**REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA) 002**

**For a Fixed Amount Award (FAA)**

**Investigative Journalism Grant**

**Armenia Integrity Project**

**Issuance Date:**  **05/22/2023**

**Deadline for Questions: 06/02/2023**

**Knowledge and clarification session:**

**Date: 06/06/2023**

**Time: 15:00 Armenia time**

**Place: AIP Office** (28 Zarobyan street, Yerevan, RA)

**Closing Date/Time:** **Application deadline 06/23/2023** (Application must be received by 10:00 am **(**Armenia Time)

**Subject:** Request for Applications (RFA) Number 2101-RFA-002

Investigative Journalism Grant

**Reference:** Issued Under the USAID Armenia Integrity Project (AIP), Contract Number 72011121C00001

**This Request for Applications (RFA) replaces RFA Number 2101-RFA-001 that was issued March 24, 2023.**

**Any organization that previously applied in response to 2101-RFA-001 must submit a new application per instructions provided in this RFA.**

This RFA outlines the information required to apply for the subject grant. The applicant is expected to review, understand, and conform to specifications contained in this RFA. Failure to do so will be at the applicant’s own risk.

Any questions concerning this RFA should be submitted in writing to [armenia@dexisonline.com](mailto:armenia@dexisonline.com) no later than June 02, 2023. All the questions and answers will be posted on the Dexis website, where the RFA has been posted.,

AIP plans to award one investigative journalism grant to the successful applicant.

All reasonable, allocable, and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect, which are related to the grant program 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.

This call is for non-US organizations, and the Standard Provisions for Non-US Nongovernmental Recipients will apply and for Standard Provisions for Fixed Amounts Award for Nongovernmental organizations, please see [Standard Provisions for Fixed Amounts Award for Nongovernmental Organizations](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/agency-policy/303mat.pdf).

This RFA is being issued and consists of this cover letter, Schedule A, and the following attachments: Grant Application Form, Grant Budget Form (in the required excel format), Grantee Self-Assessment for Fixed Amount Awards, and the AIP Grant Risk Assessment Process.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Armenia Integrity Project nor does it commit the Armenia Integrity Project to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. The application is submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Thank you for your interest in the Armenia Integrity Project activities.

Sincerely,

Barbara James

Chief of Party

# Armenia Integrity Project

# 2101-RFA-002

# Investigative Journalism Grant

# SCHEDULE A

# SECTION I: FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Armenia Integrity Project (AIP) is a five-year program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Dexis Consulting Group (Dexis). The aim of the project is to reduce opportunities for corruption and reinforce public demand for improved governance and accountability in Armenia. Specifically, the AIP works with the Corruption Prevention Commission and the Ministry of Justice to support them to bring forward their anti-corruption agenda. Through this RFA, the AIP will award a single investigative journalism grant that will facilitate a collective action approach so that all key stakeholders engaged in corruption prevention are being held accountable and the work that is occurring is being administered transparently.

With the proliferation of new social media sources and the increasing focus by the Armenian government on anti-corruption, there is a growing demand for information that documents the work of the anti-corruption bodies. The information should answer questions such as what does it mean to average citizens when hearing about governmental employees’ asset declarations, how can citizens hold anti-corruption bodies accountable, and what is the role and duty of a citizen when addressing corruption. The Grant will support new initiatives in investigative reporting that focus on specific anti-corruption areas in order to increase information available to the public, so that they may be better informed about anti-corruption activities.

The objective of this RFA is to identify an organization which can provide investigative journalists with an opportunity to develop media materials that focus on specific anti-corruption areas – asset declarations (which includes property, asset, income, and expenditure declarations), beneficial ownership, government procurement (corrupt practices), government budgeting (transparency, accountability, integrity, corrupt practices) and political party finances. These areas are particularly important in the anti-corruption landscape. Without media coverage within these focus areas, citizens will not have resources or tools to help them better understand the complexity of issues presently being addressed by the Government of Armenia and the Corruption Prevention Commission. The Grant will support investigative journalists and “citizen” journalists to put forward multi-media materials addressing these areas, as well as to provide the investigative journalists the skills to monitor procurement and fiscal/development planning and public services delivery at the national and sub-national level and to work on innovative investigative approaches throughout Armenia.

A proposal under this RFA should include three focal areas addressing distinct themes: (1) asset declaration and beneficial ownership, (2) government procurement and budgeting, and (3) political party finances. Trainers and/or mentors will work with identified investigative journalists within each focal area. The journalists will learn what tools and techniques are available to them, learn and understand the systemic structures and issues that enable corruption (i.e., the need for government transparency and accountability and the misuse of power in the first place), and learn how to produce multi-media materials.

The timing of different focal area training can be concurrent or consecutive, so long as the initiatives are completed by March 1, 2025.

Specifically, the three focal areas will address the following:

Focal Area 1. Asset declarations and beneficial ownership - what do these terms mean, how important is this information to government employees, who should participate in asset declarations, why is it important to the citizens of Armenia, how is this information accessible, how are the data sources accessible, how can the sources be evaluated and analyzed, how does beneficial ownership impact government, what can the average citizen do with this information and why should they care.

Focal Area 2. Government procurement and budgeting - what do these terms mean, what information must be shared with the public, why is transparency and accountability important, why are corrupt practices in procurement important at national and sub-national levels, which government agencies must share information, which government actions important to the citizens of Armenia, the role of citizens in government procurement and budgeting, how is this information accessible, how are the data sources accessible, how can the sources be evaluated and analyzed, what can the average citizen do with this information and why should they care. Additionally, under the government procurement and budgeting focal area, journalists will learn to monitor procurement practices as well as fiscal/development planning and public services delivery at the sub-national level with an understanding that accountability must be involved to limit potential corrupt practices, providing the participants with the skills and mentoring support to conduct investigations. Furthermore, some of the produced media products should include monitoring components, addressing public disclosures, or other activities that will bring attention to public resource use.

Focal Area 3. Political party finances - what do we mean by political party finances, what information must be shared with the public, who must share this information, how is this information to be shared, why is it important to the citizens of Armenia, how is this information accessible, how are the data sources accessible, how can the sources be evaluated and analyzed, what can the average citizen do with this information and why should they care.

The multi-media content to be produced within the frames of the grant support is expected to address the questions outlined above under each of the focal areas.

The organization selected for award must involve not only Armenian media professionals/groups but will be required to bring international and/or regional trainers/mentors using international best practices to provide local investigative journalists with the information/mentoring, resources, and tools of what can and should be achieved under each focal area. Between 5-10 journalists will participate in each focal area. Strong preference will be given to engaging unique participants for each of the focus areas; however, some journalists – based on their interest and background – may be eligible to participate in multiple focal areas with the approval of the grantee.

Finally, there is a need to provide the journalists with an understanding of the risks involved in investigative journalism. Applications are expected to include mentoring/training – through a mix of national and international/regional trainers/mentors – regarding cybersecurity as well as other security and safety issues.

Program Objectives:

* Identify and engage between five to ten investigative journalists in each of the three focal areas. In each focal area, the journalists will create multi-media materials with support from the trainer/mentors and this will also lead to enhanced capacity of each journalist. The total number of journalists participating will be ten to thirty.
* Provide training/mentoring to each journalist in the three focal areas so that each journalist is able to produce at least 5 multi-media products that will be published and/or broadcast on TV, radio, or social media platform(s).
* Support and train journalists on cybersecurity, security, and safety issues, considering the Armenian context, as they become more involved in investigative journalism.

# SECTION II: AWARD INFORMATION

Subject to the availability of funds, Dexis expects to award one Fixed Amount Award – Investigative Journalism Grant.

The estimated total amount available is 58,000,000 AMD. The expected (estimated) Period of Performance is September 01, 2023, through March 1, 2025.

NOTE: The Armenia Integrity Project reserves the right to not fund any of the applications submitted.

# SECTION III: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Organizations applying for this grant must be officially registered and working in compliance with all applicable Armenian civil and fiscal regulations, including, but not limited to pertinent local laws and status.

Applications from debarred organizations will not be processed. (Debarred organizations are excluded from receiving federal grants. Debarment is also referred to as “exclusion” and “suspension.

Types of organizations eligible to apply for the grant:

* Civil society organizations
* Think tanks
* Academic institutions
* Associations
* Media outlets
* Coalition of these entities

Note: Cost share is not required.

# SECTION IV: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

**Please note that if an applicant has submitted an application for the RFA - Investigative Journalism Grant – 001, dated March 24, 2023, they must submit a new application to be considered for the current RFA.**

Anticipated timeline:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Issuance date | May 22, 2023 |
| Question submission deadline | June 02, 2023\*\* |
| Knowledge and clarification session | June 06, 2023\*\* |
| Deadline for submission of proposals | June 23, 2023, 10:00\*\* (Armenian time) |
| Award of grant (estimated) | September 01, 2023\*\* |
| Completion of Award | March 1, 2025\*\* |

\*\* Dates are tentative and will be finalized prior to award

Any questions concerning this RFA should be submitted by emailing [armenia@dexisonline.com](mailto:armenia@dexisonline.com) no later than June 2, 2023. All the questions and answers will be posted on the Dexis website, where the RFA has been posted.

An in-person, informational meeting – Knowledge and Clarification Session – will be held on **June 6, 2023, at 15:00 PM** at **AIP’s office** (28 Zarobyan street, Yerevan, RA).

All applications must be submitted electronically. Please email the completed applications to [armenia@dexisonline.com](mailto:armenia@dexisonline.com) no later than the closing date/time stated on the front page of the RFA cover letter.

The complete application package must be submitted in the required format with the required attachments.

* Application:
  1. Grant Application Form
  2. Grant Budget Form (in the required excel format)
  3. Grantee Self-Assessment for Fixed Amount Awards
  4. Proof of legal registration
  5. Proof of the organization’s active registration at [sam.gov](https://sam.gov/content/home) (this link includes instructions on registering on sam.gov)

*Restrictions:*

* Grant funds provided under the terms of this RFA shall not be used to finance any of the following commodities as per ADS 312 Eligibility of Commodities:
  + **Ineligible Commodities:** Military equipment, surveillance equipment, commodities, and services for support of police and other law enforcement activities, abortion equipment and services, luxury goods, gambling equipment, and weather modification equipment.
  + **Restricted Commodities**: Agricultural commodities, motor vehicles, pharmaceuticals, contraceptives and condoms, pesticides, used equipment, U.S. Government-owned excess property, and fertilizer.
  + **Other:** Purchases of goods or services restricted or prohibited under the prevailing USAID source and nationality and other regulations found under ADS 310 or from countries and suppliers as may be identified by USAID’s consolidated list of debarred, suspended, or ineligible subcontractors at SAM.gov.
* In addition, grant funds provided under the terms of this RFA shall not be used to finance any of the following costs:
  + Any purchases or activities deemed unnecessary to successfully complete the activity, including any grantee headquarters expenses that are not directly linked to the implementation of the proposed project.
  + Previous obligations and/or bad debts.
  + Fines and/or penalties.
  + Other costs unallowable under USAID and/or federal regulations such as referenced 2 CFR 200 Subpart E Cost Principles and FAR 31.2 Cost Principles for Commercial Organizations. See [eCFR: 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E – Cost Principles](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E) and [Subpart 31.2 - Contracts with Commercial Organizations | Acquisition.GOV](https://www.acquisition.gov/far/subpart-31.2).

# SECTION V: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

The Armenia Integrity Project will review applications through an appointed “Technical Review Committee” (Committee).

Throughout the evaluation process, the Armenia Integrity Project will take steps to ensure that members of the Committee do not have any conflicts of interest or the appearance of such with regard to applicant organizations. This includes any Committee member or the member’s spouse, partner, child, close friend, or relative workings for, negotiating to work for, or having any financial interest (including being an unpaid member of a Board of Directors) in any organization that submitted an application under the Committee’s review. Members of the Committee shall neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from parties to the awards.

All applications from eligible organizations that are received by the deadline (as indicated on the cover letter) will be reviewed for responsiveness to the specifications outlined in this RFA and compliance with the application format.

Applicants are expected to review, understand, and comply with all aspects of this RFA. Failure to do so may result in your application being determined as “non-responsive” and may forego further review.

The application must be signed by the organization’s representative who will also serve as the primary point of contact for their submission, with the authority to negotiate and enter into an award with Dexis.

Verification of the application submission requirements will be conducted by the AIP Grants Manager.

The application will be evaluated according to the evaluation criteria set forth below. To the extent necessary (if an award is not made based on initial applications), negotiations may be conducted with each applicant whose application, after discussion and negotiation, has a reasonable chance of being selected for an award.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. **Technical Merit - 40 points**
   1. Relevance to program goals
   2. Coherent, cohesive, and structured description of programming approach and objectives
   3. Sustainability of project results
   4. Anticipated impact on beneficiaries
2. **Past Performance / Organizational Capacity - 30 points**
   1. Past performance in similar projects
   2. Expertise and knowledge of proposed staff, both national and international
   3. Relevant staff skills to the proposed project
3. **Feasibility and Cost Effectiveness - 30 points**
   1. Costs are reasonable, allowable, and allocable.

# SECTION VI: AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

The recommendation or selection of an application in accordance with established procedures does not guarantee an award. All applicants must demonstrate that they possess or have the ability to obtain the necessary management competence to practice mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided.

Please note: USAID approval is required before the grant is awarded.

A successful applicant can expect to receive an Award Letter. The award letter will be addressed to the organization’s point of contact as stated in the application. Applicants that were not successful can expect a rejection letter.

Following the Award Letter, final negotiations will take place prior to signing the grant agreement.

Reporting Procedures:

A description of reporting requirements will be included in the grant agreement. Reporting forms will be provided to grant recipients. Types of reporting will include the following:

* Progress report to be submitted during project implementation according to a schedule described in the grant agreement. This report will include a description of progress made during the period, problems in project implementation; actions taken to overcome them; and activities planned for the next period.
* Monthly reporting to describe ongoing activities, challenges, and next month’s activities.
* The final program report will describe how the project objectives and goals were reached, results of the project, and problems and solutions during implementation.
* Financial reports may be required to be submitted according to a schedule described in the grant agreements. Types of financial reports, as well as the schedule of reporting, will depend on the type of grant, length of project, and amount of funding.
* In addition, a detailed Final Financial Report may be required.

Issuance of the final installment of grant funds is contingent upon the Armenia Integrity Project receipt and acceptance of Final Financial and Final Program Reports.

# SECTION VII: OTHER INFORMATION

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award or commitment on the part of Dexis, nor does it commit the Armenia Integrity Project to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application.

**Dexis reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. Further, Dexis reserves the right to make no awards as a result of this RFA.**

# PUBLIC NOTICE

**REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)**

**for the Armenia Integrity Project Issuance Date: May 22, 2023**

**Closing Date: June 23, 2023**

# I. SUMMARY

The Armenia Integrity Project is a five-year program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Dexis Consulting Group. The aim of the project is to reduce opportunities for corruption and reinforce public demand for improved governance and accountability in Armenia through:

* Strengthening corruption prevention institutions and integrity systems.
* Supporting the implementation of specific legal-regulatory measures for corruption

prevention.

* And facilitating a collective citizen action approach to hold national and local level government entities engaged in corruption prevention mutually accountable.

# II. PURPOSE

This RFA is seeking applicants to propose effective approaches to the development of new initiatives in investigative reporting which focus on specific anti-corruption areas in order to increase information to the public so that they may be better informed about anti-corruption activities.

# III. LOCATION OF ACTIVITIES

The geographic focus under consideration can include all of Armenia.

# IV. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

* Identify and engage between five to ten investigative journalists, per each focal area – 1. asset declarations and beneficial ownership, 2. Government procurement/budgeting, 3. political party finances. These journalists, in each focal area, will create multi-media products with support from the international/regional trainer/mentors and this will also lead to enhanced capacity of each journalist. The total number of journalists participating will be between ten to thirty.
* Provide training/mentoring to each investigative journalist cohort and allow all journalists, within each focal area, to create at least the number of multi-media products required. Each journalist will produce at least 5 multi-media products that will be published/broadcasted in print, TV, radio or in some social media structure, per each journalist, a total of at least 50 multi-media products produced over the course of the RFA. Additionally, some of the produced media products should be on monitoring/ disclosing/ highlighting/ investigating/ or otherwise bringing attention to public resource use.
* Support and train journalists on cybersecurity, security, and safety issues, considering the Armenian context, as they become more involved in investigative journalism.

# V. APPLICANTS ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The applicant must be officially registered in Armenia and working in compliance with all applicable civil and fiscal regulations, including, but not limited to pertinent local laws and status. The Armenian organizations (and consortiums of organizations) such as not-for-profit civil society organizations, civic unions, academic institutions, associations as well as media outlets are encouraged to apply.

# VI. AWARD INFORMATION

Subject to the availability of funds, Dexis expects to award one Fixed Amount Award grant. The anticipated total amount available is 58,000,000 AMD. The expected duration of Dexis’ support or the period of performance is September 01, 2023, to March 1, 2025.

**Dexis reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. Further, Dexis reserves the right to make no awards as a result of this RFA.**

# VII. CONTACT INFORMATION

[armenia@dexisonline.com](mailto:armenia@dexisonline.com)