INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS (IFES)

MODIFICATION #1

TO

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA) FOR GRANT COMPETITION: "SECTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE INFLUENCE OF AI USE ON ELECTORAL RIGHTS AND AN OVERVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES FOR THE USE OF AI BY ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODIES (EMBS)" in UKRAINE

RFA-25-006

JANUARY 16, 2024

1. Request for Application (RFA)

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA) is to invite civil society organization(s) to submit applications to implement a project that will equip the Central Election Commission (CEC) and the Ministry of Digital Transformation (MDT) with knowledge on the influence of AI on electoral rights, focusing on both practical recommendations for the CEC and MDT and a review of international practices. The objective of this project is to deliver the following key outputs: 1. Sectoral Recommendations on AI Use: Safeguarding Electoral Rights; 2. Overview of International Practices on the Use of AI by EMBs. The RFA provides prospective organizations with the relevant operational and performance requirements. IFES anticipates issuing single subaward under this RFA.

1.2. RFA Schedule

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

Issuance of RFA	January 8, 2025
Questions Due	January 12, 2025 by 18:00 Kyiv time
Response from IFES	January 16, 2025
RFA Closes—All Applications Due	**January 29, 2025 by 18:00 Kyiv time**
Anticipated Implementation Period	**March 1, 2025 – August 30, 2025**

2. General Information

2.1. Background

IFES is an independent, non-governmental organization providing professional support to electoral democracy. IFES supports citizens' rights to participate in free and fair elections. Our independent expertise strengthens electoral systems and builds local capacity to deliver sustainable solutions.

As the global leader in democracy promotion, we advance good governance and democratic rights by Providing technical assistance to election officials, Empowering the underrepresented to participate in electoral and political processes, and Applying field-based research to improve the electoral cycle.

Since 1987, IFES has worked in over 145 countries – from developing democracies, to mature democracies.

In Ukraine, where the ongoing war and rapid digital transformation have created unique challenges, safeguarding electoral rights has become a priority for ensuring democratic integrity. The integration of AI into various aspects of governance indicates how societies manage democratic processes, including elections.

AI technologies present both opportunities and risks. While AI can enhance electoral transparency, security, and accessibility, it may also pose such threats as disinformation, voter manipulation, and potential biases in decision-making algorithms. In this context, it is critical to assess how AI impacts electoral rights and to establish safeguards to protect these rights while promoting trust in democratic processes.

The CEC and the MDT are key institutions tasked with modernizing Ukraine's electoral system. Their effective adoption and regulation of AI tools can set a benchmark for ensuring fair and secure elections. However, these institutions require robust recommendations informed by evidence-

based research to implement AI effectively while mitigating associated risks.

IFES aims to support the development and expanded use of trainings, methodological materials, and policy recommendations on leveraging technologies, in particular AI, to assist the CEC, election commissioners, and public authorities in improving election integrity. This will be achieved through a subaward to a local NGO possessing expertise in advocating digital rights and digital accessibility, with a track record in implementing projects that support vulnerable groups' access to digital services and enhance web accessibility in compliance with international standards. **The anticipated value of the subaward is up to USD$40,000.**

3. **Application Preparation Instructions**

   3.1. Applicant's Understanding of the RFA
   In responding to this RFA, the applicant 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 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 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.

   3.3. Communication
   Verbal communication shall not be effective unless formally confirmed in writing by the IFES officials identified in Section 3.5 of this RFA. In no case shall verbal communication govern over written communication.

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

   Name: Marlaine Tocatlian   **and**   **Name: Maryam Raufi**
   mtocatlian@ifes.org   mraufi@ifes.org

   Questions/Answers and Addenda(s) related to this RFA can be found on IFES Procurement Notices.

   3.3.2. Formal Communications shall include, but are not limited to:
   - Questions concerning this RFA
   - Expressions of Interest
   - Pre-award negotiations under this RFA
   - Addenda to this RFA

   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 RFA Schedule above. All questions, answers, and addenda will be shared with all interested organizations.

3.4. Eligibility

To be eligible for consideration under this subaward, applicants must meet the following basic criteria:

1) **Non-Governmental Organization Status**: The applicant must be a registered and operational non-governmental organization (NGO).

2) **Membership in the Expert Committee on the Development of Artificial Intelligence**: The applicant must be an active and recognized member of the Expert Committee on the Development of Artificial Intelligence at the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine.

3) **Strong background in AI and previous positive experience in this field.** The applicant should provide a summary of the organization's experience, where specific projects, studies, or activities that demonstrate previous expertise in this field should be highlighted.

Individuals and the following organizations are **not eligible** to access funding:
- Governmental and semi-governmental institutions
- International organizations
- 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. Technical Application

The Technical Application must include a written application in English describing in detail the applicant's (a) Technical Approach, (b) implementation timeline, and (c) results framework to implement the Program Description as described in Article 4 of this RFA. The evaluation criteria can be found in Article 3.6. Applicants should use the technical narrative template in Attachment A.

3.5.2. Cost Application – Budget & Budget Narrative
- The Budget should reflect costs associated with the technical activities and deliverables. All applicants must use the budget template provided in Attachment B and submit it in Excel format as part of their application. The Budget should be presented in USD, with applicable taxes/charges clearly identified. Unit costs are required and, in the case of discrepancies between unit costs and total costs, the unit cost will be taken as the reference basis in the evaluation.
- The applicant must agree to keep these costs valid for a minimum of 180 calendar days.
- The Cost Application should include a Budget Narrative that describes each cost element of the Budget (see column H of Attachment B).

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

Organizations should demonstrate prior experience working with young people from a wide range of states and regions, particularly rural areas, facilitating training programs, and working on programming such as youth leadership, civic education, and/or elections.

3.5.4. Additional documentation
- When available, a copy of the organization's most recent final, signed audits/financial statements
- 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 program manager
- Any other supporting document that will strengthen the application

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

3.7. Criteria for Selection
The evaluation of each response to this RFA will be based on its demonstrated competence, compliance, format, and organization. The purpose of this RFA is to identify those organizations that have the interest, capability, and financial strength to implement the project as described in Article 4 of this RFA.

1. **Technical Proposal (Project Goals, Objectives, Activities and Results)   40 points**
   - Does the project aim to reach the set objectives and the completion of the tasks?
   - 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 the budget reflect realistic costs?
   - Is the budget adequate to cover project activities?
   - Is the budget cost-effective?

3. **Organizational Capacity/Past Performance   30 points**
   - Does the applicant organization have proven experience in organizing monitoring and outreach campaigns or similar activities?
   - Is there evidence of previous success in a related field?
   - Has the applicant organization previously implemented similar awards successfully?
   - Does the applicant organization demonstrate relevant experience of the project team?

3.8. Selection and Notification
Applicants determined by IFES that possess the capacity to compete for this project will be selected to move into the negotiation phase of this process. Written notification will be sent to these applicants via e-mail. Those applicants not selected for the negotiation phase will also be notified.

4. Scope of Work
The project seeks to equip the CEC and MDT with knowledge on the influence of AI on electoral rights, focusing on both practical recommendations for the CEC and MDT and a review of international practices. The results of the assignment is to produce two documents for the CEC and MDT: – (1) sectoral recommendations on the influence of AI use on electoral rights and (2) an overview of international practices for the use of AI by Election Management Bodies (EMBs). These efforts align

with the goal of enhancing efficiency, and integrity of Ukraine's public bodies. **The anticipated value of the subaward is up to USD$40,000.**

1) Sectoral Recommendations on AI Use: Safeguarding Electoral Rights (Task 1): The first task will develop a detailed, actionable methodology to study the use of AI in MDT's and CEC's operations. The subgrant will support the following activities:

- Research and Analysis: Conduct a comprehensive review of current electoral practices and identify how AI influences electoral rights, particularly focusing on internationally recognized electoral principles.
- Development of Methodology: Design a structured framework to guide the CEC and MDT on how to implement AI tools while safeguarding electoral rights. This framework may include ethical guidelines, a phased implementation plan, and criteria for evaluating AI tools such as predictive algorithms and automated decision-making systems that could impact international electoral principles.
- Consultations with Stakeholders: Organize consultations with key stakeholders from the CEC, MDT, human rights organizations, and AI experts to ensure that the recommendations align with institutional capacities, legal requirements, and technological advancements.
- Report Production: A comprehensive report, including design and translation into Ukrainian, to facilitate ease of use by MDT, the CEC and the public on maintaining electoral rights in the age of AI.

2) Overview of International Practices on the Use of AI by Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) (Task 2): The second task will involve researching and documenting how AI is utilized by the EMBs globally, identifying practices that could be appropriate in Ukraine's context.

- **Research on Global AI Usage by the EMBs**: Conduct in-depth research into how AI has been utilized in elections across various countries, focusing on examples from both established democracies and emerging digital governance systems.
- **Development of Case Studies**: Create case studies that illustrate the benefits and challenges of AI integration in elections. Countries like Estonia (e-governance), India (voter database management), and the United States (disinformation detection) will serve as key examples, but the research is not limited to these countries.
- **Comparative Analysis**: Perform a comparative analysis across various countries to evaluate how these international experiences can be applied in Ukraine's electoral environment.
- **Compilation of a Summary Report**: Produce a clear and comprehensive report summarizing the international best practices, with recommendations for future AI implementation in Ukraine's electoral system.

5. **Functional Requirements**

   5.1. **Timeline:**
   Applicants must submit a detailed timeline in their Application showing the time required to implement the services requested. IFES requires all deliverables to be completed not later than August 15, 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.

- 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 should not 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 RFA 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 RFA 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 RFA. Further, IFES reserves the right to reject any or all applications received or stop 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 RFA; or
- As a result of the use of any information, error, or omission contained in this RFA document

or provided during the RFA process.

6.8. Entire RFA
This RFA, any addenda to it, and any attached schedules, constitute the entire RFA.

6.9. Attachments
Attachment A: Technical Narrative Template
Attachment B: Budget Template
Attachment C: Organizational Capacity and Past Performance Template

End of RFA

ATTACHMENT A
Technical Narrative Template

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

_____

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)[1]

_____

PAN Number

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[1] Only organizations with Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) are eligible to receive a subaward under this RFA. If your organization does not have a UEI, please visit www.SAM.gov to get a Unique Entity ID only (no entity registration required).

**II.	Technical Approach:**

*Please include the following components in a maximum of **5 pages***

   A. **Project Summary:** describe your project in one paragraph, including objectives, issue, target audience, and geographic coverage.
   B. **Need for the project:** identify the problem your project would help to solve. Why is this project important?
   C. **Project's Goal and Objectives**: what is the specific goal of your effort? Does it comply with the goals and objectives of the competition?
   D. **Target Audience and Stakeholders:** what is your main target audience? What groups of stakeholders will the project primarily serve?
   E. **Activities:** identify and describe in detail each activity to be undertaken to produce results, justifying the choice of activities.
   F. **Expected Deliverables:** identify specific deliverables that you expect to develop within your project (research/analytical reports; specific strategies; public policy recommendations; etc.).

**III.	Implementation Timeline**

Please use the following format to provide an implementation timeline

Project Month	Activity	Expected Result	Involved Stakeholders

**IV.	Results Framework**

Please identify specific results that you expect to realize upon completion of your project and the quantitative and qualitative criteria for the project's success. How will you determine that the project goals have been accomplished? The framework should include:

- A list of results you expect to accomplish throughout the project
- 1-4 performance indicators for each result including a detailed definition for each
- The source, method, frequency and schedule of data collection,
- Staff responsible for collecting data.
- How the performance data will be collected
- How data will be reviewed, analyzed and reported

ATTACHMENT B
Budget Template

CLICK HERE to visit IFES Procurement Notices page and download the budget template

ATTACHMENT C
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 organization's Director and / or Chief Executive Officer.*
    B. *Please provide CVs for the core technical members of the team (the director of the organization training or curriculum experts, project manager etc.).*
    C. *Please provide hiring plan for full and part-time positions the organization including a list of positions and recruitment plan or cost-share with existing positions.*

III.   Past Performance
    A. *Briefly describe how your organization's previous experience prepares it to successfully implement the proposed project; highlight the organization's relationship and work experience 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:*

Project Name	Project Activities	Donor	Award Amount	Period of Award

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