**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
U.S. EMBASSY PODGORICA**

**Notice of Funding Opportunity**

**Funding Opportunity Title:  2023 Democracy Commission Small Grants Program**

**Funding Opportunity Number:** 2023-FY23AEECA-PASPODGORICA

**Deadline for Applications**: until close of business, 17:00 on Monday, May 8, 2023

**CFDA Number:** 19.900

**Award floor:** $20,000

**Award ceiling:** $50,000

**Total amount available:** $300,000

**Anticipated number of awards:**  6-9 (depending on the amount of each award)

**Priority Region:** Montenegro

**THIS NOTICE IS SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY OF FUNDING.**

**A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The U.S. Embassy Podgorica/Public Affairs Office of the U.S. Department of State announces a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program.

The Democracy Commission Small Grants Program is designed to support initiatives that contribute to open and competitive political systems and to the protection of human rights.

**For this NOFO, the Embassy is seeking project proposals that support tolerance, diversity and inclusion within Montenegrin society.**

Project proposals should contribute to one of the priority areas stated below:

* Protection of human rights and promotion of tolerance, especially among youth
* Ethnic minority, LGBTQi, and gender equality
* Women’s empowerment in the political and economic sphere

Projects may include various elements, including, for example, strategic policy engagements, advocacy, communication campaigns targeting key audiences, workshops, hackathons, cultural programming, hands-on activities requiring follow-on actions from project participants, and community initiatives.

We encourage quality proposals which target audiences from outside the capital, especially in economically disadvantaged areas of the country, which have had notable brain drain over the years.

**Applicants should clearly define project goals that advance one or more of the aforementioned topics, as well as define tangible outcomes that can be measured after the project’s completion.**

All application materials must be submitted by email to [PodgoricaGrants@state.gov](mailto:PodgoricaGrants@state.gov) by close of business, 17:00 on May 8, 2023. Please send all supporting documents via email attachments or in a zipped folder **(RAR files/zipped folders won’t be accepted)**. **Do not send application materials via WeTransfer links or Dropbox.**

**Upon submission, if you haven’t received an automatic reply that your application has been received within a few hours after emailing the application package, please request a confirmation of the receipt of your application in a follow-up email.**

**Please email any questions about this Notice of** Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to [PodgoricaGrants@state.gov](mailto:PodgoricaGrants@state.gov) .

**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.**

**B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION**

**Length of performance period:** Up to 12 months (with a possibility of no-cost time extensions, provided there is a good justification for a request to extend the duration of the project).

**Anticipated program start date:** October, 2023

**Funding Instrument Type:**  Grant, fixed amount award, or cooperative agreement.

The awarding agency will decide on the funding instrument depending on the scope of the project and recipient organizations’ track record in project/grants management.

Please note that the precise timeframe in which grant money will be disbursed cannot be guaranteed.  Grantees should design projects that can be implemented if grant is awarded and money disbursed no earlier than **September, 2023.**

**C. ELIGILIBITY INFORMATION**

1. Eligible Applicants

The following organizations are eligible to apply:

* **Montenegrin not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks, civil society/non-governmental organizations, educational organizations, and other organizations that have displayed trustworthiness.**

**American and third-country organizations and individuals are not eligible for grants under this program.**

Applicants are only allowed to submit one proposal per organization. If more than one proposal is submitted from an organization, all proposals from that institution will be considered ineligible for funding.

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 which do not have ongoing Embassy grants at the time when the merit review panel convenes.

**Incomplete application packages will not be considered for funding.**

1. Other Eligibility Requirements

In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov), as well as a valid registration on [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov). Please see Section D.3 for more information on free of charge, mandatory registrations.

**D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

**Proposals that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the requirements stated below will not be considered for funding.**

**Mandatory application forms (attached to this Notice of Funding Opportunity and available for download from Embassy website):**

* Project proposal using the **Application Form** and in compliance with **Application Guidelines.**
* Detailed budget in USD amounts and a budget narrative using the format of your choice (see Application Guidelines for information about eligible and ineligible costs).
* **SF 424, SF 424A,** and **SF 424B** forms filled out in line with the **SF 424 guidelines** and **SF 424A guidelines** and signed.
* 1-page CV or resume in English of key personnel who are proposed for the program.
* Organization’s registration papers (in the local language).
* 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).

**Important: Applicant organizations without an active SAM.gov status at the time of technical screening will be disqualified.**

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 awarding agency will check the SAM.gov status of organizations applying to this Notice of Funding Opportunity during the technical screening of all received applications before the merit review convenes, and disqualify applicant organizations not appearing as active in SAM.gov by 17:00 on Monday, May 15.

**Other important notes:**

Special consideration will be given toproject proposals that use a methodological approach to outline a clear evaluation plan for measuring the impact of project activities (during, and/or immediately after, and/or six months to a year after the project’s completion). For example, the impact of the project could be measured by the number or type of actions project participants took in their communities, as a result of their participation in the project. Please note that impact should be measured by outcomes (the level of performance and achievement that came as a result of the completed project), rather than direct outputs (number of people trained or activities implemented as part of the project). Simply put, outcomes are final product derived from program’s activities. **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.**

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.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic threats, we welcome proposals that utilize virtual platforms as well. If your proposal includes in-person activities, please include contingency plans, in the event that the health situation in the country is not conducive to in-person interactions.

**E. Required Registrations:**

Any applicant listed on the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS) in the [System for Award Management (SAM)](https://sam.gov) 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.

In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country**, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration in SAM.gov at the time of application,** or include documentation to show it has, at a minimum started the process of registration on [www.SAM.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.sam.gov%2F&data=04%7C01%7CJanketicM2%40state.gov%7Ca368d3bb02714d49cf9908d8c46d99fb%7C66cf50745afe48d1a691a12b2121f44b%7C0%7C0%7C637475322292613075%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=lZdjsofCI6mV9dDux26GPuRT6TwSErKRAHTLQY8xSkg%3D&reserved=0) at the time of application. **The SAM.gov registration process should be fully completed before the merit review panel convenes otherwise your application will be disqualified.**

**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 to this 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. Please follow the steps in [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov) after acquiring the UEI, in order 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. Please find the template of the letter attached to this Notice of Funding Opportunity on the Embassy website. **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.

**F. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION**

1. Criteria

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

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

**Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Grants:** The organization has expertise in its stated field and has the internal controls in place to manage federal funds.  The applicant’s record in managing Federal awards, if it is a prior recipient of Federal awards, including timeliness of compliance with applicable reporting requirements, is spotless. The organization’s proposed project staff (either full time employed at the applicant organization or outsourced) is sufficient to carry out the proposed scope of work.

**Support of Equity and Underserved Communities:** Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the program will support and advance equity and engage underserved communities in program administration, design, and implementation. The proposal should have a clearly defined goal of the project which supports one of the three topics of this Notice of Funding Opportunity, a reasonable plan and timeline how this goal will be achieved and an evaluation plan to measure the success towards achieving the project goal.

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

**Budget:** 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.

**Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** The 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 quality of an applicant’s evaluation plan will be judged on how well it: 1) specifies intended outcomes; 2) gives clear descriptions of how each outcome will be measured; 3) identifies when particular outcomes will be measured; and 4) provides a clear description of the data collection strategies for each outcome (i.e., surveys, interviews, or focus groups).

**Media/Social Media Plan:** Applicant organization’s media/social media plan should concisely indicate the media/social media activities that will highlight project results, promote U.S. assistance and advance project objectives.

**Sustainability:** Program activities will continue to have positive impact after the end of the program.

**Impact:** The extent to which the project will produce an impact in Montenegro, its institutions, legislation, education, and the status of disadvantaged groups in the society.

1. Review and Selection Process

The merit review panel will evaluate all eligible applications and will contact the applicants in case of any follow-up questions.

**As soon as the results of this open competition are available, applicants will receive an e-mail notification.**

**G. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION**

* 1. **Federal Award Notices**

The grant award 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 and implementing project activities 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.

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**Payment Method:** Dynamics of grant payments would be discussed with grant recipients individually, and once agreed upon they will be stated in the award document.

* 1. **Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

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 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=81a5f41de81c46a9844617d93a9db081&mc=true&node=pt2.1.25&rgn=div5)
* [2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=81a5f41de81c46a9844617d93a9db081&mc=true&node=pt2.1.170&rgn=div5)
* [2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=81a5f41de81c46a9844617d93a9db081&mc=true&node=pt2.1.175&rgn=div5)
* [2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE (FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE)](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=81a5f41de81c46a9844617d93a9db081&mc=true&node=pt2.1.182&rgn=div5)
* [2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=81a5f41de81c46a9844617d93a9db081&mc=true&node=pt2.1.183&rgn=div5)
* [2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=81a5f41de81c46a9844617d93a9db081&mc=true&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2chapterVI.tpl)
* [U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS](https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/)
  1. **Reporting**

**Reporting Requirements:** Award recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify how often these reports must be submitted.

**Foreign Assistance Data Review:** As required by Congress, the Department of State must make progress in its efforts to improve tracking and reporting of foreign assistance data through the Foreign Assistance Data Review (FADR). The FADR requires tracking of foreign assistance activity data from budgeting, planning, and allocation through obligation and disbursement. Successful applicants will be required to report and draw down federal funding based on the appropriate FADR Data Elements, indicated within their award documentation. In cases of more than one FADR Data Element, typically program or sector and/or regions or country, the successful applicant will be required to maintain separate accounting records.

**H. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS**

If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact: [**PodgoricaGrants@state.gov**](mailto:PodgoricaGrants@state.gov)**.**

**I. OTHER INFORMATION**

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.

If your organization has a NICRA and includes NICRA charges in the budget, your latest NICRA should be included as a PDF file.