



ADVOCACY GRANTS FOR EMBATTLED CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

The Lifeline Embattled CSO Assistance Fund provides rapid response advocacy grants to civil society organizations (CSOs) pushing back against restrictions on civil society space. Advocacy grants support short-term initiatives that identify civic space challenges, such as threats to freedom of association, assembly, and expression or attacks on civil society, and target key actors associated with the resolution of these threats. Successful initiatives seek to establish or maintain the ability of civil society to work on good governance and human rights, especially in high-risk environments where state or non-state actors seek to limit civil society's influence.

Recent initiatives include:

- Strategic engagement with media outlets to increase coverage of physical/legal attacks on CSOs.
- Analysis of the implications of (draft) laws on CSOs, to generate amendment recommendations.
- Dialogue with government agencies responsible for ensuring the safety of CSOs.
- Establishment of regional CSO coalitions to address transnational repression tactics against CSOs.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

I. General Evaluation Criteria

All applications will be evaluated based on the three areas below. Special consideration will be given to applications proposing activities highlighted in section II. **Initiatives of Particular Interest**

- Proposed initiative is urgent and responds to emerging or intensifying threats to civil society or opportunities to expand civic space.**
Urgency is defined by threatening conditions or a time-bound opportunity for advocacy, not the financial need of the organization.
- Activities are feasible, short-term (<6 months), and clearly address the conditions they seek to change.**
Application must present a clear, step-by-step plan to act on a time-bound opportunity to advocate for an enabling environment for civil society.
- Cost Effectiveness**
Rapid Response funding is not intended to support a CSO's core operations costs; excessive admin, equipment, and personnel will not be considered. Average awards are around \$9,000.

II. Initiatives of Particular Interest

Lifeline encourages applicants to creatively address civic space challenges in their countries with an approach they feel is most appropriate. However, due to the scarcity of funds, Freedom House may choose to prioritize applications that take into account any of the following under-funded activity areas:

- Engage local constituencies and audiences, especially the general public, on civic society issues**
While pressure from the international community is often important and in some cases the only safe avenue for advocacy, Freedom House is particularly interested in initiatives that engage the general public on civil society issues and/or local lawmakers, policymakers, opinion leaders, and government officials who have a stake in creating or destroying an enabling environment for civil society.



- b) **Counter stigmatization of civil society and build a positive counter-narrative**
Crackdowns and legal restrictions on civil society are often preceded by calculated campaigns to undermine the legitimacy of CSOs. This is true of organizations working on human rights and accountability issues, which are often branded as representing “foreign” interests and values. Freedom House is interested in applications that aim to counter this stigma and/or demonstrate the positive role CSOs play in society.
- c) **Convene CSOs across sectors to boost civil society to respond to restrictions**
Civil society often suffers from artificial divisions across sectors, such as divisions between human rights and development organizations or accountability and service-delivery organizations. Laws targeting civil society often play on or enhance these divisions. Freedom House is interested in initiatives that bridge these divides to improve advocacy on civic space issues and to better respond to respond to restrictions and crackdowns.
- d) **Share best practices for protecting civil society space between countries or across regions**
CSOs often lack opportunities to learn from peer organizations in other countries or regions that have experienced similar crackdowns on civil society. Freedom House encourages applicants to draw on the experiences of others or develop regional/trans-national approaches.

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Submit a one-page concept note with summary budget (see *Lifeline Rapid Response Grant-Concept.doc*) to advocacy@csolifeline.org. We will review the concept, and if approved, will request a complete application.
2. Complete [Rapid Response Grant: Application](#), including the following forms:
 - *Lifeline Rapid Response Grant – Application.doc*
 - *Lifeline Rapid Response Grant – Detailed Budget.xls*
3. Lifeline will review the application, and respond with comments or questions to further define grant activities and objectives. When/if the application is strong and comprehensive, Freedom House will put the project forward to the Lifeline Consortium for approval.
4. Once Lifeline has consortium approval, we will begin the internal approval process, which may require the Applicant to submit documents relating to financial capacity.
5. The process is complete when the grantee has received a Grant Agreement detailing the terms of the grant, and signed by an authorized Freedom House representative.

Until an Agreement is signed, no funding is guaranteed.