



International Foundation  
for Electoral Systems

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

**REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)  
for  
Media Small Grants Program in Serbia**

**RFA-22-034**

**February 1, 2022**

## 1. Request for Application (RFA)

### 1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA) is to invite media organizations to submit applications to implement a project that will investigate, analyze, and/or report on the 2022 electoral process in Serbia. The objective of this project is to conduct independent media oversight of the 2022 elections and share impact stories and media pieces with the public across a range of localities in Serbia. The RFA provides prospective organizations with the relevant operational and performance requirements. IFES anticipates issuing up to five 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	February 1, 2022
Questions Due	February 7, 2022; by 17:00 (EST)
Response from IFES	February 9, 2022
RFA Closes—All Applications Due	February 18, 2022; by 17:00 (EST)
Anticipated Implementation Period	March 1 – May 31, 2022

## 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.

## 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 3.3.1 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.

**Ragheed Al-Ameen**  
ralameen@ifes.org

and

**Hend Ghobrial**  
hghobrial@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

Media organizations registered in Serbia, including civil society-affiliated media outlets, freelance journalists in Serbia, and journalist associations who have a publishing agreement signed with registered media outlets in Serbia. If an organization is not locally registered, a signed letter stating the reason why must be included as part of the application.

**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

## 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 3.7. Applicants should use the technical narrative template in Attachment A.

### 3.5.2. Cost Application – Budget & Budget Narrative

- Eligible proposals should **not exceed USD 3,000**
- 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 90 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.**

Submitting media organizations should illustrate their previous experience in research, investigating, and reporting on the electoral process, especially as it relates to electoral transparency and integrity challenges, including campaign finance regulations, the abuse of state resources, compliance with legal framework, and election complaints and appeals processes. Experience in reporting on related topics is recommended to be included and participation in IFES' technical training series is preferred. For more information please see Article 3.7 Criteria for Selection.

### **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 Approach and Implementation Timeline** **40 points**
  - Demonstrated understanding of the RFA and of IFES' requirements
  - Soundness and feasibility of technical approach
  - Reasonable implementation timeline
  - Innovative approach in implementation of proposed activities
  - Demonstrated project impact through anticipated results
- 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** **30 points**
  - Extent to which proposed personnel have relevant qualifications and experience
  - Demonstrated capacity to organize, manage and implement activities required to achieve program goals and objectives (this may be demonstrated through participation in IFES' technical training series)
  - Demonstrated flexibility to adjust implementation in response to changing environments

- Demonstrated past performance in implementing programs of similar size, scope and complexity
- Demonstrated presence and/or networks to target proposed audiences

### **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 International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) invites media organizations in Serbia to submit proposals for project activities designed to monitor, investigate, and report on election transparency and integrity throughout the 2022 electoral process in Serbia. Project proposals should include innovative and unique approaches and tools (for example, the Facebook Political Ad Library) to collect data and information and inform the public in engaging and dynamic ways, including through the use of citizen-centered storytelling and other media mechanisms. Activities should consider the work and behavior of state institutions and/or electoral administration, political subjects, campaigns, and other relevant election stakeholders, and focus on campaign finance regulations, the abuse of state resources, compliance with legal framework, election campaign or election day violations, and election complaints and appeals processes.

IFES requests project proposals achieve the following objectives:

1. Conduct oversight and investigate the implementation of the 2022 electoral process in Serbia related to challenges in election transparency and integrity.
2. Raise awareness and educate citizens throughout the electoral process on key findings, developments, discussions, violations, and/or data that support voters in making informed decisions on election day.
3. Demonstrate trends, patterns, and practices that influence and/or enable violations or noncompliance during the election period and illustrate the effects on democratic processes in Serbia.

Applicants will provide a detailed description of activities in the submitted Technical Application (Attachment A). The final description of anticipated activities will be decided in consultation with IFES. An illustrative list of activities is provided below, but is not an exhaustive list.

- Investigative and/or analytical reporting on specific cases of election transparency and integrity challenges at the local-, regional-, or national-level;
- Collection of election data and development of user-friendly, online data visualization tools for citizen use;
- Development of human-interest stories or long-form investigative exposés through written, video, or graphic medium;
- Expert interview series or stakeholder roundtables/town halls structured to gather and/or disseminate information, data, or other findings.

IFES encourages unique, innovative technical approaches to activities, as noted in 3.7.

Project proposals should also include dedicated actions to critically evaluate the reach, impact, and/or effectiveness of activities conducted. This includes monitoring and evaluation practices to assess project successes, lessons learned, and key results. Such results include:

- Increased efforts to monitor, investigate, and report on election transparency and integrity challenges in the Serbian electoral process, following international good practices and innovative use of tools and resources
- Improved citizen access to information on and greater understanding of the issues related to election transparency and integrity in Serbia;
- Broad distribution of new tools and mechanisms for voters to analyze election data and information publicly available;
- Strengthened analysis of enabling factors for low transparency and integrity in Serbia's electoral process.

#### **Anticipated Milestones:**

The accomplishment of each objective will be based on the completion of the tasks/deliverables defined in the proposal. Illustrative deliverables include, but are not limited to:

- Published reports, articles, videos, and/or photo galleries;
- Social media messages and infographics;
- Research and analysis documentation;
- Stakeholder interviews, roundtables, and/or discussions;
- Online tools and dashboards.

## **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 **May 31, 2022**.

### **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](mailto: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**

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Complete Legal Name of Applicant Organization

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Office Address

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Legal Mailing Address (if different)

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Office Telephone Number(s)

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E-Mail Address(es)

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Director of Organization

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Project Manager/Contact Person

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Project Dates (month/year – month/year)

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Title \_\_\_\_\_ Project

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

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PAN Number



**II. Technical Approach:**

*Please include the following components in 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. Include expected resources and capacity-strengthening needs.
- F. Expected Deliverables:** Identify specific deliverables that you expect to develop within your project (research/analytical/personal stories and media pieces; specific strategies and citizen-centered approaches; online databases and visualization tools; 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 and outcomes 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 and outcomes 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

Note: Results and outcomes are not project deliverables. They should focus on what the project intends to see as a direct consequence of activities and deliverables.

**ATTACHMENT B**  
**Budget Template**

[CLICK HERE](#) to visit IFES Procurement Notices page and download the budget template.

***Please only fill line items which are applicable to the project activities***

**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 provide examples of your organizations coverage and/or reporting on election related issues.*
- 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.*