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REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Ref: RFA-19-038

Grant Competition: Monitoring the Use of Media during Elections 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 Ukraine Responsive and Accountable Politics (U-RAP) and Electoral and Legal Enhancements through Civic Engagement and Technical Assistance (ELECT) program – two long-term initiatives funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and UK aid from the UK government, respectively. The projects are 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 a 9-months media monitoring project. The purpose of this project will be monitoring the use of media, particularly political advertisements, by parties and candidates to identify solutions aimed at decreasing overall cost of campaigning and level the electoral playing field.

The maximum grant amount cannot exceed **USD 70,000**. 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

According to various expert assessments, the cost of campaigning has been steadily rising throughout Ukraine's independence period. The lion's share of party and candidate expenses are used for political advertisements, predominantly on TV. Absence of effective legal regulations allows electoral competitors to spend huge amounts of money on advertisements and compete with their wallets driving up the total cost of elections. As a result, established electoral competitors use their vast resources and ties to big private donors to dominate the advertisement market and keep smaller and less affluent political actors at bay. This inflates the cost of participating in elections, distorts the electoral playing field and limits electoral choice of Ukrainian citizens.

Domination of advertisements over all other media-related instruments of campaigning has also resulted in degradation of quality of electoral debates. Instead of offering and discussing policies and programs, many parties and candidates use advertisement to target voters with simplistic messages and emotional appeals preventing informed discussion and competition of ideas. This in turn negatively affects quality of representation and decision-making process, as well as undermines general trust in election process and democratic institutions.

In absence of legal changes or notable public attention to this issue, established and wealthy parties and candidates will most likely use their advantageous access to media to further increase their share in advertisement market during the upcoming 2019 parliamentary elections. This raises a need to bring the issue of use of media during elections to the public agenda through conducting legal assessment and monitoring real spending on media by electoral contestants followed by wide discussions of the obtained results among key stakeholders.

Implementation of the project is expected to result in identifying key challenges related to use of media during elections, establishing effective communications between key advocates for change and raising awareness about the issue among the public. Special attention should be devoted to engaging various stakeholders representing state institutions, media, political parties and civil society in wide and inclusive discussions. All activities within the project should be accompanied by innovative media outreach campaign.

IFES continues to support the efforts aimed at promoting free and fair elections in Ukraine and invites CSOs to participate in this grant competition.

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

Illustrative activities may include but are not limited to:

1. Assessing current legislative framework regulating use of media and political advertisement during election and pre-election period.
2. Developing methodology for monitoring real spending of parties and candidates on media during election campaigns.
3. Using developed methodology to gather data on spending of parties and candidates on media during 2019 parliamentary elections, including those not reflected in campaign and party financial reports.
4. Organizing public discussions with different stakeholders on issues related to use of media during elections and its legal regulation, based on the legal assessment and the obtained data on media spending.
5. Identify key challenges and legal gaps related to regulation of use of media during elections that need to be addressed through legal changes and other measures.
6. Organizing wide media outreach and awareness campaign by using both the traditional communication channels and innovative practices.
7. 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, 2019 and finish no later than January 31, 2020.

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

Applicants are advised to follow the Project Proposal Format guidelines (Attachment A) 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 proven 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%

- 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%

- 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%

- 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?

Evaluation Criteria Grading:

Highly Exceeds Expectations	5 Points
Slightly Exceeds Expectations	4 Points
Meets Expectations	3 Points
Meets most but not All Expectations	2 Points
Does Not Meet Expectations	1 Point

Application Submission Procedures

Applicants must submit:

- A completed IFES application form, including the detailed work plan for the proposed activities (Attachment A);
- A completed Performance Monitoring Plan (Attachment B);
- A detailed itemized budget in USD along with the budget notes in the unified IFES format (Attachment C) without VAT and include any applicable charges clearly identified, provided against each of the categories of expenses described in this request;
- Scanned copies of the registration documents, including by-laws;
- CVs of the project participants (project director, administrative staff, and all expected involved experts);
- 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	April 2, 2019
Deadline for submission of questions	April 8, 2019
Answers from IFES	April 12, 2019
RFA Closes – All Bids Due	April 30, 2019 till 6.00 PM Kyiv time

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 there from.

Contact for submission

Applications must be submitted via email **on or prior April 30, 2019**. 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. Ian Swank at iswank@ifes.org and Ms. Sajia Tokhi at stokhi@ifes.org with “**Monitoring Use of Media during Elections Project**” in the subject line for all e-mail communication. IFES will confirm timely recipient 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