**Citizen Outreach Grant (COG) Program**

**Request for Applications (RfA)**

The East-West Management Institute (EWMI) Advancing CSO Capacities and Engaging Society for Sustainability (ACCESS) project **invites Georgian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), particularly those from the regions, to apply for Citizen Outreach Grants (COGs).** In anticipation of the upcoming local government elections ACCESS calls CSOs to **work with local communities, especially women, to identify and bring their needs to the attention of political parties and candidates participating in the election (i.e. election subjects) and contribute to the formation of a female voter constituency.**

The COG program will support initiatives aimed at creating or otherwise supporting an enabling environment for the election candidates to engage with female voters and highlight women’s issues in their electoral debates and campaigns. The COG program will also fund the initiatives that, by engaging groups of local citizens, aim to educate the electorate about the meaningful participation of women in elections, both as candidates and voters.

**Problem Statement**

The Georgian Central Election Commission’s (CEC) official statistics for the last two elections, Parliamentary Elections of October 2016 and Local Self-Government Elections of June 2014, demonstrate a wide gender gap in political party memberships and nominated candidates:

*Local Elections 2014 (proportional)*

Nominated Men – 66.89 %

Elected Men (as a % of the total) – 84.54%

Men “over-elected” by: 126%

Nominated Women – 33.11%

Elected Women (as a % of the total) – 15.46%

Females “under-elected” by 46%

*Parliamentary Elections 2016 (proportional)*

Nominated Men – 63 %

Elected Men (as a % of the total) – 76.62%

Nominated Women – 37%

Elected Women (as a % of the total) – 23.38%

Men “over-elected” by: 121% Women “under-elected” by 63%

The gap is **even larger** with majoritarian candidates:

*Local Elections 2014 (majoritarian)*

Nominated Men – 85.03 %

Elected Men (as a % of the total) – 91.89 %

Men “over-elected” by: 108 %

Nominated Women – 14.97 %

Elected Women (as a % of the total) – 8.11 %

Women “under-elected” by 54 %

*Parliamentary Elections 2016 (majoritarian)*

Nominated Men – 82.48 %

Elected Men (as a % of the total) – 95.65 %

Men “over-elected” by: 115 %

Nominated Female – 17.52 %

Elected Female (as a % of the total) – 4.35%

Women “under-elected” by 40%

A USAID-funded study published by the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) on G*ender Analysis, Major Findings and Challenges of 2016 Parliamentary Elections* ([here](https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://gyla.ge/files/news/2006/IV.GYLA.-gender-presentation..pdf)) demonstrates that while election systems and political parties’ discriminatory practices limit and otherwise discourage women’s political participation, societal norms, which are often patriarchal and stereotypical, do not provide a conducive environment for women’s political participation.

Another study published by the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) in March 2017, *Gender Equality Assessment Among Political Parties of Georgia* ([here)](http://nimd.ge/uploads/images/8455Gender_Ranking_online%20publication_2017.pdf), looks at seven political parties’ electoral, institutional, and programmatic dimensions vis-à-vis gender rankings and reveals that (a) a party’s high overall gender equality index (for example, 32% in case of Patriot’s Alliance) does not mean that their programmatic and institutional ratings are respectively high (12% and 11.7%), and (b) a party’s high electoral dimension demonstrated by higher numbers of women (in proportion to the total amount of nominated candidates) elected is not due to a party’s women-oriented agenda (programmatic dimension). For example, the Patriot’s Alliance has 52.6% electoral scoring but only 12.5% for its programmatic (i.e. formal rules or quotas that promote gender equality). This is its lowest ranking, and it shares this rank with the Free Democrats, UDM and Labor Party.

Hence, ACCESS seeks to focus its efforts on **the demand side of the elections’ gender gap problem** and assist regional CSOs to enable female voters to identify, shape, and voice female voters’ needs and support the formation of female constituency.

**Illustrative Activities:**

These illustrative activities are meant to guide the applicants’ thinking on how to approach achieving the RfA objectives and demonstrating successful results. Applicants need not limit their proposals to these activities.

* Identifying women’s needs in the targeted communities and working with political parties and other electoral stakeholders to incorporate these issues in electoral campaigns and programs;
* Highlighting the role of local elections in addressing local issues pertaining to women’s needs, including improved childcare and healthcare services, safe and accessible infrastructure, local initiatives to prevent and/or respond to gender-based violence, etc.;
* Encouraging female voters’ active participation in elections;
* Conducting critical reviews of election programs’ focus on women’s issues;
* Partnering with media to increase coverage of women’s issues and/or aspects of electoral programs focusing on women’s issues, including talk-shows and interviews with female candidates about parties’ female-considerate campaigns;
* Referencing available studies and white papers on women’s political participation, preparing visual materials summarizing the underlying factors limiting women’s political participation, and engaging local communities (women, public officials, parties, academia, media, citizens) in open discussions on these issues;
* Organizing discussions and debates between the candidates (including the female candidates) and voters on the issues that matter to female voters the most;
* Highlighting problems within the status quo and identifying factors limiting women’s political participation and/or supporting female candidates in the regions, including exposing local gender stereotypes;
* Organizing other activities that advance women’s issues and support the formation of a female voting constituency

The proposed activities must contribute to recognizing and highlighting women voters’ needs as different from the needs of other social groups.

**ACCESS strongly encourages the interested applicants** to (a) align their activities with other ongoing initiatives in the area, (b) collaborate with organizations working on women’s issues (including with Tbilisi-based organizations), (c) use the opportunities provided by the Election Media Centers at the Centers for Civic Engagement in ten regions of Georgia for civic engagement and open dialogue, and (d) propose a vision for furthering and sustaining the project achievements beyond the project duration.

**Grant Awards**

ACCESS will award up to four COG grants under this RfA. The maximum grant award for each proposal is $15,000 USD. COG projects should last up to one year. ACCESS reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

**Eligibility and Funding Priorities**

ACCESS will give priority to applications that:

1. are from **CSOs based in the regions** outside Tbilisi or regional branches of Tbilisi-based CSOs;
2. demonstrate a **good understanding of women’s political participation**, especially in the Georgian context, as well as a track record of similar work individually or in partnership with other organizations;
3. form **coalitions** and ensure substantial engagement of women, girls, youth, ethnic or religious minorities, the LGBT community, or other **vulnerable/marginalized groups**;
4. demonstrate innovative and creative outreach strategies of garnering large and sustained citizen engagement;
5. include **innovative uses of technology** in female constituency formation and/or to engage citizens, such as through smart phones or internet-based activities; and/or
6. include components that increase **engagement of media partners** (including Internet-based media platforms)to better target and focus its activities on involving larger citizen groups, especially those from marginalized communities;
7. demonstrate **measurable contribution** that could be attributed to the project

Applicant organizations should meet the following criteria:

* Be a Georgian, registered non-governmental, non-profit organization that could qualify for a grant under a Georgian Law on Grants;
* Have at least one year of operational experience. As a rule, ACCESS will not provide “start-up” funding, although ACCESS may make a rare exception if sufficient evidence is presented to show that the organization’s leadership has adequate prior experience and the organization is capable of filling a niche that has been underserved in the past.
* Have a governance structure that ensures proper rotation of leadership and delegation of power, including, at least a Board of Directors, a Chairperson, and an Executive Director. The same individual should not hold the position of the Board Chairperson and Executive Director unless the size of the organization precludes this separation. If the above criteria are not met, the applicant must submit a proposed reform process that will work towards meeting these standards.
* Have a transparent system of bookkeeping that complies with the Georgian legislation and International Accounting Standards (IAS). If such a system is not in place, the grantee must work closely with the ACCESS office to ensure that accurate financial management and transparent bookkeeping systems are developed.
* Must not be a debtor and must have cancelled any debt to the state or arranged for debt collection prior to receiving the first disbursement of ACCESS grant funds.
* Must operate as an independent, non-politically affiliated organization.

Civil servants, political appointees, members of the current parliament, staff of public broadcasting companies, and/or leaders of political parties cannot participate in a grant project as a director or as grant-remunerated participant.

ACCESS will not review applications that include the following activities:

* Support for or lobbying on behalf of a particular political party;
* Religious activities. However, EWMI ACCESS may support a religious organization for non-religious aims if its proposal corresponds to COG objectives;
* Humanitarian activities;
* Theoretical research;
* Training on organizational development or fundraising;
* Individual and/or group travel grants; or
* Capital construction projects for commercial purposes.

**Application Submission Procedures**

ACCESS will accept proposals in English **or** Georgian. Applications can be e-mailed to the email address indicated below.

Applicants must submit the following documents:

1. A copy of the COG Application Form, project budget, and all required attachments;
2. A letter of support from relevant public institution(s) or media, if the applicant plans to work with public officials or media staff.

Before making the final decision, ACCESS **may** request additional documentation such as:

* A copy of the organization’s most recent Public Registry Record printed out from [www.reestri.gov.ge](http://www.reestri.gov.ge);
* A copy of the organization’s most recent Act of Comparison printed out from [www.rs.ge](http://www.rs.ge);
* Auditor’s report;
* Financial statements (Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss, Cash Flow); and
* The organization’s policies.

Submitted proposals must be the original and sole work of the applicant organization. Plagiarism will result in disqualification from the grant competition.

ACCESS will retain all materials and documents submitted by applicants. It will not use this information for purposes other than proposal review and will not share it with other persons or institutions, except when required by Georgian law or requested by USAID. Please note that in line with our donor coordination efforts, we will share the names of the applicants and a short description of their respective projects with other Georgian and international programs that support CSOs in Georgia.

**Contact Information**

**Application Form:** To download the application form, please see the COG announcement on [www.jobs.ge](http://www.jobs.ge). Alternatively, please visit ACCESS website at [www.ewmi-access.org](http://www.ewmi-access.org) for an application form.

**Clarifications:** Applicants should submit clarification requests by the deadline listed above via email to eimerlishvili@ewmi.org and or via the ACCESS Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/EWMI.ACCESS/?fref=ts. EWMI ACCESS will issue clarifications to all interested organizations every Friday starting from May 5 through May 24 in Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) document.

**Proposals:** Applicants should submit their proposal and required documents via e-mail to grants@ewmi.orge-mails must have “**COG PROGRAM”** in the subject line.

**OPTIONAL SUPPLEMENTARY VIDEOS**

To provide applicants with an opportunity to explain ideas that cannot be fully captured in the written grant application, ACCESS will accept **optional** supplementary videos along with the written grant application form. The videos can be used to better demonstrate the issue (e.g., by showing sights, infrastructure or experiences that showcase the project needs and urgency) or explain how project activities will address the problem. Videos should focus on ideas that cannot be fully explained in written form, and should not be, for example, a summary of the history of the problem or a condensed version of the entire proposal. Applicants can use camcorders, cameras, or phones to record the videos – they need not be professionally edited or filmed.

Videos must be:

* no more than five minutes long,
* uploaded to YouTube (with the link included in the application) or provided to ACCESS on a CD, and
* if provided on a CD, videos must be in .wma, .wmv., .avi, .mpg, .wav, or any other video file type supported by Windows Media Player.

These videos are optional, but it is highly encouraged that applicants embrace the available technology as part of their application. Applications do not need to contain these optional videos, but submission of the written application forms is mandatory.

**Evaluation Process and Criteria**

The selection process will be administered by a Grants Review Committee (GRC) established by ACCESS for the purpose of this COG RfA. The GRC will be composed of ACCESS staff and other independent experts. If an application is short-listed for potential funding, the respective applicant may be requested to provide additional information.

Using a scale of 100, ACCESS will assess proposals based on the following criteria:

1. Technical Merit (50):
* Compliance with COG objectives and criteria;
* Fit with other past and ongoing initiatives with similar goals;
* Efficiency of the proposed strategies and activities in achieving the set objective(s);
* Innovation and technology used in the proposed approach, including uses of media and other visually engaging materials to effectively reach out to female voters;
* Scale of gender mainstreaming and inclusion of women, youth, and disadvantaged groups in the implementation of the proposed activities;
* Reliable and effective communication and public outreach plan that is considerate of women and marginalized communities
1. Geography (10):
* Project’s focus is on supporting and generating public interest in CSO activities in Georgia’s regions;
* Extent to which the project proposes to engage remote or underserved communities
1. Beneficiaries (10):
* Significant and large-scale engagement is planned with women to generate awareness, support for advocacy, and/or other activities involving citizens;
* Volunteerism and youth engagement are encouraged in activities;
* Target beneficiaries include girls, women that belong to religious and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, IDPs, the LGBT community, and other marginalized groups.
1. Cost Effectiveness (10):
* Proposed budget demonstrates good value for the funds allotted;
* Co-funding is proposed, especially from local business, other donors, and/or government, as well as media and other partner organizations and/or volunteers.
1. Collaborative Posture (10):
* Cooperation among CSOs, government, media, and citizens to better achieve the project goal, when applicable;
* The USAID-funded Centers for Civic Engagement (CCEs) (established in ten cities and towns throughout Georgia) are used as venues for public dialogue (<http://www.cce.ge>);
* Level of collaboration among Georgian CSOs in sharing expertise and resources to implement innovative advocacy, civic engagement, and technology approaches in fulfilling project goals.
1. Organizational Capacity and Past Performance (10):
* Adequacy of the proposed project implementation team;
* Applicants’ past performance on similar activities, as applicable

**Timeline**

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| RfA launch date | April 25, 2017 |
| Open Door Day at the ACCESS Office and/or online | May 1, 2017 |
| Deadline for submitting clarification requests to ACCESS | May 23, 2017  |
| Date when ACCESS will issue final clarifications | May 25, 2017 |
| **Deadline for Submitting Proposals** | **16:30, May 31, 2017** |
| Evaluation of proposals | June 14, 2017 |
| Grant award notification to successful applicants | June 28, 2017 |
| Grant agreement signing | July 4, 2017 |
| *Please note that evaluation and award dates are subject to change* |

**Technical Assistance**

Successful COG applicants will be eligible for Technical Assistance (TA) activities that EWMI ACCESS and its partners the Centre for Training and Consultancy (CTC) and the Civil Development Agency (CiDA) will offer to grantees. This TA includes an Organizational and Advocacy Capacity Assessment (OACA) for willing grantee, leading to the development of an individualized Capacity Development Plan (CDP). Demand-based on-the-job consulting and mentoring will be available to grantees to assist them in implementing their CDPs. The TA will be delivered during, and potentially beyond, project implementation. COG grantees will also be eligible to apply for CTC’s new Non-profit Management Program (NMP). Through an applied, hands-on curriculum, the NMP will empower experienced CSO leaders throughout Georgia to more effectively address a broad range of management challenges they face in their organizations.

**About ACCESS**

The Advancing CSO Capacities and Engaging Society for Sustainability (ACCESS) is a five-year 6,897,000 USD project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by East-West Management Institute (EWMI) and its local partners, the Center for Training and Consultancy (CTC) and the Civil Development Agency (CiDA).

ACCESS began in November 2014 and works to enhance effectiveness of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Georgia through: (1) increasing public confidence in CSOs and citizen participation in CSO initiatives, and (2) assisting CSOs to develop into stable and sustainable organizations. By empowering CSOs to become respected citizen representatives capable of leading public debate and collaborating with government, ACCESS contributes to more transparent and accountable governance in Georgia.

Under its grant program, the Citizen Outreach Grant helps Tbilisi and regional CSOs to increase civic engagement on a broad range of topics in the regions of Georgia. The grant projects under COGs might include awareness-raising, advocacy campaigns, citizen mobilization efforts that bring public concerns to decision makers and promote changes that resolve community issues. Project topics should be of priority interest to local communities and provide opportunities for citizens to take action to address these local issues. Projects should engage as many citizens as possible through activities like petitions, community actions, community meetings, volunteer recruitment initiatives, media events, meetings with local and central government officials, and other relevant actions.

Since 2014, ACCESS has issued 17 Citizen Outreach Grants (COG) to regional and Tbilisi-based organizations to support citizen engagement on a myriad of topics, including citizen participation in civic advisory councils, taking a stand in solving local environmental problems, drafting petitions to local government, and countering anti-western disinformation.

*Advancing CSO Capacities and Engaging Society for Sustainability (ACCESS) is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by East-West Management Institute (EWMI). ACCESS empowers CSOs to become respected community representatives capable of leading public debate to create more transparent and accountable governance. USAID administers U.S. foreign assistance programs providing economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 80 countries worldwide.*