



GUIDELINES FOR GRANT APPLICANTS

DIGITAL SPARK CALL

NOTICE

This document constitutes the Guidelines for Grant Applicants under the Digital Spark Call for Proposals. It provides detailed information on the objectives of the Call, eligibility criteria, application procedures, and evaluation process. Applicants are strongly advised to read this document carefully before preparing and submitting an application.

Applications must be submitted exclusively in English, using the [official application form](#), by the deadline specified in the Call for Proposals. Budgets (Annex B) must be presented in USD. All supporting documents (annexes and requested documents from the applicants) along with signed and stamped application form should be submitted via email to GrantsEECA@metamorphosis.org.mk. You need to be registered in your email address in order to save and print the application form.

Failure to comply with the instructions contained in these Guidelines may result in rejection of the application. No individual advice can be provided during the application phase.

1. REGIONAL SUPPORT MECHANISM GRANTS – CALL FOR PROPOSALS

1.1 Background

With the support of CIVICUS, and in partnership with TechSoup's Digital Activism Program team, Metamorphosis Foundation is implementing the [Regional Support Mechanism](#) project, which aims to strengthen civil society organizations, activists, and informal initiatives through financial and non-financial support in the digital age.

The project is part of CIVICUS' global [Digital Democracy Initiative](#) (DDI), which is covering the Global South, and **aims to build a sustainable and inclusive ecosystem for digital democracy in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, especially in conditions of narrowing civic space, disinformation, and increased digital risks.**

The programme recognizes the critical role of civil society **in defending democratic values, protecting digital rights, and fostering inclusive participation through technology.** It therefore seeks to strengthen the resilience, sustainability, and innovation capacity of civil society actors working on digital democracy-related issues.



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1.2 Objectives of the Programme and thematic priority areas

The overall objective of the Regional Support Mechanism project is to strengthen digital democracy and civic participation in the EECA region.

The **specific objectives** of the Digital Spark Call for Proposals are to:

- support civil society actors in promoting democratic participation through digital means;
- enhance inclusion of marginalized and underrepresented groups in digital civic spaces;
- strengthen organizational capacity and sustainability of civil society organizations;
- encouraging innovative and ethical use of digital technologies for advocacy, participation, and accountability.

The grants aim at:

- Support organizations developing innovative digital tools or advocacy models for civic engagement and transparency.
- Strengthen organizational resilience and sustainability of local CSOs.
- Foster inclusion by enabling grassroots and marginalized voices to use technology for democratic participation.
- Enhance regional collaboration and peer learning through participation in the DDI learning network.

The grants will enable civil society organizations to develop or scale digital democracy initiatives through tools, campaigns, and capacity-building efforts, focusing on the following thematic priority areas: participation, accountability, and human rights in the digital sphere.

1.3 Financial Allocation

The programme will award 10 Institutional Stability Grants of USD 13,000 each, and up to 90 Strategic Growth Small Grants of up to USD 4,500 each. The Metamorphosis Foundation may decide not to award all available grants, depending on the quality of applications received. Funding is provided through two distinct grant types (lots), each with its own objectives, eligibility rules, and financial ceilings.

1.4 Capacity- Building Support

In addition to the grant funding, all selected grantees will receive capacity- building support delivered by TechSoup's Digital Activism Program team. This component will include:

- completion of a Digital Needs Assessment;
- placement into one of several digital learning cohorts on the Hive Mind platform;
- participation in needs-based training opportunities, workshops, and clinics;
- peer learning and exchange;
- mentoring and expert consultations.





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The specific training topics, learning pathways, and individual support roadmaps will be designed after the needs of analysis. Grantees will be asked to indicate areas where they believe support would be beneficial, and the final learning plan will be developed collaboratively with a designated expert after selection.

2. RULES FOR THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

2.1 Grant Types (Lots)

2.1.1 Lot 1 – Institutional Stability Grants

Institutional Stability Grants are intended for established civil society organizations with demonstrated experience in digital democracy, civic engagement, or digital rights. These grants aim to strengthen organizational sustainability and regional leadership.

Under this grant type, selected organizations must:

- act as Capacity Hubs (CapHubs) supporting other civil society actors;
- design and implement at least one local networking or learning event and one advocacy or awareness-raising campaign;
- host or send a fellow for a one-month fellowship aimed at knowledge exchange and capacity building.

2.1.2 Lot 2 – Strategic Growth Small Grants

Strategic Growth Small Grants are intended for smaller organizations, informal groups, or individuals seeking to pilot or scale up innovative digital democracy actions. This grant type places particular emphasis on initiatives working with or representing marginalized or underrepresented groups (women, youth, LGBTQI+, rural, or other marginalized groups) and supports experimentation, learning, and grassroots engagement.

Please note applicants may submit only one application under this Call and may apply for only one grant type. In addition, multiple applications or applications submitted under both grant types will be rejected.

2.2 Eligibility Criteria

2.2.1 Eligibility of Applicants

Applicants must be registered (for legally registered non-profit CSOs) or based (for informal groups and individual activists) in one of the thirteen (13) eligible countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as listed here: Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Moldova, Türkiye, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. All





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activities should be implemented in an eligible country in which the applicant is registered and based.

Eligibility requirements differ by grant type and may include legal registration, operational capacity, and prior experience. Government bodies, political parties, religious organizations, and entities affiliated with them are not eligible to apply. Applicants must not be in a situation of conflict of interest and must comply with ethical and legal standards.

To be eligible for Institutional Stability Grants, the applicant must:

- Be **legally registered, non-profit CSO**.
- Be in one of the **eligible EECA countries: Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Türkiye, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan**.
- Propose an action related to **digital democracy, digital rights, civic participation, or human rights**. Propose initiatives using digital tools for **inclusion and democratic participation**.
- Commit to **ethical and rights-based use of digital tools**.
- Apply **only for this grant type** (applicants cannot apply for both lots).
- Applicants must show **the capacity to implement** the proposed initiative.
- Be able to act as a **Local Capacity Hub**, including hosting at least **one local networking/learning event**, and possibly hosting or sending participants for a one-month Fellowship.

To be eligible for Strategic Growth Small Grants, the applicant must:

- Be **legally registered, non-profit CSO or be individual activist or an informal group**.
- Be in one of the **eligible EECA countries: Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Türkiye, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan**.
- Propose an action related to **digital democracy, digital rights, civic participation, or human rights**. Propose initiatives using digital tools for **inclusion and democratic participation**.
- Represent or work with **women, youth, LGBTQI+, rural, or other marginalized groups**.
- Commit to **ethical and rights-based use of digital tools**.
- Apply **only for this grant type** (applicants cannot apply for both lots).
- Applicants must show **the capacity to implement** the proposed activity.

2.2.2 Eligibility of Actions

Proposed actions must:

- address at least one thematic priority of the Digital Spark Call;
- include a clear digital or technology-based component;



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- be implemented within April – September 2026 in duration of six (6) months;

Actions that are purely academic, commercial, or unrelated to digital democracy are not eligible.

2.2.3 Eligibility of Costs

Eligible costs are those that are necessary for the implementation of the action, reasonable, justified, and verifiable. Eligible costs may include staff costs, operational costs, travel, services, and purchase of limited equipment directly related to the action.

Ineligible costs include but are not limited to debts and debt service charges, provisions for losses, exchange rate losses, and costs already financed by another donor.

Overhead and indirect costs are not allowed. Budget must be presented in USD.

Grantees will receive funds in tranches based on deliverables. Reporting will include a short narrative and financial report at midterm and completion.

Important note: Applicants, by applying, confirm that under their national legislation they have the legal capacity to enter into a Grant Agreement with the Metamorphosis Foundation

from North Macedonia and to receive a donation in the form of a grant. The applicant shall be the sole recipient of the grant and the implementer responsible for the approved activities.

2.3 How to Apply and Procedures to Follow

2.3.1 Application Form

Applications must be submitted using the official application form available [here](#). Applicants must complete all sections of the form relevant to the selected grant type. The application form includes sections on organizational background, project description, budget, and expected results. Once the application starts, the application needs to be completely fulfilled. Once fulfilled, the application form should be downloaded, signed, and stamped. You need to register into your e-mail address in order to save and print the application form. A list of all Application questions is provided as Annex A.

2.3.2 Supporting Documents

Applicants must submit all required supporting documents together with the signed and stamped application form via email to GrantsEECA@metamorphosis.org.mk. The list of required documents varies depending on the grant type and may include legal registration documents, organizational statutes, CVs, budgets, and declarations. A complete list of Supporting Documents is provided below:





Institutional Stability Grants (USD 13,000)

- Annex B Detailed Budget (USD)
- Legal Registration Certificate issued within the last 3 months
- Organizational Statute in English
- CVs of key staff/project team
- Annex D - Portfolio of similar implemented projects in the past 3 years
- Annual narrative reports for 2025, 2024, 2023
- Annual financial reports for 2025, 2024, 2023
- Signed Annex E - Data Protection & Ethics Statement

Strategic Growth Small Grants (up to USD 4,500)

- Annex B Detailed Budget (USD)
- Document outlining mission, vision, and previous activities
- CVs of key team members
- Signed Annex E - Data Protection & Ethics Statement
- Annex D -Portfolio of similar implemented projects in the past 3 years

- Legal Registration Certificate issued within the last 3 months (not applicable for informal groups/individuals)
- Organizational Statute (not applicable for informal groups/individuals)
- Annual narrative reports for 2025, 2024, 2023 (not applicable for informal groups/individuals)
- Annual financial reports for 2025, 2024, 2023 (not applicable for informal groups/individuals)

2.3.3 Deadline and Submission

Applications must be submitted by the deadline – 23.2.2026, 16:00 CET. Late submissions will not be accepted under any circumstances.

2.4 Evaluation and Selection of Applications

2.4.1 Administrative Compliance Check

All applications will undergo an administrative compliance check to verify that eligibility criteria are met; the application is complete, and submission rules have been respected. Applications that fail the administrative check will be rejected and will not proceed to technical evaluation.



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2.4.2 Evaluation Criteria and Scoring

Eligible applications will be evaluated using a 100-point scoring system based on the following criteria:

- Relevance (25 points)
- Impact (25 points)
- Feasibility (20 points)
- Innovation (15 points)
- Inclusion (10 points)
- Sustainability (5 points)

Each criterion is assessed independently by Regional Committee composed of seven evaluators.

2.4.3 Thresholds and Ranking

To be considered for funding, applications must reach a minimum quality threshold of 60 points. Applications are ranked according to their total score, and funding decisions are made based on ranking and availability of funds.

2.5 Decision, Contracting and Implementation

Applicants will be informed in writing about the outcome of the evaluation process. Successful applicants will be invited to sign a grant agreement specifying the conditions for implementation, reporting, and visibility. Grant agreements must be signed before the start of project implementation.

2.6 Data Protection and Ethics

Applicants must comply with applicable data protection regulations and ensure ethical and responsible use of digital tools. Special attention must be paid to privacy, security, and protection of vulnerable groups.

3. ELIGIBILITY OF ACTIONS

3.1 Eligible (Applicable) Actions

Actions must contribute to the objectives of the Regional Support Mechanism EECA and include a clear digital or technology-related component. Eligible actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Development or improvement of digital tools and platforms enabling civic participation, consultation, or accountability.
- Digital advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns promoting democratic participation and digital rights.



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- Initiatives support freedom of expression, access to information, online safety, privacy, and data protection.
- Digital initiatives that increase participation of marginalized or underrepresented groups.
- Capacity-building activities that strengthen digital skills, security, advocacy, or data literacy of civil society actors.
- Institutional development activities directly linked to digital democracy objectives.
- Networking, peer learning, mentoring, and knowledge exchange related to digital democracy.
- Pilot projects and innovative digital approaches with a clear learning component.
- Evidence-based digital advocacy targeting public policies or institutional practices.
- Regional or cross-border cooperation activities using digital tools.

3.2 Ineligible (Non-applicable) Actions

The following actions are not eligible for funding under this Call:

- Actions without a clear and meaningful digital or technology-based component.
- Purely academic research or studies without practical civic or advocacy application.
- Commercial, profit-oriented, or business development activities.
- Political or partisan activities, including support to political parties or electoral campaigns.
- Government-led actions or activities implemented by entities affiliated with public authorities.
- Humanitarian or emergency relief actions unrelated to digital democracy objectives.
- Large-scale infrastructure investments or construction works.
- Actions exceed the maximum implementation period of six (6) months.
- Actions already completed or substantially similar to previously funded projects.
- Activities violating ethical standards, human rights, data protection, or responsible use of technology.

The Metamorphosis Foundation reserves the right to reject actions that, although not explicitly listed above, do not align with the objectives, values, or ethical standards of the project.

Clarification by Grant Type

Institutional Stability Grants focus on organizational strengthening, advocacy, capacity hub activities, and fellowship implementation, while Strategic Growth Small Grants prioritize experimentation, grassroots action, and inclusion of marginalized groups. Applicants must ensure alignment with the selected grant type.

4. INDICATIVE TIMETABLE

The indicative timetable for this Call for Proposals is presented below. Metamorphosis Foundation reserves the right to modify the timetable if necessary.





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Questions can be sent to GrantsEECA@metamorphosis.org.mk no later than 13th of February 2026. All answers will be provided at the Frequently Asked Questions available at the following [link](#) on 16th of February 2026. No individual answers via email will be provided.

Activity	Indicative Date
Publication of the Call for Proposals	30.1.2026
Frequently Asked Questions	No later than 13 th of February, published on 16 th of February
Deadline for submission of applications	23.2.2026, 16:00 CET
Administrative and eligibility checks	Within 2–3 weeks after deadline
Evaluation of applications	Within 4 weeks after deadline
Notification of applicants	After completion of evaluation but not later than 27 th of March 2026
Contracting period	Following notification, but not later than 1 st of April 2026
Implementation period	Maximum 6 months

5. PRACTICAL CHECKLIST FOR APPLICANTS (Non-exhaustive)

Before submitting your application, please ensure that:

- You are eligible under the selected grant type;
- Your organization or group is based in an eligible country;
- You have applied for only one grant type;
- All mandatory sections of the application form are completed;
- Signed and stamped application form, accompanied with supporting documents and annexes are send to the dedicated email address GrantsEECA@metamorphosis.org.mk;
- The proposed action fits within the 6-month implementation period;
- The budget respects the grant ceiling and eligible cost rules;
- The application and all annexes and supporting documents are submitted in English and before the deadline.
- You understand that participation in the non-financial support (tailored learning activities) is a requirement for selected grantees.



6. ANNEXES

The following annexes form an integral part of these Guidelines and of the application:

- [Annex A – Application Form](#)
- [Annex B – Budget Template](#)
- [Annex C – Administrative Checklist](#)
- [Annex D – Portfolio of similar past projects](#)
- [Annex E – Data Protection & Ethics Statement](#)

DISCLAIMER

These Guidelines are provided for information purposes only and do not replace the Digital Spark Call for Proposals or the Grant Agreement. In the event of inconsistencies, the Call for Proposals and the Grant Agreement shall prevail. Metamorphosis Foundation is not obliged to award all available funds and reserves the right to suspend or cancel the Call.