

Terms of References

Expert - Strategic Development and Spatial Planning on Local Level

Polaris: Supporting Multilevel Governance in Ukraine

About SALAR International & its engagement in Ukraine

SALAR International is a subsidiary of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), representing all 290 municipalities and 21 regions in Sweden. As the international branch of SALAR, we work globally to support local democracy and good governance in developing and transitioning countries. Our expertise covers areas such as capacity building in municipal management and service delivery, local and regional development planning, support for local government associations, decentralisation policies and European integration. Geographically, SALAR International's projects cover countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Middle East and the Sub-Saharan Africa.

SALAR International has been engaged in Ukraine since 2014, providing support to Ukraine's decentralisation process through three major initiatives focusing on building a robust multi-level governance system, increasing accessibility and quality of services at the local level, and enhancing international cooperation between municipalities from Ukraine and the EU. After the full-scale invasion, SALAR International has added crisis support to Ukrainian municipalities, providing them with material assistance.

Description of the assignment context

To address the changing needs of Ukrainian municipalities and national level stakeholders during wartime, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has initiated a broader programme in support of multilevel governance and recovery. This programme is called "Polaris: Supporting Multi-level Governance in Ukraine". It is implemented by SALAR International and planned for four years (July 2024-May 2028).

Polaris Programme aims to work with both short and long-term focus, addressing the needs of the multi-level governance system in Ukraine and in parallel strengthening municipalities' public service provision, as well as their direct engagement in the recovery and reconstruction processes, in line with the requirements of Ukraine's EU accession.

The Programme's support is provided through two operational components: one focusing on policy and collaboration with national stakeholders, and the other providing direct support to municipalities. The support encompasses six thematic areas: education, fiscal decentralisation and budgeting, administrative services, locally-led recovery, municipal enterprises and international municipal partnerships. In addition, the Programme will provide material support to meet short-term material crisis needs of municipalities.

To uphold previous gains in Ukraine's decentralisation process, it will be important for territorial communities to demonstrate that they can lead local recovery and reconstruction efforts, in dialogue with their citizens, as well as regional and national authorities. However, many territorial communities in Ukraine do not possess adequate spatial or strategic planning capacity. To overcome this gap, technical assistance is needed to support local planning processes, including the identification of recovery and reconstruction projects that are eligible for funding.

The work within the Polaris Programme's thematic area "Locally-led Recovery" (LLR) will focus mainly on recovery planning in partner Municipalities. A strong emphasis will be placed on: local ownership of the process by Municipalities; evidence-based formal spatial planning and strategic recovery planning drawing from a range of data sources; holistic and integrated planning; sustainability perspectives and future-oriented scenario planning; and the establishment of synergies between local and regional planning.

Based on the recovery planning process, Municipalities will be supported to identify projects that address specific service delivery and infrastructure priorities. Projects should be catalytic by nature, with the aim of stimulating local development, as well as further recovery financing. SALAR International will assist Municipalities to follow, and ensure mechanisms to report back to the community on specific project implementation.

The Methodology will be implemented based on internationally recognised approaches to resilience, recovery and sustainable urban development, tailored to the Ukrainian context and taking account of Ukrainian urban planning and local development legislation, in coordination with the Ministry for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine. Based on the outputs developed, SALAR International and partners will also engage in national policy dialogue on the framework for recovery and reconstruction, also taking account of the requirements of Ukraine's EU integration process.

Organisational set up

The programme is a joint Swedish-Ukrainian initiative with management structures in both Stockholm and Kyiv. It encourages a flat organisational structure, meaning a high degree of autonomy and responsibility for involved experts, as well as strong local ownership among beneficiaries such as national stakeholders and Ukrainian municipalities.

It is expected that more than 80 people will be working full-time in Ukraine in the Polaris programme, where the Locally Led Recovery team is one of several thematic teams, alongside also various support units. The Programme has its office in Kyiv but the support and activities target local self-government in all regions of Ukraine and will be implemented in all regions controlled by the Ukrainian government. The support is provided on demand, in most cases through open calls.

Role description

This assignment is part of the implementation phase of the "Locally-Led Recovery" component. It will include refinement of the existing methodological approach, further elaboration of the current task, comprehensive consultancy support to Municipalities in the development of strategic and urban planning documents, needs assessment, capacity building of Municipalities in this thematic area, and formulation of projects under the general recovery frame.

The Expert in Spatial Planning and Strategic Development on Local Level is part of the thematic Locally-led Recovery team and will work under the guidance of the Local Team Leader for "Locally-led Recovery" and in tandem with experts and management units in Stockholm and Kyiv.

Main responsibilities

- Serve as the main Polaris focal point for a number of partner Hromadas.
- Support the development and implementation of the “Locally-led Recovery” Methodology, including the Methodology for the formulation of documents in the areas of strategic planning and urban planning.
- Conduct an expert review of existing documents and decisions governing strategic and spatial planning.
- Assess and strengthen the capacities of local self-government (LSG) officials in the areas of strategic and spatial planning, as well as infrastructure project implementation.
- Coordinate the process and directly participate in the development of the Community Development Strategy for 2028–2034 and the Terms of Reference for the development of the Comprehensive Spatial Development Plan.
- Provide expert support for the development of the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Strategy and the Unified Portfolio of Medium-Term Public Investments, including the preparation of the necessary materials and documents as required.
- Support the identification and development of infrastructure projects for subsequent cooperation with NEFCO and other projects that may be eligible for material support from Polaris.
- Organize and/or participate in training activities for LSG officials responsible for the preparation, implementation, monitoring, and updating of the community's strategic and spatial planning documents.
- Provide institutional support, advisory services, and guidance on improving strategic and spatial planning processes and governance within partner communities.
- Provide expert advisory support to partner territorial communities in the preparation of the above-mentioned strategic and spatial planning documents in close coordination with third party technical expertise (vendors).
- Advise the Local Recovery team and partner territorial communities on the application of Ukrainian legislation related to urban development, strategic planning, and recovery planning.
- Support the implementation of the Local Recovery component, including:
 - coordinating and liaising with partner territorial communities and/or partner organizations (and their experts) to facilitate the preparation of the above-mentioned planning documents;
 - coordinating dialogue with relevant stakeholders to collect the necessary data and ensure the effective implementation of the Programme in partner territorial communities in accordance with the approved methodology and work plan.
- Undertake working visits to partner territorial communities.
- Support on additional tasks as required.
- Monitoring and reporting
 - Prepare written materials summarizing key findings, observations, recommendations, results, and other relevant information.
 - Prepare written inputs and background materials for Programme reports.
 - Participate in communication and information-sharing in Polaris activities.

Qualifications

- Advanced university degree (master’s degree or equivalent) in the fields of architecture, urban planning and spatial planning, urban management, cadastre, economics, geography, regional planning, sociology, public governance, or related fields.
- Strong analytical, communication, and project management skills, enabling successful execution of complex, multi-stakeholder initiatives.

- A minimum of five years of relevant professional work experience in urban development, spatial planning, local economic development, strategic planning on municipal level, urban data analysis, implementation of participatory planning practices, recovery planning or a related field.
- Deep knowledge of Ukrainian legislation in the field of strategic planning at the local level and spatial planning.
- Demonstrated experience in developing community development strategies, as well as in map production and spatial analysis, including data visualization.
- Experience of capacity building processes targeting Municipalities;
- Strong command of English and Ukrainian as working languages, ability to deliver documents and professional discussion in both languages.

Merits

- Knowledge of and interest in local self-governance and decentralisation reform processes in Ukraine;
- Experience in elaboration urban planning documentation on local level, Comprehensive Recovery Programmes, Concepts of Integrated Urban Development in Ukraine.
- Experience of data-driven urban planning projects/processes, including software for urban planning (e.g. GIS, data analysis, visualization and production of maps).
- Previous work for Municipalities and programmes of international technical support.

Selection Criteria

Candidates will be assessed based on their professional experience and knowledge in strategic and spatial planning, analytical and advisory skills, ability to communicate effectively and organise work, and experience in working with local self-government authorities.

Diversity and equal opportunities

SALAR International embraces diversity and respects human rights in all areas of its work. SALAR International strives to create a gender-equal and diverse working environment. Team members shall respect equal rights of individuals and strive to create an atmosphere where people's differences are accepted and valued. SALAR International supports working arrangements that enable personnel to combine work with family commitments.

Location: Ukraine, with the expectation of travelling to partner communities and Kyiv for key meetings at the Polaris Programme office.

Duration: up to 100% from September 2026 for four months with the possibility of extension

Application:

Send your application with max 3 page CV and max 1 page cover letter (in PDF) and portfolio of relevant conducted projects (descriptive and/or graphic part) preferably in English to ukraine@salarinternational.se. Please note "Senior Expert in Spatial Planning and Strategic Development on Local Level" in the subject line. The interviews will be conducted on an ongoing basis. Early applicants are encouraged. Only shortlisted applicants will receive a response by email when the recruitment has been finalised.

For any questions or clarifications, please contact: ukraine@salarinternational.se.

Personal information provided by the applicant in the recruitment process will be handled by SALAR International.

Deadline: September 7th 2026