Annual Program Statement (APS)

U.S.-Africa Strategic Investment Program

Bureau of African Affairs, Office of Assistance, Department of State

Opportunity number: DFOP0019410

Application deadline(s):

See Section E for specific deadlines.

Summary of Changes from Previous Version

Note the following changes have been made from the previous version of this Annual Program Statement:

- Application Window 2 will adhere to the following timeline:
  - Opening December 1, 2026 – January 31, 2027
  - Questions due December 11, 2026
  - Response to questions expected January 10, 2027
  - Notification of results March 31, 2027
- Application Windows 3 and 4 are removed
- Optional notices of intent to apply are no longer requested
- Applicants for Window 2 must be registered in SAM.gov and include their UEI on the cover page of the SOI

No changes are made to the timeline or requirements for SOIs submitted in Window 1.

A. Basic Information

1. Overview

Funding Opportunity Title	U.S.-Africa Strategic Investment Program
Funding Opportunity Number	DFOP0019410
Announcement Type	Initial
Deadline(s) for Applications	See Section E.
Deadline(s) for Questions	See Section E.
Assistance Listing Number	19.989
Estimated Length of Award Performance Period	12 to 36 months
Estimated Number of Awards	10 awards (dependent on amounts)
Estimated Award Amounts	Awards may range from a minimum of $5 million to a maximum of $50 million per award. Applicants must not propose award amounts that are outside of this range.
Total Available Funding	$500 million pending funding availability
Type of Funding	FY 2026 National Security Investment Program (NSIP), must be obligated by the Department to one or more awards by September 30, 2027
Anticipated Program Start Date	Rolling, no later than October 1, 2027

The Bureau of African Affairs (AF), Office of Assistance of the U.S. Department of State ("Department," below) announces an open competition for organizations to submit a statement of interest (SOI) to carry out a project consistent with one or more of the objectives described below. Please carefully follow all instructions in this APS and any addenda.

The submission of the SOI is the first step in the process. Applicants must first submit a concise (2-page) SOI designed to clearly communicate project ideas and objectives. This is not a full proposal and will not result in a federal assistance award at this step. The purpose of the SOI process is to allow applicants to submit project ideas for evaluation prior to requiring the development of a full proposal application. Upon a merit review of eligible SOIs, select applicants will be invited to expand on their project idea(s) by either participating in a consultative program design process or by proceeding to submit a full proposal application. Full proposals will go through a second merit review before final funding decision(s) are made. Multiple awards may be made as a result of this APS. The actual number of awards is subject to the availability of funds and the viability of SOIs received. Accordingly, the Department of State reserves the right to award multiple awards, one award, or no awards at all under the APS.

Funding Instrument Type: Grant or cooperative agreement. Cooperative agreements are different from grants in that Department staff are more actively involved in the implementation ("Substantial Involvement" is described further in Section B.3 below). Grants or cooperative agreements may be cost-reimbursement type awards or fixed amount awards. While an applicant may propose an award type, the award type will be determined by a Department Grants Officer.

Program Performance Period: Proposed projects should be completed in one to three years. The Department will entertain the continuation of applications funded under these awards beyond the initial budget period on a non-competitive basis subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the program, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the Department.

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

2. Executive Summary

U.S.-Africa Strategic Investment Program

The U.S.-Africa Strategic Investment Program advances America's national interests by harnessing market-based, private sector-led growth across two strategic focus areas: **Critical Minerals Investment** and **Commercial Diplomacy Acceleration**. Consistent with the Trump Administration's America First foreign policy, this program reflects the State Department's mandate to ensure foreign assistance is delivered with greater accountability, strategy, and efficiency and that every program funded advances demonstrable U.S. interests.

As Secretary Rubio has stated: "We will prioritize trade over aid, opportunity over dependency, and investment over assistance." African partner nations have made clear they want investment that empowers sustainable growth, not decades of aid dependency. When U.S. companies compete and win in African markets, they build transparent, rules-based business environments that reduce corruption, lower barriers to trade, and create the jobs and infrastructure African partners need to stand on their own two feet, thus reducing, not entrenching, reliance on U.S. foreign assistance.

This U.S.-Africa Strategic Investment Program is targeted, time-limited, and designed to produce measurable results. It prioritizes partner nations that have demonstrated both the ability and willingness to help themselves, channeling resources where they generate lasting economic benefit and catalyze durable private sector investment, including by American companies.

The U.S.-Africa Strategic Investment Program builds upon the foreign assistance framework established in Section 496 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 by emphasizing market-based, private sector-led approaches consistent with the Administration's priorities and national interests of the United States. As recognized by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, these national interests may require economic support for countries, and AF will program all assistance consistent with the applicable authorities in the FAA and other statutes, including the authority to furnish assistance to countries in order to promote economic and political stability.

Evaluation Approach:

Preference will be given to applicants that also demonstrate clear pathways for U.S. business participation and contributions to U.S. supply chain security or commercial goals.

No one type of U.S. business participation is preferred. Depending on the project, a U.S. business could be a prime applicant, subrecipient, subcontractor, beneficiary, or in some other role(s).

Strategic Focus Areas:

1. **Critical Minerals Investment** – Strengthening the enabling environment for the responsible development of critical minerals projects, including, but not limited to, geological mapping, development of local value-addition capabilities, identification of policy, regulatory, infrastructure, transport, logistics, and energy constraints, together with the design of practical interventions to address them, and workforce localization and skills development. SOIs and proposals shall be scoped to de-risk and catalyze high-quality investment from U.S. and U.S.-aligned companies.
2. **Commercial Diplomacy Acceleration** – Strengthening U.S. commercial opportunities and economic development by strengthening regulatory frameworks, supporting workforce development, improving enabling infrastructure, and addressing market access barriers across priority sectors, including telecommunications, energy, emerging technologies, and artificial intelligence. SOIs and proposals shall be scoped to de-risk and catalyze investment from high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned companies.

For detailed objectives, priority challenges, and key performance indicators for each focus area, see Section C. Program Description.

B. Eligibility

1. Eligible Applicants

The following organizations are eligible to apply as a prime applicant:

- U.S. and non-U.S. for-profit companies and organizations
- U.S. and non-U.S. not-for-profit organizations
- U.S. and non-U.S. public and private institutions of higher education
- Public international organizations
- These eligibility criteria do not apply below the prime applicant level. Any type of organization can be a subrecipient or subcontractor, though foreign government

agencies and parastatals are generally not envisioned as subrecipients or subcontractors.

Note: see "Other Eligibility Requirements" in Section B.5 for additional details

The following types of programs are NOT eligible for funding:

- Programs relating to partisan political activity;
- Construction activities*;
- Programs that support specific religious activities;
- Fund-raising campaigns;
- Programs intended primarily for the growth or institutional development of the organization without addressing the program description in the APS (e.g. solution(s) sought, priority challenge(s), mutual benefit to a country in sub-Saharan Africa); or
- Programs that are duplicative of existing, ongoing projects without meeting additional needs or moving a project to a new stage.

*New, non-temporary construction involving structural work is generally ineligible. Non-structural modifications, equipment installation, and pre-construction activities (feasibility studies, environmental/social assessments, design, site prep, permitting support, etc.) can be proposed. See the SF-424A for the definition of construction: SF-424A Instructions v.1, OMB #4040-0006.

2. Selection Preference

Preference will be given to applicants whose projects are designed to de-risk and catalyze investment from high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned companies through the development of transparent, competitive business environments. Projects should catalyze transparent, predictable, and competitive market conditions that generate durable economic benefit, advance African development and economic growth objectives, and expand opportunities for mutually beneficial commercial engagement with high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned companies.

3. Substantial Involvement

For awards that are issued as cooperative agreements, areas of substantial involvement may include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Active collaboration with the Recipient in the implementation of the award
- A review of all planned stages of work to be performed and expected strategic focus area outcomes
- Review and approval of one stage of work before another can begin
- Involvement in the selection of program participants/beneficiaries
- Approval of work plans and / or monitoring, evaluation, and learning plans

Any additional areas of substantial involvement will be assessed at the full proposal stage in relation to a specific project.

4. Cost Sharing or Matching
Cost sharing is not required.

While applicants may propose cost share or matching, cost-sharing/matching will not be evaluated as part of the merit review process. Opportunities for cost sharing and matching may be discussed during negotiation and/or consultative program design (aka "co-design"), if applicable. Per 2 CFR §200.306, items that are proposed for cost share must be allowable per 2 CFR §200, Subpart E—Cost Principles.

See also "Resource Contributions," in Section D., below. Non-U.S. government resources will be evaluated, but they need not be cost share (as defined in 2 CFR 200.1 and 2 CFR 200.306), specifically.

5. Other Eligibility Requirements
All prime applicant organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) issued via SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on SAM.gov in order to submit a full proposal if selected for that stage (Window 1 applicants). Neither the UEI nor the SAM registration is required during the SOI submission phase for Window 1. Window 2 applicants must have a SAM.gov UEI to submit a SOI. Please see Section D.3 for more information.

Prime applicants are allowed to submit up to two SOIs per organization per deadline (either one for each Focus Area, or two for a single Focus Area. This cap does not restrict the number of other SOIs an organization can appear on in a subrecipient/subcontractor role. Each legally incorporated organization with a distinct physical geographic address can submit up to two SOIs per window. It is fine if a single SOI lists both focus areas as relevant. Please see Section E.4 for specific deadlines.

Each project must have a single prime applicant and may not be submitted as multiple SOIs (e.g., a single project split into multiple SOI submissions). "Consortiums" are neither encouraged nor discouraged. A single legally established prime applicant must hold overall responsibility for award management, including subrecipient monitoring.

Applicant SOIs must demonstrate alignment with or a commitment to advancing U.S. supply chain or commercial goals.

C. Program Description

Overview: This program seeks market-based solutions that strengthen the environment for foreign investment in sub-Saharan Africa through transparent and competitive processes, creating sustainable economic growth in two strategic focus areas. Projects must demonstrate clear, measurable benefits to one or more sub-Saharan countries, such as increased investment from high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned companies. Applicants are also encouraged to identify how their projects create conditions that enable U.S. commercial participation.

A SOI must address one or more "Focus Areas," "Solutions Sought," and "Priority Challenges," below.

It is fine for a SOI to list both Focus Areas, if relevant. If both Focus Areas are listed it is fine to indicate one as primary; however, this is not required.

Applicants should propose to use at least one of the below Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) if relevant to the proposed project, and must include tentative target(s) for indicator(s) included in the SOI. The below lists of KPIs are illustrative rather than exhaustive and will not be defined further within the APS. The applicant can propose indicator definitions and additional indicators at the full proposal stage if a concept advances.

1. <u>Critical Minerals Investment</u>

Solutions Sought: AF seeks creative, innovative, cost-effective, market-based solutions to support the responsible development of critical mineral resources in sub-Saharan Africa while advancing local value creation, economic growth, and workforce development. Solutions should strengthen enabling environments, promote transparent and competitive markets, address policy, regulatory, infrastructure, and technical capacity constraints, and de-risk investment opportunities for high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned companies.

All U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), and U.S. Department of War (DoW)-designated critical or strategic minerals are eligible.

Priority Challenges Addressed:

Governance and Regulatory Environment:

- Addressing policy, regulatory, and institutional barriers that constrain investment and responsible resource development
- Promoting transparent, predictable, and competitive investment frameworks, including through improved procurement and licensing processes
- Strengthening regulatory frameworks and institutional competence to support sustainable and commercially viable critical minerals sectors

Technical Skills and Data:

- Expanding geological mapping, geodata collection, management, and accessibility
- Improving availability and quality of mineral resource data transparently accessible to support investment decisions and resource planning
- Building technical skills for responsible mineral development, resource governance, and project oversight

Supply Chain Development:

- Strengthening critical minerals supply chains and reducing vulnerabilities associated with concentrated market and supply disruptions
- Supporting alternative processing and refining capabilities to enhance supply chain resilience and diversification

- Developing local value-addition capabilities that increase economic benefits for African countries, expand export opportunities, reduce dependence on single-buyer markets, and support diversified global supply sources

Transaction Support:
- Providing transaction advisory services, feasibility studies, and targeted technical assistance to advance commercially viable projects and enable competitive participation in African critical minerals sectors

Key Performance Indicators:
- Number of African government officials and technical personnel trained in critical minerals governance, regulatory management, and environmental safeguards
- Value of critical minerals investments, transactions, and offtake agreements advanced toward financial close, including U.S. and U.S.-aligned private sector investment
- Volume of critical minerals transiting on the Lobito Corridor (only relevant for certain projects; this KPI does not indicate Department preference for Lobito Corridor or other corridor projects)
- Number of companies, including U.S. and U.S.-aligned companies, participating in African critical minerals sectors through transparent and competitive processes
- Increase in African government revenues generated from successful transparent and competitive critical minerals projects
- Number of African countries with strengthened regulatory frameworks supporting transparent, competitive minerals procurement
- Value ($) of non-donor resources mobilized for local development and economic growth priorities

2. Commercial Diplomacy Acceleration

Solutions Sought: AF seeks creative, innovative, cost-effective, market-based solutions that strengthen the enabling environment for private-sector investment and economic development in sub-Saharan Africa, including by strengthening regulatory frameworks, expanding workforce development and local capacity, improving enabling infrastructure, and addressing market access barriers. Solutions should enhance commercial competitiveness, support economic diversification, and catalyze high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned investment and commercial engagement in strategic sectors.

Sectors of interest include but are not limited to:

- Critical Minerals and Mining (e.g., exploration, extraction, processing and related technologies)
- Emerging Technologies (e.g., artificial intelligence, biotechnology, advanced hardware, and fintech)
- Energy (e.g., power generation, transmission and distribution; oil and gas exploration, production and infrastructure, and energy technologies)

- Infrastructure (e.g., transportation, water, and sanitation)
- Digital, Telecommunications and Cybersecurity (e.g., telecommunications and connectivity, data centers, cloud computing, digital platforms, satellite technology, and cybersecurity technologies)
- Healthcare (e.g., diagnostics, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, healthcare services and technologies)

Priority Challenges Addressed:

Governance and Regulatory Environment:
- Strengthening African regulatory frameworks and reducing barriers to trade and investment in ways that promote transparent, predictable, and competitive markets, economic growth, job creation, and market diversification
- Improving enabling infrastructure (telecommunications, energy, transportation) to support economic growth
- Supporting adoption of international standards that enhance African competitiveness and market access
- Modernizing customs systems and trade facilitation mechanisms to reduce transaction costs

U.S. Commercial Competitiveness:
- Addressing regulatory, policy, infrastructure and other barriers to entry that constrain investment by high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned companies in key sectors in Africa.
- Helping high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned companies secure major international contracts in competitive bidding environments
- Creating an enabling environment for high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned firms to enter high-risk sectors such as critical minerals, oil and gas exploration and extraction, emerging technology, and healthcare innovation
- Mitigating risk and supporting first-mover opportunities for high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned companies in strategic sectors
- Addressing market distortions and competitive disadvantages that high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned companies face against state-backed competitors
- Strengthening local workforce capacity to advance both African economic development and high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned investments, in strategic sectors
- Providing transaction advisory services, feasibility studies, and technical assistance to African governments and high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned private sector stakeholders to advance commercially viable opportunities and facilitate competitive participation

Technology Standards and Digital Connectivity:
- Advancing technology standards that enhance African countries' digital competitiveness, cybersecurity strength, and ability to participate in the global digital economy while promoting interoperability with U.S. and U.S.-allied systems
- Increasing adoption and uptake of U.S. AI stack and cloud technology in strategic sectors
- Improving telecommunications and promoting adoption of open and interoperable telecommunications standards (Open RAN, 5G/6G) using U.S. technology and expertise

- Building cybersecurity capacity in partner countries using trusted platforms and U.S. technology and expertise
- Supporting development of secure digital payment systems that maintain dollar-based financial infrastructure
- Advancing trusted data governance frameworks that align with U.S. standards

Energy Security and Infrastructure Development:
- Increasing energy access and reliability for African businesses and households, supporting industrialization and economic diversification, while creating opportunities for U.S. energy technology and expertise
- Increasing electricity generation and transmission capacity, including through power sector modernization and electricity infrastructure development, using U.S. technology and expertise
- Expanding access to liquefied natural gas (LNG), liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), and U.S. energy solutions
- Facilitating U.S. participation in oil and gas exploration and extraction projects
- Advancing transportation infrastructure and smart city initiatives with U.S. technology and expertise

Trade Barriers and Regulatory Obstacles:
- Modernizing customs systems and implementing trade agreements
- Eliminating non-tariff barriers affecting U.S. exports in sectors including medical devices, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, automotive, and energy
- Strengthening intellectual property protections for U.S. innovations, particularly in healthcare and energy technologies
- Harmonizing international standards and regulatory frameworks with U.S. requirements, including regulatory reforms for pharmaceutical approval and medical device certification
- Harmonizing trade policies to level the playing field and improve U.S. firm competitiveness
- Promoting African self-reliance and sustainable trade relationships that reduce long-term dependence on foreign assistance, including through co-financing arrangements with host governments, donors, and the private sector that leverage U.S. assistance dollars and strengthen U.S. supply chains

Key Performance Indicators:
- Number and value of bankable deals facilitated to financial close including sector distribution and investor participation, including high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned company participation
- Number of African countries adopting technology standards that promote interoperability with high-quality U.S. and U.S. aligned systems
- Number of people and businesses gaining access to improved infrastructure services (energy, telecommunications, transportation)
- Number of African government officials and technical personnel trained in regulatory management, trade facilitation, and sector governance

- Reduction in time and cost associated with customs clearance and cross-border trade processes
- Number of small- and medium-scale enterprises supported

3. Beneficiaries: Projects funded under this program must be for the benefit of one or more countries in sub-Saharan Africa. See a list of sub-Saharan African countries here. Applicants can submit a SOI related to one or more of these countries. Any relevant foreign assistance restrictions will be evaluated within the context of a specific SOI.

SOIs are welcome for single country projects as well as multi-country projects; neither is preferred.

D. Application Contents and Format

Please follow all instructions below carefully. SOIs that do not fully comply with the requirements of this announcement will be ineligible.

SOI content must include the following, submitted together as part of a single PDF document with content in the order listed below:

1) Table Listing of Critical Details (1 page maximum; include as cover page to the submission)

I. Proposed Project Title
II. Name of the Organization, Contact Information, and SAM.gov UEI (note that the UEI is not required for Window 1 SOI applicants)
III. Focus Area(s) to which the SOI is responding
IV. Target Benefiting Country or Countries
V. Total Federal Share Requested (as $ amount, and as percentage of V.+VI)
VI. Estimated Value of non-USG Resource Contributions (as applicable)
VII. Project Length with planned goals of each stage, and a proposed spend plan and estimated end date of completion for each stage. Stage may be annual or project phase/ milestone-based.
VIII. Key Partners (include key partners such as subrecipients and unfunded private sector partners, if applicable)
IX. Performance and Impact Indicator(s) and Target(s) (For each SOI, applicants should propose using at least one indicator from the APS, where relevant.)
X. Prime Applicant and Subrecipient UEIs and EINs if applicable and already available (not required at SOI stage)
XI. Is your organization able to accept the PHFFA award requirements in E.5.vi? (Yes/No/Unsure)

2) Narrative (2 pages maximum)

- A brief project description summarizing goals, objectives, outcomes, beneficiaries, and partner roles and responsibilities, geographic scope, and project duration. Clearly specify if any partners are tentatively envisioned as subrecipients for the project (see 2 CFR 200.331 and 200.332). A clear statement of the applicant's and any subrecipient(s)' relevant work history (in the proposed sector and country) and capacity to carry out the proposed activity and manage U.S. Government funds.

- Resource Contributions/Co-Financing/Burden Sharing and/or Cost Share from non-federal sources (if applicable): Describe any proposed cost-share (per 2 CFR 200.306) or any proposed leverage from outside sources which will be brought to the proposed project. Leverage is defined as the mobilization of non-U.S. Government resources such as cash, in-kind contributions, expertise, or technology from public or private partners to expand the impact of the project, even if not formally incorporated into the award as cost-share. Please also briefly describe any relevant burden sharing by other governments. Non-U.S. government resources need not be newly mobilized due to the SOI / proposed award per se, but the SOI must demonstrate that U.S. government resources are not the only resources supporting the project.

3) Summary Budget (1 page maximum)

- The anticipated total budget amount (in U.S. dollars) and a high-level budget (by year) showing estimates for the following categories: 1) Personnel; 2) Fringe Benefits; 3) Travel; 4) Equipment; 5) Supplies; 6) Contractual; 7) Other Direct Costs; and 8) Indirect Costs. The information need not be provided via an SF-424A form at this stage; however, see the SF-424A instructions for definitions of each budget category.
- List any indirect cost rates used and the basis for those rates (Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA) or other).
    - Not-for-profits without a NICRA may elect the de minimis rate (currently up to 15%) under 2 CFR 200.414.
    - For-profit entities should use their established overhead / general & administrative (G&A) rates, or allocate all costs to direct cost categories if no such rates exist.

All documents must be in English. All documents must be single-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins and submitted together within a single PDF.

E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

1. Department of State Contacts

AF-A-Proposals@state.gov.

2. Application Submission Requirements All application materials must be submitted by email to AF-A-Proposals@state.gov by the deadline given for each window.

3. Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

Required Registrations

All prime applicant organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration with the SAM.gov in order to submit a full proposal (Window 1) or SOI (Window 2). A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act

(FFATA), for all Federal awards. An applicant must maintain an active registration while it has a proposal under review by the Department and must continue to keep the registration active for the entire duration of the period of performance of any Federal award that results from the APS.

The 2 CFR 200 requires that subrecipients obtain a UEI. Please note the UEI for subrecipients is not required at the time of application but will be required before a subrecipient award is approved by the Grants Officer and processed by the prime applicant.

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

- Organizations **based in the United States** or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and a UEI prior to registering in SAM.gov.

- Organizations **based outside of the United States** and that do not pay employees within the United States do not need an EIN from the IRS but do need a UEI prior to registering in SAM.gov.

- **<u>Organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of War (DoW) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code to apply for non-DoW foreign assistance funding opportunities.</u>** If an applicant organization is mid-registration and wishes to remove an NCAGE code from their SAM.gov registration, the applicant should submit a help desk ticket ("incident") with the Federal Service Desk (FSD) online at www.fsd.gov using the following language: "I do not intend to seek financial assistance from the Department of War. I do not wish to obtain an NCAGE code. I understand that I will need to submit my registration after this incident is resolved in order to have my registration activated."

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO NOT plan to do business with the DoW should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Proceed to SAM.gov to obtain a UEI and complete the SAM.gov registration process. SAM.gov registration must be renewed annually.

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO plan to do business with the DoW in addition to Department of State should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Apply for an NCAGE code by following the instructions on the NSPA NATO website linked below:

NCAGE Homepage:
https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/sc/CageList.aspx
NCAGE Code Request Tool (NCRT):
NCAGE Code Request Tool (nato.int)

Exemptions
All prime applicant organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration with the SAM.gov in order to submit a full proposal (this is not required to submit a SOI). An exemption from the UEI and SAM.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis. See 2 CFR 25.110 for a full list of exemptions.

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must include the request and a justification in the full proposal if selected to advance to the second stage. Approval for a SAM.gov exemption must come from the warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

4. Submission Dates and Times
SOIs will be accepted throughout the year according to the following schedule.

All SOIs submitted in a window will be reviewed after that window's deadline closes. There is no advantage to submitting earlier rather than later within a given window. However, future windows may be amended or cancelled at the Department's discretion.

Please do not submit SOIs or questions for a future window until that window begins. If you submitted information for Window 2 during Window 1, please resubmit the Window 2 information once that window opens. Earlier submissions will not be used unless resubmitted during the relevant window.

Window 1: July 23 – September 4
- Applications due by 11:59 pm ET **September 4**
- Deadline for Questions and Notice of Intent to Apply: **August 2** by 11:59 pm EDT
- Notifications of Results: **November 29**

Window 2: December 1, 2026 – January 31, 2027
- Applications due by 11:59 pm ET **January 31, 2027**
- Deadline for Questions: **December 14** by 11:59 pm EST
- Anticipated Response to Questions: **January 10, 2027**
- Notifications of Results: **March 31, 2027**

- **Applicants should be sure include any questions or concerns about the PHFFA funding restrictions in E.5.vi, below.**
- **Include the opportunity number DFOP0019410 in the email subject line.**
- Questions and answers will be anonymized and posted on Grants.gov.
  Questions submitted after the deadline will not be addressed.

If a SOI submitted in one window is unsuccessful, the applicant must not submit the same SOI to the APS again, even within a different window. Any additional submissions must be for different project concepts rather than revisions of a previously submitted SOI.

5. Funding Restrictions

i. Funding Restrictions for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)

None of the funds awarded resulting from this Annual Program Statement may be made available for subawards, direct financial support, or otherwise used to provide any payment or transfer to United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

ii. Certification Regarding Compliance with applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws

If the place of performance or delivery of any award made under this Annual Program Statement will be **within the United States**, applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award:

1) Its compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of title 31, United States Code; and

2) It does not operate any programs promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws. A program promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion means a program whose purpose is to promote preferences based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origins, such as in training or hiring.

iii. Certification Regarding Compliance with 20 U.S.C. 1011f and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements

Applicants are advised that Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) must certify the following at the time of award, and that this certification requirement must be included in any subaward agreements to IHEs:

> Its compliance in all respects with section 1011f of title 20, United States Code, and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements is material for purposes of section 3729 of title 31, United States Code, and for receipt of appropriate Federal grant funds.

iv. Certification of Trafficking in Persons Compliance and Compliance Plan

Applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award <u>for awards where the estimated value of services to be performed outside the United States exceeds $500,000</u>:

- To the best of the Recipient's knowledge, neither the Recipient, nor any subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor of the Recipient or any agent of the Recipient or of such a subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor, is engaged in any of the activities described in 2 CFR 175.105(a);

  The Recipient has implemented a Trafficking in Persons compliance plan to prevent activities described in 2 CFR 175.105(a) and is compliant with this plan; and the compliance plan must follow the minimum requirements described in 2 CFR 175.105(b)(5).

- That the Recipient has and will implement procedures to prevent activities described in 2 CFR 175.105(a) and to monitor, detect, and terminate any subrecipient, contractor, subcontractor, or employee of the Recipient engaging in these activities.

Recipients do not need to submit a copy of the plan. However, they must provide it to the Grants Officer upon request, and as appropriate, must post the useful and relevant contents of the plan or related materials on their website and at the workplace. Recipients must re-certify on an annual basis for the entire award period of performance.

v. Prohibition of Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS). If your project involves the purchase or use of a UAS, see this link (https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/UAS-NOFO-Guidance-current.pdf) for requirements and information you must include in your application.

vi. Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance (PHFFA)

Applicants for foreign assistance awards should be aware of requirements in 2 CFR Parts 602, 603, and 604.

These policies are referred to collectively as the Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance (PHFFA) Policy.

The most important way to learn about what the policy requires is to read the PHFFA standard provisions in the three published U.S. Federal Register rules. Each entity type is subject to distinct requirements. In some cases, the policy applies to non-U.S. government funded activities. Please find PHFFA FAQs (including Tables 1 and 2 on applicability and restricted activities) and the related U.S. Federal Register Rules here: **https://www.state.gov/federal-assistance-policies-appeals**

602: The award term imposes certain abortion-related requirements on foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), United States NGOs, public international organizations, foreign governments, and parastatals.

603: The award term imposes certain requirements relating to gender ideology on foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), United States NGOs, public international organizations, foreign governments, and parastatals.

604: The award term imposes certain requirements relating to discriminatory equity ideology on foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), United States NGOs, public international organizations, foreign governments, and parastatals.

The Department recognizes there are costs associated with these policies. Potential one-time and recurring costs the Department identifies for Recipients and grantees are for familiarization with the policy, development and delivery of organizational training and implementation guidance, routine compliance monitoring, and record-keeping and reporting requirements.

F. Application Review Information

1. Review Criteria

Each SOI will be evaluated and rated based on the evaluation criteria outlined below, using the following scale for each criterion:

4 – Very Strong
3 – Strong
2 – Acceptable
1 – Needs improvement to be acceptable
0 – Unacceptable

Weight assigned to each criterion is shown below in percentages:

- **Quality and Feasibility of the Program Idea – 40%:**
    - The project idea is responsive to the foreign policy goals and priorities expressed in the APS program description and addresses one or more of the "Solutions Sought" and "Priority Challenges."
    - The project demonstrates alignment with or a commitment to advancing U.S. supply chain or commercial goals.
    - The project idea is well developed, with detail about how program activities will be carried out and achieve the proposed impact.
    - The project includes a reasonable implementation timeline.
    - The project demonstrates clear pathways for U.S. business participation and contributions to U.S. supply chain security or commercial goals.
    - The project is designed to de-risk and catalyze investment from high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned companies through the development of transparent, competitive business environments, where relevant.
    - The project catalyzes transparent, predictable, and competitive market conditions that generate durable economic benefit, advance African development and

economic growth objectives, and expand opportunities for mutually beneficial commercial engagement with high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned companies, where relevant.

- **Organizational Capacity and Past Experience – 25%:** The organization has relevant capacity, experience, and expertise in its stated field, demonstrated success with projects of a similar nature, and relevant country level expertise. Staff experience and expertise can contribute to the assessment of organization qualifications if included in a SOI.
    - **Subrecipients** – Proposed subrecipient organization(s) have strong relevant expertise and experience.

- **Leverage, Burden Sharing, and/or Public or Private Sector Partnerships– 20%:** The project idea mobilizes non-U.S. Government resources including funding, in-kind contributions, expertise, and technology to expand the impact of the project. The project ensures that taxpayer dollars catalyze substantial commercial returns.

- **Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives – 15%:**

    - Goals and objectives are clearly stated, and program approach is likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results (See table listing critical details above).
    - The SOI includes at least one relevant Key Performance Indicator from the APS (or proposes a logical alternative that aligns with the program description), and a notional target for achieving meaningful and realistic impact.

2. Indirect Costs (Full Proposal Stage only)

If two or more full applications receive equivalent scores based on the evaluation criteria outlined in this Annual Program Statement, and those applicants have a NICRA, de minimis rate, or other indirect cost rate in their proposals, preference will be given to the applicant with the lower indirect cost rate, as consistent with Executive Order 14332, Section 4(b)(iii). This preference will only be applied as a tie-breaking mechanism and does not supersede the primary evaluation criteria. It is not applied at the SOI stage. Additionally, if one or more of the applicants with equivalent scores allocates all costs directly rather than using an indirect cost rate, the tie-breaking scenario does not apply.

3. Review and Selection Process

a. Process Overview and Timing:
All SOIs submitted within a given quarterly window are reviewed after the submission deadline for the window that has passed. Following the close of the submission window, the Department conducts a multi-step review process, including:

o Technical Eligibility Review
o Merit Review Panel evaluation

o Internal clearance and selection decision-making

The Department aims to complete initial review and communicate outcomes within 90 days (see Section “G. Award Notices”) following the close of the window. However, timelines may vary based on the volume of submissions and operational considerations.

o Notification of Results: Organizations that have submitted a SOI will be notified of one of the following outcomes, consistent with the APS:

- Not selected for continued review
- Recommended for consultative program design
- Recommended to proceed to Phase 2 (full application)

Due to the anticipated volume of submissions, the Department does not anticipate being able to provide individualized feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

b. Phase 1- SOI Review and Selection:

All technically eligible SOIs will be reviewed against the criteria listed above by a Merit Review Panel (MRP). (Note: SOIs not responsive to a specific objective or a current Addendum’s objective (if any) will be considered technically ineligible). There may be multiple MRPs to review SOIs based on country, or region, or sector, as appropriate. SOIs will only be evaluated once. SOIs are reviewed individually against the criteria and not against competing SOIs. Additionally, the MRP will evaluate how the SOI meets the APS objectives, U.S. foreign policy goals, and AF’s overall priority needs. For a fair review, all panelists will review SOI documents up to any applicable page limits and no further. The MRP may provide conditions and/or recommendations on SOIs to enhance the proposed program, which must be addressed by the organization in the full application and/or co-design process, as applicable. To ensure effective use of limited funds, conditions and recommendations may include requests to increase, decrease, clarify, and/or justify costs and program activities. AF reserves the right to make a final determination regarding all funding matters, pending funding availability.

The panel is responsible for reviewing each SOI and recommending one of the following actions:

i. SOI is not recommended for continued review – The SOI is not responsive to the Annual Program Statement or the SOI does not meet overall priority needs or foreign policy.

ii. SOI is recommended for continued review through consultative program design prior to recommendation for funding and submission to phase 2. The SOI meets a key priority or foreign policy goals that would benefit from Department of State input.

- AF will notify these applicants and assemble a team of subject matter experts (SMEs) that may or may not include panel members. The technical team and the applicant will work together to develop the concept so that it can be recommended for funding and responsive to a request for full proposal. All applicants within each evaluation panel will be treated equally to ensure fair competition. If at least one applicant is recommended to participate in consultative program design, all full proposal applicants will be invited to participate. Consultative program design may be individual with each organization, group, or a hybrid of both. The results of the consultative program design process may or may not result in a recommendation for funding and movement to phase 2. The Department of State reserves the right to make this final determination. All costs to the applicant associated with participation in the consultative program design process will be at the expense of the applicant.

- For organizations selected for consultative program design, this stage is intended to be a structured, time-bound process to refine proposed concepts in collaboration with the Department of State. In general, this process is expected to occur over a defined and relatively short period and may include virtual, in-person, or hybrid engagement. As this is a new approach being implemented on a pilot basis, the Department retains flexibility in how consultative program design is conducted.

iii. SOI is recommended for funding and submission to phase 2 - The concept outlines a strong approach that is ready to move to full application. A request for full application with detailed instructions will be issued to the applicant.

Final selection of SOI concepts and funding authority resides with a senior level official. All concepts must be approved before moving to phase 2.

Voting members of MRPs generally include representatives from AF and other Department bureaus. Additionally, Department of State often welcomes participation from interagency colleagues and other USG or non-USG subject matter experts (SMEs) onto MRPs. All MRP members sign non-disclosure agreements and conflict of interest agreements.

c. Phase 2 – Request for full applications
Applicants that have moved either directly to phase 2 or subsequent to consultative program design will be directed to an announcement available via a State Department MyGrants system to submit a full application based on their approved concept. A full application typically includes, but is not limited to, the following:
• SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B (if applicable)
• Cover Page/Executive Summary
• Proposal Narrative
• Budget Narrative
• Program Monitoring and Evaluation Narrative and Plan, including Indicators. Applicants should propose using at least one primary and one secondary indicator from the APS or request for full application, where relevant, in addition to proposing other indicators where needed to meaningfully measure the performance and impact of the proposed project.
• Risk Assessment
• Key Personnel
• Timeline
• Attachments, (if applicable)

Detailed instructions regarding the full application submission process will be provided to those applicants that move to phase 2. The timing of full application review and award issuance will depend on a range of factors, including:

- Complexity of proposed programs
- Availability of funding
- Completion of required reviews and approvals

General Guidance
The Department is committed to conducting a fair, transparent, and efficient review process. At the same time, applicants should anticipate that the full process (from SOI submission to potential award) may take several months. Organizations are encouraged to plan accordingly and monitor official communications for updates.

4. Risk Review

i. Risk factors

Under the merit review as required by 2 CFR § 200.206, prior to making a Federal Award the Department will review and consider the following risk factors:

a. Financial stability
b. Management systems and standards
c. History of performance
d. Audit reports and findings
e. Ability to effectively implement requirements

ii. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov

The U.S. Federal awarding agency, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the U.S. government designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (see 41 U.S.C. 2313).

An applicant can review and comment on any information in the responsibility/qualification records available in SAM.gov.

Before making decisions in the risk review required by § 200.206, the Department will consider any comments by the applicant, along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov.

G. Award Notices

The award agreement will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The award agreement is the authorizing document, and it will be provided to the Recipient for review and signature by email or via the MyGrants system. The Recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date shown on the grant award document signed by the Grants Officer.

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department has no obligation to provide any additional future funding. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the discretion of the Department.

Issuance of this APS does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all SOIs and proposals received.

Unsuccessful applicants: Unsuccessful applicants will be notified via email within approximately 90 days of submitting the SOI.

Payment method for prime recipients:
Payments under this award will be made through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Payment Management System (PMS) for U.S. organizations and public international organizations.

For non-U.S. organizations, recipients will be required to request payments by completing form SF-270—Request for Advance or Reimbursement—and submitting the form to the Grants Officer.

H. Post-Award Requirements and Administration

1. ***Administrative and National Policy Requirements***

   Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply.

   These include:

   In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, the Department of State will review and consider applications for funding, as applicable to specific programs, pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity in accordance with the following: NOTE:

   - Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 89 FR 30046 on April 22, 2024, particularly on:
     - Selecting Recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an impartial process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
     - Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with *Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty* (Executive Order 13798) and *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (Executive Order 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),
     - Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
     - Terminating agreements pursuant to the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, including, to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340).

- 2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT
- 2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION
- 2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS
- 2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE (FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE)
- 2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY
- 2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS
- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

    Recipients must comply with Executive Orders as applicable. A searchable list can be found in the Federal Register: https://www.federalregister.gov/

- Prohibition against profit: The Department or recipient will not provide funds as profit to any for-profit entity receiving or administering Federal financial assistance (a grant or cooperative agreement, including one that is a fixed amount award) as a recipient or subrecipient. Federal financial assistance does not include contracts as defined at 2 CFR 200.1, other contracts a Federal agency uses to buy goods or services from a contractor, or contracts to operate Federal government owned, contractor operated facilities (GOCOs). Profit is any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs.
- Program income: gross income earned by the recipient or subrecipient that is *directly* generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the Federal award during the award period of performance will be treated as program income in accordance with 2 CFR 200.1 and 2 CFR 200.307. Program income requirements do not extend beyond the award period of performance unless related continuing responsibilities are negotiated by the Department and Recipient and included in the award terms and conditions.
- Pre-award cost authorization should not be assumed. Also, costs associated with participating in consultative program design are considered proposal costs (see 2 CFR 200.460 for nonprofits; FAR 31.205-18 for for-profits) and are not allowable as pre-award costs. Virtual meetings can be considered for consultative program design where in-person participation is cost-prohibitive.
- Property Standards: See 2 CFR 200.310 – 2 CFR 200.316 for the tangible and intangible property standards that will apply to award(s) issued under this APS.

2. ***Reporting***

Reporting Requirements: Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify what reports are required and how often these reports must be submitted.

Foreign Assistance Data Review: As required by Congress, the Department of State must make progress in its efforts to improve tracking and reporting of foreign assistance data through the Foreign Assistance Data Review (FADR). The FADR requires tracking of foreign assistance activity data from budgeting, planning, and allocation through obligation and disbursement. Successful applicants will be required to report and draw down federal funding based on the appropriate FADR Data Elements, indicated within their award documentation. In cases of more than one FADR Data Element, typically program or sector and/or region or country, the successful applicant will be required to maintain separate accounting records.

Applicants should be aware of the post-award reporting requirements reflected in 2 CFR 200 Appendix XII—Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters.

3. **Branding and Marking**

The Department of State, its programs, and U.S. Government funding and assistance should be easily identifiable to the Department's global audiences.

Recipients of federal assistance awards must follow the branding guidance published at Guidance for Contracts and Grants - U.S. Department of State Brand System. Branding policy exceptions are outlined in the U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual 10 FAM 416, Policy Exceptions. For more information, visit: https://brand.america.gov/