

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

POLICY FELLOWSHIP INITIATIVE FALL 2018

The Open Society Foundations Armenia (OSFA) works to build vibrant and tolerant democracies with governments accountable to their citizens. Human rights, transparency, access to justice, promotion of civil society and social inclusion are among Foundations' core areas of concern. Aiming to provide a rapid response to the challenges of open and pluralistic society, and in its quest for an empowered civil society, OSFA announces Call for Proposals for the Policy Fellowship Initiative (PFI) Fall 2018. The Initiative invites applications from policy researchers who are willing and prepared to carry out rigorous and innovative research identifying the most critical open society challenges, developing practical solutions, and advocating for such by maximising the impact of their research. The fellowship also aims to enhance the capacity of researchers in influencing public policy-making processes, and encourages proactive cooperation between independent researchers, civil society organisations, and decision-makers to reach a higher quality of policy analysis and research-based dialogue.

Eligibility

The PFI Program is open to civil society representatives, university faculty, policy researchers, analysts, policy advisers and specialists. The applicants must have at least an MA degree in Public Policy and Administration, Political Science, Law, Economics, International Relations, or any other related field. Experience in policy analysis and advocacy is desirable. Strong research skills are highly valued. Availability of fellows to devote significant time to the fellowship is a must. Fellowship applications for projects last up to five months and are accepted from individuals only.

Expectations

Applicants are expected to identify and conceptualise specific problems in the framework of bigger challenges in Armenia today,¹ conduct policy research and contribute to public discourse by promoting policy concerns, and proposing solutions to identified problems. Fellows are expected to question policies and reforms, formulate concerns based on reasoned arguments and apply appropriate methodological techniques. Fellows should provide a structured and informed reporting in the form of a policy paper (within 10,000 word-limit) and a policy brief with clear recommendations. The promotion of public discourse is characterised by effectively influencing decision-making. Fellows are expected to delegate time to advocacy of their research. To promote a policy concern, Fellows are expected to design and follow an advocacy plan, including identifying relevant decision-makers, groups and allies, initiating targeted consultations, engaging in various formats of public communication and networks to stay updated on the policy developments.

Application procedures

¹ Applicants are encouraged to formulate concerns based on, but not limited to, issues identified in suggested thematic areas in Appendix 1 (page 3) of PFI Fall 2018 Call for Proposals.

Applicants are required to submit Policy Fellowship Initiative Fall 2018 Application Form² by carefully addressing the specific framework designed for proposal submission and evaluation. All applicants will be informed about the results of competition in a period of three weeks after the submission deadline. Shortlisted applicants might be invited to attend an interview.

Budget

Fellows will receive individual grants up to \$3,000 (USD) to cover research-related costs.

Training

OSFA provides assistance in policy analytical capacity building and development for Fellows. All successful Fellows participate in a mandatory seminar in Yerevan on the value of policy analysis, problem formulation and research methodology, and are exposed to an advanced experience in policy intervention and advocacy. Fellows are expected to actively participate and contribute with their expertise to the policy discussions and meetings organised regularly by the OSFA, and other partner civil society organisations.

Application deadline and contacts

All interested applicants are required to submit the Application Form (Appendix 2) and supporting documents: resume (mandatory) and a sample of previously conducted research (optional) to OSF-Armenia via email: register@osi.am by:

October 8, 2018 17:00

Applications are submitted electronically. Applicants will receive an electronic confirmation of application receipt to their e-mail in a period of two working days after submission. If no confirmation email is received -- contact us. For questions or additional information, please contact Policy Fellowship Initiative Coordinator Valentina Gevorgyan by email: valentina@osi.am or phone: (+374 10) 533 862; 536 758.

***An information session will be held to answer questions for Applicants:
October 01, 2018 17:00
Vivaldi Hall, Grand Hotel Yerevan, 14 Abovyan str., 0001 Yerevan***

² See Appendix 2 (page 6) for Application Form.

Policy Fellowship Initiative Fall 2018 Call for Proposals

Appendix 1 Thematic Areas

Justice System

In its period of democratic transition, Armenia ranks high the implementation of reforms with an objective to strengthen the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, as a foundational principle for the protection of citizens' constitutional rights. In a democracy, the performance of judiciary is an indicator of country's commitment to the rule of law. Despite its new political course, the country still faces a range of challenges. The applicants are encouraged to develop research, which will assess the performance of judicial system, prospects of reforming the criminal justice sphere; analyse root causes of injustice leading to human rights violations; identify mechanisms for the prevention of recurring practices of human rights violations and abuse; identify evidence on possible human rights protection mechanisms in the context of state security etc. The applicants are encouraged to develop knowledge identifying international experience related to administering justice in transition. We expect that fellows, develop evidence-based research, and contribute to the development of reforms' agenda through policy recommendations to support country's effective and smooth transition to democracy.

Government Accountability, Transparency and Corruption Prevention

After the change in the political course of Armenia, the new leadership now prioritises the fight against corruption to be able to establish a transparent and an accountable governance. Armenia needs a thorough commitment to the application of anti-corruption mechanisms. The determination of the new government to fight corruption on all levels necessitates rigorous research to be able to functionalise the commitment in different spheres. Researchers are encouraged to map the root causes for continued injustice and provide support in the development and implementation of anti-corruption reform agenda. The spheres of enquiry can include, but be not limited to the anti-corruption body, public procurement system, regulations on asset declaration and beneficial ownership. The applicants can initiate research to seek for the best international experience in fighting corruption in the period of political transition; develop measures and indicators for assessing implementation of the anti-corruption strategy and its action plans; analyse Armenia's progress towards implementation of core international anti-corruption obligations and conventions in the framework of GRECO, GSP+, OECD, UNCAC and assess effectiveness and impact of EITI for in-country implementation. Separate research projects can concentrate on the analysis of functioning of policies designed to fight corruption, e.g. including but not limited to conducting assessment of illicit enrichment criminalisation, conflict of interest regulations, whistle-blower institution and so on.

General and Higher Education

In this period of Armenia's democratic transition, the new government has committed to initiate authentic reforms in the field of education, in order to revitalise the sector. Despite numerous former interventions and significant donor support, the problems of human rights in education, quality, integrity, social justice and participation remain challenging today. There is a need to thoroughly depoliticise the sector, establish quality assurance mechanisms, and secure inclusive and egalitarian policies offering credible education for all. The applicants are encouraged to develop research addressing the

following issues: social justice (e.g. inclusion and non-discrimination, access to quality education in urban vs. rural communities, effectiveness of high schools in terms of accessibility and quality of education for all); academic integrity and academic freedom (problems of higher education institutions' autonomy and academic independence in the context of ongoing reforms in higher education, plagiarism); quality and integrity issues of external and internal quality assurance mechanisms in higher education, general education text books; role of parents' and other councils in ensuring accountability and quality of education; science and research in the context of the higher education sector; scientific qualification process; elitisation of education; benchmarking methods and indicators to measure the quality of education; assessment of practice vs. policies of the free of charge system of general education; public perceptions towards the quality and value of education; optimisation of general education in the context of community consolidation, as well as the national security. Additionally, research activities can include revision of financial and education policies from the perspective of integrity and efficiency of the education system and development of immediate measures to address access to education for students from diverse backgrounds throughout the territory of the republic. The applicants are encouraged to develop research to support and/or complement the decision-making process related to the ongoing reforms.

Armenia's Velvet Revolution and the Next Steps

In April 2018, Armenia witnessed an unprecedented mobilisation, a nation-wide uprising, which became known as the Velvet Revolution. The country's political course has changed and the hopes of citizens increased for the new and quality governance uphold by the democratic principles and values. Considering the urgency of immediate reforms, country's political agenda currently evolves around strategic priorities, the primary targets paving the foundation for the entire reform process. The applicants are encouraged to develop research related to issues high on political agenda, as well as identify concerns necessitating immediate enquiry to support the reforms' process. The research can also be designed to identify ways of cooperation and support provision to the government by civil society and policy community. The research can be developed to compare values, policies, practices and budgetary performance under the former and the current governments; to identify opportunities of participation for local population and the vulnerable groups; to analyse the changes in political culture, public perceptions and expectations from the ongoing developments, etc. Fellows are encouraged to develop targeted recommendations to help shape the agenda for reforms.

Social Justice

According to its Constitution Armenia is a social state. The country has also taken responsibilities to deliver social guarantees as a member of the Council of Europe. The equal distribution of resources and the fair treatment of the different social groups are essential indicators standing in positive relationship with the level of countries' development around the world. Committed to equality and justice in policies and practice, the applicants are encouraged to develop research addressing the extent to which the reforms implemented in various spheres reflect the principles of social justice, to understand whether the ongoing reforms fulfil the standards uphold by the foundations of the constitutional order, that of a social state governed by the rule of law. The research activities can include but be not limited to assessing the allocation and implementation of public funds in the sectors of health, education, labour and social affairs; studying cases of corruption and their relation to unemployment, poverty and migration, issues of access to justice and social protection of vulnerable groups, as well as designing enquiries to policies and practice of social justice issues on local and national levels. Applicants can research policies and administrative procedures designed in accordance with rights-based approach; develop a methodology for the assessment of social justice policies and propose a research addressing the linkage of social justice issues with development indicators. The applicants are also encouraged to look

into the ideologies based on which the reforms are implemented in different sectors, their penetration into existing narratives and actions from the perspective of social justice.

Disinformation and Propaganda

The development of communication and information technologies foster public capacity to mobilise and advocate for reforms. The Armenian people were successful in voicing their will and concerns, a circumstance, which has led to the events of April 2018. However, after Armenia's Velvet Revolution, propagandistic efforts have seemingly increased, particularly in online and social media, wrapped in nationalistic, discriminatory, partial and free-from evidence narratives targeting public space and civic discussions. Identifying reliable sources of information remains a serious challenge. In the current situation, when Armenia's political life is under a significant public radar, as well as on behalf of the various local and international bodies and institutions, the need for evidence based and rigorous research on the subject increases. Improved communication mechanisms are essential for the appropriate messaging of reforms, as well as for the provision of support to citizens in holding their government accountable. The applicants are encouraged to develop research looking into channels, messaging and the political logic behind tendencies, which aim to absorb public space using disinformation and propaganda mechanisms. The applicants are also encouraged to address the improvement of communication between the government and the public, to ensure the continuity of the democratisation process in Armenia. We expect that fellows develop research to exercise evidence aimed at maintaining a healthy-operating public space, less prone to propaganda.

EU – Integration and the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement

In November 2017, Armenia and the EU signed the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which sets a comprehensive reform agenda. In this critical period of Armenia's transition, it is essential that the policy community supports domestic reforms' process by taking advantage of the opportunities, in this case to monitor and advocate accountable implementation of CEPA. The reforms in different sectors, as stipulated in the Agreement, should be implemented in close cooperation with civil society and policy community. To support the policy capacity in the critical reform areas, the applicants are encouraged to develop research on issues complementing domestic priorities and Agreements' agenda. The activities may include but be not limited to developing a methodological framework, an assessment model to address the impact of CEPA implementation in different sectors; assessing civil society engagement in monitoring of Agreement's implementation; assessing performance of Armenia's obligations under human rights and other instruments (as referenced in CEPA); assessing the organising, performance and impact of Civil Society Platform and other institutional bodies established under the Agreement; developing and implementing local and international advocacy strategies; exploring new tools and mechanisms for engagement of civil society in the framework of CEPA (or other instruments Armenia has signed). The researchers can develop enquiries focusing on, but not limited to, the areas laid down in the Agreement, including democratic institutions and the governance system, economic development and market opportunities, energy efficiency, environmental protection, agriculture, social and labour affairs and transportation. The applicants can also design research to comparatively assess sectors as provided by the Eurasian Economic Union Treaty and CEPA. The applicants are invited to submit proposals to help influence reforms through a rigorous research, which is critical in the period of transition, full of tangible opportunities enabled by the EU integration.

Appendix 2 Application Form

Policy Fellowship Initiative Fall 2018

Call for Proposals

This application form is designed to offer specific framework for proposal submission and evaluation. The form highlights selected key sections that a robust policy research proposal shall contain. Each section needs to be carefully addressed. Word limits are expected to be taken into consideration. Precise, concise and clear writing are seen as an advantage of a potentially successful proposal.

Project title and abstract

Provide a title and a brief overview of your policy research: what do you intend to examine? What is the motivation and reason behind your research? What is the current reform relevance? Describe the questions you seek to answer. (250-300 words)

Problem description and research justification

Define the policy problem and specify what you aim to achieve with your policy research. What are the novelty and urgency of addressing the problem? How the problem affects the Armenian society today? Who are the stakeholders directly and indirectly involved; targets influenced by the problem? Present the context and nature of the specific concern and anticipated contribution to the field as a result of your research. (1000-1200 words)

Research questions

Present your main and sub- (if any) research questions (the research questions should be provided in a question format). (80-100 words)

Policy options and argumentation

In response to your research question/s, what is/are your suggested alternative policy option/s? Elaborate on the reasons why the suggested alternative policy option/s is/are more effective? (350-400 words)

Methodology

Describe research methodology selected to answer your research question/s. Indicate potential obstacles in applying research methods, and elaborate on how you will overcome those. (300-350 words)

Outputs and deliverables

Describe your research outputs and deliverables: policy papers, policy briefs, posters, conference papers, databases, guidelines, information leaflets, infographics, presentations, audio visual materials etc. (80-100 words)

Advocacy strategy

How you see the impact of your policy research? What tools and resources you will use to reach out to target audiences in properly communicating the findings of your research? Elaborate on the advocacy strategy you will apply to maximise the impact of your research. What are the risks associated with the implementation of your advocacy strategy? (500-700 words)

Project timetable

Provide the timeframe for the project and its key activities. Please note that the maximum project duration is five months. Estimated start of the project is November 01, 2018

Budget

Please list all costs associated with your research in an itemised budget table below (in USD). Expenses such as honorarium, fieldwork, advocacy costs (presentation, publication of policy paper), and other necessary expenses can be included in the budget. Please note that the budget shall not exceed \$3,000 (USD).

	<i>budget category</i>	<i>unit</i>	<i>number of units</i>	<i>cost per unit (\$)</i>	<i>total (\$)</i>
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
	Total:				