

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA) 005

For a Fixed Amount Award (FAA) Grant

PUBLIC AWEARNESS ACTIONS ON WHISTLEBLOWING SYSTEM IN ARMENIA

ARMENIA INTEGRITY PROJECT

Issuance Date: January 11, 2024

Deadline for Questions: January 18, 2024

Knowledge and clarification session:

Date: January 23, 2024

Time: 15:00 Armenia time

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

Closing Date/Time: Application deadline February 11, 2024 (Application must be received by 23:00 Armenia Time)

Subject: Request for Applications (RFA) Number 2101-RFA-005 - **PUBLIC AWEARNESS ACTIONS ON WHISTLEBLOWING SYSTEM IN ARMENIA**

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

This Request for Application (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 no later than January 18, 2024.

Armenia Integrity Project (AIP or Project) plans to award one grant to the successful applicant under this RFA.

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 Standard Provisions for Fixed Amounts Award for Nongovernmental organizations, please see Standard Provisions for Fixed Amounts Award for Nongovernmental Organizations. This RFA is being issued and consists of this cover letter, Schedule A, and the following attachments: 1. Grant Application Form, 2. Grant Budget Form (in the required excel format), and 3. Grantee Self-Assessment for Fixed Amount Awards.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the AIP nor does it commit the Armenia Integrity Project to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. AIP may decide to not make any award under this RFA. Applications in response to this RFA are 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-005

PUBLIC AWARENESS ACTIONS ON WHISTLEBLOWING SYSTEM IN ARMENIA"

SCHEDULE A

SECTION I: FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Background:

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. The aim of the project is to reduce opportunities for corruption and reinforce public demand for improved governance and accountability in Armenia. Specifically, AIP works with the Corruption Prevention Commission and the Ministry of Justice to support them to advance the Government's corruption prevention agenda.

Whistleblowing and robust complaints mechanisms are increasingly recognized as crucial tools in preventing and uncovering corruption as well as addressing integrity violations. Citizens who constructively provide feedback play a critical role in exposing wrongdoing within organizations, thereby preventing harm, safeguarding human rights, saving lives, and upholding the rule of law. Given the secretive nature of corrupt behavior, these cases may continue to be unobserved unless discovered and reported by individuals willing to come forward.

Pursuant to the "Law on the Whistleblowing System," individuals can anonymously report corruption through the Unified Electronic Platform for Whistleblowing www.azdararir.am

This can include violations of conflict of interest, violations of rules of conduct or incompatibility requirements, violations/restrictions related to required asset declarations, and other violations that harm public interests within state and local self-government bodies and other organizations. As to the incompatibility requirement the Law on Public Service, it is defined that public servants and persons holding public positions (except for the members of the community council of elders) may not hold a position not related to their status within other state or local self-government bodies, or any position within commercial organizations, or engage in entrepreneurial activities, or perform any other paid work, except for scientific, educational and creative work. Additionally, persons holding public positions and public servants shall be prohibited from being a representative of a third party in relations with a body where he or she is in service or which directly reports to him or her or is directly supervised by him or her; entering into property transactions with his or her close relatives or relatives-in-law as a representative of the state; using his or her official position for ensuring actual benefits or privileges for political parties, non-governmental, including religious, organizations; receiving honorarium for publications or speeches following from the performance of his or her official duties; using logistics, financial and information means, other state and/or community property and official information for non-official purposes, including purposes of pre-election campaign.

The Armenia General Prosecutor's Office guarantees the anonymity of whistleblowers. This anonymity is a fundamental safeguard for whistleblowers, ensuring the protection of their personal data, protection from harmful actions and consequences arising from their whistleblowing activities (Article 10, the Law "On the Whistleblowing System"), and that the whistleblower's identity remains undisclosed to both third parties and competent state bodies.

These descriptions provide a background and understanding for applicants under this RFA, defining the complexity of this subject area, providing the necessary background for grantees.

Goal of the Request for Applications (RFA):

The Armenia Integrity Project is supporting the Ministry of Justice's effort to increase the public's trust in and use of the Unified Electronic Platform for Whistleblowing (www.azdararir.am) by raising awareness and educating the public on available governmental tools and general information (for example, the protection of whistleblowers) so that it is more understandable by the public.

The primary objective of this RFA is to identify an organization/organizations capable of leading awareness-raising campaigns in Yerevan and other regions of Armenia to promote public support for individuals who speak up against and report corruption: whistleblowers. Despite often facing threats to their livelihoods and even their lives, whistleblowers frequently are met with suspicion. This RFA seeks to support initiatives that aim to reduce negative perceptions surrounding whistleblowers, raise awareness about their vital role in the fight for a fairer society and their **right to protection**, and highlight the role of the unified electronic reporting system (azdararir.am) as well as other reporting mechanisms.

Target groups

Applicants should target a broad population with the objective of raising awareness about available mechanisms and addressing the need for a more positive public perception surrounding whistleblowing.

At a minimum, target groups should include,

- i) vulnerable groups applying for social services, including the socially disadvantaged, disabled, and forcibly displaced as these groups may be more likely to witness wrongdoing in the public sector;
- (ii) final-year university students and recent graduates, who are preparing to establish work/business relationships and may be more likely to witness wrongdoing in the workplace early in their careers;
- (iii) legal entities, such as commercial enterprises, non-profit organizations, and local self-government representatives, as they regularly engage in procurement and other contractual relationships; and
- (iv) applicants are encouraged to identify other relevant target groups.

Specific objectives and deliverables

Applicants are invited to submit proposals to address following objective:
Promote public support for individuals who speak up against and report corruption: whistleblowers.

Objective 1, the submitted proposals are advised to encompass, the following critical areas:

Development of a public awareness campaign on whistleblowing.

- Create the concept for a public awareness-raising campaign on whistleblowing system in the country, including digital marketing, messaging, and promotional materials on whistleblowing mechanisms.

- In close cooperation with the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia (MoJ) and the Project, develop a promotion plan for an information awareness raising campaign and execution of a future public campaign.
- Development and production of the promotional materials:
 - Five (5) informational videos about the whistleblowing system encompassing the following themes:
 - 1. What are corruption cases.
 - 2. Using azdararir.am to report corruption cases.
 - 3. Whistleblowing, persons related to the whistleblower, the duty of the whistleblower to act in good faith.
 - 4. Which agency should be considered the competent authority after receiving complaints.
 - 5. Types of whistleblowing: internal, external and whistleblowing procedures
 - 24 thematic information posters about the whistleblowing system to be installed in 12 administrative districts of Yerevan city as well as other marzes (at least 4).
 - Short digital slideshow about the whistleblowing system and posting a relevant link (button) to access azdararir.am on the official websites of relevant state institutions, including MoJ.
 - Campaign visibility items for distribution within the project activities (such as information booklets, T-shirts, cups, pens, Usb drives, rubber bracelets).
 - Informational panels-monitors and stands to display informational materials about the whistleblowing system to be installed by public and private institutions in reception halls for citizens, organisations providing public services, reception halls for citizens within state community bodies, citizen admission areas in medical institutions, universities, main halls of the courts, health institutions, and local self-government bodies.
 - Produce additional information and visual materials for the campaign.

General Approach:

Proposed grant activities should be implemented in cooperation with the MoJ and the Project as well as be in line with the MoJ COMMUNICATION ACTIONS ON WHISTLEBLOWING SYSTEM IN 2023. Additionally, after an initial review of all applications, AIP will request the top three short-listed applicants to present a letter of intent for cooperation agreed upon with the MoJ.

Awardee(s) will be encouraged to establish cooperative relationships with other relevant stakeholders, especially members of the intergovernmental working group on whistleblowing/complaints. Awardee(s) will also be expected to coordinate activities with AIP-supported CSO (Civil Society Organization) initiatives targeting integrity and anticorruption.

SECTION II: AWARD INFORMATION

Subject to the availability of funds, Dexis expects to award one Fixed Amount Award grant under this RFA.

The estimated total amount available and period of performance for this grant award is:
Objective 1 - 20,000,000 AMD with a period of performance of up to 12 months.

IMPORTANT NOTE

**The Armenia Integrity Project reserves the right
not to make any award or fund any grant under this RFA.**

SECTION III: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

- Types of organizations eligible to apply for the grant:
 - Non-for-profit organizations (public organizations and foundations)
 - Partnerships of non-for-profit-organizations
- 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;
 - have three or more years of experience in the anti-corruption field during the last five years;
 - have one year of experience in implementing educational, training and awareness programs within the last four years; and
 - have a proven track record in the development, organization, and delivery of public relations and communications initiatives.
- 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”.
- Applicants must include a signed statement that their organization is not affiliated with any political party or parties.
- Organizations applying for this grant should present information on the accountability and financial transparency of their organization, in particular, public reports on funding from state funds, grants provided by international organizations, programs, and their costs (to be reflected in the Attachment 3. Grantee self-assessment form).
- Organizations applying for this grant should present detailed and complete information about their staff (to be reflected in Attachment 1. Grant application form).
- Organizations applying for this grant should provide evidence of any professional PR expertise, either within the organization or any experts they intend to include. The organizations may receive a request to submit CVs during the review process.

Note: Cost share is not allowed.

SECTION IV: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Anticipated timeline

Issuance date	January 11, 2024
Question submission deadline	January 18, 2024
Knowledge and clarification session	January 23, 2024
Deadline for submission of proposals	February 11, 2024, 23:00 (Armenian time)
Award of grant (estimated)	May 1, 2024**
Completion of Award (at minimum)	May 1, 2025**

** Dates are tentative

Any questions concerning this RFA should be submitted by emailing armenia@dexisonline.com no later than January 18, 2024. All the questions and answers will be posted on the Dexis website.

An in-person, informational “Knowledge and Clarification Session” will be held on **January 23, 2024, at 15:00 PM Armenian Time** at **AIP’s office** (28 Zarobyan street, Yerevan, RA).

All applications and modifications thereof must be submitted electronically. Please email the completed applications to 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. This includes:

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 (this link includes instructions on registering on sam.gov)
6. Profile and portfolio of the applicant organization with information about previous experience with projects of similar scale and methodology
7. Structure of the team - qualifications and experience of team members – CVs of team members and consultant-experts

The application language is English.

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 and Subpart 31.2 - Contracts with Commercial Organizations | Acquisition.GOV.

Late Application

Late applications are marked as “late” and are ineligible for review or award; however, Dexis reserves the right to accept and include late applications in the review and award process when it is considered within the best interest of Dexis to do so and if applications that were received on time have not been opened and reviewed. Applications that are submitted late or incomplete run the risk of not being considered for review.

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 regarding applicant organizations. This includes any Committee member or the member's spouse, partner, child, close friend, or relative working for, negotiating to work for, or having any financial interest (including being an unpaid member of a Board of Directors) in any organization that applied 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 of the RFA) 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 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:

The evaluation criteria are as follows:

1. Technical Merit - 40 points

- a. Relevance to program goals
- b. Coherent, cohesive, and structured description of programming approach and objectives
- c. Sustainability of project results
- d. Anticipated impact on beneficiaries

2. Past Performance / Organizational Capacity - 40 points

- a. Past performance in similar projects
- b. Expertise and knowledge of proposed staff, both national and international
- c. Relevant staff skills to the proposed project

3. Feasibility and Cost Effectiveness - 20 points

- a. 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.
- Bi-weekly updates 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.

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