



Armenia Civics for Engagement (ACE) Program

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Project Harmony Armenia

Issuing Date:	20 June 2023
Closing Date, time:	20 July 2023, 17:00 (Yerevan time)
Subject:	Provision of grants for projects to improve the enabling environment for youth civic engagement in Armenia
Program/Reference:	Armenia Civics for Engagement Program/Cooperative Agreement №72011122CA00001 between USAID and Project Harmony Inc.
Number of Awards	A total of up to 10 projects will be awarded. PH Armenia reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.
Ceiling for Budget	3 820 000 AMD
Request per Project	
Cost Sharing or Matching Cost per Project	At least 10% of the total Project value

Through the present Request for Applications (RFA), Project Harmony Armenia is inviting Civil Society Organizations (CSO) registered in Armenia to submit applications for projects aiming to advance youth civic engagement in Armenia.

Eligible parties interested in applying are encouraged to closely read and follow the instructions in this RFA document.

1. Background

The RFA is issued within the framework of the 5-year [Armenia Civic Engagement \(ACE\) Program](#), implemented by a Consortium led by Project Harmony Armenia, and comprised of International Center for Human Development (ICHHD), Armenian Center for Democratic Education – CIVITAS, and the National Center for Educational Technologies of Armenia (KTAK).

The goal of the ACE Program is to enhance the quality and scope of Armenia's school-based and extracurricular civic education as a means to foster youth participation in public affairs for helping the advancement of democratic principles and practices in Armenian society. **The program is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).**

The ACE Program has two components which pursue the accomplishment of below described objectives:

- **Component 1:** Youth civic skills and sense of agency through formal education improved
- **Component 2:** Enabling environment for youth civic engagement is improved.

The Program's **1st Component targets youth under 18, working with the participants of general public education** (students, teachers, administrators, and parents of Armenian secondary schools), and the **2nd Component targets youth aged 18-29**, working with universities, colleges, youth-led organizations, youth experts and practitioners, active community groups and CSOs with focus on youth, officials responsible for youth policy making and implementing, media outlets, etc.

2. Grants Objective and Expected Results

This funding opportunity is specifically designed to contribute to the objective of the ACE Program's 2nd Component. The proposed projects should be designed **to improve the enabling environment for youth civic engagement in Armenia**, through:

- 1. Increasing the capacity and commitment of relevant government institutions to sustainably engage youth in decision-making processes.*
- 2. Improving the capacity and commitment of civil society organizations for effective youth programming and civic engagement.*
- 3. Employing new avenues for non-formal civic education of youth.*

The proposed projects can choose to address any, the combination of or all of the above-mentioned three sub-objectives. Below is a list of priority themes and illustrative activities to expand on:

- Building the capacities of national or local government representatives to effectively work with youth.
- Contributing to the development and integration of youth-sensitive and gender-sensitive policies and/or practices across existing services; introducing indicators measuring the extent of youth-responsive practices within the operations of relevant national or local government institutions.
- Contributing to the institutionalization and strengthening of Youth Workers' operations in Armenia, including through creative application of ICTs (platforms, modules, tools, gamification, etc.).
- Introducing a sustainable system or practices/mechanisms for assessing and recognizing the contributions of community-led solutions that promote youth resilience, advance their well-being, and create enablers for youth's strong ownership of their community.
- Developing and testing with schools, positive strategies and solutions that help schools combat bullying.
- Identifying and elevating promising practices that address gender disparities; promote models and programs celebrating positive masculinities, especially in rural, underserved communities.
- Promoting culturally protective factors and enforcing youth-sensitive social norms to advance inter-generational partnership for effectively addressing youth needs.
- Supporting community-led innovation in promoting resilience among children, youth, and their families (in places such as youth centers, community organizations, schools, universities, primary care, and other children- and youth-serving or youth-led organizations)
- Increase understanding of gaps and opportunities to promote youth civic engagement, especially in underserved communities.
- Catalyzing action through public-private partnerships for creating opportunities for youth development and civic action.
- Enhancing the scope and content of current civic participation platforms with mechanisms/tools to demonstrate/measure the level of youth participation.
- Establishing new or improved mechanisms/tools granting youth ways to positively engage in dialogue with local and national authorities.

- Initiating advocacy campaigns by partner CSOs addressing specific policies to improve youth engagement.
- Creating/operating online tools to strengthen youth engagement in promoting government accountability and whistle-blowing behavior and practices.
- Establishing new opportunities/platforms to promote and empower youth-led civic initiatives and community actions, including for gender equality and positive masculinities,
- Organizing outreach initiatives to promote constructive dialogue and solutions on mitigating or overcoming barriers to youth engagement and participation.
- Supporting peer CSOs to institutionalize mechanisms/practices for effective youth programming and civic engagement, with user-friendly guidelines easily accessible for youth.
- Introducing mechanisms to strengthen school-parent collaboration for student empowerment and engagement, including through addressing social injustice, supporting mentor initiatives, etc.
- Developing and disseminating public awareness materials on PYD framework for people with limited hearing and visual abilities.
- Enhancing youth-led action on various civic causes, including but not limited to countering fake news, strengthening electoral processes and political accountability, environmental protection, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health, etc.

2.1 Special Requirement on PYD Integration: The ACE Program has adopted and is integrating the internationally acclaimed **Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework** throughout its entire implementation. Positive youth development is an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth along with their families, communities and/or governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full potential. PYD approaches build skills, assets, and competencies; foster healthy relationships; strengthen the environment; and transform systems.

The grant projects are also required to integrate PYD approaches, methodologies and tools into their projects, thus, to inform the design of their projects, all applicants are encouraged to familiarize themselves with PYD approaches available at the publicly available inventory (available at [Positive Youth Development](#)), and are additionally encouraged to participate in **an online orientation session on PYD** (see more information in Section 5 of this RFA) offered by Project Harmony Armenia.

3. Performance Period and Award Ceiling per Project

Each project should be proposed **for a maximum of 12 months of implementation**. The maximum amount requested from PH Armenia for the implementation of the proposed project cannot exceed **3 820 000 AMD**.

4. Eligibility Criteria and Special Requirements

The present RFA is restricted only to entities that meet the criteria and requirements listed below:

- Applicants should be legal entities registered as a local Armenian CSO (Civil Society Organization), i.e., a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) or Community-Based Organization (CBO), association, foundation, etc.
- Applicants are expected to have well established institutional practices of good governance, accountability, and transparency, and be willing to adhere to USAID's requirements listed in the [Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations: A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 303 \(usaid.gov\)](#).

- Applications **must integrate** relevant approaches of the PYD framework into their interventions. Applicants are encouraged to use the Youth Programming Assessment [Tool adapted to the Armenian context](#) (the [source](#) in English), as well as refer to [PYD](#) guides and learning materials, specifically relevant PYD indicators (source in [English](#), in [Armenian](#)).
- Applicants are expected to have clear policies and procedures ensuring youth participation in program-related decisions of the applicant NGO, including a user-friendly guidance on how an interested young person may engage into the various elements of NGO's programming (PCM/project cycle management), including application form, key information on NGO organizational structures, management, etc. **If an applicant is yet to develop** such policies and procedures, they must commit to completing it within the first 3 months of the grant at their own resources. Respective technical guidance will be offered by PH Armenia.

Cost share - At least ten (10 %) percent of the total project value is required as cost share (cash or in kind) or cost matching; applicants are encouraged to contribute resources from their own private or other sources.

Other Eligibility Requirements – If selected, in order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov. The following [video](#) is offered to help applicants with obtaining a UEI. This process may take a few weeks, so applicants interested in applying and currently do not have a UEI, are encouraged to apply for their UEI at their earliest opportunity.

5. Application and Submission Instructions

An applicant may submit only one application under this RFA.

The complete application package should be combined as **one PDF document**, sealed, and signed, containing the following documents (please additionally enclose the budget file in Excel):

- The Project Narrative in English, using the following [Word Document template](#).
- Attachment 1: Budget in English, using the following [Excel Document template](#).
- Attachment 2. CVs of the key project staff and experts (if applicable).
- Attachment 3: Copy of NGO's Registration Certificate.
- Attachment 4: Copy of the Organization's By-laws.
- Attachment 5: Copy of the Organization's latest audit report, if available.

The **application package** should be sent via email to lilit.kostanyan@ph-int.org with cc to armen.bezhanyan@ph-int.org, mentioning "**ACE Grant Application – [Organization's Name]**" in the Subject line.

The deadline for submitting the proposal is **July 20, 2023, 17:00 (Yerevan time)**. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

5.1 Guidelines for Budget Preparation

All reasonable, allocable, and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect, which are related to the proposed project and are in accordance with applicable cost standards (2 CFR 200 Subpart E Cost Principles or the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 31 for-profit organizations), may be charged under the grant. Project budget may include the following Items of Expenditure (IOE):

- 1. 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.
- 2. Travel:** Estimate the costs of travel and per diem (coffee breaks, lunches, dinners, refreshments during events, travel, etc.) 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.
- 3. Supplies:** List and describe all the items and materials, including any computer devices, that are needed for the program.
- 4. Equipment:** Equipment is machinery, furniture, or other property that 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**. Equipment **cannot** be purchased under this grant.
- 5. Contractual:** Describe goods and services that the applicant plans to acquire through a contract with a vendor. Also describe any sub-contracts to non-profit partners that will help carry out the program activities.
- 6. 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.
- 7. 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. Organizations may request indirect costs of 10% of modified total direct costs as defined in 2 CFR 200.68.
- 8. Cost Sharing:** This refers to contributions from the applicant organization or other supporting entities other than Project Harmony Armenia. It also includes in-kind contributions such as volunteers' time and donated venues.

Budget Restrictions:

The funds requested under this program cannot cover partisan political activity; humanitarian aid and charities or charitable activities; scientific research; fundraising campaigns; commercial projects; trade activities; individual trips abroad and individual participation in conferences; projects aimed primarily at the institutional development of the recipient organization, construction or renovation (works, materials, services, etc.), costs of alcoholic beverages.

The costs of proposal preparation or submission also cannot be included in the project budget.

Special Notice on VAT Exemption of Award Funds: For budgeting purposes it is important to take into consideration that all awards will be exempt from VAT. All grantees will be provided with an official VAT exemption letter after Agreements are signed with them. It is important that the applicants consider this during the design of their project budgets, especially when including costs that may be split across other ongoing projects which might not be exempt from VAT (i.e., fees for office phone and internet communications services, etc.).

6. Review and Selection of Applications

The submitted applications will be reviewed and assessed by the Selection Committee according to the following criteria:

Criteria	Description	Max score
Organizational capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proven institutional capacity for proposed activities. • The applicant has a track record in designing and implementing interventions similar to those in the proposal. • The applicant has proven administrative and financial management capacities, in compliance with respective organization policies and procedures, • Capacity to adhere to USAID financial guidelines. 	10
Project design, feasibility and relevance of intervention approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal offers quality and innovative interventions that are reasonable, coherent, and responsive to the grant objective and any of the expected results, while maximizing the value transfer to the beneficiaries (sustainability potential). • The proposal is technically sound and consistent, with proper description of implementation methods and approaches on how it will deliver the set targets and activities/deliverables. • The action plan for implementing the grant activities is clear, feasible and time realistic. • An effective Monitoring and Evaluation plan is in place for monitoring Project performance and measuring progress. • The project fosters youth engagement in monitoring its implementation and delivery of results. 	20
Project Management and Key Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has a relevant management structure and optimum staffing to implement the project effectively and efficiently. • The key project team's roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. • The proposed team CVs demonstrate relevant level of expertise/experience in similar technical functions. 	15
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The grant budget is relevant and in line with the proposed scope of work and required budget thresholds. • Costs are reasonable, allowable, and allocable. 	5
Maximum Score		50

The selection and awarding process will be arranged according to the following timeline:

Step	Responsible	Timeline
1. Technical review and evaluation of applications; Potential clarifications and requests for adjustments with the highest-scored 10	Review Committee	By Jul. 25

applications, as requested by Selection Committee		
2. Adjustments received from potential awardees and reviewed for final decisions	Review Committee	By Jul. 30
3. Due diligence check-up and submission of selected organizations' information to USAID for approval	PH Armenia staff	By Jul. 30
4. Approval of selected organizations for award agreements	USAID	By Aug. 5
5. Signing of agreements with grantees	PH Armenia staff	By Aug. 10

7. Consultations and Support During Project Design and Implementation

7.1 All interesting applicants can submit their **questions (in English or Armenian) regarding this RFA** by completing the following [online form](#) **by June 25, 2023**. These applicants will receive detailed information for an **online Consultation/Orientation Workshop to be conducted on June 28, 2023**.

This Workshop will **address all submitted questions, and answers will be posted online by June 30, on the ACE Program's Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/ArmCivics4Engage>)**; the Workshop will start with an **orientation session on PYD concept and application approaches**.

7.2 During the implementation of the grant projects, the ACE Program Consortium plans to organize an in-person **Soft Skills Training** for a small group of representatives of the awarded CSOs. The CSOs should be committed to nominate candidates and participate in this training, afterwards applying their best efforts to transfer the knowledge and skills obtained during this training throughout and beyond the ACE grant implementation. **More detail on this will be provided only to the final grantee organizations.**