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Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
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www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-civilian-security-democracy-and-human-rights/bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/

Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for Statements of Interest

Updated: December 2023

PLEASE REFER TO THIS DOCUMENT WHEN PREPARING A STATEMENT OF INTEREST.

Table of Contents

SECTION I: Eligibility	1
A. Eligibility Requirements	1
B. System for Award Management (SAM.gov)	1
C. Eligible SOI Applications.....	2
Format Requirements	3
A. SOI Requirements	3
SECTION II: Guidelines for Application Components	3
A. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Regulations	4
B. SF-424 Forms.....	4
SECTION III: SOI Submission Instructions.....	5
A. MyGrants Applications.....	6
B. Grants.gov Applications	7
SECTION IV: SOI REVIEW PROCESS.....	9
A. SOI Review Criteria.....	9
SECTION V: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	11
A. Background Information on DRL and General DRL Funding	12

SECTION I: ELIGIBILITY

A. Eligibility Requirements

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) welcomes Statements of Interest (SOIs) in response to DRL Requests for Statements of Interest (RSOIs) from:

- U.S.-based and foreign-based non-profit organizations/non-government organizations (NGOs);
- Public international organizations;
- Private, public, or state institutions of higher education; and
- For-profit organizations or businesses.

DRL's preference is to work with **non-profit** entities; however, there may be some occasions when a for-profit entity is best suited. Applications submitted by for-profit entities may be subject to additional review following the panel selection process. Additionally, the Department of State prohibits profit to for-profit or commercial organizations under its assistance awards. Profit is defined as any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs. The allowability of costs incurred by commercial organizations is determined in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR 30, Cost Accounting Standards Administration, and 48 CFR 31 Contract Cost Principles and Procedures. Please see 2 CFR 200.307 for regulations regarding program income.

Applicants must have existing, or the capacity to develop, active partnerships with thematic or in-country partners, entities and relevant stakeholders, including private sector partners and NGOs, and have **demonstrable experience** in administering successful and preferably similar programs. DRL encourages SOIs from foreign-based NGOs headquartered in the geographic regions/countries relevant to the applicable solicitation. DRL reserves the right to request additional background information on applicants who do not have previous experience administering federal grant awards, and these applicants may be subject to limited funding on a pilot basis.

Applicants may **form consortia** in order to bring together organizations with varied expertise to propose a comprehensive program in one proposal. However, one organization should be designated as the lead applicant with the other members as sub-award partners.

DRL is committed to an **anti-discrimination policy** in all of its programs and activities. DRL welcomes SOI submissions irrespective of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, sexual orientation, pregnancy, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, marital status, parental status, political affiliation, veteran's status, or other status. DRL requires all programs to be non-discriminatory and expects implementers to include strategies for nondiscrimination of individuals/organizations/beneficiaries.

B. System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

Note: SAM.gov is not the same as MyGrants. It is free to register in both systems, but the registration processes are different.

Any applicant listed on the Excluded Parties List System in the [System for Award Management \(SAM.gov\)](http://www.sam.gov) (www.sam.gov) and/or has a current debt to the U.S. government is not eligible to apply for an assistance award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR,1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR,1989 Comp., p. 235), "Debarment and Suspension." Additionally, no entity or person listed on the Excluded Parties List System in SAM.gov can participate in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the Excluded Parties List System in SAM.gov to ensure that no ineligible entity or person is included in their application.

Organizations are **not** required to have a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number — formerly referred to as a DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) number — and an active SAM.gov registration to apply for this solicitation. **However, if a SOI is approved, these will need to be obtained before an organization is able to submit a full application. Therefore, we recommend starting the process of obtaining a UEI and SAM.gov registration as soon as possible.** Please note that there is no cost associated with UEI or SAM.gov registration.

Note: The process of obtaining a SAM.gov registration may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks. Please begin your registration as early as possible.

C. Eligible SOI Applications

Technically eligible SOIs are those that:

- Arrive electronically via MyGrants or Grants.gov by the designated due date and time noted in the RSOI. If reasonable accommodations are granted for persons with disabilities or for security reasons, SOIs must still be received by DRL by the designated due date and time noted in the RSOI;
- Are in English and all costs are in U.S. Dollars. If an original document within the application is in another language, an English translation must be provided. For any documents provided in both English and a foreign language, the English language version is the controlling version. (Please note: the Department of State, as indicated in 2 CFR 200.111, requires that English is the official language of all award documents);
- Heed all instructions and specific guidelines contained in the RSOI and PSI, including length and completeness of applications; and
- Do not violate any of the guidelines stated in the RSOI and the PSI.

It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all of the documents submitted in the SOI application are complete, accurate, and current. **DRL strongly encourages all applicants,**

especially foreign or first-time applicants, to submit the SOI before the designated due date to ensure that the SOI has been received and is complete.

FORMAT REQUIREMENTS

To be considered, all SOI documents should adhere to the below formatting guidelines:

- All pages are numbered, including attachments;
- All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper (U.S. letter size); and,
- All documents are single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. Captions and footnotes may be 10-point Times New Roman font. Font sizes in charts and tables can be reformatted to fit within one page width.

A. SOI Requirements

Complete SOIs must include the following:

1. Completed and signed **SF-424** and **SF-424B**, as directed on MyGrants or Grants.gov; and,
2. Program Statement (not to exceed three (3) pages in Microsoft Word) that includes:
 - a) A table listing:
 - i. Organization name
 - ii. The target country/countries;
 - iii. The total amount of funding requested from DRL, total amount of cost-share (if any), and total program amount (DRL funds + cost-share); and,
 - iv. Program length;
 - b) A synopsis of the program, including a brief statement on how the program will have a demonstrated impact and engage relevant stakeholders. The SOI should identify local partners as appropriate;
 - c) A concise breakdown explicitly identifying the program's objectives and the activities and expected results that contribute to each objective; and,
 - d) A brief description of the applicant(s) that demonstrates the applicant(s) expertise and capacity to implement the program and manage a U.S. government award.

Please note: DRL retains the right to ask for additional documents not included in this PSI. Additionally, to ensure all SOIs receive a balanced evaluation, the Department of State review panel will review the first page of the requested section up to the page limit and no further. DRL encourages organizations to use the given space effectively.

Information on additional materials that organizations with approved SOIs must submit can be found in DRL's PSI for Applications, available on DRL's website: <https://www.state.gov/bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/programs-and-grants/>.

SECTION II: GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION COMPONENTS

A. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Regulations

Prospective applicants should be aware that if ultimately selected for a federal award, DRL requires all recipients of foreign assistance funding to comply with all applicable Department and federal laws and regulations, including but not limited to the following: The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards set forth in 2 CFR Chapter 200 (Sub-Chapters A through F) shall apply to all non-Federal entities, except for assistance awards to Individuals and Foreign Public Entities. Sub-Chapters A through E shall apply to all foreign organizations, and Sub-Chapters A through D shall apply to all U.S. and foreign for-profit entities.

The applicant/recipient of the award and any sub-recipient under the award must comply with all applicable terms and conditions, in addition to the assurance and certifications made part of the Notice of Award. The Department's Standard Terms and Conditions can be viewed at <https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>.

B. SF-424 Forms

Organizations must fill out, sign, and submit SF-424 and SF-424B forms as directed on MyGrants or Grants.gov. **Please note that all communication regarding the SOI will be directed to the points of contact identified on the SF-424 forms.**

I. SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance: Please refer to the following guidelines as you fill out the SF-424 form. Complete all fields except where noted as "Leave Blank" below.

1. Type of Submission: Application.
2. Type of Application: New.
3. Date Received: Leave blank. This will be assigned automatically.
4. Applicant Identifier: Leave blank.
- 5a. Federal Entity Identifier: Leave blank.
- 5b. Federal Award Identifier: Leave blank.
6. Date Received by State: Leave blank. This will be assigned automatically.
7. State Application Identified: Leave blank. This will be assigned automatically.
- 8a. Enter the legal name of the applicant organization. Do NOT list abbreviations or acronyms unless they are part of the organization's legal name.
- 8b. Employer/Taxpayer ID Number: Non-U.S. organizations enter 44-4444444.
- 8c. Enter organizational Unique Entity Identifier number (UEI) or DUNS Number.
- 8e. Enter the headquarters address of the applicant.
- 8f. Enter the name of the primary organizational unit (and department or division) that will undertake the assistance activity as applicable.
- 8g. Enter the name, title, and all contact information of the person to be contacted on matters involving this application. Please note this is the only person to receive updates on the submitted application.

9. Select an applicant type: Select the type of organization applying.
10. Enter: Office of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
11. Select: 19.345.
12. Enter the Funding Opportunity Number and title. This title and number will already be entered on electronic applications.
13. Enter the Competition Identification Number and title. This number will already be entered on electronic applications.
14. Areas Affected by Project: Enter country or region intended for project. Multiple countries may be entered for regional programs.
15. Enter the descriptive title of applicant's project. Note, there is a 30-character limit including spaces.
16. (16a) Congressional districts of Applicant: Applicants based in the U.S. should enter congressional district. Foreign applicants should enter "90." (16b) All applicants should enter "70."
17. Enter projected start date and projected end date. Refer to the funding opportunity for guidance on projected start dates.
18. (18a) Enter the amount requested for the project described in the full proposal under "Federal"; (18b) enter any cost-share under "Applicant." If not proposing cost-share, enter zeros. For (18c-f) please enter zeros. For (18g) the total should automatically populate.
19. Select "c. Program is not covered by E.O 12372."
20. Select the appropriate box. If the answer is "yes" to this question, provide an explanation.
21. Enter the name, title, and all contact information of the individual authorized to sign for the application on behalf of the applicant organization.

II. SF-424 B Assurances – Non-Construction Programs:

This form must be signed online in MyGrants or Grants.gov. All sections of this form must be filled out and signed. Please note, public international organizations are required to sign the form in order to submit their proposal, but may submit an additional letter declaring the following:

"Our organization is a Public International Organization and therefore is not subject to any of the assurances and certifications referring to US law." Ensure the document is signed by an Authorized Official. The Authorized Official is generally the grant signatory at the organization or business.

SECTION III: SOI SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

The U.S. Department of State requires that SOIs be submitted electronically via MyGrants (<https://mygrants.service-now.com>) or Grants.gov (www.grants.gov). Both systems require registration by the applicant at no cost.

Faxed, couriered, or emailed documents will generally **not** be accepted. Reasonable accommodations may, in appropriate circumstances, be provided to applicants with disabilities or due to security reasons. Applicants must follow all formatting instructions in the applicable RSOI and these instructions.

DRL encourages organizations to **submit applications during normal business hours** (Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM- 5:00 PM EST). If an applicant experiences technical difficulties and has contacted the appropriate help desk but is not receiving timely assistance (e.g., if you have not received a response within 48 hours of contacting the help desk), you may contact the DRL point of contact listed in the RSOI. The point of contact may provide assistance contacting the appropriate help desk, but an applicant should also document their efforts in contacting the help desk. Applicants may also contact the DRL point of contact listed in the RSOI if experiencing technical issues with Grants.gov or MyGrants that may result in a late submission. Applicants experiencing technical difficulties should follow these three steps:

1. Contact the help desk for either Grants.gov or MyGrants immediately.
2. Document (including screenshots) technical issues AND efforts to contact the help desk.
3. If there are continued difficulties submitting documents, email all of the required documents to the DRL point of contact listed in the solicitation before the deadline.

Note: Eligibility is not guaranteed, and each SOI will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by a warranted Grant Officer. The warranted Grant Officer will determine technical eligibility of all SOIs and allowability of acceptable SOI submissions. DRL strongly encourages applicants to apply before the submission deadline to ensure any complications can help be mitigated.

A. MyGrants Applications

All applicants are strongly encouraged to submit SOIs via MyGrants (https://mygrants.service-now.com/grants/portal_login.do).

Applicants using MyGrants for the first time should complete their “New Organization Registration.” To register with MyGrants, click “Login to https://mygrants.service-now.com/grants/portal_login.do” and follow the “create an account” link.

Organizations **must** remember to save a screen shot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

Applicants should not expect a separate notification from DRL upon receiving their application. Incomplete applications will not receive a notification.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that it has an active registration in MyGrants or Grants.gov. Applicants are required to document that the application has been received by MyGrants or Grants.gov in its entirety. DRL bears no responsibility for disqualification that result from applicants not being registered before the due date, for system errors in either MyGrants or Grants.gov, or other errors in the application process.

Additionally, you **must** remember to save a screen shot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

Please note that establishing an account in MyGrants may require the use of smartphone for multi-factor authentication (MFA). If an applicant does not have accessibility to a smartphone during the time of creating an account, please contact the ILMS help desk and request instructions on MFA for Windows PC.

MyGrants Help Desk:

For assistance with MyGrants accounts and technical issues related to the system, please contact the ILMS help desk by phone at +1 (888) 313-4567 (toll charges apply for international callers) or through the Self Service online portal that can be accessed from <https://afsism.service-now.com/ilms>. Customer support is available 24/7.

B. Grants.gov Applications

Applicants who do not submit applications via **MyGrants** may submit via www.grants.gov. The Grants.gov registration process **can take 10 business days or longer**, even if all registration steps are completed in a timely manner.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a validation e-mail from Grants.gov upon the successful submission of a SOI. Validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days. Applicants should not expect a separate notification from DRL upon receiving their application.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that it has an active registration in MyGrants or Grants.gov. Applicants are required to document that the SOI has been received by MyGrants or Grants.gov in its entirety. DRL bears no responsibility for disqualification that result from applicants not being registered before the due date, for system errors in either MyGrants or Grants.gov, or other errors in the application process. Additionally, you **must remember to save a screen shot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.**

Grants.gov Helpdesk:

For assistance with Grants.gov, please call the Contact Center at +1 (800) 518-4726 or email support@grants.gov. The Contact Center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week (except federal holidays).

See <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/snow-dismissal-procedures/federal-holidays/> for a list of federal holidays.

SECTION IV: SOI REVIEW PROCESS

DRL strives to ensure that each application receives a balanced evaluation by a DRL review panel. The Department's Office of Acquisitions Management (AQM) will determine technical eligibility for all SOI submissions. All technically eligible SOIs will then be reviewed against the same four criteria by a DRL review panel: quality of program idea, addressing barriers to equal participation, program planning, and ability to achieve objectives/institutional capacity.

Additionally, the review panel will evaluate how the SOI meets the solicitation request, U.S. foreign policy goals, and the priority needs of DRL overall. DRL may also take into consideration the balance of the current portfolio of active programs, including geographic or thematic diversity, if needed. Panelists review each SOI individually against the evaluation criteria, not against competing SOIs.

In most cases, the DRL review panel includes representatives from DRL and the appropriate Department of State regional bureau (to include feedback from U.S. embassies). In some cases, additional panelists may participate, including from other Department of State bureaus or offices, U.S. government departments, agencies, or boards, representatives from partner governments, or representatives from entities that are in a public-private partnership with DRL. Once a SOI is approved, selected applicants will be invited to submit full proposal applications based on their SOIs. Unless directed otherwise by the organization, DRL may also refer SOIs for possible consideration in other U.S. government related funding opportunities. The Grants Officer Representative (GOR) for the eventual award does not vote on the panel. All panelists must sign non-disclosure agreements and conflict of interest agreements.

The panel may provide conditions and/or recommendations on SOIs to enhance the proposed program, which must be addressed by the organization in the full proposal application. To ensure effective use of limited DRL funds, conditions and recommendations may include requests to increase, decrease, clarify, and/or justify costs and program activities.

Except for technical submission questions, during the RSOI period U.S. Department of State staff in Washington and overseas shall not discuss this competition with applicants until the entire proposal review process has been completed and rejection and approval letters have been transmitted.

A. SOI Review Criteria

The Review Panel will evaluate each SOI individually against the following criteria, listed below in order of importance, and not against competing SOIs. Please use the below criteria as a reference but **do not structure your SOI according to the sub-sections.**

Quality of Program Idea

SOIs should be responsive to the program framework and policy objectives identified in the country/regional context, and should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to

DRL's mission of promoting human rights and democracy. Projects should have the potential to have an immediate impact leading to long-term sustainable reforms. DRL prefers new approaches that do not duplicate efforts by other entities. This does not exclude from consideration projects that improve upon or expand existing successful projects in a new and complementary way. In countries where similar activities are already taking place, an explanation should be provided as to how new activities will not duplicate or merely add to existing activities and how these efforts will be coordinated. Proposals that promote creative approaches to recognized ongoing challenges are highly encouraged. DRL prioritizes project proposals with inclusive approaches for advancing these rights.

Addressing Barriers to Equal Participation

DRL strives to ensure its projects advance the rights and uphold the dignity of all persons. As the U.S. government's lead bureau dedicated to promoting democratic governance, DRL requests a programming approach dedicated to strengthening inclusive societies as a necessary pillar of strong democracies. Discrimination, violence, inequity, and inequality targeting any members of society undermines collective security and threatens democracy. DRL prioritizes inclusive and integrated program models that assess and address the barriers to access for individuals and groups based on their race, ethnicity, religion, income, geography, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability. The proposal should also demonstrate how the program will further engagement in underserved communities and with individuals from underserved communities. Applicants should describe how programming will impact all of its beneficiaries, including support for underserved and underrepresented communities. This approach should be an integral part of both the concept and explicit design of all proposed project activities and objectives. Strong proposals will provide specific analysis, measures, and corresponding targets as appropriate. Stakeholders shall identify the difference between opportunities and barriers to access, and design programs accordingly to not perpetuate these inequalities, but rather enhance programmatic impact by including all people in society. The goal of this approach is to bring communities and those in power together in support of more stable and secure societies.

Program Planning

A strong SOI will include a clear articulation of how the proposed program activities and expected results (both outputs and outcomes) contribute to specific program objectives and the overall program goal. Objectives should be ambitious, yet measurable, results-focused, and achievable in a reasonable time frame.

Ability to Achieve Objectives/Institutional Capacity

SOIs should address how the program will engage relevant stakeholders and should identify local partners as appropriate. If local partners are identified, applicants should describe the division of labor among the applicant and any local partners. SOIs should demonstrate the organization's expertise and previous experience in administering programs, preferably similar programs targeting the requested program area or similarly challenging environments.

SECTION V: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

DRL will not consider SOIs that reflect any type of support for any member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization.

Applicants should be aware that DRL understands that some information contained in SOIs may be considered sensitive or proprietary and will make appropriate efforts to protect such information. However, applicants are advised that DRL cannot guarantee that such information will not be disclosed, including pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or other similar statutes.

The information in DRL's RSOI and this PSI for SOIs is binding and may not be modified by any DRL representative. Explanatory information provided by DRL that contradicts this language will not be binding. Issuance of a RSOI and negotiation of SOIs does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government.

The U.S. government may: (a) reject any or all SOIs, (b) accept other than the lowest cost SOI, (c) accept more than one SOI, or (d) waive informalities and minor irregularities in SOIs received.

Program activities that provide training or other assistance to foreign militaries or paramilitary groups or individuals will not be considered for DRL funding given purpose limitations on funding.

Restrictions may apply to any proposed assistance to police or other law enforcement. Among these, pursuant to section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA), no assistance provided may be furnished to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country when there is credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. In accordance with the requirements of section 620M of the FAA, also known as the Leahy law, program beneficiaries or participants from a foreign government's security forces may need to be vetted by the Department before the provision of any assistance.

Projects that utilize private security contractors must comply with the International Code of Conduct. Contractor(s) must be a member of the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers' Association (ICoCA) in good standing, i.e., not currently suspended or terminated from the ICoCA. Contractor(s) must operate in accordance with the principles of the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC). In addition, contractor(s) must conform to the requirements set forth in the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard entitled PSC-1-2012 for the duration of their performance.

To maximize the impact and sustainability of the award(s) that result(s) from this SOI/NOFO, DRL reserves the right to execute a non-competitive continuation amendment(s). The total duration of any award, including a potential non-competitive continuation amendment(s), shall not exceed 60 months or five years. Any non-competitive continuation is contingent on

performance and **pending availability of funds**. A non-competitive continuation is not guaranteed; the Department of State reserves the right to exercise or not exercise the option to issue non-competitive continuation amendment(s).

A. Background Information on DRL and General DRL Funding

DRL has the mission of promoting democracy and protecting human rights globally. DRL supports projects that uphold democratic principles, support and strengthen democratic institutions, promote human rights, prevent atrocities, combat and prevent violent extremism, and build civil society around the world. DRL typically focuses its work in countries with egregious human rights violations, where democracy and human rights advocates are under pressure and where governments are undemocratic or in transition.

Additional background information on DRL and its efforts can be found on <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-civilian-security-democracy-and-human-rights/bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/>.