

# Resilient Roots Accountability Pilot Project Grants: Open Call for Proposals

## Title

Resilient Roots Accountability Pilot Project Grants: Open Call for Proposals

## 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 partners in a range of countries to design and rollout innovative accountability pilot projects over an 18-month period. These pilot projects will explore the factors which increase public support and trust in civil society organisations (CSOs), to identify different pathways to 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 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 assist or see benefit from its work, also known as its '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.

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 are we looking for?**

Around 10 organisations which will be supported to design, roll out, and evaluate an accountability pilot project at the national or local level over an 18-month period.

We want each organisation to share their context-specific idea for boosting accountability to their primary constituents. Therefore while this is ultimately up to each organisation to define themselves, 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.

#### 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.

[Read the full case study here.](#)

#### **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 and consolidation of this work
- Hands-on guidance to develop the pilot project proposal into a comprehensive implementation plan, along with tailored training and resources to build the specific skills needed to undertake the pilot project
- Ongoing, regular support with project implementation, including the use of co-created methodologies for 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, along with opportunities to connect with a wider network of experts and practitioners working on accountability and resilience. However should you wish, this need not include specific details about your organisation

## What is the timeline?

Spring 2018	Confirmation of participating organisations, project design and training
Spring/Summer 2018	Pilot project implementation begins
Autumn 2018	Progress assessment and course correction
Winter 2018/2019	Sharing and learning event, bringing together all pilot project organisations
Spring 2019	Progress assessment and course correction
Summer 2019	Pilot project evaluation and succession planning
Autumn 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:

- Primarily working at the national or subnational level
- Based in countries ranked by the [CIVICUS Monitor](#) as narrowed, obstructed or repressed, especially in the Global South
- 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?

Following an open call for pilot project proposals, 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	10%
Explanation of why and how primary constituencies will be continuously engaged during the pilot project	20%

Explanation of how primary constituent inputs will inform organisational planning, decision making and activities, including beyond the pilot project period	20%
Demonstration of buy-in from senior management and allocation of adequate staff/teams to deliver the pilot project	10%
Demonstration of innovation and creativity, or expansive thinking around existing approaches	20%
Meets financial request criteria (organisational registration, financial management, staffing and reporting, etc)	10%

### How to apply

After reading the 'Who is this for?' section to see if your organisation is eligible to apply, you should complete the initial [application form](#). You should also use the 'What are we looking for?' section to help you come up with and refine the idea for your constituent accountability pilot project.

**The deadline for the first round of grant proposals is 18th March 2018.** However applications will be reviewed as soon as they are received, and some grants may be awarded before this deadline.

If you have any questions or require further information, please email Jack Cornforth ([jack.cornforth@civicus.org](mailto:jack.cornforth@civicus.org)).