**The deadline for the submission of applications is close of business, 17:00 on May 8, 2023**

**APPLICATION GUIDELINES FOR**

**2023 DEMOCRACY COMMISSION SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM**

**Basic requirements:**  The application should be in English, neatly typed and easy to read. Perfect English is not required but the proposal must be understandable to an English speaker.

Applications must be emailed to the following address: PodgoricaGrants@State.Gov.

**Applications received after the close of business on May 8, 2023, will not be considered.**

Please email any questions you may have about this Notice of Funding Opportunity to the Public Affairs Office at PodgoricaGrants@State.Gov.

**IMPORTANT! Organizations may only submit one proposal per program.**

Organizations that have received a grant from the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program in a previous cycle may apply, however, preference will be given to organizations without ongoing grants issued by the Embassy at the time when the merit review panel convenes.

Project proposals outlining a clear evaluation plan for measuring the success of project activities based on a methodological approach, will receive special consideration.

**APPLICATION TIPS AND GUIDELINES:**

**Application format:**

* Use the recommended Application Form, and do not change the original look of the application form.
* Stay within the required character limit in each application field.
* Send in SF 424, SF 424 A and SF 424 B forms, signed and filled in line with guidelines, along with NOFO required supplemental documents: 1 page CVs in English of key personnel working on the project; detailed budget proposal and budget narrative; organization’s registration documents, as well as documentation to show that you have, at a minimum started the SAM.gov registration process. **Incomplete application packages won’t be considered for funding.**
* Make sure the proposal clearly addresses one or more priority areas of this funding opportunity.
* All documents need to be in English and all budgets in U.S. dollars.
* All pages need to be numbered.
* All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper, and
* All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12 point Calibri font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.
* The proposal should contain sufficient information that anyone not familiar with it would understand exactly what the applicant wants to do.

**Please send all supporting documents via email attachments or in zipped folder (RAR zipped folders won’t be accepted) to** **PodgoricaGrants@state.gov** **by 17:00 on May 8, 2023.**

**Do not send application materials via WeTransfer links or Dropbox.**

**Proposed program dates:**

When will the project be carried out? Your program can last up to 12 months. Remember that, even if approved, funds from the Democracy Commission may not be available before September/October 2023. If your project is approved, you may be asked to change project dates.

**Background on the applicant organization:**

Include information such as when the organization was founded, principal activities, significant achievements, etc. Include information about projects (and funding sources) which are ongoing at the time of application submission.

Send registration papers of the organization as issued by host country authorities.

**Key personnel**:

Include names, titles and roles of key personnel involved in the program, including organization staff and any experts or trainers engaged in project implementation. Give a brief overview (1-2 sentences) of their experience and qualifications. What percentage of their time will be used in support of this program? Send CVs or resumes in English of the people who will be engaged in the project. No individual CV should exceed one page.

**Problem statement and program purpose:**

What does the applicant organization propose to do? The more specific, detailed, concise and clear the program description, the better. Applicants are encouraged to develop unique activities, instead of relying primarily on organizing roundtables and creating websites.

**What is the importance of the project? Why should it be funded? Who will be affected by this project? What difference does it make for Montenegro?** Remember that the Democracy Commission will only support projects that will make an important contribution to society.

**Make sure your problem statement and project summary are tied to one of the priority areas mentioned in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.**

**Project audience/beneficiaries:**

Describe the target audience or group (specify gender, age range and location of target audiences) addressed by the proposal and enter an expected number of beneficiaries.

**Project summary / Design & methods / Goals & objectives:**

A narrative that outlines how your project will address the problem statement. Include project goals, objectives, as well as outcomes and anticipated impact.

Use this field to explain how the proposed project would address the problem you want to solve. Your description should be informative but concise. Please keep the text under 2,000 characters with spaces as it will be copied to a spreadsheet of all proposals in preparation for the merit review.

**Planned activities/ Schedule and timeline:**

Describe project activities and include which target audiences are they addressing. Specify location and timeframe for each activity/group of activities.

**Project partners:**

List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations and sub-awardees assisting with the project, if applicable. If you are implementing your project jointly with any other organization, please list the names and type of involvement of those partner organizations.

A partner organization is an organization actively involved in development and implementation of the project. Partner organizations also need to obtain the UEI.

Contractors you engage to deliver goods or services such as trainers, web developers or suppliers are NOT partner organizations.

**Important note: There can only be one grant recipient/lead implementer, and if applying with a partner organization, you would need to determine: who is the lead applicant/grant recipient, and whether you would issue a sub-grant or contract to partner organization for their scope of work.**

**Project evaluation:**

Project evaluation plans should clearly distinguish between program outputs and outcomes. Outputs are products and services delivered, often stated as an amount. Output information is important to show the scope or size of project activities, but it cannot substitute for information about progress towards outcomes or the results achieved. Examples of outputs include the number of people trained or the number of seminars conducted. Outcomes, in contrast, represent specific results a project is intended to achieve and is usually measured as an extent of change. Applicants should outline in detail how project success and impact will be determined. Please include how you intend to measure the success of the project – this could involve pre and post-project surveys of participants; **it could be any other method of collecting evidence that demonstrates that your project changed/improved a situation**. We encourage you to consider the following examples of indicators when evaluating your project:

* **Participant satisfaction**with the program.
* **Participant learning**, such as increased knowledge, aptitude, skills, and change in understanding and attitude.
* **Participant behavior**, such as concrete actions to apply knowledge in work or community; greater participation and responsibility in civic organizations; continued contacts between participants, community members, and others.
* **Institutional changes**, such as increased collaboration and partnerships, policy reforms, and organizational improvements.
* **Please note**: Consideration should be given to the appropriate timing of data collection for each level of outcome. For example, satisfaction is usually captured as a short-term outcome, whereas behavior and institutional changes are normally considered longer-term outcomes.

**Important note: Applicants may request funds for an external (outsourced) evaluation of the project’s impact (during and/or after the project’s implementation) as part of the proposed budget.**

**Project sustainability:**

Describe the expected long-term effects of the project. If the project is intended to continue after the funding from the Democracy Commission ends, the proposal should contain an explanation of how the organization will fund the activity in the future.

**Media/social media plan:**

Describe which media/social media activities you plan to undertake to highlight project results, promote U.S. assistance and advance project objectives.

A competitive proposal should have a clear media/social media plan for promotion of project activities and results throughout the project implementation. Organizations whose proposals include and budget for a media/social media campaign as one of the project activities, if selected for funding, would be required to submit a media/social media strategy and campaign timeline in the pre-award phase of the grant cycle.

**Detailed budget, including supporting narrative:**

All project expenses should be calculated in advance, and be realistic. Please check the exchange rate U.S. dollar – euro when calculating the costs in U.S. dollars.

Present the budget in form of your choice, in USD amounts, dividing the budget into the categories delineated below.

**Please explain your budget in narrative form. Make sure to detail** personnel duties, list names of trainers/moderators/experts and project staff and break down travel and lodging costs (i.e., how many people, how many overnights, cost per person per day).

Cost sharing is not required, however, if the Recipient includes cost sharing in the project proposal, then the Recipient is accountable for providing additional funds and justifying the costs. **In the event the Recipient does not provide the minimum amount of cost-sharing as stipulated in the Recipient’s approved budget, the government contribution may be reduced in kind.**

**Budget Categories:**

**Personnel:** Describe the wages, salaries of temporary or permanent staff who will be working directly for the applicant on the program. The budget narrative should indicate the base salary and time each person will spend on the project. The narrative should also include any method used to arrive at the requested amount.

NOTE: Recipients may include personnel costs to cover salaries of current employees, if the time charged to the program is deemed reasonable. Personnel costs included in assistance awards are not limited to new personnel hired specifically to work on the program.

**Fringe Benefits:** Fringe benefits are allowances and services provided by employers to their employees as compensation in addition to regular salaries and wages. Fringe benefits include, but are not limited to, the costs of leave, employee insurance, pensions and unemployment benefit plans. These costs may be derived from historical costs or calculated as a percentage of salaries and wages. If the costs are calculated as a percentage of salaries and wages, this percentage will need to be justified by the entity’s written internal policy or documented on their Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA).

**Travel:** Estimate the costs of local travel and per diem for this program, for program staff, consultants or speakers, and participants/beneficiaries. This category includes domestic and international travel costs. The budget narrative should indicate who will travel, where, and why, and should include estimated air fare (or other mode of transportation), accommodations, meals and incidental expenses, and other costs relating to the travel. If the travel locations are not yet finalized at the time of application, the Grant Officer may use discretion in accepting a notional budget, to be finalized during the period of performance once the locations are identified.

**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**. If equipment is in the proposed budget, it is important to determine if it is necessary to the project, if it is reasonable to purchase instead of rent the equipment, and if the entity has adequate internal property standards. The recipient must, at a minimum, provide the equivalent insurance coverage for real property and equipment acquired under a grant with Federal funds as the recipient does for its own property/equipment.

**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. The contracts or subawards must be necessary for the award and the recipient must have the capability and internal policies to manage subawards. It is also important to understand the difference between a contract and a subaward. The recipient should include the budget breakdown for any proposed subawards or contracts.

* A contract is for the purpose of obtaining goods and services for the recipient’s own use and creates a procurement relationship. A consulting agreement with a consultant or contractor is generally considered a contract.
* A subaward is provided to a subrecipient to carry out a portion of the Federal award. A beneficiary of a program is not considered a subrecipient. A subaward may be provided through any form of legal agreement, including an agreement that the prime recipient entity considers a contract.

**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. Bank charges should be pre-calculated and included in the budget. Also, this category may include the entity’s operating expenses that are directly linked to the award but **not** included as an indirect cost. All “Other” or “Miscellaneous” expenses must be itemized and explained.

**Indirect Costs:** These are costs that have been incurred for common or joint objectives and cannot be readily identified with a final cost objective. Indirect costs, often called overhead, or facilities and administrative costs, may only be charged to a Federal award that is subject to CFR §200, Subpart E when:

* The applicant has a current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) from a Federal agency; or
* The applicant elects to charge a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC), which is allowable if the organization does not have a current agreement. The MTDC base excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participants support costs and the portion of each subaward in excess of $25,000. 10% of MTDC is the maximum allowable, but anything below 10% is acceptable if voluntarily offered by the applicant. If an award has been issued utilizing the 10% de minimis rate, that rate is then applicable for the entire period of performance of that award. Should the recipient negotiate and obtain a NICRA, it may not be applied to an award already using the 10% de minimis rate.

**If the recipient does not have a NICRA and elects not to use the de minimis rate, identified “overhead costs” must be broken out by individual line item (e.g. electricity, accountant fees, etc.) and charged as direct costs. However, these must be on a cost allocated basis. For example, if the award project accounts for 20% of the organization’s work, only 20 % of the electricity, accountant fees, etc. should be charged as a direct cost to the grant.**

**Important!** Administrative expenses include communication expenses (phone, fax, e-mail, postage); bank fees; copying and print services; office materials (e.g., paper, toner, and envelopes). Although printing of leaflets and brochures may be covered by the grant, please explore other options such as use of social media to cut down on costs and environmental impact.

The use of “miscellaneous expenses” as a budget item is unacceptable.

Salaries, overhead, equipment, and other administrative expenses are allowable only as they relate to specific project activities. Salary or honoraria should be listed according to rate of pay and percentage of time spent on program-related activities. While salary expenses are permissible for indigenous personnel, payment of honoraria and other expenses for foreign experts will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by EUR/ACE and EUR/PD or SCA/PPD.

**Grant funds may NOT be used for the following:**

* Long-term infrastructure needs.
* Partisan political activity (Note: non-partisan election education and public information activities are allowable.)
* To pay for travel to the United States or for travel grants. Projects involving regional travel will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must have a clear justification outlining why the travel is integral to the project.
* To provide direct social services to populations.
* For alcohol, entertainment, or “miscellaneous” costs.

Funds may only be used for food expenses under special circumstances. These costs should be clearly justified and limited to a maximum of ten percent of the total award amount. This includes expenses associated with individual per diems for grant-related activities.

**Required Registrations:**

Applicant organizations without an active SAM.gov status at the time of technical screening will be disqualified. Application package must include documentation to show that the applicant has an **active SAM.gov registration** or at a minimum has started the SAM.gov registration process (a screenshot from SAM.gov confirming whether the applying organization is active in SAM.gov or its SAM.gov registration is in progress).

Organizations may apply while their SAM.gov registration is pending, however, if the SAM.gov registration is not finalized and active in the system by 17:00 on Monday, May 15 (a week after the deadline for submission of applications to this Notice of Funding Opportunity), the applicant organization will be disqualified, and their application will not reach the merit review panel.

**The process of obtaining or renewing a SAM.gov registration may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks. To be able to renew the existing SAM.gov registration or finalize a new SAM.gov registration by the deadline for submission of project proposals, you must start this process immediately.**

All mandatory registrations are **free of charge**:

* Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)
* SAM.gov registration

**SAM.gov is a free government-managed website; applicants do not need to pay to have their organization registered. The Embassy receives frequent reports that recipients are contacted by organizations posing as SAM.gov which threaten to cut off registration unless a fee is paid for registration or renewal. These emails are fake.**

**Important:** As of November, 2022 and February respectively, organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code or CAGE code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities. If an applicant organization is mid-registration and wishes to remove a CAGE or NCAGE code from their SAM.gov registration, the applicant should submit a help desk ticket (“incident”) with the Federal Service Desk (FSD) online at [www.fsd.gov](http://www.fsd.gov) using the following language: “I do not intend to seek financial assistance from the Department of Defense, I do not wish to obtain a CAGE or NCAGE code. I understand that I will need to submit my registration after this incident is resolved in order to have my registration activated.”

**Useful SAM.gov Resources and Tips**:

* Please read the **UEI and SAM.gov FAQs** attached with the Notice of Funding Opportunity.
* Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) permanently replaced DUNS in April, 2022 and is now assigned through www.SAM.gov, as the first step in the SAM.gov registration process. An assigned UEI does not mean your SAM.gov registration is complete, you need to follow the steps in [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov) to finalize the SAM.gov registration process.
* SAM.gov registration must be renewed annually, so even if you’ve previously registered in SAM.gov, please check if your registration is still active (if your SAM.gov registration is due for its annual renewal but hasn’t yet expired, please read the above referenced UEI and SAM.gov FAQs -Registration Renewals section with available Quick start Guide for Updating an Entity Registration).
* Entities registering in SAM.gov must submit a letter appointing their authorized Entity Administrator. You may find the template attached with this Notice of Funding Opportunity. **The letter doesn’t require official notarization.**
* If you experience any problem in registering in SAM.gov use the following link: <https://www.fsd.gov/gsafsd_sp> to register for live chat, so the SAM.gov administrators can answer your questions.