

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-EXPOSE SUB-GRANTING TO JOURNALISTS AND
YOUNG RESEARCHERS**

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-EXPOSE SUB-GRANTING TO JOURNALISTS AND YOUNG RESEARCHERS

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Institute for Democracy and Mediation, in cooperation with the Center for Research and Policy Making (CRPM) and Faktoje, 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.

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 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.

Media is an important governance and transparency ingredient in a democratic society. However, due to media capture by political and economic interests, investigative journalism in Albania needs capacities and resources to serve the public interest. The **BAT-Expose sub-granting to investigative journalists** will offer concrete support for their work. Another objective of BAT-Expose is to improve analytical and research capacities of journalists through their cooperation with postgraduates and young researchers. Ultimately, BAT-Expose will contribute to the improvement of the right to information, right to public consultations and increased transparency and accountability.

Five initiatives bringing together and developing synergy of joint teams of journalists and young researchers will be supported by BAT Expose sub-granting (*duration 4 to 8 months and maximum budget of EUR 5.000*).

Type of activities suggested

The proposals should aim to expose through documenting and reporting on cases of violations of budget accountability, transparency, public participation and related crosscutting issues (gender, climate change etc.) with analytical evidence and facts. Applicants are encouraged to “expose, document and report” on violations, malpractices and other negative tendencies in topics related to budget accountability and transparency in one or more state institutions. The **main deliverable** should be an investigative piece (written and/or audio-visual product).

1.3 FINANCIAL ALLOCATION PROVIDED BY THE SUB GRANTING AUTHORITY

<i>Total indicative budget available for this call</i>	25,000 EUR
<i>Max. amount contribution per project</i>	5,000 EUR
<i>Coverage of costs</i>	The sub-granting scheme will award 100% of eligible costs.
<i>Duration of the Action</i>	Min. 4 months Max. 8 months
<i>Action must take place in</i>	Albania

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

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:

- CSOs with focus on media, journalism, fact-checking (non-governmental and non-profit making organization, legally registered and operating in Albania); or
- Investigative journalists (i.e., natural persons) operating in Albania; and

- be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the action with the co-applicant(s) (if any), not acting as an intermediary;

The lead applicant may act individually or with co-applicant(s). Co-applicants must satisfy the eligibility criteria as applicable to the lead applicant.

If awarded the sub-grant contract, the lead applicant will become the beneficiary identified as the coordinator in 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 in another application at the same time.

The applicants (lead applicant and co-applicant if any) should submit the following documents under the Albania law:

If CSOs:

- 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) 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);

If investigative journalists (i.e., natural persons):

- a) Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- b) Fiscal registration Certification (NUIS) – if applicable
- c) The Lead Applicant must sign and stamp: Declaration by the lead applicant (annex 3); 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.

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;
- 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 I*). 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.

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-Expose 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-Expose**”. 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.

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

Administrative Criteria (FIRST PHASE)	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. The budget is presented in the requested format, and stated in EUR.			
3. The applicant satisfies the eligibility criteria.			

4. All supporting documents are submitted in the required form.			
5. The duration of the action is: not lower than 4 months nor exceed 8 months			
6. The budget requested complies with the set threshold (up to EUR 5,000)			

Evaluation Grid (SECOND PHASE)	Maximum Score
The proposed project is coherent. The proposed activities are appropriate, practical and in line with the expected results and objectives. The overall goal of the project contributes to the achievement of the BAT Civil Society objective.	15
The proposed project falls within the thematic area of the Call. The problem addressed by the project proposal is defined and analysed. The proposal includes analysis of stakeholders and target groups.	15
The proposal indicates the expected results to be achieved by the project. The proposed activities are appropriate, practical, and consistent with the envisaged results.	15
The budget corresponds to the proposed activities. The proposed costs are realistic and respect the principles of sound financial management.	10
The action plan for implementing the project is clear and feasible and the timeline is realistic.	10
The action is likely to have multiplier effects, including scope for replication, extension, and capitalisation on experience and knowledge sharing.	5
Maximum total score	70

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.

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.

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	
ACTIVITY	DATE
1. Information session	November 10, 2023
2. Deadline for submission of applications	December 15, 2023
4. Information to applicants on the evaluation of the applications	January 15, 2024
5. Notification of award	January 17, 2023
6. 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