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Date: 01/25/2018

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Ref: RFA-18-015

Grant Competition: Abuse of State Resources Monitoring Project

Organizational Background

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) is an independent, non-governmental organization providing professional support to electoral democracy. Through field work, applied research and advocacy, IFES strives to promote citizen participation, transparency and accountability in political life and civil society.

Since 1994, IFES has conducted a range of assistance activities to support the development of democratic elections and political processes in Ukraine. IFES supported the country's institutions and citizenry in building democracy through improvements in election law and administration, civil society development, rule of law and good governance. IFES continues to work closely with election officials, political parties, media, educational institutions, and the non-governmental sector through each election cycle.

Currently, IFES is implementing Electoral and Legal Enhancements through Civic Engagement and Technical Assistance (ELECT) program - the long-term initiative funded by UK aid from the UK government. The project is aimed at increasing trust in the electoral process among the public and political participants; to foster discussion on electoral law reform; to combat political corruption; to strengthen of the election administration; and to build the capacity of civil society to analyze and advocate on electoral reform issues. IFES support has focused on both the process and content of the reform by promoting inclusive dialogue among stakeholders and providing technical assistance in the development of legislation consistent with international and European standards.

Invitation for Grant Competition

IFES invites non-governmental, not-for-profit organizations meeting the relevant operational and performance requirements to submit applications for the 20-months monitoring project. The purpose of this project will be promoting reduction of abuse of the state resources during the national electoral campaigns in Ukraine through independent monitoring of a national state institution activities and outreach campaign.

The maximum grant amount cannot exceed **USD 120,000**. Grant funds may be used only for activities that are directly related to the implementation of the grant project, which will be funded under this grant competition.

IFES reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

Project Description

Abuse of the state resources at national, regional and local levels has long plagued Ukrainian elections, distorting level playing field and undermining public trust in electoral process and state institutions. While after Euromaidan the scale of the state resources abuse has notably decreased, incumbent political actors of different kind continue to use public institutions and resources to gain unfair advantage over their electoral competitors, which is regularly highlighted in reports of international and Ukrainian election monitors.

Significant legislative gaps and weak enforcement of existing norms create breeding ground for abuse of the state resources in Ukraine. Furthermore, high tolerance towards employing the state resources for political and electoral ends is entrenched in the fabric of Ukrainian political system. Therefore, it is highly likely that practices of abuse of the state resources will continue to be employed during the next presidential and parliamentary elections of 2019, which could limit their potential to serve as effective representation tools.

Thus, there is a need for increased efforts of civil society actors interested in promoting free and fair elections in Ukraine aimed at controlling and counteracting abuse of the state resources by various political actors. To be productive, these efforts should include direct interactions with those public institutions that are most vulnerable to being used in favor or against certain candidates or parties. Importantly, such interactions should employ both “sticks” and “carrots” to maximize overall effect.

Implementation of the project is expected to result in comprehensive analysis of the compliance by the selected national state body or bodies with the current legislation on prevention of abuse of the state resources in political activities, specifically in elections. The focus of the monitoring should be on usage of the institutional resources and public funds of the state body both before and after the official start of national campaigning of presidential and parliamentary elections to be held in 2019. The analysis should be complemented by wide media outreach campaign and specific policy recommendations, developed as a result of the monitoring and consultations with key stakeholders.

IFES continues to support the efforts aimed at promoting fairness and integrity of electoral processes and neutrality of public administration in Ukraine and invites CSOs to participate in this grant competition.

IFES encourages innovative approaches in designing monitoring and raising awareness campaign with a strong analytical and informative component to reach the main stakeholders and the public.

Illustrative activities may include but are not limited to:

1. Developing methodology for the on-going monitoring of using the institutional resources and public funds before and during the national campaigning periods by a national administrative body/ministry with traditionally high level of abuse of the state resources indicated during the previous electoral cycles, that will include:
 - mechanism(s) to track the use of institutional, administrative and budget resources by a pilot national administrative body/ministry;
 - tools to compare the use of the institutional resources and public funds before and after the official start of the national campaigning periods by a pilot national administrative body/ministry;
 - approaches to increase the level of understanding of legal requirements on avoiding abuse of the state resources by the state bodies officials and the field personnel.
2. Using the developed methodology to conduct on-going monitoring activities at national and regional/local level at least in ten pilot regions of Ukraine.
3. Organizing a series of expert discussion of the obtained interim and final monitoring results by gathering the key stakeholders followed by development of public policy recommendations on how to combat abuse of state resources more effectively.
4. Developing a Code of Conduct for a pilot national administrative body/ministry’s officials and the field personnel with its following introduction through signing the memorandum of cooperation between the ministry and the project implementer.
5. Organizing informational/training initiative on the implementation of the Code of Conduct for a pilot national administrative body/ministry’s officials and the field personnel in at least 10 pilot regions.
6. Developing relevant formats for presenting the findings to the public in the most comprehensive and user-friendly manner.
7. Organizing wide media outreach and awareness campaign by using both the traditional communication channels and innovative practices.
8. Other impactful activities could be applicable to reach the main goals of the project.

Duration of the Project

Project activities are expected to start May 15, 2018, and finish no later than December 21, 2019.

Technical Proposal (Proposal Goals, Objectives, Activities and Results)

Applicants should follow the Project Proposal Format guidelines (Attachment 1) carefully to ensure they meet the criteria below. Application form and budget template can be downloaded as the attachments to this announcement.

Eligibility

- Eligible organizations include Ukrainian non-governmental organizations with strong, established financial management and reporting systems, and not affiliated with any political parties or engaged in any political activities.
- Prior experience and demonstrated expertise in implementation of related projects; prior history of successful implementation of project grants and subawards is a plus.
- Proposals submitted to IFES under this competition must be original and the sole work of the applicant organizations.

Decision-making

To ensure an objective and non-discriminatory selection process, proposals will be reviewed by a board comprised of IFES staff and local experts. During the review process, additional information may be requested. The applicant will be asked to present the requested information within two days after the request.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of IFES, nor does it commit IFES to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a proposal.

Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will be used for evaluation of applications:

1. Technical Proposal (Project Goals, Objectives, Activities and Results) – 50 points

- Does the project aim to reach the set objectives and the tasks completion?
- Does the project target the main stakeholders?
- Are the goal(s) and objective(s) achievable within the allocated timeframe?
- Is the action plan realistic and comprehensive enough to justify the choice of activities?
- Are the expected results concrete, meaningful, attainable and appropriate to the goals and objectives?
- Are the expected deliverables practical, reasonable, and helpful for the set tasks completion?

2. Budget Proposal - 30 points

- Does the presented budget follow the guidelines?
- Does budget reflect realistic costs?
- Is the budget adequate to cover project activities?
- Is the budget cost-effective?

3. Organizational Capacity/Past Performance – 20 points

- Does the applicant organization have proven experience in organizing monitoring and outreach campaigns or similar activities?
- Is there an evidence of previous success in related field?
- Has the applicant organization previously implemented similar awards successfully?
- Does the applicant organization demonstrate relevant experience of the project team?

Application Submission Procedures

Applicants must submit:

- A completed IFES application form, including the detailed work plan for the proposed activities (Attachment 1);
- A completed Performance Monitoring Plan (Attachment 2);
- A detailed itemized budget in UAH along with the budget notes in the unified IFES format (Attachment 3);
- Scanned copies of the registration documents, including by-laws;
- CVs of the project participants (project director, administrative staff, and all expected involved experts);
- Support letter(s) from the relevant national state institutions stating their willingness to participate in the project is a plus;
- If applicable, applicant should submit additional information about other projects (project summary and budget) on similar topics, submitted or already funded by other donors.

Please note that selected organizations will be subject to a pre-award audit to determine fiscal responsibility and ensure adequacy of financial controls and accounting systems.

Schedule of events

Release of RFA	January 25, 2018
Deadline for submission of questions	February 9, 2018
Answers from IFES	February 20, 2018
RFA Closes – All Applications Due	March 26, 2018 by 6.00 PM Kyiv time

Note: Questions/Answers and Amendment(s) related to this RFA can be found on IFES Procurement Notices Page on the following link: www.ifes.org/procurement-notice

CSOs' Understanding of the Inquiry

In responding to this RFA, the organization accepts full responsibility to understand the RFA in its entirety, and in detail, including making any inquiries to IFES as necessary to gain such understanding. IFES reserves the right to disqualify any organization which demonstrates less than such understanding. Further, IFES reserves the right to determine, at its sole discretion, whether the organization has demonstrated such understanding. Such disqualification shall be at no fault, cost, or liability whatsoever to IFES.

Good Faith Statement

All information provided by IFES in this RFA is offered in good faith. Individual items are subject to change at any time. IFES makes no certification that any item is without error. IFES is not responsible or liable for any use of the information or for any claims asserted therefrom.

Contact for submission

Applications must be submitted via email **on or prior March 26, 2018**. Late proposals will not be considered. IFES will consider applications **in English**.

All questions and submission of proposals must adhere to the abovementioned schedule and shall be to the attention of Mr. Ragheed Al Ameen at ralameen@ifes.org and Ms. Sajia Tokhi at stokhi@ifes.org with “**Abuse of State Resources Monitoring Project**” in the subject line for all e-mail communication. IFES will confirm timely receipt of applications within one business day.

All the materials and documents submitted as part of this competition become IFES property and will not be returned to the applicant. IFES guarantees the confidentiality of applications.

End of RFA