



ICEDA

Increasing Civic Engagement
in the Digital Agenda

Request for Applicants for Civil Society Organizations

ICEDA Small Grants Scheme

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The "Increasing Civic Engagement in the Digital Agenda – ICEDA" project is implemented by Metamorphosis Foundation (North Macedonia), Open Data Kosovo (Kosovo), e-Governance Academy (Estonia), CRTA – Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (Serbia), NGO 35mm (Montenegro), and Levizja Mjaft! (Albania).

1. ICEDA Small Grant Scheme

1.1 Introduction and background of the Call

The Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans is a key pillar of the European Commission's Western Balkans Strategy published in February 2018. It covers a wide range of areas from broadband infrastructure, public sector modernization and the digitalization of industry to digital skills and cybersecurity, and a roadmap for lowering roaming charges. Most media, civil society organizations (CSOs) and Governments in the region do not have the resources or the capacities to cover the issues of e-government and digital rights, denying the citizens opportunities to learn about the current tendencies.

Therefore, the consortium of CSOs from five Western Balkan countries was established, within the regional EU funded project, [Increasing Civic Engagement in the Digital Agenda – ICEDA](#), with aim to increase the engagement of the CSOs in the shaping and implementation of the Digital Agenda in the Western Balkans.

The consortium is made of:

- North Macedonia, [Metamorphosis Foundation](#)
- Kosovo, [Open Data Kosovo](#)
- Serbia, [Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability - CRTA](#)
- Albania, [Levizja MJAFT](#)
- Montenegro, [NVM 35 MM](#)

The ICEDA project works with its European Union partner:

- Estonia, [E-Governance Academy](#)

1.2 Objectives

ICEDA announces this Request for Applications to provide support to CSOs to promote Digital agenda through the first Small Grants Scheme Cycle **LOT 1: Award grants for the e-Government Support Centers** awarding 15 small grants to CSOs from Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia (the target is approximately 3 grants per country), in the range between EUR 13.000 to EUR 17.000 per grant.

ICEDA will provide support to CSOs to perform initiatives within their native countries, by awarding small grants that will contribute to achieving the following overall objectives:

- To increase the capacity of CSOs and media for tackling challenges related to the Digital Agenda, empowering them to become active participants in the process;
- To enhance the role of CSOs in aiding state institutions to better exploit the potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in order to improve the quality of their e-services to the citizens and increase their openness including achieving greater transparency and accountability through development of efficient eGovernment systems;



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- To strengthen online trust and security by providing trainings and awareness raising through a network of CSOs promoting digital literacy, skills and inclusion at regional, national and local level;
- To increase the visibility of issues related to the Digital Agenda within civil society and media;
- To increase the citizen demand for quality e-services through training and awareness-raising by the CSOs.

1.3 Financial Allocation and timeline for LOT 1

The action will support CSOs from five Western Balkan countries (Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) to promote the implementation of the Digital Agenda through a Small Grants Scheme of EUR 300,000 awarding approximately 30 small grants for local initiatives during the course of three years. The Small Grants Scheme is divided into two lots, namely:

- **LOT 1: Award grants for the e-Government Support Centers**

The action will award 15 small grants to conduct local projects in line with the ICEDA objectives to 15 CSOs from the 5 Western Balkans countries, embedding partnerships with local or national public institutions. The budget for this LOT is EUR 225.000 providing amounts **ranging between EUR 13.000 to EUR 17.000 per individual grant.**

The sub-granting cycle for this LOT will take approximately 23 months to complete: One month for issuing a public call and conducting promotional activities, two months for selection of the sub-grantees, two months for preparation and training activities, and 18 months for implementation of the individual grants. The grants should start from December 2020 **and partnership with some local or national state institutions¹ will be given a priority** to ensure sustainability.

1.4 Technical Assistance and Networking

Once the initiatives are selected, the Action partners will monitor the project implementation and provide technical assistance to all recipients based on their specific levels of competence. Technical assistance will be provided through tailor-made mentoring for sub-grantees to further strengthen their capacities and to respond to their specific needs, including public relations, communication, evaluation, etc. Administrative and Finance Staff (Metamorphosis) will conduct mentoring related to financial reporting, while the Action staff will provide mentoring related to the program aspects.

ICEDA will support the sub-grantees to develop and implement initiatives and build partnerships regionally and internationally through organizing online and offline networking meetings for exchange of information, experience and lessons learned, discussion on faced challenges, possible ways of resolving them, and possibilities for better cooperation with other interested parties in the region.

¹ For potential sub-grantees from North Macedonia, in case there is an Internet Club run by the Ministry of Information Society and Administration in the area where you would like to conduct the activities, contact them for potential synergies.



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The awarded sub-grantees will become part of the national networks established in their respective countries which constitute the regional ICEDA network.

2. Eligibility Criteria

2.1 Eligibility of Applicants

The applicants and co-applicants need to be:

- non-profit-making;
- a civil society organization;
- registered in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia or Serbia for at least 1 year before the date of publication of the call and;
- directly responsible for the preparation and management of the project with the co-applicant(s);
- have 1 year of experience in implementation of projects in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia or Serbia.

One organization can apply with only one project application as a lead applicant and can participate in only one additional project application as co-applicant/partner. One organization can participate in maximum two projects. Alternatively, one organization can participate in up to two projects as partner.

2.2 Eligibility of the activities

The Small Grants Support Scheme LOT 1 will provide support for targeted initiatives for promotion of the Digital Agenda that will contribute to achieving the overall ICEDA goals, transposed to the local circumstances of the respective countries or local communities, aimed to build capacity-building synergies.

The Grant Scheme will enable CSOs to reach out to relevant stakeholders, build effective coalitions that could strengthen their positions, and help them to address their authentic perspectives. This will also be reflected in the design of the Grant Scheme, which will have the following aims:

- To foster the creation of an enabling environment for civil society development and greater involvement of stakeholders in achieving the goals of the Digital Agenda, including achieving greater transparency and accountability through development of efficient eGovernment systems;
- To contribute towards empowerment of CSOs and media, both national and grassroots, as well as towards enhancing their active role in the Digital Agenda implementation;
- To increase citizen demand for accountable institutions that provide eGovernment services through public education and promotion of EU standards and international best practices;
- To contribute towards a deepened understanding and inclusiveness of information society development priorities embodied within the Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans;



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- To act upon further development of the dialogue between decision makers and stakeholders based on evidence and best practice, enabling CSOs and media to participate effectively in the consultative processes, by strengthening their capacity for evidence-based analyses, ICEDA-relevant monitoring and effective advocacy while also improving networking, partnership and coalition building skills;
- To increase the capacity of CSOs and media to contribute to the achieving Digital Agenda's goals and serve their communities, through joint engagement with state institutions.

The Action's methodology for the Small Support Grants will treat designing and implementing grants projects as a learning process that will be complemented by the ICEDA action expertise. Applicants will be supported with constructive feedback at all stages of the grant project - from their project proposal, to the development of their action plan, to implementing the supported initiative. All costs will be approved and covered directly by the Metamorphosis team. The Steering Committee of the ICEDA Project will select the partnership initiatives competitively based on proposals quality, potential impact and relevance to the overall Action's objective. Additional criteria will be discussed and determined at the inception phase in cooperation with the pool of experts.

2.3 Eligibility of Costs

Only 'eligible costs' can be covered by a grant. The categories of costs that are eligible and non-eligible are indicated below. The budget is both a cost estimate and an overall ceiling for 'eligible costs'.

- Human Resources include at maximum 30% of total budget cost
- Administrative Cost is at maximum of 10% of total budget cost
- The remaining should be direct cost for the implementation of the activities

3. How to Apply

3.1 Application Documents

The CSOs will need to submit their applications via e-mail by sending the following appropriately completed documentation:

- Application Form;
- Timeframe of project Implementation;
- Budget Form;
- Copy of registration documents;
- Annual narrative and financial reports for the previous year (2019);
- Audit report*;
- CVs of key personnel;
- Information on partners and letters of commitment – if applicable.

*The Audit report is optional for organizations with above 30.000 EUR annual turnover, but will be considered positively by the evaluation committee. Newly established organizations (less than one



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year) and small organizations with an annual turnover less than 30,000 EUR are not obliged to submit an Audit Report.

3.2 Where to apply and send the documents

Applicants that would need clarifications or need additional information about the call for proposals, are invited to send them by e-mail to iceda@metamorphosis.org.mk before **15.09.2020** so they can receive the responses in time before the final deadline for submitting the project proposal.

Deadline of Applications is: **30.09.2020** by 23:59 CET.

3.3 Deadline of Submissions

Deadline for submission of complete applications: 30.09.2020 at 23:59 CEST, exclusively by e-mail to iceda@metamorphosis.org.mk. Application forms must be completed using English language.

3.4 Information Sessions

An online information session for potential applicants will be organized by the ICEDA project Partners, in the form of webinars for up to 1 hour. One information session will be held within each of the five Western Balkans countries, conducted in local languages.

Albania: 10th of September 2020; 10:00am (follow @MJAFTAlbania for more information)

Kosovo: 10th of September 2020; 10:00am (follow @OpenDataKosovo for more information)

Montenegro: 10th of September 2020; 10:00am (follow @NVO35mmEmisijaRobinHud for more information)

North Macedonia: 10th of September 2020; 10:00am (follow @metamorphosis.foundation for more information)

Serbia: 10th of September 2020; 10:00am (follow @CRTArs for more information)

Follow the Facebook and Twitter with @ICEDAproject page of the project for more information and links about the Information sessions.

4. Evaluation and selection criteria

This Request for Applications will support innovative and bold proposals that:

- Directly support the ICEDA objectives and demonstrate a commitment towards enhancing the Digital Agenda through promotion of digital literacy and use of eGovernment services;
- Introduce innovative models of cooperation between CSOs, public institutions and the media;



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- Provide creative and effective strategies for engaging their targeted audiences;
- Produce educational multimedia contents that can be distributed via different platforms (for instance, but not limited to, video materials that can be used as TV show and as online clips);
- Strategically use traditional and new media for increased visibility;
- Promote an integrative approach with focus on ethnicity, gender and age;
- Foster partnerships and cooperation between the various stakeholders, including civil society, media, state institutions at local or central level, educational and business sector.

The forming of the network and the financial support for the sub-grantees will also be based on the principles of promoting integration, social cohesion, diversity, advancement of human rights and non-discrimination, which will be encouraged through the rules and procedures for the public calls and selection of sub-grantees.

The CSOs, as lead partners, will need to submit their applications using the Metamorphosis Standardized Application Form, including a precise Timeframe of Implementation and Budget Form and other relevant attachments: copy of registration documents, CVs of key personnel, information on partners and letters of commitment.

The selection of grant recipients will be a three-step process: pre-assessment, assessment and awarding. Each application will be pre-assessed to ensure that the basic requirements are met and that the application is in compliance with the eligibility criteria, as follows:

- The applicants are from the targeted countries and include activities within them);
- The proposed initiatives demonstrate clear vision, catering to the particular needs of citizens;
- The proposed initiatives delineate clear roles of all partners;
- The Application Form is fully completed and includes the required attachments;
- The Application is submitted within the deadline;
- The requested financial support does not exceed the maximum small grant amount.

The following applications will receive priority during the selection process:

- Creative and cost-effective initiatives with high potential for long-term sustainability;
- Initiatives contributing to strengthening of networking at local, regional or national level.
- **Projects which will have direct partnerships with Local or Central Institutions will have direct advantage.**

An application must comply with all these criteria in order to proceed to the assessment phase.

Applications not complying will be rejected.

All applications positively assessed during the pre-assessment will be presented to the Steering Committee of the ICEDA project for approval/rejection/conditional approval based on the following **selection criteria**:



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1. Technical approach (maximum 70 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance to the needs and issues addressed (30 points) • Quality of the proposed activities (15 points) • Results-oriented activities (15 points) • Innovation (10 points)
2. Organizational capacity and past performance (maximum 10 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative, financial and managerial capacities (5 points) • Relevant past experience and results in similar areas (5 points)
3. Cost proposal (max. 20 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost-effectiveness of the budget (20 points)

Small grants will be awarded only to responsible recipients who possess the potential to perform successfully under the criteria and terms of the Small Grants Scheme. Consideration will be given to such matters as integrity, record of past performance, financial and technical resources, and accessibility to other necessary resources. During the evaluation process, the Steering Committee will have the liberty to request additional information from the applicants regarding the proposal or about the organization in general that is necessary to complete the evaluation.

Following the best practices used by the EU Delegations, a threshold of 70 points will be set by the Steering Committee and only proposals exceeding this level will be considered. The sub-grants will be awarded to the highest-ranked proposals from each country, while the rest will be put on the reserve list, and considered if the highest-ranked proposal for a certain country are below the threshold.

5. Notification from the ICEDA TEAM

Approval, rejection, or conditional approval letters will be sent to the applicants. Approved applications will receive an Agreement of cooperation outlining the recipient organization's legal obligations, which will be based on the implementation timeframe from each application. In line with the Action contract and the resulting internal procedures the sub-grantees will conduct administrative preparations including registering the project with the respective tax authorities.

Metamorphosis will manage all aspects of implementation of the sub-grant contracts with each of the sub-grantees, distribute funds and monitor the implementation, facilitating communication and problem-solving when necessary, and ensure that sub-grantees are supported in utilizing the provided tools and training to advance their activism. The ICEDA partners from different Western Balkan countries will be part of the monitoring process and provide support to the sub-grantees through coaching and mentoring in order to facilitate successful implementation.

The applicants will be notified from the project team by email on the results of their application by end of October 2020.



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6. Contract Notice

Following the decision to award a grant, the beneficiary(ies) will be offered a contract based on the standard grant contract. The contract notice will be sent by November 2020, while the project will intend to start implementation by December 2020.

The beneficiary upon the signature of the contract will receive 70% of the total agreed budget of the project, while the remaining amount of 30% will be distributed upon the approval of the final narrative and financial report.

7. Annexes

- [Application Form](#)
- [Timeframe of project implementation](#)
- [Budget Form](#)



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