**PROPOSAL NARRATIVE**

1. **Summary**

Project Title: "Community participation in local government as a basis for democracy strengthening."

The project aims at implementing innovative approaches to public access to solving important local issues, improving interaction and communication between the community and local authorities, more active involvement of citizens in decision-making processes, improving democratic standards of accountability and transparency of government.

The project idea is to create a website "Public opinion" with sections for discussionsof draft resolutions of sessions of local councils and other documents, creating electronic petitions, online broadcasting of sessions and other meetings. Within the project realisation seminars and public discussions will be organized with the aim of promoting the project results.

1. **Background**

Democracy is considered to be most effective means of harmonizing and improving society. It is a form of state and political system based on the recognition of people as the source and bearer of power, on an effort to ensure equality, prosperity and justice for all people inhabiting the country.

In the current version of the Constitution of Ukraine general principles for the development of direct democracy in our country are established. Art. 1 and Art. 5 of the Constitution stipulates that the people of Ukraine perform original and supreme power in the country, are the bearers of sovereignty and the only source of power in the state. It defines the right of people to exercise power directly and through state and local authorities.

The problems of local government rarely get proper publicity and attention from the media, do not occupy a significant place in the speeches of the majority of politicians. In addition, there is a rapid decline of confidence in representative government bodies. Development of democracy is hindered by lack of political responsibility of deputies of different council levels before their voters, the opacity of preparation process and decision-making by elected authorities.

The public demands more responsibility and transparency from the authorities, improvement of communication and interaction between citizens and the state and more active involvement of community in decision-making processes. There are approximately 24 million of Internet users in the country, 71% of them are interested in receiving services and communicating with state institutions online. However, the results of the national poll, conducted by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) in February 2015, suggest that the provision of information and services and communication of citizens with the state with the help of Internet resources still need substantial improvements to meet the needs of citizens. Therefore, the introduction of innovative approaches that help both government and citizens to use freely the tools of e-governance and e-democracy for a more transparent and effective cooperation are now urgent more than ever.

21 village councils and 2 united territorial communities of Hlyboka district demonstrate the desire to increase the democratic standards of accountability and transparency of their activities, introduce the practices of public participation in key decisions. It is expected that these changes will be effective through the introduction of practical steps and fixing them in the regulations of the respective councils. Examples of such changes are fixing provisions concerning establishing online broadcasting of sessions in the regulations of local councils and provision about activity of web portal of public initiatives. Transparency of local government of the district is ensured by publishing the draft resolutions of local councils sessions on the websites.

However, except for exploring these documents, the residents of district are not able to influence something or express their opinion on key points of draft resolutions. We are planning to solve this problem with the help of creating the web-site that will improve interaction between government and citizens.

1. **Project Objectives**

- enhancement of transparency and accountability of local governments;

- involvement of citizens in the formation and making decisions at the local level.

1. **Project Activities**
2. ***Creation of the project work group***.

Project work group will consist of members of non-governmental organization “Reforms and development”. Three of them will work on paid positions and one of them will work as a volunteer.

1. ***Creating a web site "Public opinion***".
* Draft resolutions of local councils are published on the web-site [www.gromady.cv.ua](http://www.gromady.cv.ua) 20 working days before the session. With the help of external experts, IT specialists the web-site named “Public opinion” will be created. There will be created separate sections for discussions of draft resolutions of the district and village councils sessions, where links to the published project on the portal www.gromady.cv.ua will be posted. Users will be able to comment on and discuss published information, thus affecting the local government. Our project has the full support of the partner Hlyboka District Council which guarantees official permission and confirmation of planned activities.
* We also plan to create a section “Electronic petitions” on the web-site “Public opinion”. Electronic petition is a service for citizens, which will enable to bring their initiatives to the district authorities. If you receive 500 signatures in 30 days Initiatives will be discussed by responsible officials of local councils, if possible executed, the official response will also be published. Electronic petitions must concern issues relating to the powers and responsibilities of local councils.
* Within the project realization it is planned to broadcast online the sessions of district council on the web-site “Public opinion”. Online broadcasting of plenary sessions will provide realization of citizens' constitutional right to free access to information, will introduce new and effective forms of cooperation between district council and territorial communities of the district. The activities of chairman of the Council, executive staff, and members of the standing committees will be shown to the public through the mechanism of online broadcasting. Their official positions and comments on important issues for the district will be made public. Other events held in the Conference Room of District Council will also be broadcast online, so that citizens could watch and discuss them. Such events include public discussions and hearings, meetings, celebrations, "round tables", conferences. Thus, residents of the district village, even the most distant ones, can be virtually present during the discussion of important issues for them.
1. ***Organization of seminars based on village councils of the district*.**

With the aim of promoting the project implementation, familiarization of the district residents with the newly created website, seminars will be organized for 21 village councils and 2 united territorial communities. Conduction of 23 seminars is planned (1 seminar for each village council and united territorial community), and if necessary, additional meetings will be organized. Rooms for the seminars will be provided by village councils (it can be village culture house, school premises or others). Hlyboka District Council as a partner ensures the provision of premises by village councils. With the help of projectors and laptops we will acquaint citizens with the basic elements of the site and opportunities of participation in discussions and commenting. Seminars will be held in the format of discussions and workshops. People will be able to express their opinion on the website sections, suggest the creation of new sections, learn how to post comments, e-petitions on the site.

1. ***Organization of public discussions in the district villages***

For citizens who do not have Internet access public discussions of the key documents and local councils activity will be organized. Residents of rural areas will be able to watch online broadcasting of the current session of the local council, familiarize with opinions of participants of meetings on issues of the agenda. These discussions will also be held in the premises, provided by village councils, with the use of projectors and notebooks. It is planned to hold 5 public discussions because most residents of the district have access to the Internet. If necessary additional seminars will be held.

1. ***Promotion of the project results***

Citizens of the district will learn about project achievements through the created web-site. Besides, seminars and public discussions held in the villages will also promote project results.

1. **Evaluation plan**

The positive impact of the project will be measured by the following indicators:

* Number of registered users on the site;
* Number of website visits;
* Number of published petitions and the number of people who support them;
* Number of comments to published documents and records;
* Number of views of online broadcasting;
* Number of participants of seminars and public discussions.
1. **Organizational background**

Non-governmental organization “Reforms and Development” is newly created and has operated in Hlyboka district of Chernivtsi region since 2016. The main aim of our organization is assistance in community development and reforms on the territory of Hlyboka district in particular and in the country as a whole.

Objectives of the activity of our organization are:

* uphold the principles of democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights in all spheres of life, social solidarity and social justice of citizens;
* comprehensively promote the protection of constitutional rights and freedoms, by representation of their interests in state authorities, local government, public organizations of Ukraine and other countries and their associations, international meetings, conventions, conferences;
* contribute to providing informative and technical assistance;
* organize and ensure implementation of monitoring programs of activity of government, central authorities, local authorities, local departments of executive power, on the formation and implementation of state and local policies, aimed at solving urgent problems of national and local development for improving economic situation in the country.

These objectives correspond to priorities the project is directed at and the problems it is intended to solve.

The members of non-governmental organization “Reforms and development” are Olena Shmidt (head of the organization), Bohdana Kraiska, Oleksandra Orshevska and Yulian Mikhailovych. All members of the NGO have higher education, they are public activists who have repeatedly participated in the events that are important for the district. Besides, these people reside in Hlyboka district where the project will be implemented, so they know exactly the current problems of the district, needs and desires of district residents.