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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

Amount of SSPGs:	Up to \$80,000
Number of SSPGs to be issued:	Up to 3
Duration of Projects:	Min. 12 months – Max. 18 months
Deadline:	November 20, 2023

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 activism and advocacy.

Under this call, the USAID Civil Society Engagement Program will award up to three grants of up to **\$80,000** each.

Grants will be issued for a period ranging from 12 months to 18 months as **strategic core funding** to help organizations effectively address the targeted problem(s) and increase their capacity and sustainability.

Grantees will be eligible for **technical assistance**, including mentoring, peer-to-peer support, and/or training by the USAID Civil Society Engagement Program and its local and international implementing and resource partners.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

Applications are welcome in the fields of **education, healthcare, and social protection**.

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.¹

In Spring 2022, the USAID Civil Society Engagement Program 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. The USAID Civil Society Engagement Program also organized discussions with policymakers, independent experts and pundits to explore their perspectives (Annex 2) and conducted social media monitoring to track key conversational topics on social media.

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

Applicants are strongly advised to **concentrate on only one policy issue in education, healthcare or social protection that is highly salient to many citizens**. When selecting topics from the expert and policymakers' list of perspectives in Annex 2, applicants should also ensure they resonate with the priority issues and problems identified by citizens in Annex 1.

Applicants may not propose projects related to the following topics that have previously been covered by SSPGs:

- High prices of medication and the government's pharmaceutical reforms
- The New School Model
- Targeted Social Assistance
- Medical laboratories

FUNDED ACTIVITIES

Communications and public outreach must be at the heart of all projects. Applicants are expected to raise general public's understanding of the targeted problem(s) and mobilize citizens' support for sustainable policy solutions through online and/or offline **communications and advocacy campaigns**, and engage citizens, communities, and other stakeholders in the solution of the targeted problems. Grantees will be expected to increase their institutional capabilities for policy communication and outreach. The Program's partner, Zinc Network, will assist selected grantees in redesigning their communication plans and delivering effective campaigns through a learning-by-doing approach.

Applicants are expected to **incorporate evidence** into their advocacy and communication efforts, which may be drawn from existing studies, newly acquired data, or overseas policy solutions. Original research is not a strict requirement.

In addition to communications activities, project activities may encompass low-intensity research (such as desk research, quick surveys, focus groups, and evidence synthesis), on-site monitoring and supervision, information dissemination, the development of e-solutions to increase citizen engagement, and collaboration with stakeholders. However, most efforts and resources should be dedicated to policy activism, public outreach and communication. Besides, SSPG funds can be used to cover not only the project costs for addressing the targeted priority issue(s), but also organizational development expenses.

APPLICATION PROCESS

In the application forms, applicants should propose what specific issue(s) in healthcare, education, or social protection they are going to work on under this call and what communication strategies they will employ. They should also indicate the topics they have expertise in, explain what challenges they face that inhibit their growth as a more impactful organization and propose their funding needs to overcome those challenges.

The USAID Civil Society Engagement Program will prioritize applicants who:

- ✚ Propose addressing **well-selected issue** in terms of citizens' priorities;
- ✚ Propose sound **public outreach and communications** strategies, e.g.:
 - Raise citizen understanding of the targeted problem(s) and mobilize their support for sustainable policy solutions.*
 - Engage citizens, communities, and other stakeholders in the solution of the targeted problems.*
 - Use evidence to support their cause.*

- ✚ Have a **clear vision** of the institutional needs of the organization to grow and can demonstrate how this core funding will allow them to make a greater impact in the targeted area(s).
- ✚ Have **niche expertise, a solid track record, and experience** in one or more of the three priority areas (healthcare, education, social protection).
- ✚ Are established and **well-managed** organizations.

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 of the components 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

Issue-specific CSOs registered in Georgia or CSO networks/partnerships are eligible to apply to the SSPG program. This includes community-based organizations, social movements, grassroots groups, watchdog organizations, policy research and advocacy oriented CSOs and think tanks working predominantly in one, two, or all the priority areas. Registered applicant organizations are encouraged to partner with other organizations, networks and individuals 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 the organization fills a niche in a 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 the USAID Civil Society Engagement Program to ensure that accurate expense reports are prepared, and a transparent bookkeeping system is put in place.
- Must not be in debt. The grantee must have fulfilled any debt obligations 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 be excluded from being grant-remunerated participants in the project.

GRANT AWARDS

The USAID Civil Society Engagement Program will award a maximum of three grants of up to \$80,000 each under this RfA. Grant funds may be used only for 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 12 months and should not exceed 18 months.

The USAID Civil Society Engagement Program reserves the right to fund less than three of the applications submitted and/or provide partial funding for selected applications.

Before grants can be issued, the organization must have a SAM.gov registration, or, at minimum, a Unique Entity ID (UEI) obtained from SAM.Gov. It must also provide a cost share (10% or more of the total budget) to the Program.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

SPPGs will benefit from several technical assistance services. At the onset of the grant period, the USAID Civil Society Engagement Program will administer a participatory advocacy capacity assessment (ACA) to assess grantees' strengths and weaknesses and identify areas of support. Throughout the implementation period, grantees will be assisted by Zinc Network through Design Sprint and Communications Hubs that help the grantees to finetune their approaches and communication assets.

Grantees will also be assisted by policy experts in education, healthcare, and social welfare from Columbia University. The experts will provide advice on policy solutions, research methods, review policy papers, and provide advice drawn from international experience, as needed.

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.
- ✚ 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, the USAID Civil Society Engagement Program may request additional documentation, including:

- ✚ A copy of the organization's most recent Act of Comparison from 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.

The USAID Civil Society Engagement Program will retain all materials and documents submitted by applicants. The USAID Civil Society Engagement Program 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, the USAID Civil Society Engagement Program might share a list of received applications with other donors supporting CSOs in Georgia.

EVALUATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

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

The USAID Civil Society Engagement Program will assess applications based on the following main criteria:

- ✚ Organizational capacity and management, including:
 - ✚ Applicant’s past 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 grow and 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.
 - ✚ Level of consideration of issues related to women, girls, youth, ethnic and religious minorities, the LGBT community, or other marginalized groups in the proposed analysis and activities.
- ✚ Budget proposal, including:
 - ✚ Cost-effectiveness of the proposed budget.
 - ✚ Proposed co-funding, particularly from local businesses, other donors, the government, the media, other partner organizations, and/or volunteers.

TIMELINE

RfA launch date	October 9, 2023
Open-door meeting at the EWMI office	October 16, 2023
Open-door meeting (online)	October 17, 2023
Deadline for submitting written clarification requests	November 9, 2023
Date when the Program will issue clarifications	November 10, 2023
DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS	November 20, 2023, at 16:30
Evaluation of applications (tentative)	December 4, 2023
Grant award notification for successful applicants (tentative)	December 11, 2023
Grant agreement signing (tentative)	January 15, 2024
<i>Please note that evaluation, notification and award dates are subject to change</i>	

CONTACT INFORMATION

Application Form: To download the application form, please visit the Program [website](#) or Facebook [page](#) or see the announcement on www.jobs.ge. Alternatively, please contact Nodar Tangiashvili (ntangiashvili@ewmi.org), USAID Civil Society Engagement Program Public Policy Adviser.

Clarifications: Requests for clarification should be sent to Nodar Tangiashvili at ntangiashvili@ewmi.org by the deadline listed above. The USAID Civil Society Engagement Program will issue clarifications to all interested organizations via e-mail.

Proposals: Applicants should submit a completed application form and the required documents via e-mail at csep@ewmi.org. E-mails must have “SSPG PROGRAM” in the subject line. The USAID Civil Society Engagement Program will also accept applications submitted in a sealed envelope to **SSPG Program, USAID Civil Society Engagement Program, 5 Marjanishvili St., 3rd floor, Tbilisi, Georgia.**