

Roma Initiatives Office

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ROMA NGOS

GRANT-MAKING GUIDELINES

The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. Roma Initiatives Office (RIO) are a group of coordinating, grantmaking, and operational programs within the Open Society Foundations network, dedicated to promoting the equality, human rights and integration of Europe's largest ethnic minority, the Roma (Gypsies).

The development of Roma NGOs is part of Roma Initiatives Office' theory of change, which is centered on the belief that full integration of Roma will require that Roma themselves are empowered to influence decisions concerning their lives; that governments are accountable for ensuring that the relevant laws, policies and practices are in place; and that a politically significant proportion of the majority populations is supportive of living, working and learning together with Roma. It is our assumption that Roma NGOs must be credible, critical and legitimate in order to leverage sustainable changes for Roma communities.

Through its institutional development programming, RIO aims is to strengthen and develop Roma NGOs with constituency building, watch-dog functions and policy advocacy that serve to influence the redistribution of public funds and hold governments accountable for their decisions and actions.

Main goals and rationale of institutional development grants-making to Roma NGOs

1. To strengthen core policy advocacy and watch-dog functions of Roma NGOs.

In line with global trends, many Roma NGOs in the past 5-7 years have increasingly been engaging in various forms of service-provision or integration projects, especially through greater reliance on EU Pre-Accession and Structural Funds. While these may be providing much needed services and activities in communities, it has meant that fewer organizations are working with Roma groups to hold governments accountable, analyze public policies and demand an end to practices that discriminate and prevent Roma from realizing their full potential. It also risks creating new forms of dependency on the NGOs, rather than serving as channels for empowering active Roma citizens and claiming rights to a life in dignity.

The democratic deficiencies in the region also make critical public voice risky for NGOs that depend heavily on government support or partnerships, since such public criticism could result in funding cuts or other 'punishments'. Therefore, the institutional development support of Roma Initiatives Office will support the preservation and further development of civic 'watch-dog' functions of Roma NGOs, helping to maintain an independent and critical voice, holding governments accountable for ensuring that relevant laws, policies and practices translate into positive changes for Roma.

2. To assist Roma NGOs to have solid structures and practices of democratic good governance, strategic management and accountability mechanisms toward those they serve and represent.

Many NGOs, both Roma and non-Roma, are relatively weak in terms of having well-functioning governance structures, separate from the senior management of the organization. In advocating for greater transparency and accountability among governments, NGOs themselves should model good practices. Furthermore, the general funding climate will increasingly require greater professionalism among NGOs if they are to survive on competitive funding markets. Rising populism and anti-Gypsy politics in Europe put Roma NGOs at greater risk of exposure and media attacks if good governance and potential conflicts of interest within organizations are not addressed properly. This includes a separation of governance and management personnel, since governance bodies should be holding management accountable, while also serving as an additional resource to strengthen fundraising, strategy development, performance assessment and fiscal control. This potential resource within organizations is untapped and missing, when there is no effective governing body.

When using public funds, family relations within organizations and in connection with projects and beneficiaries also represent a potential conflict of interest, for which appropriate measures should be instituted and practiced. Here, policies should ensure that procedures are in place, so that persons without a conflict of interest decide on issues, such as hiring of staff or consultants, selecting beneficiaries, or purchasing of goods and services.

The lack of conflict of interest policies weakens an organization's trust among target groups, public authorities and donors. Other accountability measures, such as obtaining feedback from beneficiaries, running transparent operations, and regular public reporting should empower those people for whom the organization works.

Roma Initiatives Office institutional development support should enable organizations to develop operational strategies, reconfigure and develop governance bodies, create conflict of interest policies, and introduce new accountability mechanisms towards beneficiaries and the general public.

3. To strengthen Roma NGOs abilities to organize constituencies and coalitions with other NGOs and interest groups that influence decisions over public policies and practices on the integration and rights of Roma.

The current anti-Roma climate, combined with weak political influence and often limited demographic advantages means that the influence of Roma NGOs alone is limited in terms of the power it can leverage over decisions on public policies and related resource distribution. Many NGOs lack grassroots constituencies, who can be organized for public actions to influence decision-makers. Therefore, institutional development support looks to help organizations access the needed knowledge and resources for building alliances, coalitions and constituencies, which can strengthen the organization's advocacy efforts. This might include certain public relations and communications activities, training, volunteer recruitment and engagement, and joint strategizing meetings with other organizations.

4. To strengthen Roma NGOs as platforms for the ongoing emergence of new civic leadership among Roma individuals as activists, experts, managers and volunteers.

Advocacy efforts for greater participation of Roma in government have led to the transfer of Roma human resource capacity from NGOs to public administration. Many talented Roma from the NGO sector have migrated to public administration, diminishing civil society capacity. This is likely to continue. While this is desirable, former activists have not been replaced by an influx of new activists and leaders, among emerging Roma youth.

Furthermore, many Roma NGO leaders and governmental officers first started out in local or national NGOs, where they were introduced to Roma rights issues, activism and advocacy. With the changing funding climate, influenced greatly by Structural Funds for services, today the stress is less on citizen activism, rights and community mobilizing, and more on services directed at Roma clients and beneficiaries. Therefore, new cadre of Roma youth is less exposed to rights-based agendas and practices of civic activism. Most of the efforts for investment in growing civic leadership and activism by training, mentoring and support to organizations and individuals were present in the past periods though largely missing in the current context. Therefore civic, watch-dog functions of Roma NGOs should serve as learning and leadership opportunities for Roma youth.

5. To improve Roma NGOs' ability to access and generate a diverse human and financial resource base that supports organizational growth and sustainability.

Most in the CEE region would agree that funding of NGO activities has become more difficult, both in terms of the diversity of funding available and the conditions for absorbing and managing funds, especially in relation to EU funds. Institutional development support should further capacitate NGOs to access and manage diverse funds both within the host country and abroad. In addition to traditional forms of

grants, organizations are confronted with an ever greater need to expand their revenue base through non-traditional means, such as membership fees; corporate social responsibility giving; fees for services such as training or consulting; and other forms of income-generating activities that can supplement grants. Roma Initiatives Office will work together with Roma NGOs to further explore and understand how organizational growth and sustainability can be strengthened through alternative and diverse sources of funding.

Methods of support

Roma Initiatives Office will employ a number of different methods aimed at the development of Roma NGOs as strong institutions. These include: grant-making for support of core running and development costs; access to regional training opportunities; coaching on organizational change management; support for peer-to-peer learning. Institutional development grant recipients may also apply separately for project-specific grants to support programming in the areas of RIO's strategic programming objectives.

Basic eligibility criteria:

- As a 'Roma NGO', at least 50% of the general assembly (in case of associations), governing body and senior management of the organization should be composed of persons who openly declare their Roma ethnic origin and belonging.
- As a civic organization, members of governance and senior management structures should not hold a public office (elected or appointed), including working in public administration.
- The organization and its leadership should be non-partisan, therefore not an active political party member.
- All organizations should have a Conflict of Interest policy. In the case that the applicant does not have a COI policy, then it should be among the main development objectives of the grant period.
- The organization should have programming experience and plans relevant to RIO's theory of change.
- The leadership of the organization should be open to introducing good governance practices, accountability and transparency measures, and stronger public outreach mechanisms.

Focus countries

Institutional development grant-making is focused on supporting organizations based in the following countries of Roma Initiatives Offices' programming: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia.

A small proportion of RIO's funding for institutional development may be dedicated to supporting outstanding organizations in non-focus countries, including: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France, Italy, Kosovo, Montenegro and Spain.

RIO's total budget available for institutional development grant-making is 1,000,000 USD.

Criteria for Grantees and Strategic Partners

Beginning in 2013, Roma Initiatives Office will distinguish between two types of relationships: grantees and strategic partners. All potential strategic partners are expected to start-out as grantees, as a basis to develop joint programming goals and intended outcomes.

Grantees

Grantees could be new organizations or new applicants as well as organizations that have already received institutional development grants from RIO in the past. Grants can be for a period of **up to 12 months**.

Decisions on grantees will take into consideration the following criteria:

- 1. Relevant experience and clear achievements toward at least one of Roma Initiatives Office core programming objectives** (empowerment of Roma, especially women and youth; greater accountability among local and national governments for policies, laws and practices; and challenging negative attitudes toward Roma)
- 2. The organization's management has the proven capacity to administer the grant and realize intended programming.** This could be exhibited through successful project management in the past; formal educational background; and also positive referrals from other donors or NGOs who may have supported and worked with the organization and its management.
- 3. The organization's leadership has a demonstrated capacity to take on new issues and develop new leadership within the organization.** Here organizations show an adaptive capacity to develop and change its strategy and methods in order to increase outcomes and social impact. This could be in response to new opportunities or challenges or as a result of learning from past mistakes and failures. It also looks at how the organization recruits and maintains new talents and young people, providing opportunities for demonstrating leadership and taking responsibilities as part of a team.
- 4. Progress over time in the introduction of good governance practices.** Governing boards should serve to strengthen organizational performance, help define how the organization's mission is being fulfilled, hold executive (management) accountable for their work; and support the management to have the resources and capacities to implement and adapt its strategy over time. This includes relevant decision-making procedures among governance and management; introduction of policies for conflict

of interest; governance bodies that strengthen organizational performance and accountability; and measures to ensure transparency toward beneficiaries, members, volunteers and constituencies.

5. **The organization has a clear added value to the eco-system** of civic organizations working in the field of Roma equality, integration and rights;
6. **Level of donor diversity.** All organizations should show the ability to generate monetary and in-kind resources from other sources besides OSF. In some cases, valuable advocacy and attitudes-related work are realized by organizations that draw on European Accession and Structural Funds for services and projects. While this may limit certain critical voice, both in terms of partnership approaches with authorities, funding dependency and actual human resources allocation, such organizations also have an important role as they are closely connected to real problems and issues confronting excluded Roma communities and groups.
7. **Potential for developing into a strategic partner** of Roma Initiatives Office after a period of successfully working together in pursuing common goals. This especially refers to potential for strengthening civic 'watch-dog' and policy advocacy functions, with limited dependence on governmental funding, as it can compromise the organization's ability to criticize governmental policies and practices.

The average size of the support for grantees is around 25.000 USD/year.

Requests from **groups wishing to start up a new organization** would also be considered a grantee, and will involve consideration of:

1. The organization's vision and niche in the broader civil society ecosystem of the country, region, locality;
2. Capacity and potential of the leadership team;
3. Organizations that provide new leadership opportunities for Romani youth and women;
4. The strategic relevance and coherence of the action plan for the first year;
5. Organizations that represent a response to critical external factors (corroded democratic institutions; increased discrimination and violence, deficiencies of agency in RIO strategic focus areas)
6. Results of a pre-monitoring assessment meeting carried out by Roma Initiatives Office.

The average size of the support for starting up as a new organization is around 18.000 USD/year.

Strategic partners:

Strategic partners will work closely with Roma Initiatives Office on implementing our theory of change through: (a) development and generation of operational projects, (b) execution of projects based on our grant-giving, and (c) the support and amplification of common advocacy efforts and goals. Roma Initiatives Office would build at least one strategic partnership in each priority country, with a focus on addressing key deficits.

Ongoing dialogue, reflections and adjustments on strategies, cooperative actions, and the development of trust and understanding should qualify the relations between the leadership of strategic partners and Roma Initiatives Office.

Strategic partners will have much stricter requirements in terms of programming alignment and assessment criteria. The grant agreements can be for a 3-year, renewable commitment, with annual review processes.

Strategic partners may have a higher monetary contribution to their core costs than grantees. A higher financial contribution will involve stricter requirements regarding quality of work, developmental benchmarks, and reporting.

Strategic partners of Roma Initiatives Office will be assessed on the following criteria:

1. **Minimum 3-year, recent track record of core programming achievements in at least two areas of RIO's strategic objectives:** outcomes and results in terms of empowerment of Roma communities, especially youth and women; holding governments accountable for more effective public policies and programs for Roma integration, and challenging negative attitudes toward Roma.
2. **Minimum 3-year track record of realizing civic 'watch-dog' functions through evidence- or constituency-based advocacy, as a core and primary activity of the organization.** Evidence- and/or constituency-based policy advocacy has generated credibility and ongoing recognition as a point of reference for communities and certain public authorities. Strategic partners should show a history of regular public critiques on policies, the voicing of discontents, and collective actions to challenge power relations and decision-making processes. Recognition and credibility should result in outputs and outcomes such as 'wins' in conflicts over policy issues and court cases, influence in elections of public representatives; publishing and quoting of critiques; research and policy analysis that contribute to policy changes, mass media coverage on the positions and actions over particular issues; and an articulation of greater negotiating power.
3. **Empowering Roma to be agents of change.** Strategic partners should be working with Roma in empowering ways, to build capacity and leadership from among local communities and groups so that they may organize themselves and represent their own interests in front of authorities and decision-makers. As opposed to service-provider - client relations, strategic partners are expected to be a resource or platform for Roma to increasingly become their own agents of change. This may be through the organization's human resource development, leadership model and practices within the organization, core programming activities and through the working structure of membership-based organizations.
4. **Organizational leadership exhibits openness to learning and practices critical thinking, with a demonstrated capacity to take on new issues and develop new leadership within the organization.** Leadership of strategic partner organizations are able to engage in dialogue and critical reflection in terms of strategizing, self-evaluation, feedback and learning aimed at strengthening outcomes. Such dialogue and processes should result in the actual implementation of adjustments and

changes in approaches and actions of partners based on the learning and insights gained. The organization should also be effective in recruiting and maintaining new talents among its human resources, developing leadership qualities others, and laying the ground eventual leadership transition when the time comes.

5. **Good governance and management structures and practice are functioning.** Governing boards should serve to strengthen organizational performance, help define how the organization's mission is being fulfilled, hold executive (management) accountable for their work; and support the management to have the resources and capacities to implement and adapt its strategy over time. This includes relevant decision-making procedures among governance and management; introduction of policies for conflict of interest; governance bodies that strengthen organizational performance and accountability; and measures to ensure transparency toward beneficiaries, members, volunteers and constituencies.
6. **Funding diversity:** While recognizing that organizations focused primarily on watch-dog functions, rather than services, will limit the type of funding they can access (e.g. non-ESF and government funding), it would be important to see strategic partners generate and access other funding sources, beyond OSF. This may include corporate social responsibility funding, other private foundations, membership fees, or income-generating activities such as training and coaching.
7. **External factors in the environment** that increase the importance of the organizations' work, such as corroded democratic institutions; increased discrimination and outbreaks of violence, niche in the broader (Roma) civil society ecosystem.

Costs supported by institutional development grants:

Through its institutional development grants RIO aims to provide a maximum of **1/3** contribution to the overall annual funding of an organization. This may be more in the case of new start-up organizations or other extenuating circumstances. The content of funding aims to be flexible enough to respond to the needs of organizations that contribute to transformation and change in pursuit of institutional development objectives, or respond to critical, temporary and time-sensitive issues that jeopardize institutional development progress.

RIO's institutional development funding will go for institutional developmental purposes, and some core costs, which ultimately support organizations for 'watchdog' and policy advocacy functions. This includes:

- Volunteer outreach, recruitment and development;
- Travel expenses for advocacy, outreach and fundraising activities;
- Human resource development (learning opportunities for new skills and knowledge am staff);
- Board and staff retreats, including potential coaching and training,
- Facilitated support for development of multi-year organizational strategies.

- Introduction of new staff to support organizational capacity needs (e.g. fundraising support; financial manager; public relations officer, advocacy officer).
- Training of fundraising strategies.
- Translation costs (e.g. for applications, reports)
- Independent auditing to strengthen financial management practices, while serving as a safeguard against public bodies using audits and controls to potentially discredit vocal and critical organizations.
- Partial core salaries, especially of management and administration;
- Administrative expenditures and overhead not covered by other programming;
- Equipment.

Please note that Roma Initiatives Office may approve only part of the funding request.

Outcomes and Indicators of Progress

In supporting institutional development of Roma NGOs, RIO has set the following intended outcomes and related indicators which will be monitored together with the organizations receiving funding:

1. Roma NGOs are credible and democratic institutions, modeling good practice of transparency and accountability

Indicators of development:

- Governance structures serve as an effective accountability mechanism within organizations.
- Organizations have adequate forms of communication that strengthen accountability and transparency toward constituencies, donors and general public.
- Conflict of Interest policies are established and practiced.
- Less overlap in persons sitting in both the governance and management bodies.

2. Roma NGOs are more mission- and strategy- driven, rather than donor-driven.

Indicators of development:

- NGOs have developed 3-year strategies that guide their work.
- Organizations are operating on the basis of a core strategy and related annual plan.
- Organizations demonstrate new or enhanced learning, monitoring and evaluation cultures and practices.
- Organizations are better able to realize their intended budget plan.
- There are new sources resources and funding supporting the work of the organization, especially from members (financial and in-kind), corporations, social enterprises, and other private donors.

3. New leadership and critical voice emerge from among Roma youth and women working in Roma NGOs

Indicators of development:

- Teamwork is strengthened within organizations, especially those that are highly individual-centered.
- Talented and qualified young Roma, especially women, are working in Roma NGOs (staff, volunteers, managers).
- Roma NGOs recruit and maintain young Roma, especially women.
- Roma Youth and women are more visible and vocal in public arenas.
- The organization gains public recognition from various actors as a reference point on particular issues it deals with.
- New NGO representatives are present in national and international conferences, events and public

4. Greater numbers of Roma (from among the 'target group') exercise decision-making powers within Roma NGOs

Indicators of development:

- Membership-based organizations are expanding in the number of members.
- Volunteers are recruited and maintained, and over time show upward mobility within the organization.
- Well-functioning structure of the organization, including statutory elections within organizations.
- New persons participating in governing, control and other bodies of the organization.

Application deadlines:

- **New applicants:** New applications, from organizations that do not currently have an ongoing institutional development grant, will be reviewed two times per year, in March and September.
- **Ongoing grantees:** Current grantees may reapply anytime of the year, when their current grant ends. In 2013, Roma Initiatives Office will be working with current grantees to align future grants to the January - December or July - June cycle.

How to Apply:

To apply for an institutional development grant, applicants should complete the attached narrative application form and the excel budget sheet.

Applications should be submitted through the Open Society Foundations' [Applicant/Grantee Portal](#).

Please be sure to complete all sections, indicating N/A where not applicable.