



**International Foundation
for Electoral Systems**

**INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS
(IFES)**

**Call for Concept Papers (CCP) for
Innovative Voter Education Grants Competition in Malawi
for 2025 Elections**

January 8, 2025

1. Call for Concept Papers

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this Call for Concept Papers (CCP) is to invite eligible Malawi-based organizations to submit a detailed concept for a project that will pilot an innovative voter education initiative ahead of the September 2025 general elections. This CCP provides prospective organizations with the relevant operational and performance requirements for the concept paper process. IFES will subsequently invite the organizations with the strongest concepts to participate in a full Request for Applications (RFA) process that includes a presentation-based, “Dragon’s Den”-style competition. IFES anticipates issuing up to five (5) subgrants at the end of this two-stage process.

1.2. Call for Concept Papers

IFES will conduct a competitive process to identify grantees per the tentative timeline below:

Call for Concept Papers Schedule

Issuance of Call for Concept Papers	January 08, 2025
Questions Due	January 14, 2025, by 17:00 Central Africa Time (CAT)
Response from IFES	January 16, 2025
Call for Concept Papers Closes	January 24, 2025
All Concept Papers Due	January 24, 2025, by 23:59 CAT

IFES will send the Request for Application to finalists only.

2. General Information

2.1. Background

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), as part of the Consortium for Election and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), is supporting Malawi’s 2025 Tripartite Elections through the “Strengthening Electoral Integrity Project” funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Foreign Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO). One goal of SEIP is to improve voter education and issue-based civic education in Malawi.

IFES seeks to support Malawi civil society to design and deliver effective voter education campaigns to ensure youth and first-time voters receive appropriate information to engage in the electoral process. Such activities include developing innovative approaches to ensure that citizens are motivated and well informed about how to participate fully in elections through comprehensive information on a variety of electoral activities such as campaign rules and responsibilities of political parties, polling and counting procedures during elections, duties and responsibilities of voters, measures to ensure peaceful elections, and the electoral disputes process.

In coordination with the Malawi Election Commission, IFES will host a voter education ‘Dragon’s Den’ competition for Malawian civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs) to pitch innovative proposals for effective and inclusive voter education campaigns. Through a two-stage process, beginning with this Call for Concept Papers, participating organizations will make a proposal pitch for their concept, with the potential to win grant funding and capacity building on best practices in voter education, grant management, use of new media techniques, and platforms for enhanced message dissemination. IFES will prioritize the selection of innovative voter education campaign concepts that substantively address effective outreach to youth (under age 30) and first-time voters, in particular young women and/or young persons with disabilities.

3. Application Preparation Instructions

3.1. Applicant's Understanding of the Call for Concept Papers (CCP)

In responding to this CCP, the applicant accepts full responsibility to understand the CCP 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 applicant who demonstrates less than such understanding. Further, IFES reserves the right to determine, at its sole discretion, whether the applicant has demonstrated such understanding. Such disqualification and/or cancellation shall be at no fault, cost, or liability whatsoever to IFES.

3.2. Good Faith Statement

All information provided by IFES in this CCP 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.

3.3. Communication

Verbal communication shall not be effective unless formally confirmed in writing by the IFES officials identified in Section 3.3.1 of this CCP. In no case shall verbal communication govern over written communication.

3.3.1. Applicant Inquiries

Inquiries, questions, and requests for clarification related to this CCP should be submitted in writing to the representative listed below by the deadline listed in 1.2. CCP Schedule.

Ahmad Totakhil
atotakhil@ifes.org

Questions/Answers and Addenda(s) related to this CCP can be found on [IFES Procurement Notices](#).

3.3.2. Formal Communications shall include, but are not limited to:

- Questions concerning this CCP
- Expressions of Interest
- Pre-award negotiations under this CCP
- Addenda to this CCP

3.3.3. Addenda

IFES will make a good-faith effort to provide written responses to the questions or requests for clarifications that require addenda by the date set in the CCP Schedule above. All questions, answers, and addenda will be shared with all interested organizations.

3.4. Eligibility

Locally registered Malawian civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), disabled persons organizations (DPOs), non-political party organizations or other similar not-for-profit institutions are invited to apply. If a DPO, CSO, or NGO is not locally registered, a signed letter stating the reason why must be included as part of the application. Participating organizations must have been formally established for at least two years to conduct civic and voter education, and should be currently accredited by the Malawi Electoral Commission to conduct civic and voter education.

Individuals and the following organizations are not eligible to access funding:

- Governmental and semi-governmental institutions
- International organizations / organizations headquartered or registered outside of Malawi
- Political parties or organizations affiliated with or engaging in partisan activities

- Organizations running on a for-profit basis

3.5. Application Instructions

All applications should include the following, in order for their application to be considered:

3.5.1. Concept Paper

The Concept Paper must include a written application in English describing in detail the applicant's technical approach, expected results, and feasibility to implement the Program Description as described in Article 4 of this CCP. The evaluation criteria can be found in Article 3.6. Applicants should use the concept paper template in Attachment A from this solicitation.

3.5.2. A brief outline of the applicant's organization and experience

Organizations should demonstrate substantive prior experience conducting relevant public education and outreach and/or democracy and governance programming, using Attachment B from this solicitation.

3.5.3. Additional documentation

- Proof of organization's registration or a signed letter indicating why the organization is not registered
- CVs of key personnel including the organization's director and anticipated project manager

3.6. Application Submission

Applicants must send final applications in electronic copy via e-mail to the points of contact identified in Section 3.3.1, on or prior to the closing date and time shown in the *Schedule of Events*.

3.7. Criteria for Call for Concept Paper review

IFES will evaluate responses to this CCP based on its demonstrated competence, compliance, format, and organization. The purpose of this CCP is to identify those organizations that have the technical creativity, realistic concepts and institutional capacity to implement the project as described in Article 4 of this CCP.

- **Responsiveness and Soundness of Concept**
 - Demonstrating strong understanding of the specific voter education context, needs and challenges that the proposed concept will address
 - Evidence-based substantiation for the effectiveness of the concept
 - Substantive, specific plans for how the concept will more effectively educate and engage women, youth, persons with disabilities in electoral processes
- **Innovation of Concept**
 - Clear articulation of how the concept will meet an unmet voter education need in a creative, effective manner
 - Convincing description of how the concept will effectively use an approach, methodology, medium and/or technological resource not currently being used for voter education in Malawi
- **Realism of Scale and Scalability**
 - Clear and convincing consideration of how:
 - The applicant organization can realistically implement the pilot concept within the grant ceiling range of 17,500,000 to 26,000,000 Malawian Kwacha (MWK)
 - The pilot concept could be sustained or expanded to other regions or a nationwide scale in Malawi
- **Past Performance and Organizational Capacity**

- Demonstrated capacity to organize, manage and implement the full range of activities required to achieve project goals and objectives
- Evidence of strong past performance in implementing projects of similar size, scope and complexity
- Demonstrable presence, capacity and/or networks in the target area

3.8. Selection and Notification

A technical evaluation committee will individually review and score the responsive concepts received according to the criteria outlined above. IFES will invite the organizations presenting the highest scoring concepts to submit a full application through the RFA & “Dragon’s Den” competition phase of the selection process. Written notification will be sent to these applicants via e-mail. Those applicants not selected for the second phase will also be notified.

3.9. RFA & Competition Phase

Following evaluation of concept papers, IFES will invite the shortlisted applicant organizations to submit full proposals. The RFA phase will require applicants to present an expanded technical narrative, results framework, and full and detailed budget for implementing their proposed concept within the grant ceiling between MWK 17,500,000 and MWK 26,000,000.

This proposal phase will include an oral presentation element, in which each organization will be given a fixed amount of time to present their respective project ideas using PowerPoint presentations, videos, graphics, stories, etc. to the technical panel. Depending on the number of qualified applications, the oral presentation may be incorporated into the RFA or represent a final stage for top applicants. The evaluation panel will then select the strongest applications for funding based on criteria and scoring to be further detailed in the RFA phase of the solicitation.

Capacity-Building Workshop for Grantees

CEPPS will support local partners to develop and implement targeted, coordinated, inclusive, and evidence-based civic and voter education campaign strategies and messages. In April 2025, CEPPS plans to host a series of voter education capacity-building workshops, in which the selected grantees will receive technical assistance to prepare to effectively implement their projects. Each selected organization is expected to provide staff directly supporting the grant to participate in this training, including program, finance and monitoring & evaluation personnel.

4. Scope of Work

Successful concepts should clearly, logically and specifically articulate the applicant's strategy for implementing an innovative voter education pilot initiative, either nationally or in one or more of Malawi's three regions. Applicants should specify the geographic scope/target area of their proposed project.

The concept must make a convincing case for how the applicant organization can realistically and effectively implement the pilot concept within the anticipated timeframe of May – September 2025 and the grant ceiling range of MWK 17,500,000 and MWK 26,000,000. Successful concepts should address the following elements:

- An innovative, feasible idea for leveraging technologies and/or methodologies not currently being used, or being under-utilized, for voter education and outreach in Malawi
- A clear statement of the specific problem/need in voter education and participation that the concept will address
- Strong and substantial focus on how the concept will more effectively promote the voter education and participation of youth and first-time voters, including young women and/or persons with disabilities
- Ideas that have been implemented in other settings with demonstrably effective results
- Specific consideration of the context and needs in the proposed region(s) of work
- Clear consideration of the principles of do no harm / conflict sensitivity
- Realistic planning for implementation within budget and sustainability of outcomes

The concept must make a convincing case for how it will contribute to the following outcomes:

- Increased voter understanding of key election information and civic issues in the 2025 Tripartite Elections
- Increased participation of youth and first-time voters in the 2025 Tripartite Elections

5. Functional Requirements

5.1. Timeline:

Applicants must indicate the time required to implement the services requested. IFES requires all deliverables to be completed not later than October 31, 2025.

5.2. Monitoring & Evaluation

- As part of its due diligence, IFES conducts pre-award surveys on all potential grantees to assess capacity and inform the appropriate grant mechanism. In addition, applicants expected to expend \$750,000 or more in U.S. funded awards during their fiscal year must have an audit conducted in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F—Audit Requirements. If applicable, applicants must ensure that funds are included in the grant budget for an audit. If not applicable, applicants need not budget for an audit.
- IFES will issue the appropriate grant mechanism depending on the nature of the work, the capacity of the grantee, the duration of the grant, and the overall value of the grant.
- IFES will provide continuous mentorship, training and oversight to ensure grant management practices are in line with anti-corruption principles as well as to build capacity of local grantees to fully manage and implement their programs in adherence to donor regulations and with a view towards sustainability.

5.3. Deliverables:

Specific deliverables and reporting will be determined based on the grant activities proposed and negotiated during the negotiation phase.

6. Additional Terms & Conditions

6.1. Non-Disclosure Agreement

IFES reserves the right to require any applicant to enter into a non-disclosure agreement.

6.2. Zero Tolerance for Fraud

IFES has zero tolerance for fraud. Fraud is any act or omission that intentionally misleads, or attempts to mislead, to obtain a benefit or to avoid an obligation. If you have concerns about potential fraud in any way related to IFES projects, contracts, or activities, please contact IFES' Compliance Hotline at compliance@ifes.org or at +1 202-350-6791.

6.3. Intellectual Property

Applicants cannot use any intellectual property of IFES including, but not limited to, all logos, registered trademarks, or trade names of IFES, at any time, without the prior written approval of IFES, as appropriate.

6.4. Applications

All accepted applications shall become the property of IFES and will not be returned.

6.5. Governing Law

This CCP and the applicants' applications shall be governed by the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, USA.

6.6. Partial Awarding

IFES reserves the right to accept all or part of the application when awarding the grant. IFES also reserves the right to issue multiple awards and procure only items or services from selected applicants.

6.7. No Liability

Issuance of this CCP does not constitute a commitment on the part of IFES to make an award nor does it commit IFES to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of any application in response to this CCP. Further, IFES reserves the right to reject any or all applications received or stop the solicitation process at any time, without assigning any reason or liability.

IFES shall not be liable to any applicant, person, or entity for any losses, expenses, costs, claims, or damages of any kind:

- Arising out of, by reason of, or attributable to, the applicant responding to this CCP; or
- As a result of the use of any information, error, or omission contained in this CCP document or provided during the CCP process.

6.8. Entire CCP

This CCP, any addenda to it, and any attached schedules, constitute the entire CCP.

6.9. Attachments

Attachment A: Concept Paper Template

Attachment B: Organizational Capacity and Past Performance Template

End of CCP

ATTACHMENT A

Concept Paper Template – Cover Page

I. General Information

Complete Legal Name of Applicant Organization

Office Address

Legal Mailing Address (if different)

Office Telephone Number(s)

E-Mail Address(es)

Director of Organization

Project Manager/Contact Person

Project Dates (month/year – month/year)

Project Title

UEI Number – If you do not have a UEI number, please note and leave blank.

PAN Number

Concept Paper Template (3 pages maximum)

Problem Statement: *Succinctly summarize the issue or challenge your project intends to address.*

Project Approach: *Provide the proposed project's overall scope, goal/objectives, target beneficiary, locations, strategy, and activities for implementation. Explain how your approach addresses the problem statement. Describe what makes the proposed project innovative.*

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion: *Describe your strategies for integrating gender equality and social inclusion to promote active participation of young men and women, and young persons with disabilities, in project intervention – as both beneficiaries and implementers of the project.*

Conflict Sensitivity: *State your strategy for integrating conflict sensitivity/"do no harm" principles in project design*

Expected Results: *Identify what will be achieved by your project within the prescribed timeframe. How can the outcomes of the intervention be sustained beyond the project?*

Cost Realism: *Demonstrate careful, substantiated consideration of how your organization can achieve the proposed concept within a grant ceiling range of MWK 17,500,000 and MWK 26,000,000. Please note that full, detailed, realistic budgets will be required for the second phase of this solicitation.*

ATTACHMENT B
Organizational Capacity and Past Performance Template

I. Summary

Briefly present your organization's mission, its core activities, and why it is best suited for this project

II. Human Resources

- A. *Please provide full, legal name of the organization's Director and/or Chief Executive Officer.*
- B. *Please provide CVs for the core technical members of the team (e.g. director of the organization, project manager, technical specialist, etc.).*
- C. *Please provide staffing plan for full and part-time positions the organization will use to successfully implement the proposed project.*

III. Past Performance

- A. *Briefly describe how your organization's previous experience prepares it to successfully implement the proposed project; highlight the organization's relationships and work experience within the target communities as well as with lawmakers, political parties or government officials, if applicable.*
- B. *Please specify previous work in the relevant field.*
- C. *Please list the organization's major projects from the past five years in the following format:*

<i>Project Name</i>	<i>Project Activities</i>	<i>Donor</i>	<i>Award Amount</i>	<i>Period of Award</i>

IV. References:

If applicable, contact information for three references from donor-funded projects similar in scope.