



**The Asia Foundation**

## **South Asia Small Grants Program (SASGP)**

### **Guidance for Applicants**

## 1. BACKGROUND

[The Asia Foundation](#)<sup>1</sup> (TAF) manages the South Asia Small Grants Program (SASGP). The SASGP will provide small grants to eligible Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in five South Asian countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Designed as a flexible mechanism to respond to existing contexts and emerging opportunities, the open grant window will support CSOs to work on critical governance challenges around four core themes:

- Increasing public sector accountability and transparency;
- Strengthening the rule of law;
- Promoting civil society participation and media in these efforts; and
- Strengthening democratic institutions and practices.

The five South Asian countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka have unique political contexts, governance challenges, and civil society operating environments. While governance challenges in the areas of rule of law, transparency and accountability and civil society participation exist in all of them, the intensity of the problem varies in each. TAF's six decades of experience working with democracy and governance-focused CSOs in South Asia has also revealed that significant gaps exist in civil society capacity to carry out its mandate to ensure a healthy governing system. This requires targeted organizational development assistance, particularly around finance and accounting, advocacy skills, building coalitions, and augmenting their influence in state agencies. The practical application of grants management can support advancing these capacities.

In conjunction with low capacity are increasing limitations on and control of civil society space across South Asia, which continues to undermine democratic governance values in the region. TAF recognizes the issues and challenges of programming across these five countries and the need to tailor program strategies to country specific socio-economic and political environments. To respond to these challenges and address the broader goal of creating a free and open South Asian region, SASGP will strive to increase CSO-led policy reforms, constructive engagements, and social accountability in core areas of governance; open up and enlarge the space for civil society to engage with and influence key democratic institutions in the region; and increase the capacity of CSOs to effectively pursue longer-term reform in the governance sector.

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<sup>1</sup> The Asia Foundation is a non-profit international development organisation committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. [www.asiafoundation.org](http://www.asiafoundation.org)

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE SOUTH ASIA SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

The long-term goal of the SASGP is to create a free and open South Asian region. This is only possible through the protection and promotion of a vibrant and constructive space for civil society to engage with the governments of the region and champion good governance.

To contribute to this broader goal, SASGP hopes to support civil society to achieve three main objectives:

- 1) To promote greater transparency, accountability, rule of law, and responsiveness in their respective governments;
- 2) To broaden the space to meaningfully engage with democratic institutions including those related to the criminal justice sector, anti-corruption bodies, human rights commissions, election administration, parliament, media and local governments;
- 3) To enhance the internal capacity, knowledge base, and programming capabilities of CSOs through capacity development inputs from SASGP.

## 3. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

TAF invites all eligible CSOs in Maldives to submit proposals for funding projects under the South Asia Small Grants Program (SASGP). The small grant window is open to innovative and actionable proposals to deliver results that contribute to the above objectives in these domains: Fiscal and Institutional Domain, Political Domain, Social Domain and Informational Domain. The following table provides a list of priority areas under each of the domains that SASGP proposes to fund.

<b>Priority Areas</b>
<b><i>Fiscal and Institutional Domain</i></b>
<i>Core Objective: Institutional and fiscal integrity strengthened</i>
Strengthening oversight and anti-corruption institutions
Promoting accountability in public procurement processes
Promoting greater understanding and oversight of contracts and international agreements that may impact the public interest
Strengthening budget transparency laws and/or practices
<b><i>Political Domain</i></b>
<i>Core Objective: Political and electoral system integrity strengthened</i>
Promoting and strengthening financial disclosure practices for public office holders
Promoting citizen participation in policy processes

Research support to legislative committees with oversight responsibilities or independent commissions
<b><i>Social Domain</i></b>
<i>Core Objective: Social attitudes reinforce democratic systems</i>
Strengthening legal protection mechanisms
<b><i>Informational Domain</i></b>
<i>Core Objective: Access to information and informational integrity strengthened</i>
Promoting investigative journalism and journalism skills
Strengthening tools and institutions to combat disinformation in social media
Promoting open data, including open data policies, and data for evidence-based decision making

### 3.1. AWARD INFORMATION

**Estimated Funding Level:** Applicants can apply for grants with a floor level funding of USD 25,000 and a ceiling of USD 75,000 in equivalent local currency. The SASGP has no preference for funding level and applications will be evaluated on the merit of the program with no prejudice to levels of funding sought.

**Award Implementation Period:** The implementation period for grants cannot be shorter than 6 months or longer than 15 months. The implementation period is to be driven by the logic of the program and no other consideration.

**Award Type:** All awards under this Call for Proposals will be cost-reimbursable grants.

### 3.2. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

- Grants will be limited to national not-for-profit organizations. ‘Not-for-profit’ organizations include national civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), consortia, networks, federations and membership bodies, think tanks, universities etc., but exclude government bodies, for-profit entities, and individuals.

#### Criteria for eligibility of the organization

Type	Eligibility criteria to apply for the SASGP
CSOs and NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be a duly registered non-profit or charitable organization.</li> <li>• Apply in the country where the organization is registered.</li> <li>• Has been in operation for a minimum of 3 years.</li> <li>• Has demonstrated capacity in project/program management.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has sound credentials in financial management and shall demonstrate good current audited financial statements for the organization.</li> <li>• Has experience in effective governance related programming.</li> <li>• Favourable if organization can demonstrate experience in implementing programming that is sensitive to diversity and promotes inclusivity. If not, demonstrates willingness to incorporate such expertise into a project proposal.</li> </ul>
Professional Associations (consortia, networks, federations and membership bodies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be a duly registered or recognized non-profit or charitable organization.</li> <li>• Apply in the country where the organization is registered.</li> <li>• Has been in operation for a minimum of 3 years.</li> <li>• Has demonstrated capacity in project/program management.</li> <li>• Has sound credentials in financial management and shall demonstrate good current audited financial statements for the organization.</li> <li>• Has experience in effective governance related programming.</li> <li>• Favourable if organization can demonstrate experience in implementing programming that is sensitive to diversity and promotes inclusivity. If not, demonstrates willingness to incorporate such expertise into a project proposal.</li> <li>• For all consortia, a lead organization must be declared, and all consortium partners should be not-for-profit organizations.</li> </ul>
Academic/Research Institutions (think tanks, universities etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be duly registered or recognized by Universities or Campuses and registered as a Research Institution and be a non-profit or charitable organization.</li> <li>• Has been in operation for a minimum of 3 years.</li> <li>• Has a demonstrated capacity in project/program management.</li> <li>• Has sound credentials in financial management and shall demonstrate strong audited financial statements.</li> <li>• Has experience in effective governance related programming.</li> <li>• Favourable if organization can demonstrate experience in implementing programming that is sensitive to diversity and promotes inclusivity. If not, demonstrates willingness to incorporate such expertise into a project proposal.</li> </ul>

- All applicants must be eligible to receive foreign donor funds and have the necessary paperwork and legal requirements to receive such funds.

- All applicants will need to provide evidence (in an Application Form) that they are established and have in place the resources, systems and processes that will enable them to effectively manage the size of funds that they are requesting in the application.
- If any of the information provided in the Application Form is proven wrong in the post-award due-diligence process, the applicant will be automatically disqualified even if selected for an award.

#### 4. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

This competition announcement and any amendments can be accessed at [www.asiafoundation.org](http://www.asiafoundation.org). If you have trouble or difficulties accessing any information contained in this announcement, please contact TAF through the email address assigned to your country. Inquiries will only be entertained through email.

Please follow all instructions below carefully. Applications that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to furnish or comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible.

##### **Content and form of application submission:**

Please note:

- Applications should be submitted in English.
- All budgets should be in local currency.
- All pages should be numbered.
- All documents should be formatted to A4 paper.
- All Microsoft Word documents should be single-spaced, 11-point Calibri font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.

When submitting an application, applicants are required to include the following documents and information, as applicable:

**A. Application Form:** Applicants must complete and submit the form given in *Annex 1*.

A copy of the organization's registration and non-profit status should be provided along with the application. Applicants must also submit proof of their ability to receive foreign and international donor funding.

**B. Concept Note:** Applicants must prepare a concept note using the template provided in *Annex 2*.

**C. Budget Estimate:** Applicants must present a budget total and breakdown in the budget template available in *Annex 3*.

##### Funding Restrictions

- **Construction:** This award does not allow for construction activities or costs.

- Pre-award Costs: Pre-award costs are not an allowable expense for this funding opportunity.
- Program Activities: Activities that are not typically funded include, but are not limited to:
  - profit-generating projects;
  - scholarships to support educational opportunities or study for individuals;
  - paying to complete activities begun with other funds;
  - financial support for fundraising or fund development projects;
  - projects that are inherently political in nature or that contain the appearance of partisanship/support to an individual or single party in electoral campaigns;
  - political party and lobbying activities;
  - projects that support specific religious activities; and,
  - microloans/microfinance projects, distribution of seed money for enterprises, and legal/land rights-focused programs.

### **Submission Date and Time:**

Applications may be submitted by email for consideration by the closing date of this opportunity, which is **April 15, 2020**. All submissions must be received by **05:00 p.m. local time**. This deadline is firm and is not a rolling deadline. If organisations fail to meet the deadline noted above their application will not be considered for funding and will be considered ineligible. The time stamp provided by the email service provider will be used by officials to determine whether or not an application was submitted on time.

All application materials may only be submitted electronically to the following email address:

[sasgp.mv@asiafoundation.org](mailto:sasgp.mv@asiafoundation.org)

[Concept notes rejected in Round 1 cannot be re-submitted for Round 2]

The issuance of this Call for Proposals does not constitute an award or commitment on the part of TAF, nor does it commit TAF to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. TAF reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. Further, TAF reserves the right to make no awards as a result of this Call.

## **5. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION**

### **Selection Criteria:**

Each concept note submitted under this opportunity will be evaluated and rated by a Technical Evaluation Panel on the basis of an evaluation matrix detailed below. The criteria outlined in the matrix are designed to assess the quality of the concept note, and to determine the likelihood of its success. The criteria are closely related and are considered as a whole in judging the overall quality of the concept note. Applications will be reviewed on the basis of their fullness, coherence, clarity, and attention to detail.

### **Concept Note Evaluation Matrix:**

- Quality of the project idea and project planning (50 Points): This relates to your problem statement, approach, how innovative your project idea is and how well it fits with the broader Domain Objective (s).
- Ability to achieve project objectives (25 Points): This is related to how well your goals, objectives, activities, outputs and outcomes are articulated and linked.
- Institution's record and organizational capacity (15 Points): This is related to the quality of the personnel deputed to the project and the organization's capacity statement.
- Value for money (10 points): This relates to how you plan to deliver value, your project costing, cost-effectiveness, and how your personnel inputs are priced.

### **Review and Selection Process:**

- Each application will initially be reviewed against the organizational eligibility criteria given above (this corresponds to the information provided in the Application Form) and screened for alignment with the thematic areas. All shortlisted applications found to be eligible will be forwarded to a Technical Evaluation Panel of experts.
- The Technical Evaluation Panel will evaluate, score and rank the shortlisted applications based on the Concept Note Evaluation Matrix given above. The highest-ranking concept notes will be selected for funding.
- If your concept note is selected for an award, TAF will invite representatives from your organization (including the Team Lead) to attend a project development workshop. Apart from M&E frameworks, reporting requirements and detailed budgeting, the workshop will also contain voluntary modules on developing a full-scale proposal.
- After the workshop all grantees will be required to submit a detailed project proposal.
- Once the proposals are received, full scale due diligence and budget negotiations will be carried out and Letters of Grant will be issued immediately after.
- All applicants will be sent a written response on the outcome of their application. The overall process will take an average of 2 to 3 months.

## **ANNEXURES**

Annex 1: Grant Application Form

Annex 2: Project Concept Note Template

Annex 3: Project Budget Template