



Call for Grant Proposals

Moving beyond COVID-19 Restrictions: Pushing Back Against Authoritarian Pandemic Governance

The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) is pleased to invite proposals for grants as part of its ongoing project to safeguard civic freedoms and address democratic backsliding stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. Grants of \$25,000 - \$45,000 USD are available for projects meeting the criteria discussed below. The activity funded by each grant must be completed by **October 31, 2022**.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until **April 30, 2022** or until available funds are depleted.

Background

As the world enters the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, civic freedoms in the Indo-Pacific region remain under threat. Two years of ongoing emergency measures, restrictions on freedom of expression, security-driven pandemic responses, and economic and geopolitical instability have weakened the non-profit sector and sapped its resources in many countries. Despite these challenges, civil society has persevered and proven its worth, not least through its integral role in COVID-19 response, often fulfilling critical service and humanitarian needs and stepping up to compensate for state and private sector failures to ameliorate human suffering and improve pandemic outcomes. And yet, governments continue to use COVID-19 as an excuse to restrict civic space, enforcing gathering bans and quarantining protesters, or introducing restrictive NGO registration laws in response to protests triggered by the pandemic.

Despite an increasingly toxic operating environment, civil society actors in the region continue their efforts to safeguard civic space and human rights, push back against restrictive government measures, and highlight best practices and better alternatives to governance than authoritarian repression.

Whether or not the pandemic formally 'ends' in the near future, many of the emergency and restrictive measures implemented by Indo-Pacific governments over the past two years are unlikely to be easily reversed, along with expansions of executive power.

In this context, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) seeks to support civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Indo-Pacific in undertaking forward-looking

projects focused around 1) strategies for addressing COVID-19 authoritarian policies, including reviewing and repealing emergency measures; 2) activities to promote civic freedoms-oriented best practices around emergency, disaster response, and pandemic policies; and 3) efforts to highlight the innovative work of civil society in advocating against COVID-19 related encroachments on fundamental freedoms, as well as civil society's critical role in COVID-19 response.

In support of these objectives, applicants may select from a broad range of activities designed to achieve the grant's objective, including, but not limited to:

- Identifying points of leverage and specific strategies to repeal emergency and other restrictive COVID-19 measures in light of the omicron variant, and planning concrete activities to achieve these objectives;
- Researching and analyzing COVID-19 related technology, such as contact tracing apps and surveillance tools, and preparing advocacy activities to roll back the use of technologies that violate privacy and other freedoms, while promoting rights-respecting alternatives for crisis management;
- Developing toolkits, publicity materials, multimedia, or digital campaigns to highlight and promote the work of civil society in resisting authoritarian COVID-19 governance while continuing to provide critical services;
- Conducting research, fieldwork, or case studies to compare best and worst-case scenarios and practices around pandemic governance response, with recommendations for how to better address crises while respecting civic freedoms;
- Organizing national and/or regional convenings to disseminate successful civil society advocacy strategies to resist closing civic space stemming from COVID-19 approaches over the past two years;
- Identifying regional best practices for ensuring avenues for participation in public affairs during COVID-19, and developing recommendations for the institutionalization and wider adoption of such practices;
- Organizing national and/or regional convenings to share best practices employed by governments that successfully addressed COVID-19 while protecting civic freedoms.

*This list is illustrative, and ICNL strongly encourages applicants with innovative ideas and approaches not described above to apply. *Please note that **service-related or direct public health interventions** (e.g. providing COVID-19 relief supplies or trainings on hygiene practices) are **not** relevant to this call and will not be considered. Due to the number of expected applications, only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.*

Application Instructions

To apply for a grant, applicants must submit the following items **in English**:

- Proposal (see below).
- Line-item budget (no more than \$45,000 USD) **using [provided template](#)**.
- Budget narrative, **using [provided template](#)**.
- Resumes/CVs of staff to be engaged in the project.
- Background information about the applicant organization (e.g., website links or informational materials).

Content of Proposal

In five pages or less, please describe your proposal. The proposal should address the following topics:

- Identify a clear opportunity for CSOs or civic space in the COVID-19 era and explain how the proposed initiative will take advantage of this opportunity.
- Provide an overview of the proposed initiative and explain how it will assist other CSOs in overcoming, easing, or navigating COVID-19-related civic space challenges, including specific activities and anticipated outcomes.
- Describe applicant's experience implementing similar activities proposed in this call.
- Identify CSOs, government bodies, and other stakeholders that will be engaged in the activities outlined in the application.
- Provide a proposed activity plan with specific goals and a timeline, recognizing that grant activities must be completed no later than **October 31, 2022**.

Eligibility Requirements

Open to any non-governmental organization based in the Indo-Pacific region.¹

Selection Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following factors:

- Compliance with eligibility requirements and application procedures.

¹ For the purposes of this call, the Indo-Pacific includes most countries in Asia (East Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia) and the Pacific Islands, but does not include Pakistan or Afghanistan. To verify eligibility, please email asia@icnl.org. Not-for-profit organizations are preferred applicants. For-profit organizations carrying out public benefit activities, civic space work, or with relevant expertise interested in applying should contact ICNL to verify eligibility.

- Demonstrated commitment of the applicant to improving civic space.
- Quality of proposed project, including the project’s innovations, the proposed methodology/design, and feasibility of the project (e.g., activities are targeted to achieve stated results, and anticipated results are realistic and attainable).
- Likelihood that the proposed project will enhance civic space.
- Proposed budget and value for money.
- Inclusion of reasonable indicators to measure project success.

How to Apply

Interested applicants can apply by submitting all required documents by email to asia@icnl.org. Please ensure that the subject of your email is “COVID-19 Grant Application 2022.” Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until **April 30, 2022** or until available funds are depleted. Due to the number of expected applications, only shortlisted candidates will be contacted. Questions about the grant opportunity may also be sent to asia@icnl.org.