

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS**  
**POLICY RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP SPRING 2019**  
**Open Society Foundations Armenia**

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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. Responding 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 Research Fellowship: [PRF Spring 2019](#). The program invites applications from policy researchers who are willing and prepared to carry out rigorous and innovative research identifying critical open society challenges, developing practical solutions, and advocating for such by maximising the impact of their research. The fellowship program 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 PRF 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 required. Applications are accepted from individual researchers; the duration of research projects is up to five months.

**EXPECTATIONS** Applicants are expected to identify and conceptualise specific problems in the framework of bigger challenges in Armenia today,<sup>1</sup> conduct public policy research and contribute to public discourse by promoting policy concerns, and generating solutions to identified problems. Successful applicants are expected to question policies, reforms or their implementation, formulate concerns based on reasoned arguments and apply relevant 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 and targeted recommendations. The promotion of public discourse is characterised by effectively influencing decision-making. Fellows are expected to develop advocacy strategies, and delegate time for their implementation to promote a public policy concern, including identifying relevant decision-makers, groups and allies, initiating targeted consultations, engaging in formats of public communication and networks and following-up on policy developments. We expect that fellows take ownership of their policy research results advocacy.

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<sup>1</sup> Applicants are encouraged to formulate concerns based on, but not limited to, issues identified in suggested thematic areas in [Appendix 1](#) (page 3) of PRF Spring 2019 Call for Proposals.

**APPLICATION PROCEDURES** Applicants are required to submit **PRF Spring 2019 Application Form**<sup>2</sup> by carefully considering and responding to the framework designed for proposal submission and evaluation. All applicants will be informed about the results of competition in a period of four 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 PRF assists fellows in developing policy analytical capacity. Fellows participate in a mandatory seminar in Yerevan on the value of policy analysis and research methods, policy intervention and advocacy. On a competitive basis, and per requirements of the policy concern and advocacy, the program also provides an opportunity to participate in a regional (including participants from Moldova and Kyrgyzstan) capacity development and networking seminar. 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 PROCEDURE AND CONTACTS** All interested applicants are required to submit the Application Form (Appendix 2) and supporting documents: resume (mandatory) and sample (or link) of previously conducted research (optional) to OSFA via email: [register@osi.am](mailto:register@osi.am) by:

**March 04, 2019 17:00**

**Applications are submitted electronically.**

Applicants will receive an electronic confirmation of application receipt to their email in a period of two working days after submission. If no confirmation email is received -- contact us. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered. For questions or additional information, please contact Policy Research Fellowship Coordinator Valentina Gevorgyan by email: [valentina@osi.am](mailto:valentina@osi.am) or phone: (+37410) 533 862. 536 758.

Information session:

**February 19, 2019 17:00**

Vivaldi Hall, Grand Hotel Yerevan, 14 Abovyan str., 0001 Yerevan

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 2 (page 7) for Application Form.

Call for Proposals  
Policy Research Fellowship Spring 2019  
**Appendix 1 Thematic Areas**

### **Justice System**

Armenia's political transition provides immense opportunities to reform the judiciary and criminal justice system. The impartiality and independence of the justice system will be determinant of country's commitment to the rule of law and protection of citizens' constitutional rights. Armenia's former attempts to improve justice system has been characterised by sporadic and fragmentary approach. Despite the new political course of Armenia, the country still faces a range of challenges in this field. To be able to commit to justice reforms, decision-makers necessitate evidence-based research and analysis identifying urgent gaps in policy and implementation. The applicants are encouraged to develop research, which will provide recommendations towards strengthening the judiciary, law enforcement, investigative and prosecutorial bodies; to analyse issues related to the penitentiary institutions and other closed and semi-closed institutions. Research is welcome to address matters of civilian oversight in defence and security sectors. The applicants are also 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 Armenia's democratic transformation.

### **Government Accountability, Transparency and Corruption Prevention**

After the change in the political course of Armenia, the new leadership 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. For example, the applicants can initiate research to seek for the best international experience in fighting corruption in the period of democratic 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. Research can address 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, unexplained wealth, as well as studying the cases of corruption and their relation to unemployment, poverty, migration and so on.

## **Economic and Social Justice**

Achieving social and economic justice remains a challenge for societies in transition. The struggle for justice remains an untapped area, compelling public authorities to reconsider policies by shifting these to base on the principles of social and economic justice. 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. Armenia has taken a number of international commitments, to manifest a domestic environment in accordance with policies of fairness and economic guarantees contributing to equality within society. We encourage research to improve understanding of crucial financial and economic policies promoted by the government, and addressing the different measures of social and economic situation. Research activities can include but be not limited to assessing the impact of Armenia's integration to the Eurasian Economic Union; assessing Armenia's new tax code, customs and import policies; market access, conflict of interest issues and policies protecting economic competition. Researchers can also address policies and administrative procedures designed in accordance with rights-based approach; develop a methodology for the assessment of social and economic justice policies; assess the allocation and implementation of public funds in different sectors. The applicants are also encouraged to develop enquiries addressing ideologies based on which the reforms are implemented in different sectors, their penetration into existing narratives and actions from the perspective of social and economic justice on local and national levels.

## **Human Rights, Non-discrimination and Fundamental Freedoms**

Democratic societies prioritise human rights. Armenia necessitates steps to ensure protection of minority and vulnerable groups, to fight discrimination and ensure equal opportunities for participation of marginalised populations. The applicants are encouraged to develop research on discriminatory practices in the areas of education, health care, labour, social protection, etc.; state policies ensuring equal access and non-discriminatory treatment for minorities and vulnerable groups; policies securing the exercise of the rights to access to justice, fair trial, freedom from torture and ill-treatment, as well as the right to freedom of assembly, association and expression. Additional suggested research areas include practices of investigation and adjudication of discrimination and domestic violence cases, the need of special measures for targeted populations (affirmative actions) in Armenia, impact of such measures on accelerating equality in enjoyment of human rights. Applicants are also encouraged to analyse root causes of injustice leading to human rights violations and identify evidence on possible human rights protection mechanisms. The applicants can also develop research addressing stereotypical narratives and attitudes towards minorities and marginalised groups, their root causes and influence on equal enjoyment of human rights. Research should develop clear recommendations aimed at improvement of existing policies or their implementation.

## **New Political Environment and Political Culture**

To support the democratic transformation of a country means to support its value-based foundation. In line with demands of the 2018 revolution, the Armenian society necessitates changes in political culture, with shift in values manifested on policy level. The quest of Armenian citizens for accountable governance must be cemented with changes in societal values, because changes in practice will be not possible without improved political thinking and ideological foundations of society. With decline of liberal values around the world, promotion of emancipatory values, including political and economic freedom, freedom of expression, participation and choice, equal access and opportunities etc., becomes the challenge. Armenia necessitates value-based thinking in reforms and policies, a

process in which civil society representatives shall be participants. The applicants are encouraged to develop research providing an understanding of existing ideological foundations among various groups, analysing changes in political culture, identifying opportunities to improve public space and advocate emancipatory discourses, to introduce new practices of social messaging and communication channels, to mobilise latent groups for value-based networking and community organising, to create spaces for dialogues, to reach out to new audiences, improve understanding across different civil society groups, to use the potential of groups and structures aimed for developing a value-based society. Applicants are also encouraged to analyse Armenia's international commitments from perspective of their application in national policies. Research products should aim at developing policy-related targeted recommendations to help shape the agenda for reforms.

### **General and Higher Education**

In the period of Armenia's democratic transformation, 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 challenges. There is a need to 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 and right to education of every child (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, academic freedom and autonomy in the context of ongoing reforms in higher education; quality and integrity issues of external and internal quality assurance mechanisms in higher education (design and approval of program standards; teaching and assessment standards; student-centered learning, etc.); quality and integrity issues in the context of academic/educational programs of higher education institutions, academic programs at higher education institutions and learning outcomes, general education text books; role of parents' and other councils in ensuring accountability and quality of education; issues of scientific research in higher education; academic qualification process; 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 (general and higher education) 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 or complement the decision-making process related to the ongoing reforms.

### **Disinformation and Propaganda**

The development of communication and information technologies foster public capacity to mobilise and advocate for reforms. The political environment in Armenia has changed, but propagandistic narratives seem to curb public spaces. Such efforts have seemingly increased, particularly in online and social media, wrapped in free-from-evidence narratives. Such tendencies necessitate increased focus on policy community prioritising research-based evidence as opposed to propagandistic discourse. Identifying reliable sources of information remains a serious challenge. Improved communication mechanisms are essential for the appropriate messaging of reforms, as well as for the provision of support to citizens to hold their public institutions to account. The applicants are encouraged to develop research looking into channels, messaging and the political logic behind tendencies, which aim to absorb public sphere using disinformation and propaganda mechanisms; to conduct retrospective fact-finding to promote historical revisionist practices to promote critical thinking and alternatives to repeating

narratives; to understand capacities among policy community, including identifying fake news and fact-checking techniques. The applicants are also encouraged to address the improvement of communication between the government and public, to ensure the continuity of the democratisation process in Armenia.

### **Civil Society Oversight of Policy Design and Implementation**

Armenia needs a new quality in civil society and public institutions relationship. The limited or imitative civil society presence in policy-making leads to gaps in policy and legislation, or the accountable implementation of such. For a quality level of governance, Armenia necessitates new functional tendencies and relationships among its various government agencies and bodies, on the one hand, and civil society and expert community, on the other. Armenian civil society actors should become effective monitors of policy development. There is a lack of tangible oversight of government performance, whereas the areas necessitating improvement of governmental processes are many. Research projects can address manifest and latent factors hindering meaningful civil society participation all stages of the policy development process, and ways of cooperation and support provision to the parliament and government agencies by civil society. Applicants are encouraged to develop research addressing civil society participation in existing bilateral and multilateral platforms, drafting of key strategic documents, monitoring of budgetary performance in sectors, including but not limited to health, education, social affairs, defence etc., strengthening the link between researchers and public governance, analysing origins and shifts in agenda setting and other processes by public institutions. We encourage research proposals assessing the institutionalisation of participatory governance, quality of government accountability and transparency defined as civil society participation in governmental bodies and councils. Research should develop targeted and feasible recommendations towards improvement of formerly established functional tendencies, with a clear advocacy for their effective implementation.

### **EU – Integration and the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement**

The EU – Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA), signed in 2017, sets a comprehensive reform agenda. The reforms in different sectors should be implemented in close cooperation with civil society. 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. Research 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 performance of Armenia's obligations under human rights and other instruments (as referenced in CEPA); assessing civil society engagement in monitoring of Agreement's implementation; assessing the organising, performance and impact of EU-CSO bilateral Civil Society Platform and other institutional bodies (to be/established by the Agreement); developing and implementing local and international advocacy strategies. The researchers can develop enquiries focusing on 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 assess comparatively sectors as provided by the Eurasian Economic Union Treaty and CEPA. With this thematic area, we suggest that the researchers take advantage of the available instruments to monitor and advocate the implementation of reforms.

Call for Proposals  
Policy Research Fellowship Spring 2019  
**Appendix 2 Application Form**

*This application form offers framework for proposal submission and evaluation. The form highlights selected key sections that a robust policy research proposal shall contain. Each section has 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.*

<p><b>1. Project title and abstract</b></p> <p>Provide a <u>title</u> and a <u>brief overview</u> 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)</p>
<p><b>2. Problem description and research justification</b></p> <p>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)</p>
<p><b>3. Research questions</b></p> <p>Present your main and sub- (if any) research questions (in a question format). (80-100 words)</p>
<p><b>4. Policy options and argumentation</b></p> <p>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)</p>
<p><b>5. Methodology</b></p> <p>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)</p>
<p><b>6. Outputs and deliverables</b></p> <p>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)</p>

**7. 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)

**8. 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 April 01, 2019

**9. 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.					
	<i>Total (\$):</i>				