

Notice of Funding Opportunity 16-03

U.S. Department of State

Embassy of the United States of America in Chisinau, Moldova

Public Affairs Section

Funding Opportunity Number: 16-03

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.900

CFDA Title: AEECA PD Programs

Program: Democracy Commission Small Grants Program

Announcement Type: Open Competition

Announcement Date: 2016-04-05

Deadline for submission of proposals: May 4, 2016, 17:00, Moldova Time

Agency Contact: Stelian Rusu, MoldovaGrants@state.gov

I. Funding Opportunity:

The purpose of this announcement is to inform interested parties about funding opportunities through grants.

Organizations that submit applications in response to this announcement acknowledge and accept all of the requirements contained herein. This announcement serves as notice to select interested parties to have equal opportunity to submit project proposals for funding consideration. All submissions in response to this announcement are voluntary and do not obligate the Department of State to fund any proposal or proposal preparation costs.

II. Background Information

The Democracy Commission Small Grants Program was initiated in 1994 as a flexible mechanism to enable American embassies to support initiatives that contribute to more open and competitive political and economic systems and the protection of human rights.

The Democracy Commission Grants Program has been implemented in Moldova since 1996, providing support to Moldovan NGOs and mass media to carry out projects throughout Moldova.

The existence of a strong and vibrant civil society is critical to political, social and economic progress of Moldova. With the help of civil society organizations communities can solve many of their problems, NGOs can hold the authorities accountable in front of their citizens and advocate for the rights of disadvantaged groups to ensure equal treatment and equal opportunities for every member of the society. The nonprofit sector can educate a new generation of active, skilled and informed citizens who value democratic norms.

III. Program Objectives:

The Democracy Commission Small Grants Program provides seed money for qualified organizations for sustainable projects that help promote intercultural dialogue.

Grants must support initiatives such as: promotion of civil society; free flow of information; public education and advocacy; association building; conflict resolution; human rights; civic education; environment; “watchdog” activities, anti-corruption awareness campaigns and training; and ethnic, minority and women’s equality.

Applicants are encouraged to develop partnerships with relevant stakeholders including the public and/or private sector as well as local organizations, where applicable. All proposals must include an evidence-based description of (i) the problem the applicant seeks to address, (ii) the implementation context, including any relevant details on the socio-political environment and the target beneficiaries of the project, and (iii) the project’s theory of change, i.e., the means by which the proposed project will contribute to one of program objectives.

Strong proposals will also define how their programs are “innovative,” which could include one or more of the following elements:

- Presents a new model or a creative way of scaling and building upon successful approaches;
- Capitalizes on an emerging opportunity or responds to an emerging challenge;
- Organizes actors or activities in a novel way so as to increase efficiency or effectiveness;
- Introduces a new method or technology that can be replicated, scaled, and sustained.

In identifying the specific target populations, proposals must demonstrate a commitment towards the support and inclusion of marginalized communities (including disability status, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, whether they live in a rural or urban setting, etc.)

IV. Eligibility Information

Eligibility is limited to organizations such as theatres, museums, libraries, professional associations and unions, NGOs, cultural institutes officially registered in the Republic of Moldova.

Direct funding for U.S. and third-country institutions is not available under this funding opportunity. The organizations without Moldovan registration can apply only as partners through an eligible organization.

Organizations submitting proposals must meet the following criteria:

- Organizations should have existing, or demonstrate the capacity to develop, active partnerships with in-country entities and relevant stakeholders including the public sector, private sector, and civil society, as relevant to the proposed program objectives.
- Organizations may form consortia and submit a combined proposal. However, one organization should be designated as the lead applicant.
- Organizations may submit only one proposal.
- Public Affairs Section reserves the right to request additional background information on applicants that do not have previous experience administering federal grant awards, and these applicants may be subject to limited funding on a pilot basis.
- Please note: the Department of State prohibits profit under its assistance awards to for-profit or commercial organizations. No funds will be paid as profit to any recipient. Profit is defined as any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs. The permissibility of costs incurred by commercial organizations is determined in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR Part 31, Cost Accounting Standards, and Part 31 Contract Cost Principles and Procedures. Program income earned by the recipient must be deducted from the total project or program allowable cost in determining the net allowable costs on which the federal share of costs is based.
- Please note: no entity listed on the Excluded Parties List System in the System for Award Management (SAM) is eligible for any assistance or can participate in any activities under an award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR Part 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR Part 1989 Comp., p. 235), "Debarment and Suspension." All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the Excluded Parties List System in SAM (www.sam.gov) to ensure that no ineligible entity is included.

The Democracy Commission Small Grants Program cannot fund:

- Organizations with affiliation to elected officials, political parties or religious groups
- Humanitarian or charitable activities, including direct social services to populations
- Fundraising campaigns;
- Career development
- Political or partisan activities
- Scientific research;
- Individual trips abroad
- Trade activities
- Health projects

V. Federal Award Information

Funding Instrument Type: Grants

Funding per grant: \$5,000-\$25,000

For the entire 2016 Fiscal Year the Democracy Grants Program has a total budget of \$600,000. During the 2016 fiscal year we expect to organize four competitions. For the competition announced in this Funding Opportunity the U.S. Embassy anticipates to fund approximately 15 projects totaling up to \$150,000.

Expected award date is June 3, 2016.

The Department also reserves the right to award more or less funding as deemed in the best interest of the U.S. Government. The performance period for funded projects will be for up to 12 months. Recipients of funding under this announcement will be subject to the Department of State terms and conditions found at: <https://www.statebuy.state.gov/fa/Pages/TermsandConditions.aspx> and the terms set forth in this announcement. Additional terms and conditions may apply as warranted. Quarterly or Semi-annual technical and financial reports may be required during the term of the project. A final assessment at the end of the project is mandatory for all grants.

Award recipients must comply with Executive Order 13224, Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions with Persons who Commit, Threaten to commit, or Support Terrorism. Information about this Executive Order can be found at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2001-09-25/pdf/01-24205.pdf>.

VI. Cost Sharing or Matching

Applicants are not required to include funding from other donors. However, applications that include additional in-kind and/or cash contributions from non-U.S. Government sources will be more competitive, since cost-sharing demonstrates a strong commitment to the planned activities and greater cost effectiveness.

Cost sharing may be a certain percentage or amount, or may be in the form of contributions of specified items or activities (e.g., provision of equipment).

VII. Proposal Submission and Deadline:

Applicants are requested to submit a completed proposal package that includes all mandatory documents, per the solicitation instructions below.

Note: Unsolicited appendices will not be read and should not be submitted for this award.

To meet the announcement deadline, complete proposals with attachments must be emailed to MoldovaGrants@state.gov. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be accepted.

The U.S. Embassy will determine if the application has been submitted before the deadline by checking the 'received date' on the email message. Please take into consideration any possible delays that may occur.

The applicant will receive a notification when the application is entered into the Grants Management System (usually within 48 hours of receipt). We strongly encourage applicants not to call to inquire about receipt of applications on the day of the deadline.

Do not archive documents. The documents should be attached as individual files and sent in one email before the deadline. Do not send the application package more than one time.

It is the responsibility of all applicants to ensure that proposals have been submitted on time to Moldovgrants@state.gov, U.S. Embassy bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.

Proposal Requirements:

This section outlines requirements for the proposal package and also includes detailed instructions on budget, budget narrative, and monitoring and evaluation plan submission. All materials must be written in English.

Each proposal submission should clearly demonstrate the relationship to Democracy Commission Small Grants Program and address at least one of the program objectives described in this announcement.

We encourage the applicants to use the downloadable application form and project format. If the internet access is limited contact us to arrange an alternative way of receiving the application package.

A complete application must contain the following mandatory elements:

1. Signed SF424 Application Coversheet Form (pdf format)
2. Project Format in .doc format (original doc format)
3. Detailed Budget (use provided template)
4. Budget Narrative
5. Monitoring and Evaluation plan
6. Project Timeline
7. CVs of the paid staff and experts

Other Submission Requirements

Do not send any other documents except those required by the program (See Application and Submission Application).

Please use only Microsoft Word to fill out the project form. Using OpenOffice, LibreOffice or other alternatives may break the format and render the forms unusable. If you do not have Microsoft Office software, feel free to use the computers at the American Resource Center (find address on the Embassy's website) or any other public access center (Novateca's, Internet Café's, etc.)

Please contact us at moldovagrants@state.gov if you experience technical problems or are unable to submit an electronic version of the application.

Application Review Information

Criteria

The Democracy Grants Program will fund the proposals that best address the Commission's themes and reflect the values of the United States and the mandate of the Embassy and the Democracy Grants Program. Successful proposals will contain accurate and well-developed implementation plans and clear explanations of how the project goals will be achieved.

Project selection is competitive. Proposals are judged on the following criteria:

1) Quality of Program Idea

Proposals should be responsive to the solicitation and exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to Embassy's mission. The bureau typically does not fund continuation programs but innovative, stand-alone programs.

2) Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Long and Short Term Goals

A relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity of the organization. The work plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above. Objectives should be ambitious, yet measurable and achievable. For complete proposals, applicants should provide a monthly timeline of project activities.

3) Multiplier Effect/Sustainability

Proposed programs should address long-term institution building with an emphasis on moving towards sustainability, garnering other donor support, or demonstrating capacity-building results.

4) Program Evaluation Plan

Programs should demonstrate the capacity for engaging in impact assessments and providing long and short-term goals with measurable outputs and outcomes. Applicants should also identify long and short term project goals. Projects that propose an independent evaluation with a clear plan will be deemed highly competitive in this category.

5) Institution's Record and Capacity

The Embassy will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful program administration, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past grants. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the project's goals. Roles and responsibilities of primary staff should be provided.

6) Cost Effectiveness

The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate.

Review and Selection Process

The Grants Program Review Committee is made up of heads of sections or delegates of the U.S. Embassy and American agencies present in Moldova. The panel members have at least 10 working days to read the projects and then convene to review and discuss the project proposals and recommend selected projects for funding.

The expert panel usually includes representatives of the following sections:

- Management Section
- Public Affairs Section
- Political and Economic Section
- Peace Corps Moldova
- USAID Moldova

The selection of the committee is confirmed by the Front Office of the U.S. Embassy and sent to the U.S. Department of State in Washington D.C. for final approval.

Federal Award Administration Information

Federal Award Notices

Applicants will be notified electronically about selection results. An email message will be sent to the email account included in the application form. Grants Program Staff may also contact the applicants to request additional information or clarify certain aspects of the application documents; therefore it is important to provide accurate contact information.

Successful program applicants will have to sign a Notice of Award (grant agreement) before receiving the funds. No costs should be incurred by the applicant prior to signing a Notice of Award. The notice of Federal award signed by the grants officer is the authorizing document.

Unsuccessful program applicants will receive an email notification. The grants program may provide a signed rejection letter upon request; however, the Grants Program will not provide reasons for rejection. The Democracy Grants program is highly competitive and may not be able to fund all good applications.

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Reporting

During the grant implementation the recipient will have to inform the Embassy about the events and activities carried out under the grant.

The recipient will have to provide a final performance report (narrative) submitted in electronic format in English via email at the end of the project, however, often the Embassy may choose to request semiannual or quarterly reporting. The U.S. Embassy reserves the right to request other proofs such as photos from events, participants' lists, copies of publications, etc., as well as request access to financial information related to the grant.

FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

Grants Specialist: Stelian Rusu

Email: Rusus@state.gov

Email: moldovagrants@state.gov

Telephone: 022 851706; 022 851707

OTHER INFORMATION

Disclaimer

Issuance of this Request for Proposals does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government, nor does it commit the Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the Government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received. If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with the award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of the Department of State.