USAID | LIBERIA
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Issue Date:	May 7, 2021
Deadline for Question:	May 20, 2021
Closing Date:	June 9, 2021
Closing Time:	14:00 GMT

Subject: Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Number: 72066921RFA00002

Program Title: Media Activity, Liberia

Federal Assistance Listing Number: 98.001

Ladies/Gentlemen:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is seeking applications for a cooperative agreement from qualified entities to implement the Media Activity in Liberia. Eligibility for this award is not restricted.

USAID intends to make an award to the applicant who best meets the objectives of this funding opportunity based on the merit review criteria described in this NOFO subject to a risk assessment. Eligible parties interested in submitting an application are encouraged to read this NOFO thoroughly to understand the type of activity sought, application submission requirements and selection process.

To be eligible for award, the applicant must provide all information as required in this NOFO and meet eligibility standards in Section C of this NOFO. This funding opportunity is posted on www.grants.gov, and may be amended. It is the responsibility of the applicant to regularly check the website to ensure they have the latest information pertaining to this notice of funding opportunity and to ensure that the NOFO has been received from the internet in its entirety. USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion process. If you have difficulty registering on www.grants.gov or accessing the NOFO, please contact the Grants.gov Helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or via email at support@grants.gov for technical assistance.

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements detailed in Section D.6.f. The registration process may take many weeks to complete. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to begin registration early in the process.

Please send any questions to the point(s) of contact identified in Section D. The deadline for questions is shown above. Responses to questions received prior to the deadline will be furnished to all potential applicants through an amendment to this notice posted to www.grants.gov.

Issuance of this notice of funding opportunity does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government nor does it commit the Government to pay for any costs incurred in preparation or submission of comments/suggestions or an application. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Thank you for your interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

Andrea M. Plucknett
Agreement Officer

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION A: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This funding opportunity is authorized under the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, as amended. The resulting award will be subject to 2 CFR 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, and USAID's supplement, 2 CFR 700, as well as the additional requirements found in Section F.

INTRODUCTION

The Media Activity falls under the Foreign Assistance Framework (FAF) Governing Justly and Democratically Objective, Program Area 2.45 Civil Society. It is also aligned with USAID/Liberia's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), which identified the following overall strategic goal: USAID/Liberia will foster self-reliance by spurring private sector led economic expansion through a focus on catalyzing reforms and cultivating a healthy, productive, and educated workforce. This is to be accomplished through a package of interventions targeted at three complementary Development Objectives (DOs). The interventions proposed in this program description (PD) have been compiled with the goal of achieving DO 2: "Effective and Inclusive Governance Catalyzed through Reforms and Greater Accountability" but are also expected to contribute to the other two DOs.

USAID/Liberia expects to award a five-year (60 month) $11,000,000 cooperative agreement for this activity. The illustrative activities and results in this NOFO are meant to be examples only, and USAID encourages applications that propose activities and interventions that are both innovative and appropriate to the Liberian context.

This activity is expected to achieve the following objectives:

1. Capacity of media to produce reliable, relevant, and accurate information enhanced
2. Media's ability to serve as a conduit for information between citizens and government enhanced
3. Organizational and financial sustainability of community radio stations improved
4. Enabling environment for freer media strengthened

The following principles are essential to this program:

1. Sustainability: Projects can be called sustainable when they "deliver an appropriate level of benefits for an extended period of time after major financial managerial and technical assistance from an external donor is terminated." USAID supports country-led development by strengthening local expertise, institutions and management systems. For example, this activity will focus on helping media outlets to develop and maintain strategies to ensure they are relevant to their clients and can generate revenues to support operations over the long term.

Note: The term "program" as used in 2 CFR 200 and this NOFO is typically considered by USAID to be an Activity supporting one or more Project(s) pursuant to specific Development Objectives. Please see 2 CFR 700 for the USAID specific definitions of the terms "Activity" and "Project" as used in the USAID context for purposes of planning, design, and implementation of USAID development assistance.

2. Gender Integration: While both men and women actively participate in all areas of economic, social, and political life in Liberia, women have significantly less income, influence, autonomy, and political clout than men. Women's full and equal participation and the integration of gender perspectives are hallmarks of civic engagement. Gender issues should, therefore, be taken into consideration throughout activity implementation and evaluation. The recipient will be required to: design interventions in every objective area that respond to the specific needs of both genders as well as facilitate women's increased participation in Liberian media; collect data disaggregated by sex as appropriate; and implement monitoring mechanisms that determine if activities are facilitating a more equitable role for women.

The USAID/Liberia Office of Democracy, Rights, and Governance (DRG) works closely with the Government of Liberia (GOL) to implement reforms and improve effective, accountable, and inclusive governance. In a country where corruption and poor governance underlie a range of development challenges, Liberia's vibrant and engaged civil society and media organizations can serve as a counterweight to ineffective institutions. On USAID's Fiscal Year 2020 Journey to Self-Reliance Country Roadmap, Liberia scored 0.92 out of 1.0 on the metric of Civil Society and Media Effectiveness, which measures the range of actions and mechanisms that citizens, civil society organizations (CSOs), and media have available to them to hold the government accountable. Liberia's high score on this indicator is due to a relatively open operating environment for both civil society and the media. This contrasts with lower scores for Liberia on metrics of government capacity and commitment, demonstrating the potential for leveraging civil society and media investments--the "demand side" of governance--to catalyze government reforms that increase GOL accountability to Liberians and maximize results across the Mission's portfolio.

USAID/Liberia will implement a new media strengthening activity, ***Media Activity***, which will build upon lessons learned from prior activities and new approaches to enhance the effectiveness of Liberian media in serving as a conduit for citizen voices and government response. This activity will work together with a civil society strengthening activity to address the following problem statement: *There are limited avenues for Liberian citizens to engage their government to support their priority needs and create improved accountability.*

From 2015 to 2021, through the Liberia Media Development (LMD) activity, USAID supported the GOL and Liberian media organizations to achieve the following results, among others:

- Passage of the Kamara Abdullah Kamara Press Freedom Act, which has helped to solidify press freedoms within legislation. Implementation remains nascent, however, with limited public education of key stakeholder groups on the reforms passed within the Act;
- During the 2017 election, 126 district-level candidate debates (simultaneously broadcast on radio) contributed to increased citizen demand for election information and increased candidate knowledge about districts' issues; and
- Media outlets have demonstrated the ability to increase the quality and quantity of news and information that citizens receive about critical public issues.

Despite substantial progress, several challenges remain to enhance citizen engagement in democratic processes through improving the communication of reliable and quality information via media outlets. Some of the challenges include:

- Capacity and resource constraints in GOL regulatory bodies: The Independent Information Commission has limited capacity to ensure compliance with the Freedom of Information Act across the GOL, and to support Information Officers in GOL Ministries, Agencies, and Commissions;
- Holistic approaches to sustainability: Many media outlets lack capacity in a range of areas that are necessary to sustain operations over the long term. Current capacity gaps include: editorial management; program scheduling and formatting; human resources; financial management; technical maintenance systems;
- Energy: Reliable electricity continues to be a critical obstacle for media outlets. Reliable power sources will increase financial viability and improve the ability of stations to reach audiences, strengthening two-way platforms for citizens to participate in government decision making processes; and
- Talent retention: Veteran journalists who have risen through the ranks of media outlets often leave to take higher paying jobs in communications or public relations for government ministries, the private sector, foreign embassies, or development organizations.

Overall, a key problem this activity will address is how to strengthen the role of the media as a vehicle for citizens to engage the GOL in building sustainable change and national ownership of development priorities. A community radio assessment completed in February 2016 demonstrated that community radio stations are effective in providing information to many otherwise isolated communities across Liberia, yet there is limited space for citizens to utilize the media to amplify their voices and raise community issues to national-level dialogue. Media outlets, particularly community radio stations, are often able to solicit citizen feedback on the GOL services, but lack capacity or miss opportunities to channel feedback to appropriate government officials.

SPACE LEFT BLANK INTENTIONALLY

Figure 1: The role of media in strengthening citizen-GOL feedback loops

As depicted in Figure 1 above, citizens and the government should have a direct two-way relationship, through which citizens can direct concerns, priorities, and feedback to the government, and the government provides services to citizens and acts on citizen feedback through policy reform and implementation. In Liberia, the government is highly centralized, which, combined with distrust and lack of accountability of the GOL to its citizens, creates a disconnect between government officials and their constituents. Given that disconnect, and the inaccessibility of many parts of rural Liberia, the media, and more specifically, community radio, acts as a key vehicle for information sharing and through which the GOL engages citizens. However, the media does not provide a functional feedback loop from the citizens back to the government. Prior USAID-supported interventions have supported the media to help bridge the gap between citizen voices and national dialogue, in addition to providing information to citizens on issues of national concern. CSOs also have an important role to play in engaging the media to strengthen citizen-GOL feedback loops through organizing citizens for media engagement or communicating with constituents to spread awareness of CSO activitites and impacts. Through increased citizen engagement in community radio programming, the media can serve to bolster the citizen-GOL compact by providing space for citizen concerns and needs to be elevated to national dialogue, where issues can be heard and addressed by government officials.

ACTIVITY PURPOSE

USAID/Liberia will continue to support the development of high-quality, responsible journalism and sustainable media outlets through the 5-year Media Activity. The activity is aligned with USAID/Liberia's 2019-2024 CDCS under DO 2, "Effective and Inclusive Governance Catalyzed through Reforms and Greater Accountability." The activity directly supports Intermediate Result 2.3, "Civil society and media enabled to advance reforms and accountability."

The purpose of the activity is to: *Enhance the human and institutional capacity of the media while advocating for and maintaining current media freedoms to reliably carry out responsible journalism, drive reforms, and increase revenue.*

The activity is designed around the following development hypothesis:

> *If media outlets achieve greater managerial/editorial capabilities, higher-quality investigative journalism skills, and financial self-reliance, then the media sector will be better positioned to channel citizen interest and influence change.*

A central component of the activity will be enhancing feedback loops that can channel information effectively from citizens to government officials, and from government down to citizens. When the media's human and institutional capacity is strengthened, its ability to serve as a conduit for information between citizens and the government is improved, while providing the space for citizens to engage the government and participate in national-level dialogue, particularly around significant issues that impact their lives. As a part of this process, the activity will focus on building the capacity of media, including radio stations, print media and online media. Working across these platforms will maximize the impact of the media in elevating citizen voices and driving government reforms.

SPACE LEFT BLANK INTENTIONALLY

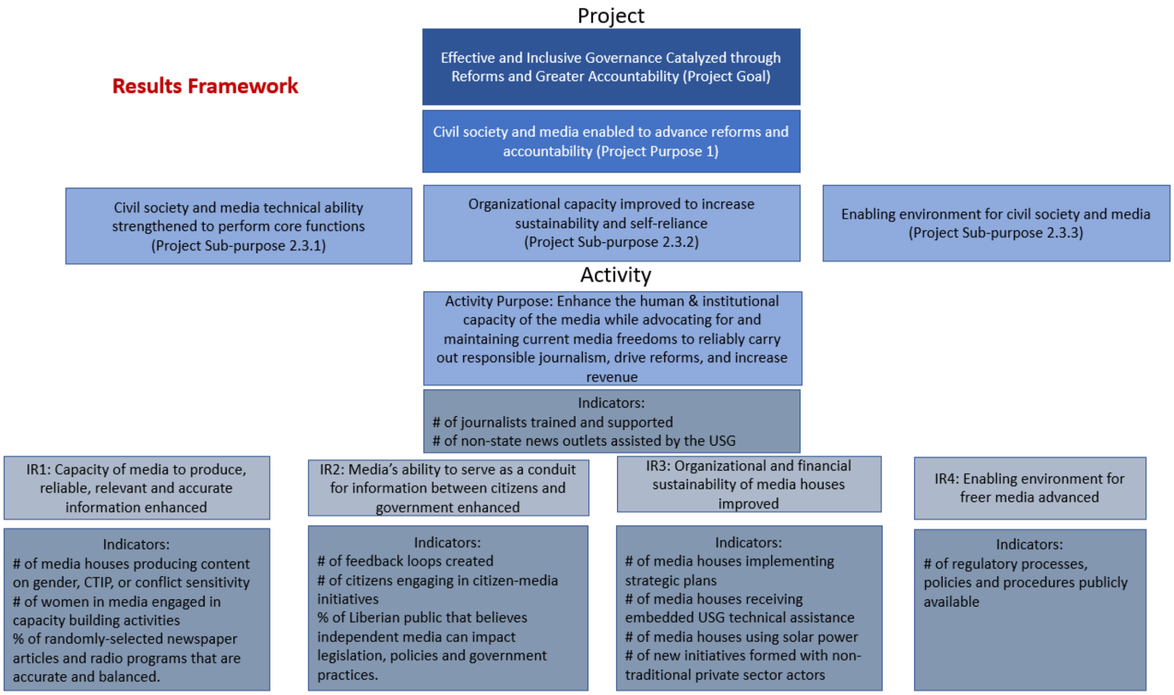

Figure 2: Results Framework

Building on lessons learned from LMD and analysis of challenges to Liberan media, the Media Activity will support three key themes to help strengthen the capacity and sustainability of media organizations:

- Enhancing the Quality of Reporting: This includes editorial oversight to ensure accuracy and relevance, and reduce bias; efficient content distribution; alignment of content with development-related thematic areas, e.g., conflict prevention, gender equality, Counter-Trafficking in Persons (CTIP), human rights, etc.
- Institution Strengthening: This includes robust organizational policies and internal management structures; strategy and business planning and implementation; and integration of new technologies and media, e.g., social media.
- Financial Sustainability: This requires strategies for revenue generation and marketing, private sector engagement, and access to reliable alternate power sources.

By addressing the themes above, the Media Activity will tackle the challenges to the sector noted above that center on sustainability and access to energy. Together, they will also address the challenge related to retention of quality journalists. Financial sustainability will increase revenue and decrease costs, which will enable media organizations to pay higher salaries to retain journalists. In addition, strengthening institutions and the quality of reporting will ensure that media managers devise strategies to retain staff and ensure young journalists are provided training and support to replace veteran journalists lost through attrition. Attention to gender equality and women's empowerment will be essential across all themes through prioritizing support to women in media management positions and female journalists. For example, the Female Journalist Association (FeJAL) will continue to be an important partner in this area.

The Media Activity will prioritize support to independent media organizations, but targeted support to GOL entities will help maintain and enhance Liberia's existing conducive enabling environment. For example, more work is needed to clarify processes to apply for radio station licenses, including the fair allocation and use of radio frequency spectrum, and accreditation for covering government events. The new activity will also help Liberians guard against potential GOL encroachment on the media's freedoms.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND ILLUSTRATIVE INTERVENTIONS

The Media Activity will support IR 2.3 of the USAID/Liberia 2019-2024 CDCS, "Civil society and media enabled to advance reforms and accountability," by focusing on efforts that increase the financial sustainability, organizational capacity and quality of information produced by the media.

The Media Activity has the following four objectives:

1. Capacity of media to produce reliable, relevant, and accurate information enhanced
2. Media's ability to serve as a conduit for information between citizens and government enhanced
3. Organizational and financial sustainability of community radio stations improved
4. Enabling environment for freer media strengthened

Objective 1: Capacity of media to produce reliable, relevant, and accurate information enhanced

Previous USAID support helped build the capacity of journalists to solicit a variety of views and to research background information on a breaking story. However, the media still struggles to uncover new stories and to pursue deep investigative coverage. Often, news outlets revert to publishing unaltered press releases. The Media Activity will train journalists on investigative journalism techniques, including how to uncover new stories, ensure the accuracy of reporting, and to provide timely stories of relevance to Liberian news consumers.

The Media Activity will also provide embedded technical assistance to select community radio stations to ensure that managerial and editorial capacity building is sustained beyond short-term training sessions. The activity should be sufficiently flexible to be able respond to crises or issues of national importance, such as disease outbreaks, the electoral cycle, the annual budgeting process, etc.

Illustrative interventions under objective 1:

- Topic-specific training for journalism fellows (for example: elections, human trafficking, or additional USAID/Liberia priorities)
- Training youth journalists through existing press clubs and establishing new press clubs where none exist through partnerships between select community radio stations and local schools

- Internships for college and university journalism students
- Support to the Press Union of Liberia (PUL) to sponsor an annual award ceremony highlighting reliable, relevant, and accurate print or radio coverage; prizes to be donated by private sector

Illustrative indicators under objective 1:

- Number of community radio stations producing content on gender, CTIP, or conflict sensitivity
- Number of women in media engaged in capacity building activities
- Percentage of randomly-selected newspaper articles and radio programs that are accurate and balanced.

Objective 2: Media's ability to serve as a conduit for information between citizens and government enhanced

Journalists have strengthened their ability to serve as a conduit during previous activities by including government officials in radio talk shows and in-person community media forums, but each show or event needed hands-on support. The new activity will build on this and support radio and print journalists to consistently and independently bring citizens and government voices together to debate pressing issues. By increasing the flow of information between government and its constituents, the media will create effective feedback loops that bolster accountability.

Illustrative interventions under objective 2:
- Train journalists on techniques to increase engagement with national and local government
- Support local associations such as the PUL to host community media forums, in collaboration with local radio stations

Illustrative indicators under objective 2:

- Number of citizens engaging in citizen-media initiatives
- Percentage of Liberian public that believes independent media can impact legislation, policies and government practices

Objective 3: Organizational and financial sustainability of community radio stations improved

Previous USAID activities had success enhancing the financial sustainability of some media organizations through improving sales and marketing skills. Nevertheless, many media outlets lack capacity in a range of areas that are necessary to sustain operations over the long term. Further, the capacity built during the implementation of previous activities was not sufficient to help media outlets internalize strong management systems and organizational policies that allow daily operations without donor support.

Embedded technical advisors will work with community radio stations at various levels to institutionalize capacity building and improve the sustainability of USAID interventions. This activity will also support community radio stations to become financially self-reliant through reducing costs and using data to identify additional revenue generation opportunities. This support will also help community radio stations to build networks with other actors, including the private sector, to explore mutually beneficial public-private partnerships. At the end of the project, it is expected that Tier 1 community radio stations (described in Section E below) will achieve financial sustainability without donor support.

To further assist sustainability of community radio stations, this activity may include refurbishments and/or renovation of existing structures, specifically community radio stations. The renovations could involve preparing or repairing facilities to be able to house information technology and electronic equipment (phones, computers, solar panels, etc.) to increase communications and broadcasting efficiencies in community radio stations. The work to be performed may also include the purchase and placement of furniture in existing structures. The work will be of short duration and will not necessitate construction of housing for workers. It is envisioned that no heavy equipment (e.g., large tractors or trucks) will be employed in the renovations.

Illustrative interventions under objective 3:

- Conduct an analysis of community radio stations (radio, television, newspapers) to determine which are independent and which are owned, operated, or affiliated with political actors
- Selection of Tier 1 and Tier 2 community radio stations to receive increased technical assistance, with USAID approval (within first 3 months of implementation)
- Regional technical advisors provide embedded support to community radio stations
- Detailed market research on audience demographics
- Business plan development for community radio and television stations
- Technical assistance to help community radio stations to engage the private sector and, using audience research data, drive advertising revenue
- Training on fundraising skills to include tapping into new markets, such as the private sector and the diaspora
- Refurbishment and renovation of Tier 1 and Tier 2 community radio stations, as needed

Illustrative indicators under objective 3:

- Number of community radio stations implementing strategic plans
- Number of media houses using solar power
- Number of new initiatives formed with non-traditional private sector actors

Objective 4: Enabling environment for freer media strengthened

The high score for civil society and media effectiveness on the Journey to Self-Reliance Roadmap indicates a relatively open operating environment for both civil society and the media. More work is needed to clarify processes to apply for radio station licenses, including the fair allocation and use of radio frequency spectrum, and accreditation for covering government events. The new activity will also help Liberians guard against potential GOL encroachment on the media's freedoms.

The Media Activity will work with the Liberia Telecommunications Authority (LTA) and the Ministry of Information, Cultural Affairs & Tourism (MICAT) to clarify regulatory processes, including obtaining radio station licenses and obtaining accreditation for government events, such as election monitoring and press conferences. USAID will engage the PUL as a key stakeholder in these efforts to help ensure that regulatory processes are transparent and inclusive. Offerors should also consider ways to promote self-regulation among media actors, for example through support to the PUL's National Media Council, which was initiated with LMD support.

Illustrative interventions under objective 4:

- Technical assistance on drafting regulations
- Technical assistance on internal LTA and MICAT policies and procedures

Illustrative indicators under objective 4:

- Number of regulatory processes, policies and procedures publicly available.

COMMUNITY RADIO STATION SELECTION CRITERIA

The majority of Liberians trust community radio stations as their primary source of news and information. LMD provided support to 30 community radio stations in all of Liberia's 15 counties. While none of these stations have achieved financial sustainability, some of the larger stations are closer to achieving viability than others. To balance the goal of achieving self-sufficiency for the most capable community radio stations with the need to provide access to accurate information throughout Liberia, the Media Activity will provide tiered support to community radio stations as follows:

- Tier 1: Focused support to the most capable stations to improve delivery of news and information, enhance sustainability, and set standards for "modeling behavior" to influence stations across the country.
- Tier 2: Broad-based capacity building for a larger set of radio stations in all counties to ensure all citizens benefit from greater access to timely and quality information.

Based on lessons learned from previous activities, this tiered approach can best address the breadth of challenges currently facing the media. Applicants will be required to develop selection criteria for the two tiers that balance analysis of existing capacity, potential political influence, and quantitative audience consumption research; the need for financial viability and sustainability; and country-wide geographical coverage.

LINKAGES TO OTHER USAID/LIBERIA PROGRAMS

Accurate and reliable information on important issues to national development can also have a positive multiplier effect on outcomes throughout the USAID/Liberia portfolio, and particularly on other DRG activities supporting civil society, good governance, and elections and political processes. The Media Activity should intentionally link with other DRG activities through annual work plans to ensure maximum impact of the portfolio in achieving strategic objectives. For example, flexibility to complement support for the 2023 election may be embedded in activity work plans. Additionally, it is expected that the implementing partner for this award will work closely with the Civil Society Activity implementing partner upon award.

GENDER CONSIDERATIONS

In response to the gender and other exclusion issues identified in the Background section, the activity must effectively integrate gender equality and women's empowerment as a cross-cutting objective throughout the activity, and include approaches and specific activities that will strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment as they relate to the activity purpose.

MANAGEMENT, ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACH AND STAFFING PLAN

Given the great range of possible effective skill combinations among potential staff members, USAID is not specifying the organizational configuration and staffing plan, however, is requiring a minimum of two senior (key personnel) positions, the Chief of Party (COP) and the Senior Advisor. Applicants may employ U.S. or third country personnel as permanent key staff. The use of local rather than international personnel for both short-term and permanent positions should be maximized as much as possible to assure appropriate institutionalization and sustainability. Curricula vitae for the proposed key personnel must be provided. USAID does not expect any Liberian organization or potential Liberian staff to have to promise exclusivity to one partner with one potential implementing partner.

Responsibilities and Qualifications for the Chief of Party (COP)

The COP will be the primary liaison with USAID/Liberia on technical matters. The COP shall be responsible for responding to the designated Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) and USAID/Liberia's Agreements Officer (AO). The COP shall also be responsible for ensuring quality control and the overall responsiveness of technical assistance provided under the award. The COP's primary responsibilities are aimed at providing overall leadership, management and general technical direction of the entire program, ensuring an integrated vision among different components and actors, and a focus on achieving the results defined in the award. This individual will be expected to identify issues and risks related to program implementation in a timely manner, and suggest appropriate program adjustments. The following are minimum requirements for the COP:

- S/he must have a degree in social sciences, journalism, international development, management, or a related field.
- S/he must have a minimum of 10 years professional experience in development at a senior program management level, including direct supervision of professional and support staff.

- S/he must have at least five (5) years of experience working in a developing country on media issues.
- It is preferred that s/he have previous work experience in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- S/he must have demonstrated experience in working effectively with media organizations, and capabilities in media development.
- S/he must have proven exceptional leadership in the design, management, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of similar-sized or larger/more complex donor-supported programs, with skills in high level strategic visioning and leadership, and have experience in managing complex activities involving coordination with multiple partner institutions.
- S/he must have strong communication skills, including interpersonal and in written and oral English.
- S/he must have the proven ability to develop and communicate a common vision among diverse partners and the ability to lead multidisciplinary teams.

Responsibilities and Qualifications for Senior Advisor

The Senior Advisor will liaise with the COP and radio stations. The Senior Advisor will be responsible for providing detailed information, advice, and direction to radio stations, technical teams, and organizational leadership. This includes but is not limited to the following: regulatory processes, including obtaining radio station licenses and obtaining accreditation for government events; technical assistance to help community radio stations to engage the private sector and, using audience research data, drive advertising revenue; training on fundraising skills to include tapping into new markets, such as the private sector and the diaspora; and managerial and editorial capacity building support

- S/he must have a degree in communications, journalism, or a similar field.
- S/he must have a minimum of 7 years professional experience in media development at least a mid-level management level, including direct supervision of professional and support staff.
- S/he must have demonstrated experience in working effectively with media organizations, and capabilities in media development, preferably in countries with nascent and under-funded media sectors.
- S/he must have strong communication skills, including interpersonal and in written and oral English.

THE REMAINDER OF THIS PAGE LEFT BLANK INTENTIONALLY.

SECTION B: FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Contemplated

USAID intends to award one Cooperative Agreement pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity. Subject to funding availability and at the discretion of the Agency, USAID intends to provide $11,000,000 in total USAID funding over a five-year period.

2. Expected Performance Indicators, Targets, Baseline Data, and Data Collection

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan shall include specific benchmarks and indicators for measuring progress for all activities that are ongoing, including results outlined in the Program Description, and USAID/Liberia's overall Performance Management Plan, along with additional benchmarks and indicators developed by the Recipient. The plan shall specify how data will be collected and analyzed for each of the benchmarks and indicators. The MEL Plan will also highlight how data collected will show the impact and effectiveness of program approaches and methodologies employed and how the data will contribute toward enhancing understanding of best practices in the sector. Measurement will focus on both output and outcome data as well as on higher levels of impact, to demonstrate the impacts and results of program activities.

3. Start Date and Period of Performance for Federal Awards

The anticipated period of performance is five years. The estimated start date will be [to be inserted upon signature of the award].

4. Substantial Involvement

A Cooperative Agreement implies a level of "substantial involvement" by USAID. The intended purpose of USAID involvement, primarily through the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR), during the award is to assist the recipient in achieving the objectives of the agreement.

Substantial involvement is anticipated in the following areas:

Key Personnel: the following position has been designated as key to the successful completion of the objective of this award.

Title	Name
a) Chief of Party	[TBD]
b) Senior Advisor	[TBD]

Annual Implementation Plans: The Recipient shall submit an Annual Implementation Plan within 30 days from the date of the award and at the beginning of every project year thereafter. The USAID/Liberia designated AOR will review the Implementation Plan and provide comments within one week of receipt. The Recipient shall incorporate these comments and provide a revised draft within one week of receiving USAID's comments. Thus, a final Annual Implementation Plan will be in place within 60 days from the beginning of the program. The Implementation Plan will include major activities that will be undertaken, rationale behind these activities, anticipated results of these efforts and how they will be measured, any outside technical assistance that may be required to complete the activity, and a timeframe for when activities will commence and end. Details of collaboration with other USAID-funded democracy and governance partners, especially the civil society activity implementing partner (once in place), will also be included.

A. **Annual Risk Assessment:** The Recipient shall conduct an annual risk assessment to assess the overall context, monitor risks and key assumptions, and identify mitigating measures that can be put in place. This annual risk assessment will be incorporated with the annual implementation plan. USAID reserves the right to suspend activities should the situation change.

B. **Weekly Programmatic Notes:** The Recipient shall submit to the AOR weekly programmatic notes via email highlighting the outcomes of any significant meetings and/or events from the previous week. Details of collaboration with other USAID-funded democracy and governance partners will also be included. The "weekly" should also include any upcoming events and advise if USAID representation is recommended.

Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan: At the beginning of each agreement year, the Recipient shall submit an MEL Plan with the Annual Implementation Plan. The MEL Plan will be approved at the same time and with a similar approval process as the Annual Implementation Plan. The MEL Plan shall be updated and revised as needed in collaboration with USAID. The MEL Plan will include specific benchmarks and indicators for measuring progress for all activities that are ongoing, including results outlined in the Program Description, and USAID/Liberia's overall Performance Management Plan, along with additional benchmarks and indicators developed by the Recipient. The plan will specify how data will be collected and analyzed for each of the benchmarks and indicators. The MEL Plan will also highlight how data collected will show the impact and effectiveness of program approaches and methodologies employed and how the data will contribute toward enhancing understanding of best practices in the sector. Measurement will focus on both output and outcome data as well as on higher levels of impact, to demonstrate the impacts and results of program activities. For each objective, there should be at least 2 to 3 qualitative outcome-oriented objectives. All data should be disaggregated by gender, disability, and age, whenever applicable. Please note that the recipient should plan to also collect detailed, in-depth baseline data for all relevant components in order to track impact of activities over the life of the program. By having the initial baseline data from the studies undertaken by previous-USAID funded activities and the implementing partner, there will be a strong basis from which to measure changes, as well as evidence on which to make informed decisions about future activities and interventions. Therefore, this will promote institutional learning for implementing partners, media outlets, and associations, and USAID alike. The Recipient should anticipate an annual reporting schedule that will accommodate the collection and analysis of performance data for each fiscal year (October-September), with compilation and presentation to USAID/Liberia by October 31 in order to allow USAID sufficient time to prepare the Mission's Annual Report for timely submission to USAID/Washington in December of each year. MEL Plans with progress against indicator targets should also be submitted on a quarterly basis with the Quarterly Reports.

Demobilization Plan: Ninety days prior to the completion date of the Cooperative Agreement, a demobilization plan including the proposed disposition of equipment, if any, will be submitted to the AOR for review and approval of the Agreement Officer.

5. Authorized Geographic Code

The geographic code for the procurement of commodities and services under this program is 935.

6. Nature of the Relationship between USAID and the Recipient

The principal purpose of the relationship with the Recipient and under the subject program is to transfer funds to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation of the Media Activity which is authorized by Federal statute. The successful Recipient will be responsible for ensuring the achievement of the program objectives and the efficient and effective administration of the award through the application of sound management practices. The Recipient will assume responsibility for administering Federal funds in a manner consistent with underlying agreements, program objectives, and the terms and conditions of the Federal award.

7. Selection of Instrument

The purpose of this activity is to: enhance the human and institutional capacity of the media while advocating for and maintaining current media freedoms to reliably carry out responsible journalism, influence change, and increase revenue.

Four objectives are envisioned: 1) enhance the capacity of media to produce reliable, relevant, and accurate information, 2) enhance the media's ability to serve as a conduit for information between citizens and government, and 3) improve organizational and financial sustainability of community radio stations; and 4) strengthen the enabling environment for freer media.

The Program Area advances the Mission of the Agency and serves a public purpose of support and stimulation authorized by the FAA and annual appropriations legislation.

It is the policy of the Agency to help countries increase the capacity and sustainability of professional journalism and citizen-generated media by providing Federal financial assistance to development actors who merit federal support or assistance by reason of their mission, programs, and activities in a Program Area for which the Agency has funding. Through the provision of Media Activity, Federal financial assistance under a Cooperative Agreement for this Activity, the Agency intends to support development actors in the media sector who will help increase the capacity and sustainability of professional journalism and citizen-generated media by carrying out their mission, programs, and activities in a manner that advances sustainable development in the Program Area.

SECTION C: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligibility for this NOFO is not restricted.

USAID welcomes applications from organizations that have not previously received financial assistance from USAID.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

USAID has established a suggested recipient cost share of 5% for the award. Such funds may be provided directly by the recipient; other multilateral, bilateral, and foundation donors; host governments; and local organizations, communities and private businesses that contribute financially and in-kind to implementation of activities at the country level. This may include contribution of staff level of effort, office space or other facilities or equipment which may be used for the program, provided by the recipient. For guidance on cost sharing in grants and cooperative agreements see 2 CFR 200.306.

SECTION D: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Agency Point of Contact

Name	Andrea M. Plucknett
Title	Supervisory Contracting/Agreement Officer
Email:	aplucknett@usaid.gov
Mail Address:	US Embassy, Monrovia, Liberia

Name	Claudia Molina
Title	Senior Acquisition and Assistance Specialist
Email:	cmolina@usaid.gov
Mail Address:	US Embassy, Monrovia, Liberia

2. Questions and Answers

Questions regarding this NOFO should be submitted via email to Claudia Molina, cmolina@usaid.gov and Andrea M. Plucknett, aplucknett@usaid.gov no later than the date and time indicated on the cover letter, as amended. Any information given to a prospective applicant concerning this NOFO will be furnished promptly to all other prospective applicants as an amendment to this NOFO, if that information is necessary in submitting applications or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicant.

3. General Content and Form of Application

Preparation of Applications:

Each applicant must furnish the information required by this NOFO. Applications must be submitted in two separate parts: the Technical Application and the Business (Cost) Application. This subsection addresses general content requirements applying to the full application. Please see subsections 5 and 6, below, for information on the content specific to the Technical and Business (Cost) applications. The Technical application must address technical aspects only while the Business (Cost) Application must present the costs, and address risk and other related issues.

Both the Technical and Business (Cost) Applications must include a cover page containing the following information:

- Name of the organization(s) submitting the application;
- Identification and signature of the primary contact person (by name, title, organization, mailing address, telephone number and email address) and the identification of the alternate contact person (by name, title, organization, mailing address, telephone number and email address);
- Program name

- Notice of Funding Opportunity number
- Name of any proposed sub-recipients or partnerships (identify if any of the organizations are local organizations, per USAID's definition of 'local entity' under ADS 303.

Any erasures or other changes to the application must be initialed by the person signing the application. Applications signed by an agent on behalf of the applicant must be accompanied by evidence of that agent's authority, unless that evidence has been previously furnished to the issuing office.

Applicants may choose to submit a cover letter in addition to the cover pages, but it will serve only as a transmittal letter to the Agreement Officer. The cover letter will not be reviewed as part of the merit review criteria.

Applications must comply with the following:

- USAID will not review any pages in excess of the page limits noted in the subsequent sections. Please ensure that applications comply with the page limitations.
- Written in English.
- Use standard 8 ½" x 11", single sided, single-spaced, font not smaller than 12 point, 1" margins, left justification and headers and/or footers on each page including consecutive page numbers, date of submission, and applicant's name.
- Eight point font can be used for graphs and charts. Tables however, must comply with the 9 point requirement
- Submitted via Microsoft Word and PDF formats, except budget files which must be submitted in Microsoft Excel.
- The estimated start date identified in Section B of this NOFO must be used in the cost application.
- The technical application must be a searchable and editable Word and PDF format as appropriate.
  The Cost Schedule must include an Excel spreadsheet with all cells unlocked and no hidden formulas or sheets. A PDF version of the Excel spreadsheet may be submitted in addition to the Excel version at the applicant's discretion, however, the official cost application submission is the unlocked Excel version.

Applicants must review, understand, and comply with all aspects of this NOFO. Failure to do so may be considered as being non-responsive and may be evaluated accordingly. Applicants should retain a copy of the application and all enclosures for their records.

4. Application Submission Procedures

Applications in response to this NOFO must be submitted no later than the closing date and time indicated on the cover letter, as amended. Late applications will not be reviewed nor considered. Applicants must retain proof of timely delivery in the form of system generated documentation of delivery receipt date and time/confirmation from the receiving office/certified mail receipt.

Applications must be submitted by email to cmolina@usaid.gov and aplucknett@usaid.gov Email submissions must include the NOFO number and applicant's name in the subject line heading. In addition, for an application sent by multiple emails, the subject line must also indicate whether the email relates to the technical or cost application, and the desired sequence of the emails and their attachments (e.g. "No. 1 of 4", etc.). For example, if your cost application is being sent in two emails, the first email should have a subject line that states: "[NOFO number], [organization name], Cost Application, Part 1 of 2".

USAID's preference is that the technical application and the cost application each be submitted as consolidated email attachments, e.g. that you consolidate the various parts of a technical application into a single document before sending it. If this is not possible, please provide instructions on how to collate the attachments. USAID will not be responsible for errors in compiling electronic applications if no instructions are provided or are unclear.

After submitting an application electronically, applicants should immediately check their own email to confirm that the attachments were indeed sent. If an applicant discovers an error in transmission, please send the material again and note in the subject line of the email or indicate in the file name if submitted via grants.gov that it is a "corrected" submission. Do not send the same email more than once unless there has been a change, and if so, please note that it is a "corrected" email.

Applicants are reminded that e-mail is NOT instantaneous, and in some cases delays of several hours occur from transmission to receipt. Therefore, applicants are requested to send the application in sufficient time ahead of the deadline. For this NOFO, the initial point of entry to the government infrastructure is the USAID mail server.

There may be a problem with the receipt of *.zip files due to anti-virus software. Therefore, applicants are discouraged from sending files in this format as USAID/L cannot guarantee their acceptance by the internet server. File size must not exceed 9.5 MB.

5. Technical Application Format (20 pages)

The technical application should be specific, complete, and presented concisely and must not exceed 15 pages, excluding Cover Page, Table of Contents and Executive Summary. The application must demonstrate the applicant's capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this program. The application should take into account the requirements of the program and merit review criteria found in this NOFO.

(a) Cover Page (See Section D.3 above for requirements)

(b) Table of Contents (not included in page limit)

Include major sections and page numbering to easily cross-reference and identify merit review criteria.

c) Executive Summary (one page – not included in page limit)

The Executive Summary must provide a high-level overview of key elements of the Technical Application.

d) Technical Approach (not to exceed 15 pages)

This section of the technical application will present the Applicant's overall approach to achieve the objectives outlined in Section A of this NOFO to include integration of stakeholders, gender considerations, project sustainability, anticipated activities and results to be achieved. The overall approach should demonstrate the applicant's comprehensive understanding of the program description by proposing a clear and focused, convincing, logical, and realistic technical approach. The technical approach should also include proposed selection criteria for determining the two tiers of support for community radio stations described in Section A.

Illustrative Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan – This section of the technical approach will describe the applicant's approach to monitoring and evaluation as described in Section B of the program to include the planned activities and relevant indicators and how activities will be implemented into the project on an ongoing basis.

In an annex (not included in page limit), the applicant will present a clear and focused overall approach to project monitoring and evaluation so as to demonstrate its understanding of the issues and challenges associated with the execution of planned activities.

Illustrative Risk Assessment – This section of the technical approach will describe the applicant's approach to conducting a risk assessment as specified in Section B to include identifying possible risks to the overall program and mitigating measures to be taken on behalf of the applicant and how they will be implemented into the project on an ongoing basis. The applicant will present a clear and focused overall approach to conducting a project risk assessment so as to demonstrate its understanding of the risks and assumptions working with the media sector in Liberia.

e) Staffing Plan and Management **Approach (not to exceed 5 pages)**

The Staffing and Management section should contain the following elements:

Key Personnel – This section of the staffing and management approach will describe in narrative format, the roles and responsibilities of proposed key personnel as they are tied to the proposed approach, and how the proposed candidates meet the qualifications to serve as key personnel as detailed in Section A of this NOFO. The Applicant must state concisely why the proposed key personnel are appropriate for this effort and how they maximize the probability of successful performance of the program. Additionally, for all proposed key personnel, the applicant must provide an annex to include: resumes in a standard format to be determined by the applicant; three professional references to include name, title, telephone number, e-mail, and description of the project; and a signed letter of intent from each key personnel indicating his/her: 1) availability to serve in the stated position, in terms of number of days after award; and 2) intention to serve for a specified duration.

Staffing Plan– This section of the staffing and management approach will describe the applicant's overall approach to staffing, including an organizational chart. The Applicant must describe in narrative format how its proposed staffing plan is an appropriate mix of expertise (including local, regional, and expat staff and support functions) and how they will together achieve the objectives of the activity identified in the program description. The Plan must describe and define the roles and responsibilities of each proposed team member to include key personnel and present clear lines of reporting and communication among prime recipient staff and/or home office support staff and its subpartner(s), if any. Additionally, the Applicant must provide an annex to include an organizational chart that depicts the structure of the organization and lines of reporting and communication.

Management Plan - The applicant must demonstrate how it will successfully and systematically manage the staff and activities presented in its technical approach including project schedule, budget, and personnel using appropriate management tools.

f) History of Performance (not included in page limit)

The applicant must describe its work performance on relevant programs related to media development it has previously implemented. Similar work need not be with USAID nor with a US government agency. It must describe how its performance (providing 20% or more of work) contributed to the successful completion of the project in terms of its management of the services it provided, controlling project costs, meeting the project schedule, the manner in which business was conducted, overall customer satisfaction, and effectiveness of key personnel on the project.

In an annex, the applicant must provide information regarding its recent history of performance for all its cost-reimbursement contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements involving similar or related programs, not to exceed three years as follows:

• Name of the Awarding Organization;
• Award Number;
• Activity Title;
• A brief description of the activity;
• Period of Performance;
• Award Amount;
• Reports and findings from any audits performed in the last {three years}; and
• Name of at least two (2) updated professional contacts who most directly observed the work at the organization for which the service was performed with complete current contact information including telephone number, and e-mail address for each proposed individual.

If the applicant encountered problems on any of the referenced Awards, it may provide a short explanation and the corrective action taken. The applicant should not provide general information on its performance. USAID reserves the right to obtain relevant information concerning an applicant's history of performance from any sources and may consider such information in its review of the applicant's risk. The Agency may request additional information and conduct a pre-award survey if it determines that it is necessary to inform the risk assessment.

The Applicant must alert the contacts that their names have been submitted and that they are authorized to provide past performance information when requested.

6. Business (Cost) Application Format

The Business (Cost) Application must be submitted separately from the Technical Application. While no page limit exists for the full cost application, applicants are encouraged to be as concise as possible while still providing the necessary details. The business (cost) application must illustrate the entire period of performance, using the budget format shown in the SF-424A.

Prior to award, applicants may be required to submit additional documentation deemed necessary for the Agreement Officer to assess the applicant's risk in accordance with 2 CFR 200.206. Applicants should not submit any additional information with their initial application.

The Cost Application must contain the following sections (which are further elaborated below this listing with the letters for each requirement):

a) Cover Page (See Section D.3 above for requirements)

b) SF 424 Form(s)

The applicant must sign and submit the cost application using the SF-424 series. Standard Forms can be accessed electronically at www.grants.gov or using the following links:

Instructions for SF-424	http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424-instructions.html
Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html
Instructions for SF-424A	http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424a-instructions.html
Budget Information (SF-424A)	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html
Instructions for SF-424B	http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424b-instructions.html
Assurances (SF-424B)	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html

Failure to accurately complete these forms could result in the rejection of the application.

c) Required Certifications and Assurances

The applicant must complete the following documents and submit a signed copy with their application:

(1) "Certifications, Assurances, Representations, and Other Statements of the Recipient" ADS 303mav document found at http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mav.pdf
(2) Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)
(3) Certificate of Compliance: Please submit a copy of your Certificate of Compliance if your organization's systems have been certified by USAID/Washington's Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA).

d) Budget and Budget Narrative

The budget must be submitted as one unprotected Excel file (MS Office 2000 or later versions) with visible formulas and references and must be broken out by project year, including itemization of the federal and non-federal (cost share) amount. Files must not contain any hidden or otherwise inaccessible cells. Budgets with hidden cells lengthen the cost analysis time required to make award, and may result in a rejection of the cost application. The Budget Narrative must contain sufficient detail to allow USAID to understand the proposed costs. The applicant must ensure the budgeted costs address any additional requirements identified in Section F, such as Branding and Marking. The Budget Narrative must be thorough, including sources for costs to support USAID's determination that the proposed costs are fair and reasonable.

The Budget must include the following worksheets or tabs, and contents, at a minimum:

- Summary Budget, inclusive of all program costs (federal and non-federal), broken out by major budget category and by year for activities implemented by the applicant and any potential sub-applicants for the entire period of the program. See Section H, Annex 1 for Summary Budget Template
- Detailed Budget, including a breakdown by year, sufficient to allow the Agency to determine that the costs represent a realistic and efficient use of funding to implement the applicant's program and are allowable in accordance with the cost principles found in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E.
- Detailed Budgets for each sub-recipient, for all federal funding and cost share, broken out by budget category and by year, for the entire implementation period of the project.

The Detailed Budget must contain the following budget categories and information, at a minimum:

1) Salaries and Allowances – Must be proposed consistent with 2 CFR 200.430 Compensation - Personal Services. The applicant's budget must include position title, salary rate, level of effort, and salary escalation factors for each position. Allowances, when proposed, must be broken down by specific type and by position. Applicants must explain all assumptions in the Budget Narrative. The Budget Narrative must demonstrate that the proposed compensation is reasonable for the services rendered and consistent with what is paid for similar work in other activities of the applicant. Applicants must provide their established written policies on personnel compensation. If the applicant's written policies do not address a specific element of compensation that is being proposed, the Budget Narrative must describe the rationale used and supporting market research.

2) Fringe Benefits – (if applicable) If the applicant has a fringe benefit rate approved by an agency of the U.S. Government, the applicant must use such rate and provide evidence of its approval. If an applicant does not have a fringe benefit rate approved, the applicant must propose a rate and explain how the applicant determined the rate. In this case, the Budget Narrative must include a detailed breakdown comprised of all items of fringe benefits (e.g., superannuation, gratuity, etc.) and the costs of each, expressed in U.S. dollars and as a percentage of salaries.

3) Travel and Transportation – Provide details to explain the purpose of the trips, the number of trips, the origin and destination, the number of individuals traveling, and the duration of the trips. Per Diem and associated travel costs must be based on the applicant's normal travel policies. When appropriate please provide supporting documentation as an attachment, such as company travel policy, and explain assumptions in the Budget Narrative.

4) Procurement or Rental of Goods (Equipment & Supplies), Services, and Real Property – Must include information on estimated types of equipment, models, supplies and the cost per unit and quantity. The Budget Narrative must include the purpose of the equipment and supplies and the basis for the estimates. The Budget Narrative must support the necessity of any rental costs and reasonableness in light of such factors as: rental costs of comparable property, if any; market conditions in the area; alternatives available; and the type, life expectancy, condition, and value of the property leased.

5) Subawards – Specify the budget for the portion of the program to be passed through to any subrecipients. See 2 CFR 200 for assistance in determining whether the sub-tier entity is a subrecipient or contractor. The subrecipient budgets must align with the same requirements as the applicant's budget, including those related to fringe and indirect costs.

6) Construction – If applicable

7) Other Direct Costs – This may include other costs not elsewhere specified, such as report preparation costs, passports and visas fees, medical exams and inoculations, as well as any other miscellaneous costs which directly benefit the program proposed by the applicant. The applicant should indicate the subject, venue and duration of any proposed conferences and seminars, and their relationship to the objectives of the program, along with estimates of costs. Otherwise, the narrative should be minimal.

8) Indirect Costs – Applicants must indicate whether they are proposing indirect costs or will charge all costs directly. In order to better understand indirect costs please see Subpart E of 2 CFR 200. The application must identify which approach they are requesting and provide the applicable supporting information. Below are the most commonly used Indirect Cost Rate methods:

   <u>Method 1 - Direct Charge Only</u>
   Eligibility: Any applicant
   Initial Application Requirements: See above on direct costs

Method 2 - Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)
Eligibility: Any applicant with a NICRA issued by a USG Agency must use that NICRA
Initial Application Requirements: If the applicant has a current NICRA, submit your approved NICRA and the associated disclosed practices. If your NICRA was issued by an Agency other than USAID, provide the contact information for the approving Agency. Additionally, at the Agency's discretion, a provisional rate may be set forth in the award subject to audit and finalization. See USAID's Indirect Cost Rate Guide for Non Profit Organizations for further guidance.

Method 3 - De minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC)
Eligibility: Any applicant that does not have a current NICRA
Initial Application Requirements: Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate an indirect rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time. The applicant must describe which cost elements it charges indirectly vs. directly. See 2 CFR 200 for further information.

Method 4 - Indirect Costs Charged As A Fixed Amount
Eligibility: Non U.S. non-profit organizations without a NICRA may request, but approval is at the discretion of the AO
Initial Application Requirements: Provide the proposed fixed amount and a worksheet that includes the following:

- Total costs incurred by the organization for the previous fiscal year and estimates for the current year.
- Indirect costs (common costs that benefit the day-to-day operations of the organization, including categories such as salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting, or that benefit and are identifiable to more than one program or activity, such as depreciation, rental costs, operations and maintenance of facilities, and telephone expenses) for the previous fiscal year and estimates for the current year
- Proposed method for prorating the indirect costs equitably and consistently across all programs and activities of using a base that measures the benefits of that particular cost to each program or activity to which the cost applies.

If the applicant does not have an approved NICRA and does not elect to utilize the 10% de minimis rate, the Agreement Officer will provide further instructions and may request additional supporting information, including financial statements and audits, should the application still be under consideration after the merit review. USAID is under no obligation to approve the applicant's requested method.

e) Prior Approvals in accordance with 2 CFR 200.407

Inclusion of an item of cost in the detailed application budget does not satisfy any requirements for prior approval by the Agency. If the applicant would like the award to reflect approval of any cost elements for which prior written approval is specifically required for allowability, the applicant must specify and justify that cost. See 2 CFR 200.407 for information regarding which cost elements require prior written approval.

e) Approval of Subawards

The applicant must submit information for all subawards that it wishes to have approved at the time of award. For each proposed subaward the applicant must provide the following:

- Name of organization
- DUNS Number
- Confirmation that the subrecipient does not appear on the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) list
- Confirmation that the subrecipient does not have active exclusions in the System for Award Management (SAM)
- Confirmation that the subrecipient is not listed in the United Nations Security designation list
- Confirmation that the subrecipient is not suspended or debarred
- Confirmation that the applicant has completed a risk assessment of the subrecipient, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.332(b)
- Any negative findings as a result of the risk assessment and the applicant's plan for mitigation.

f) Dun and Bradstreet and SAM Requirements

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier (DUNS number) and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements. Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is exempted from requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to:

1. Provide a valid DUNS number for the applicant and all proposed sub-recipients;
2. Be registered in SAM before submitting its application. SAM is streamlining processes, eliminating the need to enter the same data multiple times, and consolidating hosting to make the process of doing business with the government more efficient (www.beta.sam.gov).
3. Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

The registration process may take many weeks to complete. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to begin the process early. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements above by the time USAID is ready to make an award, USAID may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

DUNS number: http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform
SAM registration: http://www.beta.sam.gov

Non-U.S. applicants can find additional resources for registering in SAM, including a Quick Start Guide and a video on how to obtain an NCAGE code, on www.beta.sam.gov, navigate to Help, then to International Registrants.

g) Branding Strategy & Marking Plan

The Recipient shall include a Branding and Marking plan, with a budget (in the Cost Application) as part of the application package. Marking shall comply with the USAID "Graphic Standards Manual" available at: www.usaid.gov/branding, or any successor branding policy.

1. Branding Strategy – Assistance (June 2012)

a. Applicants recommended for an assistance award must submit and negotiate a "Branding Strategy," describing how the program, project, or activity is named and positioned, and how it is promoted and communicated to beneficiaries and host country citizens.

b. The request for a Branding Strategy, by the Agreement Officer from the applicant, confers no rights to the applicant and constitutes no USAID commitment to an award.

c. Failure to submit and negotiate a Branding Strategy within the time frame specified by the Agreement Officer will make the applicant ineligible for an award.

d. The applicant must include all estimated costs associated with branding and marking USAID programs, such as plaques, stickers, banners, press events, materials, and so forth, in the budget portion of the application. These costs are subject to the revision and negotiation with the Agreement Officer and will be incorporated into the Total Estimated Amount of the grant, cooperative agreement or other assistance instrument.

e. The Branding Strategy must include, at a minimum, all of the following:

(1) All estimated costs associated with branding and marking USAID programs, such as plaques, stickers, banners, press events, materials, and so forth.

(2) The intended name of the program, project, or activity.

(i) USAID requires the applicant to use the "USAID Identity," comprised of the USAID logo and brandmark, with the tagline "from the American people" as found on the USAID Web site at http://www.usaid.gov/branding, unless Section VI of the RFA or APS states that the USAID Administrator has approved the use of an additional or substitute logo, seal, or tagline.

(ii) USAID prefers local language translations of the phrase "made possible by (or with) the generous support of the American People" next to the USAID Identity when acknowledging contributions.

(iii) It is acceptable to cobrand the title with the USAID Identity and the applicant's identity.

(iv) If branding in the above manner is inappropriate or not possible, the applicant must explain how USAID's involvement will be showcased during publicity for the program or project.

(v) USAID prefers to fund projects that do not have a separate logo or identity that competes with the USAID Identity. If there is a plan to develop a separate logo to consistently identify this program, the applicant must attach a copy of the proposed logos. Section VI of the RFA will state if an Administrator approved the use of an additional or substitute logo, seal, or tagline.

(3) The intended primary and secondary audiences for this project or program, including direct beneficiaries and any special target segments.

(4) Planned communication or program materials used to explain or market the program to beneficiaries.

(i) Describe the main program message.

(ii) Provide plans for training materials, posters, pamphlets, public service announcement, billboards, Web sites, and so forth, as appropriate.

(iii) Provide any plans to announce and promote publicly this program or project to host country citizens, such as media releases, press conferences, public events, and so forth. Applicant must incorporate the USAID Identity and the message, "USAID is from the American People."

(iv) Provide any additional ideas to increase awareness that the American people support this project or program.

(5) Information on any direct involvement from host-country government or ministry, including any planned acknowledgement of the host-country government.

(6) Any other groups whose logo or identity the applicant will use on program materials and related materials. Indicate if they are a donor or why they will be visibly acknowledged, and if they will receive the same prominence as USAID.

e. The Agreement Officer will review the Branding Strategy to ensure the above information is adequately included and consistent with the stated objectives of the award, the applicant's cost data submissions, and the performance plan.

f. If the applicant receives an assistance award, the Branding Strategy will be included in and made part of the resulting grant or cooperative agreement

(END OF PROVISION)

2. Marking Plan – Assistance (June 2012)

a. Applicants recommended for an assistance award must submit and negotiate a "Marking Plan," detailing the public communications, commodities, and program materials, and other items that will visibly bear the "USAID Identity," which comprises of the USAID logo and brandmark, with the tagline "from the American people." The USAID Identity is the official marking for the Agency, and is found on the USAID Web site at http://www.usaid.gov/branding. Section VI of the RFA or APS will state if an Administrator approved the use of an additional or substitute logo, seal, or tagline.

b. The request for a Marking Plan, by the Agreement Officer from the applicant, confers no rights to the applicant and constitutes no USAID commitment to an award.

c. Failure to submit and negotiate a Marking Plan within the time frame specified by the Agreement Officer will make the applicant ineligible for an award.

d. The applicant must include all estimated costs associated with branding and marking USAID programs, such as plaques, stickers, banners, press events, materials, and so forth, in the budget portion of the application. These costs are subject to the revision and negotiation with the Agreement Officer and will be incorporated into the Total Estimated Amount of the grant, cooperative agreement or other assistance instrument.

e. The Marking Plan must include all of the following:

(1) A description of the public communications, commodities, and program materials that the applicant plans to produce and which will bear the USAID Identity as part of the award, including:

(i) Program, project, or activity sites funded by USAID, including visible infrastructure projects or other sites physical in nature;

(ii) Technical assistance, studies, reports, papers, publications, audiovisual productions, public service announcements, Web sites/Internet activities, promotional, informational, media, or communications products funded by USAID;

(iii) Commodities, equipment, supplies, and other materials funded by USAID, including commodities or equipment provided under humanitarian assistance or disaster relief programs; and

(iv) It is acceptable to cobrand the title with the USAID Identity and the applicant's identity.

(v) Events financed by USAID, such as training courses, conferences, seminars, exhibitions, fairs, workshops, press conferences and other public activities. If the USAID Identity cannot be displayed, the recipient is encouraged to otherwise acknowledge USAID and the support of the American people.

(2) A table on the program deliverables with the following details:

(i) The program deliverables that the applicant plans to mark with the USAID Identity;

(ii) The type of marking and what materials the applicant will use to mark the program deliverables;

(iii) When in the performance period the applicant will mark the program deliverables, and where the applicant will place the marking;

(iv) What program deliverables the applicant does not plan to mark with the USAID Identity , and

(v) The rationale for not marking program deliverables.

(3) Any requests for an exemption from USAID marking requirements, and an explanation of why the exemption would apply. The applicant may request an exemption if USAID marking requirements would:

(i) Compromise the intrinsic independence or neutrality of a program or materials where independence or neutrality is an inherent aspect of the program and materials. The applicant must identify the USAID Development Objective, Interim Result, or program goal furthered by an appearance of neutrality, or state why an aspect of the award is presumptively neutral. Identify by category or deliverable item, examples of material for which an exemption is sought.

(ii) Diminish the credibility of audits, reports, analyses, studies, or policy recommendations whose data or findings must be seen as independent. The applicant must explain why each particular deliverable must be seen as credible.

(iii) Undercut host-country government "ownership" of constitutions, 6 laws, regulations, policies, studies, assessments, reports, publications, surveys or audits, public service announcements, or other communications. The applicant must explain why each particular item or product is better positioned as host-country government item or product.

(iv) Impair the functionality of an item. The applicant must explain how marking the item or commodity would impair its functionality.

(v) Incur substantial costs or be impractical. The applicant must explain why marking would not be cost beneficial or practical.

(vi) Offend local cultural or social norms, or be considered inappropriate. The applicant must identify the relevant norm, and explain why marking would violate that norm or otherwise be inappropriate.

(vii) Conflict with international law. The applicant must identify the applicable international law violated by the marking.

f. The Agreement Officer will consider the Marking Plan's adequacy and reasonableness and will approve or disapprove any exemption requests. The Marking Plan will be reviewed to ensure the above information is adequately included and consistent with the stated objectives of the award, the applicant's cost data submissions, and the performance plan.

g. If the applicant receives an assistance award, the Marking Plan, including any approved exemptions, will be included in and made part of the resulting grant or cooperative agreement, and will apply for the term of the award unless provided otherwise.

h) Funding Restrictions

Profit is not allowable for recipients or subrecipients under this award. See 2 CFR 200.331 for assistance in determining whether a sub-tier entity is a subrecipient or contractor.

Construction is not authorized under this award.

USAID will not allow the reimbursement of pre-award costs under this award without the explicit written approval of the Agreement Officer.

Except as may be specifically approved in advance by the AO, all commodities and services that will be reimbursed by USAID under this award must be from the authorized geographic code specified in Section B.4 of this NOFO and must meet the source and nationality requirements set forth in 22 CFR 228.

i) Conflict of Interest Pre-Award Term

CONFLICT OF INTEREST PRE-AWARD TERM (August 2018)

a. Personal Conflict of Interest

1. An actual or appearance of a conflict of interest exists when an applicant organization or an employee of the organization has a relationship with an 8 Agency official involved in the competitive award decision-making process that could affect that Agency official's impartiality. The term "conflict of interest" includes situations in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise, or have the appearance of compromising, the obligations and duties of a USAID employee or recipient employee.

2. The applicant must provide conflict of interest disclosures when it submits an SF-424. Should the applicant discover a previously undisclosed conflict of interest after submitting the application, the applicant must disclose the conflict of interest to the AO no later than ten (10) calendar days following discovery.

b. Organizational Conflict of Interest

The applicant must notify USAID of any actual or potential conflict of interest that they are aware of that may provide the applicant with an unfair competitive advantage in competing for this financial assistance award. Examples of an unfair competitive advantage include but are not limited to situations in which an applicant or the applicant's employee gained access to non-public information regarding a federal assistance funding opportunity, or an applicant or applicant's employee was substantially involved in the preparation of a federal assistance funding opportunity. USAID will promptly take appropriate action upon receiving any such notification from the applicant.

THE REMAINDER OF THIS PAGE LEFT BLANK INTENTIONALLY.

SECTION E: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Criteria

The merit review criteria prescribed here are tailored to the requirements of this particular NOFO. Applicants should note that these criteria serve to: (a) identify the significant matters which the applicants should address in their applications, and (b) set the standard against which all applications will be evaluated.

Technical and other factors will be evaluated relative to each other, as described here and prescribed by the Technical Application format. The Technical Application will be rated by a Selection Committee (SC) using the criteria described in this section.

2. Review and Selection Process

The applications submitted in response to this NOFO will be reviewed by a committee of USAID personnel (DHs and PSCs), institutional contractors, representatives from the local American embassy, host governments, or private sector individuals, as appointed by the Agreement Officer. The SC will conduct a merit review of all applications received that comply with the instructions in this NOFO.

a) Merit Review

Applications will be reviewed and evaluated in accordance with the following criteria shown in descending order of importance:

1. Technical Approach (Most Important- bullets bellow in descending order of importance)

   The Technical Approach will be evaluated based on the extent to which the application demonstrates the following:

   - An understanding of the program description and a proposed implementation approach that is politically and technically sound, informed by the local context, and includes logical proposed selection criteria for tiered support to community radio stations. The extent to which gender considerations are integrated as well as other appropriate stakeholders and activities, and how sustainability will be achieved.

2. Staffing Plan and Management Approach (Very Important-bullets below in descending order of importance)

Staffing Plan and Management Approach will be evaluated based on the extent to which the application demonstrates the following:

- Proposed key personnel who meet or exceed the qualifications outlined in Section I, subsection I, possess the appropriate technical and management skills, and/or complement each other to successfully implement the activity and achieve the objectives outlined in the Program Description Objectives in Section I.

- A team that maximizes local/regional technical experts, and a clear description of how the team will be effective in achieving the objectives described in this NOFO.

- A clear, realistic and efficient organizational structure and management model that maximizes the technical strengths of its partners, presents clear reporting lines and lines of communication among staff to include between the prime recipient/home office and subpartner(s) relationships, if any.

History of Performance (Important)-

Extent to which the Applicant's past performance in managing media-related programs of similar size, scale and complexity reflects its ability to meet the program objectives outlined in this NOFO (reference Section I, subsection B. Program Objectives, Illustrative Activities, and Anticipated Results). The applicant's performance information determined to be relevant will be evaluated in accordance with : (a) Quality of product or service, including consistency in meeting goals and targets; (b) Cost control, including forecasting costs as well as accuracy in financial reporting; (c) Schedule, including the timeliness of performance, adherence to agreement schedules and other time-sensitive project conditions and effectiveness of the home and field office management to make prompt decisions and ensure effective completion of tasks; (d) Business relations, addressing the history of professional behavior and overall business-like concern for the interests of the customer, including the applicant's history of reasonable and cooperative behavior (to include timely identification of issues of controversy), customer satisfaction, timely award and management of subcontracts and developing country partners and timely completion of all administrative requirements; (e) Customer satisfaction with performance, including end user or beneficiary whenever possible; and (f) Effectiveness of Key Personnel, including appropriateness of personnel for the job and prompt and satisfactory changes in personnel when problems were identified.

b) Business Review

The Agency will evaluate the cost application of the applicant(s) under consideration for an award as a result of the merit criteria review to determine whether the costs are allowable in accordance with the cost principles found in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E.

The Agency will also consider (1) the extent of the applicant's understanding of the financial aspects of the program and the applicant's ability to perform the activities within the amount requested; (2) whether the applicant's plans will achieve the program objectives with reasonable economy and efficiency; and (3) whether any special conditions relating to costs should be included in the award.

Proposed cost share, if provided, will be reviewed for compliance with the standards set forth in 2 CFR 200.306, 2 CFR 700.10, and the Standard Provision "Cost Sharing (Matching)" for U.S. entities, or the Standard Provision "Cost Share" for non-U.S. entities.

The AO will perform a risk assessment (2 CFR 200.206). The AO may determine that a pre-award survey is required to inform the risk assessment in determining whether the prospective recipient has the necessary organizational, experience, accounting and operational controls, financial resources, and technical skills – or ability to obtain them – in order to achieve the objectives of the program and comply with the terms and conditions of the award. Depending on the result of the risk assessment, the AO will decide to execute the award, not execute the award, or award with “specific conditions” (2 CFR 200.208).

SECTION F: FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Federal Award Notices

Award of the agreement contemplated by this NOFO cannot be made until funds have been appropriated, allocated and committed through internal USAID procedures. While USAID anticipates that these procedures will be successfully completed, potential applicants are hereby notified of these requirements and conditions for the award.

2. Administrative & National Policy Requirements

The resulting award from this NOFO will be administered in accordance with the following policies and regulations.

For US organizations: ADS 303, 2 CFR 700, 2 CFR 200, and Standard Provisions for U.S. Non-governmental organizations.

For Non US organizations: Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-governmental Organizations.

3. Reporting Requirements

- **Financial Reporting:**

The Recipient shall submit the SF425 financial reporting form quarterly. Financial Reports shall be in keeping with 2 CFR 200.327.

- **Performance Reporting**

The Recipient shall deliver a single quarterly progress report to the AOR within 30 days from the end of the quarter (January – March; April – June; July – September, October - December). These reports shall include a descriptive analysis of the activities conducted during the life of the project; a quantitative and/or qualitative description of actual achievements versus planned activities for the life of the project, in both narrative and in data performance table formats; and targets for the next reporting period, as well as information detailing how the programmatic outputs are linked to financial reporting. Reports will specify any problems encountered and indicate resolutions or proposed corrective actions. The July – September report should summarize progress made for the entire year and report against all agreed upon indicators. In addition, the recipient will provide, in electronic form, a copy of all quarterly and annual reports to the Development Experience Clearinghouse at https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/home/Default.aspx. Complementing the annual report, the implementing partner may, at the AOR's request, hold annual project reviews with USAID and selected stakeholders to present results, review progress, and determine adjustments to the project. Agenda for the review should be determined in collaboration with USAID.

- **Final Report**

The Recipient shall submit a final report of the program within 90 calendar days after the expiration or termination of the award. The final report contents shall meet requirements as set in 2 CFR 200.301 and include major success stories, best practices, and lessons learned. It shall include a description of the cumulative results achieved; final data for all indicators included in the MEL Plan; an assessment of the impact of the program; a summary of the problems/obstacles encountered during the implementation and how they were addressed or overcome; and recommendations regarding unfinished work and/or future needs and directions for further strengthening elections and political transitions in Liberia. The final report will consolidate activities and analyses of all partners into one document and their activities and progress towards results. The recipient shall submit an electronic version of the final report to the AOR and the Agreement Officer, respectively. In addition, the recipient will provide, in electronic form, a copy of this report to the Development Experience Clearinghouse.

4. Environmental Compliance

This activity is captured under the umbrella Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) of the 53163 under “Media Activity”. The IEE was approved by the Regional Environmental Officer, Colin Quinn on March 22, 2021. It was reviewed and approved by Brian Hirsch of the Africa Bureau Environmental Office, on April 1, 2021. The majority of current and planned DRG activities have received categorical exclusions with negative determination. The IEE covers the period 2021 through 2026.

SECTION G: FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

1. NOFO Points of Contact

Name	Andrea M. Plucknett
Title	Supervisory Contracting/Agreement Officer
Email:	aplucknett@usaid.gov
Mail Address:	US Embassy, Monrovia, Liberia

Name	Claudia Molina
Title	Senior Acquisition and Assistance Specialist
Email:	cmolina@usaid.gov
Mail Address:	US Embassy, Monrovia, Liberia

2. Acquisition and Assistance Ombudsman

The A&A Ombudsman helps ensure equitable treatment of all parties who participate in USAID's acquisition and assistance process. The A&A Ombudsman serves as a resource for all organizations who are doing or wish to do business with USAID. Please visit this page for additional information: https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/acquisition-assistance-ombudsman

The A&A Ombudsman may be contacted via: Ombudsman@usaid.gov

THE REMAINDER OF THIS PAGE LEFT BLANK INTENTIONALLY.

SECTION H: OTHER INFORMATION

USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. Any award and subsequent incremental funding will be subject to the availability of funds and continued relevance to Agency programming.

Applications with Proprietary Data

Applicants who include data that they do not want disclosed to the public for any purpose or used by the U.S. Government except for evaluation purpose, should mark the cover page with the following:

> "This application includes data that must not be disclosed duplicated, used, or disclosed – in whole or in part – for any purpose other than to evaluate this application. If, however, an award is made as a result of – or in connection with – the submission of this data, the U.S. Government will have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting award. This restriction does not limit the U.S. Government's right to use information contained in this data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction are contained in sheets {insert sheet numbers}."

Additionally, the applicant must mark each sheet of data it wishes to restrict with the following:

> "Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this application."

ANNEX 1 - SUMMARY BUDGET TEMPLATE

Description	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total 5 Years
Direct Costs						
Personnel						
Fringe Benefits						
Travel and Per Diem						
Equipment and Supplies						
Contractual/Subagreements						
Other Direct Costs						
Total Direct Costs						
Indirect Costs						
Total Indirect Costs						
Total Estimated Amount						

ANNEX 2 - STANDARD PROVISIONS

(Note: the full text of these provisions may be found at:
https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303maa and
https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mab).

The actual Standard Provisions included in the award will be dependent on the organization that is selected. The award will include the latest Mandatory Provisions for either U.S. or non-U.S. Nongovernmental organizations**.**

Please note that the resulting award will include all standard provisions (both mandatory and required as applicable) in full text.

ANNEX 3 - USAID/LIBERIA PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PLAN