



EXPRESSION OF INTEREST GUIDELINES

For organizations interested in becoming
strategic partners for the
Recovery Through Sport program.





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1. KEY INFORMATION

Program	Recovery Through Sport
Lead Funder	adidas Foundation
Application Period	July 15 – August 30
Thematic Focus	Sport and physical activity as a psychosocially informed recovery modality for children and young people, embedded in humanitarian and MHPSS systems
Focus Population	Children and young people affected by crisis and displacement
Funding	Up to EUR 6 million initial commitment across selected partners; multi-year deployment
Geographic Scope	Multiple geographies; specific contexts to be identified jointly with selected partners
Partnership Type	Strategic alliance; long-term, co-developed relationship (not project-based grant)
Number of Partners	Up to three partner organizations
Duration	Multi-year
Eligible Applicants	Established nonprofit organizations seeking a long-term strategic partnership. This includes humanitarian and development organizations as well as sport-for-development organizations with the organizational scale, systems, mandate, and operational reach to engage across multiple contexts. Applications may be submitted by a global headquarters, international secretariat, regional office, national affiliate, or country office. Where the applicant is part of a wider organization, federation, or network, the application must represent a regional, multi-country, or organization-wide partnership opportunity. Applications limited to the operations of a single country office will not normally meet the operational-reach requirement.



Current Stage	Expression of Interest; followed by structured dialogue and partnership formalization
Language	All submissions and communication in English

2. BACKGROUND - RECOVERY THROUGH SPORT

Over the past months, the adidas Foundation partnered with an independent research and practice consortium to better understand the role the Foundation could play in supporting communities affected by crisis, particularly children and young people. The consortium helped us develop the evidence-informed framework that now anchors Recovery Through Sport, the Foundation's new program exploring how sport and physical activity can support recovery when delivered safely, meaningfully, and in connection with existing community, humanitarian, and psychosocial support systems.

The consortium brought together academic research in public health and psychosocial recovery, humanitarian mental health and psychosocial support practice, and operational experience delivering sport-based programming in crisis-affected settings. It conducted a structured review of close to 100 academic studies, consulted more than 30 organizations across the sport-for-development, humanitarian, and MHPSS sectors, and translated these insights into a framework that sets out when sport and physical activity can support recovery, and when they cannot.

The findings of that work are clear. Sport is not a substitute for humanitarian or psychosocial response. It is not a quick intervention, and it is not effective as a short-term activation. But where the conditions are right, sport and physical activity can play a meaningful role in restoring routine, social connection, belonging, and agency for children and young people whose lives have been disrupted, particularly when delivered over time, embedded in trusted systems, and facilitated by people who understand both sport and recovery.

The work is equally clear about the limits of what is known. The evidence base is largely qualitative, concentrated in high-income resettlement settings, and thin in the lower-resourced crisis contexts where the need is often greatest. The adidas Foundation has drawn a direct conclusion from this: the partnerships we aim to form should help build the evidence the field currently lacks. What we look for in partners reflects that.



a. WHAT RECOVERY THROUGH SPORT MEANS

Recovery Through Sport refers to sport and physical activity programming developed with trusted partners and grounded in community realities, helping children and young people affected by crisis and displacement restore safe participation in everyday life. It supports recovery by rebuilding safe access to sport and physical activity environments, strengthening social connection and belonging, re-establishing routine and agency, and reducing longer-term exclusion, particularly for groups facing structural barriers to participation.

For the adidas Foundation, this means acting only where sport and physical activity can be delivered safely, over time, and through trusted community, humanitarian, and psychosocial support systems. Our approach is conditions-based rather than phase-based: what matters is not whether a context is labelled “acute” or “early recovery,” but whether the enabling conditions for safe and meaningful participation are in place, including trusted local presence, functioning safeguarding systems, available referral pathways, and a credible role for sport in that specific context. In practice, this means eligibility is not determined by how a country or region is classified: a setting labelled “humanitarian” is not automatically in scope, and a setting labelled “development” is not automatically out. What matters is whether programming reaches children and young people whose lives have been disrupted by crisis or displacement, and whether the enabling conditions described above are in place. We also recognize that these settings can be volatile and that conditions on the ground shift. We seek strong partners who understand the complexity and volatility of these contexts, can respond appropriately as conditions change, and recognize when restraint is needed, including pausing activities until safe and enabling conditions are restored.

The Foundation’s approach to Recovery Through Sport is grounded in a core principle: connect, not disrupt. Sport-based recovery programming should strengthen and work within existing humanitarian, MHPSS, and community systems, not introduce parallel structures or compete with established actors. The Foundation’s role is to invest where sport and physical activity add genuine value to recovery, not to position sport as a substitute for what other actors do better.

This is why this Expression of Interest is deliberately framed as an expression of interest rather than a call for proposals. Our consultancy recommendations define the conditions under which the Foundation will engage; it does not predefine countries, program models, or delivery formats. Those will be developed with selected partners through



structured dialogue and co-design. At this stage, we are asking organizations to show fit, capability, and interest in shaping this work with us.

3. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

This Expression of Interest invites organizations to explore a long-term partnership with the adidas Foundation for its new Recovery Through Sport program. We are looking for a small number of partners (up to three) with the MHPSS expertise, humanitarian experience, operational reach, and sport experience to develop and deliver sport-based recovery programming with us, and to build the evidence base alongside it.

The Foundation is seeking partners that can engage at regional, multi-country, or organization-wide level. An application may be led by a headquarters, regional office, national affiliate, or country office, provided the applying entity has a clear mandate to represent and mobilize the wider organizational structure relevant to the proposed partnership. A country office applying only for its own country-level operations will not normally meet the intended scope of this partnership.

This is an invitation to begin a conversation about institutional fit, not a request for proposals. Co-development does not mean starting from zero: many organizations are already doing strong work in this space, and the partnership can equally serve to test, strengthen, and expand what a partner already delivers, and to build the evidence around it. Selection at this stage does not constitute a partnership commitment from either side: it opens a structured dialogue that may, where mutual fit is confirmed, lead to a formalized partnership.

The objectives of this Expression of Interest are to:

- Identify up to three institutional partners that meet the partner profile set out in this document
- Open a structured dialogue, including a joint working session, with shortlisted organizations to test mutual fit before any commitment on either side
- Establish long-term, co-developed partnerships rather than single project-based grants. Co-development may range from funding structure and disbursement model to project selection logic, MEAL frameworks, and specific program designs
- Build a shared approach to sport-based recovery that is grounded in evidence, safeguarding, and operational reality, and contributes to the evidence base over time

We are looking for partners who bring not only institutional capability, but the ambition and curiosity to shape this work with us.



4. WHAT THE FOUNDATION BRINGS

The adidas Foundation comes to this partnership with a strong belief: that sport and physical activity, where the conditions are right, can play a key role in recovery specially for children and young people affected by crisis. What we bring to act on that belief:

- Multi-year funding, with an initial commitment of up to EUR 6 million across selected partners. The funding will be committed in 2026 and deployed over multiple years, with the final structure, activation logic, and disbursement model developed jointly with selected organizations. The Foundation will only commit funding where it identifies partners that meet the bar set out in this document and may allocate less than the full amount, or not proceed with selection in this round. This initial commitment is a starting point, not a ceiling; there is potential for the Foundation to build on the model and commit additional funding to selected partners over time
- An evidence-informed starting point: a conditions-based framework, developed through structured research and consultation, that sets out when sport-based approaches can support recovery and when restraint is warranted. We treat this as a foundation to build on with partners, not a finished position
- A co-development posture in practice: close collaboration on programming, ways of working, and pace, with the willingness to adapt as we learn
- A commitment to evidence creation: we fund the research, monitoring, and learning needed to build the evidence base for sport-based recovery as a core part of the partnership, not as an add-on to delivery
- High standards for safeguarding and quality: clear minimum expectations across all programming (safe facilitator recruitment and training, strong safeguarding, and participation-first, inclusive design) with partners supported to build toward good practice over time.

5. WHAT THE FOUNDATION LOOKS FOR IN A PARTNER

The criteria below summarize what we are looking for. We are looking for organizations that fulfill all five core criteria set out below. In addition, experience with sport and physical activity is an important additional criterion. This may be demonstrated directly by the organization, through first-hand experience, or by closing this gap through a named partner organization presented in the EOI. The full partner profile, which will be used to evaluate submissions, is set out in Appendix A.



- **Genuine appetite for a co-developed partnership**, including program development and joint governance
- Established MHPSS capacity that the organization sustains and draws on across its work, built on dedicated professionals and recognized technical standards, rather than capacity assembled for individual projects or donor requirements
- Operational reach across multiple crisis-affected or recovery settings, with the humanitarian experience to navigate complex environments, and the workforce to sustain delivery over time
- Institutional safeguarding systems that operate consistently across contexts, including child safeguarding
- Institutional interest in **research and evidence creation**, contributing to the evidence base for sport-based recovery

Additional criterion

- Experience with sport and physical activity as part of recovery work, either through direct first-hand experience, sustained engagement with sport-for-development organizations, or through a named partner organization presented in the EOI. Where this experience is provided through a named partner organization, the EOI should identify that organization, describe the existing or intended collaboration, and indicate the role it would play in the partnership.

6. STANDARD ORGANIZATIONAL ELIGIBILITY

Organizations expressing interest must fulfill the following standard eligibility criteria to partner with the adidas Foundation.

Legal & Organizational Requirements

- Be a legally registered non-profit organizations.
- Be politically and religiously independent. Organizations must not promote political or religious ideologies, participate in political or religious activism, seek to convert individuals they work with, or restrict services only to individuals or communities who support specific beliefs or views.

Governance and Safeguarding

- Demonstrate inclusive and non-discriminatory practices across race, gender, gender identity, class, sexual orientation, ability, religion, age, and ethnicity.



- Have documented safeguarding policies and standard operating procedures demonstrating how safeguarding is embedded across organizational operations and programming. This includes reporting mechanisms to handle allegations and concerns safely, as well as safe recruitment procedures for individuals working directly with participants.
- Demonstrate internal transparency through governance structures and internal control systems (e.g., governance manuals, organograms, or equivalent documentation).

Compliance and Participation

- Be willing to participate in the adidas Foundation due diligence process and provide additional information related to organizational and financial structures, key personnel, and authorized signatories where requested.
- Conduct standardized due diligence processes for vetting and monitoring downstream recipients of funding, including local NGOs, sub-grantees, or implementation partners, including verification of legal status, integrity risks, basic financial controls, and safeguarding commitments and reporting mechanisms.

Applying entity and organizational mandate

The applying entity must have the authority and organizational mandate required to explore and shape the proposed partnership.

Where the applicant is part of a federation, confederation, network, alliance, or wider international organization, the Expression of Interest must clearly state:

- which legal entity is applying;
- whether the application represents one country office, multiple countries, a region, or the wider global organization;
- which country offices, regional structures, technical functions, or affiliates would be involved; and
- how the wider organization would participate in partnership design, governance, and delivery.

A country office or national affiliate applying solely on behalf of its own country-level operations will not normally meet the operational-reach requirement. A country office, national affiliate, or regional office may apply where it has a clear mandate to represent a wider regional, multi-country, or organization-wide partnership opportunity.

Evidence of this mandate may be requested during shortlisting or due diligence.



7. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Selected partners take part in a structured reporting and monitoring process across the projects they may deliver under the partnership, designed to support implementation, accountability, and shared learning. Because Recovery Through Sport is co-developed, the specific reporting standards and mechanisms will be defined jointly with selected partners. For each project delivered under the partnership, we will develop a detailed work plan together and agree on the indicators and outcomes to be measured. A number of standard requirements apply across all adidas Foundation partnerships, however, and are set out below so that organizations understand them before entering into a partnership.

a. Financial Reporting

As a Germany-based funder, the adidas Foundation is required to ensure that grant funds are used in line with the partnership agreement and each project's approved budget. We apply a risk-based and trust-based approach: partners are not required to submit individual receipts, invoices, or vouchers as part of regular reporting. Partners must, however, maintain complete, accurate, and verifiable financial records throughout the partnership and retain all supporting documentation in accordance with local legal requirements. This documentation must be made available upon request for audits, spot checks, or compliance reviews. Partners submit an annual financial report for each project, providing an overview of expenditure and progress against its approved budget.

b. Narrative Reporting and Learning

Partners submit an annual narrative report for each project, capturing key achievements, lessons learned, reflections on implementation, and any adjustments made or required. Where appropriate, and with the necessary consent in place, this includes photographs of activities and stories of change from both the organization and the participants it works with. Information generated through reporting is used to monitor progress, identify where partners may need support, strengthen shared learning across the portfolio, and inform future program strategy and communication.

c. Check-in Calls and Connection to Delivery

The Foundation and each partner hold regular check-in calls to discuss progress, challenges, risks, opportunities, and organizational updates. Beyond formal reporting, the Foundation places particular value on hearing directly from the people delivering



programming on the ground. As part of each partnership, we will agree ways to stay connected with frontline teams and, where appropriate, with participants, so that their first-hand experience informs a shared understanding of what is working and what is not. This may include project visits by the Foundation organized and planned in collaboration with the partner.

Collection of Annual Reach Data

Participation in the adidas Foundation's annual reach survey to collect key global indicators across all partners and programs.

8. WHAT WE ARE NOT LOOKING FOR

This is not a request for project proposals, a short-term grant, or a competitive bidding process. We are looking for an institutional fit for a long-term partnership, not the most ambitious or lowest-cost pitch. Programming will be co-developed with selected partners; we are not asking organizations to implement a pre-designed model, nor to set aside what already works. Where a partner has strong existing programming, co-development can mean testing, strengthening, and scaling that work with additional resources.

Accordingly, the following are not expected or required at this stage. They will be developed jointly with selected partners after the EOI process:

- Site-level context analysis or activation plans
- Community-level assessments, such as trust, legitimacy, and inclusion
- Detailed budgets or financial proposals
- Monitoring, evaluation, and learning frameworks
- Theories of change or logframes

9. PROCESS AND NEXT STEPS

The Foundation will use a staged process to identify, assess, and formalize partnerships under its Recovery Through Sport program. At each stage, the number of organizations will be narrowed down: from all submissions to a shortlist, from the shortlist to selection calls, from selection calls to workshop participants, and from the workshop to the final partner selection.



a. STAGE 1: EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

The submission window runs from 15 July to 30 August 2026, 11:59 pm CEST. Organizations submit an EOI presenting their institutional profile against the partner criteria set out in this document.

Approximately two weeks after the window opens, the Foundation will host an open webinar walking through the process and answering questions on 30 July 2026 at 03:00 pm CEST (German Time) via MS Teams Webinar. Participation is not required and has no bearing on evaluation. In order to prepare the webinar organizations are encouraged to pre-submit their questions via this form by July 27.

b. STAGE 2: EVALUATION AND SHORTLISTING

The Foundation reviews all submissions against the partner criteria and identifies a shortlist of organizations with the strongest institutional fit. Shortlisted organizations are notified directly; non-shortlisted organizations receive written notification that they will not progress in this round.

c. STAGE 3: SELECTION CALLS

Between 20 and 25 September 2026, the Foundation holds a call with each shortlisted organization. These calls are a first two-way exchange: an opportunity for the Foundation to clarify and deepen its understanding of the submission, and for the organization to ask questions and assess its own interest. Based on these calls, the Foundation invites up to three organizations to the workshop. The invitation to the workshop does signal strong partnership interest, but not a formal commitment to an actual partnership.

d. STAGE 4: DUE DILIGENCE

During October 2026, organizations invited to the workshop undergo institutional due diligence; the required documentation is set out in Appendix B. This step confirms institutional eligibility before organizations proceed to the joint working session.

e. STAGE 5: WORKSHOP AND STRUCTURED DIALOGUE

Organizations that complete due diligence are invited to a joint working session (workshop in Germany – exact location to be confirmed), held between 9 to 13 November 2026. Up to two individuals per participating organization will be reimbursed for travel and accommodation. This is a two-way exchange: the Foundation shares its vision,



approach, and ways of working; the organization shares its institutional reality, interests, constraints, and questions. Together, both parties test mutual fit and begin to shape a common approach to Recovery Through Sport.

f. STAGE 6: PARTNERSHIP FORMALIZATION

Where mutual fit is confirmed, the Foundation and the partner jointly define the partnership structure, governance, financial parameters, and initial scope, and formalize the relationship through a partnership agreement, with contracting taking place between 14 November and 31 December 2026.

g. STAGE 7: COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Within the established partnership, the Foundation and the partner jointly identify contexts, assess on-the-ground conditions, and shape programming, building on the partner's existing work where it provides a strong foundation and co-designing new approaches where needed, before beginning delivery in selected sites.

Organizations that are not selected at this stage may be considered for future rounds or for different forms of collaboration with the Foundation. A decision not to proceed does not reflect a judgment on the quality of the organization's work.

h. INDICATIVE TIMELINE

Milestone	Timing
EOI submission window	15 July – 30 August 2026, 11:59 pm CEST
Webinar (Q&A)	30 July 2026
Review and shortlisting	1 – 11 September 2026
Applicants notified of shortlisting outcome	Latest by 19 September 2026
Pre-selection calls	20 – 25 September 2026
Due diligence	1 – 30 October 2026
In-Person Workshop	9 – 13 November 2026



Contracting	14 November – 31 December 2026
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10. CONTACT

For questions about this Expression of Interest, please use the **[Recovery Through Sport question [submission form](#)**.

Questions received by **27 July 2026** will be considered for the informational webinar on **30 July 2026**.

Following the webinar, the Foundation will publish and update a live FAQ document weekly. Individual responses will not be provided. Similar questions may be grouped and addressed collectively through the webinar or FAQ, while questions already clearly covered in these guidelines or on the Recovery Through Sport webpage may not be addressed separately.

The Foundation welcomes questions about the scope, intent, eligibility requirements, and submission process. It will not provide feedback on draft submissions before the deadline.



11. APPENDIX A: DESIRED PARTNER PROFILE

We have defined six criteria describing what we are looking for in a strategic Recovery Through Sport partner. They are assessed at institutional level: organizational characteristics, not project-specific features. We look for organizations that meet each criteria themselves, with one exception: experience with sport and physical activity as a delivery modality may be met through a named partner organization presented in the EOI.

1. Genuine appetite for a co-developed partnership

Long-term partnership requires a different operating posture from standard project grants. Your organization's culture supports learning, flexibility, and shared decision-making, and you have the appetite and structures to engage in joint governance with us.

- Genuine openness to developing an operating and governance model jointly with the Foundation, rather than defaulting to a standard organizational template
- Willingness to find common ground where institutional preferences differ, including on programming approach, ways of working, and pace
- Prior experience in co-developed or framework partnerships where both sides shaped the operating model
- Governance and decision-making structures that allow the organization to enter joint governance arrangements, including the authority to adapt internal templates where needed

2. MHPSS as an established institutional capacity

Your organization maintains mental health and psychosocial support as a sustained capacity it can draw on across its work: dedicated professionals, recognized standards or frameworks, and experience applying them in programming. MHPSS does not need to be your organization's primary identity, but it must be an institutional capability rather than one assembled when a specific project or donor requires it.

- MHPSS is a cross-cutting competency, with dedicated professionals as part of regular staffing
- Institutional MHPSS standards or technical frameworks guide programming across contexts
- Staff across programming areas have baseline psychosocial literacy / receive training
- Experience integrating MHPSS into non-clinical delivery modalities



3. Operational reach and humanitarian experience

Your organization (or the wider organizational structure that the applying entity is formally mandated to represent) has the infrastructure, authority, and operational reach to operate across multiple crisis-affected or recovery settings. It brings the institutional experience to navigate complex humanitarian environments and the workforce and systems needed to sustain delivery over time.

- Active programming in multiple crisis-affected or post-crisis countries or regions, with sustained presence
- Experience operating across different crisis types (conflict, displacement, disaster, protracted settings)
- Institutional familiarity with humanitarian coordination mechanisms and humanitarian principles
- Experience navigating access constraints, security management, and operational challenges in complex settings
- Capacity to recruit, train, and supervise the workforce that delivers programming, and sustain delivery through staff turnover and periods of disruption
- Experience delivering programming through sub-granting arrangements or other on-the-ground service providers, and the ability to coordinate with other sectoral actors as part of a wider humanitarian response

4. Safeguarding systems at institutional level

Safeguarding is embedded in your organization's policies, systems, training, and culture: not dependent on individual projects or donor requirements. Includes child safeguarding as a core component.

- Organization-wide safeguarding policy that demonstrates a clear commitment to prevent harm to children, youth, or other vulnerable persons
- Organizational safeguarding commitments which are formally adopted by the organization (e.g. management decision or governing body approval) and which clearly defines roles and responsibilities.
- Experience conducting safeguarding risk management processes for programs, partnerships and implementation
- Institutional mechanisms to report safeguarding concerns and incidents and which allows concerns to be raised by participants, staff, volunteers, or relevant representatives.



- Institutional response mechanisms that function across country programs and which describe how reports are assessed, escalated, and followed up
- Regular safeguarding training as part of educating and building awareness on safeguarding within the organization
- A code of conduct that clearly defines expected behaviors and prohibited conduct for all personnel, promotes ethical and responsible practices, and provides a foundation for safeguarding, compliance, and professional integrity.
- Organizational safeguarding commitments extend to the organization's partnerships particularly those with implementing partner organizations

5. Research and evidence creation

Your organization treats evidence generation as part of how it works, not as an external add-on. There is a willingness to learn alongside the Foundation, document what is working and what is not, and contribute to the wider evidence base on sport-based recovery.

- Openness to embedding learning and monitoring within programming from the start, with research components where appropriate
- Experience working with researchers, academic institutions, or evaluation partners, including local researchers where relevant
- Capacity to capture and share practice-based insights, including what does not work, in a structured way
- Institutional interest in contributing to the broader evidence base on sport and physical activity as a recovery modality

6. Additional Criteria: Experience with sport and physical activity as a delivery modality

Your organization has engaged with sport or physical activity as a real part of recovery work, whether through its own programming or through sustained collaboration with sport-for-development organizations, and recognizes that it can support recovery in specific ways: by restoring routine, building connection, creating safe space, and supporting agency, not as recreation alone. Where your organization does not bring this experience itself, this criterion may be met through a named partner organization: your EOI should identify that organization, describe the existing or intended collaboration, and indicate the role it would play in the partnership.

- Has delivered sport or physical activity-based programming in crisis-affected or recovery settings at any scale, or has engaged substantively with the approach through sport-for-development partners



- Can articulate how sport connects to recovery mechanisms (routine, connection, safe space, agency, belonging) rather than making generic wellbeing claims
- Understands the difference between sport as an activity and sport as a psychosocially informed delivery modality
- Demonstrates genuine institutional interest in co-developing sport-based recovery approaches



12. APPENDIX B: DUE DILIGENCE DOCUMENTATION

Shortlisted applicants that are invited to the workshop will be required to submit the following documentation in English (for all documents other than those listed under item 1, convenience translation are sufficient):

- Legal status and registration (proof of legal existence and non-profit or public benefit status, provided in English/German or in the original language with a certified English translation).
- Statutory purpose and governance arrangements (statutes or bylaws, governance structure, and decision-making and oversight mechanisms).
- Financial management and accountability systems (annual financial statements, financial controls, accounting systems, and the ability to track and report on restricted funds).
- Safeguarding policies and procedures (including reporting mechanisms, safer recruitment measures, and procedures for recording and responding to safeguarding concerns; organizations must be willing to strengthen safeguarding practices where required).
- Ethics, integrity and compliance frameworks (including a code of conduct or equivalent, a compliance policy or equivalent compliance framework, whistleblowing or grievance mechanisms, conflict-of-interest management arrangements, and data protection and responsible communications measures).
- Key personnel and authorization details (information on leadership, key staff, and authorized signatories).
- Additional eligibility, compliance or due diligence information (including clarifications, supporting evidence, or follow up documentation, as requested).