



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS (IFES)

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

RFA-21-022

February 22nd, 2021

1. Request for Application (RFA)

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA) is to invite registered media organizations in Serbia to submit applications to receive support through a small grants program to research, report or develop public educational materials on the abuse of state resources (ASR), political finance (PF), and electoral dispute resolution (EDR) process in Serbia. The objective of this activity is to contribute to enhancing integrity and transparency in the election process through monitoring, civic engagement and improvement of the overall election system/framework through enabling more effective reporting, monitoring and oversight of ASR, PF and EDR processes by media. The RFA provides prospective organizations with the relevant operational and performance requirements.

1.2. RFA Schedule

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

Issuance of RFA	February 22, 2021
Questions Due	February 27, 2021; by 17:00 Washington DC (EST)
Response from IFES	March 3, 2021
RFA Closes—All Applications Due	March 12, 2021; by 17:00 Washington DC (EST)
Anticipated Implementation Period	April 1 – July 1, 2021

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 3.5 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.

Ian Swank, Contracts and Grants Manager Sajia Tokhi, Contracts and Grants Administrator
iswank@ifes.org Stokhi@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 outlets 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.

The following organizations are not eligible to access funding:

- Government and semi-government 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 d) Publishing agreement signed with registered media outlet (*if freelance journalist or journalists association*). 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

- Eligible proposals value is up to USD 8,000
- Budget should reflect costs associated with the proposed technical activities and related 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.

Organizations should illustrate their previous experience in research and reporting on the electoral process, especially as it relates to PF, ASR, and EDR. 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 in media registry or a proof or registration of the media outlet with whom there is an publishing agreement signed, including the agreement;
- CVs of key personnel including the organization's Director and anticipated program manager, where relevant;
- 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.

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|---|------------------|
| 1. Technical Approach and Implementation Timeline | 40 points |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 to meet desired criteria as outlined in 3.7 will be selected to move into the negotiation phase of this process or signing of the agreement. 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

Project: Strengthening Media Engagement in the Electoral Process

Country: Serbia

Period of Performance: April 1, 2021 – July 1, 2021

Objective:

The aim of this project is to offer technical and funding support to a select number of media outlets to strengthen capacities to investigate, monitor and report on the abuse of state resources, political and campaign finance and election dispute resolution in the Serbian electoral process. This project will contribute to enhancing integrity and transparency of elections through monitoring, civic engagement and public dialogue.

More concretely, this project activity aims to achieve the following:

1. Inform and educate citizens on the legal framework, standards and practices, and implementation of practices in the areas of the abuse of state resources (ASR), political and campaign finance (PF) and/or electoral dispute resolution (EDR);
2. Inform citizens of current practices and potential violations related to ASR, PF, and/or EDR on the national or local level;
3. Analyze implementation practices and the work of responsible public institutions, such as the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption, the Administrative Court, the Republic Electoral Commission, etc.;
4. Demonstrate patterns or practices that influence or enable ASR, allow financing outside of the legal and regulatory framework or influence an effective EDR process;
5. Illustrate the effects and overall influence of those processes and occurrences related to suffrage in Serbia.

Description of Activities:

Applicants will provide a detailed description of activities in the submitted Technical Application. The final description of anticipated activities will be decided in consultation with IFES. An illustrative list of activities is provided below, but is by no means an exhaustive list.

- Local investigative or analytical reporting on specific cases;
- Development of public education content and effective dissemination;
- Development of human-interest stories or other related content;
- Series of short or in-depth interviews with stakeholders.

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

Anticipated Results:

- Domestic media actors have greater capacity to engage in monitoring, reporting and advocacy on ASR, PF and EDR;
- Serbian citizens have information on and greater understanding of the issues related to ASR, PF and EDR;
- Regulations for preventing ASR, vulnerabilities in political and campaign finance oversight, and frameworks for EDR are identified and reported on more effectively by media;
- Media actively contribute to promoting transparency and integrity in Serbia's electoral process.

Illustrative Milestone Delivery Timetable:

The accomplishment of each objective will be based on the completion of the tasks/deliverables defined in the proposal. A timetable template is below to be used as a reference point for proposed application.

No.	Description of Milestone	Required Deliverable	Completion Date	Amount USD
1.		•		
2.		•		
3.		•		
4.		•		
TOTAL				MAX. 8,000

5. Functional Requirements

5.1. Timeline:

Applicants must submit a detailed timeline in their Application showing the time required to implement the activities proposed. IFES requires all deliverables to be completed not later than July 1, 2021.

5.2. Monitoring & Evaluation

- 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.
- IFES will monitor for submission of deliverables and achieving results anticipated in line with described activities in the project proposal, on a bi-monthly basis.

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

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

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.
- 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 earthquake affected areas, and districts in Province 5, Karnali Province and Sudurpashchim Province.*
- 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.