



Request For Proposals

Title: ACCELERATE Programmatic Grants for Civil Society Organizations under the Human Rights Defenders Initiative at The Carter Center and DT Institute

Award amount: \$30,000 - \$50,000

Number of awards: Three (3) - four (4)

Issue date: March 19, 2025

Closing date: May 2, 2025

Contact information: HRDIGrants@cartercenter.org

Background

As stated in Article I of the United Nation's *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups, and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*: "Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels." However, throughout the world, there is a rise in authoritarianism, a crackdown on fundamental freedoms, and a restriction on the operation of human rights defenders (HRDs). The internet has transformed how people and societies interact; global economic growth has not been equitable across regions or within countries, and the COVID-19 pandemic has shown how deeply vulnerable the global population is to unforeseen global catastrophes. Moreover, a focus on the human rights impacts of climate change has shifted how HRDs do their important work.

The Carter Center and DT Institute have supported HRDs as they carry out their courageous work in some of the most difficult contexts. Since 2003, The Carter Center has convened the Human Rights Defenders Forum to provide a space for reflection, resilience building, and action planning. In addition, DT Institute has been working with human rights defenders on public and privately funded programs and grants since its inception in 2019. Since 2024, the two organizations have expanded our support for HRDs through the ACCELERATE funding mechanism. With this Request for Proposals (RFP), The Carter Center and DT Institute seek to resource HRDs in a second pilot phase of programmatic grants. ACCELERATE Programmatic Grants will channel funding to HRDs implementing locally led solutions that will benefit from project-based resources to start new initiatives, scale existing work, or amplify efforts.

These programmatic grants are open to partners of The Carter Center and DT Institute who meet the eligibility criteria below. Successful projects will benefit from technical advisement from either The Carter Center, DT Institute, or both. Through this pilot small grants mechanism, The Carter Center and

DT Institute seek to empower HRDs to make meaningful impacts in their local contexts. Successful applicants will contribute to a modest Learning Agenda and participate in an emergent Community of Practice.

Despite the crisis impacting foreign assistance and organizations that depend on bilateral funding, The Carter Center and DT Institute are continuing to implement the second phase of the ACCELERATE mechanism for our partners. Please note that funding is very limited in the pilot phase. The Carter Center and DT Institute cannot provide awards for all favorably evaluated applications.

Issue date: March 19, 2025

Application deadline: May 2, 2025

Maximum total amount awarded: \$50,000 USD. The Carter Center anticipates awarding 3-4 awards between \$30,000 - \$50,000 for a total ceiling of \$150,000.

Duration: At most 15 months. Start date: July 1, 2025, or later. End date: No later than September 30, 2026.

Eligibility:

Applications to ACCELERATE Programmatic Grants are limited to The Carter Center and DT Institute programmatic partners. The RFP is open to organizations and individuals who are in good standing with either organization through current or previous work, including through a prime/subrecipient relationship with a private or public donor; organizations who have benefited from technical assistance from either organization; local organizations who have partnered on advocacy campaigns or other similar initiatives with either organization. If you need help determining if your organization is a partner in good standing with either organization, please email HRDIGrants@cartercenter.org with your inquiry.

Geographic eligibility is limited to those countries where The Carter Center and DT Institute have a history of operating or collaborating in partnership with local organizations. Country context will be a factor in determining feasibility of programmatic interventions during review.

Other eligibility considerations:

1. Organizations should be not-for-profit organizations/charities according to national laws. For-profit entities are not eligible.
2. They should qualify as civil society/non-governmental organizations. Governmental entities are not eligible.
3. Public and private educational institutions are eligible if they meet the above criteria.
4. Individuals are not eligible.
5. Existing bank in account in the name of the organization, or the ability to obtain one prior to project start date

Successful applicants must complete a pre-award survey from The Carter Center and DT Institute. The Carter Center will use the pre-award survey to exercise due diligence on prospective grant recipients.

Organizations may submit applications individually or in partnership with other international or local organizations. Each applicant is limited to one application submission under this RFP as the prime applicant. There is no limitation on being included as a potential sub-recipient in multiple applications submitted by other prime applicants.

Thematic areas and illustrative activities:

ACCELERATE Programmatic Grants are non-prescriptive and will scale or amplify existing work or projects that increase the ability of HRDs to conduct their human rights work. Proposed activities should capitalize on a window of opportunity through which the implementing organization will expand an enabling environment for HRDs to promote respect for human rights and democracy. The Carter Center and DT Institute take a broad view regarding the definition of human rights defender; please use your proposal to demonstrate how your work relates to this topic. Other thematic areas on which The Carter Center and DT Institute focus on are: conflict resolution, peacebuilding, rule of law, stabilization, and transition.

You may find some ideas of illustrative activities below:

- Advocacy efforts to enshrine protections for HRDs in domestic law based on UN principles.
- Intergenerational mentorship schemes to build the capacity of young people based on context-specific movement successes.
- Cross-border exchanges and action planning to promote the opening of civic space based on regional similarities.
- Efforts to increase the inclusion of marginalized populations into mainstream civil society organizations.

This mechanism will NOT support:

- Any existing/ongoing expenses not directly related to the selected project. *De minimus* indirect costs will be considered.
- Projects focusing on broader human rights issues than those affecting human rights defenders.

Submission and co-creation:

Proposals should include:

- A. A **cover page** including:
 - Proposal title
 - Organization name
 - Address
 - Phone number
 - Email address
 - Point of contact
 - Total amount of request
 - Complete Annex 1: budget template
- B. A two (2) – three (3) page **narrative proposal**, including but not limited to:
 - o Background of working as/with human rights defenders;
 - o Description of current or past partnership with The Carter Center and/or DT Institute;
 - o Window of opportunity to which the intervention is responding;
 - o A program design overview with activities, their impacts, beneficiary groups, and an implementation timeline;
 - o Thematic working areas for the activities;
 - o *instead of a narrative proposal, applicants can prepare **five to seven slides** outlining the same information above.*
- C. A **budget** detailing line item and activity costs, including staff allocation, for the suggested time period.
- D. Brief **budget notes** explaining calculation costs in the budget.

Successful applicants will work with The Carter Center and DT Institute on a work plan and adaptive implementation.

Process

Timeline:

- March 19, 2025: RFP release
- March 28, 2025: Deadline for questions
- April 4, 2025: Release of responses to questions
- May 2, 2025: Submission deadline
- May 7, 2025: Confirmation of receipt of proposals.
- May 7 - 23, 2025: Review of applications. The Carter Center and DT Institute reserve the right to ask clarifying questions. Questions do not indicate a successful proposal.
- No later than May 23, 2025: Completion of review of proposals.
- May - June 2025: Successful applicants will undergo due diligence review.
- June 2025: Announcement of successful applicants.
- July 2025: A kickoff call will be scheduled to identify roles and responsibilities and expectations, including workplans, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting requirements.
- July 2025 – September 2026: All ACCELERATE beneficiaries are expected to take part in an emergent Community of Practice for the mechanism.

Instructions to applicants:

1. Basic Parameters

The Carter Center and DT Institute invite eligible organizations to submit technical and financial proposals to meet the specificities of the RFP above:

- a. Successful applications will align with the specificities as described above.
- b. The Carter Center and DT Institute may, at its discretion, cancel the RFP in whole or in part.

2. Cost of proposal

The costs of preparing a proposal are each applicant's responsibility, regardless of the outcome.

3. Eligibility

The Carter Center reserves the right to verify any information in the applicant's proposal or request additional information after the proposal is received.

4. Questions related to RFP documents

A prospective applicant requiring clarification of the required RFP documents may contact The Carter Center and DT Institute in writing at HRDIGrants@cartercenter.org. The Carter Center and DT Institute will publish responses to any requests for clarification of the RFP documents received by March 28, 2025, no later than April 4, 2025, on The Carter Center's website.

5. Language of proposal

The proposal and all related correspondence must be in English.

6. Clarification of proposals

To assist in the examination, evaluation, and comparison of proposals, The Carter Center and DT Institute may request further written clarification from an applicant after the proposal submission deadline. To ensure timely review, the applicant must answer any requests for further clarification or information within three business days. A request for clarification does not indicate likelihood of success.

7. Proposal currencies

All prices quoted in the financial proposal must only be in United States Dollars. Any agreements resulting from this RFP will be issued in United States Dollars.

8. Evaluation of technical and financial proposal

TECHNICAL PROPOSAL (80%)

Proposals must include the following sections:

- Background of working as/with human rights defenders;
- Description of current or past partnership with The Carter Center and/or DT Institute;
- Window of opportunity to which the intervention is responding;
- A program design overview with activities, their impacts, beneficiary groups, and an implementation timeline;
- Thematic working areas for the activities.

The following supporting materials are not required but may be submitted:

- CVs or descriptions of key project team members (no more than two pages)
- Brief summary of previous awards within the past five years (no more than two pages).

Applicants must demonstrate organizational experience and ability to plan and manage programming, progress reports, and financial compliance.

FINANCIAL PROPOSAL (20%)

Financial proposals will be evaluated following the completion of the technical proposal evaluation. Applicants are encouraged to develop a realistic budget that includes only a small portion of costs for overhead expenses. Budgets must be consistent with proposed activities. The applicant must have the ability to account for all costs and demonstrate an ability to reconcile expenses and maintain acceptable standards of compliance properly. The amount of funding per successful applicant depends on the number of awards.

9. Award

The award will be made to the most qualified applicant(s) who can successfully demonstrate their capacity to implement the activities outlined in their proposal with the greatest efficiency and best cost. The Carter Center reserves the right to negotiate with the selected applicant(s) to adjust their proposal to meet The Carter Center's program objectives. The award will only go into effect once all components of an applicant's proposal are agreed upon and an agreement between the applicant and The Carter Center is signed.

The selected applicants are expected to commence implementing successful projects as of the date and time stipulated in this RFP.

About The Carter Center

"Waging Peace. Fighting Disease. Building Hope."

A not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization, The Carter Center has helped to improve life for people in over 80 countries by resolving conflicts; advancing democracy, human rights, and economic opportunity; preventing diseases; and improving mental health care. The Carter Center was founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, in partnership with Emory University, to advance peace and health worldwide.

About DT Institute

DT Institute is a US-based non-profit organization that operates as both a funder and implementer to advance human rights, build peace, and increase internet freedom through strengthening independent media and technology. Our mission is to partner with communities and leaders to help build and preserve more resilient, equitable, inclusive, and democratic societies. As an implementing partner, DT Institute focuses on strengthening communities and leaders in these areas, working with local organizations to build strong coalitions to effect change. Our philanthropic strategy complements, informs, and expands these initiatives. The impact grants we make to non-governmental organizations and individual researchers aim to build, test, and advance bold, innovative approaches to development.

