

# Guidance for Humanitarian/ Resident Coordinators

## *Key Points of Engagement in CERF Processes*

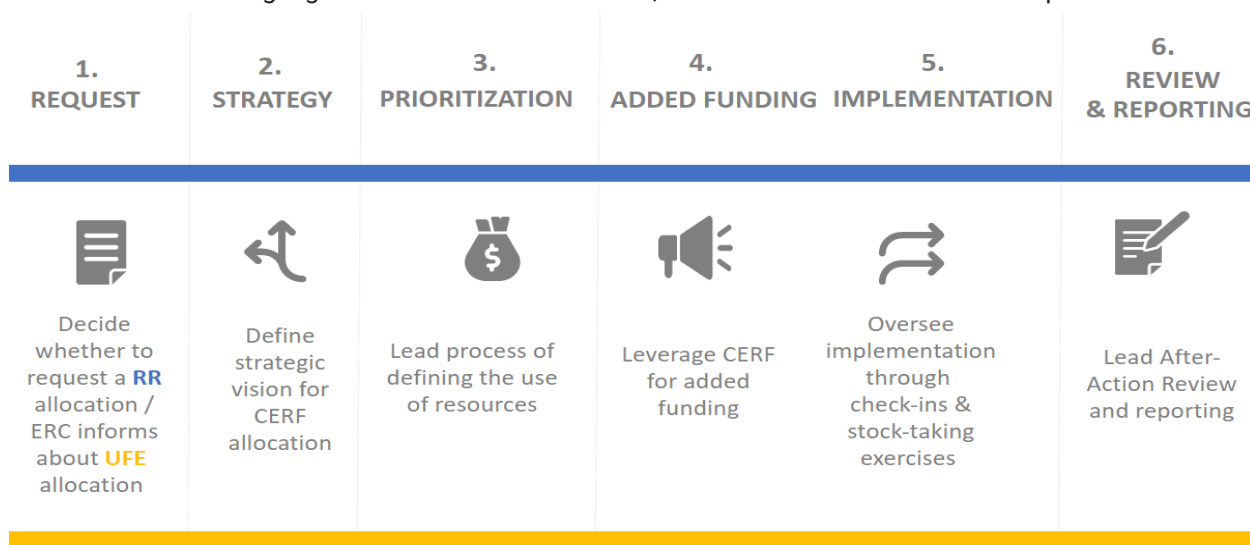
This note provides a brief overview of key responsibilities of Resident and Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HCs) in managing CERF allocations<sup>2</sup>. It highlights key decisions and initiatives to be led by the RC/HC and is applicable to both Rapid Response (RR) and Underfunded Emergencies (UFE) allocations<sup>3</sup>. The OCHA Country Office will support the RC/HC in managing all aspects of the CERF process, and where no OCHA office exists the relevant OCHA Regional Office will

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<sup>2</sup> Additional detailed CERF guidance relating to different aspects of the CERF process can be found in the guidance section of the CERF website, including the CERF Handbook, the CERF Life-saving Criteria and the CERF Monitoring Guidance.

<sup>3</sup> The main difference is that RR requests are country-driven and linked to new needs, and typically time-critical in nature, whereas UFE country allocations are decided by the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) once or twice a year based on a global comparative analysis of humanitarian need and funding levels. It should be noted that this document does not cover “special allocations” from CERF. Also, CERF Anticipatory Action allocations under the Rapid Response window are not covered by this note as these are governed by specific processes and guidance (<https://cerf.un.org/anticipatory-action>).

support along with the RC Office. OCHA therefore plays a key role in facilitating CERF processes under the leadership of the RC/HC. Notwithstanding and as highlighted in the below flowchart, this document outlines some specific areas



where the RC/HC's direct involvement is expected.

## Decide whether to submit a rapid response CERF funding request allocation

**The first key task for an RC/HC is to determine whether to request CERF funding, based on the humanitarian situation<sup>4</sup>.** An RR grant may be requested following a new emergency, a significant deterioration of an existing one, or a change in the operational environment. To determine whether a situation falls within the scope of CERF's RR Window, the RC/HC should consider several key questions<sup>5</sup>, including what the trigger for the CERF request is, what time-critical interventions could be put in place, and the potential comparative advantage of supporting the response through CERF funding.

Should RC/HCs consider pursuing a CERF RR allocation, they are **encouraged to discuss the possible request with the OCHA country/regional office and informally reach out to the CERF secretariat (directly or through the OCHA Office) as early as possible** to establish contact before efforts to assemble an application commence. This will allow the RC/HC to get feedback on the feasibility and

<sup>4</sup> Application to the RR Window can be made at any time. Eligibility for the Underfunded Emergencies Window is determined through a central process that takes place once or twice per year. In some specific situations the ERC may proactively decide a rapid response allocation from the global level and inform the RC/HC of this.

<sup>5</sup> Further information is available in the CERF Handbook. ([https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/cerf\\_handbook\\_2018\\_en.pdf](https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/cerf_handbook_2018_en.pdf)), Chapter 6 – Rapid Response.

## Define the strategic vision for the CERF allocation

potential size of a possible allocation. This initial outreach should happen within days following the event that triggered the request.

**A key role for the RC/HCs is to articulate their “strategic statement” on the intended use of a CERF allocation, explaining its focus, and how it will make an impact in the operational context, beyond simply providing additional funding to the response.** While the RC/HC consults the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT)/United Nations Country Team (UNCT)<sup>6</sup> in developing this “strategic statement”, it will ultimately remain under the authority of the RC/HC<sup>7</sup> to set out the strategy for the allocation, with OCHA country office support.

**The strategic statement will be presented to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) as a basis for deciding on the allocation.** It should therefore be concise and describe in strategic terms the focus and added value of the allocation to the overall response and reflect how CERF resources will be leveraged to maximize saving of lives.

**The strategic statement of the RC/HC will serve as the basis for articulating a focused funding proposal** – and is the starting point for prioritising how CERF funds should be allocated to achieve greater impact. The strategic statement will also serve as the foundation for reporting on the impact of the CERF allocation at the end of the implementation period and therefore it should be tangible and realistic.

**In countries with a Country-Based Pooled Fund (CBPF), the strategic statement should also clarify how the CERF allocation will ensure complementarity with CBPF funding,** based on the comparative advantage of each mechanism and as part of one “joined-up” strategic approach<sup>8</sup>. The strategic statement may also highlight complementarity with other funding sources.<sup>9</sup>

**The strategic statement should be submitted to the CERF secretariat as part of the initial funding request for funding and should precede the development of a full application.** For the RR window, the initial request, with the strategic statement, should be submitted as quickly as possible following the triggering event to allow for timely funding decisions. For sudden onset shocks, the statement should be submitted no later than a week after the event.

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6 The strategy will be based on an assessment of humanitarian need and priorities and of CERF funding’s comparative advantage, and informed by relevant analysis by OCHA, cluster/sectors groups and other key actors.

7 While developed in collaboration with the HCT the statement should ultimately present the RC/HC’s strategic vision for the allocation and it is not meant to be a consensus exercise.

8 Please refer to CERF’s website for further information on CERF/CBPF complementarity

9 Including other funding instruments such as for example the Peace Building Fund

## Lead the process for determining the use of resources

**Once RC/HCs have set a strategy for the use of resources, they should lead an inclusive process to determine the best possible prioritisation of CERF funding.** The RC/HC's leadership on this is critical to shift the focus from the implementing organizations' individual funding goals towards the achievement of collective results.

**The RC/HCs should set out the parameters for the allocation of funds and lead discussions with partners on the optimal funding "breakdown" across clusters and agencies to achieve strategic goals.** While this should be based on a consultative process, the RC/HC should not "devolve" this decision-making responsibility to the working level, such as to the inter-cluster/inter-sector coordination group. It is also important that the RC/HC ensures that the allocation is focused on a limited number of projects that will have a significant impact towards the achievement of the strategic statement, thereby helping ensure a focus on results and impact and avoiding that the CERF funding is committed across too many fragmented projects, sectors or geographies.

**The RC/HC shall ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are considered throughout the CERF process.** In this respect, the RC/HC, with support from OCHA, should see that technical experts<sup>10</sup> and leads on cross-cutting programmatic priorities, including on cash and voucher assistance especially multi-purpose cash, gender, GBV, PSEA and disability are engaged in CERF decision-making<sup>11</sup> and programme design, and that accountability to affected people (AAP) underpins the CERF allocation design and implementation.

**The RC/HC is responsible for ensuring that in-country processes relating to CERF applications are fast, in particular for time-critical RR allocations.** A key objective of the CERF's RR window is to ensure that critical, acute and life-threatening humanitarian needs are met through a timely response. Therefore, it is important that RC/HCs avoid lengthy consultations at this stage of the process, as delays may limit the intended impact of CERF funding.<sup>12</sup> For RR requests, the submission of the full application with project proposals to the CERF secretariat is expected within a week of the ERC's initial funding endorsement.

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<sup>10</sup> Including ideally local experts or organisations.

<sup>11</sup> Including as part of UNCT/HCT CERF discussions.

<sup>12</sup> To help ensure a timely RR process the CERF secretariat sets out timing benchmarks for submissions.

## Use the CERF allocation for advocacy and resource mobilisation

**Beyond providing rapid and strategic funding, CERF is also meant to highlight the urgency for humanitarian action by signalling critical financing requirements.** All CERF allocations are intended to be catalytic in leveraging additional funding from other sources. While this should be done collectively by the HCT, with support from OCHA, the leadership of the RC/HC is required for ensuring that CERF's contribution is actively used to strengthen further resource mobilization efforts.

**Even before receiving an allocation from CERF, it is therefore important that the RC/HC considers opportunities to use CERF funding to leverage additional donor resources.** Given the importance of this aspect, RC/HCs are expected to outline in their CERF applications how the allocation will be used to support resource mobilisation and to report on related achievements as part of the final narrative report and stock-taking exercises throughout the implementation period.

**With support from OCHA and recipient agencies, the RC/HC is also expected to actively communicate and convey the impact of CERF funding to the broader humanitarian community and to the public.**

## Oversee implementation through check-ins & stock-taking exercises

**The RC/HC is responsible for overseeing the overall implementation of CERF funding and ensuring that implementation is on track towards the achievement of the pre-defined strategic objectives.** In this respect, the RC/HC should institute periodic "check-ins" with the HCT, and particularly cluster leads to discuss progress of the CERF-funded interventions<sup>13</sup>. This will help ensure collective ownership of the allocation and allow the RC/HC to monitor that the overall implementation is on track, and if not, agree on corrective measures with the HCT as required. These "check-ins" are not intended to be detailed technical reviews but high-level assessments of progress in meeting strategic objectives of CERF allocations. In this regard, they can be handled through an "agenda item" in a standard HCT meeting. It is up to the RC/HC to decide the number of required "check-ins" based on the nature of the grant and its duration, however it is suggested that at least one to two are conducted, in addition to the mandatory interim stocktaking exercise (see below).

**In addition to periodic check-ins with the HCT/UNCT, the RC/HC is also required to lead a more substantive "interim stocktaking exercise" halfway through the implementation period.** The exercise is intended to review progress against the objectives set out for the allocation and discuss challenges that have/could affect implementation. The objective of the exercise is to give the RC/HC - and by extension the ERC - an update on the implementation of the allocation, and more importantly, to enable corrective actions<sup>14</sup> to be taken if required. The interim

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<sup>13</sup> HCT/UNCT check-ins may be informed by the outcomes of working-level CERF discussions and stock-staking at the inter-cluster/inter-sector level

<sup>14</sup> These may include the decision to pursue a no-cost extension and/or reprogramming of the budget of an ongoing CERF project if considered necessary and justified by the RC/HC.

stocktaking exercise is expected to involve a broader group of participants than the periodic check-ins, to allow for a more in-depth discussion on implementation against the strategic objectives of the allocation. The outcome of the interim stocktaking exercise should be a consolidated interim update report<sup>15</sup> that should be discussed in the HCT/UNCT before being finalised and submitted to the CERF secretariat by the RC/HC.

## Lead an After-Action Review and reporting

**The RC/HC is expected to lead an After-Action Review (AAR), which is essentially a structured discussion at the end of the implementation period that allows the HCT and cluster leads to collectively reflect on what was achieved through the CERF allocation and what lessons were learned.** A main objective of the AAR will be to assess whether the strategic objectives set out for the allocation in the strategic statement were met. The AAR will also support a discussion of what was achieved with the grant, what was learned, what follow-up actions should be taken and what corrective measures can be taken in the future. The AAR meeting should take place shortly after the conclusion of CERF grant implementation, with relevant stakeholders, in particular CERF recipient agencies and the HCT/UNCT, as well as cluster leads and other partners as relevant. With the support of the OCHA Office, it is the RC/HC's responsibility to ensure that the AAR is conducted, and that it addresses the strategic and operational added value of the CERF allocation in a manner that enables a strong articulation of impact and achievements. The AAR meeting can be chaired by the RC/HC with support from OCHA, or ideally by an external facilitator if feasible. The AAR is key in informing the final narrative reporting on the CERF allocation.

**Three months after grant expiration, the RC/HC is required to submit a final narrative report on the use of CERF funds to the ERC (through the CERF secretariat), that contains strategic reporting at the level of the overall allocation, as well as agency reporting at the project level.** The reporting shall be based on the outcome of the AAR. The RC/HC shall personally approve the strategic level reporting<sup>16</sup> that will explain whether and how the strategic statement set out for the allocation was achieved whether operational targets were met and articulate how the allocation has been utilized to meet life-saving humanitarian needs. The final narrative reports are important tools for communicating to the ERC and CERF's donors the strategic results of CERF allocations, their strategic added value and relevant learning obtained through implementation.

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<sup>15</sup> The CERF secretariat will advise RC/HCs the on the timeline of the interim report and provide a pre-populated standard template

<sup>16</sup> The reporting guidance and template will explain what parts of the report require direct RC/HC leadership and sign-off.