**Citizen Outreach Grant (COG) Program**

**Request for Concept Papers (RfCP)**

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 submit **concept papers** to the Citizen Outreach Grant (COGs) program.

The COG program enables and supports Georgian CSOs and civic movements to:

1. Target the most pressing problems faced by local communities and
2. Directly engage citizens in resolving these problems.

The program focuses on results in terms of **citizen empowerment** to address the **key issues facing Georgia**. It also prioritizes the initiatives that:

* Enable and support **partnerships between formal** (i.e. registered CSOs) **and informal** (citizen groups, civic activists, social movements) civil society
* Enable and support **inter-sectoral cooperation** (i.e. CSO sector, the private sector, academia, media, the arts community, etc.)
* Seize the **election-year opportunity** to influence the pre-election agenda, increase citizen engagement in electoral processes, and shape the issues to be address in electoral debates and
* Engage CSOs in seeking **alternative sources of funding**, such as crowdfunding, business partnerships/contributions, and donations.

Under this RfCP, EWMI ACCESS invites CSOs to submit brief (i.e. up to 1,500 words) concept papers proposing **proven or innovative** approaches to implementing civic campaigns on **a broad range of priority issues** as identified by their **constituents**. The interested CSOs can propose EITHER:

**A. Capitalizing on their most successful initiatives** (past or ongoing) and using the grant funds to continue implementing these initiatives or expand them. Although, in general, EWMI ACCESS encourages and supports innovation and creative thinking, if an organization proposes **a proven strategy** for achieving its objective(s), EWMI ACCESS will support it to augment its successful strategy or replicate it, as appropriate. The concept paper on the tested strategy must briefly describe the proposed initiative, explain what made it successful, and outline a strategy for building off it to achieve greater/more sustainable results.

OR

**B. Testing out** **out-of-box civic initiatives** through partnering with other groups, both formal and informal, individual civic activists, and professionals. As old-school methods of communicating with citizens often fail to effectively attract them, it is important to develop and test out innovative ways to reach out to and engage local communities, including the hard-to-reach ones. EWMI ACCESS, therefore, encourages CSOs to submit the concept papers that propose developing and implementing out-of-box, higher-risk, but also higher-impact strategies. Such concept papers must briefly describe the problem the organization aims to focus on and propose an innovative approach to address it.

The concept papers will serve as a platform for further discussion between the applicant organization and EWMI ACCESS. EWMI ACCESS will review the received papers and select the most promising among them. It will then work with the shortlisted applicants to assist them in transforming the project concepts into comprehensive implementation plans, i.e. **activity plans and budgets** for their COG projects. To this end, EWMI ACCESS, in close cooperation with the respective applicant will organize the so-called **Social Lab discussions** (i.e. apply the co-creation method[[1]](#footnote-1)), engaging diverse groups (e.g. CSOs, community leaders, private sector representatives, media organizations, students, teachers and professors, other multi-sectoral stakeholders) to tap into their creative and professional skills, generate innovative approaches and validate ideas from a variety of perspectives. By applying for this grant competition, applicants consent to the proposed **inclusive (co-creation) process** of developing their projects.

After funding the COG projects and testing the new solutions in a practical context, EWMI ACCESS will work with its grantees to add new elements step-by-step or change the course of action, as needed. This may also include increased funding for the most successful solutions.

**Grant Awards**

EWMI ACCESS will award up to 6 grants under this RfCP. The maximum grant award for each project will be $20,000 USD and the maximum grant period will be 12 months. EWMI ACCESS reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

As a rule, EWMI ACCESS will award COGs as Fixed Amount Awards (FAAs)[[2]](#footnote-2). Rare exceptions will be made if proposed grant activities do not allow for the FAA process.

**Eligibility**

Applicant organizations must meet the following criteria:

* Be a Georgian, non-governmental, non-profit organization;
* Operate as an independent, non-politically affiliated organization;
* Have at least one year of operational experience. As a rule, EWMI ACCESS will not provide “start-up” funding, although EWMI ACCESS may make an 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 transparent and credible system of bookkeeping. If such a system is not in place, the grantee must work closely with the EWMI ACCESS office to ensure that accurate financial management and transparent bookkeeping systems are developed;
* Must not be a debtor and must have canceled any debt to the state or arranged for debt collection prior to receiving the first disbursement of EWMI ACCESS grant funds.

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 a grant-remunerated participant.

EWMI ACCESS will not review concept papers 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.

**Submission Procedures**

EWMI ACCESS will accept concept papers in English **or** Georgian. Concept papers can be e-mailed to the email address indicated below.

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

**Concept Paper:** To download the concept paper form, please see the COG announcement on [www.jobs.ge](http://www.jobs.ge). Alternatively, please visit the EWMI ACCESS website at [www.ewmi-access.org](http://www.ewmi-access.org).

**Clarifications:** Applicants should submit clarification requests by the deadline listed above via email to tgurchiani@ewmi.org and or via the EWMI ACCESS Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/EWMI.ACCESS/?fref=ts>. EWMI ACCESS will issue clarifications to all interested organizations every Friday, in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document.

**Submission:** Applicants should submit their concept papers 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 concept paper, EWMI ACCESS will accept **optional** supplementary videos along with the written grant documentation. The videos can be used to better demonstrate the issue (e.g., by showing the sights, infrastructure or experiences that showcase the project needs and urgency) or explain how the 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 concept paper. 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.

**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 program. The GRC will be composed of EWMI ACCESS staff and other independent experts.

ACCESS will assess concept papers based on the following criteria:

* Compliance with COG objectives and criteria
* Efficiency of the proposed strategy in achieving the set objective(s)
* Significant and large-scale engagement with citizens to generate awareness, support for advocacy, and/or other activities involving citizens
* Cost effectiveness (including co-funding proposed)
* Cross-sectoral cooperation
* Applicants’ past performance on similar activities, as applicable
* Adequacy of the project implementation team
* Scale of gender mainstreaming and inclusion of women, youth, and disadvantaged groups in the implementation of the proposed activities

**Timeline**

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| --- | --- |
| RfCP launch date | December 2, 2019 |
| Open Door Day at the EWMI ACCESS Office and/or online | December 10, 2019 |
| Deadline for submitting clarification requests to EWMI ACCESS | December 19, 2019  |
| Date when EWMI ACCESS will issue final clarifications | December 20, 2019 |
| **Deadline for Submitting Concept Papers** | **December 23, 2019** |
| Evaluation of concept papers | January 10, 2020 |
| Joint work to develop a detailed activity plan and budget | January 15, 2020 |
| Grant agreement signing | February 3, 2020 |
| *Please note that evaluation and award dates are subject to change* |

**Technical Assistance**

Successful COG applicants will be eligible for the Technical Assistance (TA) activities that EWMI ACCESS offers to its grantees. This TA includes an Organizational and Advocacy Capacity Assessment (OACA) for willing grantees, 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 applicants may also identify their organizational/institutional development needs in the proposed projects and include respective costs in their budgets.

**About ACCESS**

The Advancing CSO Capacities and Engaging Society for Sustainability (ACCESS) is a six-year USD 8,996,947 project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by East-West Management Institute (EWMI) and its local partners.

ACCESS began in November 2014 and works to enhance the 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. An inclusive and dynamic process where diverse groups actively collaborate during the problem identification, project design, implementation, and/or evaluation to cultivate innovation and recognize the needs and views of all stakeholders. For more information co-creation, please see the [USAID Learning Lab Discussion Note](https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/co_creation_discussion_note_august_13_2017_final.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A type of grant agreement under which accountability and funding are based primarily on programmatic performance and results as opposed to financial documentation. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)