



Annual Program Statement

ANNUAL PROGRAM STATEMENT

Grant program to support civil society in making rule of law topics relevant to the public.

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| Funding Opportunity Title: | Civic Education Small Grants |
| Announcement Type: | Annual Program Statement (APS) |
| Funding Opportunity Number: | 2023-APS-001 |
| Issuance Date: | March 8, 2023 |
| Closing Dates: | Open until amended to close. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis; review and decisions will be made on a rolling basis. |
| Submit Applications to: | ceprolagrants@dexisonline.com |
| Questions: | Questions will be accepted on an ongoing basis. |

Purpose. The Central Europe Program Rule of Law Activity (CEP ROLA), implemented by Dexis Consulting Group (Dexis) on behalf of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), seeks to support creative local initiatives that make the rule of law (ROL) topics more relevant to the average citizen in Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland. Proposed programs should engage local community members, especially in underserved areas outside of urban centers, and should encourage greater civic engagement with local government initiatives. CEP ROLA is seeking applications from prospective partners to implement activities.

This Annual Program Statement (APS) outlines funding priorities, key ROL themes, and the process for submitting requests for funding. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis, review and decision will be made quarterly. Dexis encourages prior consultations with potential applicants. Applications can be submitted in English, though these will also be accepted in Bulgarian, Hungarian and Polish.

Applications will be reviewed according to the criteria established in the **Evaluation Criteria section V**, below.

The issuance of this APS does not constitute an award commitment on the part of Dexis or CEP ROLA, nor does it commit Dexis or CEP ROLA to pay for any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of applications. All preparation and submission costs are at the risk and expense of the applicant. Dexis reserves the right to make no awards as a result of this APS.



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Section I - Funding Opportunity Description

A. Description of the Proposed Program

Background

Central and Eastern Europe – along with democracies across the globe – are facing challenges including the closing of political space, declining public support for democracy; increasing polarization; disengagement of youth and marginalized communities; complex social media environments; and erosion of civil and political rights.

To meet these challenges, CEP ROLA (<https://dexisonline.com/projects/usaid-central-europe-program/>) aims to strengthen the resilience and capacity of independent civic actors to protect fundamental freedoms in alignment with national democratic traditions and European values.

CEP ROLA's activities under this grants program can help to increase ROL observance, promote greater transparency, provide greater protection of vulnerable and marginalized groups, and address human rights issues in communities outside of urban centers. Civic education initiatives on ROL issues can engage youth, the creative arts, and other grassroots organizations to address ROL challenges such as corruption, misuse of power, lack of civic oversight and transparency. Through greater engagement of CSOs focusing on these issues, CEP ROLA hopes to also improve the lines of communication and engagement among ROL actors.

Objectives. The objectives of this grants program are to:

- 1) Improve public knowledge of ROL for the average citizen, especially in traditionally underserved communities outside of urban centers;
- 2) Improve civil society watchdog and advocacy skills via civic education, creative communication, public engagement, and debate on ROL issues with government and cross-sectoral partners.

Geography. Proposed activities should take place within Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland.

Illustrative Activities.

- Education initiatives including theatre productions, vlogs, short film, social media campaigns, art, and photography that focus on ROL issues, such as citizens' access to justice, education on their individual fundamental rights, information about judicial process, and civic responsibilities.
- Creative communication plans for local civil society organizations and train them on implementation.



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- Social media curricula that aim to increase citizen engagement in transparency, integrity and other ROL related issues.
- Awareness campaigns that build public knowledge of channels of communication between the government civil society actors that aid in preventing and addressing corruption.
- Training to local CSOs on advocacy and watchdog skills through practical exercises and best practices.
- Civic education programming for radio and social media platforms that deepens knowledge about democracy, democratic norms and rule of law.
- Public advocacy programs that work to protect the legal rights and security of watchdog and ROL stakeholders.
- Bloggers to cover rule of law issues and gain new subscribers via networking and other tools.
- In-kind support for local theater groups to hold performances on civic education topics in town squares, local theaters, and other relevant venues.
- Mock trial events with local judges in schools to improve understanding of the justice system.
- A comedy serial on integrity or other relevant ROL issues that is freely available on YouTube or other platforms.
- Debates in regional universities about ROL issues, such as inclusion, democratic norms and values, and citizens' rights and responsibilities in a democracy.
- Film festival-related activities that stimulate awareness of ROL issues and encourage debate, such as Hungary's Verzio International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival and Sofia's International Film Festival.
- Data collection, research, advocacy and other activities related to monitoring the implementation of European Union ROL mechanisms.

CEP ROLA particularly encourages activities that take place in underserved communities, outside capital cities, engage women and youth, and are linked to existing ROL institution initiatives. Applicants may choose a new concept or scale up existing projects that have demonstrated success. Awardees will be expected to share evaluation results and key lessons and disseminate periodic activities and outcomes with the broader community per the reporting requirements to be stipulated in the resultant subaward agreement.

Anticipated Results:

Initiatives should contribute to the following results:

- Increased public understanding of ROL and the importance of the ROL to the average citizen
- Increased engagement of the creative sector in civic education on ROL issues.



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- Improved advocacy and strategic communications skills among ROL actors.

Ineligible Activities/Costs:

Grant funds may **not** be used to cover:

- Projects that are inherently political in nature or that contain the appearance of partisanship/support to individual or single party electoral campaign.
- Exchange programs.
- Social welfare projects.
- Trade activities; fundraising campaigns; commercial projects; scientific research; construction projects; projects whose primary aim is the institutional development of the organization itself.
- Travel to the United States or EU member countries for conferences, scientific research, studies, reporting tours and cultural events.
- Food and drink beyond the cost of coffee breaks and working lunches (alcohol is prohibited).
- Reimbursement of pre-award costs.
- Profit is not allowable under any resulting award(s) made under this APS.

B. Administration of Award

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200><https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-B/chapter-VII/part-700> CEP ROLA is required to ensure that all organizations receiving grant funding from USAID comply with the terms and conditions of their grant agreements. For non-U.S. organizations, the rules and regulations contained within the USAID Standard Provisions for non-U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations— and applicable references therein to 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 700—will apply.

Applicants may obtain copies of the referenced Standard Provisions at the following website:

Standard Provisions for Non-U.S., Nongovernmental Recipients

<https://www.usaid.gov/about-us/agency-policy/series-300/references-chapter/303mat>

Standard Provisions for Fixed Amount Awards to Nongovernmental Organizations

<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/agency-policy/303mat.pdf>

Section II- Award Information

A. Estimated Funding Level and Number of Awards

Awards will be issued on a rolling basis, so applicants are encouraged to apply early to ensure that sufficient funds remain available. Grant sizes are expected to range between USD \$5,000 - \$25,000 depending on the scale and scope of the activity. CEP ROLA reserves the right to fund any or none



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of the approved applications and may choose to fully fund or incrementally fund the selected application(s).

B. Anticipated Start Date of this Award and Performance Period

The period of performance for an individual award will be up to twelve (12) months. However, the duration will be determined by the scope and scale of the activity and may be subject to negotiation. Awards will be issued on a rolling basis with the start date upon signature of the award.

C. Award Type

CEP ROLA's final determination on award mechanism will be based on its assessment of an applicant's capacity and risk prior to award. If this assessment identifies weaknesses or deficiencies that call into question the applicant's ability to manage an award, CEP-ROLA may elect to remove the applicant from consideration under this funding opportunity or select a mechanism more appropriate for the applicant's current capacity.

Section III- Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

The applicant must be a local entity officially registered in Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland and working in compliance with all applicable civil and fiscal regulations, including, but not limited to pertinent local laws and status. The following groups/entities are eligible to apply for funding under this APS:

- Locally registered (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland) civil society organizations including for profit, not profit, research institutes, and community-based organizations
- Applications from organizations outside the capital as well as youth-, women-, and creative arts-led organizations are strongly encouraged to apply.

B. Cost Share

Cost share is **not** required under this opportunity. If generated, such funds may be mobilized from the subrecipient; other multilateral, bilateral, and foundation donors; host governments; and local organizations, communities and private businesses that contribute financially and in-kind to the implementation of activities at the country level. Mobilization of funds from outside sources through cost share of project activities is highly encouraged. Cost share will follow the regulations in 2 CFR 200.306 and the Standard Provisions for non-U.S. NGOs.



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Section IV- Application and Submission Information

A. Submission of Application

Applicants must submit applications of no more than **5 (five)** pages. Applications must meet the identified needs of this solicitation, as described below. CEP ROLA encourages applicants to submit applications in English, though will accept applications written in BG/HU/PL.

B. Application Guidelines

The application should be specific, complete, and concise, demonstrating the applicant's capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this program. Applications will be reviewed in terms of responsiveness to the APS, appropriateness of subject matter, and creativity. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how their proposed work will contribute to the CEP ROLA objectives of 1) enhancing public knowledge of ROL and its significance to daily lives and 2) improving watchdog and advocacy skills via civic education, improved strategic communications, and public engagement, debate, and education on ROL issues with government and cross-sectoral partners.

Formatting / Application Presentation Instructions:

The application must be submitted in **Arial 11 pt.** font and must include page numbers. Each page must be marked with the APS title and number.

Prepare the application according to the structural format set forth below:

- I. **Cover Page** - no more than one (1) page. The cover page must include:
 - a. The APS number and name.
 - b. Address of organization.
 - c. Type of organization (e.g., for-profit, non-profit, university, etc.).
 - d. Organizational Point of Contact (lead contact name; relevant telephone, fax, e-mail information).
 - e. Names of other organizations (federal and non-federal as well as any other USAID offices) to whom you are submitting and/or have submitted the application and/or who are funding the proposed activity.
 - f. Signature of authorized representative of the applicant.
 - g. Names and contact information for 3 organizational references

- II. **Technical Approach** -no more than four (4) pages. This section should address the program summary and selected objectives from **Section I** of this document and be responsive to the merit review criteria referenced below in **Section V** and should include:



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- a. Concise title and objectives of proposed activity.
 - b. A discussion of the objectives, the approach, the level of effort to be employed, the anticipated results, potential impact and sustainability (if applicable) and how the work will help accomplish the CEP ROLA objectives; and
 - c. Type of support the applicant requests from the CEP ROLA (e.g., funds, facilities, equipment, materials, personnel resources, etc.).
 - d. Organizational capacity, Institutional or personal profile, background, expertise, experience with projects of similar size and scope in relevant technical area and regions, names and profiles of proposed personnel.
- III. Supporting Information.**
- a. Brief budget including cost breakdown along major budget lines (e.g., salaries, supplies, equipment, travel, etc.); proposed optional amount of the applicant's financial as well as in-kind (non-financial support) participation, if applicable; proposed duration of the activity; and brief description of the applicant's previous, relevant past performance.

A. Selection Process

As applications containing all of the required elements/information referenced above in section B.I-III are received, CEP ROLA will review them on a regular/rolling basis and provide feedback to applicants on the status of their application (either accepted or rejected). Selected applicants will be contacted to provide further information, elaborate further technical details, clarifications, and/or for pre-award due diligence purposes.

Applications that meet the application guidelines and fulfill the basic technical criteria as outlined in the APS will be reviewed by a selection committee.

Applicants will be selected on a rolling basis based on the evaluation criteria described in **Section V**, below.

Section V – Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria for Applications

Applications will be reviewed in terms of responsiveness to the APS requirements, appropriateness of subject matter, and creativity. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how their proposed work will contribute to the program objectives described in **Section I** above. Applicants will be expected to respond to questions for clarification and/or submit revisions to applications, as requested.

Merit Review Criteria:



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Submitted applications will be evaluated as follows:

| Area | Comments |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Technical Approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extent to which application matches priorities and objectives of CEP ROLA.• Relevance and sustainability of proposed activities to meet results.• Clarity of timelines and meaningful ways to measure results.• Extent to which youth, and citizens outside of key cities are engaged and included and the degree to which gender, vulnerable groups, youth, and political/conflict sensitivity considerations are thoroughly integrated throughout the proposal.• Potential to facilitate trust/partnerships with different types of civic and public institutions.• Expected impact on target groups/public and potential for a positive multiplier effect.• Sustainability of results after activity end, if applicable. |
| Organizational Capacity | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Institutional or personal profile, background, expertise, experience with projects of similar size and scope in relevant technical areas and regions.• CEP ROLA reserves the right to visit each organization, and request and contact references for due diligence purposes.• Experience of the proposed personnel to reach program results. |
| Cost Reasonableness | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feasibility and justification of proposed budget. |



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Section VI - Project Contacts

The point of contact for submitting applications in response to this APS and for any questions during the APS process is:

ceprogrants@dexisonline.com

Any prospective applicant desiring an explanation or interpretation of this APS must request it in writing at the email address above. Oral explanations or instructions given before award of a grant will not be binding. Any information given to a prospective applicant concerning this APS will, as appropriate, be furnished to other prospective applicants as an amendment of this APS, if that information is necessary in submitting applications or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicants.

Section VII - Other Information

Issuance of this APS does not constitute an award or commitment on the part of Dexis or the CEP ROLA program, nor does it commit Dexis or the CEP ROLA program to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application.

Dexis and the CEP ROLA program reserve the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. Further, Dexis and the CEP ROLA program reserve the right to make no awards because of this APS.