

Statement of Interest (SOI)

U.S. Embassy Cotonou PDS Request for Statements of Interest

AF/U.S. Embassy Cotonou, Department of State

Opportunity number: PDS-RCS-FY25

Application deadline: June 30, 2025 (11:59 p.m.) UTC+1

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**U.S Department of State
AF/U.S. Embassy Cotonou
Statement of Interest**

A. Basic Information

1. Overview

Funding Opportunity Title	U.S. Embassy Cotonou PDS Request for Statements of Interest
Funding Opportunity Number	PDS-RCS-FY25
Announcement Type	Initial announcement
Deadline for Applications	June 30, 2025 (11:59 p.m.) UTC+1
Assistance Listing Number	19.040 – Public Diplomacy Programs 19.022 – ECA Programs
Length of performance period	10 to 12 months
Number of awards anticipated	Varies (See Priority Program Objectives)
Award amounts	Awards may range from a minimum of \$5,000 to a maximum of \$20,000 (approximately)
Total available funding	\$100,000 pending availability of funds
Type of Funding	FY25 Smith Mundt Public Diplomacy Funds & FY25 Fulbright-Hays Public Diplomacy Funds
Anticipated project start date	10/01/2025

The U.S. Embassy Cotonou of the U.S. Department of State announces an open competition for organizations and individuals to submit a statement of interest (SOI) to carry out a project (or projects) that directly supports mission goals and foreign policy objectives. Please carefully follow all instructions below.

The submission of the SOI is the first step in a two-step process. Applicants must first submit a concise (3 pages maximum) statement of interest designed to clearly communicate projects idea 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, selected applicants will be invited to expand on their project idea(s) by submitting a full proposal application. Full proposals will go through a second merit review before final funding decision(s) are made.

Funding Instrument Type: Grant, fixed amount award (FAA), or cooperative agreement. Cooperative agreements include substantial involvement of the bureau or embassy in program implementation of the project. An FAA can also include substantial involvement.

Project Performance Period: Proposed projects should be completed in 12 months or less.

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

2. Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The U.S. Mission to Benin supports the country's efforts to enhance cooperation and promote economic growth in partnership with the United States.

The U.S. Embassy's Public Diplomacy Section in Cotonou supports media, youth, and business leaders with training, mentorship, and grants to build resilience, strengthen ties, and foster prosperity. These efforts align with three key goals: making America safer, stronger, and more prosperous.

B. Eligibility

1. Eligible Applicants

The Public Diplomacy Section encourages applications from U.S. and Beninese:

- Registered not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations with programming experience;
- Individuals;
- Non-profit or governmental educational institutions;
- Governmental institutions.

For-profit or commercial entities are not eligible to apply.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing is not required. When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

Applicants are only allowed to submit one statement of interest per organization. If more than one statement of interest is submitted from an organization, all statements of interest from that institution will be considered ineligible for funding.

To be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid and active registration in the System for Award Management (SAM) www.SAM.gov. **Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov. As the process to register in SAM can take several weeks, we recommend starting this process as soon as possible.**

C. Program Description

1. Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Make America Safer

Strategic Rationale: Counterterrorism efforts in Benin help reduce extremist threats, enhancing U.S. security and regional stability. Strengthening partnerships with Benin and its allies supports long-term peace and prosperity. By preventing radicalization through media engagement and reinforcing community resilience, the U.S. advances mutual security interests while fostering stability in vulnerable areas.

Priority Program Objectives & Audiences

- **Objective 1:** Prevent radicalization in northern Benin by equipping local radio stations and social media influencers to counter terrorist propaganda.
- **Objective 2:** Strengthen community resilience and social cohesion in at-risk areas.

Target Audiences: Youth leaders, religious leaders, northern community members, community radio stations, and social media influencers.

Expected Innovative Projects include, but are not limited to:

- Training on countering terrorist disinformation and recruitment.
- Capacity-building for community radio journalists and social media influencers to combat extremist narratives.

- Digital literacy programs in partnership with U.S.-based organizations and alumni associations.

Anticipated Awards: 1-2 grants, up to **\$20,000** each.

Goal 2: Make America Stronger

Strategic Rationale: Benin plays a key role in advancing U.S. security, trade, and diplomatic interests. By promoting press freedom and strengthening governance, the U.S. supports democratic stability and economic growth. Expanding English language learning and American values further reinforces cooperation, fostering long-term regional security and reinforcing U.S.-Benin partnership.

Priority Program Objectives & Audiences

- **Objective 1:** Promote press freedom, counter negative media influence and train Beninese journalists on U.S. best practices for election coverage.
- **Objective 2:** Expand access to English language learning and promote American values.
- **Objective 3:** Strengthen governance and democracy to reinforce U.S. leadership and global stability.

Target Audiences: Government officials, business leaders, security experts, academics, civil society, youth leaders, media professionals, and influencers.

Expected Innovative Projects:

- Support investigative journalism, storytelling, and social media campaigns showcasing U.S.-Benin cooperation.
- Expand STEM education, mentorship, English learning programs, and business development opportunities for young entrepreneurs.
- Train civil society leaders, journalists, and policymakers on transparency, the rule of law, and democratic governance.

Anticipated Awards: 1-2 grants, up to **\$15,000** each.

Goal 3: Make America More Prosperous

Strategic Rationale: Expanding trade, investment, and free-market policies in Benin supports U.S. economic interests by driving growth and creating jobs in both countries. By helping local businesses partner with U.S. firms, empowering STEM professionals, and promoting entrepreneurs, these initiatives foster sustainable development while reinforcing U.S.-Benin partnership.

Priority Program Objectives & Audiences

- **Objective 1:** Strengthen U.S.-Benin trade by enhancing local businesses' capacity to partner with American firms.
- **Objective 2:** Empower Beninese professionals in STEM to drive economic growth and U.S.-aligned business opportunities.
- **Objective 3:** Promote entrepreneurs and foster a fair business environment.

Target Audiences: Government and trade officials, business leaders, investors, chambers of commerce, and entrepreneurs.

Expected Innovative Projects:

- Training for Beninese businesses on U.S. market standards, trade regulations, and investment opportunities.
- Startup competitions supporting ventures aligned with U.S. business interests and private-sector growth.
- Programs assisting entrepreneurs in agriculture, textiles, and renewable energy to develop U.S. trade relationships.

Anticipated Awards: 1-2 grants, up to **\$20,000** each.

D. Application Contents and Format

The U.S. Embassy Cotonou Public Diplomacy Section will accept statements of interest through June 30, 2025. If your statement of interest is approved, you will be invited to submit a proposal within two weeks of notification. A grants committee including U.S. Embassy employees will review eligible applications in July 2025. All application materials must be submitted by email to CotonouPASGrants@state.gov.

All Statements of Interest SOI applications should ensure that the following requirements are met:

Please follow all instructions below carefully. SOIs that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible.

Content of SOI must include:

- A brief project description summarizing goals, objectives, outcomes, performance indicators, beneficiaries, and proposed timeline.

- Documents fully in English.
- The anticipated total budget amount (in U.S. dollars).
- All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12 point Calibri font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.

The Statement of Interest (3 pages maximum) should contain sufficient information that anyone not familiar with it would understand exactly what the applicant wants to do. You may use your own proposal format, but it must include all the items below.

- **Summary:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed project, including project objectives and anticipated impact.
- **Problem Statement:** Clear, concise and well-supported statement of the problem to be addressed and why the proposed program is needed
- **Project Goals and Objectives:** The “goals” describe what the program is intended to achieve. The “objectives” refer to the intermediate accomplishments on the way to the goals. These should be achievable and measurable.
- **Proposed Project Schedule and Timeline:** The proposed timeline for the program activities. Include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.
- **Budget Justification Narrative:** Please use a separate file to describe each of the budget expenses in detail.

E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

1. Address to Request Application Package

Application forms required above are available at: [Homepage - U.S. Embassy in Benin](#) and www.grants.gov

2. Department of State Contacts

The U.S. Embassy is unable to provide individual feedback on non-selected Statements of Interest. A public presentation with general feedback will be offered. The date and time will be announced on the Embassy Facebook.

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

Required Registrations

All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration in SAM.gov. 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 this NOFO.

The 2 CFR 200 requires subrecipients to obtain a UEI. Please note the UEI for subrecipients is not required at the time of application but will be required before an award is processed and/or directed to a subrecipient.

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

- 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.
- **Organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities.** 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 Defense. 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 DoD 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 DoD 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 \(nato.int\)](https://nato.int/ncage-code-request-tool)

Exemptions

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 email the point of contact listed in the NOFO at least two weeks prior to the deadline in the NOFO providing a justification of their request. 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

The U.S. Embassy Cotonou Public Diplomacy Section will accept proposals through June 30, 2025, (11:59 p.m.) UTC+1

5. Funding Restrictions

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

None of the funds awarded resulting from this Notice of Funding Opportunity 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

None of the funds awarded under this agreement may be used for any initiatives or programs, or any activities that do not comply with Executive Order 14173 titled Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity.

By signing the SF-424 or SF-424I Application for Federal Assistance, the Applicant certifies the following:

- 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.

6. Other Submission Requirements

All application materials must be submitted by email to CotonouPASGrants@state.gov

F. Application Review Information

1. Review Criteria

Each submission will be evaluated and rated based on the evaluation criteria outlined below.

Quality of Program Idea –40 points: The SOI is responsive to program framework. The idea is communicated well and is feasible. SOI's that promote creative approaches to address program objectives are highly encouraged. The proposed timeline is reasonable.

Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Grants –30 points: The SOI should demonstrate the organization's expertise and previous experience in administering programs. If a local partner is identified SOI should briefly describe the partner's role and experience.

Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives – 15 points: The SOI should clearly articulate proposed program activities and expected results towards achieving program objectives and goal(s).

Budget – 15 points: The budget justification should be detailed. Costs should be reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The budget should be realistic, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities.

2. Review and Selection Process

A review committee including U.S. Embassy employees will review eligible applications in July 2025.

All eligible SOIs will be reviewed against the criteria listed above. SOIs are reviewed individually against the criteria and not against competing SOIs. For a fair review, all panelists will review the first page of the SOI up to the page limit and no further. The panel may provide conditions and/or recommendations on SOIs to enhance the proposed program. Conditions must be addressed, and recommendations should be addressed, in a full proposal application.

Following the review, any successful SOI applicants will be contacted and instructed to submit full applications. A full application will include:

- SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance – organizations) or SF-424-I (Application for Federal Assistance --individuals)
- SF424A (Budget Information for Non-Construction programs)

- SF424B (Assurances for Non-Construction programs) – the SF424B are only required for individuals, organizations exempt from registration, and for organizations not required to fully register in SAM.gov.

3. Risk Review

Risk factors – must include

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

G. 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* (E.O. 13798) and *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (E.O. 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](#)