



International Foundation
for Electoral Systems

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

**Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Training Academy Feasibility Study in North
Macedonia**

Solicitation # RFP-22-019

December 7, 2021

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to invite prospective contractors (“Bidders”) to submit a written response (“Response”) for the procurement of a training academy feasibility study in North Macedonia. The solicitation provides Bidders with the relevant operational and performance requirements.

1.2 Coverage & Participation

IFES reserves the right to reject any and all offers, to add, delete or modify any element of the solicitation at any time without prior notification and without any liability or obligation of any kind. This RFP does not obligate IFES to enter into a contract nor does it obligate IFES to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of submission of any Response.

1.3 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.

2 GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1 The Organization

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 the political process
- Applying field-based research to improve the electoral cycle

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

2.2 Schedule of Events

The following, tentative schedule will apply to this solicitation. The dates may change in accordance with IFES’ needs or unforeseen circumstances. IFES will communicate changes to the schedule.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Issuance of RFP | December 7, 2021 |
| • Technical Questions/Inquiries Due | December 13, 2021, 17:00 Skopje Time |
| • Answers/Addenda from IFES | December 15, 2021 |
| • RFP Closes | December 21, 2021, 17:00 Skopje Time |

3 PROPOSAL PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS

3.1 Bidders' Understanding of the Solicitation

Bidders are responsible for understanding the solicitation in its entirety and each of its elements, and should make inquiries to IFES as necessary to ensure such understanding. IFES reserves the right to disqualify any Bidder that it determines, at its sole discretion, does not understand the solicitation or any of its elements. Such disqualification shall be at no fault, cost, or liability whatsoever to IFES.

3.2 Information from IFES

All information provided by IFES in this solicitation is subject to change at any time. IFES makes no certification as to the accuracy of any item, and is not responsible or liable for any use of or reliance on the information or for any claims asserted therefrom.

3.3 Communication

All communications related to the RFP must be in writing. Verbal communication shall not be effective unless formally confirmed in writing by the procurement official listed in 3.3.1. In no case shall verbal communication govern over written communication.

3.3.1 Point of Contact: The sole point of contact for all communication related to this solicitation is listed below.

Ian Swank
iswank@ifes.org

and

Hend Ghobrial
hghobrial@ifes.org

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

- Questions concerning this solicitation must be submitted in writing to the point of contact identified in 3.3.1.
- Errors and omissions in this solicitation, as well as enhancements. Bidders should notify IFES of any discrepancies, errors, or omissions that may exist within this solicitation. Bidders should recommend to IFES any enhancements to the work described in the solicitation which might be in IFES' best interests.
- Inquiries about technical interpretations must be submitted in writing to the point of contact identified in 3.3.1.

3.3.3 Addenda: IFES will make a good-faith effort to provide a written response to the questions or requests for clarifications in the form of written responses or addenda in accordance with the *Schedule of Events*.

3.3.4 Posting Online: Copy of this solicitation, Amendments and or Q&A will be available online at: www.ifes.org/procurement-notices.

3.4 Submission

It is mandatory for Bidders to send proposals 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*.

3.5 Criteria for Selection

The evaluation of each Response to this solicitation will be based on the criteria outlined below. The purpose of this solicitation is to identify responsible Bidders that have the interest, capability, and financial strength to supply IFES with the product and/or service identified in the Scope of Work.

Evaluation Criteria:

IFES will evaluate responsive offers based on the following criteria:

1. METHODOLOGY

20 points

The methodology should be elaborated in terms of proposed approach, indicative workplan and a short description/outline of the content for Feasibility Study.

2. EXPERIENCE

40 points

Evaluated based on description of previous experience and knowledge providing similar services. The expertise of the entity submitting the proposal (20 %) and the expertise of the proposed team (20 %) will be evaluated.

3. PRICE

40 points

The financial proposal should reflect all costs per deliverable as stated above. The costs should be in MKD or USD without VAT.

3.6 Selection and Notification

IFES will evaluate Responses to identify responsible Bidders and responsive offers. Finalists will be selected to move into the negotiation phase of this process. Written notification will be sent to finalists via email.

4 SCOPE OF WORK/GOODS/SERVICES

I. Background

Support to Electoral Reforms in North Macedonia is a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), implemented by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and its partner, the National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM). The project aims at supporting democratic and credible election processes that facilitate political participation and social integration by enabling voters to freely select their representatives and hold them accountable. The project activities are designed to support the achievement of three outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Strengthened institutions conduct fair and efficient election processes.
- Outcome 2: Internally democratized political parties present citizen-oriented policies and election programs.
- Outcome 3: Empowered citizens hold political parties and elected officials accountable.

Project beneficiaries are election management bodies at all levels; government agencies, such as the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, State Statistical Office, Ombudsperson Institution, State Audit Office, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice; political parties, civil society organizations, voters, and citizens.

The project started its implementation in August 2019 and is expected to be completed in June 2023.

Election Management Bodies

In North Macedonia, elections are administered by a three-tiered structure led by the State Election Commission (SEC). The SEC is composed of a President, Vice-President and five members and is supported by 74 professional staff engaged at the secretariat in Headquarters in Skopje and 34 regional offices throughout the country. These are permanent bodies. In addition, there are 80 Municipal Election Commissions (MECs), and 3,480 Electoral Boards (EBs). The MECs are appointed for a five-year term, while the term for EBs is four years. Members of the MECs are from public administration while members of the EBs are from public administration and from political parties. In total, around 35,000 people are involved as election officials during a national electoral event. The Electoral Code provides that both the SEC and MECs have responsibilities related to training and education. The main role in the process is played by the Sector for Continuous Trainings, Public Relations and International Cooperation of the SEC. Despite the recognized professionalism of the aforementioned sector's staff, the electoral training has a list of shortcomings related to insufficient and incoherent funding, limited time for preparing and conducting trainings before election-day, late adoption of election related procedures and instructions, frequent changes to the Electoral Code and too close to elections, inconsistency in delivering voter education, (dis)continuity of training and education activities in-between elections, etc.

Training Sector Organizational Structure

The evolution of the SEC's education sector over the past 15 years has been uneven. Following the formation and functioning of a Sector for Education and Information between 2006 – 2015, education and training activities were consigned to the Sector for Legal and Normative Affairs, Education, Professional-Administrative Affairs and Public Relations. In 2019, a fully-fledged Sector for Continuous Trainings, Public Relations and International Cooperation (SCTPRIC) was established, led by a Head of Sector. Embedded in this Sector is the Department for public outreach and education of citizens, Department for international cooperation and Department for continuous trainings – center for training of electoral management bodies, political parties, media and other stakeholders in the electoral process, led by a Head of Department and supported by a Senior Associate. In this composition, the SCTPRIC is responsible for all education commitments of the SEC described in the Electoral Code, as well as for all ongoing communication and press center activities during and in-between election cycles.

Education and training efforts

As stipulated in the Electoral Code, a key responsibility of the SEC is the organization, implementation and coordination of mandatory and continued training of election management bodies. Before 2019, the SEC rolled out fully internal cascade trainings wherein, with the support of professional and auxiliary

staff, SEC members delivered education to MECs, who in turn disseminated the knowledge and materials to their EBs. Envisaged for delivery over a limited period of time to large trainee groups, the education effort placed a tremendous strain on the SEC's and MEC's human resources and reduced the opportunity for interactive learning. In 2019, aiming to streamline the process, foster engagement and emphasize trainees' active role in skill-building, the SEC rolled out a public call and the SCTPRIC selected, trained and certified its first cohort of external trainers who were deployed to conduct the training of lower election management bodies. As a result of the ToT initiative, a growing pool of external trainers (three cohorts and 146 trainers to date) are engaged to contribute to train lower Election Management Bodies for each election.

Further to conventional trainings, the SEC uses an array of additional tools to reach out to and educate election stakeholders, such as handbooks, pocket manuals, video guides and e-learning courses. The educational video guides, for example, target different stakeholders through a range of topics, such as voting procedures, rights of persons with disabilities in the election process, election observation, and election material handover. The latest addition is the collection of four e-learning courses designed for voters, election participants, MECs and EBs. To consolidate its suite of learning materials, the SEC recently launched an online learning platform which holds all education content categorized by intended user group.

Voter education and outreach

Recognizing voter education as a critical condition for the integrity of the election process, the SEC uses a variety of outreach methods to ensure that all information is made available and accessible to all constituents. In addition to standalone videos, information posters and interactive online courses and quizzes, the SEC consistently launches comprehensive country-wide voter awareness campaigns, such as It's Your Turn, Enough with the Political Shoptalk, and Your Vote – Your Right, geared towards helping voters (and particularly first-time voters) understand their rights and responsibilities and disseminating information on how to participate meaningfully in the election process.

Beside the SEC, voter education is conducted by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). These efforts however are sporadic and mostly undertaken in the election period. As the SEC is not involved in these efforts, the accuracy of developed and used education material by the NGOs is unverified.

Political parties (PP) participating in elections also organize trainings for their members. While for nominated representatives of PP who serve as members of EBs, the training is organized by the SEC, representatives of the PP responsible to observe the voting process are trained by the PP. Similarly, as with NGOs, these education efforts are conducted without involvement of the SEC.

Pre-Feasibility efforts

A pre-feasibility assessment for establishing a training academy for the education of election management bodies and voter education was carried out. For this purpose, IFES contracted an international Consultant with an extensive experience in working with electoral training/education centers and in conducting electoral trainings, voter and civic education. One of the findings of the pre-

feasibility assessment is that establishing a training academy will help solving some of the issues related to training and education and will bring added value to the electoral process. Both SEC and NGO representatives welcome such initiative. Their expectations are that the training academy undertakes the continuous education of MEC and EB members between elections, more targeted civic education activities, including programs for future voters and an extended list of electoral stakeholders/beneficiaries.

The pre-feasibility report on establishing a training academy in the electoral field for the State Election Commission of North Macedonia was completed in November 2021. It will be made available to the selected service provider and shall serve as a basis for further actions, including the development of a full-fledged Feasibility Study envisaged under the current ToR.

II. Objective

The Project is seeking to engage an experienced company/NGO (further in the text referred as Service Provider) that will support the SEC to conduct a Feasibility Study on the possible options to establish a training academy for the continued education of electoral management bodies, specialized training of other electoral stakeholders and for voter and civic education.

The Service Provider shall work under the oversight and guidance of IFES North Macedonia and an engaged international expert, the SEC and its Sector for Continuous Trainings, Public Relations and International Cooperation.

III. Required Specific Tasks

Key tasks of the Service Provider shall be the following:

- Familiarize with the context of North Macedonia and the pre-feasibility assessment conducted in November 2021 for establishing an electoral training academy for the education of election management bodies, other stakeholders and election related education.
- Carry out a Feasibility Study:
 - Conduct a context review and in-depth analysis in the four distinct areas: legislative analysis, “market” analysis (the potential market demand for the proposed training academy/current and potential beneficiaries, i.e., but not limited to lower-level EMBs, political parties, media, municipalities, voters), human resource analysis, and financial analysis.
 - Explore in depth the options provided in the pre-feasibility report, and other options which may be identified as a result of the in-depth analysis, and formulate the pros and cons for each.
 - Include, for each option, prospects for the:
 - Legislative framework (legal status, legal basis, relation with the SEC, competences of the Director, status of the employees and experts),
 - Organizational structure and staff (including their key functions),
 - Operations (core activities),
 - Budget for establishing and operating a training academy,

- Funding (source of money - from the state budget or/and other resources).
- Describe corresponding adjustment of the legal framework, including of the internal SEC regulations, for each option.
- Estimate and include, for each option, financial projections for establishing the academy and for operations.
- Present study draft to IFES, SEC members and relevant SEC staff for review, discussion and deciding on the best option.
- Develop a Roadmap to establishing a training academy under the agreed best option and following the discussion with the SEC.
- Conduct a public event (roundtable discussion) with relevant stakeholders to present the findings of the Feasibility Study and the Roadmap.
- Finalize and submit Feasibility Study and the Roadmap.

IV. Deliverables

- Detailed plan and outline of the feasibility study developed and submitted to IFES North Macedonia.
- Presentation of the draft feasibility study to the SEC members and SEC relevant staff.
- Participation in a public event with relevant stakeholders and presentation of the final draft Feasibility Study and Roadmap.
- Feasibility Study and Roadmap on establishing a training academy.

V. Duration

The contract is expected to start in January 2022 and be completed by June 2022.

NOTE: When applying for, and implementing the assignment, the service provider shall take into consideration potential early parliamentary elections and any existing Covid -19 restrictions. In both cases, the work plan will be revisited in close collaboration with the SEC and IFES North Macedonia.

I. Service Provider Qualifications and Requirements:

Prospective service providers must provide the following information for their response and offer to be considered:

- A brief outline of the Service Provider and services offered, including:
 - Full legal name and address of the Service Provider
 - Corporate and tax Registration Documents
 - Year business/organization was started or established
 - Full name of the legal representative (president or managing director) of the Service Provider

- Name of any individuals or entities that own 50% or more of the Service Provider, if applicable
- The Service Provider must have more than three (3) years of experience in the area of electoral assistance, electoral training and voter education systems and processes;
- Proof of successfully completed at least three (3) assignments contracts/awards similar in nature, size and scope of work. For these, the Service Provider must provide contact information for at least three (3) references, brief description of assignment(s) objectives, location and year of implementation. IFES reserves the right to request and check additional references.
- The prospective Service Provider must be legally registered under the laws of the country in which they are organized and possess all licenses, permits and government approvals necessary to carry out the terms of reference.
- Qualified staff members in the following areas:
 - Election, including in-depth understanding of the electoral training and voter education systems and processes.
 - Institutional Development, including a good understanding of the functioning of election management bodies, electoral training facilities and their role in the organization of elections.
 - Electoral legislation and administrative laws.

Team of Experts

The service provider shall propose composition of the team who will realize the aforementioned tasks and deliverables. The subject of the evaluation of the offer will be the CVs of the Key Team Members with the following profile, qualifications and expertise:

Team Leader-Institutional and Capacity Development Expert

The Team Leader will be responsible for the overall quality of the Feasibility Study, including its content, language, and time. Also, s/he shall be responsible for the overall supervision and coordination of the activities as well as for the management of the team. S/he will act as the primary contact for all communications, preparation, and delivery of reports to IFES and the SEC.

Specific Requirements for a Team Leader:

- Master's degree in political science, social science or similar;
- Previous experience in at least 3 (three) assignments, similar in size and scope, in the capacity of a team leader;
- Minimum 10 years of international experience in providing assistance to Election Management Bodies in the design and management of training and capacity development programs;
- Experience in implementing minimum 3 (three) projects/assignments related to conducting a feasibility study; capacity assessment; capacity development program similar in scope and size with the one envisaged under the current ToR;

- Experience in providing support in the institutional development (in setting up and/or functioning) of electoral training facilities¹ on at least one assignment;
- Flexibility and ability to operate in different cultural settings and with a variety of stakeholders, cultural and gender sensitivity;
- Excellent written and verbal communication and reporting skills in English.; and
- Previous experience in the country and knowledge of the local languages will be considered an asset.

Key Expert on Election legislation and administrative laws

- Master’s degree in law, political science, public administration or similar;
- Minimum 10 years of experience in the field of public administration legislation in North Macedonia;
- Experience in implementing minimum 5 (five) projects/assignments related to legal support to public institutions and/or Election Management Bodies such as Functional review, Institutional restructuring, Acts of systematization and similar;
- Excellent command of English;
- Fluency of local languages spoken in the country will be considered an asset.

For the implementation of this assignment, the service provider’s representatives are required to be present in the country at least three times, minimum 20 person days, out of which 10 days for the Team Leader.

In addition to the above experts, the service provider should propose non-key experts in the field of Human Resources, Finance and any other profile required to successfully complete the assignment.

5 FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

5.1 Timeline

Bidders must submit a timeline in the Response showing the time required to produce and consolidate the products and/or deliver services.

5.2 Geographic Code (applicable to USAID funding only)

IFES’ project in North Macedonia is funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under Source and Nationality (S/N) Geographic Code 937 (please refer to [22 CFR 228.03](#) for more information). A waiver request may apply to certain offers. If IFES determines a waiver would be necessary, the estimated time required to obtain the waiver will be considered within the “Timeline” in the Evaluation Criteria. IFES encourages all Bidders to consider products that fall under S/N Geographic Code 937 whenever possible.

5.3 License, Clearance and Approvals

The Bidders will include in the timeline any time needed to obtain any licenses, clearances, and/or approvals required under local legal requirements to produce or deliver the products and/or services described in the Scope of Work.

¹ Under facility it is meant an entity responsible to provide training /education. There are different names used for the facilities somewhere it is training center, education academy, etc

6 QUALIFICATIONS & REFERENCES

Bidders must provide the following information for their Response to be considered:

1. A brief outline of the company and services offered, including:
 - Full legal name and address of the company
 - Corporate and tax registration documents
 - Year business was started or established
 - Full name of the legal representative (president or managing director) of the company
 - Name of any individuals or entities that own 50% or more of the company
 - U.S. companies must indicate if they are a registered Small Business (Woman owned, veteran-owned, Minority-owned, Disabled, Service Disabled Veteran-owned)
 - No subcontracting is allowed under this solicitation.
2. Evidence of successful completion of a project of a similar size and complexity.
3. References: Contact information for no less than three references from projects similar in size, application, and scope and a brief description of their implementation (including location and year). IFES reserves the right to request and check additional references.
4. Bidders must be legally registered under the laws of the country in which they are organized and possess all licenses, permits and government approvals necessary for performance of the work. Scope of Work.
5. A certification signed by an officer or authorized representative that the Bidder has sufficient financial, technical and managerial resources and facilities to complete the Scope of Work.

7 PRICING

Bidders must complete the following cost breakdown for the implementation of their solution for IFES' project as described in this solicitation. Bidders must agree to keep these prices valid for a minimum of 90 calendar days.

Pricing must be in **Macedonian denars (MKD) or US Dollars (USD)**. Bidders must specify one currency in **their offer**. Unit prices are required and in the case of discrepancies between unit prices and the total price, the unit price will be taken as reference basis in the evaluation. Technical specifications must be shown for each item.

No.	Item Description	Technical Specifications	QTY	Unit	Unit Price USD or MKD	Total Price USD or MKD
Group 1						
1.						
2.						
	Subtotal Group 1					
Group 2						
3.						
4.						

Subtotal Group 2						
Group 3						
5.						
6.						
Subtotal Group 3						
Total						USD or MKD
Taxes (if applicable)						USD or MKD
Grand Total						USD or MKD

8 ADDITIONAL TERMS & CONDITIONS

8.1 Non-Disclosure Agreement

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

8.2 No Collusion

Collusion is strictly prohibited. Collusion is defined as an agreement or compact, written or oral, between two or more parties with the goal of limiting fair and open competition by deceiving, misleading, or defrauding a third party.

8.3 Companies Owned or Controlled by Government

The Bidder must disclose in writing with its Response if a government, its agents, or agencies, have an ownership or managerial interest in the company. Failure to disclose a government ownership of managerial interest in the company will result in the Bidder's offer being removed from consideration.

8.4 Subcontracting

No subcontracting is allowed under this solicitation.

8.5 Costs

The solicitation does not obligate IFES to pay for any costs, of any kind whatsoever, which may be incurred by a Bidder or third parties, in connection with the Response.

8.6 Intellectual Property

Bidders may not use any intellectual property of IFES including, but not limited to, all logos, trademarks, or trade names of IFES, at any time without the prior written approval of IFES.

8.7 Bidders' Responses

All accepted Responses and supporting documentation shall become the property of IFES, subject to claims of confidentiality in respect of the Response and supporting documentation.

8.8 Partial Awarding

IFES reserves the right to accept all or part of the Response when awarding a contract.

8.9 No Liability

IFES reserve the right to accept or reject any Response or to stop the procurement process at any time, without assigning any reason or liability. IFES shall not be liable to any Bidder, person, or entity for any losses, expenses, costs, claims, or damages of any kind.

8.10 Entire Solicitation

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

[End of Solicitation]