

Instructions for Proposal Submission

Please Read Through to the End

USRF welcomes proposals to support projects that will advance USRF's mission and program priorities from organizations both in the United States and abroad.

Evaluation Process

Proposals are selected on a competitive basis. The final decision is made by the USRF Board of Directors. Approved proposals will be executed via a grant agreement signed between USRF and the applicant.

Proposals will be considered based on deadlines specified on the USRF website.

Eligibility for Applicants

USRF welcomes proposals from organizations both in the United States and abroad.

The applicant should have at least a two-year financial history confirmed by reports to tax authorities that have jurisdiction over the applicant, and an established track record in successful project management and implementation.

Proposal Selection Criteria

USRF has established **three areas of funding priority**:

1. **Rule of Law (ROL)**

Support for outreach, education, and training in international and domestic law, expertise and best practices that build the capacity of Russians to develop and sustain laws, institutions, and jurisprudence that protect citizens' rights and that will enable good governance at the local, regional, and national levels.

2. **Media & Free Enterprise (MFE)**

Support for independent Russian media in efforts to reach audiences inside and outside of Russia, develop IT infrastructure and innovative technological approaches, and establish sustainable business models. Support for pro-democracy Russian exile communities through training in legal, regulatory,

economic, and business practices that strengthen free enterprise and private entrepreneurship.

3. **Civil Society & Expertise (CSE)**

Support for pro-democracy Russian civil society groups and networks inside and outside Russia, including opportunities for training and capacity building. Support for teaching and professional development aimed at increasing expertise on Russia in the United States.

USRF will prioritize proposals that:

- **Identify** clear and plausible methods likely to be effective
- **Generate** sustainable expertise and relationships that are not dependent exclusively on single-source funding
- **Build** capacity in measurable ways

Project activities should have practical and applicable results that can be disseminated and replicated.

Budget

Preference will be given to projects with efficient budgets that achieve best value at the lowest cost.

Project budgets should be detailed, self-explanatory, and supported by a detailed budget narrative. Applicants are required to use the standard budget lines provided in the budget form on the website.

How to Apply

Proposals must be submitted using the following forms that can be accessed and downloaded on the USRF website:

1. *Project Application (please submit in Word format)*
2. *Proposed Budget (please submit in Excel format)*

To submit an application, please send the above documents via e-mail to grants@usrf.us.

At a later stage, applicants may also be asked to provide additional materials such as letters of support from stakeholders, materials illustrating previous successes, and additional details on proposed activities and budget items.

Best Practices Guide for Successful Grants

Thank you for your interest in applying for a grant from the U.S. Russia Foundation! If submitting a proposal for the first time, please be sure to download the Application Instructions and watch our video tutorial.

This Best Practices Guide is meant to help you craft both a favorable proposal and a successful project. Please review the enclosed:

- (1) Proposal Evaluation Criteria, and
- (2) Final/Interim Project Evaluation Criteria

The Proposal Evaluation Criteria is used by the staff at USRF to grade your proposal on its level of effectiveness and likelihood of success. This review is then utilized by the USRF Board of Directors in determining whether your proposal is accepted or not.

The Final/Interim Project Evaluation Criteria are similarly used by the staff at USRF to grade your project on the level of success, impact, and sustainability achieved through USRF funding. If you hope to apply for future grants or continue to build on a grant that is already funded by USRF, please take the time to review these criteria to ensure there is a substantial return on investment. This will determine the successful funding of your project.

And finally, when crafting a proposal, please keep in mind that USRF is non-partisan. It does not engage in or fund partisan political activity, partisan training, or training focused on electoral activities.

If you have any further questions regarding any grant-related matters, please contact us at grants@usrf.us. Thank you for your interest and best of luck!

PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Note: Applicants are given a rating of “high,” “medium,” or “low” on the following criteria:

I. ELIGIBILITY

- Compliance with the submission deadline
- Completeness of the proposal
- Relevance to USRF’s mission and the five areas of funding priority
- Compliance with specific requirements (for example: the level of cost sharing, the level of indirect costs, and so on)
- Due Diligence results

II. TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

- Clear articulation of needs that project will address, including clear clarification of the target group(s) / the target demographic
- The extent to which the project goal and objectives are consistent with needs, and USRF’s priorities
- Clearly defined goals and objectives
- Easily measurable progress on goals and objectives
- Performance indicators for measuring quantitative and qualitative result
- Clear action plan for project completion
- Provide credible risk assessment and mitigation; absence of factors/obstacles to desired results

III. COST PROPOSAL

- Does the overall level of project cost correspond to the proposed activity?
- Indicators of cost value, i.e. administrative costs vs. program delivery; number of people affected by project vs. total project cost
- Clear explanation of matching funds, including amounts of cash and in-kind contribution(s), and sources of the matching funds
- Provides reasonable plan for sustainability

IV. CAPACITY

- Applicant has an established track record in successful implementation of projects
- Applicant has appropriate experience in managing of grants with budgets commensurate with requested funds
- Applicant has project staff experienced in operating similar projects, and engages professionals with adequate expertise and skills
- Applicant’s Board of Directors’ level of engagement in project
- Applicant’s credibility and credibility of partnered organizations to project

FINAL/INTERIM PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

*Note: Applicants are given a rating of “high,” “medium,” or “low” on the following criteria:

I. PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- The extent to which the project goal and objectives were achieved

II. PROJECT ACTIVITY

- The extent to which the project’s outputs and outcomes were achieved
- The effectiveness of the project compared to the results planned

III. PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

- Were the project outcomes applied to other organizations (the multiplier effect)?
- Does the project have the potential to be replicated on a regional or national scale (replicability)?
- Did the project result in new policies or measurable systemic changes that were important for Russia’s economic or legal development?
- Did the project attract additional funding, thereby becoming a sustainable, regularly-funded program (sustainability)?
- Did the project make a “difference” to the organization itself or the sector as a whole?

IV. FINANCIAL REVIEW SUMMARY

- Documents total Grant Amount Approved/Spent and Cost Share Proposed/Provided

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Proposals will be considered three times each year, for decision in February, June and October.

- February proposals are due on December 1st
- June proposals are due on May 1st
- October proposals are due on August 15th

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