**CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR SUB-GRANTS**

**FOR LOCAL CSO’s AND MEDIA FROM MONTENEGRO**

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| **Project:** | Society Against Corruption in Montenegro |
| **Project Partners:** | Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) and Civic Alliance (CA) |
| **Funded by:** | U.S Department of State |
| **Reference number:** | SAQMIP22GR0367 |
| **Contact Persons:**  | Vuk Maraš and Hatidža Gušić |
| **Submit electronically to:** | birn.montenegro@birnnetwork.org |
| **Call for Proposals issued:** | 21 October 2024 |
| **Deadline for Submission of Applications:**  | **18 November 2024** |

# BACKGROUND

Corruption is the main obstacle to establishing the rule of law in Montenegro and is significantly undermining the economy and betterment of human rights. Trust in institutions is dropping and the participation of civil society, especially community groups working at local level, in assessing the impact of, and gaps in promised reforms is lacking. Citizens are either poorly consulted by the government or excluded from designing and implementing anti-corruption activities. Public consultations are most often organised in a way that discourages participation, and recommendations provided by Civil Society Organizations, CSOs, are often refused. Although on paper, and in speeches, the government supports civil society and its participation in policy development, in reality CSOs’ contribution is neglected. Local media also have limited knowledge and skills to report on corruption and do not have developed relations with primary stakeholders – citizens and local CSOs.

# AIM AND OBJECTIVES

As a result, this project aims to bring Montenegrin citizens, civil society and local media closer to one another and empower them to work together on identifying and reporting corruption, holding institutions accountable and demanding results – while at the same time raising awareness of the damage of corruption, especially in the strategic areas of healthcare, **education** and the environment.

The objectives for this round of grants include:

1. Increased capacities of local media, civil society and citizens to identify corruption in education in their communities, report it to responsible authorities and hold institutions accountable;
2. Empowered civil society and media to report and counter corruption in education at national and local level and influence changes;
3. Improved constructive engagement among civil society, government(s) and/or private sector and policies, laws and/or anti-corruption practices in education.

# OUTPUTS AND ACTIVITIES

The expected outputs (Op) and activities (A) depending on your application type, whether as a Media Outlet or a CSO, may include:

**For Media Outlets:**

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| *Output 1.1* | Cases of corruption in education sector throughout Montenegro identified and revealed |
| *Activity 1.1* | Developing factual and objective in-depth articles on education sector based on the needs of local communities |
|  |  |
| *Output 1.2* | Increased public awareness in Montenegro regarding the significance of anti-corruption efforts and the mechanisms for public interaction |
| *Activity 1.2* | Enforcing anti-corruption campaign via mainstream and social media |

**For CSO’s:**

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| --- | --- |
| *Output 2.1* | Drafted and published anti-corruption policy papers providing recommendations for improving anti-corruption policies, laws and/or practices in education sector |
| *Activity 2.1* | Developing anti-corruption policy papers on education sector based on the needs of local communities |
|  |  |
| *Output 1.2* | Increased public awareness in Montenegro regarding the significance of anti-corruption efforts and the mechanisms for public interaction |
| *Activity 1.2* | Enforcing anti-corruption campaign via mainstream and social media |

**Capacity Building, Networking and Promotional Activities:**

Towards achieving the aforementioned results, individual support will be provided to grant recipients by BIRN and CA. Initially, each selected grant applicant will undergo a needs assessment which will be used to identify strengths, as well as opportunities for furthering their capacities. Based on this assessment and needs identified, support will be offered through tailor-made trainings (a minimum of 3 for at least 10 representatives), workshops and mentoring sessions (a minimum of 3).

Additionally, all grantees will be granted the access to BIRN’s digital tools for citizens' reporting corruption[[1]](#footnote-1). Each grantee will also have the opportunity to organize a community event, fostering public debate and highlighting key points from published articles or policy papers. An annual anti-corruption forum will be convened to collectively formulate recommendations and advocate for their adoption.

# ELIGIBILITY OF COSTS AND SIZE OF GRANT

The table below summarises the grants to be given within this Call for Proposals.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Maximum Amount per Grant** | **Number of** **Grants Foreseen** | **Estimated Amount** |
| $12,430.00 | 6 | $74,580.00 |

BIRN reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted, as well as to discuss allocating actions with applicants as needed within the aforementioned categories towards achieving the overall goal of the programme. No co-financing from the applicant's side is expected within this Call for Proposals.

# APPLICATION

This section includes important information on the rules for application, including eligibility criteria, activities and costs eligibility, application and evaluation procedures among others.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

In order to apply, applicants must fulfil the following criteria:

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| --- | --- |
| **For Media Outlets** | **For CSOs** |
| Demonstrate a commitment to producing high-quality, independent journalism that serves the public interest | Demonstrate a commitment to producing high-quality, independent policy papers that serves the public interest |
| Propose (at least 5) community impactful anti-corruption stories focused on education | Propose (at least 3) community impactful anti-corruption policy papers focused on education |
| Express clear intention and means of including under-represented communities in stories and policy papers. These may include marginalised groups, such as minorities, youth, women and other underreported communities. |
| Be a legally registered entity within Montenegro. |
| Be able to provide supporting documentation as listed in [5.4.1 Application Form Content](#_heading=h.2et92p0).  |

## ACTIVITIES ELIGIBILITY

The following types of activities are eligible for support within this Call for Proposals:

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| --- | --- |
| **For Media Outlets** | **For CSOs** |
| Activity 1.1.: Developing anti-corruption stories focused on education, based on inputs from citizens; | Activity 2.1.: Developing anti-corruption policy papers focused on education, based on the needs of local communities; |
| Activity 1.2.: Conducting promotional anti-corruption campaign focused on education via mainstream and social media. |

## COSTS ELIGIBILITY

While developing the budget for the proposal under this Call for Proposals (*budget* *form* *enclosed in* [*5.4.1 Application Form Content*](#_heading=h.tyjcwt)) the following eligible and ineligible costs should be:

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| --- |
| **Eligible Costs** |
| **Category** | **Explanation** |
| **Personnel Costs** | Costs of organisation’s staff and experts directly involved in implementing the proposed activities, proportionate to their level of involvement. |
| **Travel Costs** | Travel costs needed to produce the story / policy paper, especially if it’s a story covering citizens’ experiences in some local or more remote area of the country |
| **Other Costs** | PR costs related to *Activity 2.4.: Enforcing promo anti-corruption campaign via mainstream and social media* or any other costs related to the production of the stories / policy papers, including communication with stakeholders, research costs. |
| **Ineligible Costs**  |
| Include costs of office equipment, construction costs, entertainment and excessive transport and event costs. |

## APPLICATION SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

To ensure a fair and competitive application process, applicants should complete and submit **only one application / proposal** under this Call for Proposals. Multiple applications by individual media outlet are not eligible.

### 5.4.1. APPLICATION FORM CONTENT

To apply for grants, local CSOs and media outlets should:

* **Fill out the Application Form** (download the template – [HERE](https://birn.eu.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/DRL_Application-Form_Grantees-3rdcycle-30oct24-1.docx)) which should:
	+ Be completed in the English language.
	+ Outline general information, current audience data, and your proposal, based on your application type, whether as a Media Outlet or as a CSO.
* **Fill out the Financial Proposal.** Download the budget template [HERE](https://birn.eu.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/BIRN_DRL-Budget-3rd-cycdle-10oct24.xlsx)
* **Submit the following** **supporting documents** together with the application form and financial proposal:
	+ Registration Certificate or any other document certifying that the applicant is registered as a legal entity in Montenegro.
	+ Financial Statements for the 2022 and 2023 fiscal years, if applicable.
	+ Certificate from relevant tax authority that the CSO/media outlet is a regular taxpayer.
	+ Editorial policy, (for media outlets) if applicable.

The complete application, including the Application Form, Budget Proposal, and the mentioned supporting documents, must be submitted to: birn.montenegro@birnnetwork.org.

### 5.4.2 APPLICATION DEADLINE

The applicant must submit the application by **23:59**, **November 29, 2024.**

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered. The deadline applies to all parts of your application, including supporting documentation.

### 5.4.3. CLARIFICATIONS, QUESTION & ANSWERS

The Information session is an integral part of this Call for Proposals and will be conducted online in English. During the Info session, the Call for Proposals, including the application forms, will be explained and questions answered.

The Info sessions will be held on Zoom, on **Monday,** **November 11, 2024, at 11:00.**

Meeting link: Click [HERE](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88068297577?pwd=Pwjp9WakA1bD0otsQTa6UC5WIR5qdb.1)

Meeting ID: 880 6829 7577

Passcode: 082466

Questions about the Call for Proposals may be sent in English to the email address: [birn.montenegro@birnnetwork.org](http://birn.montenegro@birnnetwork.org) until the [deadline for clarifications](#_heading=h.z337ya) has passed.

## EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

All received proposals will go through the following three steps:

1. [Administrative and eligibility check by BIRN](#_heading=h.26in1rg) to ensure the applicants have followed the application procedure set out in the Application Form and Financial Proposal, according to [eligibility criteria](#_heading=h.30j0zll), and have submitted all required documents by the [deadline](#_heading=h.z337ya).

1. [Evaluation by the project jury](#_heading=h.lnxbz9).

1. [Notification of the application outcome](#_heading=h.2jxsxqh).

### STEP 1: BIRN ADMINISTRATIVE AND ELIGIBILITY CHECK

BIRN will undertake administrative checks to ensure the applicants have followed the application procedures and submitted all the required documents. If any requested information / document is missing or incorrect, the application may be rejected and will not be evaluated further. A rejected application will be replaced by the next-best-placed application on the reserve list that falls within the available budget for this Call for Proposals.

Applications that pass the administrative check will be assessed further as part of the [evaluation by the project jury](#_heading=h.lnxbz9).

### STEP 2: EVALUATION BY THE PROJECT JURY

After the call is closed, all applications that meet the administrative requirement and eligibility criteria will be evaluated by the project jury. The jury will assess proposals based on the Relevance of the Proposed Story / Policy Paper, Capacity, Financial Proposal and Potential, including Social Impact. Please refer to the criteria list for further information on quality assessment.

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| **CRITERIA** | **MAXIMUM SCORE** |
| 1. **RELEVANCE OF THE PROPOSED STORY / POLICY PAPER**
* The proposed story / policy paper tackles a local or national issue relevant to the community.
* The proposed story / policy paper contains specific cross-cutting issues, such as the promotion of gender equality, respect of human rights, and marginalised groups.
 | 25 points |
| 1. **CAPACITY**
* Applicant demonstrates experience / capacity to implement activities.
* Applicant demonstrates significant reach in its community.
 | 25 points |
| 1. **FINANCIAL PROPOSAL**
* Budget demonstrates value for money – applicant clearly shows it can implement activities according to the proposed amount.
 | 25 points |
| 1. **POTENTIAL**
* Story / policy paper proposal addresses problems in communities.
 | 25 points |
| **MAXIMUM TOTAL SCORE** | **100 points** |

### STEP 3: NOTIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION OUTCOME

Applicants will be notified of the outcome, whether it was successful or not, by email. Applicants may ask for clarifications. Notification is conducted during two phases of the evaluation:

* Notification 1: Not passing the administrative and eligibility check
* Notification 2 (final): Selection or non-selection upon the qualitative assessment

Upon positive notification, successful applicants will sign the contract with BIRN and become a recipient of the grant.

# TIMELINE OF CALL ACTIVITIES

The following table presents the indicative timeline of this Call for Proposals.

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| **ACTIVITY** | **DATE** |
| **Call for Proposals Issued** | October 30, 2024 |
| **Information Session** [**CLICK HERE**](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88068297577?pwd=Pwjp9WakA1bD0otsQTa6UC5WIR5qdb.1) | November 11, 2024 at 11:00 |
| **Deadline for Requesting Clarifications** | **November 18, 2024** at 17:00 |
| **Deadline for Submission of Applications** | **November 29, 2024 at 23:59** |
| **Notification to Applicants of the Results of the Administrative Check and the Qualitative Assessment**  | December 02 - 23, 2024 |
| **Contract Signature & Orientation Session** | January, 2025 |

1. *CER Platform - Crowdsourcing Evidence, Engaging Citizens, Reporting Facts* is a platform designed to support journalists and CSOs to engage with their communities and empower individuals to actively participate in combating pressing issues, including corruption, within their communities. This tool enables journalists and activists to crowdsource insights and evidence from citizens (by reaching out to the citizens directly through the media they already use), allowing them to submit various forms of multimedia content, including photos, videos, and testimonies related to corrupt practices they encounter or witness. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)