

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
U.S. EMBASSY, Yerevan
Notice of Funding Opportunity**

Funding Opportunity Title: Democracy Commission Small Grants Program Competition
Funding Opportunity Number: *DemCom-FY20-01*
Deadline for Applications: *February 13, 2020*
CFDA Number: *19.900*
Total Amount Available: *Around \$400,000 pending the availability of funds*

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The U.S. Embassy, Yerevan of the U.S. Department of State announces an open competition for proposals that aim to develop democracy, promote respect for human rights, and support civic education in Armenia. Please carefully follow all instructions below.

Program Objectives:

The United States Embassy is pleased to announce the first round of the 2020 Democracy Commission Small Grants Program competition. The program supports initiatives that develop democracy, promote respect for human rights, and support civic education in Armenia.

Special consideration will be given to proposals that focus on one or more of the following:

- Support transparency and accountability in governance and the fight against corruption;
- Develop independent, diverse, and pluralistic media in Armenia;
- Promote importance of entrepreneurship and boost entrepreneurial skills;
- Promote reconciliation and lasting partnerships between the people of Armenia and Azerbaijan and/or Armenia and Turkey, including plans for continued cooperation after the project ends; and
- Promote activities to engage youth audiences in the development of civic participation, political debate, and social responsibility in Armenia.

All projects should explain how the proposed activities impact Armenia's democratic development and further the long-term goals of the organization. Project proposals should describe specific objectives and expected outcomes. Proposals focused primarily on training or capacity building will not be considered unless the training will lead to concrete, measurable outcomes. Collaborative projects between partnering NGOs are strongly encouraged.

Participants and Audiences:

Please be specific when mentioning the target audience(s) of your proposed project, including demographic information and the approximate number of beneficiaries to be directly and indirectly impacted by project activities.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Length of performance period: *3 to 12 months*
Number of awards anticipated: *up to 20 awards, depending on budget request*
Award amounts: *awards may range from a minimum of \$5,000 to a maximum of \$50,000*
Total expected funding available: *\$400,000 (pending the availability of funds)*

Type of Funding: *FY19/20 Assistance Europe Eurasia Central Asia under the Foreign Assistance Act*

Anticipated program start date: *July 1, 2020*

This notice is subject to the availability of funds.

Funding Instrument Type

The type of funding instrument, exact amount of funding, the scope of work, and the terms and conditions of a successful award will be determined in pre-award negotiations between the applicant and US Embassy representatives after the application has been selected for funding.

The funding instrument will be either a grant or a cooperative agreement. The award will be a cooperative agreement if the proposed project involves substantial US Embassy involvement. “Substantial involvement” means that, after the award is approved for funding, US Embassy will assist, guide, coordinate, or participate in project activities in a partnership role. US Embassy will NOT assume direction, primary responsibility, or a dominant role in project activities. These reside with the recipient for the project as a whole.

Program Performance Period: Proposed programs should be completed within 12 months of the project start date. The Department of State will entertain applications for continuation grants funded under these awards beyond the initial budget period on a non-competitive basis subject to the availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the program, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the U.S. Department of State.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants:

The following organizations are eligible to apply:

- Armenian not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations;
- Independent media outlets registered in Armenia.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching:

Cost sharing is encouraged but not required. Matching is not required.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a unique entity identifier (Data Universal Numbering System/DUNS number from Dun & Bradstreet), as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Please see Section D.3 for information on how to obtain these registrations.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. All applications must be written in English and submitted by February 13, 2020, 18:00 local [Armenia] time, using the application portal available at the following link:
<https://www.usa.am/forms/site/view?id=7e290c252fe673893e9b9286ea66571e>

Only applications submitted before the deadline will be considered for funding. After submitting the application electronically, the portal will notify the applicants about their successful submission.

2. Attachments:

- One-page CV or resume of key personnel who are proposed for the program;
- Letters of support from program partners describing the roles and responsibilities of each partner;
- If your organization has a NICRA and includes NICRA charges in the budget, your latest NICRA should be included as a PDF file;
- Official registration documents;
- For the full application, the standard application package, consisting of the standard forms, i.e., SF-424, SF-424A, is available at <http://www.grants.gov>.

3. Content and Form of Application

Applications received after the deadline of February 13, 2020, will not be reviewed. Applications lacking any of the required elements, or which do not follow the instructions listed in this funding announcement, will be deemed ineligible.

Here is guidance on completing some of the required Standard Federal Forms:

- Application for Federal Assistance, Standard Form SF-424.
 - Items 18a – g (Estimated Funding (\$)). These items must reflect (1) the total Federal funding requested for the project, (2) the total match, if match is a factor, for the project, and (3) the total project cost, which equals the total Federal funding requested for the project plus the total match, if there is match.
 - Item 21 (Authorized Representative). Signatures (electronic or ink) must match the name printed in the “Authorized Representative” section of the SF-424 Block 21. Another Authorized Representative may not sign on behalf of the individual noted in Block 21.
- Budget Information, Non-construction Programs, Standard Form SF-424A. Submit separate SF-424A budget forms for requested funding. In Section B, use separate columns to indicate how Federal funds, and matching funds, if match is a factor, are broken down by each cost category, i.e., by each line item.
- SF-424B, Assurances - Non-construction Programs. This must be completed for each submitted non-construction application.

4. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

Required Registrations:

Any applicant listed on the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS) in the System for Award Management (SAM) is not eligible to apply for an assistance award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR, 1986 Comp., p. 189) and

12689 (3 CFR, 1989 Comp., p. 235), “Debarment and Suspension.” Additionally, no entity listed on the EPLS can participate in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the EPLS in SAM to ensure that no ineligible entity is included.

All organizations applying for grants must obtain these registrations. All are free of charge:

- Unique entity identifier from Dun & Bradstreet (DUNS number)
- NCAGE/CAGE code
- www.SAM.gov registration

Step 1: Apply for a DUNS number and an NCAGE number (these can be completed simultaneously)

DUNS application: Organizations must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet. If your organization does not have one already, you may obtain one by calling 1-866-705-5711 or visiting <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>.

Step 2: NCAGE application: Application page here:

<https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/scage/CageList.aspx>

Instructions for the NCAGE application process:

<https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/Docs/US%20Instructions%20for%20NSPA%20NCAGE.pdf>

For NCAGE help from within the U.S., call 1-888-227-2423

For NCAGE help from outside the U.S., call 1-269-961-7766

Email NCAGE@dlis.dla.mil for any problems in getting an NCAGE code.

Step 3: After receiving the NCAGE Code, proceed to register in SAM.gov by logging onto:

<https://www.sam.gov>. SAM registration must be renewed annually.

Registration is free. ALL three registrations must be completed before an applicant can submit an application. Since complete registration can take from three (3) days to four (4) weeks or longer to complete, begin the registration process early.

5. Funding Restrictions

The funds requested under this program CANNOT fund: partisan political activity; humanitarian aid and charities or charitable activities; scientific research; fundraising campaigns; commercial projects; trade activities; conferences and individual trips abroad; projects aimed primarily at the institutional development of the organization. Please note that award funds cannot be used to purchase alcoholic beverages.

6. Other Submission Requirements

Applications and application materials must be submitted using the application portal set up for this round of competition. Please see Section D.1 for the link.

Please visit the U.S. Embassy Yerevan website for more specific information about the grant NOFO: <https://www.usa.am/cms/announcements.php>

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Evaluation Criteria

Each application will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the evaluation criteria outlined below.

Proposals will be evaluated according to the project's relevance to the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program goals; the extent to which the project has clearly formulated objectives, target groups, and expected outcomes; and the ability of the applying organization to carry out the project aims.

Quality and Feasibility of the Program Idea – (25) points: The program idea is well developed, with detail about how program activities will be carried out. The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline.

Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives – (30) points: Goals and objectives are clearly stated and program approach is likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results.

Budget – (10) points: The budget justification is detailed. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The budget is realistic, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities.

Expected Results and Project's Sustainability – (20 points): Program activities will continue to have positive impact after the end of the program. Applicant demonstrates it is able to measure program success against key indicators and provides milestones to indicate progress toward goals outlined in the proposal. The program includes output and outcome indicators, and shows how and when those will be measured.

Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Grants – (15 points): The organization has expertise in its stated field and has the internal controls in place to manage federal funds. This includes a financial management system and a bank account.

The maximum score for each criterion is indicated in parentheses. Each criterion includes factors reviewers will consider to determine how well an application meets that criterion. Reviewers must provide comments to justify the scores they provide for each criterion. Applications that best address these criteria will be the most competitive.

2. Review and Selection Process

There are three steps for review for each application received:

Minimum requirements review: We will conduct an initial, administrative review on each, timely-received application to ensure that it is eligible, responsive to the solicitation, and complete. Applications deemed ineligible, not responsive, and incomplete will be eliminated from further review. The U.S. Embassy, in its discretion, may continue the review process for applications with non-substantive issues that may be easily remedied. Applications that meet the minimum requirements during the initial screening will move to the next phase that involves a preliminary technical review. Applications that meet the technical threshold will move to an interagency Embassy panel for final review. Both the technical and panel reviews are carried out by the same set of reviewers. The two phases are described in detail below.

Preliminary technical review: Independent, written, technical evaluations from three U.S. Embassy officers with specific subject matter expertise will assess the technical merit of each application. Each application will be evaluated solely on the information in the application against the evaluation criteria described in Section E 1 above. Each reviewer will certify that they have no conflict of interest relative to each application they are reviewing before the review process begins. Each reviewer will independently evaluate each project and provide an individual score.

Applications will be ranked in descending order according to their preliminary technical review score. A “cutoff score” may be established based in part on the amount of funding available for the program in Fiscal Year 2019. Applications below the cutoff will be eliminated from further consideration. Reviewers’ comments will not be shared with applicants whose proposals were rejected.

Panel review: Reviewers who participated in the preliminary technical review will also participate in the panel review. For those applications at or above the cutoff technical review score, we will conduct panel reviews to discuss these proposals in depth prior to making final recommendations. These in-depth discussions will raise issues and answer questions that a single reviewer may have raised during the preliminary technical review phase, or they may clarify an issue. Reviewers’ final scores will be combined and averaged to produce a final rank order of the proposals for each panel/priority. Final approvals from responsible offices at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, DC, will be obtained before the grants are signed.

3. Anticipated Announcement and Federal Award Dates

July 1, 2020

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Federal Award Notices

The grant award or cooperative agreement will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the recipient for review and signature by email. The recipient may only start incurring program

expenses beginning on the start date shown on the grant award document signed by the Grants Officer.

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the discretion of the Department of State.

Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

Payment Method:

Payments will be made in general in two segments. An initial segment will be authorized to initiate the project. The applicant must provide an interim report about the use of the first segment of funds before the second segment is released.

1. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Terms and Conditions: Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply. These include:

2 CFR 200, 2 CFR 600, Certifications and Assurances, and the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, all of which are available at: <https://www.statebuy.state.gov/fa/pages/home.aspx>
Note the U.S Flag branding and marking requirements in the Standard Terms and Conditions.

2. Reporting

Reporting Requirements: Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify how often these reports must be submitted. All recipients must submit a formal report to the Grants Officer upon completion of the project. The report should discuss what was done, whether the project was successful from the applicant's perspective and how it might be improved in the future. Copies of video materials, CDs and other video and audio aids generated during the implementation of the project attesting to the success of the grant activities are welcome, and sometimes required indeed. An accounting of the use of the grant funds must also be included. The information from this report will enable the Democracy Commission to better evaluate future proposals.

3. Review of Risk

After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the U.S. Embassy Grants Office will perform administrative reviews under 2 C.F.R. 200-205. In addition to reviewing repositories of government-wide eligibility and qualifications or financial integrity information, the risk assessment conducted by the U.S. Embassy may consider items such as the financial stability of the applicant, quality of the applicant's management systems, an applicant's history of performance, previous audit reports, and findings concerning the applicant's ability to effectively

implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities. Upon review of these factors, if appropriate, specific special award conditions that respond to the degree of risk found may be applied by the U.S. Embassy Grants Officer pursuant to 2 CFR 20.207. Special conditions that address any risks determined to exist may be applied.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact: sahakyanl@state.gov.

H. OTHER INFORMATION

Guidelines for Project Narrative

It is critical that the project summary accurately describe the project being proposed and convey all essential elements of the project. Provide a summary of the proposed project (a paragraph maximum). Someone unfamiliar with your proposal should be able to read the project summary and understand your proposal.

Project Objectives: List primary objectives for the entire project period. Use plain language.

Detailed Project Narrative:

Detail what your project will achieve under the following headings: What, Why, Who, How, and When? Explain each aspect of your proposal clearly, and address each topic below. Reviewers must be able to connect proposed activities and project costs. The Detailed Project Narrative should track as tightly as possible the evaluation criteria listed under "Evaluation Criteria," in Section above.

Sustainability. Explain how the funding request will create a sustainable project after the grant funds end. List any other sources of funding that have been requested or will be sought for the project and the status of those requests.

Outcomes. Be sure your proposal describes expected outcomes, rather than outputs. For example, a successful project is not evaluated on the number of beneficiaries (i.e. how many people were trained), but rather on what the beneficiaries will do with the new knowledge gained to make an impact in their communities or society.

Organization and Personnel. Describe how the project will be organized and managed. Demonstrate the applicant's knowledge and experience in delivering the project defined in the application. Describe any partnerships with other organizations which are integral to the project.

Guidelines for Budget Justification

Detailed Budget Narrative: The Detailed Budget Narrative should explain the need for Federal financial assistance. Provide a detailed spreadsheet, with the narrative, separated into Federal and non-Federal shares (if there is a match), as they relate to specific, requested line items or activities (personnel and salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contracts, indirect costs). The Detailed Budget Narrative submitted with the application MUST match exactly the dollar amounts and line item/object classes on the required forms SF-424 and the SF-424A. Round off to the nearest dollar. Do not use cents! We recommend you prepare the Detailed Budget Narrative and

spreadsheet first, then insert these numbers into the appropriate line items found on the SF-424A, and finally, complete items 18a-g on the SF-424.

If there are costs beyond your application's proposed Federal funds (and non-Federal share) needed to complete the project, list all other sources of funding that have been, or will be, sought for the project and the status of each request. If no other funding has been sought, explain.

Personnel and Fringe Benefits: Describe the wages, salaries, and benefits of temporary or permanent staff who will be working directly for the applicant on the program, and the percentage of their time that will be spent on the program.

Travel: Estimate the costs of travel and per diem for this program, for program staff, consultants or speakers, and participants/beneficiaries. If the program involves international travel, include a brief statement of justification for that travel.

Equipment: Describe any machinery, furniture, or other personal property that is required for the program, which has a useful life of more than one year (or a life longer than the duration of the program), and costs at least \$5,000 per unit.

Supplies: List and describe all the items and materials, including any computer devices, that are needed for the program. If an item costs more than \$5,000 per unit, then put it in the budget under Equipment.

Contractual: Describe goods and services that the applicant plans to acquire through a contract with a vendor. Also describe any sub-awards to non-profit partners that will help carry out the program activities.

Other Direct Costs: Describe other costs directly associated with the program, which do not fit in the other categories. For example, shipping costs for materials and equipment or applicable taxes. All "Other" or "Miscellaneous" expenses must be itemized and explained.

Indirect Costs: These are costs that cannot be linked directly to the program activities, such as overhead costs needed to help keep the organization operating. If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, attach a copy of your latest NICRA. Organizations that have never had a NICRA may request indirect costs of 10% of the modified total direct costs as defined in 2 CFR 200.68. "Cost Sharing" refers to contributions from the organization or other entities other than the U.S. Embassy. It also includes in-kind contributions such as volunteers' time and donated venues.