

GUIDELINES

2025-26 UCF Edu-Fund Platform – Second Edition

Funding initiative for multidimensional programmes aimed at contrasting educational poverty

1. UNICREDIT FOUNDATION

UniCredit Foundation is the corporate foundation of UniCredit Group whose purpose is to unlock the potential of Europe's next generation. Its mission is to **empower young people across Europe by creating equal opportunities in education** and to support them in making their way in life and the professional world. The Foundation's initiatives aim at **combating school drop-out, enhancing employability, encouraging university attainment and promoting study and research**. The Foundation is committed to supporting communities in all countries where UniCredit Group operates.

2. 2025-26 UCF Edu-Fund Platform – Second Edition

The UniCredit Foundation is launching the **"2025-26 UCF Edu-Fund Platform – Second Edition"**.

With this initiative, the Foundation reaffirms its strong commitment to promoting equal access to quality education for young people, while addressing the widespread and complex challenges of early school leaving and the unequal development of the skills needed for university or workforce entry.

The "2025-26 UCF Edu-Fund Platform – Second Edition" is a **bold initiative aimed at supporting programmes that address educational poverty, among lower and upper secondary school students aged 11 to 19**.

Adopting a **multidimensional approach**, the programmes supported by the platform address both the core and peripheral factors contributing to the educational challenges faced by young people in the countries where UniCredit operates.

With a **funding pool of up to 6 million**, the platform will remain open from November 17, 2025, to February 16, 2026. It offers **three streams of funding opportunities**, ranging from €100,000 to over €1 million, to accommodate programmes of varying scope and scale. These streams are designed to engage a diverse array of entities committed to fostering quality education and regional development, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive response to the educational needs of the community.

The initiative extends to **Austria, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia** and it is open to non-profit organisations with in-depth knowledge of educational needs.

3. OBJECTIVES, TARGET ORGANIZATIONS AND GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

The "2025-26 UCF Edu-Fund Platform – Second Edition" aims to support bold programmes to combat educational poverty that preferably adopt a multidimensional approach by involving key community stakeholders.

3.1 Objectives

Programmes aimed at addressing educational poverty in favour of lower and upper secondary school students (aged 11-19), with a particular focus on:

- addressing early school drop-out
- training teachers
- encouraging university attainment

- enhancing employability for students, through the acquisition of adequate skills to enter the workforce

3.2 Target organizations

Programmes carried out by **non-profit organisations**¹ operating locally or cross-country with substantial knowledge and presence in one or more countries mentioned in point 3.3.

3.3 Geographical coverage

Programmes implemented in the following countries: **Austria, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia.**

4. FUNDING STREAMS

The “2025-26 UCF Edu-Fund Platform – Second Edition” envisages **three streams based on the type and size of the proposed programme.**

While these streams share common objectives, target groups, and areas of intervention as outlined in point 3, they differ in the following criteria:

4.1 Stream 1 – Small-scale programmes

Scope	Local programmes (implemented in one country among those listed under 3.3)
Duration	18-36 months
Funding	Between €100k-€300k
Description	Small-scale programmes designed to create meaningful impact at a local level. These programmes should be tailored to the specific needs of their communities, with clearly defined objectives and measurable outcomes

4.2 Stream 2 – Mid-scale programmes

Scope	National and local programmes (implemented in one country among those listed under 3.3)
Duration	24-36 months
Funding	Between €300k-€600k
Description	Robust programmes addressing key issues at the national ² and/or local ³ level within a single UniCredit country. These programmes should be clearly defined and capable of delivering measurable results within their target communities

4.3 Stream 3 – Large-scale programmes

Scope	Multi-country (a minimum of two countries among those listed under 3.3) or national wide programmes
Duration	24-36 months (longer programmes may be considered)

¹**For Italy only:** applicants must be “Enti del Terzo Settore (**ETS**) listed on **RUNTS** as defined by art.4 of Legislative Decree n. 117/2017”.

²Programmes implemented in multiple regions and/or areas of the same country

³Programmes implemented only in specific regions and/or areas of the same country

Funding	€600k or more
Description	Ambitious, wide-reaching programmes capable of delivering significant and measurable impact at the national level or across multiple countries, with outcomes assessed and validated by an independent external evaluator, or, alternatively, with an impact evaluation carried out by an internal MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning) team using a validated methodology. Programmes in this category should demonstrate a strong strategic framework, along with the capacity for large-scale implementation and long-term sustainability.

5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible, applicants must:

5.1 Respect the following requirements:

- Be non-profit organizations⁴ with a presence (e.g. headquarters, representative office, branch/branches, correspondents, etc.) in one of the countries listed section under 3.3. Public administrations, political parties and movements, trade unions, professional and representative associations of economic categories, employers' associations, and entities under the direction, coordination, or control of these bodies are not eligible
- Have **been established for at least five years** and possess a solid financial structure (UniCredit Foundation will verify the validity of the documents uploaded to the platform and reserves the right to request further information)
- Have at **least three years of experience in the field of education**, demonstrated through solid programmes with significant social impact and demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the educational needs to be addressed and of the territory in which the programme is to be implemented
- Submit a maximum of one application per stream: multiple applications by the same applicant for the same stream will not be considered
- It is possible to submit one application for each stream: all applications will be assessed, but only one can be funded.
- The applicant entity shall act as the project leader and will be the sole counterpart of UniCredit Foundation. All relationships with partner entities will be managed directly by the grant recipient.
- **The requested grant may not exceed twice the organization's revenues from the previous year for a two-year programme, or three times the previous year's revenues for a three-year programme.**

5.2 Propose programmes that:

- Generate tangible and monitorable social impact in combating educational poverty. For large-scale programmes the implementation of a **third-party impact assessment** is required, while for small and mid-scale programs it will be considered an added value.
- Provide coherent objectives and intervention strategy as well as effective (financial and human) resource planning, time management and monitoring of activities

⁴Proposal for a multi-partner programme must designate a single lead applicant

- Based on the objectives outlined for the programme, identify relevant context data, define KPIs, set targets and guidelines for measuring programme outcomes (including **source of data verification**)
- Should the programme be already running, propose a plan for scaling or expanding it (e.g. to a larger number of schools/students in the same country/region; to other geographic areas - as indicated in 3.3 - where similar educational needs were identified)
- Provide a detailed budget **including monitoring and impact evaluation as well as communication expenses.**

The following **activities** are **ineligible for funding** unless they are directly related to the proposed programme and the allocated budget is proportionate: purchasing land and/or acquiring immovable property; building construction; ordinary activities (e.g. the expenses relating to the management and maintenance activities necessary to guarantee the daily, ordinary activity, such as payment of salaries, rent of premises, purchase of materials of ordinary administration, etc.); granting scholarships; organizing events, conferences, or exhibitions.

6. REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

After completing the application form, the following documents must be uploaded to the platform:

- Statute (Statute may be submitted in the local language, but an English summary is required)
- Last three Financial Statements (Financial Statements may be submitted in the local language, but an English summary is required.)
- Child Safeguarding Policy (in English)
- Programme Budget (in English, using the form available on the platform)
- Anti-Corruption declaration signed by the legal representative of the organization (form available on the platform)

To guarantee that all the eligibility criteria and requirements listed in points 5. and 6. are met, UniCredit Foundation may engage, where necessary, the relevant departments of UniCredit S.p.A.

7. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The evaluation of the proposed programmes will be based on a set of predefined criteria, with each criterion assigned a weight (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Evaluation criteria

CRITERIA	WEIGHT (%)
Experience and competence of the proposing non-profit organization: this criterion refers to the applicant's profile, focusing on their expertise in the non-profit sector, particularly in the education field relevant to the target beneficiaries. Evaluation will consider years of experience, knowledge of the territory and its needs, as well as the track record and results of past programmes.	25
Coherence and content of the action plan, methodology and approach, monitoring and reporting tools: these criteria refer to the clarity and depth of each action's content, ensuring consistency with the respective objectives, qualitative characteristics (as indicated below) and expected results, as well as an appropriate output and outcome impact evaluation.	50

Cost-efficiency of the proposal and sustainability over time: the cost-efficiency of the proposal means whether the costs of the proposed action are adequate to the activities and proportionate to the expected results, referring also to the overall organization budget. The programme must also demonstrate sustainability (in terms of economic viability, continuity, and long-term stability) beyond the grant period, with financial resources foreseen to support the continuation of the initiative.	25
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Preference may be given to eligible organizations fulfilling the following **qualitative characteristics**:

- **Community-centric approach:** the programme adopts a comprehensive strategy in which teaching and learning remain central, while complementary interventions are implemented with the support of key community stakeholders
- **Opportunity for scaling and/or expansion:** the programme is realistically scalable to other cities, towns, or regions within the same country and/or replicable in other countries where UniCredit operates, with similar educational needs, or can be expanded in scope – provided that the applicant has both the capacity and the willingness to do so

8. APPLICATION PROCEDURE AND EVALUATION PROCESS

Applications must be submitted exclusively via the [“2025-26 UCF Edu-Fund Platform – 2nd Edition”](#) tool and written entirely in English. Applications submitted partially or wholly in any other language will be considered ineligible.

Winners of the previous edition of the Edu-Fund Platform are not eligible to apply.

The application window is open from November 17, 2025, to February 16, 2026 (until 23:59 Italian Time, CET)

The evaluation process will be carried out by a Committee responsible for a comprehensive assessment of the applications based on the criteria outlined in point 7. The Evaluation Committee will begin its review after the call has closed, excluding any applications deemed ineligible.

The Evaluation Committee will be composed of international members with diverse backgrounds (including non-profit, academia, civil society, and business) each possessing proven expertise in the field of education.

The timeline for the evaluation process and the list of selected winners for each stream will be communicated via the [UniCredit Foundation website](#). **Only successful applicants will be notified**; no individual feedback will be provided due to the usual high number of applications.

The evaluation of the applications will be made entirely at the discretion of the Evaluation Committee, with full authority vested in the Committee regarding these matters.

Moreover, the Foundation reserves the right not to allocate the entire funding, or any part of it, if it deems the submitted proposals to be inadequate and/or undeserving, even partially.

9. AGREEMENT AND REPORTING PROCEDURES

UniCredit Foundation and the awarded organizations will enter into a donation Agreement. In accordance with the Agreement, the selected entities will receive a contribution disbursed in instalments. The first installment will be paid immediately after the signing of the Agreement; this will be followed by 2 to 3 installments. The terms and timeline of these disbursements will be jointly determined by the UniCredit Foundation and the organization during the finalization of the Agreement.

The Agreement will also outline the reporting schedule, which will include periodic narrative and quantitative reports on the programme progress towards targets indicated in the application, including budget spending updates. Upon programme completion, a budget review will also be required.

The submission of a financial statement detailing the expenses incurred and the supporting evidence is not required.

10. OBLIGATIONS AND CONTACTS

Submission to the “2025-26 UCF Edu-platform – Second Edition” implies the complete and unconditional acceptance of these Terms and Conditions.

Further information and clarifications may be requested to: info@unicreditfoundation.org

Milan, 17 November 2025