



**International Foundation
for Electoral Systems**

INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS (IFES)

**REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA) for
Monitoring the 2025 Local Elections in North Macedonia**

RFA-25-009

May 14, 2025

1. Request for Application (RFA)

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA) is to invite civil society organizations (CSOs) to submit applications to implement a project that will monitor campaign finance and the potential misuse of administrative resources during upcoming local elections in North Macedonia. These efforts will contribute to overall monitoring of electoral processes and strengthening CSOs' capacities to support accountability, advocacy, and institutional reform. The RFA provides prospective organizations with the relevant operational and performance requirements. IFES anticipates issuing multiple (small scale) awards under this RFA.

1.2. RFA Schedule

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

Issuance of RFA	May 14, 2025
Questions Due	May 19, 2025; by 17:00 Washington DC (EST)
Response from IFES	May 22, 2025
RFA Closes—All Applications Due	May 29, 2025; by 17:00 Washington DC (EST)
Anticipated Implementation Period	15 August to 15 November 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.

IFES has been active in North Macedonia since 2016, providing substantial support to the organization and improvement of electoral processes, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In 2019, IFES, with the funding of the Government of Switzerland, has been entrusted with a mandate to execute the Electoral Support Programme (ESP) which is currently in its second phase and expected to conclude by the end of 2027. Additionally, in 2024, with support from the UK Government, IFES successfully contributed to strengthening online media oversight and improving transparency in political finance during elections.

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: Khurram Naz
knaz@ifes.org

And

Name: Rebecca Hawkins
rhawkins@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

Locally registered Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs), or other similar not-for-profit institutions are invited to apply.

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 Technical Approach to implement the activities 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 required 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 **Macedonian Denars (MKD)**, 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 90 calendar days.
- The Cost Application should include a Budget Narrative that describes each cost element of the Budget (see column G of Attachment B).

A brief outline of the applicant's organization and experience

Applicants should demonstrate:

- Previous experience in election-related monitoring, civic oversight, or public scrutiny/accountability initiatives.
- Experience in monitoring electoral processes, public sector conduct, or election campaign activities is particularly relevant.
- Local knowledge and familiarity with the institutional structures, political dynamics, and electoral environment of the municipality/ies proposed to be monitored. This includes prior work or presence in the proposed municipality/ies.
- Capacity to mobilize and manage a small monitoring team (minimum two people per municipality) and to handle logistical planning, scheduling, and coordination of field activities.
- Experience in compiling qualitative and quantitative reports, and in managing or guiding monitors in observation, desk research, and documentation efforts.
- Experience in communication outreach, including the use of social media and other platforms, for public awareness and advocacy around legal standards and electoral integrity is an advantage.
- While not a requirement, it is considered an advantage if the organization includes young members¹ and engages them in monitoring activities to help build their capacity and retain knowledge within the organization. These individuals are not expected to lead the monitoring efforts but to participate as part of a broader learning process.

3.5.3. Additional documentation

- When available, a copy of the organization's most recent final, signed audits/financial statements
- Proof of organization's registration.
- CVs of key personnel including the organization's Director, Monitoring Coordinator, and Monitors.
- 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,

¹In accordance with the local law, youth is defined as individuals under 29 years of age.

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 Approach** **30 points**
 - Demonstrated understanding of the RFA and of IFES' requirements
 - Soundness and feasibility of technical approach
 - Number of proposed municipalities to be monitored. Applicants that propose monitoring more than 1 municipality will receive higher scores

- 2. Competitive Budget with efficient and reasonable cost structure** **30 points**
 - Cost realism in response to RFA requirements
 - Clear budget presentation of necessary, allocable and reasonable costs
 - Appropriate balance of budget between operational/personnel costs and activity costs

- 3. Past Performance and Organizational Capacity** **40 points**
 - Relevant Experience: Demonstrated experience in election-related monitoring, civic oversight, public scrutiny, or community mobilization initiatives, including monitoring processes, government accountability, public sector conduct, or election related activities. Applicants are required to fully and comprehensively fill out Attachment C.
 - Organizational and Operational Capacity: Proven ability to organize, manage, and implement the full range of activities required to achieve program goals, including mobilizing and coordinating a monitoring team, overseeing logistics, and ensuring timely reporting.
 - Local Presence and Knowledge: Demonstrated familiarity with the political context, institutional structures, political actors and electoral dynamics in the proposed municipalities, supported by prior work or networks in those areas.
 - Reporting and Analytical Skills: Experience in compiling qualitative and quantitative reports, conducting observation and desk research, and guiding monitors through documentation and analysis.

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 notifications 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

In preparation for the 2025 local elections in North Macedonia, IFES is launching an initiative to monitor targeted aspects of the electoral process, such as potential misuse of administrative resources during the pre-election and campaign period, implemented in cooperation with the Civil Society Organization/s CSOs. The misuse of administrative resources (if it happens) can distort electoral competition, erode public trust, and undermine democratic institutions. International standards and good practices call for the impartiality of public institutions and the prevention of any abuse of office or public resources that could unfairly advantage electoral contestants or compromise voter confidence.

The misuse of public resources during elections is explicitly prohibited by the Electoral Code. The law restricts public authorities from launching new infrastructure projects, disbursing extraordinary budget funds, or initiating employment procedures once elections are called. During the regulated

campaign period, further limitations apply, including bans on inauguration events tied to state funding, the use of official premises or vehicles for campaign purposes, and voter pressure or intimidation. These provisions aim to safeguard institutional neutrality and ensure fair electoral competition.

The purpose of the monitoring effort will be to provide an overview of trends and patterns before and during the election campaign in selected thematic areas and municipalities, highlight emerging practices, and sensitize relevant stakeholders. Findings will inform a final report about issues, risks, and good practices, and will serve as a resource for election monitoring review, public accountability, and subsequent advocacy efforts. The initiative also seeks to contribute to expanding expertise and capacity among participating CSOs on monitoring electoral campaigns and the possible misuse of administrative resources, as part of overall monitoring of elections.

Overview of the Monitoring: Monitoring will take place across a number of municipalities during the pre-election campaign period and during the election campaign. The total engagement is expected to span approximately 3 months and will begin with a short preparatory phase followed by the active monitoring period. The monitoring effort will cover both rounds of local elections. While the elections are expected to take place in October 2025, the exact Elections Calendar will depend on the formal announcement of the elections, and as such the monitoring timeline will be adjusted accordingly.

Under the overall coordination and guidance of IFES, participating CSOs will monitor campaign activities and related public and political developments in their assigned municipalities to identify and document potential manifestations of the misuse of administrative resources, based on a methodology developed by IFES with international and local expertise.

Areas of monitoring will include:

- Activities organized or initiated by municipal authorities and other public institutions, including events, initiatives, visibility materials, and communications, from the perspective of the role they play in the context of the electoral campaign.
- Campaign activities of political parties and electoral contestants, including public events and meetings, from the perspective of how public resources may intersect with the campaign.
- Use of public spaces, premises, logistical support, or transport in the context of campaign events or candidates and parties' visibility.
- Involvement of local public officials and representatives of state institutions in activities of electoral contestants, including presence at election campaign-related events, visibility, messaging, provision of support services (including public security), and other possible supportive roles in the campaign context.
- Visibility and distribution of campaign materials and giveaways, including attention to imprint information on entities that procured them.

Information will be gathered through a combination of methods, including direct monitoring of public events, desk-research, review of media, official websites, social media platforms, and other publicly available sources. IFES will provide the necessary training, reporting templates, and technical guidance during the monitoring, as well as the space for reflections and lessons learned.

Geographic scope and coverage of monitoring efforts: CSOs may apply to monitor one, two or a maximum of three municipalities, listed and ranked in order of preference. CSOs and their monitors are not required to be based in the selected municipalities, but they should be prepared to travel to them and fully follow developments on the ground. Applicants should demonstrate familiarity with local institutional set-ups and political dynamics for each of the municipalities proposed to be monitored. The final selection and municipalities assignments will be made by IFES, in consultation

with selected CSOs, taking into account municipality diversity and balance, relevance and project needs.

Roles and Responsibilities of Applicants: CSOs selected through this call will be responsible for:

- Deploying and coordinating a small monitoring team (a minimum of 2 individuals) per assigned municipality (depending on the size of municipality) and planning for contingencies in case monitor(s) are not available (e.g., due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances)
- Ensuring that monitors attend in-person training and debriefing sessions organized by IFES and deliver on all tasks assigned as part of the monitoring
- Coordinating and ensuring the timely submission of regular reports and a final report based on the observations of their monitors
- Serving as the key institutional counterpart for IFES, via a designated Monitoring Coordinator/contact person
- Managing internal logistics, day-to-day operational oversight, and scheduling for their team (strategic guidance and overall direction will be provided by IFES)

CSOs will oversee their own team of monitors.

Responsibilities of the monitors:

- Available for all tasks under this assignment, including throughout the monitoring period and attending the training workshop before the beginning of the monitoring, final workshop/lessons learned event and other events organized by IFES.
- Prepared to conduct direct in-the-field monitoring by attending public or open events, following local developments, conducting desk research, documenting findings, and - where necessary and appropriate - engaging stakeholders to obtain additional information or clarifications.
- Possess an understanding of the electoral process, campaign dynamics, relevant institutional structures, political actors (including gender and marginalized groups) at the local level in the assigned municipality/ies.
- Be familiar with, or willing to acquaint themselves with, key provisions of the Electoral Code relevant to campaign conduct (training and guidance will be provided by IFES before and throughout the monitoring) prior to the beginning of the assignment.
- Compile and submit reports with qualitative and quantitative findings as per guidance and templates provided (in Macedonian and/or Albanian language).
- Be able to travel locally within municipalities as needed.
- Have basic IT skills (e.g., word processing) and communication skills necessary for compiling reports, conducting desk research, and liaising with stakeholders.
- Commit to impartiality and ethical conduct.
- Monitors and/or their respective CSOs should be prepared to ensure that necessary equipment is available to support the monitoring effort, including phones, laptops, printers, cameras, or other tools required for monitoring, documentation, and communication.

Code of Conduct: All CSOs and monitors must uphold strict non-partisanship. By applying, CSOs confirm that neither they nor their intended monitors are actively affiliated with political parties, election campaign, or local officials in a way that could affect the perceived independence of their observation role. CSOs are expected to assess any possible conflicts of interest and ensure their team's

independence. A Code of Conduct will be shared with selected CSOs and will form an integral part of project expectations. It will include principles of neutrality, confidentiality, respectful conduct, and professionalism. CSOs and their monitors will not be expected to intervene in, prevent, or confront individuals or entities regarding any perceived irregular conduct, and will be encouraged to prioritize their safety and act with professionalism.

Communications: In conjunction with monitoring, CSOs will be encouraged to use their own communication channels, including social media, to raise general public awareness about legal regulations related to the electoral campaign and campaign finance, what constitutes misuse of administrative resources, and the potential impact on an electoral process. Communication about observed practices and monitoring results will be done *solely through report(s) published by IFES North Macedonia*, CSOs will also be encouraged to support the dissemination of the final report and engage in related advocacy efforts, based on their priorities and capacity in at least 5 posts on social media.

Potential Future Engagement: Based on performance during the elections and availability of funding, a number of CSOs will likely be further engaged in monitoring government measures after the local elections.

Budget guidelines:

- If only one municipality is monitored then not more than MKD 217,000 is available,
- If two municipalities are monitored then not more than MKD 326,000 are available, and
- If three municipalities are monitored then not more than MKD 434,500 are available.

Municipality guidance:

- If CSOs decide to monitor only one municipality, it is recommended to choose a municipality with a population size between 99,000 to 40,000 residents
- If CSOs decide to monitor two municipalities, it is recommended to choose one municipality with a population size between 99,000 to 60,000 residents and a second municipality with a population size under 20,000 residents
- If CSOs decide to monitor three municipalities, it is recommended to choose one municipality with a population size between 99,000 to 60,000 residents, a second municipality with a population size from 59,000 to 20,000 residents, and a third municipality with a population size under 20,000 residents

For municipality population sizes, see

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_municipalities_in_North_Macedonia_by_population

5. Functional Requirements

5.1. Timeline:

Applicants must complete the provided table (see Attachment A, Section III) and ensure it is a part of their Application. The table outlines key activities, which are mandatory. Applicants may add additional activities, indicating the time required for implementing these activities. IFES requires all activities and deliverables to be completed not later than **two weeks after the elections**.

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 work with the grantees to ensure protocols are established for the collection of any relevant monitoring and evaluation data needed for the program.
- 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:

Deliverables include 5 periodic monitoring reports and a final monitoring report. The reporting template will be provided by IFES. 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

Monitoring Coordinator/Project Manager/Contact Person

Project Dates (month/year – month/year)

Project Title

PAN Number

II. Technical Approach:

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

- A. Project Summary:** Describe your monitoring effort in one paragraph, including monitoring objectives, target audience, and geographic coverage by clearly identifying-municipality/ies you propose to monitor. Applicant must *include the names of municipality/ties you intend to monitor. As stated above it can be one, two or three.*
- B. Need for the project:** Elaborate why the monitoring of the misuse of administrative resources for local elections 2025 needs to take place in proposed municipalities?
- 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:** Given that the target group is pre-determined by the call, elaborate how do you plan to disseminate monitoring findings, once these are published by IFES?
- E. Activities:** The core activities under this call are defined by the requirement to engage monitors and a coordinator (see Section 4 – Scope of Work). If additional activities are planned beyond those specified, please describe them in your application. Additionally, if your organization intends to monitor more than one municipality, explain how you will coordinate and manage monitoring efforts across the proposed municipalities.
- F. Expected Deliverables:** The number of required deliverables per municipality is predefined (see Section 4 – Scope of Work). Please make sure these deliverables are addressed in your application. If you propose any additional deliverables beyond those required, clearly describe their content, purpose, and intended objective.

III. Implementation Timeline

Please see below the overall estimated implementation timeline CSOs are expected to follow. In their applications, CSOs are expected to confirm that they can adhere to the below timeline.

Project Month	Activity	Expected Result	Involved Stakeholders
August	Final team set up and preparatory activities for monitoring efforts	Monitoring team ready for monitoring Involved stakeholders informed about monitoring efforts	Political parties Local government administration Other CSOs not directly engaged in monitoring efforts
September	Participation in the IFES organized training in monitoring methodology Pre-election monitoring	IFES training attended Periodic monitoring report(s)	
October	Election monitoring/election campaign First round of local elections Second round of local elections (if	Periodic monitoring report(s) Lesson learned	

	applicable) Participation in the lesson learned workshop organized by IFES	workshop attended	
November	Preparation of the final monitoring report	Final monitoring report submitted	

Note:

- The core timeline provided above covers the period from second half of August to mid/second half November 2025. If applicants propose additional activities, please include them in the table above by adding extra rows. All activities must be completed and reported no later than mid-November 2025.

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 monitoring efforts.

II. Human Resources

- A. *Please provide full legal name of organization’s Director and Monitoring Coordinator.*
- B. *Please provide CVs for the monitors with clear indication for which municipality the monitors will be responsible to observe. (in case more than one municipality is observed) core technical members of the team (the director of the organization training or curriculum experts, project manager etc.). Please provide CV(s) of young members who may be exposed to the efforts and learn from it (this is not mandatory)*
- 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 required activities; highlight the organization’s knowledge and familiarity with the institutional structures, political dynamics, and electoral environment of the municipality proposed to be monitored.*
- B. *Please specify previous work in the election-related monitoring, civic oversight, or public accountability-advocacy initiatives.*
- C. *Please list the organization’s projects, relevant to this application, from the past ten 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:

Please provide contact information for three references from donor funded projects similar in scope.