

Guidelines for the Democracy Commission Small Grants Program

The Democracy Commission Small grants program was initiated in 1994 as a flexible mechanism by which American Embassies are able to award small sums of money for projects and initiatives that support the development of democracy in the countries of Central Europe and the Baltic States.

- The small grants program is for **non-governmental** activities that promote grassroots democracy. **Thus, it is very important to explain how the project promotes democracy.** Projects, which provide a direct social service, such as services to individuals with disability, do not meet strict D.C. guidelines. Rather, projects should include democracy building aspects such as: public awareness, respect for human rights and advocacy for the targeted groups, establishment and preservation of the rule of law and democracy, economic reform, environmental clean-up, the strengthening of the NGO sector, the reconciliation of disputes, and better journalism, etc.
- The **maximum** amount per grant is **\$24,000**. However, **most grants will be for smaller amounts.**
- The Public Affairs section of the embassy in each country is responsible for submitting **ALL** proposals to Washington for a technical review after the proposal(s) have been approved by the commission. Upon approval, Washington sends authorization to the embassy to write the grant locally. In the technical review Washington will look to see how the project promotes democracy.
- Grants should seek to facilitate long-term sustainability and democratic institution-building for local organizations and support efforts to promote reform.
- Grants for publication of materials should describe the intended audience, provide a clear understanding of the materials' content, and specify who is responsible for the distribution of the materials.
- A clear time frame, especially a date by which the grant-funded activity is expected to end, is recommended.
- Budgets should be submitted in US dollars.
- These grants may **NOT** be used to:
 - fund American organizations and individuals
 - fund activities for which there are existing programs.
 - provide for long-term infrastructural needs.

- Provide direct social services to populations.
- Grants are normally made on a one-time basis. But repeat grants to the same organization are okay with clear justification and for different projects.
- Grants generally avoid paying salaries or professional fees with grants. If salaries appear necessary and appropriate, the following guidelines apply:
 - Salary levels should be reasonable and no higher than other local salaries for similar work.
 - Salary should be calculated as a lump-sum, based on the total number of hours worked for the duration of the project.
- Grants may not pay for food or refreshments. But if it is necessary at a workshop or conference or other event, the grantee or another donor organization must pay for it.
- A report on every grant must be submitted by the Public Affairs section of the embassy to Washington upon completion of the activity(s). The report will be used to evaluate whether the program has accomplished its goals. Evaluation is essential to the integrity of the program and is also required to account for the dispersal of USG funds. Future funding of the program will be contingent on a careful review of its accomplishments.
- A suggested format for writing grants and evaluation is provided with these guidelines.