

Terms of reference

Expert on education at the local and regional level

Polaris Programme: Supporting multi-level governance in Ukraine

About SALAR International and its activities in Ukraine

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

SALAR International has been working in Ukraine since 2014, supporting the decentralisation process in Ukraine through three main initiatives aimed at building a robust multi-level governance system, improving the accessibility and quality of services at the local level, and strengthening international cooperation between municipalities from Ukraine and the EU. After the full-scale invasion, SALAR International joined the anti-crisis support of Ukrainian municipalities by providing them with material assistance.

Description of the context of engagement

To meet the evolving needs of Ukrainian municipalities and national stakeholders during the war, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) initiated a broader programme to support multi-level governance and recovery. This programme is called Polaris, Support for Multi-level Governance in Ukraine. It is being implemented by SALAR International and will run for four years (July 2024 - May 2028).

The Polaris Programme aims to address both short- and long-term needs of Ukraine's multi-level governance system, while strengthening municipal service delivery and direct community participation in recovery and reconstruction processes, in line with the requirements of Ukraine's EU accession. The programme works both at the national level (focusing on policy and cooperation with national stakeholders) and in direct support to communities. The programme covers five thematic areas: Education, Fiscal Decentralisation and Budgeting, Administrative Service Delivery, Local Recovery and International Cooperation of Communities.

The programme provides financial support to meet the short-term material crisis needs of local communities.

The Polaris Programme's Education Thematic Sphere, together with Ukrainian partners (at the national, regional and local levels), is working to establish an effective system of financing and multi-level governance in the field of education. Operationally, the Programme's education experts are divided into two levels: the national education team and the local and regional education team. These terms of reference refer to the expert(s) who will be part of the Local Level Education team. The unit supports territorial communities in improving the quality and accessibility of educational services, forming effective educational networks, introducing educational innovations and establishing productive communication with educational stakeholders.

Organisational structure

The programme is a joint Swedish-Ukrainian initiative with management structures in Stockholm and Kyiv. It encourages a horizontal organisational structure, which means a high degree of autonomy and responsibility for the experts involved, as well as strong local ownership among beneficiaries such as national stakeholders and Ukrainian local communities. Around 50 people are employed in Ukraine on a full-time basis in various thematic areas, including the support unit.

Office

The Programme office is located in Kyiv, but support and activities are targeted at local governments in all regions of Ukraine and are implemented in all regions controlled by the Ukrainian government. Support is provided upon request, in most cases through open calls for proposals.

Role Description

This assignment involves working in the Local and Regional Education thematic team, the expert will work under the supervision of the team leader of this thematic team together with five other experts. The main part of the work will involve expert support to partner communities in the formation of sustainable educational networks and organisation of educational management efforts to improve the quality of the educational process in the community.

Main responsibilities

- Organising (both as part of a team and independently) events in communities and regions to enhance their institutional capacity and to help them develop the skills and expertise needed to establish and manage effective educational networks;
- Providing overall coordination of work with communities and regions regarding the organisation of activities within them and their involvement in joint initiatives;
- Working with moderators of the 'School Network Optimisation' game: maintaining contact regarding the preparation of the training plan – establishing links with communities wishing to undertake optimisation; assisting moderators in preparing game sessions; providing online support for game moderators;
- Carrying out coordination activities regarding work with temporary experts;
- Collecting, verifying, documenting and disseminating best practices in the field of education management in communities and regions;
- Assisting the thematic area manager in organising and conducting events in communities and regions and coordinating activities at the programme office

Qualification

- A bachelor's (or master's) degree in public administration, management, education or a related field;
- At least 5 years' practical experience in the management of general secondary education institutions or in the management of the education sector (at community, district or regional level);

- At least 3 years' experience working with communities;
- At least 3 years' experience in delivering training programmes in the education sector;
- Ability to deliver training in both online and offline formats;
- Ability to develop training materials and use a variety of teaching methods;
- Presentation and facilitation skills;
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills;
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team;
- Fluency in Ukrainian (spoken and written);
- Ability to analyse educational statistics;
- Proficiency in Excel and other office software;
- Previous experience working with international organisations is desirable;
- Ability to work directly within communities and regions without hindrance or restrictions;
- Ability to spend up to 50% of working time at the Programme's office (Kyiv)

Additional benefits

- Work experience in the educational management structure

Diversity and equal opportunities

SALAR International supports diversity and respects human rights in all areas of its work. SALAR International is committed to creating a gender-equal and diverse work environment. Team members respect the equal rights of people and strive to create an atmosphere in which differences between people are accepted and valued. SALAR International supports working arrangements that allow staff to combine work with family responsibilities.

Location: Kyiv/ government-controlled territory of Ukraine, partial physical presence in the Programme office in Kyiv is required, as well as willingness to travel to communities.

Duration of engagement: from June 2026 to the May 2027 with a possibility of extension.

Application:

Please send your CV (no more than 3 pages) and cover letter (no more than 1 page in PDF format) to ukraine@salarinternational.se. Please indicate in the subject line "Expert on education at the local and regional level". Interviews will be conducted on a rolling basis. **Early application is encouraged.** Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted by email once the recruitment process is complete.

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

Personal information provided by the applicant during the selection process will be processed by SALAR International.

Deadline: 18 May 2026. Expected start of engagement: second half of June.