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USAID-ის სამოქალაქო საზოგადოების ჩართულობის პროგრამა  
USAID CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

## **Request for Applications (RfA) Strategic Support & Policy Grants (SSPG) Program**

<b>Amount of SSPGs:</b>	<b>Min. \$70,000 – Max. \$100,000</b>
<b>Number of SSPGs to be issued:</b>	<b>Up to 3</b>
<b>Duration of Projects:</b>	<b>Min. 18 months – Max. 30 months</b>
<b>Deadline:</b>	<b>June 10, 2022</b>

### **Apply Now**

The USAID Civil Society Engagement Program invites Georgian civil society organizations (CSO) and CSO networks to submit their grant applications to the Strategic Support and Policy Grants (SSPG) program. SSPG will support applications addressing one of the following priority areas for Georgian citizens – **education, healthcare, and social protection** – through policy analysis, policy development, and policy activism.

Under this call, EWMI will award up to three multi-year grants ranging from **\$70,000 to \$100,000**.

Grants will be issued for a period ranging from 18 months to 30 months and will serve as **strategic core funding** to help organizations effectively address the targeted problem(s), increase their organizational capacity and sustainability, and stay flexible and relevant.

Grantees will be eligible for **technical assistance**, including mentoring, peer-to-peer support, and/or training by the East-West Management Institute (EWMI) and its local and international implementing and resource partners.

#### **FUNDING PRIORITIES**

Opinion polls conducted in Georgia in recent years have shown that socioeconomic issues, such as poverty, inflation, unemployment, pensions, and affordable and quality healthcare and education consistently rank at the top of public concerns. Georgians see insufficient progress being made on these national issues, and many believe that the situation has worsened in the past ten years.<sup>1</sup>

To research these issues in greater detail and identify specific priorities for the SSPG program, EWMI organized nine baseline focus group discussions (Annex 1) in Georgia's regions, asking citizens, including various socially vulnerable groups, to share their attitudes and experiences in the spheres of education, healthcare, and social protection. After collecting information from the focus groups, EWMI interviewed policymakers and civil servants from the relevant ministries to better understand the government's priorities and plans in these spheres. EWMI also organized discussions with independent experts and pundits to explore their perspectives (Annex 2) and conducted social media monitoring to track key conversational topics on social media (Annexes 3 and 4). Applicants are

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ndi.org/publications/ndi-poll-deterioration-economy-forefront-people-s-minds-majority-says-nobody-acts-their>.

advised to consult EWMI's findings and submit grant applications that address citizens' primary concerns while taking into consideration expert assessments and the government's plans.

The USAID Civil Society Engagement Program will prioritize applicants who:

- ✚ Are established and **well-managed** organizations.
- ✚ Have **niche expertise, a solid track record, and experience** in one or more of the three priority areas (healthcare, education, social protection).
- ✚ Have **a clear vision** of the institutional needs for the organization to grow and can demonstrate how this core funding will allow them to make a greater impact in the targeted area(s).
- ✚ Propose addressing **well-selected issues** that consider citizens' priorities, the government's planned actions, and expert assessments.
- ✚ Propose sound **research, advocacy, and communications** strategies, e.g.:
  - a. *Provide policy analysis/research for a more nuanced understanding of the targeted issues and the elaboration of viable solutions.*
  - b. *Raise citizen understanding of the targeted problem(s) and mobilize their support for sustainable policy solutions.*
  - c. *Engage citizens, communities, and other stakeholders in the solution of the targeted problems.*
  - d. *Work with decision-makers to advance evidence-based and citizen-vetted policies policy solutions.*
- ✚ Propose **partnering with other organizations** to increase their outreach and impact.

SSPG funds can be used to cover ongoing and organizational development expenses as well as program costs for addressing the targeted priority issue(s). Applicants should explain what challenges they face that inhibit their growth as a more impactful organization and propose funding needs to overcome those challenges, integrating both research and non-research-type activities into their program costs. They should indicate the topics they have expertise in; provide information on what specific issues in healthcare, education, and/or social protection they are going to work on under this call; and describe proposed approaches to address these issues. For example, research activities could include experimental or quasi-experimental research, nuanced analysis of administrative data, pilot research with the possibility to scale up, or comparative analysis of policy alternatives.

Depending on the research topic and justification through situational analysis, grantees may either conduct months-long empirical research or periodically publish policy briefs. In either case, they will be expected to routinely provide policy analysis or commentary on pressing issues, ongoing policy debates, and new initiatives in the priority policy area(s).

Non-research activities could include activities such as onsite monitoring and supervision, information dissemination, experimental campaigns, e-solutions to increase citizen engagement, and collaboration with policymakers and other stakeholders. Grantees may choose to delegate the implementation of non-research activities to other organizations or networks that have more relevant experience or better traction with local communities.

The USAID Civil Society Engagement Program will not fund applications that propose any of the following:

- ✚ Theoretical/academic research.
- ✚ Solely desk research.
- ✚ Trainings as the core activity of the project. However, the program may fund projects that involve training/seminars as one component used to achieve overall project objectives.
- ✚ Humanitarian activities.
- ✚ Support for or lobbying on behalf of a particular political party.
- ✚ Religious activities.
- ✚ Individual and/or group travel as a primary project activity.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

Registered issue-specific CSOs or CSO networks are eligible to apply to the SSPG program. This includes think tanks, watchdog organizations, and research-oriented CSOs working mostly in one, two, or all the priority areas. Think tanks and policy research organizations working on multiple topics that have research experience in at least one of the priority areas are also eligible to apply. Qualified partners of issue-specific CSOs can include regional CSOs, social movements, community-based organizations, grassroots groups, and other individuals and organizations with relevant resources, expertise, and knowledge.

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Have at least two years of operational experience. As a rule, the USAID Civil Society Engagement Program does not provide start-up funding under the SSPG program. It may make an exception if sufficient evidence is presented to show that the organization's directors and experts have adequate prior experience and that the organization fills a niche policy area that has been underserved in the past.
- Have a transparent system of bookkeeping that follows Georgian legislation and International Accounting Standards (IAS). If such a system is not in place, the grantee must work closely with EWMI to ensure that accurate expense reports are prepared and a transparent bookkeeping system is put in place.
- Must not be in debt. The applicant must have satisfied any debt to the state or have arranged for debt collection prior to receiving the first disbursement of grant funds.
- Must operate as an independent organization with no political affiliation.

Civil servants, political appointees, members of the current parliament, staff of public companies, and/or leaders of political parties cannot participate in a grant project as the director. In most cases, these individuals will also be excluded from being grant-remunerated participants in projects.

## **GRANT AWARDS**

EWMI will award a maximum of three grants ranging from \$70,000 to \$100,000 under this RfA. Grant funds may be used only for the activities directly related to the implementation of the project, except for any proposed institutional/capacity development activities. The duration of project activities should last a minimum of 18 months and should not exceed 30 months.

EWMI reserves the right to fund less than three or none of the applications submitted and/or provide partial funding for selected applications.

## **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

SPPGs will benefit from several technical assistance services. From the outset, EWMI will administer a participatory advocacy capacity assessment (ACA) to evaluate grantees' strengths and weaknesses and identify areas of support. Through Design Sprints and Communication Hubs organized by EWMI's partner Zinc Network, grantees will be assisted in developing and delivering effective advocacy and communications campaigns through a learning-by-doing approach.

Grantees will also be assisted by policy experts in economic development, education, healthcare, and social welfare from Columbia University. They will provide advice on policy analysis and development, review policy research approaches and policy papers, and provide advice based on international experience. These experts will engage in peer-coaching, peer review, policy training and analysis, and possible hosting of events or fellows in the United States, as appropriate.

## **APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCEDURES**

SSPG applications must be submitted in English. Applications can be emailed, mailed, or hand-delivered to the USAID Civil Society Engagement Program office in Tbilisi.

Applicants must submit the following documents:

- ✚ Completed SSPG Application Form.
- ✚ A copy of the (lead) organization’s most recent Public Registry Record from [www.reestri.gov.ge](http://www.reestri.gov.ge).
- ✚ A letter of support from partner organizations (if applicable) and from a public institution (if the organization plans to collaborate with a public institution).

During the evaluation process, EWMI may request additional documentation, including:

- ✚ A copy of the organization’s most recent act of comparison from [www.rs.ge](http://www.rs.ge).
- ✚ A copy of the organization’s annual report, both financial and technical (if available).
- ✚ An auditor’s report.
- ✚ Financial statements (balance sheet showing profit, loss, and cash flow).
- ✚ Organizational policies.

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

EWMI will retain all materials and documents submitted by applicants. EWMI 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 to avoid duplication of efforts, EWMI may share a list of received applications with other donors supporting CSOs in Georgia.

### **EVALUATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA**

A Grants Review Committee (GRC) established by EWMI will review all applications and select the awardees. The GRC will be composed of EWMI staff and independent experts. Short-listed applicants may be asked to provide additional information.

EWMI will assess applications based on the following main criteria:

- ✚ Organizational capacity and management, including:
  - ✚ Applicant’s performance and expertise in the targeted area(s).
  - ✚ Qualifications of the proposed implementation team and partners.
  - ✚ Applicant’s assessment of its institutional development needs to achieve the desired outcomes.
- ✚ Technical approach, including:
  - ✚ Compliance with SSPG program objectives.
  - ✚ Relevance of the application to the priority issue(s) or concern(s) of citizens.
  - ✚ Overall effectiveness of strategies and approaches.
  - ✚ Use of an effective communication and advocacy plan.
- ✚ Budget, including:
  - ✚ Cost-effectiveness.
  - ✚ Proposed co-funding, especially from local businesses, other donors, government, media, other partner organizations, and/or volunteers.

### **TIMELINE**

RfA launch date	May 10, 2022
Open Door at the EWMI offices and/or online	May 17, 2022
<b>DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS</b>	<b>June 10, 2022 at 16:30</b>
Evaluation of applications	June 17, 2022
Grant award notification for successful applicants	June 22, 2022

*Please note that evaluation and award dates are subject to change*

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Clarifications:** Requests for clarification should be sent to Nodar Tangiashvili at [ntangiashvili@ewmi.org](mailto:ntangiashvili@ewmi.org). The USAID Civil Society Engagement Program will issue clarifications to all interested organizations via e-mail. They will also be published on the Program [Facebook](#) page.

**Applications:** Applicants should submit a completed application form and the required documents via e-mail to [csep@ewmi.org](mailto:csep@ewmi.org). E-mails must have “**SSPG PROGRAM**” in the subject line.

*EWMI is keen to learn and improve. If you have any comments or suggestions regarding EWMI's grant programs and procedures, please share them with us via email or Facebook.*