

**Global Elections and Political Transitions (GEPT) Sub-grant
Program**

Supporting Democracy Networks and Communities of Practice

Request for Statements of Interest (RSOI)

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Statement of Interest Form

I. INTRODUCTION: GEPT SUB-GRANT PROGRAM

The Consortium for Elections and Political Processes Strengthening (CEPPS) is a joint venture of three partners: the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). Since 1995, the CEPPS partners have worked to support the development of democratic institutions, processes, and practices in over 140 countries around the world.

CEPPS is currently implementing the Global Electoral and Political Transitions (GEPT) award, which supports elections and political transitions during a period of tremendous social change, exemplified by the challenges of increased connectivity, the youth bulge, urbanization, migration, and globalization. CEPPS empowers local partners, including traditionally marginalized groups, to build resilient government institutions, political parties, and electoral processes in fragile states and developing democracies.

Through the GEPT Leader Award, CEPPS will develop and manage a sub-grants program aimed at strengthening the capacity and role of local and regional organizations in support of elections and political transitions. Sub-grants will be used to strengthen local and regional organizations and their support networks. CEPPS has found that regional and global networks provide a vital tool for building sustainable peer-to-peer support, and can offer additional leverage for country-level democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) reforms. This program is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The initiatives to be supported align with the GEPT Leader Award Program Objectives, as follows:

1. Promoting meaningful participation of all citizens in their political systems, including women, youth and other traditionally marginalized groups
2. Harnessing the comparative advantages of media and technology to promote citizen understanding and engagement and transparent political competition
3. Supporting meaningful transition processes that establish positive precedents for effective democratic governance
4. Promoting the integrity of elections as a sustainable vehicle for peacefully and democratically choosing leaders
5. Facilitating the ability of elected political actors to fulfill their responsibilities to citizens through better governance practices
6. Promoting competitive and representative multiparty political systems
7. Ensuring respect for the application of impartial legal frameworks and compliance by political actors

CEPPS will support sub-grantees to develop their organizational capacity in a range of areas, both administrative and technical. Based on the outcome of an initial assessment of organizational capacity, which will be conducted in partnership with the sub-grantee, capacity strengthening may

emphasize evaluation of and learning from program outcomes; adaptation to changes in context; innovation; and technical capacity to advance one or more of the seven GEPT objectives listed above.

II. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

CEPPS envisions grant funding to help incubate new communities of practice or strengthen existing communities of practice whose focus intersects with topics outline below. Qualified applicants may be non-U.S.-based regional and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), professional associations, and relevant special interest associations or coalitions in developing countries. Networks and Communities of Practice may be localized in a particular municipality, region, community, domestically or internationally, single or multiple country; projects supporting work at any combination of these levels will be considered. Organizations do not need be members of existing communities of practice or networks. If organizations are already active in existing communities of practice or international networks that could strategically widen the participation, audience and/or impact of the proposed work, they will explain how existing linkages will be leveraged. Awards shall not be made to organizations or individuals whose name appears on the "Lists of Parties Excluded from Federal Procurement and Nonprocurement Programs" or any U.S. government or United Nations lists of terrorists.

III. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

CEPPS will provide sub-grants to local and/or regional organizations or networks to support activities that foster local, regional, and global communities of practice. CEPPS seeks innovative, inclusive projects that will foster a community of practice on one of the following topics:

- 1) **Promoting Open Parliament:** best practices for enhancing transparency and accountability of legislatures.
- 2) **Improving Local Representation:** best practices for improving local governance and representing collective concerns to the national level government.
- 3) **Safeguarding integrity of election data management systems:** best practices in the design and maintenance of safe election data management systems
- 4) **Mitigating election violence experienced by marginalized groups:** effective approaches for reporting on and responding to election violence experienced by traditionally marginalized stakeholders.
- 5) **Promoting Political Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities:** improving the political inclusion, participation, and empowerment of persons with disabilities
- 6) **Promoting Electoral Justice:** relevant, effective and efficient solutions to common challenges in adjudicating election complaints.

Activities that typically are **not** considered competitive include:

- The provision of humanitarian assistance;
- English language instruction;
- Development of high-tech computer or communications software and/or hardware;
- Purely academic exchanges or fellowships;
- Micro-loans or similar small business development initiatives;

- Activities that go beyond an organization’s demonstrated competence, or fail to provide clear evidence of the ability of the applicant to achieve the stated impact;
- Activities that duplicate programming already being implemented by other organizations or networks

The program also seeks to strengthen local organizations’ ability to compete for, administer, and account for resources from foundations, U.S. nonprofits, international organizations, international financial institutions and bilateral donors. In addition to issuing sub-grants, CEPPS will also provide tailored technical assistance to the sub-grantees based on their identified areas of need which may include but are not limited to site visits, award and financial management training, networking, inclusion of traditionally marginalized populations, and peer to peer learning opportunities.

Through this Request for Statements of Interest (RSOI), CEPPS is seeking applications from eligible institutions, coalitions or existing networks that respond to the program description. These grants will be made pursuant to the authority contained in the leader with associates cooperative agreement number AID-OAA-L-15-00007 issued by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to CEPPS.

Priority Areas for Consideration

A. Promoting Open Parliament

Summary: Community of practice (CoP) involving collections of legislators, legislative staff, political party representatives and/or civil society organizations and citizen monitors of legislators on best practices for enhancing inclusive citizen engagement and transparency and accountability of legislatures.

Community of practice: Regional open parliament CoPs will comprise legislators, legislative staff, political party representatives and/or civil society organizations advocating for transparency, accountability and citizen monitoring of legislators. The inclusiveness, transparency, and openness of governments and parliaments is vital to promoting better governance practices and meaningful participation of citizens in their political systems, thus the community of practice aligns with GEPT Objectives 1, 5 and 6.

Project need: Globally, trust in democratic institutions is on the decline, and parliaments, in their role as the institutions meant to be closest to citizens, are among the most at risk. At the same time, citizen expectation for their parliaments’ success is on the rise. Without greater dedication to legislative transparency, openness, inclusivity, and citizen engagement at the regional level, countries risk a trust deficit that can damage the legitimacy and functioning of democratic institutions. There is greater focus on this issue within the open government community. The Open Government Partnership (OGP) recently adopted a Policy on Legislative Engagement that outlines a mechanism for parliaments and civil society organizations to co-create OGP open parliament commitments, which would also be subject to the OGP's independent review mechanism. Regional efforts to advance open parliament plans would be particularly welcome.

B. Improving Local Representation

Summary: Community of practice involving mayors, county commissioners or other appointed or elected local leaders, and political party representatives on best practices for improving inclusive local governance and representing their collective concerns to the national level government.

Communities of practice: The Local Governance CoP will facilitate a network of local leaders in order to provide specific opportunities for local leaders, such as mayors or county commissioners and political party representatives, to come together and discuss their common challenges to local governance. Through this discussion, leaders will better understand their roles as well as their counterparts' roles and will be able to better articulate the collective challenges of local governance to national government leaders. The CoP can also facilitate best practices for demand-side governance, by focusing on topics such as inclusion, constituent outreach, and ensuring that diverse constituent concerns are communicated clearly from the sub-national to national level.

The model will be similar to the U.S. Conference of Mayors ¹or other associations where local leaders have a space that allows for sharing of key governance best practices, understanding key challenges, and identifying issues that can be shared with national government leaders. This CoP will also facilitate improved dialogue not only among local level leaders but also between local and national level leaders. Projects supporting the development of this CoP will align with GEPT Objectives 3, 5 and 6.

Project need: Lack of interaction among local leaders and access to key best practices in solving common local government governance challenges hinders democratic progress. This CoP will facilitate local leaders' ability to fulfill their responsibilities to citizens through better governance practices and supporting meaningful transition processes that establish positive precedents for effective democratic governance. In many countries, the creation of associations to help represent a collective voice is a common practice and a best practice in ensuring that similar issues amongst varying stakeholders can be more impactful under a collective voice. At the local level of government, this can be a useful tool to help ensure that at the local concerns are collectively represented at the national government level. In addition to a collective voice, many associations are also a resource to local leaders in identifying best practices and understanding impact to key public policy decisions. In countries that are transitioning from a more centralized to more decentralized model, local leaders will have a new role and more responsibility in filling the needs of citizens. Therefore, this CoP would help create a more resources for newly elected leaders, as well as a collective voice for local leaders who interface and learn from one another to improve inclusive governance and responsiveness to citizens.

C. Safeguarding integrity of election data management systems

Summary: Inclusive community of practice involving election managers, data stakeholders and database experts on best practices in the design and maintenance of safe election data management

¹ <https://www.usmayors.org/>

systems.

Community of practice: The election data management systems community of practice will comprise a representative group of election managers, election stakeholder representatives, data management and information technology professionals, and elections-focused non-governmental organizations. The vulnerability of voter registration and results data management systems to theft or tampering are electoral integrity issues that can affect public perception of the credibility of the electoral process or outcome. Sub-grants promoting this community of practice would thus align with GEPT Objective 4.

Project need: Election commissions have benefitted from tracking voter registration and election results information with nation-wide, centralized data-collection systems. Officials' use of larger datasets and more complex data management systems has enabled more effective update of voter registries as well as more efficient reporting of election results. However, these modern systems for election management have also become a popular target for hackers. Regardless of whether hackers intend to discredit the election authority or the election process, news of stolen voter registration data or infiltrated results reporting systems is often quickly politicized. The consequences can be severe: diminishing trust in the election organizer's capabilities and high levels of public concern about the integrity of the election process and/or result. Election managers would benefit from an inclusive community of practice on emerging challenges and best practices in securing their data management systems. The community discussion would need to address the dual objectives of securing data systems from harmful intrusion while making key electoral data available to stakeholders since such open data initiatives often boost electoral integrity through enhanced transparency. Developing a data management policy that maximizes both objectives will require election officials to demonstrate a nuanced understanding of elections data management principles and practice.

D. Election violence experienced by marginalized groups

Summary: Community of practice on effective, inclusive approaches for reporting on and responding to elections violence experienced by traditionally marginalized stakeholders. Community of practice facilitated dialogue between stakeholder representatives, conflict and election civil society organizations and election officials will identify unique patterns of election violence that impact these communities and implications for the design of more responsive mitigation policies and practice.

Community of practice: To address the impact of election violence on traditionally marginalized populations, CEPPS will convene a diverse community of practice of stakeholder groups, election- and conflict-focused CSOs, and election management bodies. This community of practice will assess common drivers, identify effective interventions, and coordinate engagement across these marginalized groups. Focus on how election violence specifically impacts upon marginalized groups and the discussion around innovation in policy and practice to mitigate election violence advance GEPT Objective 1 and 4.

Project need: Women, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, LGBTI persons and other marginalized stakeholders face specific patterns of election violence and other human rights abuses

which can deter or otherwise undermine their meaningful participation in political life. Drawing on evidence gathered and recommendations provided by this multi-stakeholder discussion, group representatives can work with EMBs, national human rights institutions, stakeholder groups, academic institutions and CSOs to expand existing protocols for reporting election violence and create new reporting mechanisms to increase marginalized survivors' safe and confidential access to reporting on electoral violence. Prioritizing stakeholder voices in the community of practice will ensure that best practices and policy innovations emerging from this collaboration will help ensure an intersectional, survivor-centric approach to reporting on and addressing rights abuses tailored to the needs of these communities, while ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. In addition to identifying effective approaches in reporting election violence, the community of practice will also engage civil society and election managers on the how to prevent and mitigate election violence against marginalized communities. This may include collaboration between stakeholder representatives and EMBs to develop messaging to raise public awareness, as well as messaging specifically targeted towards women, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and LGBTI persons highlighting the state's commitment to their equitable access to electoral processes.

E. Leveraging Regional Networks for Political Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

Summary: Community of practice between Disabled Person's Organizations (DPOs), democracy, rights and governance focused NGOs, election observation groups, and state officials focused on improving the political inclusion, participation, and empowerment of diverse groups of persons with disabilities.

Community of practice: The political inclusion of persons with disabilities community of practice will comprise disabled people's organizations, local democracy, rights and governance focused NGOs, election observation groups, national and/or regional human rights institutions, and Election Management Bodies (EMBs). This inclusive community will share common challenges and innovations in policy and practice for upholding the political rights of persons with disabilities, especially the international standards outlined in Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). It will seek to include participation and perspectives of women with disabilities, indigenous people with disabilities, and LGBTI people with disabilities. The community of practice would strengthen connections with existing global and regional networks of election management bodies, Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) and citizen election observers. The active participation of Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM), for example, would not only better expose DPOs to best practices and lessons in the broader field of citizen election observation; it would also ensure that mainstream citizen observer groups learn from DPOs about how to better integrate diverse persons with disabilities issues into their observation efforts. Through its focus on more inclusive political processes for persons with disabilities and ensuring all citizens have a voice in how they are governed, the sub-grants promoting this community of practice will align with GEPT Objectives 1 and 4.

Project need: One in seven people around the world has a disability, yet globally persons with disabilities remain amongst the most politically marginalized stakeholders. Discrimination and barriers to participation for persons with disabilities may be compounded by other factors such as age, gender identity, sexual orientation, and/or ethnicity. They face legal, attitudinal, physical and communication barriers to political participation and low levels of representation in political

institutions. Although 90% of UN member states have ratified the CRPD, there is still a gap in terms of implementation of Article 29 on participation in political life, which this community of practice seeks to fill. Election stakeholders in government and civil society are often unaware of how their policies and procedures politically marginalize people with disabilities, but by working to integrate an inclusive disability rights perspective into existing regional and global networks, this community of practice can impact change on a broader scale.

F. Electoral justice

Summary: Inclusive community of practice amongst EMBs and other institutions with an electoral justice mandate that will facilitate the sharing of relevant, effective and efficient solutions to common challenges in adjudicating election complaints.

Community of practice: Credible, inclusive processes for the review and adjudication of electoral complaints, including effective legal remedies, are a key component of electoral integrity. The electoral justice community of practice will leverage existing regional organizations of election officials to increase both inter and intra-regional dialogue on adjudicating election complaints. The community of practice will comprise election management bodies and electoral justice institutions as well as diverse experts from civil society and academia on the topic of electoral complaints adjudication / electoral dispute resolution. CoP members will gain increased exposure to (while actively participating in) dialogue on emerging principles and best practice for the provision of inclusive electoral justice. Participants will also be exposed to a greater diversity of institutional and procedural arrangements allowing further discussion and research to take place on the comparative strengths and weaknesses of different models at handling various types of electoral disputes cases. Insights and best practices emerging from this community of practice will support GEPT Objective 1, 4 and 7.

Project need: CEPPS' experience assisting election management bodies and electoral justice institutions (e.g. electoral courts or tribunals) has shown that sharing knowledge and expertise is crucial to finding relevant, effective and efficient solutions to common challenges faced by these institutions in adjudicating election complaints. There remains enormous potential and urgency in further exploring and harnessing the opportunities for such cooperation. Limited institutional capacity and lack of financial resources are among some of the impediments to this cooperation. The community of practice would be particularly beneficial to countries that are involved in electoral reform where reform of the electoral justice framework is under consideration.

IV. INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF STATEMENTS OF INTEREST

The submission of a statement of interest (SOI) is the first step in a two-part process. Applicants must first submit a SOI, which is a concise concept note designed to clearly communicate a program idea and its objectives before the development of a full proposal application. Statements should be no longer than five (5) pages. Upon review of eligible SOIs, CEPPS will invite selected applicants to expand their ideas into full proposals and budgets for submission.

CEPPS plans to award up to six (6) sub-grants ranging between \$20,000-\$100,000. However, there is no guarantee regarding the number or amount of awards, nor that an award will be made under each of the priority areas listed above. Awards are contingent on availability of funding from USAID. CEPPS reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

Applications must be submitted by email no later than 6:00pm EST, October 20, 2017.

Applications should be sent via email to:
David Sands
CEPPS GEPT Capacity Building Specialist
networking@cepps.org

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Statement of Interest

The statement of interest should respond directly to the program description found in Section II. Applications should be concise as possible. The SOI shall be submitted in English. A corresponding sample format has been included to provide guidance on SOI formatting (see Annex 1).

Budget

A summary cost category budget must be submitted illustrating the total amount requested for the SOI. This budget does not count toward the two-page limit and should be submitted in the sample format found in Annex 2.

V. SELECTION CRITERIA

SOI submissions will be evaluated on the quality of the project idea, the approach to program planning, achievability of program objectives, and the degree to which its approach to inclusion of traditionally marginalized populations. SOIs will be scored based on the following review criteria:

Quality of Project Idea (40%):

SOIs should be responsive to the solicitation and should exhibit relevance to one of the seven GEPT program objectives. CEPPS prefers creative approaches that do not duplicate efforts by other entities.

Program Planning (20%):

A competitive SOI will clearly articulate how the proposed program activities and expected results (both outputs and outcomes) contribute to specific program objectives and the overall program goal. Objectives should be measurable, results-focused, and achievable in a reasonable time frame and with the proposed budget amount.

Ability to Achieve Objectives (20%):

SOIs should address how the program will engage relevant stakeholders and should identify local partners as appropriate. If local partners are identified, applicants should describe the division of labor among the applicant and any local partners. This division should also be represented in the summary cost category budget. SOIs should demonstrate the organization's previous experience in administering programs, preferably similar programs targeting the requested program area or similarly challenging environments.

Inclusion of Traditionally Marginalized Populations (20%):

CEPPS strives to ensure that its programs are inclusive of all citizens and increase the participation in public life of the most marginalized populations, including women, youth, people with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons, and indigenous populations. Regardless of a proposed program's target population, applicants should identify particular barriers to access for marginalized groups, address how the perspectives of these groups will be integrated in all proposed program activities and objectives, and describe how program activities and outputs will be inclusive of traditionally marginalized populations and seek to decrease barriers to access for marginalized groups in public life.

VI. STANDARD PROVISIONS AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

MANDATORY STANDARD PROVISIONS FOR NON-U.S., NON-GOVERNMENTAL RECIPIENTS

The Mandatory Standard Provisions for Non-U.S., Nongovernmental Recipients and Required as Applicable Standard Provisions will be incorporated in the award by reference and can be found at <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303mab.pdf>. Grantees will be expected to comply with all mandatory and required as applicable provisions.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Grantees will adhere to all reporting requirements listed below. The exact format for preparation of and timing for submission of all reports will be determined in collaboration with the sponsoring CEPPS Partner organization and will be included in the terms and conditions of the award.

Progress Reports: The grantee will be required to submit periodic narrative performance reports depending on the program objective and the terms and condition of each individual award.

Financial Reports: The grantee will be required to submit periodic financial reports depending on the program objective and the terms and condition of each individual award.

Final Report: The Recipient will be required to submit final narrative and financial reports. The final narrative report should consolidate activities and analyze progress towards results.

Applicant's Statement of Interest guidance:

The Statement of Interest is the most important item of consideration and must be specific, complete and presented concisely. The application should demonstrate the applicant's capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this Activity. The application should be in English and should not exceed a total of 5 pages in length. The application should be single space on standard A4 or letter and in font Times New Roman size 12. No additional materials should be submitted; no additional materials will be considered.

The technical application shall include the following sections:

- (i) Section I – Applicant Information (cannot exceed 1 page)
- (ii) Section II – Technical Application (cannot exceed 3 pages)
- (iii) Section III – Summary budget (cannot exceed 1 page)

Formatting requirements:

1. Delete the italicized guidance in the application.
2. Use one inch margins (top/bottom/right/left).
3. Use Times New Roman 12 point font.
4. Section headers should be in bold.
5. Use one space only between paragraphs.

Supporting Democracy Networks and Communities of Practice

Section 1: The Applicant Information (*This section is **one page only** and does not count towards the three (3) page application limit.*)

Formatting requirements:

1. *Delete the italicized guidance in the application.*
2. *Use Times New Roman 12 point font.*

Full Name of Organization	
Country, City	
Address	
Office Telephone Number(s)	
E-mail Address	
Contact Person, Title and Name	
Contact Person, E-mail address	
Contact Person, Phone number	
Organization's mission and statement of purpose	
Primary sectors of the organization's operation	

We/I hereby certify that the information contained herein and attached hereto is complete and accurate to the best of our/my knowledge.

Name of Representative of Organization/ Institution Signature Date

Section 2 – Technical Application

Formatting requirements:

1. **Delete the italicized guidance in the application.**
2. **Use one inch margins (top/bottom/right/left).**
3. **Use Times New Roman 12 point font.**
4. **Section headers should be in bold.**
5. **Use one space only between paragraphs.**

1. Proposed Grant Activity Summary

Organization: [Insert Organization Name]
Project Duration: [Insert Project Period (months)]
Budget: [Insert Budget Amount]

2. Introduction to the Project Idea

Please provide an overview of the project. This section should also include a description of: the overall programmatic approach (i.e. partnerships, networks); your beneficiaries; and how the project design will interact with existing networks that cover similar or related issues (please highlight complementarity and explain how you will avoid duplication of existing efforts).

3. Goal

What is the long-term, widespread improvement the project is seeking to make?

4. Project Objectives

Please state the specific project objective(s) and anticipated results. It should be made clear how achieving the project activity's goal and objectives will contribute to addressing the issues/problems listed in Section 2 above and how it will do so in an inclusive way.

Project Objective(s):

Project Result(s):

5. Project Activities

*Under the project objective(s) describe/link the activities to be conducted that will lead to the accomplishments of the stated project objectives and impact on the action-forcing event, including a description of how each activity will be conducted in an inclusive manner.
[use bullets]*

Activities (Project Objective 1):

Activities (Project Objective 2):

6. Past Experience

Please describe your organization's past experience implementing similar activities. Please be sure to include a description of how members of marginalized groups participate in your organization and how your organizations has worked on issues affecting marginalized groups.

7. Capacity Building

CEPPS seeks to develop the capacity of local organizations to more deeply engage in elections and political transitions. CEPPS will offer tailored capacity building and technical assistance to sub-grantees to strengthen organizational and technical capacities. While not part of the selection criteria, applicants are invited to list up to three aspects of organizational or technical capacity building that your organization would benefit from during a partnership with CEPPS.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Section III: Summary Budget

Submissions should include the following costs in a summary format (sample found below), but no cost details are required, nor should be included at this stage of the application.

- *Personnel* – In general, employees receiving benefits from the applicant organization are considered staff. Consultants hired to assist with the program, who do not receive benefits, should be included under contractual.
- *Travel* – Staff and any participant travel
- *Supplies*
- *Contractual* – Estimate the direct costs for items such as translation, interpretation, legal fees, accounting services, and any other contractual work that will be needed as part of the project.
- *Other Direct Costs* – these will vary depending on the nature of the project but generally include direct activities costs not contained in the other budget categories (i.e. venue rental or coffee breaks).
- *Indirect/Overhead Costs* – applicants can choose to budget directly for costs such as rent, utilities, technology, human resources and other general operating costs, or a *de minimis* rate of 10% can be applied to the total amount of direct expenses budgeted.

Sample Template

Summary Budget Category	TOTAL COST USD
Personnel	\$0
Travel	\$0
Equipment	\$0
Supplies	\$0
Contractual	\$0
Other Direct Costs	\$0
Indirect Costs	\$0
Total	\$0