



“Ndimbal na ca fékk loxol borom”
“Help yourself, before seeking other’s help”

The Ambassador's Special Self Help Fund

Guidelines

The Ambassador’s Special Self-Help (SSH) program is a grass-roots assistance program that allows U.S. embassies to respond quickly to local requests for small community-based development projects. The purpose of the Special Self-Help Program is to support communities through modest grants that would positively impact on communities. The SSH program was first initiated in Togo in 1964 and had gradually developed to become one of the most visible and successful assistance programs in Africa. The SSH philosophy is to help communities ready to help themselves. This is why SSH Banjul has adopted the Wolof (Banjul’s most common spoken local language) proverb *“Ndimbal na ca fékhh loxol borom”* meaning *“Help yourself before seeking help from others.*

I. How does an organization apply for the Special Self-Help grant?

Any legal person or organization / group / community development association may request funding for a public utility or community activity, approved by the competent Gambian authorities. The project must be submitted by an organized group, motivated, who has a real need, and has already had to deal with communities. The project should be feasible based on the socio-economic context and include the necessary information and documentation indicated on the form. Incomplete applications will be may not be considered if they do not include required documentation (e.g. proforma invoices).

Interested organizations can obtain an [application](http://banjul.usembassy.gov/self-help.html) from the Office of Self Help or on Embassy Website at: <http://banjul.usembassy.gov/self-help.html>. The organization may also send its own project proposal provided that all required information in the SSH application is included in their proposal.

The applicant should complete the form carefully with special emphasis on the following critical aspects of the proposed project:

- Objectives, impacts and key activities
- Implementation strategy



- Monitoring mechanisms
- Itemized budget

The application should be sent to:

Special Self-Help Coordinator
U.S. Embassy, Banjul
Kairaba Avenue
Banjul, The Gambia
Email: ButtnerAM@state.gov
Tel: +220 438 1337
Cell: +220 795 9058
E-mail: SelfHelpS@state.gov

Depending on the nature of the project, the following documents can be attached to the file:

- For agriculture related activities: proof of land ownership issued by the rural community;
- Water system connection: Authorization from the National hydraulic Service ;
- Medical equipment: A certificate of employment for health projects issued by the Ministry of Health for a nurse or qualified healthcare provider assigned to the project;
- Market research to show the profitability of the project (the sale of the product);
- At least two or three pro forma invoices / quotations issued by two or three different suppliers.

II. Term and condition of funding:

Any project approved by the Selection Committee can be financed for completion within one year from the signature of the grant award. Grant awards shall include terms and conditions compliant with U.S. Government regulations for grant administration.

III.1. Requesting Organization's contribution

The sponsoring organization or group should provide cash or in kind contributions representing at least 25% of the total project costs. The community contribution can be an important factor in the selection between viable projects. In-kind contributions could include: labor (wages of masons and workers), food, accommodation for qualified labor, carts of sand or gravel, bricks



for construction, sand, fence, water supply, transportation costs, and materials. Local contributions should not include the cost of land, the cost of inflation or the estimated cost of unexpected expenses for the project.

To calculate the rate of local participation requestors need to divide the amount of local participation by the total project cost.

III.2. Expenditure not eligible for funding

The Fund does not finance the purchase of vehicles, fuel supply, individual businesses, family, religious, or military projects. It can in no way serve as institutional support (trainings, scholarships, conferences, seminars, researches').

Special Self-help Help Fund criteria:

Self-help Projects proposals need to:

- Foster community self-reliance;
- Be in direct response to the initiative and aspirations of the local community (the local sponsors of the project, who will also be its prime beneficiaries);
- Have community participation and contributions -- volunteer time and labor, donated land, equipment and materials -- with the Self-Help grant providing one-time basis only;
- Have a significant impact, benefiting the greatest number of people possible. Projects that directly benefit a limited number of people will be less competitive;
- Improve basic economic or social conditions at the local community or village level; the program should avoid financing activities with only short-term impact;
- Be viable and sustainable in terms of finance, personnel support and necessary expertise and services;
- Fall within the ability of the local community to implement. Activities that are too complex should be avoided;
- Respect environmental norms for small projects;
- Avoid soliciting multiple grants for the same project. An organization can receive funds multiple times for different projects but only once for any particular project;
- Be completed in one year or less.

Priority will be given to applications that describe clearly how the project will improve the quality of life in the target community.



How much are the grants?

The maximum grant award for any one project is \$25,000 and represents a one-time U.S. Government contribution. However, due to limited available funding, most grants awarded are between \$1,000 and \$10,000. Grants are awarded for a one year period.

What does not qualify for a Self-Help grant?

- The Self-Help Program cannot fund religious or military activities, as well as those relating to police, prisons, or other law enforcement.
- Funds cannot be used for administrative costs, transportation, training, scholarships, consumable items, vehicles, or to finance repairs.
- Funds are not provided to government agencies.
- Funds are not provided to individuals, business and government agencies
- For creating, continuing, or supplementing technical assistance programs;

Project Selection and the Embassy Special Self-Help Committee

A Selection Committee annually reviews qualified SSH project proposals for recommendation to the Ambassador who makes the final decision on project funding.

How to apply for the Ambassador's Special self-Help Program?

The applicants should complete the form carefully with special emphasis on the following critical aspects of the proposed project:

- Objectives, impacts and key activities
- Implementation strategy
- Monitoring mechanisms
- Itemized budget

Please download and read the [Self Help Fund Application Guidelines](#) (PDF 69kb) before completing the [Special Self Help Fund Application](#) (PDF 173kb) form.

What is the deadline?



The U.S. Embassy accepts grant applications for the Ambassador's Special Self-Help Program throughout the year. Funding decisions and grant awards are made as money is available throughout the year.

Applicants interested in being considered for the next round of funding for the Ambassador's Special Self-Help Program are encouraged to submit their application by close of business (13:00) on **September 7th, 2018** .

SELF HELP FUND CONTACTS

Special Self-Help Coordinator
U.S. Embassy, Banjul
Kairaba Avenue
Banjul, The Gambia
Email: ButtnerAM@state.gov
Tel: +220 438 1337
Cell: +220 795 9058
E-mail: SelfHelpS@state.gov

I. How are projects selected?

The Self Help Office reviews all applications first. The coordinator will notify each applicant about the status of his/her proposal. If the application does not meet the funding guidelines, the applicant will be informed. If the proposal does meet the grant criteria, the Self Help coordinator will schedule a project visit to discuss the proposal in detail. For any project submitted a pre-selection site visit must be conducted to determine the socio-economic and financial feasibility of the business as well as the accuracy and consistency of project documentation. If the project is deemed viable, it will be presented to the Selection Committee who decides on the projects to be funded. The Self-Help Program Committee meets once a year to select projects for funding. The committee aims to have a variety of projects and a wide geographical distribution. Project funding is generally decided between March and June, depending on the availability of funds. The Self-Help coordinator will inform groups that were selected for funding.

Each grant has a 12 month limit to be completed.



If the proposal is approved, the project supervisor and the U.S. Government sign a contract of agreement that allows for partial advance payment of project expenses. Grantees are responsible for submitting receipts of purchased items and documentation of grant activities to the Self Help Office. The funded group must provide ongoing project reports with original receipts (once a month) and a final project completion report. U.S. Embassy staff will make periodic visits to the project.

The Self Help office receives many more applications each year than it can fund. Careful and complete preparation of the enclosed form will give your group or institution the best chance to qualify for funding.