**Citizen Outreach Grant (COG) Program**

**Request for Applications (RfA)**

The East-West Management Institute’s (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). **COGs aim to bring CSOs and the constituents they serve closer together in addressing priority community issues.** Seizing the momentum of expected changes locally in the aftermath of local self-government elections, ACCESS calls CSOs to **work with local communities, community members, and informal citizen groups to advance their needs and priorities, bring their concerns and agendas to the attention of the newly elected local government officials, and/or otherwise contribute to increasing civic engagement efforts locally.**

The COG program will support the grant projects that propose mobilizing and engaging local citizens and/or citizen groups to partake in highlighting and addressing the pressing community issues. The COG program will also fund the initiatives that, by engaging local citizens and community groups, capitalize on the newly elected local officials’ campaign promises, hold them accountable and do so by taking advantage of legally available citizen engagement and participation mechanisms.

Grant activities could include advocacy, awareness rising, educational, and information campaigns, and other citizen mobilization and engagement efforts that focus on civic engagement and citizen participation. **Successful COG applicants will focus on the issue(s) that were identified through a close engagement of local communities and/or proposed by informal citizen groups. They will propose to raise awareness about an issue of priority interest to local communities, provide opportunities for citizens and/or informal citizen groups to take action to address these local issues, and/or build off the previously existing initiatives that need to be further promoted.** Projects should engage the informal citizen groups and/or 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. Applicants do not necessarily need to propose a policy advocacy outcome within the grant timeframe.

COG applicants should seek to address issues that are priority concerns for the particular communities they serve, including those identified by voters during the pre-election meetings and surveys[[1]](#footnote-1), **by mobilizing and engaging citizens and/or informal citizen groups**.

Successful applicants will:

* Target a specific problem and explain why this problem is of high priority for the citizens and/or the targeted community;
* Reference available studies, research, experiences, and/or lessons learnt that speak to the selected problem’s relevance;
* Clearly identify local informal citizen groups or individuals who will be major beneficiaries;
* Demonstrate knowledge of the policy environment in which it will be implementing its proposed activities;
* Align their activities with other ongoing initiatives in the area or otherwise capitalize on the current events and developments on the local or national levels;
* Propose a concrete, practical, innovative, and well-organized action plan to address the targeted problem;
* Explain the proposed problem solution methods’ applicability to the selected priority issue;
* Propose public outreach and public information campaigns that lead to enhanced public understanding of the problem and significant civic engagement in the proposed activities;
* Develop mechanisms for increased cooperation among CSOs, government, media, business, and citizens to better achieve the project goal;
* Explain potential risks and explain ways to mitigate them.

**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. focus on **issues of particular concern** to and/or ensure substantial engagement of women, girls, youth, ethnic or religious minorities, the LGBT community, or other marginalized groups;
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** for citizen mobilization and/or citizens engagement through the use of smart phones or internet-based activities, or through other available opportunities; 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 December 8 through December 25 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

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 citizens;
* 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 citizens 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 | December 5, 2017 |
| Open Door Day at the ACCESS Office and/or online | December 12, 2017 |
| Deadline for submitting clarification requests to ACCESS | December 22, 2017  |
| Date when ACCESS will issue final clarifications | December 25, 2017 |
| **Deadline for Submitting Proposals** | **16:30, December 28, 2017** |
| Evaluation of proposals | January 11, 2018 |
| Grant award notification to successful applicants | January 25, 2018 |
| Grant agreement signing | February 9, 2018 |
| *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.

1. Women Voter Priorities, CiDA and RCSN findings [goo.gl/gcMJsj](https://goo.gl/gcMJsj)

NDI’s recent polls <https://www.ndi.org/georgia-polls> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)