

Analytic and Strategic Activities (ASAs)

Guidelines

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASAs Analytic and Strategic Activities

CA Cities Alliance

CG Cities Alliance Consultative Group

FM Financial Management

ITA Independent Technical Assessment

JWP Joint Work Programmes

IAF Integrated Assessment Framework

M&E Monitoring and Evaluation

NGO Non-governmental Organisation

PMS Performance Monitoring System

SOP Cities Alliance Standard Operating Procedures

TM Cities Alliance Task Manager

UN United Nations

UNOPS United Nations Office for Project Services

# Concept and Key Characteristics

1. Analytic and Strategic Activities (ASAs) of the Cities Alliance help promote the role of cities in urban poverty reduction and sustainable development by: delivering quality knowledge products[[1]](#footnote-1) to targeted audiences, fostering policy dialogues with members and partners on city and urban themes, and promoting advocacy initiatives on key global and regional strategic issues.
2. ASAs were introduced in FY14 to provide a common grant-making framework for a former broad range of activities – often defined as Joint Work Programmes (JWP) – that are executed either by the Secretariat or by one or multiple CA members. These Guidelines establish the common strategic umbrella and the defined set of grant-making procedures to be applied to these specific Cities Alliance activities.

## Principles

1. ASAs are based on the following principles:

* **Adherence to the CA Results Framework (Principle 1)**: ASAs must directly contribute to the achievement of specific Secretariat Outputs as identified in the Result Framework of the Cities Alliance.
* **Engaging members (Principle 2)**:ASAs should typically be implemented through a collaboration of more than one CA member (Track II). Secretariat execution (Track I) is preferred under the delivery of specific corporate services and products and/or for transaction cost considerations.
* **Ensuring quality and clarity of the approval process (Principle 3):**ASAs are subject to strong quality control through the systematic use of internal and external, recorded peer review mechanisms. They retain an agile set of procedures for rapid processing.

## Objectives

1. Cities Alliance ASAs have two major objectives:

* **Objective 1:** Strengthening the capacity of the Cities Alliance to develop and disseminate practitioner-oriented tools and diagnostic and create learning opportunities for urban professional and stakeholders on topical issues (e.g. pro-poor development approaches for and in cities, climate change, national policies).
* **Objective 2:** Engaging CA Members on strategic global or regional priorities to formulate common positions and promote joint advocacy initiatives and policy dialogues (e.g. HABITAT III, Arab Spring, Post MDG).

1. Generally, ASAs contribute directly to outputs identified in the CA Results Framework, to which the Secretariat has committed itself to deliver on a permanent basis. More specifically, ASAs help the Secretariat convene partnerships for regional and global priorities (Output 1) and deliver CA knowledge to targeted audiences, create learning opportunities and foster policy dialogues on topical issues (Output 3).
2. ASAs represent the grant products and processes through which the Business Lines (FY12-15) “Knowledge and Learning” and “Communications and Advocacy” are typically operationalized.

## Recipients and Implementing Partners of ASAs

1. ASAs, particularly JWPs, are typically implemented through a collaboration of at typically two CA members. In certain cases, CA Partners could also be involved in the execution of the grant as an additional implementing partner. Partners are non-Consultative Group Members and may include cities, national associations of local governments, national governments, civil society organisations, NGOs, university and research institutes, private enterprises, among others. The activity must also meet country and eligibility criteria as specified in the SOP and these Guidelines.

1. **Initiation, Appraisal and Approval**
2. ASAs are differentiated through a basic two track system: Secretariat-Executed ASAs (Track I) and Member-Executed ASAs – Joint Work Programmes (Track II). Both tracks share the following characteristics:

* Concept Notes defining the proposed activities are to be developed.
* Concept Note Review Meetings in the Secretariat are to be organised and documented.
* Any activity requesting a budget of over US$75,000 requires an external peer review.

1. The following sections elaborate each step of the grant-making process for both tracks.

## Track I: Secretariat-Executed ASAs

1. Track I provides an umbrella for grants[[2]](#footnote-2) that are directly implemented and/or administered by Secretariat staff. Sample activities include:

* Major corporate consultancy services;
* Studies, publications and toolkits on identified key issues and themes, such as Secondary Cities, Incremental Housing and Urbanization Reviews;
* Consultations and policy dialogues, learning events and advocacy activities, such as peer-to-peer events and study tours, the PAF, World Urban Forum and Africities.

1. Secretariat-Executed ASAs should be preferred if: a) the task is directly related to specific corporate service provision or products, and b) transaction costs for delivering the assignment can be substantially minimised. Figure 1 shows a simple and transparent, quality-oriented process consisting of three steps that structure the grant making of Secretariat-Executed ASAs.

**Figure 1: Process steps for Track I proposals (Secretariat-Executed ASAs)**

Deadline

Deadline

### Step 1: Initiation by the Secretariat

1. Based on strategic directions or areas of intervention typically agreed upon in existing Business Plans and Annual Work Plans, the TM of the CA Secretariat discusses the initial idea for an ASA with the CA Manager and receives managerial concurrence that the proposed activity is eligible.

1. The TM formally initiates the grant-making procedure through the development of a Concept Note (see Annex B). The Concept Note is a concise outline of the intended activity stating the rationale and objectives of the proposed activity, the expected outputs and deliverables, and how they link to the Business Plan, Annual Work Plan and RF; implementation arrangements; and resources needed (human and financials). After finalising the Concept Note, the TM facilitates its appraisal.

### Step 2: Appraisal of the Concept Note

1. The TM sends the Concept Note to the group of internal peer reviewers consisting of all CA Task Managers asking for preliminary comments. Proposals exceeding US$75,000 also require an external peer review. Once comments are received, the TM prepares and circulates a matrix compiling initial comments and sets up a Concept Review meeting. The TM chairs the Concept Review Meeting, to which all CA Task Managers are invited.
2. Proposals are judged and screened against the following criteria:

* **Contribution to CA Results Framework.** The central idea behind the proposal and how the suggested activities contribute to CA Results Framework should be clearly stated. The project should have a realistic plan with concrete steps or activities for achieving the project objectives, as well as clear and measurable results.
* **Alignment to the CA work programme. The** suggested activity needs to be reflected in the CA Business Plan, annual work programme or derived from other CA Member recommendations from CG Meetings.
* **Enhancing Quality.** The suggested proposal must to meet a set of quality criteria, such as: clear project design, timeline and budget, a description of applied instruments, and measures for dissemination and learning among the CA partnership.

1. The TM prepares minutes of the Concept Review meeting and revises the Concept Note to reflect all comments provided. The minutes from the review meeting and the final Concept Note are then sent to the CA Manager for clearance and endorsement.

### Step 3: Member Coordination and Approval of Concept Note

1. Subject to the Manager’s clearance, the Concept Note is sent to the CG for two-week member coordination if the request is for an amount greater than US$75,000. If the request is under US$75,000, the CA Manager may approve the proposal directly[[3]](#footnote-3).
2. After Member coordination:

* If there are no comments, or if the comments do not have a material effect on the proposed activities/budget or other key aspects of the activity, the TM sends the Concept Note to the CA Manager for review and endorsement. Final approval follows the authorisation levels and modalities stated under Paragraph 16.
* If substantial comments and inputs from Member coordination are received, the TM consolidates them into a Summary and further revises the Concept Note. The revised Concept Note is then sent to the CA Manager for review and endorsement. Final approval follows the authorisation levels and modalities stated under Paragraph 16.

1. The CA Manager approves[[4]](#footnote-4) all Concept Notes requesting funding of USD 250,000 or less, with the Secretariat informing the CG of these approvals on a regular basis. Proposals requesting funding for amounts greater than USD 250,000 are circulated to the CG for approval on a “no objection” basis.

## Track II: Member-Executed ASAs (Joint Work Programmes)

1. Track II grants are typically implemented by two or more members of the Cities Alliance through JWPs. Actively facilitated by the Secretariat, JWPs are multi-year projects between members that focus on the coordinated development and dissemination of joint knowledge products – such as studies, toolkits and e-learning courses – or on other joint and strategic and advocacy initiatives that seek to leverage the collaborative advantage as a partnership. Examples of these activities include:

* Joint development of new tools, such as for climate sensitive development approaches in cities;
* Joint dissemination of existing tools and practices, such as the promotion of successful community-based planning approaches;
* Strategic and advocacy collaborative initiatives, e.g. in response to regional or global agendas that require a concerted approach (e.g. HABITAT III, Arab Spring, Post MDG).

Member-Executed ASAs are the preferred mode of delivery. Figure 2 illustrates the six-step grant-making process:

**Figure 2: Process steps for Track II proposals (Member-Executed ASAs)**

Deadline

### Step 1: Initiation by the Secretariat with CA Members

1. Track II ASAs should be reflected in CA Business Plans, Annual Work Plans, or be derived from CA Member recommendations from CG Meetings. A designated TM of the Secretariat discusses the initial idea with the CA Manager and receives managerial concurrence that the proposed activity is eligible.
2. The TM engages with potential implementing Member(s) and Partner(s) and facilitates the preparation of the Concept Note (see Annex B). The Concept Note states the following: the rationale and objectives of the proposed activity, the expected outputs and deliverables, and how these link to the Business Plan, annual work programme, and Results Framework; implementation arrangements; and resources needed (human and financial). After finalising the Concept Note, the TM facilitates its appraisal.

### Step 2: Appraisal of Concept Note

1. The CA TM sends the Concept Note to a group of internal peer reviewers consisting of all CA Task Managers. All Track II proposals are also reviewed by external experts. Once comments are received, the TM prepares and circulates a matrix compiling initial comments and sets up a Concept Review meeting. The TM chairs the Concept Review Meeting, to which all CA Task Managers are invited. The TM prepares Meeting Minutes and facilitates Member revision of the Concept Note to reflect feedback/inputs provided during the review process, including the reviews of external experts.
2. The Concept Note is screened against an established set of criteria, which is currently under development.[[5]](#footnote-5) The final Concept Note is then sent to the CA Manager with the relevant documentation for clearance and endorsement, after which it is sent to the CG for Member coordination.
3. After Member coordination:

* If there are no comments or if the comments do not have a material impact on the proposed activities/budget or other key aspects of the activity, the implementing Member(s) work with the TM to develop and submit a Full Proposal (Annex C).
* If substantial comments and inputs from Member coordination are received, the TM consolidates them into a Summary, which is shared with implementing Member(s) along with a request for further revision of the Concept Note. If the revised proposal is satisfactory, the implementing Member(s) work with the TM to develop and submit a Full Proposal.

### Step 3: Development of a Full Proposal

1. The rationale behind the ASA Full Proposal is to provide the additional fiduciary and project design information needed to formally confirm the funding. The major functions of the Full Proposal are: (i) to provide a full understanding of the project design; (ii) to highlight compliance with existing UNOPS and CA fiduciary policies; and (iii) to provide the relevant M&E information in terms of baseline and targets.

The Full Proposal is:

* Thorough in testing the relevance of the proposed project to ASA objectives;
* Focused on the design of the project, encompassing Results Framework, M&E, timeline, institutional arrangement and budget;
* Based on the Concept Note but is also a standalone document.

### Step 4: Appraisal of the Full Proposal

1. Once a full proposal is received, the TM undertakes threshold screening to ensurecompliance with funding eligibility, selection criteria, and safeguard requirements. The TM also facilitates the review of other fiduciary aspects by assigned specialists as needed in accordance with the relevant modalities and tools (see Section 2.3).
2. A Threshold Screening Report is prepared for each proposal. The Threshold Screening Report includes: (i) the assessment of the proposal against a predefined set of relevant criteria; and (ii) a summary of the relevant fiduciary findings emerging from the various assessments. For proposals that do not pass the threshold screening in accordance with the TM’s assessment, comments are sent to the applicant Member(s) with feedback on the revisions needed to strengthen the application or address the identified gaps, including recommendations on procurement and Financial Management matters and recommended technical and institutional mitigating measures against identified risks.
3. For proposals that pass the threshold screening in accordance with the TM’s assessment, the proposal and the related Threshold Screening Report are sent to the CA Manager, with a copy to all relevant teams, recommending endorsement and clearance to proceed to final approval. Final approval will then follow the authorisation levels and modalities as outlined in Step 5.

### Step 5: Approval of Track II ASA activities.

1. The CA Manager approves[[6]](#footnote-6) all Concept Notes requesting funding of USD 250,000 or less, with the Secretariat informing the CG of these approvals on a regular basis. Proposals requesting funding for amounts greater than USD 250,000 are circulated to the CG for approval on a “no objection” basis.

## Fiduciary Review

### Financial Management

1. All CA grant recipients are required to maintain or cause to be maintained acceptable financial management arrangements (i.e. budgeting, accounting, internal control, funds flow, financial reporting, and auditing, and other risk management systems) that adequately reflect the operations, resources and expenditures related to grant-funded activities. Such arrangements should provide assurance that the proceeds of the grant will be used for the intended purposes. And where feasible, these financial management arrangements should be integral to existing recipient’s institutional systems and processes.
2. ASA Track II proposals are subject to afinancial management assessment of the Recipient organization based on the Integrated Assessment Framework (IAF). The assessment is part of the package that is submitted with the Threshold Screening Report. For additional details on assessment of financial management capacity during the appraisal process, see the SOP, Section 13, *Fiduciary Management of Grant Activities*.

### Procurement

1. CA grant recipients are expected to have acceptable procurement arrangements that ensure efficiency and cost-effectiveness, quality of goods and services, transparency, and fair competition.
2. ASA Track II proposals are subject to aprocurement capacity assessment of the Recipient organization based on the Integrated Assessment Framework (IAF). The assessment is part of the package that is submitted with the Threshold Screening Report. For additional details on procurement assessment during the appraisal process, see the SOP, Section 13, *Fiduciary Management of Grant Activities*.

### Safeguards

1. The Cities Alliance is committed to ensuring that all activities it supports are environmentally and socially sound, and that adequate mitigation measures for any potential adverse impacts/risks that may arise from the implementation of project activities are designed and implemented throughout the project life.
2. ASA Track II proposalswill be screened by the TM for any potential adverse impacts/risks using the standard environmental and social screening tool (ISDS). The assessment is part of the package that is submitted with the Threshold Screening Report, and should include adequate mitigation measures for the identified risks. For additional details on safeguards screening during the appraisal process, see the SOP, Section 13, *Fiduciary Management of Grant Activities*.

1. **Grant Set-up and Disbursement of Funds** **[under development]**

## Memoranda of Understanding and Grant Support Agreements

1. Grants are governed by agreements based on the following modalities: UN to UN Agency Contribution Agreements and Externally Financed Outputs Agreements[[7]](#footnote-7) for inter-agency grants (Annex H); Memoranda of Understanding for grants for Governments (Annex I); Grant Support Agreements for grants for all other external recipients are governed by (Annex J). UNOPS expenditures are specified in the CA annual budget.

## Creation of Records

1. Following the approval of a proposal, the TM in consultation with relevant staff in the Secretariat and in UNOPS creates the relevant records in ATLAS and in other systems as may be required in order to facilitate timely and effective grant payment and monitoring during implementation. Such records are approved in the systems by the authorised officials in accordance with UNOPS regulations and procedures.

## Disbursement Package Preparation

1. The CA TM ensures that the project budget, M&E, activities, outputs and deliverables, milestones and timelines as well as other terms of the grant agreement and reporting templates are agreed upon with the Recipient. The CA TM then prepares the following: (i) Grant Approval Request together with Project Proposal, Evaluation Report and other supporting documentation; and (ii) Standardised legally approved grant agreement, in any of the appropriate modalities, together with its supporting annexes, inclusive of templates for reporting. The package is submitted to the authorising official for review and signing of the grant agreement, in any of the appropriate modalities, in accordance with UNOPS regulations and procedures.

## Grant Effectiveness

1. Once the grant agreement in any of the appropriate modalities is signed by UNOPS, the CA TM facilitates its signing by the Recipient and submission of one original countersigned copy. After receipt of the countersigned agreement by UNOPS, the first installment of the grant is paid in accordance with the terms stated therein. Subsequent installments, if any, are paid in accordance with the agreed schedule and satisfactory achievement of the milestones including timely submission of acceptable financial and narrative reports, as may be required under the grant agreement in any of the appropriate modalities.
2. **Supervision, Monitoring and Evaluation** **[under development]**

## Reporting

1. The CA Secretariat has the following monitoring and evaluation responsibilities:

* Overseeing projects via regular missions and/or desktop reviews of quarterly financial reports and bi-annual progress reports against agreed results framework per grant;
* Monitoring progress of ASAs against the overall Cities Alliance Results Framework and provide data and information for corporate scorecard reporting.
* Supporting the feedback of knowledge and learning from the above monitoring into the programme and making adjustments as necessary to the programme design and management.

## Performance Monitoring System [to be developed]

## Disclosure policies and record retention [to be developed]

## Branding and Dissemination of Deliverables

1. All deliverables, in particular publications, financed under ASA tracks need to clearly be identified with the CA logo according to established CA specifications as well as logos of JWP members. This also applies to knowledge products of CA members that used CA funding as co-financing.
2. As stipulated in the CA Results Framework, tracking the use of CA knowledge products is considered as a key indicator to report on corporate results as well as ensure that feedbacks from users are taken into consideration in the design of future knowledge products. Against this background, TMs are advised to ensure that dissemination strategies are built into the design of proposals, particularly for ASA Track II proposals.
3. Methods of dissemination might include: linkage and exchange events to share outputs; informing training curricula for urban practitioners and decision makers; workshops; training ateliers with selected target groups, etc. Basic and compulsory methods for dissemination of any deliverable financed under ASAs tracks is the dissemination through existing CA information management systems, such as the CA project database and www.citiesalliance.org.

# ANNEX A Procedures Flow Chart [under development]

# ANNEX B ASA Track I and II Concept Note Template [under development]

# ANNEX C ASA Track II Full Proposal Template [under development]

1. A knowledge product is defined as a medium that efficiently and effectively creates, locates, captures, and shares the expertise of the Cities Alliance in areas such as slum upgrading, City Development Strategies and National Urban Policies. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This is applicable only for Secretariat-Executed activities above US$25,000. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This approval does not pertain to signature of grants, which is subject to level of delegation of authority provided. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This approval does not pertain to signature of grants, which is subject to level of delegation of authority provided. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Criteria may include: Partnership arrangement, indication of how CA money is used to build operational bridges between CA members, existing activities, dissemination strategy, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This approval does not pertain to signature of grants, which is subject to level of delegation of authority provided. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. If UNOPS confirms this modality (undergoing legal review). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)