

Terms of reference

Expert on Preschool Education

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 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 Service Provision, Locally-led Recovery, Municipal Enterprises, and International Municipal Cooperation. In addition, the Programme will provide material support to meet short-term material crisis needs of municipalities.

The Polaris Programme's **Education Thematic Area**, 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 60 people are working 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 task involves working within the thematic team “Education at the Local and Regional Levels.” The core of the team supports communities in establishing sustainable educational networks and coordinating educational management efforts to improve the quality of the educational process within the community. **This technical assignment pertains to a new area of the team’s work, which focuses specifically on early childhood education (preschool).**

Main responsibilities

- Conducting (both as part of a team and independently) activities in institutions, communities, and regions to enhance their institutional capacity for the management, modernization, and operation of preschool education institutions in the context of implementing new legislation and establishing a new regulatory framework;
- Analyse the current state of the community preschool education system and develop recommendations for the founding body, governing body, and school administration on bringing it into compliance with the requirements of the new legislation;
- Identifying gaps in the regulatory and legal framework governing the operation of preschool education institutions that prevent the full implementation of the new legislation, and formulating proposals for the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine to address these gaps;
- Assisting local self-government bodies in establishing an effective network of traditional preschool education institutions and introducing alternative forms of preschool education to ensure full coverage of children by the preschool education system;
- Promoting understanding among local self-government bodies regarding the development and establishment of various forms of organization and operation of preschool education, including private institutions;
- Coordinating activities with education experts at the local and regional levels who work in the field of general secondary education to carry out joint initiatives;
- Collecting, verifying, documenting, and disseminating best practices in the management of preschool education in communities and regions;
- Assisting the Education Local team lead in organizing and conducting events in communities and regions.

Qualification

- A bachelor's (or master's) degree in public administration, management, education, or a related field;
- At least 3 years of practical experience in the preschool education system, management of preschool education institutions, or management of the education sector (at the community, district, or regional level);
- At least 3 years of experience conducting training programs in the field of education;
- Ability to conduct training sessions in both online and in-person formats;
- Ability to develop training materials and use various 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 analyze statistics in the field of early childhood education;
- Proficiency in Excel and other office software;
- Previous experience working with international organizations is preferred;
- Ability to work directly in communities and regions without hindrance or restrictions
- Ability to spend approximately 25% of working time at the Program's office

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 October 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 preschool education". 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: 8 October 2026. Expected start of engagement: October.