



WIPO Voluntary Fund  
for Accredited Indigenous and Local Communities  
Questions and Answers

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- The Voluntary Contribution Fund is governed by the provisions described in the Annex to document *WO/GA/32/6*, approved without change by the thirty-second WIPO General Assembly. This informal document was prepared by the WIPO Secretariat to make the provisions easier to read, by emphasizing several key points.
- The “Committee” referred to is the WIPO Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore.

Summary

Timeframe

Question 1:

What purpose does the Voluntary Contribution Fund serve?

Question 2:

Who may request financial support from the Fund?

Question 3:

When should an application be submitted and how?

Question 4:

How is information provided on the applications submitted?

Question 5:

How is the Fund financed and how is information provided on the resources available from the Fund?

Question 6:

Who nominates the beneficiary(ies) of support from the Fund? (answer: the Advisory Board)

Question 7:

When are applications for support from the Fund examined by the Advisory Board?

Question 8:

What are the criteria taken into consideration by the Advisory Board when nominating an applicant for support from the Fund?

Question 9:

What happens when an application is recommended by the Advisory Board?

Question 10:

What happens when an application is not accepted by the Advisory Board?

Question 11:

What happens in the case of withdrawal by an applicant granted support from the Fund or in the case of *force majeure*?

## TIMEFRAME OF THE PROCEDURE

### Previous sessions of the Intergovernmental Committee

#### *Observer accreditation*

The Member States of WIPO approve in advance the accreditation of the *ad hoc* observer to the Committee at a previous Committee session (or they have previously accredited the observer to WIPO). It is indispensable to take this step in advance before an eligible application can be made for possible financial support from the Fund. The observers *already* accredited do not need again to seek accreditation before submitting an application for support from the Fund.



### 60 days before session X of the Committee

#### *Submission of applications*

The previously accredited observer and its designated candidate wishing to apply for financial support from the Fund for subsidized participation in Committee session X+1 submit an application form to the Secretariat at the latest 60 days before session X. Consequently, applications for funded participation at the *tenth* session of the Committee are submitted 60 days before the *ninth* session of the Committee.



### Session X of the Committee

#### *Selection of applicants for the next session*

The Committee meets and appoints the members of the Advisory Board. The Advisory Board considers the applications and recommends to the Director General those which will receive funding for participation at the next Committee session (X+1).

**Question 1: What purpose does the Voluntary Contribution Fund serve?**

Article 2

“The Fund is established exclusively to finance the participation in the work of the Committee and other related activities of WIPO of the nominated representatives of accredited observers which represent indigenous or local communities, or otherwise represent customary holders or custodians of traditional knowledge or traditional cultural expressions”.

Article 5 (e)

“The financial support will cover the purchase of a return economy class ticket, including taxes connected with the ticket, between the domicile of the beneficiary and Geneva or any other meeting place, by the most direct and cheapest route. It will also cover living expenses in the form of a daily subsistence allowance at the rate specified by the United Nations for Geneva or for the city where said meeting is held, with an additional flat rate of US\$60 to cover expenses incurred at the time of departure and arrival. All other expenses related to the participation of the beneficiaries in the session concerned will be excluded from Fund support”.

Article 5 (b)

“Each provision of support will relate to a single Committee session and any related activities held consecutively with the Committee session. Provision of support on one occasion shall not prejudice possible support for the participation of the same beneficiary in other sessions”.

Note by the WIPO Secretariat:

Only the representatives of the observers *previously* accredited by WIPO or on an *ad hoc* basis by the Intergovernmental Committee are eligible to submit applications to the Fund. The establishment of the Fund does not therefore replace the procedure of accreditation by the Committee or WIPO, which remains in place. If you wish to participate in the Committee (with or without funding from the Voluntary Fund), but you are not a representative of a previously accredited organization, that organization should begin by submitting a request for accreditation and it must obtain that accreditation, *before* being eligible to submit an application to the Fund.

It is the Member States of WIPO, and not the WIPO Secretariat, which take the decisions relating to the question as to which organizations are accredited. The Secretariat’s role is limited to receiving requests for accreditation and submitting them to the Member States for consideration. At the beginning of each session, the Member States participating in the Committee are invited to make decisions on *ad hoc* accreditations for the NGOs that have requested observer status. More information on accreditation is available at <https://www.wipo.int/tk/en/igc/participation.html>.

**Question 2: Who may request financial support from the Fund?**

Article 5 (c)

“To be eligible for financial support, persons would need to satisfy each of the following criteria:

- (i) be a natural person;
- (ii) belong, as a member, to an accredited observer which represents indigenous or local communities, or otherwise represents customary holders or custodians of traditional knowledge or traditional cultural expressions;
- (iii) have been duly nominated in writing by the observer to represent it at the session designated for the support and as possible beneficiary of support from the Fund;
- (iv) be able to participate effectively and contribute to the session intended for the support, such as through expressing the experiences and concerns of indigenous and local communities and other customary holders and custodians of traditional knowledge or traditional cultural expressions;
- (v) and whom the Advisory Board considers would not be able to take part in the session concerned without support from the Fund, owing to a lack of alternative financial resources”.

Article 3

“Since participation in the Committee’s work is restricted by its rules of procedure to its members and accredited observers, and in order to ensure their capacity to participate fully in the Committee’s work, the funded representatives should only be the nominated representatives of observers which are duly and previously accredited to the Committee, either as *ad hoc* observers accredited by the Committee itself, or as observers accredited to WIPO.”

**Question 3: When should an application be submitted and how?**

Article 6 (e)

“Duly documented requests for financial support enabling participation in a Committee session will be sent to the WIPO Director General by the applicants in their own name, so as to arrive at least 60 days before the opening of the Committee session which precedes the session for which support is requested. Later requests will be considered at the following session.

**Note by the WIPO Secretariat**

Taking into account Articles 3, 5(c) and 6(e), the previously accredited observers and their designated candidates who meet the eligibility criteria are invited to submit their applications in due time (that is to say 60 days before the session which precedes the one for which a Fund intervention is requested) using a form designed to make it easier to process their application. This form is available on the Internet site of the Traditional Knowledge Division (<https://www.wipo.int/tk/en/igc/participation.html>).

**Question 4: How is information provided on the applications submitted?**

Article 6 (f)

“Before each Committee session, the WIPO Director General will communicate for the information of participants an information note setting out:

(...)

(vii) a sufficiently detailed description of the applicants seeking support for the following session”.

**Question 5: How is the Fund financed and how is information provided on the resources available from the Fund?**

Article 6 (a)

“Fund resources will come exclusively from voluntary contributions by governments, NGOs and other private or public entities, and specifically shall not be drawn from the regular WIPO budget”.

Article 6 (f)

“Before each Committee session, the WIPO Director General will communicate for the information of participants an information note setting out:

- i) the level of the voluntary contributions paid into the Fund on the date on which the document was drafted,
  - ii) the identity of the contributors (unless individual contributors have
  - iii) expressly requested to remain anonymous),
  - iv) the amount of the resources available taking into account the funds disbursed,
- (...)”

**Question 6: Who nominates the beneficiary(ies) of support from the Fund?**

Article 6 (d)

“Decisions to extend financial support will be taken, for formal purposes, by the WIPO Director General, following an express recommendation by the Advisory Board. The recommendations made by the Advisory Board relating to the choice of beneficiaries will be binding on the Director General and not subject to appeal”.

Article 7

“The Advisory Board will comprise nine members, including:

- the Chair of the Committee, appointed *ex officio* or, where that proves to be impossible, one of the Vice-Chairs nominated by the Chair as his or her deputy;
- five members from the delegations of Member States of the Committee reflecting an appropriate geographical balance; and
- three members from accredited observers representing indigenous and local communities or other customary holders or custodians of TK or TCEs.

(...)”

Article 8

“Apart from the *ex officio* member, the members of the Advisory Board will be elected by the Committee on the second day of each of its sessions, on a proposal by its Chair, following consultation with the member states and their regional groups and, respectively, accredited observers’ representatives. Apart from that of the *ex officio* member, their mandates will expire with the opening of the following Committee session”.

**Question 7: When are applications for support from the Fund examined by the Advisory Board?**

Article 6 (g)

“Following the election of its members, the Advisory Board will be convened by the WIPO Director General to meet on the margins of the Committee session which precedes the session for which support is being considered (...)”

Article 9

“The Advisory Board will meet regularly on the margins of Committee sessions, subject to the requirement that a quorum of seven members, including the Chair or one of the Vice-Chairs, should be present”.

Article 6 (i)

“The Advisory Board will adopt its recommendation before the end of the Committee session on the margins of which it meets (...)”

**Question 8: What are the criteria taken into consideration by the Advisory Board when nominating an applicant for support from the Fund?**

Article 6 (h)

“The Advisory Board must ensure that all the criteria for eligibility of applicants set out above, in particular in Article 5, are satisfied during its deliberations, and should agree on a recommended list of eligible applicants who should benefit from Fund support. The Advisory Board should also ensure, when adopting its recommendation, that:

- a balance is maintained between the male and female beneficiaries, and between the geo-cultural regions from which they come, in successive sessions insofar as is possible; and
- where necessary, the benefits are taken into account which the Committee’s work may derive from the repeated participation in its sessions of the same beneficiary.

(...)”

Article 5 (d)

“In taking account of the need to support those who lack alternative financial resources, the Advisory Board should address the particular needs of observers based in developing and least developed countries, and small island developing countries. In ensuring a reasonable geographical spread of participation, the Advisory Board should also take due account of the seven geo-cultural regions recognized by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Support.”

**Note by the WIPO Secretariat:**

The seven geocultural regions recognized by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Support are Africa, North America, Latin America, the Arctic Region, Asia, Europe, Russian Federation and the Pacific Region.

The Advisory Board is also advised to take due account of gender balance.

**Question 9: What happens when an application is recommended by the Advisory Board?**

Article 10

“A recommendation for the selection of any beneficiaries will require the agreement of at least seven members of the Advisory Board (...)”

Article 6 (i)

“The Advisory Board will adopt its recommendation before the end of the Committee session on the margins of which it meets. This recommendation will identify:

- (i) the future session intended for financial support (i.e. the subsequent session of the Committee),
- (ii) the applicants whom the Advisory Board agrees should be supported for that session and for whom funds are available,
- (iii) any applicant or applicants whom the Advisory Board agrees should be supported in principle but for whom insufficient funds are available,
- (...)

The Advisory Board will immediately forward the contents of the recommendation to the Director General who will take a decision in accordance with the recommendation. The Director General will inform the Committee immediately and, in any cases, prior to the end of its current session, by means of an information note specifying the decision taken concerning each applicant”.

Note by the WIPO Secretariat

Two different cases may occur.

- The application is accepted and the resources available in the Fund are sufficient. In this case, the Secretariat will contact the applicant whose request has been accepted and will make the practical arrangements relating to the financial support provided for the applicant from the Fund.
- The application is accepted but the resources available in the Fund are insufficient. In this case, the application is postponed until the following session, but it enjoys priority over the others.

**Question 10: What happens when an application is not accepted by the Advisory Board?**

Article 10

“ (...) If an application is not agreed upon, it may continue to be examined at the following session, unless that application received three votes or fewer. In the latter case, the request will be considered to have been rejected, without prejudice to the right of the applicant to submit a new request at a later date”.

Article 6 (i)

“The Advisory Board will adopt its recommendation before the end of the Committee session on the margins of which it meets. This recommendation will identify:

- (i) the future session intended for financial support (i.e. the subsequent session of the Committee),
- (...)
- (iv) any applicant or applicants whose application has been rejected in accordance with the procedure in Article 10,
- (v) any applicant or applicants whose application has been postponed until the next session of the Committee in accordance with the procedure in Article 10.

The Advisory Board will immediately forward the contents of the recommendation to the Director General who will take a decision in accordance with the recommendation. The Director General will inform the Committee immediately and, in any cases, prior to the end of its current session, by means of an information note specifying the decision taken concerning each applicant”.

Note by the Secretariat of WIPO

- An application may be rejected (if it does not obtain more than three votes): in this case, the applicant must submit a new application in order to be reconsidered.
- An application may be postponed to the following session (if it obtains more than three votes, but fewer than seven votes): in this case, the applicant is not obliged to submit a new application to be reconsidered.

**Question 11: What happens in the case of withdrawal by an applicant granted support from the Fund or in the case of *force majeure*?**

Article 5 (f)

“If an applicant who has been selected to benefit from Fund support has to withdraw or is unable to take part in the session concerned, any sums unexpended and recovered, apart from possible cancellation charges, will be transferred to the reserve of the resources available to the Fund and the choice which was made with regard to said applicant shall be considered null and void. The applicant will nonetheless be entitled to submit a new request for the following session, provided that information is submitted giving a good reason for the withdrawal or nature of the event which otherwise made participation impossible”.