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REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Ref: RFA-19-10-2017

Grant Competition: Advocacy campaign for adoption of a new national referendum law in Ukraine

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), Program and Strengthening the Capacity of Electoral Actors Program, and Electoral and Legal Enhancements through Civic Engagement and Technical Assistance (ELECT) program - three long-term initiatives funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), 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 the advocacy project. The purpose of this project will be promoting the adoption of a new national referendum law in Ukraine through an advocacy campaign.

The maximum small grant amount cannot exceed **UAH 266,000**. 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

Twenty-five years ago, Ukraine proclaimed its independence through a national referendum. Today, Ukrainian citizens' right to directly participate in decision making on important national issues through fair and just national referendums is at risk, as the 2012 National Referendum Law is still in force.

Adopted on November 6, 2012, the current National Referendum Law was drafted without involvement of independent expert community, and was adopted in violation of legal constitutional procedure.

Both national and international experts, including the Venice Commission, have noted that the National Referendum Law contradicts the Constitution of Ukraine, does not comply with international standards and good practices in the sphere, and may adversely affect Ukrainian democracy.

In the previous years, the Ukrainian civil society made a significant effort to repeal the current legislation governing the national referendum with the subsequent adoption of the new National Referendum Law, consistent with Ukraine's Constitution, international standards, and good practices. IFES-supported initiatives led to a number of important developments in the sphere, including but not limited to the following:

- NGO Coalition "For Fair Referendum" was established in early 2013;
- Constitutional petition was developed and submitted to the Constitutional Court of Ukraine by a group of MPs on December 1, 2014; and
- The new Draft National Referendum Law was developed and registered in the Parliament (Draft Law No 2145a) on June 23, 2015.

Unfortunately, the Parliament of Ukraine elected in 2014 has failed to repeal the current National Referendum Law, and the Constitutional Court of Ukraine is still in process of reviewing the abovementioned petition. Thus, the decision on the unconstitutional nature of the current referendum legislation is pending.

IFES continues to support the efforts aimed at promoting the adoption of democratic National Referendum legislation in Ukraine and invites CSOs to participate in this small-grant competition. The goal of the grant competition is to develop and implement an advocacy campaign targeting the parliament to consider Draft Law 2145a and the Constitutional Court in reviewing the petition on recognizing the current National Referendum Law adoption procedure as unconstitutional.

IFES encourages innovative approaches in designing advocacy and awareness campaign with a strong media component campaign to reach the main stakeholders and the public.

Illustrative activities may include but not limited to:

- Organizing an expert discussion by gathering the key stakeholders to develop public policy recommendations on how to amend the current referendum legislation to be in accordance with international and European standards;
- Coalition building to join the efforts of civil society, public activists and expert community in amending the current referendum legislation;
- Organizing wide media outreach and awareness campaign by using both the traditional communication channels and innovative practices;
- Other impactful activities could be applicable to reach the main goals of the project.

Duration of the Project

Project activities are expected to start December 10, 2017, and finish no later than July 10, 2018. All activities, including reporting and project close out, should conclude by July 31, 2018.

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 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%

- 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 legal advocacy 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 (Annex 1);
- A completed Performance Monitoring Plan (Annex 2);
- A detailed itemized budget in UAH along with the budget notes in the unified IFES format (Annex 3);
- 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.

- Any other supporting documentation that will strengthen the application.

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	October 20, 2017
Deadline for submission of questions	October 24, 2017
Answers from IFES	October 27, 2017
RFA Closes – All Bids Due	November 10, 2017

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 to November 10, 2017**. Late proposals will not be considered. IFES will consider applications **in English or Ukrainian**.

All questions and submission of proposals must adhere to the abovementioned schedule and shall be to the attention of Olesia Liesnikova at email: oliesnikova@ifes.org with "Referendum advocacy campaign 2017" in the subject line for all e-mail communication.

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