

OPEN CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Guideline for applicants

Contracting Authority: Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM)
In partnership with: Center for Research and Policy Making (CRPM) and Faktoje

TITLE: BAT-MONITOR SUB-GRANTING TO CSOs

Budget Reference: EC Grant contract IPA III/2022/441-365

“Civic oversight capacities for Budget Accountability and Transparency: BAT-Civil Society”

Deadline for submission of full application: 15 December 2023

1. BAT-MONITOR SUB-GRANTING TO CSOs

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Institute for Democracy and Mediation, in cooperation with the Center for Research and Policy Making (CRPM) and Faktaje, is implementing the project “*Civic oversight capacities for Budget Accountability and Transparency: BAT-Civil Society*”. This project is funded by the European Union, reference: EuropeAid/174080/DD/ACT/.

The overall objective of this project is to improve the governance and oversight of budget planning and implementation by strengthening the capacities of CSOs at the local and national levels to effectively participate in budget planning and to monitor and evaluate budget implementation.

This will be achieved by i) enabling civil society organizations (CSOs) at the local and national levels to effectively participate in budgetary planning and to monitor and evaluate its implementation.; ii) improving current government policies and practices on budget planning, implementation, and reporting through greater public oversight.

In a nutshell, the project seeks to improve budget accountability and transparency through a two-pronged approach: it addresses the demand side for greater transparency and accountability through civic oversight, and it seeks to improve the tools through which greater transparency and accountability can be possible by engaging oversight institutions as well as public institutions at the central and local levels. We expect that this approach will foster coalition-building and citizen participation through closer connections between CSOs, young researchers, and investigative journalists – and simplified procedures from the institutional side to enable the effective participation of the public.

The project intends to overcome obstacles and barriers to civil society’s oversight and monitoring role in providing for enhanced budget transparency and accountability by strengthening their capacities and knowledge resources, and by supporting their work in increasing budgetary and financial transparency.

The sub-granting scheme is one of the central components of the project which aims to engage the civil society, academia and journalists in delivering on the project’s goals. CSOs and journalists will produce research and investigative reports that examine case studies at the local and national levels. The CSOs and investigative journalists will be selected through an open call, and they will be financially supported to conduct their work through the sub-granting scheme.

This sub-granting guideline has been prepared to provide uniform procedures and guidance for the administration of the sub-grants that will be awarded.

1.2 OBJECTIVE OF THE OPEN CALL AND PRIORITIES

The overall goal of the BAT Sub-granting is to support civic stakeholders to play their oversight and monitoring roles in the field budget accountability and transparency at local and national level in Albania.

The specific objectives of the sub-granting facility are: (a) to empower and support civil society to monitor and evaluate local and central government agencies’ budget cycle, strengthen budget transparency, accountability and participation, and promote gender budgeting and financing of climate change measures; and (b) to empower and support investigative media initiatives and synergies between journalists and young

academia (researchers and postgraduates) to expose factors and practices hampering budget accountability and transparency of state institutions.

The expected results to be obtained under this call are: (a) civil society, investigative journalists and young academia contribute to budget accountability and transparency; (b) third party initiatives financed through BAT sub-granting generate data and findings for improved BAT policy and legal framework at national and local levels.

The purpose of BAT Monitor sub-granting (*grants to CSOs*) is to empower and support CSOs to monitor, evaluate, promote public participation and carry out other relevant activities strengthening budget accountability and transparency in public bodies. Additionally, potential applicants are encouraged to include also crosscutting issues such as gender budgeting, financing of climate change measures, etc.

Type of activities suggested – non exhaustive. Particular priority will be given to the highlighted activities.

- Building of strategic partnerships, networking and cooperation with CSOs and other relevant stakeholders or among CSOs;
- **Participation in policy formulation and promotion of greater contact and cooperation between civic and political actors, including fostering of structured dialogue mechanisms;**
- **Watchdog activities and monitoring of public policies, action plans and indicators; monitoring and analysis of legislative developments and implementation of laws and by-laws; monitoring and analysis of national and/or local budgets;**
- Policy research, gaps and needs analyses, opinion surveys, including manuals on best practices related to the priorities of the call;
- **Documenting and reporting on cases of violations of good governance and/or rule of law principles;**
- Exchange of information, know-how and experience;
- Advocacy for policy changes; revision of existing legislation and adoption of new legislation in accordance with the EU standards and requirements;
- **Public fora to promote the right to information, right to public consultations and increased transparency and strengthen collaboration with media and other non-state actors;**
- Organisation of discussion fora to improve dialogue and networking between civil society and decision makers on the issues and priorities of this call;
- Awareness-raising and communication campaigns promoting accountability and transparency at national and local level, including engaging youth, through innovative ideas;

1.3 FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE SUB GRANTING AUTHORITY

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Total indicative budget available for this call</i> | 150,000 EUR |
| <i>Max. amount contribution per project</i> | 10,000 EUR |
| <i>Coverage of costs</i> | The sub-granting scheme will award 100% of eligible costs. |
| <i>Duration of the Action</i> | Min. 6 months Max. 12 months |
| <i>Action must take place in</i> | Albania |

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of the actions financed under this call, in conformity with the practical guide, which is applicable to the present call (*available on the internet at this address <https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ePRAG>*).

2.1 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

2.1.1 Eligibility of applicants (i.e. lead applicant and co-applicant(s) – if any)

In order to be eligible for a sub-grant, the lead applicant must:

- be a non-governmental organization, civil society organization legally registered and operating in the territory of Albania;
- be non-profit making;
- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with the co-applicant(s) (if any), not acting as an intermediary;

Lead applicants must sign the Declaration by the Lead Applicant (*annex 3*).

The lead applicant may act individually or with co-applicant(s). Co-applicants must satisfy the eligibility criteria as applicable to the lead applicant. Co-applicants should participate in designing and implementing the action, and the costs they incur are eligible in the same way as those incurred by the lead applicant. If awarded the grant contract, the co-applicant(s) (if any) will become beneficiary(ies) in the action. Co-applicants must sign the Mandate (*annex 4*).

If awarded the sub-grant contract, the lead applicant will become the beneficiary identified as the coordinator in the Special Conditions (part of the Sub-Grant Contract). The coordinator is the sole interlocutor of the contracting authority. It represents and acts on behalf of any other co-beneficiary (if any) and coordinate the design and implementation of the action.

The applicant may not submit more than one application under this Call for Proposals. The applicant may not be a co-applicant or an affiliated entity in another application at the same time.

The applicants (lead applicant and co-applicant, if any) should submit the following documents in accordance with the applicable Albanian law:

- a) Court Registration Act;
- b) Statute of the organization;
- c) Fiscal registration Certification (NIUS);
- d) Document stating the organization has no pending financial obligations (Document issued by e-Albania);
- e) Latest financial statements of the organization for the past two years, in accordance with the applicable legislation;
- f) CV of the organization;
- g) The legal representative of the Lead Applicant must sign and stamp: Declaration by the lead applicant (*annex 3*); the legal representative of the Co-applicant(s) must sign and stamp: Mandate (*annex 4*);

2.1.2 Eligible actions: actions for which an application may be made

Types of action

Types of action which may be financed under this call for proposal must be in line with the objectives and indicative activities (*section 1.2*).

The following types of action are considered non-eligible:

- actions concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses;
- actions concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
- actions concerned only or mainly with study visits or participation in international forums;
- infrastructure projects or projects essentially focused on the purchase of equipment;
- purchase and/or renovation of buildings or offices;
- activities undertaken before signature of the contract;
- actions aimed at profit making activities;
- actions related to charitable donations;
- actions already funded by other Community programmes;
- actions discriminating against individuals or groups of people on grounds of their gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or lack of them, or their ethnical origin;
- actions supporting individual political parties.

Visibility

The applicants must take all necessary steps to publicise the fact that the European Union is financing the action through “*Civic oversight capacities for Budget Accountability and Transparency: BAT-Civil Society*” a project implemented by a consortium led by the Institute for Democracy and Mediation.

All measures and activities relating to visibility and, if applicable, communication, must comply with the latest Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU-funded external action, laid down and published by the European Commission ([Communication and Visibility Requirements for EU External Actions | International Partnerships \(europa.eu\)](http://ec.europa.eu/communication/visibility/)).

2.1.3 Eligibility of costs: costs that can be included

Only ‘eligible costs’ can be covered by a sub-grant. The categories of costs that are considered eligible and non-eligible are indicated below.

Recommendations to award a sub-grant are always subject to the condition that the checks preceding the signing of the grant contract do not reveal problems requiring changes to the budget (such as arithmetical errors, inaccuracies, unrealistic costs and ineligible costs). The checks may give rise to requests for clarification and may lead the contracting authority to impose modifications or reductions to address such mistakes or inaccuracies. It is not possible to increase the grant or the percentage of financing because of these corrections. It is therefore in the applicants' responsibility to provide a realistic and cost-effective budget.

Eligible costs are actual costs incurred by the beneficiary/(ies) which meet the following criteria;

- they are incurred during the implementation of the action;
- costs relating to services and works shall relate to activities performed during the implementation period
- costs incurred should be paid before the project closing date;
- they are indicated in the estimated overall budget for the Action;
- they are necessary for the implementation of the Action;
- they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the Beneficiary(ies) and determined according to the accounting standards and the usual cost accounting practices applicable to the Beneficiary(ies);
- cash payment will be allowed only up to a ceiling of 150 EUR maximum;
- they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- they are reasonable, justified and comply with the requirements of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

Non-eligible costs

The following costs are considered non-eligible:

- debts and debt service charges (interest);
- provisions for losses or potential future liabilities;
- costs declared by the beneficiary(ies) and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union (including through EDF) grant;
- purchases of land or buildings;
- currency exchange losses;
- in-kind contributions (except for volunteers' work);
- bonuses included in costs of staff;
- negative interest charged by banks or other financial institutions;
- credit to third parties;
- salary costs of the personnel of national public administrations;

2.2 HOW TO APPLY AND THE PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW

2.2.1. *Submitting the application*

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the instructions in the grant application form (*annex 1*). Application must be typed, in Albanian (*hand-written applications will not be accepted*). Currency used in the application form and budget from should be in EUR.

Any error or any major inconsistency in the application may lead to the rejection of the application. Clarifications will only be requested when the information provided is unclear and thus prevents the contracting authority from conducting an objective assessment.

Applicants must submit their proposal (*application form and budget*) and requested documents (*section 2.1.1*) by e-mail to info@idmalbania.org and Cc dangjeli@idmalbania.org. The email subject must be **“BAT-Monitor Application – (Applicant’s Name)”**

The deadline for the submission of the applications is **December 15th, 2023**. A confirmation of the receipt of the application will be sent after submission. Any application submitted after the deadline will be rejected.

2.2.2 Further information about applications

An **online info-session** on this call for proposals will be held. Any interested parties will be notified in advance on the date and time through our social media accounts. The tentative date is **10 November 2023**.

Questions may be sent by e-mail no later than **10 days** before the deadline for the submission of applications, by e-mail with the following subject: **“Inquiry – BAT-Monitor”**. The contracting authority has no obligation to provide clarifications to questions received after this date.

E-mail address: info@idmalbania.org

Replies will be given via email no later than **8 days** before the deadline. To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the contracting authority cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of lead applicants, co-applicants (if any), or an action.

2.3. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications will be examined and evaluated by the Sub-Granting Authority, with the possible assistance of external assessors. All applications will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria.

STEP 1: ADMINISTRATIVE CHECK

During the opening and administrative check, the evaluator will assess if the submission deadline has been met and if the application satisfies all the criteria specified in the administrative checklist.

| Administrative Criteria: | Yes | No | Comments |
|---|-----|----|----------|
| 1. The proposal is sent according to the application form published in the Guidelines for this Call (typed, in Albanian language) | | | |
| 2. All required documents are included. | | | |
| 3. The budget is presented in the requested format, and stated in EUR. | | | |
| 4. The applicant is a non-profit making NGO registered in Albania. | | | |
| 5. All supporting documents are submitted in the required form. | | | |
| 6. The duration of the action is: not lower than 6 months nor exceed 12 months | | | |
| 7. The budget requested complies with the set threshold (up to EUR 10,000) | | | |

After the Evaluation Committee will conclude the evaluation of the first step, all lead applicants will be notified **via e-mail**, on the results of STEP 1.

STEP 2: EVALUATION OF THE APPLICATION

The quality of the applications, including the proposed budget and capacity of the applicants, will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the evaluation grid below.

EVALUATION GRID

| Section | Maximum Score |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. Operational capacity | 5 |
| 1.1 Do the applicants and, if applicable, their co-applicants have sufficient in-house experience of project management? | 5 |
| 2. Relevance | 30 |
| 2.1 How relevant is the proposal to the objectives and priorities of the call for proposals and to the specific themes/sectors/areas or any other specific requirement stated in the guidelines for applicants? Are the expected results of the action aligned with the priorities defined in the guidelines for applicants? | 15 |
| 2.2 How relevant is the proposal to the particular needs and constraints of the targeted beneficiaries, sectors? | 5 |
| 2.3 How clearly defined and strategically chosen are those involved (final beneficiaries, target groups)? Have their needs and constraints been clearly defined and does the proposal address them appropriately? | 5 |
| 2.4 Does the proposal contain particular added-value elements (e.g. innovation, best practices) | 5 |
| 3. Design of the action | 25 |
| 3.1 How coherent is the design of the action? Does the proposal indicate the expected results to be achieved by the action? Are the activities proposed appropriate, practical, and consistent with the results? | 10 |
| 3.3 Does the design reflect a robust analysis of the problems involved? | 10 |
| 3.4 Is the action plan for implementing the action clear and feasible? Is the timeline realistic? | 5 |
| 4. Sustainability of the action | 10 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 4.1 Is the action likely to have a tangible impact on its target groups? | 5 |
| 4.2 Is the action likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension, capitalisation on experience and knowledge sharing? | 5 |
| 5. Budget and cost-effectiveness of the action | 10 |
| 5.1 Are the activities appropriately reflected in the budget? | 5 |
| 5.2 Is the ratio between the estimated costs and the results satisfactory? | 5 |
| Maximum total score | 80 |

After the evaluation, a table will be drawn up listing the applications ranked according to their score. The highest scoring applications will be **provisionally** selected until the available budget for this Call for Proposal is reached. In addition, a reserve list will be drawn up following the same criteria. This list will be used if more funds become available during the validity period of the reserve list. Any rejected application will be replaced by the next best placed application on the reserve list that falls within the available budget for this Call for Proposal.

STEP 3: FINAL EVALUATION AND DECISION

The Selection Committee will take the final decision and the results of the evaluation process will be communicated officially to the applicants.

The Sub Granting Authority, prior to signing the contract, reserves the right to negotiate with the applicant in order to ensure cost efficiency of the action, ensure a fair balance between operational and non-operational costs, reflect real market costs, and reflect costs in accordance with proposed activities.

After reaching an agreement, the sub grant contract will be signed between the relevant applicant and the Institute for Democracy and Mediation.

2.4 NOTIFICATION OF THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY'S DECISION

The lead applicants will be informed via e-mail of the contracting authority's decision concerning their application and, if rejected, the reasons for the negative decision. Please note that the lead applicant is the intermediary for all communications between applicants and the contracting authority during the procedure.

Appeals

Without prejudice, where an applicant believes they have been adversely affected by an error or irregularity allegedly committed as part of the selection procedure, or that the procedure was vitiated by any maladministration, may file a complaint by email to info@idmalbania.org within 5 working days from the day when the rejection email/notification has been received.

The Selection Committee shall answer to the submitted complaint no later than 10 working days from the date that the complaint has been submitted. The reply to the appeal represents the final decision regarding the application.

| INDICATIVE TIMETABLE | |
|--|-------------------|
| | DATE |
| 1. Information session | November 10, 2023 |
| 2. Deadline for requesting any clarifications from the contracting authority | December 5, 2023 |
| 3. Last date on which clarifications are issued by the contracting authority | December 7, 2023 |
| 4. Deadline for submission of applications | December 15, 2023 |
| 5. Information to lead applicants on the administrative and eligibility checks (Step 1) | December 22, 2023 |
| 6. Information to lead applicants on the evaluation of the full applications (Step 2) | January 15, 2024 |
| 7. Notification of award (Step 3) | January 17, 2023 |
| 8. Contract signature | January 29, 2023 |

3. LIST OF ANNEXES

Annex 1: Application Form

Annex 2: Budget Template

Annex 3: Declaration by the Applicant

Annex 4: Mandate by the Co-Applicant