

Resilient Roots Accountability Pilot Project Grants: Application Guidelines

What are we trying to do?

The Resilient Roots initiative, coordinated by [CIVICUS](#), in collaboration with [Keystone Accountability](#) and [Accountable Now](#), is testing **whether organisations who are more accountable and responsive to their roots - namely, their primary constituencies - are more resilient against external threats.**

To do so, we are looking for **Spanish/ French speaking partners and organisations in the MENA region, Asia, and Pacific to design and rollout innovative accountability pilot projects** over a 12-month period. These pilot projects will explore the different ways primary constituent accountability can increase civil society organisations' (CSOs) levels of public support and trust, to achieve greater longer-lasting efficacy and legitimacy.

Each partner organisation will be provided with the funding, technical support, and tools needed to bring these pilot projects to life. We will work closely with each selected project to:

- Refine and finalise the project plan;
- Identify capacity gaps and organise training or expert input to support project implementation;
- Measure baselines for both accountability to primary constituents and resilience;
- Continuously assess progress, providing the evidence partners will need to course correct;
- Share experience and learning across all project partners;
- Create a strategy for sustaining the resulting accountability practices as they are demonstrated to be effective.

To ensure that the impact of these efforts extends beyond these partner organisations and the communities they work with, we will use their outputs to create tools and resources that support other organisations to develop and adopt their own constituent accountability approaches. In particular, CIVICUS intends to use these tools and resources beyond this initial phase of the Resilient Roots initiative to continue scaling up the adoption of constituent-driven accountability approaches across the whole Alliance and wider civil society sector.

[A full summary of the initiative is available here.](#)

What are we looking for?

After successfully selecting an initial cohort of pilot projects in May 2018, we are now looking for **2 Spanish-speaking / 2 French-speaking partners, as well as 1 organisation per**

region in Asia, Pacific, and MENA. Organisations will be supported to design, roll out, and evaluate an accountability pilot project at the national or local level, over a 12-month period. French and Spanish speaking organisations will be supported by one regional partner in Latin America and one in Francophone Africa, in addition to the Resilient Roots team.

We want each organisation to share their context-specific idea for boosting accountability to their primary constituents. This could include things like:

- Ways to enable primary constituents to actively input into processes to set and measure progress on the organisation's strategic objectives
- Ways to empower primary constituents to have a voice in project planning and/or implementation
- Ways of involving your primary constituents in the organisation's governance structures (such as the board of directors, for example)
- Ways of engaging your primary constituents to better assess the effectiveness and impact of your activities
- Creating new or honing existing constituent accountability approaches that have the specific intention to also be used by other organisations

More specifically, we are looking for ideas for constituent-driven accountability pilot projects which are:

- Innovative, brave, and have the potential to transform the relationship between your organisation and the people you work with
- Specific to the context that your organisation works in, including the threats you face from any adversaries
- Either a completely new, untested idea, or a plan for consolidating and systematising an existing good practice that is currently only taking place in an infrequent or informal manner
- Grounded in a commitment to ongoing reflection, learning and improvement. Challenges and failures are just as useful as things that worked smoothly and successes
- Supported by decision makers and involving multiple roles/teams within your organisation who will approach this work proactively, to ensure strong commitment and participation during the full duration of the pilot project.

We are not looking for:

- Projects aiming to hold governments or other stakeholders to account
- Conventional monitoring and evaluation efforts which are not driven by the needs of primary constituents

- Projects which focus on capacity building for your primary constituents
- Projects which focus on increasing the accountability of your primary constituents
- Umbrella organisations that consider their primary constituents other member-based organisations.

What Does an Accountability Pilot Project Actually Look Like?

LIFT is a US nonprofit dedicated to ending intergenerational poverty. By fostering relationships between low-income parents and caregivers of young children and dedicated volunteers, LIFT helps families build the personal well-being, social connections, and financial strength to secure basic needs and achieve long-term goals, like a safe home, living wages, or a better education. Keystone Accountability worked with LIFT to set up a system where members answered a very short survey on an iPad as they left a LIFT meeting. LIFT shares the results of these surveys via TV screens in waiting areas and runs focus groups to better understand why people gave the responses. These focus groups created a space where LIFT staff could have a conversation with members about how better they could meet their needs. By analysing the data, LIFT has been able to establish a positive correlation between members who gave high scores to questions about their relationship with LIFT and their ability to make progress against their goals. Member feedback is now used to improve all LIFT's programmes and even in the design of new ones.

What do we mean by *accountability* and *resilience*?

This initiative is specifically looking at the **accountability** of an organisation to the individuals or communities it is trying to see benefit from its work, also known as '*primary constituents*.' Therefore accountability relates to the ways in which an organisation is answerable to - and held responsible for its policies and actions by - its primary constituents. It is different from M&E, as it therefore helps to build deeper and more transparent relationships between organisations and their communities, where information and decision-making flow more openly between CSOs and their constituents.

There is not a single, one size fits all formula for becoming a more accountable organisation, nor is it viewed as a clear path with fixed start or end points. Rather, we understand accountability to be highly context specific and constantly evolving, with organisations needing to adapt the nature of their relationships with their primary constituents according to their own capabilities and changing situations.

Resilience is the ability of an organisation to deal with or respond to threats, in order to continue to function as normal and work towards its objectives. A threat could be any form of attack or sanction which aims to disrupt or limit an organisation's activities, or any other infringement of its rights to associate, assemble peacefully and freely express views.

In practice, threats often emanate from hostile government authorities, in the form of [‘increased scrutiny, exhaustive registration requirements, and most notably limitations on the ability to access funding from abroad.’](#)

Organisational resilience can be developed in different ways, such as increasing the number or type of friends and supporters, through being part of an international community, or by deepening trust with primary constituents. But this will always be highly context specific, as it relates directly to the particular threats an organisation faces.

What do selected projects receive?

- An initial grant of up to US \$30,000 to cover your organisation’s costs to implement the pilot project, with the opportunity to access further resources for the continuation of this work
- Hands-on guidance to develop the pilot project proposal into a comprehensive implementation plan
- Tailored training and resources to build the specific skills needed to undertake the pilot project
- Ongoing, regular support with project implementation, including support with measuring constituent-based accountability and resilience
- Being part of an active community of organisations working on constituent-driven accountability approaches, focused on peer-to-peer learning and problem solving
- Promotion of your work to a global audience via case studies, blog posts and learning resources,. However should you wish, this need not include specific details about your organisation

Timeline:

June 2018	Review applications and help select pilot projects for Cohort 2
October 2018	Confirmation of participating organisations, project design and organising training
February 2019	Progress assessment and course correction
April 2019	Sharing and learning event, bringing together all pilot project organisations
July 2019	Progress assessment and course correction
November 2019	Pilot project evaluation and succession planning
February 2019	Packaging of outputs and lessons learned for wider dissemination

Who is this for?

A wide range of organisations, networks or movements are invited to apply. A particular thematic focus or experience with constituent-based accountability approaches is not required. More specifically, preference will be given to entities:

- **Organisations that work in Spanish or French as their first language, as well as those located in Asia, Pacific and MENA** ranked by the [CIVICUS Monitor](#) as narrowed, obstructed or repressed
- Primarily working at the national or subnational level
- Able to clearly identify external threats to their operations, whether they be political, financial or otherwise
- Which lack the resources to try new or consolidate existing approaches to constituent-driven accountability
- Who have a clear understanding of who their primary constituents are, and why being more accountable to them would be beneficial

How will grants be awarded?

A selection panel comprising of CIVICUS, Keystone Accountability and Accountable Now, will select a shortlist of promising project proposals. Shortlisted projects will then be required to provide further details via a final round of questioning, which the selection panel will assess against the below listed criteria.

Evaluation Criteria	
Articulation of external threats and their perceived links to accountability	10%
Articulation of primary constituencies and how they are engaged at present	20%
Explanation of why and how primary constituencies will be continuously engaged during the pilot project	15%
Explanation of how primary constituent inputs will inform organisational planning, decision making and activities, including beyond the pilot project period	25%
Demonstration of buy-in from senior management and allocation of adequate staff/teams to deliver the pilot project	5%
Demonstration of innovation and creativity, or expansive thinking around existing approaches	15%
Meets financial request criteria (organisational registration, financial management, staffing and reporting, etc)	10%

How to Apply?

Carefully read these guidelines to confirm your eligibility and help you to develop your constituent accountability pilot project idea. You should then complete this [application form](#) by 18 June 2018.

If you have any questions or require further information, please email the Resilient Roots team (resilientroots@civicus.org)