

GRANT APPLICATION FORM  
5<sup>TH</sup> GLOBAL CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2021

<b>SECTION 1. PROPOSAL BASIC INFORMATION.</b>				
<b>Country:</b> Armenia				
<b>Proposal title:</b> Water for Life: Improving Governance for Accessible Water Resources				
<b>Applicant organization name:</b> The Urban Foundation for Sustainable Development (UFSD, Urban Foundation)				
<b>Proposal duration</b> [Around three years, estimated start date - end date] 36 months				
<b>Legal status:</b> Non for profit, Foundation				
<b>Grant amount requested:</b> US\$ 402,000				
<b>Organization's average total budget in the last three years in US Dollars:</b> US\$ 1,300,000				
Indicate share of funding amount requested as a % of the organizations' average total budget in the last three years 31%.				
Please confirm the grant amount requested as a share of your organization's total average budget in the last three years has been calculated using the national organization's annual audited financial statements only (and not to those of the organization's affiliates or partners around the world) We confirm that the organization's total budget in the last 3 years is calculated according to national accounting standards, and financial standards are audited.				
<b>Proven track record:</b> please describe the organization's experience (at least 3 years) in the social accountability field, including past and ongoing projects, funding sources and website links if available. Please add any relevant information on your track record within the relevant thematic field. The Urban Foundation was created in 2004 and has implemented more than 80 projects since then. We have been one of the first to promote citizen engagement, capacity development of CSOs, institutionalized participatory management of local authorities since 2008. All implemented projects have capacity development and social accountability components with different focus. Below is selection of activities implemented in the last five years in which social accountability and citizen empowerment are/have been pivotal components.				
<b>Date</b>	<b>Project title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Donor/amount</b>	<b>Status</b>
August, 2021	Green Community-	Participatory needs assessment for	EU/Armenia Tree	Ongoing
January, 2022	Resilient Future	healthier environment and design of	Project	

		sustainable and replicable model of urban greening.	Eur 11,000	
May 2021 May 2024	Alliance for Better City Governance.	(Component) Mobilization and engagement of stakeholders, creation of task force to ensure citizen voice in various fields of city management.	EU/Vanadzor Municipality,  USD 50,817	Ongoing
November 2021 November 2022	A Helping hand for Newly formed Communities	Promotion of wide citizen engagement in municipal planning. Capacity development of both the active group and local authorities on transparent and accountable decision making.	Dutch Embassy in Armenia  Eur 80,000	Ongoing
December 2018 June 2021	Empowerment through Comparative Learning	Introducing benchmarking in service provision in municipalities.	Dutch Embassy  Eur 194,000	Completed
March 2017 June 2020	PURE-Water: Participatory Utilization and Resource Efficiency of Water	Promotion of accountable and responsible water management in Ararat Valley; fostering behavior change in water usage; Initiation of collaboration among involved stakeholders.	USAID  USD 1,000,000	Completed
January 2018 March 2020	Awareness on water resources	Awareness building of children and youth water resources and the importance of efficient usage.	Coca Cola Foundation USD 50,700	Completed
December 2016 December 2019	Clean Alliance: Accessible Services for Syunik	Participatory strategic planning of waste, behavior change for separation of plastic from household waste.	EU  EUR 582,000	Completed

**Information about all projects can be found at [www.urbanfoundation.am](http://www.urbanfoundation.am)**

**References:** please provide three contact persons that can provide references about your organization's experience.

**Reference 1:**

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**Reference 3:**

<p><b>Name:</b> Larisa Harutyunyan  <b>Position:</b> Political Officer  <b>Organization:</b> Dutch Embassy to Armenia  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:larisa.harutyunyan@minbuza.nl">larisa.harutyunyan@minbuza.nl</a></p>
<p><b>Proposal's partners.</b> Include partner CSOs' names and any other types of Partners</p> <p>The proposal's partner is Hetq Investigative Journalists NGO (IJ).</p>
<p><b>Estimated grant amount to be shared with proposal's partner CSOs if applicable</b> <i>[indicate % or number]</i>  <b>US \$ 90,000 or 22%.</b></p>
<p><b>Indicate if the application is for a new or ongoing project.</b>  <b>The application is for a new project.</b></p>
<p><b>Applicant contact information.</b>  <b>Contact Name:</b> Armine Tukhikyan  <b>Position:</b> Programme Director  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:atukhikyan@urbanfoundation.am">atukhikyan@urbanfoundation.am</a>; <a href="mailto:atukhikyan@yahoo.com">atukhikyan@yahoo.com</a>  <b>Phone Number (with country code):</b> +374 91 43 61 04</p>
<p><b>SECTION 2. APPLICATION CONTENT.</b></p> <p><b>1. What is the proposal's objective?</b> The objective must describe the intended benefits to a specific community/group of people or organizations/institutional changes that are to be realized through one or more development interventions. Please apply SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-bound) criteria. <i>[For more information, see the FAQs]</i></p> <p>The objective of the proposed project is to contribute to improve citizens' access to irrigation water resources in Ararat valley of Armenia through fostering citizen engagement and social accountability in water governance.</p> <p>The project will pursue the rights of about 300 000 residents in about 100 settlements who experience severe water shortage in the result of poor governance and aggravated by climate change. The project will specifically target Water Users Associations (WUAs) who are the closest institutional link to the citizens in the water governance chain. By capacity development and mobilization of active citizen groups, WUAs of the target area will be held accountable for their practices and supported to improve them. For water related policy issues that are under national competence, citizens and the WUAs will advocate jointly.</p> <p>More specifically, the scope of the proposed project encompasses the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Generating accurate and up-to-date data about existing water resources in the target area (including information about its distribution, losses, reasons of scarcity, etc.);</li> <li>ii. Capacity development of 4 WUAs to improve management practices and accountability;</li> <li>iii. Mobilization and training of local activists, creation of Citizen Task Force (CTF), establishing mechanisms for monitoring water management practices.</li> <li>iv. Development and advocating changes for more efficient water usage jointly by WUAs and CTFs on institutional and practical level;</li> </ol>

- v. Knowledge sharing with WUAs and stakeholders (including state Water Committee) from other regions of Armenia for jointly promoting social accountability in water sector.

**2. Outcome indicators.** Please define three key project-level results indicators that will measure the achievement of the proposal's development objective, as defined above. This type of indicators are intended to measure the uptake, adoption and use of outputs by the target group within the project period. You will be asked to develop a detailed results framework if the proposal is selected.

The following are the three key indicators that will measure project's achievement:

- i. Water Users Associations' activities have become more accountable and transparent, records on supplied and distributed water are trustworthy and accurate.
- ii. Citizen groups are able to hold water authorities of regional and national level accountable and responsive, disputes over fair distribution of water resources have reduced.
- iii. Multi-stakeholder partnership is established aiming at problem solving in water sector of Armenia.

**3. Briefly describe the country context and the institutional and sector contexts relevant to the proposal's objectives.** Why is this proposal important in the country? What is the government doing to address the above mentioned challenges? Which public sector institutions will use the project's feedback? If you have already engaged with these public sector institutions, please explain. How are you planning to engage with public sector institutions during the project?

The overall management and development of irrigation and drinking water systems in Armenia is carried out by the Water Committee which operates within the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures. At operational level, irrigation water is managed by the Water User Associations (WUAs) which are non-profit legal entities, are established to supply irrigation water to water users guided by public interest. A WUA supplies irrigation water to users located in its service area. Currently, there are 15 WUAs operating in the Republic of Armenia responsible for distribution of irrigation water. They are governed by the general meeting of member water users – the highest authority convening twice a year, Regulatory Board elected by the meeting, and an executive office for day-to-day management.

Water sector was notoriously known for irregularities. High ranking officials and oligarchs established big fish farms in the target area – Ararat Valley - which became lucrative businesses due to uncontrolled water extraction and fraud with water and electricity bills. This resulted not only in severe depletion of groundwater resources but in non-transparent, non-accountable work patterns of the WUAs. Conflicts between ordinary water users and management of WUAs during irrigation season were commonplace. Ordinary water users and WUA authorities appeared on different sides of the fence; big trust gap was created between the providers and users, tradition for transparent and participatory management was never established in reality although declared at legislative level.

WUAs were created as a participatory mechanism to more evenly distribute decision making and influence within the system, however, the Regulatory Boards of WUAs are strongly dependent on the state Water Committee both financially and institutionally. The State subsidizes part of the water cost which was supposed to be generated from fees. Because of different reasons, and particularly non-transparency, adverse practices in fee collection, as well as immense water losses, WUAs rely on the state budget for salaries and operational expenses.

Such dependence weakens participatory principles and reduces them to mere formality. Although the law prescribes a large range of rights for member-water end users, those rights are under-executed. The reasons for that are twofold. WUA coordination functions including assignment of the governing bodies are centralized within the Water Committee, therefore WUA managers do not perceive themselves as representatives of an autonomous body, but rather act as agents of the Water Committee. On the other hand, ordinary water users are not aware of their rights as WUA members, enabling environment for their participation and overseeing WUAs activities was never created.

A survey conducted by the Urban Foundation in the frame of the PURE Water project (*please refer to Section 1, Proven track record*) shows that most of the residents of the Ararat Valley (96% and more) are not involved in water resource management processes, nor have they received relevant information or participated in water resource management issues. The overwhelming majority of residents (69%) noted that they would participate in discussions on drinking or irrigation water in their community if such discussions were organized and they were notified about the opportunity. According to the same survey, 70% of households are not aware of their rights and responsibilities as water users and even the informed and active citizens, few in number, though, are not tending to take responsibility for the operation of the system due to the lack of motivation and interest.

“Water Sector Resilience in Climate Change: Assessment Report, Armenia, 2020” inter alia defines public participation as ‘having utmost importance for resilience of water resources against climate change’. The Report recommends that ‘public participation methods should be included in the list of documents specified in the Water Code that are mandatory for notification’. Today, although legal acts regulating the water sector call for public participation in decisions, there is lack of concrete mechanism to make the process effective. Access to information on WUAs’ activities, their transparency and accountability are among serious shortfalls in the system. There are technical and legal obstacles that do not allow ordinary water users and other interested publics to get timely information and participate in discussions. Feedback channels are also not operational, the role of local self-government as defender of the interests of the community in provision of water permits is unclear.

Currently, only one of the existing WUAs has an official website, with partial functionality, though. In other cases WUAs’ charters, data on supplied water, irrigation schemes, budgets, performance records, staff structure and staffing lists, feedbacks from users are not published on any online platform. As for public oversight, the law on WUAs defines the right of water users to have free access to information on the activities of the WUA. However, the mechanisms are not detailed down in what way it can be done. In such conditions, the de jure possibility of public oversight is de facto very difficult to carry out.

It is doubtless that both in the past and in the present, there have always been numerous disputes in water sector seeking appropriate and timely solutions. The law prescribes that a WUA should have a dispute resolution mechanism in place and has to elect a Dispute Resolution Commission consisting of at least three members elected during its general meeting. However, the commission’s minutes of meetings reveal dormancy in dispute resolution, and the failure to address disputes in practice. It can be concluded that despite detailed legal regulations and de jure existence of dispute resolution commissions, the latter, practically are non-functional. Financial management is another weak link of WUAs, particularly concerning collection of fees for water and spendings of financial resources. These are areas in which transparency and accountability are largely questionable.

After 2018 peaceful revolutionary events, in line with the declared fight against corruption, the government is committed to improving the situation by creating institutional framework for mutually accountable, fair and efficient water distribution. The guiding principles are spelled out in the Concept of Sustainable Development

of the Irrigation System” initially adopted in 2019 and considerably revised in 2022 to address the challenges of the sector particularly the need for improvement of participatory water management, creation of mutually trustworthy, fair and accurately measured water distribution.

The Water Committee (WC) of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure is the key stakeholder of the project. The political approach of the WC is that provision of irrigation water through WUAs is justified and that despite deficiencies WUAs have proved their effectiveness as institutions. However, to fully utilize their potential, their internal management mechanisms have to be improved, their work of the management authorities made transparent and accountable and responsive to ordinary water users feedbacks and concerns.

Besides the WC, other important stakeholders of the project are the Ministry of Environment the Ministry of Economic Development represented in the project’s Advisory Board. All 15 WUAs are institutional partners of the project. Local CSO/CBOs, informal community activist groups as members of the WUAs are key partners throughout the project. They will be supported by various capacity development activities, will be mentored and assisted to enact their oversight and advocacy initiatives, and be promoted as important actors in water governance.

- 4. Beneficiaries.** Describe the proposal’s primary and secondary beneficiaries. How will the proposal benefit poor and vulnerable groups (children, women, marginalized groups, disabled people, people living with HIV, etc.)? Will you carry out any specific activities to better understand and address these groups’ needs and gaps? Please explain how).

The project has two primary beneficiary groups: WUAs located in the target area and citizen groups of their service area:

1. Primary beneficiaries are 4 Water User Associations working in Ararat Valley, with average 250-300 employees each – will benefit from capacity development, improved knowledge on transparency and accountability, improved data base, new management/performance assessment tools, new equipment for accurate measuring water distribution, better work relations with water users and other stakeholders.
2. 120 members of CSO/CBOs, activists and interest group – will benefit from capacity development, improved knowledge on how to voice the issues, carry out advocacy, keep WUAs responsive and accountable, summer school, mentoring, small grants to carry social accountability initiatives.

Secondary beneficiaries of the project are:

- 11 WUAs throughout Armenia not directly involved in the project but acting as institutional partners of the project.
- Local authorities of target areas of the project.
- Water users of in the service area of WUAs.
- Vulnerable groups, particularly people who live in places that have fallen into category of ‘water stressed’ in the result and climate change and abuse of water resources. Majority of the residents of such settlements are poor as water is expensive and not readily available even for subsistence, not to speak about doing business.
- Farmers, fish farms and agricultural businesses through improved and fair distribution of water resources.
- Water management structures/stakeholders including state Water Committee as the project will support and promote their agenda and commitments.



5. **What is the proposal's geographic scope?** If it is both national and sub-national, please explain and provide information that will help us to understand the proposal's geographic scope in relation to the country's total population and administrative/political organization.

The proposal's geographical area is the fertile Ararat Valley of Armenia which is the largest agricultural region of the country thanks to its rich groundwater resources used not only for irrigation but also for domestic, fish-farming and industrial purposes, including for cooling the Metsamor nuclear plant. Ararat Valley is the bread basket of Armenia, producing over one third of the country's total agricultural output annually, and is home to a significant portion of Armenia's vineyards and orchards. Almost every household is engaged in farming at one level or another.

For many decades water usage in Ararat Valley has suffered from poor management, weak enforcement of existing regulations, corruption, government decisions that are based on outdated and inaccurate data, dilapidating infrastructure and climate change. Over-issuance of water permits resulted in drastic increase of fish farms and over-exploitation of groundwater resources, resulted in extracting far more water than the natural recharge. Exacerbated by climate change, this situation led to decreasing of water level for up to 15 meters in the last decades and shrinking of the underground artesian basin for 67%. The disturbed water extraction balance brought about food, energy and subsistence risks. Because of water resource depletion, more than 30 communities now have lost access to water and experience severe subsistence issues leading to poverty and unequal distribution of water resources.

Indeed, while the causes of water losses are diverse, mismanagement, irregularities, inequity and non-transparency are among the reasons WUAs traditionally have been the weakest link. The proposal aims to contribute knowledge on how accountability in management and to consumers can be nurtured. It aims to also mitigate the impact of climate change through improved, equitable water governance and by promoting social accountability and responsiveness in the interaction between WUAs and its member water users.

6. **Proposal's description.** Please describe the proposed collaborative social accountability approach [See FAQs for additional guiding questions about collaborative social accountability] Be as clear as possible about how the GPSA's support will add value or make a difference to the support you're already receiving from other donors.

The proposal strives to establish a medium where water providers and water users meet and where an enabling environment is present for exchanging information, concerns, claims and ideas of mutual interest. As described above, important institutional prerequisites are already in place in Armenia, however they hardly translate into practical outcomes due to poor management mechanisms. The project will help WUAs to make their activities, procedures, reports and data transparent, improve responsiveness to the concerns of their member-users, on one hand, and on the other hand, to raise knowledge of water users about the irrigation water supply system. It will orient users on their rights and responsibilities, equip them with tools to hold WUAs accountable not only upwards to the state, but to the ordinary water users. Using various tools, the project will raise regular WUA members' motivation for monitoring WUA's activities and for taking a proactive stance in voicing water-related problems.

The project will assess needs for improving capabilities in WUAs' management and offer technical and institutional assistance, ICT solutions, and training to equip them to foster social accountability. At the same time, water users'/regular WUA members' awareness of their rights and responsibilities will be raised, Citizen Task Forces (CTF) will be created in each of the target WUA's service areas to advocate interests of water users and keeping authorities accountable to their members by using different tools. Knowledge, lessons and

practices learned from the project will be shared with other WUAs for reference and replication. The project will build a collaborative environment for WUA authorities and their members to facilitate their mutual work and bridge the gap of distrust.

Both managing authorities of WUAs and representatives of water users are primary target groups and key stakeholders of the project. Other important stakeholders are local governments /communities of the project area, governor's offices, State Water Committee (under the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures). The project will closely collaborate also with the Ministry of Nature Protection through its Water Resource Management Agency, Ministry of Economic Development, and other international donor projects working in the field of water management to establish close synergies and avoiding duplications.

The issue of poverty in water stressed settlements will be among top discussion topics for which mitigation measures will be sought and advocated with the government. The project will use government data to reach out to families or individuals who are on the list of poverty benefit recipients and will closely work with territorial social services and municipalities to have a comprehensive picture of poverty in the target area. The involvement of the poor in the project activities will enhance their voice and increase chances of responsiveness on their needs. They will be assisted through project resources to initiate their own pro-poor social accountability actions that will become integral part of throughout the project's social accountability efforts.

The design of the project is linked to the socio-political context of Armenia, is in line with government's commitments in regard with improving water management as one of the top priorities of the state. The government is continuously improving the sector with the support of donors, among which are: World Bank (investing in the irrigation system since early 1990-ies), USAID, EU, US Millennium Challenges, among others. These investments referred to improvement of physical infrastructures – construction of primary and secondary irrigation canals, daily regulation of reservoirs, pumping stations, etc. The two most recent projects were funded by USAID: The Advanced Science and Partnerships for Integrated Resource Development promoting advanced practices through science, technology and innovation. The other major project was PURE-Water project implemented in 2017-2020 by the applicant, Urban Foundation. It promoted participatory utilization and resource efficiency of water through fostering behavior change to reduce the rate of groundwater extraction in the Ararat Valley. The PURE-Water project partially tackled transparency and social accountability issues, promoted citizen participation in identifying priorities issues. It was in the frame of this project that the first WUA website was developed (for Armavir WUA).

The added value of the current proposal is that it is exclusively designed for promoting social accountability and responsiveness in the relationships of WUAs and their member water users with the aim of fair distribution of resources. Therefore, the project does not duplicate any of the donor investments (mostly directed towards improvement of physical infrastructures) but supplements major donors' efforts through promoting participation and social accountability.

The proposal has a great potential to serve the interests of vulnerable groups and will contribute to poverty mitigation in the target area as it will enhance fairness in distribution of water in the target area and provide opportunities for underserved population to get better outcomes from farming and thus improve their subsistence. The project will use diverse tools of social accountability as described below, and will create a broad coalition with esteemed CSOs to disseminate the achievements nation-wide.

- 7. Components & Activities.** Please define the proposal's main components and under each component the main planned activities. Briefly explain the logic behind the proposed implementation design and



sequence. Please note that all GPSA-supported projects include one Knowledge & Learning component

The proposal defines the following components that will ensure effectiveness of the project and can be measured through clear indicators:

- i. Capacity development of active groups of water users – members of the WUAs to hold their managing authorities accountable for their activities and fair distribution of irrigation water.
- ii. Capacity development of management of WUAs to strengthen participatory management, become more transparent, responsive and accountable before water users and public in general.
- iii. Knowledge sharing about project’s achievements, multi-stakeholder partnership is established aiming at improving social accountability in water sector of Armenia.

The following are activities that support each of the components listed above:

*Under Component (i): Capacity development of active groups of water users – members of WUAs to hold WUA management accountable for their activities and fair distribution of irrigation water.*

Activities under this component follow ‘learning by doing’ principle. They will be implemented parallel to those under Component (ii) and may coincide or interplay with them to promote multi-stakeholder partnership.

*Activity i-1: Introductory meetings in target communities*, meeting with local stakeholders and their mapping. At the inception phase of the project, the project team (PT) will visit all settlements within the target area to introduce the project, meet with local authorities, members of WUAs, local activists and random residents. Information about the objectives of the project will be shared during meetings, project factsheets will be distributed. It will be made clear that any individual or group is welcome to participate in different phases of the project with different level of engagement. These meetings will be of semi-formal and informal character and will allow forming an understanding not only who is who in the community, what engagement potential is available. Information collected during the meetings will then be categorized and mapped as reference for further activities.

*Duration: 2 months*

- *Activity i-2: Surveying target communities and WUAs.* Such survey is important to generate evidence-based information about the current state of affairs in irrigation water supply and to have baseline information against which the project results will be assessed. At the same time the survey can serve as a reference for the midterm assessment for the study carried out by the Water Sector Project Implementation Office a couple of years ago as well as a follow up study for the baseline assessment of the PURE-Water project from 2017. While designing the survey, multi-stakeholder collaboration will be ensured so that dynamics in main findings can be observed along the timeline.

The methodology will include desk research of newest documents, surveying water users and WUA authorities and a number of multi-stakeholder semi-structured expert interviews. The scope of the survey and the instrument will be discussed and finalized with the Steering Committee; its results will be uploaded on the websites along with expected outcomes of the project so that progress from baseline can be captured and assessed.

The Project Team (PT) will involve a social scientist to design the survey, instruct and control the surveyors, analyze and report findings. Surveyors will be recruited from local active water users who had expressed interest in participating in the project. For them an orientation session will be organized and the objective of the survey will be explained followed by technical instructions by the social scientist.

Duration 2 months  
Output: Survey report

***Activity i-3: Organizing a training on social accountability for WUA members:*** Once the survey is finished and the report is finalized, the PT will organize a two-day training for local water users mapped during the introductory meetings. Invitation to sign up for the meeting will be sent to them along with the description of the training, its topics and organizational arrangements. The invitation letter will highlight the project context and how training fits in it. The learning objective of the training is to help participants understand general concepts and practical implications of citizen participation, social accountability, transparency, citizen rights and responsibilities, methods of public oversight, advocacy, etc. A session will be devoted to explaining the complex structure of water management system in Armenia so that participants understand where on that scheme the Water User Associations and they as water users are. Also, the results of the survey and will be presented and discussed.

Three trainings will be organized during the project implementation period – 2 in the first year, and one in the second year. Each of the three-day trainings will offer about 30 seats for participants from the target area. The aim of conducting similar trainings twice in two years is to keep the doors of the project open and give chance to new persons to join. This will increase the number of water users/members of WUAs who are aware of their right to participate in WUA's decisions and keep water authorities accountable. The training conducted in the second year will mainly repeat the agenda of the first two, but may be modified slightly to capture changes and developments that might have occurred since.

Duration: 1 month in Y1 and 1 month in Y2  
Output: 3 trainings; 85-100 participants

***Activity i-4: Creation of the Citizen Task Force and organizing summer school for the CTF:*** Once the first two trainings are completed, the most proactive, enthusiastic and interested WUA member participants including representatives from water stressed communities will be invited to form a Citizen Task Force (CTF), which will be trained to use social accountability tools for keeping WUA management responsive and accountable. A summer school will be organized for them during which they will master practical tools of collaborative social accountability. Apart from common components of various social accountability tools that include collection, analysis and dissemination of data and information on the subject matter, mobilization of public support, advocacy and negotiation for change, the CTF will learn to use more advanced and specific tools such as:

- Monitoring expenditures in water sector. This tool usually allows comparing the records on disbursement of fees for water and/or government funds with the records on actual delivery of services.
- Social audit for monitoring service provision through scrutiny of public funds by end users;
- Community score cards to registers perceptions of water users and satisfaction with the service. This tool holds water managers accountable for gaps and inadequacies in service delivery by registering perceptions of users and making the results of the survey widely known through the various media.
- Advocacy skills, assessment of advocacy potential of an issue; campaigning.
- Monitoring actual provision of water in due volumes; Deployment of monitors on water supply segments.
- Media literacy, information dissemination and broad publicizing of findings and results.

During the summer school, methodology of using each tool will be instructed, so that participants are able to make informed decisions about suitability of a given tool for a specific issue.

Also, during the summer school, the participants will be informed about the opportunity of implementing one or several of these tools in carrying out social accountability activities for which they will receive financial support from the project. The procedures for receiving small grants will be explained to them, a model application form will be shared and explained. One of the sessions of the summer school will be devoted to idea development for actions that the project may support. Total, 2 summer schools will be organized.

Duration: 3 months (including prep work)

Output: 30 persons master SA tools

***Activity i-5: Carrying out monitoring of water distribution using SA tools.*** The project will set aside a sum in the budget to provide small grants to the CTF members who will clearly identify a problem in water delivery chain, understand its causes and propose ideas how to reasonably solve it. The applicants shall demonstrate how they will collaborate with WUA management and relevant authorities to keep them accountable and responsive. The PT will elaborate guidelines for small grants with detailed instructions to potential applicants what kind of activities can be financed. An information session will be organized, an application form will be elaborated, and a selection committee will be created. Successful applications must clearly demonstrate what issue in irrigation water supply, as identified in the survey, their action will address, what is the expected outcome, etc. Applications must be solution-driven, addressing a specific water governance issue contributing to its solution. Applications on advocating improved policies with potential of higher level impact will be encouraged. Applicants will be advised to collaborate with each other or other stakeholders and design joint actions for stronger outcomes and better visibility. The PT will organize two granting cycles that will cover 3/4<sup>th</sup> of the project implementation period.

Duration: about 24 months

Output: About 20 small grant actions implemented

***Activity i-6: Preparing a report on SA status.*** Upon completion of small grants implementation, the CTF will prepare a comprehensive report describing what actions have been done to improve social accountability of WUAs, in the water distribution chain, what were the results and changes that were brought about as compared with the initial situation/data. The report will be published, publicized and uploaded as a resource for replication in future in other areas of Armenia.

Duration: 2 months

Output: Published report

***Activities under Component (ii): Capacity development of WUAs to strengthen participatory management, become more transparent and accountable before water users and public in general.***

***Activities under this component will be implemented parallel to those under Component (i) and may coincide or interplay with them to promote multi-stakeholder partnership.***

***Activity ii-1: Training of the target WUAs on participatory management and accountability.*** As described in previous sections of this proposal, WUAs often fail to commit to participatory principle which is required by the law and which is the cause and the essence of establishment of WUAs. WUAs' managing bodies often position themselves as part of public authorities and not as non-profits with broad membership. Therefore, in order to promote social accountability and create a collaborative environment between CTF, CSO/CBOs and WUAs, the latter will need support to understand the provisions of the law stipulating the right of member-water users to be engaged in the management of WUAs and overseeing their performance. For that purpose, a seminar will be organized not only for managing bodies of WUAs of the target areas, but also other WUAs as well. The aim of the seminar will be to refresh and provide deeper understanding on what is accountability and participation, why they should adopt those principles in their everyday work. The seminar will last for 2 days, during the first year of the project.

Duration: 1.5 month (including preparation)  
Output: 30 WUA workers trained.

***Activity ii-2: Accurate data management:*** Reliable and trustworthy data collection and usage is the starting point for any improvement, as they provide evidence about the dynamics of change. Almost all socio-economic spheres suffer from weak data management and lack of reliable baseline information. Water management sphere, across its structures, is one of such spheres where striking discrepancies are on the surface.

The project will support the government and WUAs to put in place an updated Geographic Information System (GIS) to obtain accurate and reliable information and create an efficient system for collecting and managing data on water resources. The project will coordinate with relevant government agencies (such as the cadaster service), international partner organizations engaged in improvement of water sector to ensure synergies and avoid overlaps.

To build on the experience of the USAID/PURE-Water project, the project will continue transferring WUAs' operations online, however instead of building individual websites for each of the target WUAs, a unified platform will be created in which every WUA will have their account, and each WUA member within that WUA will have personal accounts through which they can follow their various interactions with WUA management, for example for calculating fees, monitoring water volumes supplied, following supply schedules, filing applications, filing complaints, etc. The platform will serve not only as a management tool for WUAs but as transparency and accountability instrument as well. The unified platform for WUAs will be linked to GIS; other WUAs (not in the target group) will also be able to join the platform through opening individual accounts. WC will take the ownership of the platform and be responsible for its functioning. By constructing the platform, the project will make important contribution to establishing e-management tools in irrigation system that will gradually nudge out old practices not only in the 4 target WUAs, but throughout the country.

The functionality and the design of the platform will be thoroughly discussed with the WC and international donors supporting Armenia's water system improvements. Mock -up of the platform will be presented to stakeholders for final feedback and comments.

Duration: 28months  
Output: Data management system in place.

***Activity ii-3: Introducing benchmarking as an advanced method for performance self-assessment of WUAs.***

The project will encourage and mentor participating WUAs to practice benchmarking their performance as a state of the art self-assessment tool. By applying benchmarking, WUAs will be able to track the dynamics of change in their performance, but also compare their achievements with other WUAs in a peer review mode. The PT will intensively assist them in jointly elaborating key performance indicators, and will oversee the process of information/data gathering. This stage is closely linked to the *Accurate data management activity (A ii-2)* and will provide WUAs another justification about importance of proper data management. Data on indicators will be inputted in database and visualized in graphs and charts that will allow participating WUAs easily compare with each other's performance in the given indicator. The results of benchmarking can have various implications: they can show WUA's gaps in this or that performance area and serve as an evidence-based justification for investing into lagging behind areas; it can be an opportunity to learn from the best

practices of peers who have better performed, and, more importantly, benchmarking can serve as an accountability mechanism before water users. Besides, the benchmarks can be validated by citizens by comparing the WUA's data with citizens' perceptions. Adoption of benchmarking as a method for self-assessment of service provision will contribute to improved accountability and developed capacities of WUAs. This activity, too will be carried out during the most of the implementation period, with a summary of two years' data.

Parallel to performance benchmarking of WUAs, Community Score Carding (CSC) will be carried out by the trained water users/CTF. These two instruments together will provide more comprehensive knowledge as will capture perceptions of both provider and user on the same service. CSC will solicit user perceptions on quality, efficiency and transparency of WUAs and will indicate shortfalls in WUAs' work.

The results of score carding will be analyzed and summarized and compared with those of benchmarking done by the target WUAs. The analysis will highlight differences between perceptions. The findings will be presented and discussed in the Steering Committee, bottlenecks identified and measures for their addressing outlined. An investigative analytical article will be prepared and published on media platforms (such as [www.hetq.am](http://www.hetq.am)).

Duration: 24 months

Output: Benchmarking carried out 2 times.

Output: 1 unified e-platform developed

**Activity ii-4: Equipping WUAs with technical means.** In order to make work of water inspectors efficient and effective, the project will procure portable electronic devices - tablets as working instruments in the field. The devices will be connected to the GIS system to operate with accurate and systemized data which will be synchronized with websites and be available for water user residents.

Duration: 3 months

Output: 120 inspectors are equipped with devices.

*Under Component (iii): Knowledge sharing about project's achievements, multi-stakeholder partnership is established aiming at improving social accountability in water sector of Armenia.*

**Activity iii-1: Inception meetings with national-level water authorities and creation of the Steering Committee.**

The PT will organize introductory meetings with the following national-level authorities in charge of water resource management in Armenia: Water Committee (within the ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure), Water Resource Management Agency (within the ministry of Nature Protection), Ministry of Economic Development, National Assembly Standing Committee on Territorial Administration, Local Self-Government, Agriculture and Environment.

The aim of these meetings, apart from making personal acquaintances with related authorities in office, is to introduce the aims of the project and its expected outcomes, key activities and timeframe, get initial ideas about the interlocutors' approaches and thoughts about issues related to improvement of irrigation water management. During these meetings, parallel will be drawn with relevant national policies and the project targets to make it vivid that the project is fully in line with the existing legislation, the government's Concept on 'Sustainable Development of Irrigation Water Management' and is committed to contribute to addressing gaps in the sector that are identified and analyzed in various studies. These meetings will present in what specific ways and through what kind of outcomes the project will contribute to realization of provisions indicated in the policies.



The project team will ask government counterparts to nominate representatives for the Steering Committee (SC). The latter will convene at ad hoc basis but not less than twice a year. The SC will comprise of representatives of relevant state agencies, well-known environmental NGO representatives, and dedicated CTF members. Its role will be channeling social accountability measures advocated by the project to the decision makers and liaising the project outcomes with the national strategies in water management area.

*Activity iii- 2 Stakeholder conference.* The project will organize an introductory stakeholder conference to which relevant government structures, international donor organizations dealing with water management systems, Important environmental CSO working at national level, academia, specialized media will be invited. WUAs from other areas will be invited as important institutional partners.

The aim of the initial stakeholder conference will be announcing the launch of the project and presenting its logic, main objectives and expected results and receive feedback from participating stakeholders, identify areas for synergies and flag possible overlaps. Although the project will primarily work with 4 WUAs operating in certain geographical area, other 11 WUAs as institutional partners, will also benefit from knowledge generated in the project and learning from peers.

*Activity iii-3 (Added per comment 4): Elaboration of the Roadmap for improvement of social accountability.* Based on the findings and recommendation generated in the survey (Activity i-2), the project team will elaborate a Roadmap for improving SA in the irrigation water sector, supporting WUAs to regain their status of water users union, enhance water users' voice in the governing bodies of WUAs and promote the rights of users.

The Roadmap will specify a set of short- and mid-term results to be achieved within or beyond the project lifetime. Short-term results are those that do not require amendments in the legislation but rather revisions of lower level documents, such as agreements that are signed between users and WUAs which are not balanced in terms of rights and responsibilities, assisting in making WUAs' work more transparent, reviewing the composition of their governing bodies and the selection process of representatives into the general meeting, etc.

The Roadmap will include actions supporting practical realization of government's concept on 'Improvement of Irrigation System', namely the clause about 'the need for improvement participatory water management, creation of mutually trustworthy, fair and accurately measured water distribution'.

Duration 1.5 months including preparation  
Output: 15 WUAs participated in the conference.

*Activity iii-4 Development of series of analytical investigative articles using multimedia tools.* The project's media partner – HETQ Association of Investigative Journalists, has an impressive track in record in covering and publicizing water related issues. It will publish regular information about the outcomes of the project and provide wide awareness about efforts to promote social accountability. HETQ is a very reputable media, known for its impartiality, professionalism, ethical standards and fact checking policies. It uses different media to publicize its materials to make information accessible for users on various platforms. Issues raised in HETQ are sure to capture broad stakeholder interest and feedback. HETQ will partner with the project throughout entire implementation period and will develop materials more than 20 multimedia materials.

Duration: 34 months  
Output: 20 articles



*Activity iii-5: Stakeholder dissemination conference to share project proceeds.* The project will conclude with a big conference that will bring together all water related stakeholders including state Water committee, ministries, relevant parliamentary commissions, donor community that support water sector, all WUAs, national and local CSO/CBOs, etc. The conference will present key outcomes and solutions that have been achieved during the project and outline concrete measures for their institutionalizing and replicating nationwide. A short video will be shown on activities carried out in the project as well.

- 8. Sustainability.** In which ways will the proposed implementation approach be sustained overtime, after the project’s closing? Please also explain how the approach will be expanded or scaled up. Sustainability of the outcomes is enshrined in the proposed project as several of project interventions are intended for continuous action. Thus:
- Establishing e-governance system through technologically advanced platform and transferring from manual to online operations will have no alternative in irrigation sector as is the case in many other public services. Fostering accurate data management system through enabling connectivity with GIS will have long term positive impact on WUAs’ overall management as will give possibilities for efficient, effective and fair planning of water distribution and will develop a new working culture. WUA platform will be an important vehicle for both accountability and sustainability of the project. The project will have water authorities’ buy-in for institutionalizing management practices. Once constructed, the platform will be widely publicized; it will become both an e-management tool and a means to keep WUAs work transparent and under close public oversight.
  - Adopting benchmarking as a performance self-assessment tool will create an internal continuation mechanism to make it workable. Benchmarking and accurate data management are mutually supporting and complementing activities. Benchmarking data will be open to the public and serve a good tool for water users to monitor WUA’s activity/ water distribution.
  - The project will prepare a roadmap/model guidelines for collaborative social accountability between WUA management and ordinary WUA members which, after testing can be replicated in other 11 WUAs.
  - Creation of a core group (Citizen Task Force) of knowledgeable and vocal citizens who will be encouraged to formalize their activities and register as a CSO with the same mandate as the Task Force.
  - Knowledge sharing among wide stakeholder community, up-taking of the social accountability and transparency mechanisms by other WUAs throughout Armenia.
  - Engagement in and support from water management state institutions for promoting social accountability throughout the water sector.
  - Ensuring synergies between donor interventions in water sector, combining efforts of different projects funded through various sources for continuous promotion of better governance in the water sector (particularly, the planned USAID water sector management project, starting in 2022).

- 9. Risks.** Please identify and briefly describe the main risks to achieving the proposal’s objectives. Risk types include but are not limited to: political/governance, macroeconomic, sector strategies and policies, technical design of project, institutional capacity for implementation and sustainability, fiduciary, environment and social, and stakeholders. Please describe all that apply. For each type of risk, please include 1-2 sentences with the measures proposed for mitigating it.

**There are several risks that relate to this proposal. They are:**

Risk types	Description of the risk	Mitigation
<b>Political/ governance risks</b>	This refers to frequent changes in water sector management due to political turbulences. Since 2017 5 heads of Water Committee have changed, also some structural changes are still not finished which result in delay of planned activities (such as discussions, round tables, deliberations on legal amendments, etc.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ As the proposal’s objective is in line with national government’s policies in the sector, the relevance of the project will not decrease despite changes.</li> <li>▪ Maintain positive working relations with relevant authorities to stay informed about changes and new situation and be proactive in pursuing project’s agendas.</li> <li>▪ Involve gov. level authorities in project activities, maintain effective communication with their offices.</li> </ul>
<b>Sector strategies/ policy risks</b>	Dissatisfaction from WUA’s operations is common, and there have been several attempts to improve them. Their current number (15) is result of recent optimization of 45 WUAs with the aim to make their work efficient and effective. Currently, there are initial discussions as to what legal form fits better to their mandate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The project will be watchful regarding any policy changes related to WUAs. Irrespective of changes, accountability in the water sector will stay high on the agenda.</li> <li>▪ Therefore, project will be flexible to respond to any policy change as the overall objectives remain the same. If necessary, some tactical amendments may be made in the project after getting consent of the donor.</li> </ul>
<b>Risks related to institutional capacity of WUAs</b>	As described in the previous sections, WUAs lack capacities to make their work transparent and accountable. In some cases such work style may be deemed not important as compared to physical and infrastructural components.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Intensive explanatory work will be carried out with the WUAs. The benefit of being accountable and listening to the water users’ voices will be demonstrated.</li> <li>▪ The government’s policy as outlined in the “Improvement of Water Management Concept” will be highlighted regarding requirement for making WUAs’ work “transparent and mutually trustworthy”.</li> <li>▪ Best practices will be demonstrated, peer to peer discussions will be organized</li> </ul>
<b>Risks related to inactivity of citizens/water users</b>	It is very common that citizens do not take actions when they face any issue that affect their life and consider their situation as desperate. Their understanding is that they cannot do anything as they do not have power. This leads to inactivity and sense of helplessness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The project will target especially young citizens who are more receptive towards new ideas and behavior change. They will be explained citizens’ rights and how they can be executed.</li> <li>▪ The proposal will adopt learning-by-doing approach, which, together with mentoring will help young citizens voice issues and / or oversee their realization.</li> <li>▪ Facilitating communication between stakeholders will help overcome barriers.</li> </ul>

**10. Institutional and implementation arrangements.** Please explain the proposal’s implementation scheme, including each implementation partners’ main roles and responsibilities. Provide 1-2 sentences about the partner(s) organization’s experience. Please indicate how you are planning to engage with public sector institutions during project implementation, including collaboration/cooperation arrangements. Please also describe Sequencing of activities as planned.

The project will be implemented by two partners: the Urban Foundation (UF) and the Hetq Investigative Journalists NGO (HIJ). The lead partner is the UF which has considerable experience not only on in the subject matter of the proposal, but also in managing large projects with international donor funds including EU and USAID. An implementation agreement will be signed between partners which will spell out responsibilities and work scope of each other, including UF’s commitment to share grant funds with the HIJ based on their involvement in project implementation.

HIJ is one of the powerful media outlets in Armenia. Throughout its activities, the HIJ has had an impact not only on the media landscape, it is known for its fight against systemic corruption in various fields such as in public procurement system, abuse of office and illegal enrichment, offshore transactions made by high-ranking officials and their affiliates, monitored and disclosed illegal schemes in social area.

The project team will inform relevant public officials and key stakeholders about the launch of the project through official letters and invitation to the opening ceremony. Contact persons will be identified in relevant public institutions who will be regularly informed and engaged in project activities.

The project implementation period is 3 years (36 months). It will be carried out in the following sequence (with semi-annual breakdown).

Description of activity	half-year 1	half-year 2	half-year 3	half-year 4	half-year 5	half-year 6
A. i-1 to i3 (introductory meetings, baseline survey,						
A. i-3: 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> cycles of training on social accountability						
A. ii-1 Training on WUAs						
A. i-4 (creation of the task force, 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> summer schools						
A. ii-2, ii-3 (data management, first benchmarking cycle)						
A. ii-4, ii-5: creation of websites (providing equipment to WUAs						
A. ii-3 (2 <sup>nd</sup> benchmarking)						
A.i-5 Sub-grants 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> cycles (on monitoring, advocacy, accountability)						

A.iii 1 Conference with all WUAs						
A.iii-2 Development of analytical articles						
A.iii-3 Stakeholder conferences						
A.i-6 Preparation of SA report for publication						

**11. Budget.** Describe the proposal's main types of expenses, including estimated breakdown for each component by category and a brief explanation. If the proposal is pre-selected, you will be asked to prepare a detailed budget.

**For each component, please break down the expenses in the following categories:**

- a. Project management & personnel
- b. Training/capacity development
- c. Consultancies (individual and firms/organizations)
- d. Goods & services
- e. Amount transferred to partner CSO(s)

Components	Component 1: Capacity Development of CSO/CBOs	Component 2: Capacity Development of WUAs	Component 3: Multi-stakeholder knowledge sharing	Total
Project management	80,000	70,000	30,000	180,000
Training/capacity development	15,000	5,000	0	20,000
Consultancies	15,000	10,000	10,000	35,000
Goods & services	20,000	57,000	30,000	107,000
Amount transferred to partners	60,000	0	0	60,000
<b>TOTAL:</b>				<b>402,000</b>

**12. Project team.** Please provide a brief description of the team behind this proposal, including if you already have identified the future project director or manager, and other key positions, time dedication and main responsibilities. If there are positions yet to be recruited, please indicate so. Also explain your expectations in terms of distribution of labor and coordination with any partner CSO(s).

**The project will be managed by the following team:**

Title	Time dedication	Description	Name
Project director	50% 36 months	Overall management, donor relations, coordination with consultants, communication with the government agencies and LGs, reporting.	UFSD senior staff, TBD

	Team leader- 1	50% 36 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coordination of activities related to capacity development of WUAs, government collaboration</li> <li>- Collaboration with related consultants/staff</li> </ul>	TBD	
	Team leader - 2	50% 36 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coordination of activities related to SA, capacity development and civic engagement</li> <li>- Collaboration with related consultants/staff</li> </ul>	TBD	
	Grants manager	30% 24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Elaboration of the 3-rd party funding package</li> <li>- Grants management/oversight/monitoring</li> </ul>	TBD	
	Financial manager	30% 36 months	Financial management and reporting	TBD	
	Support staff				