



INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

announces

Request for Applications

for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to support innovative projects in Serbia

Submissions are welcome from December 30, 2010 to May 1, 2012

I. Introduction

The Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC) is an independent, non-profit organization that is actively engaged in helping citizens define their future through its groundbreaking approach to advocacy, which helps citizens work together to chart their shared future. ISC is implementing a seven-year Civil Society Advocacy Initiative (CSAI) program that seeks to support civil society in Serbia in its ability to help citizens take responsibility for determining the kind of society they live in by increasing citizen participation in all aspects of public life. Through grants, training, and networking opportunities, CSAI helps citizen initiatives and civil society organizations (CSOs) more effectively communicate their priorities and coordinate with government, the private sector, and others to tangibly improve people's lives. This program is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The purpose of this Request for Applications (RFA) is to solicit project proposals from CSOs that introduce new or innovative approaches, topics, and/or resources in dealing with relevant problems in Serbia today. Grants will be awarded to creative proposals that empower citizens to get engaged in affecting meaningful change in their communities. For instance, projects may consist of implementing an advocacy campaign, developing a watchdog platform, organizing a grass-roots initiative, or other type of activities that aim to solve an important problem in the community, and have a potential of engaging citizens to take part in it. We strongly encourage CSOs to develop strategies of interacting with wider audiences by using the Internet and social media (such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.), as well as new technologies (such as mobile and smart phone apps, open source software, etc). While technology is clearly one way to be innovative, ISC/CSAI also supports other types of innovation that are not necessarily tech-related, such as new methods/models for advocacy, raising awareness, or constituency building, etc. We also encourage projects that demonstrate potential to improve dialogue and cooperation between CSOs and public and private sector stakeholders, promote exchange of resources and experiences and develop coordination mechanisms.

Program Priorities

ISC will support proposals that fit at least one of the priorities listed below. Proposed projects should result in a measurable change in targeted communities by accomplishing at least one of the following:

- 1) **Introducing new topics and addressing important issues that are traditionally not dealt with by CSOs.** Applicant should analyze topics that are most commonly addressed by the civic sector, and target those specific problems that remain clearly unaffected by CSO activism.
- 2) **Developing new and innovative approaches to dealing with common topics.** If addressing traditional and important issues of CSOs the applicant should use an

innovative strategy, tactics, tools, or channels of communication for advocacy, raising awareness, or constituency building.

- 3) **Utilizing free or low cost resources for civic activism, such as the Internet, social media, apps, and open source software.** Applicant should reach out to citizens and empower them to use widespread social networks, social media and new technology in directly affecting meaningful change in their communities.
- 4) **Taking initiative to seize momentum and provide a timely response to current events or issues of significant importance.** Applicant should not hesitate to address relevant ongoing problems in their community by organizing an ad hoc campaign, raising awareness or undertaking an advocacy initiative.

Proposed projects should have direct and tangible impact in their communities, such as:

- Having a direct impact on decision makers, institutions, policies, and/or the legislative environment in Serbia
- Developing platforms to directly encourage and strengthen grassroots initiatives
- Creating compelling models of innovative activities and approaches that can be replicated

Coalitions, campaigns, partnerships, and related activities that are tied to specific opportunities to influence change are strongly encouraged, with priority given to those that unite efforts across groups, regions, and/or sectors.

When submitting project proposals, CSOs are encouraged to include a short YouTube video clip as an additional means of explaining the project's purpose, implementation strategy, and expected impact on the community. Submitting a video clip is optional, and not having one will not count against a project proposal. If submitted, the short video clip should be used to demonstrate applicant's sense of creativity and innovation.

Program Duration

Innovation Fund Grants will be awarded on a rolling basis until the May 1, 2012. There are no submission deadlines and project proposals can be submitted to ISC/CSAI anytime during the year. Maximum duration of the proposed project should not exceed 12 months. CSOs may apply with more than one proposal, but are limited to receiving only one grant.

Project Funding

Grants awarded will range **from 15,000 to 25,000 USD**, depending on project needs.

Project proposals should make every effort to be cost efficient, and CSOs should prepare project budgets that are realistic and reflect the applicant's overall available resources.

Applicants are required to present an overall cost estimate of project implementation in their concept paper. If the application passes the first evaluation stage successfully, the applicant will be required to develop a detailed budget.

Administrative costs should not exceed 40% of the budget, and program cost should be at least 60% of the budget.

Applicants should provide minimum cost share in the amount of 10% of the total project budget, either in the form of cash or in-kind contributions from a source other than the U.S. Government. Any funding from another U.S. Government source (such as other USAID-funded programs, the U.S. Embassy's Democracy Commission Small Grants Program etc.) will NOT be considered as cost-share. ISC looks favorably at proposals with cost share higher than the minimum 10%. Cost share is a contribution that may come from your own organization's funds, facilities use, time volunteered, or donations of resources or items from other sources/donors that will assist implementation of your project.

II. Evaluation of Applications

Applicants are kindly asked to submit a concept paper, using ISC/CSAI's Innovation Fund Online Application Form, to present an overall project idea, implementation plan, target groups, and expected results.

Applications will be evaluated periodically, depending on the number of proposals received. The evaluation process will be highly competitive, and will result in the awarding of up to six grants per year for a total value of 100,000 USD.

Please note that only shortlisted applicants will be contacted, and then be given an opportunity to develop their concept papers into a full project proposal and compete for a grant.

Concept papers will be evaluated based on the extent to which:

- 1) The project idea fits the Innovation Fund program priorities, as innovative and creative
- 2) The project idea targets relevant problem(s) in Serbia today
- 3) The applicant has demonstrated relevant experience and the ability to carry out the proposed project as planned
- 4) The project idea is clearly articulated, technically sound and reflects an appreciation for the likely risks or challenges to be encountered
- 5) The proposal demonstrates clear potential to motivate citizens to take part in project implementation
- 6) The applicant has a clear sense of the project's target groups;
- 7) The expected results are achievable within the project cycle and measurable;

- 8) The proposed budget is realistic

III. Project Proposal Submission

Application Form

Proposed concept notes should be submitted to ISC/CSAI using the Online Application Form available at: <http://www.iscserbia.org/contact.php>

If a YouTube video clip is part of the proposal the only standard it should meet is one of innovation and creativity.

ISC/CSAI will provide transparent assistance to grant seekers in developing their proposals. Please note that a discussion concerning this RFA will be lead on ISC/CSAI's official Facebook and Twitter accounts. This discussion will also be used to introduce or highlight ideas that ISC/CSAI considers innovative and is meant to stimulate discussion among a broader community about the role of innovation in promoting positive social change. Applicants are strongly encouraged to join the discussion and post ideas of their own as well as raise any questions and inquiries regarding the application process at the following online locations:

- Facebook discussion board:
<http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?topic=15251&uid=214599545606>
- Twitter hashtag (#konkursISC): <http://twitter.com/search/%23konkursISC>.

No phone calls please.

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