Philea | Philanthropy Europe Association

Terms of Reference

Call for consultant(s) to support Philea with the development of its 2028 – 2032 strategic framework

Executive summary

Philea is seeking a strategic partner to help draw learning from its 2023 to 2027 strategic framework and translate it into a clear, actionable framework for 2028 to 2032. The process should clarify Philea's distinctive value, define a limited number of strategic missions, and set out the governance, funding, operating and membership engagement models needed to deliver them.

1. Background and strategic context

Philea – Philanthropy Europe Association was established in 2022 through the merger of the European Foundation Centre (EFC) and the Donors and Foundations Network in Europe (Dafne). The merger was conducted through a broad participatory process and created a single European platform for philanthropy, bringing together foundations, national associations and other ecosystem actors to strengthen philanthropy's contribution to the public good. Through the merger, a new membership and governance framework was established. As part of the process, overarching organisational functions were defined and translated into a team model centred on six activity clusters.

In 2023, following a process involving members, governance bodies and staff, Philea adopted its first strategic framework (2023–2027), alongside a longer-term vision and mission designed to guide the organisation's development over the coming decade. The framework is built around three impact priorities:

- Building the community
- Empowering the community
- Advocating for and connecting the sector

and two organisational priorities:

- Deepening and widening membership
- Strengthening organisational capacity

Since its adoption, the framework has guided Philea's programme development, advocacy work, knowledge activities, membership engagement, partnerships, communications and organisational development. A lot of the work has been subject to adjustment and ongoing development along the way, as the strategic framework gradually integrated the legacies of Dafne and EFC, while also connecting the functional priorities defined in 2022 with the ambitions set out one year later in the strategic framework.

The context in which the strategy has been implemented has meanwhile also evolved rapidly. Across Europe and globally, philanthropy and civil society face an increasingly complex environment marked by pressure on democratic institutions, shrinking civic space, geopolitical tensions, technological transformation, and worsening climate and environmental crises that deepen social and economic inequalities. These developments reinforce the need for stronger ecosystem building, collective action, and collaboration across themes and sectors to address shared challenges more effectively.

Concurrently, Philea has grown steadily in terms of activities, members, budget and staff, delivering a vast array of opportunities to its members and strengthening its role as a collective infrastructure for European philanthropy. With that, Philea's internal funding, operating and engagement arrangements have, over time, become increasingly complex.

As part of a mid-term strategic review undertaken in 2025, several areas for strategic refinement were identified, including questions of prioritisation, positioning, membership, and voice, to ensure that our strategic framework remains fit for purpose in a rapidly changing context.

Building on this, a high-level proposal to simplify Philea's operational and funding model was developed in 2026. A core element of this future funding model consists of a shift from many stand-alone activities to a limited number of strategic missions[i] or priority areas under which the currently siloed or fragmented activities would be more coherently structured, governed, and funded. These orientations will be further developed through the broader development of the 2028 to 2032 strategic framework, for which a consultant is currently being recruited.

The new strategic framework will hence provide for important opportunities for Philea to:

- Help clarify and strengthen the membership value proposition
- Move away from a fragmented set of activities to integrated strategic missions
- Deliver on a more integrated and collaborative operating model, along with a more sustainable and flexible funding model
- Achieve stronger organisational alignment between strategy, governance, resources, and delivery
- Achieve greater ecosystem impact through influence, partnerships, and collective action.

2. Objective of the assignment

The overall objective of the assignment is to support Philea in bridging past performance and future positioning, by translating learning from the 2023 to 2027 strategic framework into clear choices for the organisation's next phase. This will be achieved through:

- **A concise, forward-looking evaluation of the achievements and impact of the 2023 to 2027 strategic framework**. The evaluation should generate strategic learning on achievements, gaps, and value created for members and the wider ecosystem, taking into account Philea's evolving context and broader trends affecting philanthropy.
- **The development of a strategic framework for 2028 to 2032.** The strategic framework should include clarity on the strategic missions to which Philea's key activities should contribute, alongside the governance, funding and membership engagement models needed to make them effective.

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Strategic questions at the heart of the review will include:

- What has Philea achieved through the 2023 to 2027 strategic framework, and where has impact been strongest or weakest?
- Where can Philea add distinctive value in the European philanthropy ecosystem over 2028 to 2032, taking into account trends that will affect the sector in the decade ahead?
- What should the strategic missions be, and how should current programmes, networks, advocacy, knowledge and convening work fit under them? What should Philea stop, start, continue or significantly adapt?
- What operating, governance, membership engagement and funding arrangements are needed to make the future strategy deliverable? How do members engage with the activities of Philea in the new set up?

3. Workstreams, approaches and deliverables

The assignment is organised into two workstreams:

- **Workstream A: Strategic review and learning**: Focused on assessing the current framework's relevance, effectiveness, impact, and organisational factors. It examines Philea's value as a convener, advocate, and knowledge partner, including a forward-looking understanding of ecosystem and trends that affect philanthropy.
- **Workstream B: Strategic renewal and future development:** Focused on identifying future priorities and positioning, along with strategic options in terms of governance, operating and funding modalities.

To this aim, the consultant shall:

- Review the implementation, achievements, gaps and learning from the 2023 to 2027 strategic framework.
- Analyse relevant external trends, emerging issues and ecosystem dynamics affecting European philanthropy within its broader context.
- Identify where Philea can add distinctive value in the next strategic period.
- Support the development of a 2028 to 2032 strategic framework built around a limited number of strategic missions.
- Translate the framework into implications for governance, membership engagement, operating model, funding and capacity.
- Design, support and where applicable facilitate a proportionate stakeholder engagement process.

Deliverables should include:

- An **inception report** with clear timelines and clear methodology – including for stakeholder engagement throughout the process
- A **learning review** for the period of 2023 to 2027 with executive conclusions, synthesizing findings from the retrospective evaluation, informed by feedback from members, staff and critical friends. This learning review shall also include a concise environmental scan and ecosystem map synthesised into a short set of strategic implications.

- A **strategic framework** in two iterations:
    1. DRAFT: A first high-level version would include propositions for the key strategic missions, as well as possible options for governance and funding model for the strategic missions.
    2. FINAL: A further finetuned version should include the final choice of strategic missions along with actions that will drive each strategic missions forward, measures of success and a further developed financial and funding plan.
- An **implementation roadmap and first-year action plan**, including recommendations and costing projections around capacity and roll-out, as well as proposals for opportunities to test and pilot new ways of working.

Design principles and scope of the work

The process should be:

- strategic and decision-oriented;
- participatory – based co-creation with key members of the team and governance;
- evidence-based and informed by members and key stakeholders;
- realistic about capacity and resources;
- designed to simplify, focus and integrate Philea's work.

The work should remain focused on the strategic decision-making needed for the organisation. The evaluation, environmental scan, ecosystem map and consultations should be proportionate and designed to inform clear choices for the 2028 to 2032 framework, rather than become extensive standalone research exercises. Outputs should be concise – delivered in formats that help steer decisions.

4. Ways of working

Throughout the assignment, the consultant will work closely and collaboratively with:

- The CEO: leads the process, acts as primary contact point, and validates draft propositions.
- An ad hoc team strategy cell: provides input, feedback and internal sounding-board support.
- An ad hoc Board task force: reviews and validates strategic directions before submission to the full Board.
- Full Board / governance: considers and approves the final framework, where applicable.

The consultant may be asked to support internal alignment and change-readiness throughout the process, helping the team and governance bodies understand the implications of a mission-oriented framework for ways of working, collaboration, prioritisation and accountability.

The work will be done remotely through desk reviews, online collaboration and meetings in addition to a few in-person engagements (2 to 3 throughout the process).

5. Indicative timeline and key milestones:

Workstream	Phase of the project	Deadline	Deliverable	Key milestones will include	Est. max # days
Submission & contracting		By 25 September 2026	Submission of proposal	Interview tbc	/
		By mid October 2026		Start of assignment & prep meeting CEO & strategy cell	1
Prep phase		By 3rd week of November 2026	Delivery of inception report	Sign off meeting with CEO & strategy cell	2 to 3
Coordination throughout process		Mid Oct. 2026 – End Nov. 2027	Regular meetings & coordination moments with team		6 to 8
Workstream A	Discovery, contextual analysis & evaluation phase	By End of February 2027	Delivery of learning review	Sign off meeting with CEO & strategy cell	5 to 7
		Mid-March 2027		Strategic workshop with Governance & leadership team (in person)	4 to 6 (incl. preps & follow-up)
Workstream B	Development phase	By end April 2027	Strategic framework DRAFT	Sign off meeting with CEO & strategy cell	5 to 7
		24 – 26 May 2027		General Assembly	2
	Formulation and architecture phase	By early September 2027	Strategic framework FINAL	Sign off meeting with CEO & strategy cell	5 to 7
			Proposals for opportunities to test and pilot new ways of working in 2028	Sign off meeting with CEO & strategy cell	3 to 4

	Operational design and implementation planning	By end November 2027	Implementation roadmap and first-year action plan	Sign off meeting with CEO & strategy cell	3 to 4

6. Application Process

Interested applicants must submit a proposal that includes:

- Technical Proposal: Covering the understanding of the assignment, methodology, workplan, team composition including CV, and relevant experience (including three references and examples of comparable assignments).
- Financial Proposal: Including the total budget (excluding VAT), daily rates for team members, and a budget breakdown by cost category. Proposals should be submitted electronically to the designated email address by the specified deadline.

Consultant evaluation and assessment criteria

Proposals are evaluated by a selection panel based on the following weighted criteria:

- Quality of methodology (25%): Integration of review and strategy development processes.
- Understanding of assignment (15%): Grasp of the strategic challenges facing Philea.
- Facilitation experience (15%): Proven ability to lead governance-level strategy processes.
- Experience in reviews (10%): Track record in strategy evaluations and learning.
- Sector experience (10%): Working with philanthropy infrastructure or membership organisations.
- Ecosystem and foresight expertise (10%): Skills in mapping and future-oriented strategy.
- Team suitability (10%): Quality and balance of the proposed team.
- Value for money (5%).

Evaluation process

Beyond the written scores, Philea may shortlist applicants for an interview to further discuss their approach, team, and understanding of the assignment. The organisation looks for a partner who can act as both a "critical friend" and a strategic partner.

Proposals shall be submitted in writing by 25 September and sent to consultant@philea.odoo.com

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[i] For the purpose of this assignment, “strategic missions” refers to a limited number of overarching priority areas to be defined, under which Philea’s programmes, advocacy, knowledge, convening and membership activities should be more coherently structured, governed and funded.