based Funding

Sometimes, different governments will offer pots of funding for an organization working on specific thematic areas. These special funding initiatives range in size and scope. For instance, the United States Mission to the United Nations Geneva has historically offered a yearly Small Grants program which accepts unsolicited "project proposals that promote U.S. policy priorities in the multilateral sphere." Other U.S. missions in different countries have offered similar versions of this program. This funding opportunity was available yearly for a **small** amount of money, with awards ranging in size from $15,000 to $40,000 USD. Bilateral and government funding can be significant, however it often must be moved through intermediaries for tight fiduciary requirements, some of which might incur a cost to hold and distribute.

Another funding opportunity offered by government authorities was the Program Grant on Migration and Displacement offered by the Government of the Netherlands for which RLOs were permitted to apply. This was a large amount of money, distributing a total of €57 million, and a unique opportunity, as states do not often offer this level of funding to RLOs. R-SEAT remains hopeful that these opportunities will be made available again, and that other states will follow suit.

Pros: Demonstrates a significant level of trust being given to the RLO, and could indicate a further relationship with the given state or mission funder. Initial agreements could also provide an avenue to further develop the funding relationship in some cases.

Cons: Oversight for state funding is immense and the registration and reporting requirements to become a state **vendor** can be extremely difficult, costly, and/or time consuming. These funds may also be gifted as **prizes** or **donations**, and are constantly in flux based on the political aims of the state (for instance, the U.S. Mission funding is currently suspended) meaning that they do not constitute quality funding.

United Nations Bodies Funding

The United Nations system, especially **UNHCR**, the UN Refugee Agency, may seem like a natural place to seek funding as an RLO, however options in this space are also often limited as UNHCR itself is regularly seeking funding from governments in their yearly appeals. The yearly Refugee-led Innovation Fund (RLIF) is one example of funding made available to RLOs under UNHCR's auspices. The RLIF seeks to recognize the essential role that RLOs play in the field, offering "financial resources, mentoring, and other expertise" to the maximum sum of $45000 USD. This is a fund worth applying for if an RLO has a new project they want to delve into that innovates existing ideas or modes of service delivery.

Pros: A number of these awards are made available yearly with a specific focus on RLOs and individuals with diverse lived experiences globally, with an emphasis on learning rather than tracking. This means that the funds come with additional mentoring or support, and are tailored to RLOs specifically rather than any actor working on forced migration or migration more broadly.

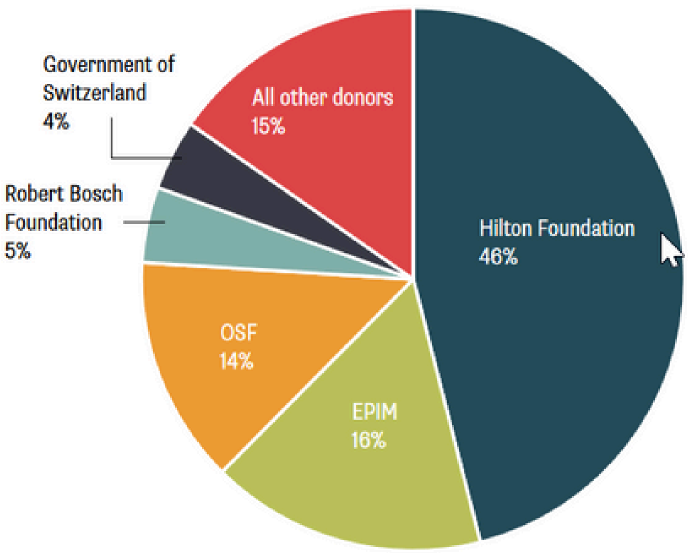
Cons: These can be competitive streams as one of the few funds which targets RLOs and due to the prestige associated with being funded by UNHCR. The nature of these funds does not constitute quality funding.

Private Philanthropy

For direct funding, private philanthropy is the dominant actor in the field. Some funders which have historically supported RLOs have been retooling their approaches, and others are now being made aware of the distance their dollar goes when entrusted to an RLO. Private philanthropy often re-assesses its objectives and pivots, meaning there are regularly new updates to consider.

Private philanthropy also offers a range of actors with diverse agendas to engage with, meaning there will likely be an organization that already exists seeking to fund the specific thematic area that your RLO is working on. Notably too, private philanthropy is more flexible than the two above actors as they are not accountable to taxpayers and instead deal in private money. This experimental approach to building high-trust relationships is how the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation came to fund over 45% of all refugee-led initiatives in 2022.[2]

Figure 4 Top five donors to RLOs in 2022, and their share of total funding (based on available data)



Source: Development Initiatives based on survey data provided directly by donors and intermediaries and data from publicly available sources: UN OCHA's FTS and IATI d-portal.
Note: EPIM = European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM); OSF = Open Society Foundations. Data is in current prices and covers 2022 disbursements to RLOs based on estimated project budgets that year. 'All other donors' includes funding from six additional donors. Funders were requested to share data based on their own categorisation of organisations they consider to be RLOs. While definitions used were broadly similar, there is a chance that some funders included organisations that others may not view as refugee-led, including overlaps with organisations that are IDP-, asylum seeker- or migrant-led, or organisations working on forced displacement more broadly.

Image sourced from 'The failure to fund refugee-led organisations," report.

2. Because funding to RLOs must flow through intermediaries so often, much of this data is self-reported, and as such should be considered an estimate.

Pros: Private philanthropy often offers significant levels of flexibility, along with Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (**MEL**) supports, Organizational Development (**OD**), and knowledge sharing. There are many private organizations working in the field, meaning that some will innately have a close alignment on thematic areas in specific regions. This also means that more opportunities for funding are made available more regularly.

Cons: Private philanthropy operates in a funding cycle, meaning that it can take up to a year to finalize and secure an agreement depending on when your application is submitted or requested. Private philanthropy also predominantly deals with large sums of money, making small or one-off disbursements difficult and instead targeting RLOs that have the capacity to absorb a large amount of funds. It can also be difficult to break into this space, as referrals between philanthropies are common, leading to a decreased ability for accepting **cold** requests. Private philanthropy can also change strategy suddenly, making their strategies somewhat unpredictable.

Aside from these actors, intermediary funds sometimes offer ad hoc support or smaller grants. A few funds to consider are the Crisis Response Fund, Resilience Fund - Mama Cash, Migrants' Rights | The Fund for Global Human Rights. While they can give to un-registered organizations, the funding they provide does not amount to quality funding.

PRE-EMPTIVE INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Before approaching any funding opportunity, an organization needs to be prepared. Consider the following before beginning any applications.

How are decisions made within your organization?

Funders will be interested in learning about how your organization makes and enacts its decisions. In some cases, organizations are governed by a Board of Directors which holds ultimate authority on the work the organization undertakes. In other cases, one or two key members hold ultimate decision-making power, but the larger team collectively informs those decisions. Consider how to translate this relationship either visually through a flow chart, or in written format. Be sure to include how your organization engages the people it is mandated to assist in its decision-making whenever relevant.

Is your organization prepared to take on and absorb a stream of funding?

Oftentimes the immediate response to this question is yes because there is a clear need for funding, but we ask this to spur further thinking. Acquiring funding requires a time investment at minimum, and there will need to be certain processes built into your existing workstreams to ensure that the money is acquired, utilized properly, tracked properly, and reported on properly. Reflect on your existing reporting methods and standards, how you might demonstrate trust to a donor through existing finance systems, and any existing or potential modes for ensuring transparency. These are indispensable elements that must be planned for before beginning your funding journey.

Is your organization registered, or will you be accepting funding through an intermediary?

International bank transfers from all actors need to be traced due to international monetary law and relevant national rules. For that reason, your organization needs to be registered, or be in agreement with a registered organization that will accept and distribute the money to your organization. This type of relationship is often the case with RLOs and can become a valuable, productive working relationship. This is often referred to as having a **fiscal sponsor.**

If you are looking to enter into a new relationship with an intermediary, ensure you draft a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** to establish clear expectations regarding the handling and transfer of money. Support for this type of work can sometimes be accessed without cost. As leader of the Multi-stakeholder Pledge: 2023 Global Legal Community, the Global Network for Public Interest Law (PILNet) offers support for matching RLOs to legal support for research, governance document drafting and review, tax advice, and other legal services. PILNet's Menu of Pro Bono Options and Legal Assistance Intake Form are available to the public.

Sponsorship arrangements may not be ideal, as they do often require payment towards their own **operating** costs (usually 10-15% of the funding), however they offer key benefits to RLOs which would otherwise be unable to access the funding they need at the scale required. If your RLO is currently in a sponsorship agreement, seek to use the sponsor's financial architecture to build a strong evidence base of your funding practices for future use upon independence. This means potentially creating a **Year End Report** noting funds and expenditures, evidence of maintaining funder agreements, and otherwise good financial hygiene.

Do you have two years of financial records to provide a new funder with?

This is another element where a supporting organization can come in handy. Many funders require the submission of two years of financial records for their own legal due diligence before taking on new grantees or distributing funds. In many cases, the sponsor provides their own details to secure this funding.

Ensure this paperwork is prepared and as up to date as possible for the calendar year before beginning the process. For RLOs looking to move away from a sponsorship arrangement, we again recommend utilizing the sponsor's financial architecture to demonstrate your organization's abilities and history before exiting the agreement. Document the aforementioned items (such as a Year End Reports and evidence of funding agreements), and engage a professional to help ensure your records meet an agreed upon standard.

Are you able to manage a proper set of records and do basic bookkeeping?

While each member of the organization should be aware of how your funding operates, at least one member will need to be prepared to take on the task of tracking the money and reporting on how it is spent. This is a time-consuming process and may require some further learning, but a good rule of thumb is to keep all records and receipts, as it is better to have lots of financial records than too few.

APPROACHING FUNDERS

When the answer to each of the above questions is affirmative, then the organization must prepare to approach a funder. The following tips ensure that the RLO is managing their own time effectively and preparing the necessary items for potential funders to ensure a smooth transition.

Research

First, do your research. Funders look at many requests on a regular basis and will quickly filter out proposals which do not align with their streams of funding or their priority areas. Sometimes these aspects can be opaque, but most often funders have public websites with details that indicate their priorities. Review the target funders' website and make note of their priorities. This can come in the form of their regional focal points, their thematic priorities, their modes of engagement, or even their ways of working. Often funders will have an “Our Work” tab on their website; review this and see where your existing work best aligns with their mandate, if at all.

When you come across a funder which is aligned with your work, tailor your communications to them in reference to their own priorities, indicating where your work converges and how funding your organization would be a good fit for their existing programming. During this period of research, consider who you might know that is already funded by that organization, any connections that work for the target organization, or any other connections you may be able to reference in your approach.

Documentation

Next, prepare your documentation. Generally, the first step in the process of acquiring new funding is to submit a Letter of Intent (**LOI**). The LOI should be a concise and clear document which outlines the work your organization is focused on, your institutional theory of change (**ToC**), and the specific programs that you are requesting funding for. If you do not have agreed upon institutional language surrounding your work or your ToC, take your time to develop it with your team. This type of exercise is essential in ensuring you are internally aligned on your work and able to communicate your goals clearly to potential funders at any time. Your LOI should be adjusted to fit each specific funder or new stream of programming, but you can maintain and utilize some standard language.

Ensure linguistic consistency is coupled with visual consistency. Similarly to using standard language, use a standard method for formatting and designing all public-facing documentation. This will help build an **organizational identity** for the RLO, and will allow for actors familiar with the work to quickly identify any outputs as belonging to the correct RLO. The documents being designed will also be useful to other audiences aside from funders, perhaps even being appropriate to post on social media or in other public facing fora.

If you are invited to submit a proposal, ensure you utilize that standard language and follow the prompts closely. Funders review many proposals, so ensure that your responses to their prompts are clear and to the point of the matter. For example, if a funder requests that you explain a situation where you felt like your work had not gone to plan, use that opportunity to candidly explain the situation and share how you learned from the experience to improve moving forward. Do not instead respond with a story that is not relevant but that you believe makes your organization look good.

Maintaining and updating internal documents will help to keep this process streamlined. Make a **briefing note** for new partners to learn about your work and have this act as your public facing standard language. Keep this up to date, and you can then utilize that to support new proposals. This practice of distilling your overall work into key points for clear communication is crucial to engaging new partners and new funders.

Program Design

Through this work of internal refinement, you may need to consider designing specific programs. For example, if your organization provides training and seed money to young refugee entrepreneurs in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. It may be challenging to find a funder that can provide funding for both elements of the work, no matter how intertwined the organization believes them to be. Instead, consider seeking funding for just the training from one funder, and just the seed money from another. This will require you to engage in program design, clarifying the actions that will be undertaken with the funding, how these actions support your ToC as an organization, how many people you will reach, and how this program will affect them.

These considerations are crucial from an early stage, and work to support the overall sustainability of the program and the organization. Many funders prefer to avoid a "single-funder approach" where one funder is responsible for providing funding for all areas of the organization. Complementarily, through designing your programs, consider which elements should be proposed to which donors specifically. This could be a new program, an existing program, or a mix of both. If there is a chance to discuss directly with the donor, it is worth taking that time to understand their strategy, what elements of your work they seek to fund, how flexible they are, and how your work aligns with their overall funding strategy. This knowledge will help both design your programs and identify clear gaps to be supported by other funders. Diversifying funders through clearly articulated program design also supports the sustainability of the overall organization.

Refine and Narrow Scope

Clarity is key. In that same line of thinking, make your requests to funders clear through differentiating programs and referring to your ToC. Most important is to not stray from your core mandate to seek funding. Consider the same organization mentioned above sees a funding opportunity available for RLOs in Kakuma providing **WASH** materials and services to the community. Do not be tempted to start branching into WASH work in order to secure this funding, as this will delegitimize the rest of your work and your ToC. Instead, you may be able to pass that opportunity along to a peer organization doing WASH work. Match funding to your existing work rather than creating work to try and match funding.

Throughout this process, donors will be trying to identify how these programs contribute to the end goal of the organization as detailed within the ToC. Identifying a clear logic through a **logic model** is a great way to demonstrate this. When looking to fund, donors are required to ask how these constituent elements of an organization contribute to its own overall goals, and how these actions and goals fit into their larger internal strategy. Consider reflecting on what activities you are proposing, why they are important, what they seek to achieve, and to what end. Be open to feedback and make adjustments as necessary.

Relationship Building

The best way to approach a new funder is to be introduced by an existing funder or trusted contact. This element of trust goes a long way and underscores the importance of treating the funding search as a type of relationship building. You can also provide deliverables and make connections with other institutions to partner on further deliverables. For instance, acting as an interlocutor on research being undertaken by a different grantee of the same funder can be a means to build that relationship, create a connection, and demonstrate goodwill.

It may take some time to build trust, but there are some key ways for the organization to do that. First is to maintain good internal records as mentioned above. Crucially, keeping track of reporting deadlines and adhering to them with timely submissions is key to demonstrating how seriously the organization is taking the relationship. Going a step further, you could track the relationships you are building, the meetings you are taking, and the key indicators and metrics being met for your work, and provide that to your funding partner outside of regular intervals. As a demonstration of trust, you can invite your funder to review some of your documents openly to show your commitment to transparency. You can also invite your funder to weigh in on strategic decisions. Invitations to events, requests for funding partners to speak on panels, and other relevant items might also demonstrate this intent.

Gauge how often your donor would like to connect, and adhere to those guidelines. For funders that would like to connect more regularly, consider hosting an annual meeting where you discuss the strategic objectives of the following year and ask for their guidance on any outstanding issues. Many funders have a sustained interest in the work being done regionally or thematically and will be grateful to learn your insights from working directly with recipients, as it can help them adjust their own programming and targets.

Be Honest and Realistic

This is especially key in formulating your request. When forming your budget, do not be tempted to reduce the true costs of things to make the request seem less expensive. This will only serve to raise expectations of the funder that then cannot feasibly be met, resulting in damaging the relationship. If a project costs $100,000 to be done properly, assert this and demonstrate it with quotes and figures. Do not inflate or deflate this figure to try and secure more money, or less money for the sake of relationship building, for the same amount of work. If a funder is interested in supporting your work, they will make funding available at the level they are able to, so begin that conversation honestly.

DOCUMENT CHECKLIST

In addition to, and through the work above, you will likely need to provide a funder with each of the following documents. Some funders may request additional items, however this varies across institutions and across sectors. This list notes documents that will likely be required, presented in the order you will likely be requested to submit in:

Key Documents

1. Letter of Intent (LOI)

An LOI is a short document used to convey what you need the funding for, and how your operation works. Using standard language and referring to your theory of change, as well as forming a specific request, is key.

2. Description of organization

This is a document, sometimes referred to as an Organizational Profile, which can utilize standard language which should already be available in a briefing note. If invited to submit a full application, you will be required to describe how the organization operates, including its programs, and its overall institutional goals. Develop this document first and use excerpts from it as standard language across the submission and within the LOI.

3. Description of program(s)

If you are applying for funding on a specific program your organization operates, take some time to workshop language and fine tune the elements of the program. This should describe the actions taken by the organization, why the program is relevant to the organization overall, why the program provides value to its users or recipients, and how this program will contribute to a broader change in the community.

4. Theory of Change (ToC)

As either a graphic or in written format, a ToC is necessary to demonstrate how your overall work contributes to your vision of a better future through your specific activities. This should clearly align and overlap with your description of organization and description of program(s). You may also be asked to submit a logic model to demonstrate how a given program relates to this ToC.

5. Projected budget

When designing a budget, potential funders will likely have a template that is standard for all submissions to their organization. Follow it closely and ensure that your projected figures are realistic, and supported by quotes or other relevant documents.

6. Objectives and Indicators

To measure the success of your work, you will likely need to consider what indicates that the work is making the desired changes towards your **objectives**. These measures are called **indicators**, and should be both very specific to your work, and clearly useful for your internal planning.

Supporting Documents[3]

7. Proof of Registration

If you are a registered entity, you will likely need to provide documentation demonstrating this in the form of a certificate or other legal document. If you are unregistered, your registered intermediary should provide this.

8. Organizational structure or Board of Directors

If your organization is legally registered, you will likely already have a document detailing your organizational structure. If not, create a document that shows key officers, their roles, and decision-making structures. In addition, or instead of this, the funder may request a document detailing the names, titles, and roles of the Board of Directors. This document also likely already exists if your organization is legally registered.

9. Two Years of Financial History

Many funders request two years of an organization's financial history to move forward on a funding agreement, which can pose a significant challenge for new RLOs. In sponsorship agreements, we recommend utilizing the funding history of the sponsoring organization, as that organization is acting as the financial intermediary. Otherwise, work to organize as much documentation as possible demonstrating any existing financial history the organization may have, in conjunction with other documents this may be an acceptable alternative.

10. Banking details

To disburse funding, banking details will need to be provided. This may also be from your intermediary if you do not have a dedicated bank account.

3. These documents will likely only be required to support a full proposal or submission.

CONCLUSIONS

Utilizing the process mentioned here is useful beyond simply securing funding, but helps to assess and strengthen the overall health of the organization. In order to grow, these elements must be in place to ensure a solid foundation. Securing and managing funding can be a difficult and stressful part of operating an organization. R-SEAT encourages all RLOs to undergo an internal assessment process, as funding opportunities can arise at any time. The best tip of all is to be prepared when opportunities strike and consider funding as an ongoing process of learning. Through internal assessment, research, preparation, and relationship building, your applications will be best placed to further the aims of the organization and of the funder.

DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Approximate funding brackets:

- **Small** $1 - $50,000 USD
- **Medium** $250,000-1 million USD
- **Large** Over 1 million USD

Award: Money given for performance, usually ranked against others. Does not constitute quality funding, and often does not come with reporting requirements. Also called a prize, donation, or a gift.

Briefing Note: A short document used to detail the most important features of an organization, specifically its central goal or mandate, and its key work streams or programs.

Cold: Approaching a potential partner without introduction from a commonly known colleague or connection.

Fiscal Sponsor: A term used to describe a number of different types of intermediaries which host and manage the finances of another organization that is unwilling or unable to manage those finances itself. This sponsorship can range from simple hosting arrangements to others which provide accompanying support such as utilizing their financial architecture for reporting.

Grant: An allocated amount of funding that is dispersed once through an agreement without obligation for re-granting. May require reporting, measurements, or check-ins with the granting organization. Sometimes called an endowment, a bursary, or a contribution.

Humanitarian finance: Money allocated to address humanitarian responses worldwide and meet immediate human needs in crisis. These funds are not used to address underlying causes of crises.

Humanitarian-Development-Peace (**HDP**) Nexus: The HDP nexus refers to the interlinkages between humanitarian, development, and peace work, aid, and processes. It is a three-pronged approach to address trenchant global challenges which implicate each of these sectors.

Indicator: An indicator is a means of measuring progress towards achieving an objective. This can include figures, such as x number of people receiving services, or be more qualitative in scope.

In the Field: In the field means actions done in real life rather than in theory or in planning stages. The field itself is comprised of numerous different actors and spaces.

Letter of Intent (**LOI**): A short, first introduction of need or interest to a funder that covers key elements of the organization and details a specific request. This should include preliminary or projected figures.

Logic Model: A diagram which clearly demonstrates how the thinking of an organization is organized, along with how different inputs such as programs or activities lead to an ultimate outcome. This should reinforce or slot into any organizational Theory of Change (ToC).

Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning (MEL): An acronym used to encompass the practice of tracking the use of funds across all stages of implementation. Some actors now prefer to use the term Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) to emphasize the importance of accountability to affected populations.

Memorandum of Understanding **(MOU)**: A legal term for a partnership agreement, signed by all relevant entities to ensure clarity on elements of collaborative work.

Objective: An objective is a major component of the work, or the desired result from a specific aspect of the work being undertaken. Objectives should be reflected within the drafting of an application.

Operating Costs: The total amount incurred for expenses related to running an organization, such as payroll fees, property taxes, or cost of materials.

Operational Funding: Flexible funds that can be allocated across the needs of the organization including for overhead or salaries.

Organizational Development (**OD**): The process of systematically reviewing and adjusting strategies, programs, and workstreams to improve the function of a given organization.

Organizational Identity: The unique characteristics and externally visible elements of an organization. Organizational identities are formed when organizations begin to increasingly be recognized for their work and their consistent hallmarks such as unique colour-ways.

Programmatic Funding: Grant funding that is directed specifically to one element of an organization's work, encompassing the elements of a specific program rather than the entire workload of the organization.

Refugee-led Innovation Fund (**RLIF**): A specific award provided by UNHCR.

Refugee-led organization (**RLO**): An umbrella term used to describe an organization led by someone or multiple people who have lived experience of forced displacement. UNHCR defines an RLO as "An organization or group in which persons with direct lived experience of forced displacement play a primary leadership role and whose stated objectives and activities are focused on responding to the needs of refugees and/or related communities."

Refugee leadership ecosystem: Formed when cross-sectoral actors with lived experience of forced displacement or statelessness engage in mutually supportive practices with other actors such as civil society, academic, and/or government to increase their meaningful participation, leadership, and influence in policies, programming and decisions that affect their lives. For an ecosystem to be robust, it must include actors from a diversity of personal and professional backgrounds. This is R-SEAT's working definition.

Quality funding: Funding which is regular and prolonged in nature, meaning it is projected to sustain work past the immediate term. This may also be referred to as sustainable funding, multi-year funding, or flexible funding.

Theory of Change (**ToC**): A document explaining (written or graphically) how and why your organization works in the way that it does. This is used to explain and translate how the actions taken by an organization create change directly, and/or contribute to a larger movement, creating indirect change through influence.

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Vendor: A registered or otherwise contractually supported organization that provides services or goods to a specific entity.

Year End Report: A year end report is an accounting document which details all the financial records of the previous year, usually then reviewed by an accounting professional.

SOURCES CITED

Caitlin Sturridge, Fran Girling-Morris, Alexandra Spencer, Andhira Kara, and Carina Chicet, "The failure to fund refugee-led organisations," *Humanitarian Policy Group Report,* November 2023.
https://odi.cdn.ngo/media/documents/HPG_report_funding_to_RLOs_final.pdf

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
https://www.hiltonfoundation.org/

Eric Reidy, "How to fund refugee-led aid," The New Humanitarian, April 2, 2024.
https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/interview/2024/04/02/how-fund-refugee-led-aid

"Lives on the Line: The human impact of US Foreign Aids Shifts," *ICVA Report,* March 2025. https://www.icvanetwork.org/uploads/2025/03/Lives-on-the-Line-Final-Report.pdf

Multi-Stakeholder Pledge: 2023 Global Legal Community, UNHCR.
https://globalcompactrefugees.org/pledges-contributions/multi-stakeholder-pledges-2023/multi-stakeholder-pledge-2023-global-legal

Programme grant Migration and Displacement, Government of the Netherlands.
https://www.government.nl/documents/decrees/2023/07/03/subsidy-framework-migration-and-displacement-2023-2028

"Quality Funding in the Grand Bargain," Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), November 2023.
https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/One%20Pager%20Quality%20Funding_November%202023_0.pdf

Refugee-led Innovation Fund, UNHCR Innovation Service.
https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/refugee-led-innovation-fund/

Robert Hakiza, Alexander Betts, Evan Easton-Calabria, and Kate Pinnock, "Refugee groups fill gaps in COVID-19 response, and they need support", *The New Humanitarian,* April 29, 2020.
https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2020/04/29/coronavirus-response-refugee-camps-humanitarian-aid

U.S. Mission to the United Nations – Geneva Small Grants Program (GVA-SGP-2024-001).
https://geneva.usmission.gov/annual-program-statement/

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

A beginner's guide to finding funding for your Project (Locality)
https://locality.org.uk/assets/images/Convention-workshop-tips-Securing-funding.pdf

Crisis Response Fund (CIVICUS)
https://www.civicus.org/index.php/engage-and-act/explore-resourcing-opportunities/crisis-response-fund

Funding and Income Guides (The National Council for Voluntary Organisations)
https://www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/funding-income/

Helpful Information, Tips & Forms (Conrad N. Hilton Fund for Sisters)
https://www.hiltonfundforsisters.org/grants/helpful-info-tips/

How to write a Memorandum of Understanding (DocuSign)
https://www.docusign.com/en-gb/blog/how-to-write-memorandum-understanding

Legal Assistance Intake Form, PILNet.
https://www.pilnet.org/legal-assistance-intake-form/

Letters of Intent (National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease)
https://www.niaid.nih.gov/grants-contracts/letters-intent

Menu of pro bono options in the framework of the GRF pledge, PILNet.
https://www.pilnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Menu-of-Pro-Bono-Options-2024.-pdf.pdf

Migrants Rights (The Fund for Global Human Rights)
https://globalhumanrights.org/what-we-do/migrants-rights/

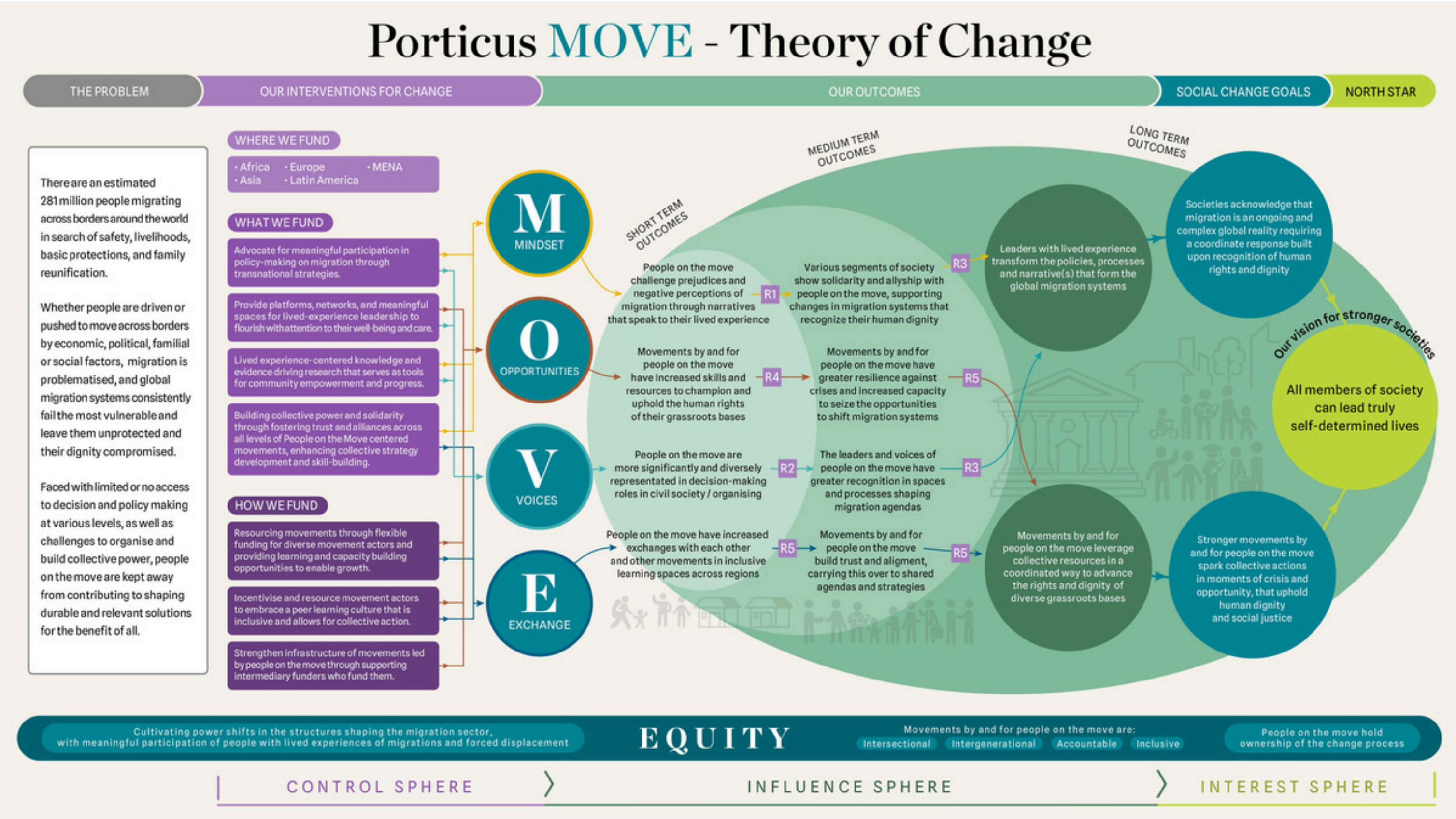
Organizational Assessment: A Framework for Improving Performance (IDRC)
https://idrc-crdi.ca/en/books/organizational-assessment-framework-improving-performance

Resilience Fund (Mama Cash)
https://www.mamacash.org/funds/resilience-fund/

Sources of funding every charity should consider (Charities Aid Foundation)
https://www.cafonline.org/services-for-charities/resources/sources-of-funding-every-charity-should-consider

APPENDICES/REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Theory of Change from Porticus MOVE Program



Projected Budget Template from Hilton Foundation

Hilton Foundation - PROJECT BUDGET FORM

Last Updated: December 2024

1. Organization Name: Enter Name

2. Project Title: Enter Title

3. Proposed Grant Period (this should match the start and end dates in rows 17 and 18): Enter Start Date - End Date

4. Prepared By: Enter Name

5. Title: Enter Title

6. Email: Enter Email Address

7. Date Prepared: Enter Date

☐ Check this box if the grant request to the Hilton Foundation covers 100% of the project costs, and do not complete Section 9.

For guidance in preparing this template, please visit https://bit.ly/budgetguidance or contact your program officer.

Please do not delete any columns or formulas.

	8. Budget Request to the Hilton Foundation				9. Total (Overall) Project Budget			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	TOTAL	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	TOTAL
Start Date	Mo/Day/Yr	Mo/Day/Yr	Mo/Day/Yr		Mo/Day/Yr	Mo/Day/Yr	Mo/Day/Yr	
End Date	Mo/Day/Yr	Mo/Day/Yr	Mo/Day/Yr		Mo/Day/Yr	Mo/Day/Yr	Mo/Day/Yr	
Personnel Assigned to this Project								
Position (% time funded by the proposed grant)				-				-
Position (% time funded by the proposed grant)				-				-
Position (% time funded by the proposed grant)				-				-
Position (% time funded by the proposed grant)				-				-
Position (% time funded by the proposed grant)				-				-
				-				-
Benefits				-				-
Taxes				-				-
Subtotal Personnel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-Personnel for This Project								
Conferences, Meetings & Trainings for this project				-				-
Staff Professional Development				-				-
Communications and Mailings for this project				-				-
Project-Associated Rent (only enter if additional space is rented for this project)				-				-
Travel & Transportation for this project				-				-
Office Supplies for this project				-				-
Digital Services (internet, database, telephone) (enter only the additional costs incurred for this project)				-				-
Additional Project Specific Items (please specify)				-				-
Travel for Hilton Foundation convenings (see guidance document)				-				-
Subtotal Non-Personnel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Personnel & Non-Personnel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Indirect Costs (see instructions)				-				-
	(Calculated) Indirect Rate			0.00%				
Sub-Contracting, Sub-Granting, and Other for this Project								
Consultants or Contractors				-				-

Sub-Grants to Other Organizations				-				-
Stipends and Honoraria				-				-
Capital Costs for this project (only items subject to depreciation; see guidance document)				-				-
Fiscal Sponsorship Fee (if applicable)				-				-
Total Sub-Contracting and Sub-Granting	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
GRAND TOTAL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	TOTAL
Total Request to Hilton Foundation	-	-	-	-
% of Project Budget	-	-	-	-

NOTE: This table will be filled in automatically once sections #8-9 are completed.

	11. Other Funding Sources for Project Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	TOTAL
Committed				
Name the source				-
Name the source				-
Name the source				-
Name the source				-
Name the source				-
Name the source				-
Name the source				-
Name the source				-
Total Committed	-	-	-	-
Projected				
Name the source				-
Name the source				-
Name the source				-
Name the source				-
Name the source				-
Name the source				-
Name the source				-
Name the source				-
Total Projected	-	-	-	-
GRAND TOTAL	-	-	-	-

Memorandum of Understanding from R-SEAT

AGENCY AGREEMENT FOR CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

THIS AGREEMENT made effective as of the date referred to below (the "Effective Date")

BETWEEN:

Name
Address
(here called the "Charity")

-and-

Name
Address
(here called the "MVT")

BACKGROUND

A. The Charity is a registered charity under the Income Tax Act (Canada). Charitable Registration No. [redacted]. Its charitable purposes are set out in Schedule "A"

[redacted] The Charity wishes to appoint the Agent to carry on certain of the Charity's charitable activities so as to further the charitable purposes of the Charity, made possible by a funding contribution received by the [redacted] in the amount of $[redacted]

NOW THEREFORE in consideration of the mutual covenants and premises herein contained, the parties hereto agree as follows:

1. SECTION 1 – DEFINITIONS

1.1. "Agreement" means this agency agreement, including Schedules "A", "B'' and "C" as those might be amended from time to time;

1.2. "Budget" means the approved budget associated with Schedule "B" and attached as Schedule "C"

1.3. "Effective Date" means the date on which the Agent signs the agreement;

1.4. "Charitable Funds" means the money under this Agreement provided by the Charity to the Agent for the purposes of carrying on the activities specified in Schedule "B".

1.5. "Specified Charitable Activities" means the activities described in Schedule "B".

2. SECTION 2 - APPOINTMENT OF AGENT

2.1. The Charity appoints the Agent to carry on the Specified Charitable Activities to further the Charity's charitable purposes in accordance with the terms, provisions and conditions of this Agreement.

2.2. The Agent will carry on its duties and obligations of this Agreement so as to strictly comply with the charitable nature of the purposes of the Charity.

2.3. The Agent does not have the authority to do any act on behalf of the Charity or to bind the Charity except as specifically authorized by the terms of this Agreement.

2.4. The Agent is not an employee, partner or joint venturer of the Charity and will not represent itself as such.

2.5. This Agreement constitutes the entire Agreement between the Charity and the Agent with respect to the carrying on by the Agent of the Specified Charitable Activities of the Charity and supersedes all prior oral and written communications not specifically referred to herein. This Agreement may be amended or modified only by means of a written agreement executed by authorized signatories of the Parties with the exception of Schedule "B" which can be amended from time to time by the dated signature of both the Charity and the Agent.

3. SECTION 3 - TERM OF THE AGREEMENT

3.1. The term of this agreement will start on the Effective Date and continue in effect until the deadline for completion of the Specified Charitable Activities or until terminated in accordance with section 9, whichever event first occurs.

3.2. As required and in consultation with the Agent, the Charity might revise Schedules "B" and "C" to reflect changes in the Charity's operations. It is intended that Schedules "B" and "C" will contemplate a calendar year, both for Specified Charitable Activities and the Budget associated with those activities. Where at the end of any calendar year, Charitable Funds have been advanced to the Agent but have not been spent or committed, for Specified Charitable Activities of that calendar year, that money, at the Charity's sole option, shall be returned to the Charity or held by the Agent and treated as an advance in respect of Schedule "B" and "C" amended in respect of the next calendar year.

4. SECTION 4 -CURRENCY

4.1. All amounts payable under this Agreement will be in United States currency.

5. SECTION 5 -TRANSFER OF CHARITABLE FUNDS

5.1. The Agent will use any the Charity's money, entrusted to it, only to carry out the Specified Charitable Activities to advance the Charity's charitable purposes and in accordance with the Budget.

5.2. The Charity will transfer the Charitable Funds to the Agent by way of instalments based on whether the Charity is satisfied that the funds and resources provided in the previous instalment have been applied to the Specified Charitable Activities.

5.3. The Charity has the right to withdraw or withhold funds at its sole discretion. The Charity's intention is to exercise this right, on legal advice, where it is necessary to ensure that the Charity complies with the requirements of the Income Tax Act respecting the obligations of registered Canadian charities.

6. SECTIONS-ACCOUNTS AND RECORDS

6.1. The Agent will keep:

6.1.1. bookkeeping and accounting records of all funds received from the Charity and disbursed by the Agent in the Agent's books and records

6.1.2. copies of all documents, including correspondence, related to the carrying on of the Specified Charitable Activities;

6.1.3. detailed expenditure statements together with copies of all vouchers.

6.2. The Agent will maintain the above-noted documentation for audit and verification in English and provide it to the Charity on its request.

7. SECTION 7 - PROGRESS REPORTS AND INSPECTION

7.1. The Agent will provide a final written report thirty days after the date for completion of the Specified Charitable Activities. All of these reports are to be in a form and contain any information that the Charity may stipulate and require.

7.2. The Agent will provide a final financial report thirty days after the date for completion of the Specified Charitable Activities, and provide copies of receipts and invoices for all expenditures incurred.

7.3. The Charity has the right, on reasonable notice, which may be short, to inspect the work carried out on behalf of the Charity and records maintained by the Agent with respect to same.

8. SECTION 8- CONTACT INFORMATION

8.1. The Charity's contact person for the purpose of this agreement is:

8.2. The Agent's contact person for the purpose of this agreement is:

8.3. Either party may change its contact person on notice to the other.

8.4. Any communication required under this Agreement ("Notice") will, unless otherwise specifically provided for in this Agreement, be given in writing accordance with this section. A Notice may be:

a) personally delivered;
b) sent by prepaid international courier;
c) sent by facsimile; or
d) sent by email (where the recipient acknowledges by return email receipt.

to the Charity and the Agent to the attention of the respective contact persons identified in this Section.

8.5. Any notice sent by prepaid international courier will be deemed to have been received by the Party to whom it is addressed on the 10th mail delivery day following the day on which it was sent. Any Notice sent by facsimile after 4 p.m. local time of the Party to whom it was addressed shall be deemed to have been received by the party to whom it was addressed on the following day on which it was sent.

9. SECTION 9 – TERMINATION

9.1. Either party may terminate this Agreement without cause by giving ninety (90) days advance written notice to the other party.

9.2. The Charity may terminate this Agreement at any time upon notice to the Agent effective immediately in the event of a default by the Agent of any of the terms of this Agreement. Without limitation, the Charity may terminate this Agreement if there is a change in the control or management of the Agent that is unacceptable to the Charity or where the Agent through those acting on its behalf - employees or others - conducts itself in a manner that the Charity, acting reasonably, considers inconsistent with this Agreement.

9.3. Either party may terminate this Agreement without notice if performance of the Agreement is frustrated by a force majeure of a lasting nature.

9.4. In the event of any termination of this Agreement, the Agent will immediately stop carrying on the Specified Charitable Activities and acting for the Charity. The Agent will immediately refund to the Charity all money entrusted with the Agent and not spent in accordance with the Budget. The Agent will also report to the Charity concerning the status of any uncompleted Specified Charitable Activities and provide access to any records relating to these activities as may be required by the Charity.

10. SECTION 10- INDEMNIFICATION

10.1. The Agent will indemnify the Charity against all actions, liability, proceedings, claims, demands, loss, costs, damages and expenses whatsoever which may be brought against or suffered by the Charity or which it may sustain, pay or incur as a result of or in connection with the performance, purported performance or non-performance of this Agreement by the Agent.

11. SECTION 11 -ASSIGNMENT

11.1. Neither this agreement nor any or all rights, duties or obligations under this agreement may be assigned, charged, subcontracted or delegated by the Agent without the prior consent in writing of the Charity; provided that the Agent will be entitled to use its own employees and consultants for the purpose of carrying out the specified charitable activities.

12. SECTION 12-COMPLIANCE WITH LOCAL LAW

12.1. The Agent represents and warrants that neither this agreement, the relationship created by it nor the performance of it is contrary to the current laws, rules or regulations of the local jurisdiction.

12.2. The Agent will comply with all laws and regulations in the local jurisdiction that apply to this agreement and all transactions and activities contemplated or to be performed under this agreement and will keep the Charity informed of any laws or regulations which may affect the Charitable Activities to assure the Charity will not breach any such laws or regulations through lack of awareness thereof.

13. SECTION 13-APPLICABLE LAW

13.1. This Agreement will be interpreted in accordance with and governed by the law of the Province of Ontario and the Agent specifically attorns to the jurisdiction of the courts of the Province of Ontario.

14. SECTION 14 – SEVERABILITY

14.1. Any invalidity, in whole or in part, of any provision of this Agreement will not affect the validity of any other of its provisions.

The Charity and the Agent have each signed this Agreement on the date below the signature of its respective duly authorized representative below.

On behalf of the Agent

Per: ______________________________

Name in print: ______________________________

Title: ______________________________

Signature: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

On behalf of the Charity

Per: ______________________________

Name in print: ______________________________

Title: ______________________________

Signature: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

Appendix “A”

CHARITABLE PUPROSES

Appendix “B”

SPECIFIED CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

Appendix “C”

BUDGET (USD$)

<u>Letter of Intent from R-SEAT</u>

R-SEAT x [redacted] Funding Proposal
September 2024

R-SEAT is thankful to the [redacted] for its crucial support in expanding our digital presence, supporting our Co-Managing Directors through coaching, funding some of our Geneva operations, and making funds available to unlock commitments for refugee-led organizations (RLOs). R-SEAT is now in a privileged position to expand our existing engagements and presence, as well as enhance our impact. In our next phase of development, R-SEAT will be strategically **increasing the profile of our presence in Geneva** and setting a **new base in New York** [redacted] To further our overall mission of realizing meaningful refugee participation as a tool, and to ensure the success of these new endeavours, we **seek a grant of** [redacted] to be allocated in the following strategic areas. All figures are in USD.

<u>Key Components of the Proposed Budget:</u>

1. **Increase of wages totalling** [redacted]
   We intend to raise the annual salary [redacted] by [redacted] annually**.** This will bring their salary closer to the industry average and will reflect the value that they bring to our team. This is a crucial cost, as their presence in Geneva remains essential to R-SEAT's success.

   We also intend to increase the salary of our [redacted] As R-SEAT has been working to secure these arrangements for almost two years, making this move to New York as seamless as possible is essential. This raise will be important to create new connections and strategically establish the organization within the New York space.

2. **Strategic Engagements and Policy Sessions totalling** [redacted]
   [redacted] of this allocation will cover one year of expenses related to strategic meetings, events, and sessions with Permanent Missions, facilitating essential relationship-building and policy advocacy. This is reflective of the average costs R-SEAT has historically incurred hosting and providing these sessions. Sessions such as the [redacted] have had great return on investment and bolstered the legitimacy of our work, making the maintenance of such events an essential feature in R-SEAT's program landscape.

   The remaining [redacted] will be utilized to conceptualize, prepare, and provide two Quiet Diplomacy sessions, with one taking place in Geneva and one in New York. R-SEAT hosted its first Quiet Diplomacy session in partnership with [redacted] and has been strategizing on further important topics to discuss in this format. These sessions are critical for private high-level discussions, revealing the strategic thinking that occurs behind consequential decisions from attendees. R-SEAT is excited to expand upon these sessions and establish the organization as a key player for facilitating these candid conversations.

3. **Travel Costs and Work Accommodations totalling [redacted]**
   Of these funds, [redacted] is requested to cover per diem expenses for our Co-Managing Directors when traveling. Currently, only staff members and other stakeholders are provided with a per diem when travelling through support from other funders. As the Co-Managing Director positions often require in person participation at international events, the requested funds will support these essential roles without adding financial strain.

   With the re-location of one Co-Managing Director to New York, a further [redacted] is requested to cover costs associated with securing an office space for their use. The remaining [redacted] will be allocated to cover general overhead expenses across the organization.

At this crucial moment of expansion in R-SEAT, we are grateful to the [redacted] for supporting our work and bringing us to this juncture. R-SEAT is in a prime position to enhance our impact in Geneva and expand upon it in New York through this additional funding. By supporting the core of the organization, our team, through providing them the conditions to excel in their roles, we believe that the impacts of our work will grow and continue to foster meaningful change for global refugee policies.

Budget Table

Item Description	Budget
HR Expenses	
[redacted]	
[redacted]	
(Program Expenses) Strategic Engagements and Policy Sessions	
Sessions with Permanent Missions	
Quiet Diplomacy Sessions (2)	
(Operations Expenses)	
Per Diem	
Office Space	
Overhead	
Grand Total	

R-SEAT is dedicated to fostering meaningful refugee participation through strategic partnerships, training, and crucially, the development of participatory mechanisms. Should you have any questions about our work, please reach out to us at info@refugeesseat.org.

R-SEAT