



International Foundation for Election Systems

Alek Manoukian 9, Yerevan 375070 Armenia, Telephone: 51-20-51, Fax: 51-20-15, E-mail: ifes@ifes.am

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Dr. Kathleen D. McCarthy, Director / CSP
The Graduate Center, CUNY

With this letter, I would like to express my support for Hrachia Kazhoyan's application to participate in the Senior International Fellows Program at CUNY's Graduate Center. I have known Mr. Kazhoyan for over two years – first, when he was a program officer at the Eurasia Foundation in Yerevan, and then secondly, as a co-collaborator in two community development initiatives (one for Eurasia/Armenia and the other for IFES/Armenia). Mr. Kazhoyan has the experience, intellectual curiosity, and commitment to be an asset to the program. My experience with him also shows his ability and zeal to adapt realistic non-indigenous ideas (i.e., realistic in the Armenian context) that he has learned and inject them into Armenia's developing civil society.

To encourage community development and stimulate local philanthropy, Mr. Kazhoyan developed two rather innovative grant competitions while at the Eurasia Foundation. One was for the development of indigenous CBOs and the other was regarding community schools (i.e., school-based community development). During the development of both initiatives, I had the pleasure of discussing with Mr. Kazhoyan both themes. His intellectual curiosity about both topics, his impressive quantity of research on both, and his critical processing and filtering of this information through Armenia's reality were obvious. The resulting RFPs and concept papers were well thought out and articulate.

Though the community school RFP was eventually not realized because of management changes at Eurasia/Armenia and the typical delays in funding from Washington, an important aspect of this program for the fellowship was its encouragement of local philanthropy by schools rallying communities to address their education and non-education needs. Based on the experiences of other CIS countries, an expected by-product of this work in many communities was the development of town or district-level community foundations.

The CBO competition did take place and produced some pertinent results to the fellowship program. Through encouragement by Mr. Kazhoyan, Eurasia supported a Giumri city CBO called Mush-2. Beyond its impressive community development work, Mush-2 has been successful enough in stimulating local philanthropy that it has established a community foundation for its district. The endowment is small but impressive within the local context. Mush-2 provides a worthy model for other CBOs in Armenia and Mr. Kazhoyan has played an important role in their success.

Outside of his work with Eurasia, I have also had the privilege of working with Mr. Kazhoyan on a couple of initiatives at IFES/Armenia. When Eurasia/Armenia was unable to go forward with the community school RFP, he and I adapted the concept for the RFP for an application to the World Bank's Development Marketplace. Through the project development process, I was again struck by his capability and commitment as well as by his communication skills.

Recently, IFES/Armenia also contracted Mr. Kazhoyan as an outside evaluator of our subgrant recipient. Though the fields of his institutional evaluation of our indigenous partner are outside the parameters of the fellowship program, how he prepared for, conducted, and presented his evaluation are worth noting. Prior to conducting the evaluation, Mr. Kazhoyan did substantial research and preparations on various institutional assessment approaches and instruments. While doing the evaluation, he interacted with staff and board members of our indigenous partner in a most professional and appropriately sensitive manner. Presentation of his final assessment report was well thought out, well documented, and well written. His recommendations were most appropriate for our partner and for the realities of Armenia's third sector.

Therefore, I support Mr. Kazhoyan's participation in the Senior International Fellows Program at CUNY's Graduate Center. Not only will he be an asset for the program but we can expect from him afterwards useful introductions of new ideas and innovations for philanthropy to funders and third sector activists.

Sincerely,

Al Decie
Project Director, IFES/Armenia