

“Budgets for Citizens” Project funded by the European Union



“Budgets 4 Citizens” Project

Call for Sub-Grant Applications for CSOs (Mass Media) for Budget Monitoring and Analysis in Target Directions

1. About “Budget 4 Citizens” Project

The “Armenian Lawyers’ Association” (the lead organization) and partners “Economic Development and Research Center (EDRC) and AGORA Central Europe (AGORA), a Czech NGO, are currently implementing the “Budgets 4 Citizens” (B4C) project (hereinafter referred to as the Project).

The European Union funded Project was launched on 8 December 2022. The Project duration is 48 months. **The Overall Objective** is to foster an inclusive and transparent budgetary process with Civil Society in Armenia. **The Specific Objective** is to enhance participation of Civil Society in public budgetary processes.

2. About the Sub-Grant Component of the Project

The results of the baseline survey¹ conducted within the framework of the project recorded that only 20% of the CSOs surveyed in the budget monitoring process have monitored budget performance, while 80% have never conducted budget monitoring. At the same time, the monitoring activities carried out were mostly at the local self government (LSG) level. The low level of monitoring by Armenian CSOs in the budget process was also emphasized by representatives of line/branch ministries. The low level of participation was recorded within the Open Budgets Survey (OBS) as well. In particular, according to the comparative assessment of the participation of Armenia and other countries, Armenia received 6 points in 2021,² and 11³ in 2023. Of course, although the score received in the last year has doubled, the level of participation in the budget process remains low in Armenia, unlike other countries (for example, Georgia received 44 points in 2021 and 2023).

According to the results of the baseline survey carried out within the framework of the project, it has also become clear that the main skills which CSOs seek to improve in budgetary field are budget analysis (83.8%) and access and use of budget information (82.5%), followed by monitoring (73.8%) and advocacy (71.3%). During the focus group discussions conducted within the framework of the survey, the recommendations voiced by the participants related to the need to develop analytical skills, as well

¹ <https://budgets.am/1162.html>

² <https://internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey/country-results/2021/armenia>

³ <https://internationalbudget.org/sites/default/files/country-surveys-pdfs/2023/open-budget-survey-armenia-2023-en.pdf>

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as skills in monitoring and advocacy. As for simplified budgets, the vast majority (over 90%) of the CSOs that participated in the survey have never drafted a simplified (“citizens”) budget.

Based on the needs identified as a result of the above-mentioned survey, a budget training program (hereinafter referred to as the Course) for CSOs and the media was organized during the previous four months. The main objective of the Course was to address the needs identified as a result of the survey. In order to address the needs the experts of the Project, prepared the study topics, making them as accessible, meaningful and easy to understand as possible. Participants also had the opportunity to have individual meetings with experts on these topics, and to receive advice and additional information on training materials and topics.

Among other things, representatives of CSOs and the Mass Media received training on theoretical and practical topics on the implementation of budget analysis and monitoring in the budget process, learned the specifics of developing simplified budgets, and the concept of a citizen’s budget. In parallel, young professionals were trained as well. They will soon start working in the CSOs and Mass Media⁴ that won the sub-grant announced by this call, and will help CSOs/Mass Media to carry out budget analysis and monitoring, as well as to develop simplified budgets for the target sector. The Project will provide the salary for one year of young professionals by providing corresponding sub-grant to CSOs/Mass Media. It is important to note that a CSOs/Mass Media applying for a budget monitoring and analysis sub-grant may also apply for a sub-grant announced aimed at attracting the a young specialist from the budget sector to work for the CSO/Mass Media.⁵

3. Objective of the sub-grant program and preferred (eligible) activities

At this stage of the project, the launch of the first sub-grants for CSOs and Mass Media that have successfully completed the training is announced, having the aim to monitor and analyze budgets, as well as to develop simplified budgets for target sectors.

Overall Objective

The overall objectives also include the analysis, monitoring and improvement of the budget of the target sectors, as well as ensuring public participation and increasing public influence in these processes, and also ensuring public participation and increasing public influence in those processes.

3.1. Target Sectors and Directions

(1) Justice, (2) Education, (3) Social Security and (4) Agriculture.

Directions of target sectors:

(1) Justice

- a. Judicial and legal, including bankruptcy, advocacy, mediation, notary activity, civil status acts registration, state registration and identification of legal entities, personal data protection, legal expertise, international mutual legal assistance systems,
- b. Human Rights,
- c. Anti-Corruption,

⁴ The meaning of the terms "CSOs" and "Mass Media" mentioned in this announcement is presented in Section 5, which refers to Applicants/Applicants.

⁵ <https://budgets.am/2382.html>

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- d. Police and Law Enforcement Agencies,
- e. Penitentiary and Probation System,
- f. Compulsory Enforcement Service.

(2) Education

- a. General Education, including pre-school, primary, basic, secondary/high school
- b. Professional Education: including Primary (Craftsmanship) and Secondary Vocational Education, Higher Education and Post-Graduate Professional Education

(3) Social Security

- a. Integrated social services,
- b. State pension security,
- c. Social support,
- d. Demographics,
- e. Social protection of family, women and children,
- f. Social protection of persons with disabilities and the elderly,
- g. Integration or reintegration of asylum-seeking refugees, displaced persons, long-term migrants and forcibly returning RA citizens.

(4) Agriculture

- a. Plant cultivation,
- b. Phytosanitary,
- c. Animal breeding,
- d. Veterinary medicine,
- e. Processing of agricultural products,
- f. Food security,
- g. Food safety.

3.2. The following activities may be implemented within the framework of the project:

1. Analysis of sectoral budgets or budget programs,
2. Analysis and/or evaluation of the implementation of the budget program, including a comprehensive analysis of performance indicators,
3. Monitoring of budget programs/measures of sectors or their individual directions, including the development of simplified budgets for 2025 of two sectors.
4. Evaluations of implementation of sectoral expenditures or budget programs, including compliance, effectiveness, impact and other evaluations.
5. Preparation of reports based on analysis and monitoring results, including preparation of reports on the performance of budgets. Reports and/or findings should include suggestions for improvement. The raised issues and proposals should be the basis for the implementation of advocacy campaigns in the future. It is planned to implement separate sub-grant programs for this purpose, in 2025.

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6. Presentation and discussion of reports and/or findings with competent state bodies, and if necessary with specialized CSOs as well.
7. Organization of public awareness and discussion events, presenting the monitoring results, collecting opinions and recommendations of the participants, their reflection in the scope of the reports and/or findings.
8. One of the grants may contribute to the 2022-2024 “Open Government Partnership-Armenia” Initiative - the 4th participative mechanisms in the budget process provided for by the National Action Plan and contribution to the implementation of dialogue and public awareness within the framework of the commitment.

4. Applicants

CSOs/Mass Media can apply for the sub-grant program under the conditions mentioned below.

CSOs and Mass Media that meet the following conditions can apply for the competition of the sub-grant program in accordance with the procedure established by the RA legislation.

- 4.1. In the case of CSOs: have been registered as non-commercial and non-governmental/local (community) organization at the State Register Agency of Legal Entities of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia as specified by the RA Law (hereinafter referred to as “State Registration”).

***Note 1.** Separate units of CSOs cannot apply individually to the grant program.*

- 4.2. In the case of Mass Media: have been registered as state registration as a non-commercial or non-profit organization, or they do not have state registration, but are established and operated by a state-registered non-commercial or non-governmental/local (community) organization.

***Note 2.** CSOs and Mass Media created by state, local (community) or commercial organizations (bodies) cannot claim to receive grant funding.*

- 4.3. Have completed the training program⁶ aimed at developing the skills of CSOs and Mass Media within the framework of the "Budgets for Citizens" Project, in accordance with all the conditions specified in the announcement, and received the certificate of completion of the training program by the "Budgets for Citizens" Project.:

- 4.4. The winning applicant organizations (CSOs and Mass Media) will be required to participate in mandatory one-day training with the "Budgets for Citizens" Project representatives to receive expert counseling on the implementation process of the grants, including financial advice. In case of applying by a consortium, each CSO/Mass Media member of the consortium shall participate in the mandatory training.

***Note 3:** A sub-grant agreement will not be concluded with CSOs and CSO consortia who refuse to participate in the mentioned training and discussion.*

- 4.5. Bare direct responsibility for preparation and complete implementation of the project.

- 4.6. In case of implementing a grant program, CSOs and Mass Media can apply through a consortium composed of CSOs and/or Mass Media, which will be considered an advantage. In the case of a grant project application submitted jointly, the relations of the cooperating parties, the division

⁶ <https://budgets.am/1596.html>

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of responsibilities and powers between them must be defined. Letters of Commitment from all cooperating parties must be attached. In the case of a consortium, at least the lead applicant must have completed the training program.

4.7. In the case of a grant project submitted by the Mass Media, the lead applicant, or at least one of the consortium members of the project must be a media. In terms of this call, the requirements related to mass media are provided in clause 4.2.

Preference will be given to applicants who will apply with a consortium of CSOs, which will include mass media, or to individual CSOs that will involve a journalist in the program.

A CSO can be included in only one consortium as a lead applicant and/or partner organization.

5. Budget and Eligible Costs

Up to 6 sub-grants to CSOs in the amount of up to 2,400,000 (two million four hundred thousand) AMD will be provided within the framework of the program.⁷ 4 of the 6 sub-grants will be for budget monitoring and analysis, and 2 for developing simplified budgets. Only the actions that are mentioned in clause 3.3 of this call will be funded.

Expenses incurred before the official date of awarding the sub-grant as well as those not related to the sub-grant will not be accepted. In addition to the above, the following actions are considered not eligible:

- actions that concerned only or mainly with individual sponsorships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences and congresses;
- actions that concerned only or mainly with individual scholarships for studies or training courses;
- actions discriminating individuals or groups of people based on their gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or lack thereof, or ethnic origin;
- actions that support political parties.

The following costs are not 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;
- credit to third parties;
- salary costs of the personnel of national administrations.

⁷ The size of the sub-grant budget may vary depending on the exchange rate of the foreign currency.

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The sum of the changes made to the budget expenditure items made by the sub-grantee should not exceed ten percent (10%) of the total budget. The person in charge of the Project of the Armenian Lawyers' Association (ALA) should be informed in advance about the changes and his/her written consent must be obtained. The changes of the sum exceeding 10% of the total budget or the objectives of the sub-grant, shall be made in the form of bilaterally approved written amendments to the Grant Agreement. Regulations for budget allocation are provided in Chapter 5 of the ALA Grant Policy.

6. Evaluation and Selection Criteria of Applications

The evaluation of applications and selection criteria are provided in Annex 2 of the ALA Procurement Policy, which refers to the procedure for sub-grants provided within the framework of the "Budgets for Citizens" program.

7. Submission Procedure

All interested CSOs and Mass Media that meet the requirements set out in this call are invited to participate in this competition by completing the form attached to this application.

Documents to be submitted with the sub-grant application:

- Copies of the charters of the Coalition member CSOs and Mass Media (in the case of a consortium, all member CSOs and Mass Media) applying for grant.
- A copy of the certificate of state registration of the Coalition member CSOs (in the case of a consortium, all member CSOs and Mass Media) applying for grant, including the copies of all supplementary sheets (inserts).
- A brief (maximum up to one page) description of each applicant organization.
- A copy of the taxpayer identification number (TIN) of the lead organization.
- A reference from bank about the existence of a bank account of the lead organization.
- A letter of attorney issued by the CSO/Mass Media head in cases where the project manager is a different individual member of the CSO/Mass Media.
- CVs of the core members of project implementing team.
- In case of the consortium, Commitment Letters of Consortium member CSOs, or a Cooperation Agreement on the joint implementation of a sub-grant project.
- Copy of the certificate of completion of the training program within the framework of the "Budgets for Citizens" Project, aimed at developing the skills of CSOs and Mass Media.
- Written confirmation that the Applicant, and in the case of applying with a Consortium, the Consortium will apply to the sub-grant program announced to involve Young Specialists from Budget Sector in CSOs/Mass Media on Employment Basis.

All documents must be submitted in Armenian language. In case of necessity, the Grant Committee may request additional documents, as well as the originals of the submitted documents from the applicants.

8. Duration

The duration of sub-grants projects shall be 6 (six) months

9. Other Requirements

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The Sub-Grant Project Proposal and accompanying documents must be signed by the Head of the Lead Applicant organization and be sealed with the seal of the Lead CSO/Mass Media.

The complete application and the attached documents must be sent electronically to the email address info@armla.am indicating "Sub-grant application of CSOs/Mass Media" in the subject line.

Please Note: Applications submitted manually will not be considered.

The deadline for submitting applications for this round is **13 October, 2024 at 18:00.**

The submitted application and attached documents will not be returned to the applicant, regardless of whether the application is accepted or not. Only one set of documents is required to be submitted.

All matters relating to sub-grants are resolved in accordance with the Grant Policy of the ALA.

Decisions on awarding sub-grants will be made **by 25 October, 2024.** Information about the winners will be published on the Project website at: <https://budgets.am/>.

Sub-grant agreements with the winners will be signed by 30 October, 2024. Implementation of sub-grants shall begin **on 1 November, 2024.**

In case of questions, please contact Mr. Artak Saribekyan, Project Grants Manager, by calling +37410 540199 or by e-mail at info@armla.am.

10. Information/awareness meetings

The Project will organize on-line information/awareness meetings aimed at informing CSOs and Mass Media about the sub-grants provided by this call for project proposals. The announcement on participation and registration will be posted on the project website: <https://budgets.am/>.

Note 4.

The terms and conditions mentioned in the announcement can be changed if necessary. In case of changes, the information will be published on the Project website: <https://budgets.am/>.

Attention

Applications submitted after the deadline and/or do not include all the required information, or do not meet the terms of the Program will not be considered.

Documents attached to this announcement:

1. Grants Policy of the Armenian Lawyers' Association NGO,
2. Sub-Grant Application Form,
3. Appendix 1. Logical Framework of the Project,
4. Appendix 2. Project Budget.