

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
UNITED STATES EMBASSY YEREVAN
NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)**

NOFO Title: Establishing a University Partnership for a Center of Excellence in Journalism (CEJ) in Armenia

NOFO Number: Media-FY23-ARM1

Federal Assistance Listing/Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.900

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement

Total Funding: \$1,185,000.00 (FY22 AEECA funding)

Anticipated Number of Awards: 1

Period of Performance: 36 months

Type of Solicitation: Open Competition

Eligibility Category: Private, public, or state institutions of higher education accredited in Armenia and the United States.

Questions Deadline: 11:59 PM local (Armenia) time on March 31, 2023

Application Deadline: 11:59 PM local (Armenia) time on April 11, 2023

Anticipated Award Signing: July 2023

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

A. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The U.S. Department of State, U.S. Embassy Yerevan announces an open competition for a cooperative agreement for a U.S. university, housing a journalism school of international stature, and an Armenian university, to establish a university partnership to create a Master of Arts (MA) degree program in Journalism and a Center for Excellence (CEJ) in Journalism in Armenia. The initiative will advance the Embassy's goal of bolstering the ability of independent media in Armenia to effectively inform the public, counter misinformation, and advance shared democratic values by building a pipeline of professionally trained journalists capable of producing quality journalism. The project will also facilitate lasting connections between an Armenian and American institution of higher education.

A.1 Background

In recent years, the Armenian media space, much like many other countries, has seen an increase in the level of disinformation. However, as disinformation and misinformation techniques become increasingly sophisticated, support for modernizing formal journalism education for aspiring journalists and media practitioners has been limited. This initiative was informed by a comprehensive needs assessment of journalism education and training in Armenia, conducted via a wide-ranging media stakeholders survey, which revealed a strong interest and demand for quality graduate-level journalism education opportunities that are responsive to the professional needs of today's journalists. The proposal to create a Center of Excellence in Journalism and graduate degree program in Armenia through a U.S.-Armenian university partnership will fill a major gap in providing much needed journalism training at the graduate level, as well as serve as a hub for journalism leadership, best practices, research, support, and training for working journalists to serve as a bulwark against misinformation.

A.2 Goals

Through the university partnership model, the goal of the Center for Excellence in Journalism will be to create a graduate degree (MA) program in Journalism in Armenia that meets international standards, as well as provide opportunities for a select number of students to participate in a summer institute (U.S. exchange program) to include an internship with a U.S. media outlet as part of their graduate study, where they can enhance their skills through an immersive, hands-on experience. Proposals that emphasize hands-on, practical training and technical skills are strongly preferable to those offering curricula with a more theoretical focus.

Projects should be designed to achieve the following:

- Objective 1: Strengthens the Armenian higher education sector's capacity to train the next generation of professional journalists through establishment of a U.S.-Armenian university partnership that brings U.S. best practices and standards to journalism education in Armenia.
- Objective 2: Provides an advance degree program and training for early to early-to-mid-career journalists from Armenia to create a pipeline of professional journalists capable of producing quality content.
- Objective 3: Enhances access to U.S. media and professional standards for early-to-mid career journalists through inclusion of a U.S. exchange component within the graduate training program.
- Objective 4: Provides hands-on training across multiple journalism platforms, based on the latest technological standards and best-practices.
- Objective 5: Establishes a Center for Excellence as a hub for journalism leadership, fact-checking, ethical standards, best practices, research, support and training, that advances knowledge of how quality journalism can serve as a bulwark against misinformation and improves networking amongst Armenia's journalism eco-system.

A.3 Expected Results

It is expected that the project will strengthen the overall media ecosystem in Armenia by creating a pipeline of journalists trained in professional and ethical standards of journalism. Upon graduation from the MA program, students must be able to think creatively; engage in creative

writing; conduct research and evaluate information pieces and their sources; demonstrate a high-level understanding of media law, ethics, and international standard of reporting; demonstrate an excellent command of various media formats, technical tools and resources; and be able to act as pioneers of public interest journalism capable of producing balanced, quality content and countering disinformation. It is also expected that the Center will serve as a hub for journalism leadership, best practices, research, support, and training that enhances the professional and ethical standards of working journalists, thus increasing the quality of fact-based news coverage in the Armenian media space overall.

A.4 Main Activities

The primary focus of the project in the initial two years (Phase 1) is the creation of a master's program that will equip aspiring journalists with the skills to succeed as well as enhance the knowledge, skills and best practices of early-to-mid-career journalists. The program should enable the program beneficiaries to ask more informed questions, evaluate evidence for competing theories, conduct fact checking and source verification, and produce sophisticated and nuanced stories that inform the public and empower citizens with the facts. The MA program will train journalists to be competent in the essential journalistic skills: research, interviewing, and storytelling, as well train them in the latest technology and multimedia approaches to reporting across media platforms. The secondary focus of the project in the third year (Phase 2) after the master's program is well established, is to expand the Center for Excellence activities to provide opportunities for professional development of working journalists.

Proposals should incorporate in-person and/or virtual exchanges for students, faculty, and/or administrators, as well as the following components:

- Creation of an MA program to fund at least two academic cohorts of up to 20 Armenian graduate students per year (institutional cost sharing on tuition remission encouraged);
- Provision of scholarships for Armenian students to enroll in this program;
- Curriculum development in collaboration with the U.S. institution and sharing of U.S. best teaching practices and instructional methods (the language of instruction can be a blended model of both Armenian and English);
- Creation of joint online courses within the degree program;
- Opportunities for faculty exchange, i.e. for U.S. faculty members to teach in the Armenian graduate program or conduct collaborative research (at least one U.S. faculty member travels to Armenia during each academic semester);
- Development of a U.S. media summer internship program (four to six weeks) for up to 10 Armenian graduate students each year to expose them to American newsrooms (to be organized and hosted by the U.S. university partner);
- Establishment of a media lab/television studio for hands-on training across multiple journalism platforms (television, radio/podcast, video production and multimedia formats);

- Establishment of a Fact-Checking lab to strengthen research, teaching and initiatives to counter disinformation among journalism educators, students and journalists in the community, and to promote media literacy among young people;
- Activities (such as conferences, workshops, and networking events) that establish the Center for Excellence as a hub for journalism leadership, ethical standards, best practices, research, support and training, that address how quality journalism can serve as a bulwark against misinformation;
- Recruitment of five U.S. journalists to lead thematic workshops/training for working journalists from Armenia at the Center of Excellence in Journalism.

The means of achieving these objectives is purposefully left broad to encourage the submission of innovative proposals tailored to the training objectives of each partner institution. Submitted proposals should clearly delineate the role(s) of the U.S. and Armenian partner institution in the project. The timeframe for achieving the objectives must be clearly outlined in the proposal funding request. The proposal should include a proposed schedule of activities, with the first year focused on curriculum development and program design, culminating in the recruitment of the first cohort of graduate students. Successful proposals will also contain an extensively detailed monitoring and evaluation plan that clearly links the training received to specific outcomes, particularly employability of students in the journalism sector after graduation.

Participants or primary audiences for university partnership should be Armenian students, as well as Armenian professors/academics, and/or administrators.

- Primary beneficiaries: 15-20 Armenian graduate students per year.
- Secondary beneficiaries: Approximately 250 working Armenian journalists per year who have the opportunity to participate in Center for Excellence conferences, workshops, fact-checking lab, and networking events.

NOTE: Any program income earned by the Recipient as a result of this award and during the period of performance must be added to the total of this award and must be used solely for the purposes and conditions of the award.

A.5 Performance Indicators

All project proposals should aim to have impact that leads to the attainment of project objectives and goals outlined in the preceding sections of this NOFO.

The Recipient must develop qualitative and quantitative indicators, including appropriate Standard Foreign Assistance Indicators (F indicators), to measure the achievement of the program objectives and expected results. Relevant mandatory F indicators include:

- Number of journalists trained and supported

- Number of host country higher education institutions receiving capacity development support with USG assistance
- Number of individuals attending higher education institutions with USG scholarship or financial assistance
- Number of individuals affiliated with higher education institutions receiving capacity development support with USG assistance

Potential illustrative custom indicators include:

- Percent increase in key journalistic skills/competencies among beneficiaries upon the conclusion of the program.
- Quantity of quality media content produced by program beneficiaries.

All applicants are required to address **A. Project Description** in the **Scope of Work** attachment (see Section D.2.1.6).

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Organizations can submit one application in response to the NOFO. If more than one application is submitted by an organization, only the first application received will be reviewed for eligibility and funding.

The U.S. Government may: (a) reject any or all applications, (b) accept more than one application, and (c) waive irregularities in applications received.

The U.S. Government may make award(s) based on initial applications received, without discussions or negotiations. Therefore, each initial application should contain the applicant's best terms from a cost and technical standpoint. The U.S. Government reserves the right to enter into discussions with one or more applicants in order to obtain clarifications, additional detail, or to suggest refinements in the project description, budget, or other aspects of an application.

U.S. Embassy Yerevan anticipates awarding a cooperative agreement. Cooperative agreements involve “substantial involvement” or greater U.S. Government participation in the project. U.S. Embassy Yerevan will undertake reasonable and programmatically necessary substantial involvement. Examples of substantial involvement can include, but are not limited to:

- Active collaboration with the recipient in the implementation of the award;
- Joint preparation or presentation of results with the recipient;
- Involvement in the selection of program participants and scholarship recipients;
- Approval of the curriculum and the structure of the graduate Journalism Program;
- Approval of the faculty for the graduate Journalism Program;
- Approval of the participants for the summer internship program;
- Approval of the format and host institutions for the summer internship program;
- Approval of the final concept for the media lab/television studio outlining its overall operational plan (specific objectives, scope of activities, list of equipment etc.);

- Approval of the final concept for the fact-checking lab outlining its overall operational plan (specific objectives, scope of activities, list of equipment etc.);
- Collaboration with the recipient to identify and approve five U.S. journalists to lead thematic workshops at the Center of Excellence in Journalism.

The authority for this funding opportunity is found in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA).

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

C.1 Eligible Applicants

U.S. Embassy Yerevan welcomes applications from private, public, or state institutions of higher education from Armenia and the United States. The U.S. university partner must house a journalism school of international stature and be accredited by a federally recognized accrediting agency for postsecondary education.

Applicants must possess or be able to obtain the required certifications to be able to offer a degree program in Armenia.

C.2 Cost Sharing or Matching

Providing cost sharing, matching, or cost participation is not an eligibility factor or requirement for this NOFO.

C.3 Other Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must have existing, or the capacity to develop, active partnerships with local in-country partners, entities, and relevant stakeholders and have successfully administered similar projects.

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

To be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a unique entity identifier (UEI), as well as a valid registration on SAM.gov. Please see Section D.3 for information on how to obtain these registrations.

Applicants, including U.S. affiliates of international organizations must provide a valid Unique Entity Identification (UEI), and **completed** SAM.gov registration when submitting application on GRANTS.gov and U.S. Embassy Yerevan’s website (<https://am.usembassy.gov/embassy/jobs/>) in response to this NOFO. **Applicants that do not have a valid UEI and completed SAM.gov**

registration will NOT be eligible for consideration. Implementing partners/sub-recipient organizations are required to have a valid UEI number.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

D.1 Address to Request Application Package

Applicants can find application forms and other materials needed to apply on GRANTS.gov: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html> and U.S. Embassy Yerevan's website (<https://am.usembassy.gov/embassy/jobs/>) under the "Establishing a Center of Excellence in Journalism (CEJ) in Armenia" program (funding opportunity number - Media-FY23-ARM1). Please contact U.S. Embassy Yerevan point of contact listed in Section G if requesting reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities or for security reasons. Please note that reasonable accommodations do not include deadline extensions.

D.2 Content and Form of Application Submission

For all application documents, please ensure:

- All documents are in English and all costs are in U.S. Dollars. If an original document within the application is in another language, an English translation must be provided **(please note the U.S. Department of State, as indicated in 2 CFR 200.111, requires that English is the official language of all award documents)**. If any document is provided in both English and a foreign language, the English language version is the controlling version;
- All pages are numbered, including attachments with the exception of Excel documents;
- All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper; and,
- All documents are single-spaced, 14-point Calibri font, with 1-inch margins. Captions and footnotes may be 12-point Calibri font. Font sizes in charts and tables, can be reformatted to fit within 1 page width.

D.2.1. Application Requirements

Complete applications must include the following:

1. Completed and signed **SF-424**, **SF-424A**, and **SF-424B** forms.
2. Organizations that engage in lobbying the U.S. Government, including Congress, or pay for another entity to lobby on their behalf, are also required to complete the **SF-LLL** "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities" form (**only if applicable**).
3. **Cover Page/Executive Summary** (not to exceed two (2) pages). Include the organization name, project title, target country/countries, and name and contact information for the application's main point of contact and brief section that clearly outlines the (1) the problem statement addressed by the project, (2) research-based

evidence justifying the applicant's approach, and (3) quantifiable project outcomes and impacts.

4. **Table of Contents**

5. **Proposal Narrative*** (not to exceed ten (10) pages). *Please note the ten-page limit does not include the following:

- SF-424
- SF-424A
- SF-424B
- SF-LLL (if applicable)
- Cover Page/Executive Summary
- Table of Contents
- Scope of Work (required template provided as an attachment)
- Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Narrative and Plan (sample template provided as an attachment)
- Timeline
- Detailed Budget (sample template provided as an attachment)
- Budget Narrative (sample template provided as an attachment)
 - If the Budget includes subawards, please include a separate Budget Narrative for each organization.
- NICRA Letter
- Single Audit or recent independent financial audit
- Key Personnel Summary
- CV or Resume of Key Personnel
- Security Plan
- Contingency Plan
- COVID Contingency Plan
- Additional Attachments (if applicable):
 - Letters of support from program partners
 - Official permission letters, if required for project activities
 - Letter of Disclosure for proposed consultants/personnel
 - Letter(s) of Institutional Support

The Proposal Narrative must include the following:

- **Introduction to the Organization:** A description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the project, including information on all relevant or similar type projects from previous grants from the U.S. Embassy and/or U.S. Government agencies.

Using the **Scope of Work** (see Section D.2.1.6) provided as an attachment to this NOFO by Embassy Yerevan, the Proposal Narrative should address the applicant's unique approach to the following:

- **Program Methods and Design:** A description of how the program is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal.
 - **Program Goal:** The “goal(s)” describe the larger outcome intended
 - **Program Objectives:** The intermediate accomplishments and measurable targets to achieve a goal. Objectives of the program should be SMART:
 - **Specific:** Detailed and specifies what will be achieved
 - **Measurable:** have associated metrics or measurements of success
 - **Attainable:** appropriately challenging, objectives can be reasonably attained given the available resources
 - **Relevant:** align with the policy/program goal and appropriate within the country or beneficiary audience
 - **Time-Bound:** achievable within the timeframe of the program
 - **Program Activities:** Describe specific actions taken under each Objective. All activities should be clearly developed and sufficiently explain the resource and time requirements (inputs) and things done or produced (outputs). Activities should detail: target areas, participant groups or selection criteria for participants; how relevant stakeholders will be engaged; and actions taken by local partners as appropriate/relevant.
 - **Program Management Plan:** Describe the proposed management structure for this project. Include a description of the responsibilities of all principal organizations and staff involved, reporting relationships, authority, and lines of communication within and between each of these organizations.
 - **Program Partners:** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations and sub-awardees, if applicable.
 - **Future Funding or Sustainability** Applicant’s plan for continuing the program beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable. Include ways program activities will ensure sustainability.
 - **Risk Analysis*** - identify the internal and external risks associated with the proposed project, rate the likelihood of the risks, rate the potential impact of the risks on the project, and identify actions that could help mitigate the risks. *Please see Security Plan Contingency Plan.
6. **Scope of Work (SOW)** (Applicants should use the SOW template provided by Embassy Yerevan and attached to this NOFO.) SOW should provide a summary of the applicant’s unique approach to the following as indicated in Section 5 on **Proposal Narrative:**
- **Program Goal**
 - **Program Objectives**
 - **Program Activities**
 - **Program Indicators**

Required *Scope of Work (SOW)* template is provided as an attachment to this NOFO.

7. **Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Narrative and Plan** (see provided sample template):

a. **Program Monitoring & Evaluation Narrative** details how a project's performance monitoring and evaluation system will be carried out and by whom. It explains how the project's performance toward its objectives will be tracked over time. It should provide a clear description of the approach and data collection strategies and tools to be employed (e.g., pre- and post-test surveys, interviews, focus groups). The description should also include how the applicant will track and document whether activities occurred (outputs) and the results or changes caused by these activities (outcomes). If the project includes work with local partners or sub-partners, explain how performance monitoring and evaluation efforts will be coordinated amongst these organizations. Explain if an external evaluation will be included. Evaluations, internal or external, should be systematic studies that use research methods to address specific questions about project performance. They should provide a valuable supplement to ongoing monitoring activities. Evaluation activities generally include baseline assessments, mid-term and final evaluations.

b. **Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Plan** should draw on the objectives, activities and expected changes from the Scope of Work, and link those areas to indicators. The Program Monitoring & Evaluation Plan is generally structured as a table with output-based and outcome-based indicators. It explains how data will be collected (data collection methods) to show that certain changes occurred. It outlines baselines (where your project is starting) and quarterly targets (what you would like to achieve) for each indicator.

The project should monitor and report on performance indicators that are specific, measurable, achievable, reasonable, and time-bound. Establish, where possible, performance baseline data and expected performance targets for each expected result and include details on what sources of data will be used to document performance, how the indicators will be measured, frequency of measurement, and units of measure. Where possible, indicators should also allow for sex disaggregation. Indicators should reflect key project outputs or outcomes that reflect the primary goals or objectives of the project and that the implementer can collect with high quality data.

A sample Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Narrative and Plan Template is provided as an attachment to this NOFO.

8. **Timeline** (not to exceed one (1) page, preferably as a Word Document or Excel Sheet). The timeline of the overall proposal should include activities and monitoring and evaluation efforts outlined in a monthly format.
9. **Detailed Budget** (must be an Excel workbook) that includes three (3) columns containing the request to U.S. Embassy Yerevan for U.S. share of cost, any cost sharing contribution, and the total budget. A Summary Budget should also be included using the OMB-approved budget categories (see SF-424A as a sample) in

a separate tab. Costs must be in U.S. Dollars. Detailed line-item budgets for subgrantees should be included as additional tabs within the Excel workbook (if available at the time of submission).

For more information, *Budget Guidance and Template for New Awards* is provided as an attachment to this NOFO.

Use of the Detailed Budget template (*Budget Guidance and Template for New Awards*) is not required, however, the submitted budget must follow OMB budget categories. If an applicant's budget does not follow OMB budget categories, the application will be deemed technically ineligible and will not be considered for funding.

10. **Budget Narrative** (preferably as a Word Document; (no maximum page limit). Justify each line-item in the budget and explain how the amounts were derived, consistent with the applicant's documented policies, as well as the source and description of all proposed costs (and cost-share, if applicable). The Budget Narrative should complement the budget rather than repeat information provided in the budget. For example, the narrative should provide details on the purpose of costs, reasonability of costs, cost price analysis, explain allocations, explain any yearly variances, and tie expenses to program activities and/or objectives where appropriate. Sources of all cost-share offered in the application should be identified and explained in the budget narrative.

Personnel costs must include a clarification of the roles and responsibilities of all staff, base salary, and percentage of time devoted to the project (also known as level of effort). The Budget Narrative should support the activities described in the proposal and provide additional information that might not be readily apparent in the Detailed Budget, not simply repeat what is represented numerically in the budget, i.e., salaries are for salaries or travel is for travel.

If the Detailed Budget includes subawards, please include a separate Budget Narrative for each organization. Please note that subaward organizations must have a SAM.gov unique entity identifier (UEI) number (certain exceptions apply).

For ease of review, it is highly recommended that applicants order the Budget Narrative in the same order as the Detailed Budget.

See Tab 1 of Budget Guidance and Template for New Awards provided as an attachment, for more information.

A sample *Budget Narrative Template* is provided as an attachment to this NOFO.

11. **NICRA Letter:** If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, your latest NICRA letter should be included as a PDF file. This document will not be reviewed by the Merit Review Panel but will be used by project and grant team if the

submission is recommended for funding. Organizations that have previously established indirect cost rates must submit timely indirect cost proposals to their cognizant agency as required by Appendix III & IV of 2 CFR 200. If indirect cost proposals have not been submitted for re-negotiation, as required, out-of-date NICRAs may not be considered. If your proposal involves subawards to organizations charging indirect costs, please submit their NICRA, if applicable.

12. **Single Audit:** a PDF file copy of your organization's most recent single audit is required, if your organization meets the threshold as defined in 2 CFR 200 Subpart F. If your organization has not had a recent single audit (within your organization's previous 3 fiscal years), you must submit your organization's most recent independent financial audit.
13. **Key Personnel Summary:** (not to exceed two (2) pages, preferably as a Word Document). Include short bios that highlight relevant professional experience. Provides names, titles, roles, and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program. Note the location where key staff will be based and percentage of their time (level of effort) that will be used in support of this program.
14. **CV or Resume of Key Personnel:** (no maximum page limit per CV or Resume). Include name, work history and experience or qualifications of key personnel who are proposed for the program.
15. **Security Plan** (not to exceed three (3) pages). Address any issues involving in-person events and recruitment for said events, and safety for any online programs or communications, including independent IT security audits (to include a vulnerability assessment) of any proposed web application or platform. Organization's Security Plan should demonstrate consideration of the risks identified in the Proposal Narrative risk analysis. Costs may also be identified within the Detailed Budget and Budget Narrative. Applicants are also encouraged to include contingency plans for in-person or online activities.
16. **Contingency Plan** (not to exceed three (3) pages). The Contingency Plan, for proposed activities should the originally planned activities not be able to be implemented, should be submitted as an additional annex. Applicants should demonstrate consideration of the risks identified in the Proposal Narrative risk analysis and include specific alternative activities or locations as part of the Contingency Plan. Any proposed "plan" must comply with 2CFR200.433 – Contingency provisions. Plans must not include unallocable or unallowable expenses and must not exceed the notified Total Funding. U.S. Embassy Yerevan requires prior approval by the Grants Officer of the "contingency reserve" before any activities can take place, or costs can be incurred against the "contingency reserve."
17. **COVID Contingency Plan** (attached as a separate document with no page limit).

Recognizing that COVID-19 can limit and affect project activities,

applicants must include a Contingency Plan that addresses contingency measures should the local COVID situation change. Below are some suggested considerations.

- How will the project transition from virtual to in-person activities or from in-person to virtual activities?
- How will COVID contingency costs be built into the budget?
- How and when will the Grants Officer be notified of contingency costs?
- What COVID precautions will be required for in-person activities?
- What type and amount of COVID monitoring will be included in the proposal?

18. Additional Attachments:

- Letters of support from program partners describing the roles and responsibilities of each partner, if applicable/pre-identified
- Official permission letters, if required for project activities
- Letter of Disclosure for proposed consultants/personnel (if applicable) of potential conflicts of interest, employment with a local/state/Federal government.
- Letter(s) of Institutional Support to indicate that your organization's leadership is providing their support of the application.

Applications that do not include the elements listed above will be deemed technically ineligible. To ensure that all applications receive a balanced evaluation, the Merit Review Panel will review from the first page of each section up to the page limit and no further.

D.2.2 Additional Information Requested of Successful Applicants Receiving Notification of Intent

Successful applicants must submit, after notification of intent to make a Federal award, but prior to issuance of a Federal award:

- Written responses and revised application documents addressing conditions and recommendations from the Merit Review Panel;
- A copy of the applicant's latest NICRA as a PDF file, if the applicant has a NICRA and includes NICRA charges in the budget;
- A completed copy of the U.S. Department of State's Financial Management Survey, if receiving U.S. Government funding for the first time;
- Submission of required banking information to U.S. Embassy Yerevan at request of Grants Officer Representative or Financial Management Officer for new vendor creation in U.S. Department of State financial management systems;
- Other requested information or documents included in the notification of intent to make a Federal award or subsequent communications prior to issuance of a Federal award.

D.3 Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

All prime organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), formerly referred to as DUNS, and an active registration with SAM.gov **before submitting an application**. U.S. Embassy Yerevan may not review applications from or make awards to applicants that have not completed all applicable UEI and SAM.gov requirements. A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards.

The 2 CFR 200 requires that sub-grantees obtain a UEI number. Please note the UEI for sub-grantees is not required at the time of application but will be required before the award is processed and/or directed to a sub-grantee.

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

- Organizations **based in the United States** or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.
- Organizations **based outside of the United States** and that do not pay employees within the United States do not need an EIN from the IRS but do need a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.

All organizations applying for grants (except individuals) must obtain these registrations. All are free of charge:

- Unique Entity Identifier from SAM.gov
- SAM.gov registration

All prime organizations must, at all times during which they have an active Federal award or application under consideration by any Federal awarding agency, maintain an active SAM.gov registration with current information. SAM.gov requires all entities to renew their registration once a year to maintain an active registration status in SAM.gov. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure it has an active registration in SAM.gov and to maintain that active registration. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements at the time of application, the applicant may be deemed technically ineligible to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

Please note that a CAGE/NCAGE number is no longer needed to register in SAM.gov.

****Only organizations which plan to do business with the Department of Defense (DOD) will be issued a CAGE code or be required to obtain an NCAGE number.***

D.3.1 Exemptions

An exemption from these requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis.

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the NOFO in Section G at least **two weeks prior to the deadline stated in**

the NOFO and provide a justification for their request. UEI/SAM.gov Exemption must be approved by a warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

D.4 Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due no later than 11:59 PM local (Armenia) time on April 11, 2023.

GRANTS.gov automatically logs the date and time an application submission is made, and the Department of State will use this information to determine whether an application has been submitted on time. Late applications are neither reviewed nor considered. Known system errors caused by GRANTS.gov or U.S. Embassy Yerevan's website that are outside of the applicant's control will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Applicants should expect a notification from U.S. Embassy Yerevan confirming receipt of their application within two business days of submission.

D.5 Funding Limitations, Restrictions, and other Considerations

U.S. Embassy Yerevan will not consider applications that reflect any type of support for any member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization. Please refer the link for Foreign Terrorist Organizations: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/> Project activities whose direct beneficiaries are foreign militaries or paramilitary groups or individuals will not be considered for U.S. Embassy Yerevan funding given purpose limitations on funding.

The Leahy Law prohibits Department foreign assistance funds from supporting foreign security force units if the Secretary of State has credible information that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. Per [22 USC §2378d\(a\) \(2017\)](#), "No assistance shall be furnished under this chapter [FOREIGN ASSISTANCE] or the Arms Export Control Act [22 USC 2751 et seq.] to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country if the Secretary of State has credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights." Restrictions may apply to any proposed assistance to police or other law enforcement. Among these, pursuant to section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA), no assistance provided through this funding opportunity may be furnished to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country when there is credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. In accordance with the requirements of section 620M of the FAA, also known as the Leahy law, project beneficiaries or participants from a foreign government's security forces may need to be vetted by the Department before the provision of any assistance. If a proposed grant or cooperative agreement will provide assistance to foreign security forces or personnel, compliance with the Leahy Law is required.

In addition, funds cannot be made available to any individual or organization that has committed serious human rights abuse.

Organizations should be cognizant of these restrictions when developing project proposals as these restrictions will require appropriate due diligence of program beneficiaries and collaboration with U.S. Embassy Yerevan to ensure compliance with these restrictions. Program beneficiaries subject

to due diligence vetting will include any individuals or entities that are beneficiaries of foreign assistance funding or support.

D.6 Other Submission Requirements

All application submissions must be made electronically via www.GRANTS.gov or U.S. Embassy Yerevan's website (<https://am.usembassy.gov/embassy/jobs/>). GRANTS.gov requires registration by the applying organization. Please note that the GRANTS.gov registration process can take ten (10) business days or longer, even if all registration steps are completed in a timely manner.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that it has an active registration in GRANTS.gov. U.S. Embassy Yerevan bears no responsibility for disqualification that result from applicants not being registered before the due date, for system errors in GRANTS.gov or U.S. Embassy Yerevan's website (<https://am.usembassy.gov/embassy/jobs/>), or other errors in the application process.

Faxed or couriered documents will not be accepted. Reasonable accommodations may, in appropriate circumstances, be provided to applicants with disabilities or for security reasons.

Applicants must follow all formatting instructions in the applicable NOFO and these instructions.

If an applicant experiences technical difficulties and has contacted the appropriate helpdesk but is not receiving timely assistance (e.g., if applicant has not received a response within 48 hours of contacting the helpdesk), the applicant may contact the U.S. Embassy Yerevan point of contact listed in the NOFO in Section G.

Alternatively, application submissions may be made using the e-mail address listed on U.S. Embassy Yerevan's website (<https://am.usembassy.gov/embassy/jobs/>) making sure that the e-mail submission clearly references the funding opportunity number of this program and includes all required application elements.

Applicants must utilize only one application method to avoid submitting duplicate proposals.

GRANTS.gov Applications:

Applicants who do not submit applications via www.GRANTS.gov may submit via the e-mail address noted in the program announcement posted on U.S. Embassy Yerevan's website (<https://am.usembassy.gov/embassy/jobs/>). Applications submitted through this inbox must clearly reference the funding opportunity number of this program and includes all required application elements.

Please be advised that completing all the necessary registration steps for obtaining a username and password from GRANTS.gov **can take ten (10) business days or longer**.

Please refer to the GRANTS.gov website for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a

validation e-mail from GRANTS.gov upon the successful submission of an application. Validation of an electronic submission via GRANTS.gov can take up to two business days. Organizations may consider saving a screenshot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

GRANTS.gov Helpdesk:

For assistance with GRANTS.gov, please call 1-800-518-4726 (U.S.) or 1-606-545-5035 (International) or email support@grants.gov. Grants.gov is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week excluding federal holidays.

For a list of Federal holidays visit:

<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/federal-holidays/>

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

E.1 Proposal Review Criteria

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

Quality and Program Design – 20 points: The program idea is well-developed and responsive to the policy and program objective of the NOFO. The applicant describes the project's potential contribution to solving the problem addressed in the problem statement. The application clearly defines the problem, its causes, stakeholders, and existing research/data; the approach taken to solve the problem; and realistic milestones to indicate progress.

Organizational Capacity – 20 points: The applicant demonstrates an institutional record of successful projects in the content area proposed. The applicant demonstrates experience (e.g., has previously worked and/or has established contacts/partners) in the proposed country/territory/region. The organization has expertise in its stated field and has adequate staffing to manage the proposed project. The applicant demonstrates capacity for responsible fiscal management of donor funding (e.g., successful management of a previous grant or sub-award, single audit findings, exclusions, etc.).

Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives – 15 points: Goals and objectives are clearly stated and project approach is likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results. The applicant proposes activities that are feasible, and are also practical, and/or experiential in nature to encourage innovation. The applicant addresses how the project will engage or obtain support from relevant stakeholders and/or identifies local partners. Program logic is sound showing plausible pathways to achieve project outcomes. Key assumptions and risks have been identified and their potential influences described. The applicant acknowledges if activities similar to those proposed are already taking or have taken place previously and provides an explanation as to how proposed new activities will not duplicate or merely add to existing/recent activities.

Detailed Budget & Budget Narrative – 10 points: The budget justification is detailed, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results and provide detail of calculations, including estimation methods, quantities, unit costs, labor input and responsibilities, procurement practice and policy information, and other similar quantitative detail.

Monitoring & Evaluation/Sustainability – 25 points: Applicant demonstrates ability to measure program success against key indicators and provides milestones to indicate progress toward goals outlined in the proposal. The program includes output and outcome indicators and shows how and when those will be measured and who will be responsible for them. The applicant clearly details how activities will result in benefits that will continue beyond the funding period.

Support of Equity and Underserved Communities – 10 points: Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the program will support and advance equity and engage underserved communities in program administration, design, and implementation.

E.2 Review and Selection Process

The Department of State is committed to ensuring a competitive and standardized process for awarding funding. Applications will be screened initially in a Technical Eligibility Review stage to determine whether applicants meet the eligibility requirements outlined in section C and have submitted all required documents outlined in section D. Applications that do not meet these requirements will not advance beyond the Technical Eligibility Review stage and will be deemed ineligible for funding under this NOFO.

All applications that are deemed eligible will proceed to the Merit Review Panel consisting of U.S. Government subject matter and/or country-specific experts and will be rated on a 100-point scale. U.S. Embassy Yerevan reserves the right to request the assistance of non-U.S. Government Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), if appropriate to the solicitation. Point values for individual elements of the application are presented Section E.1 *Proposal Review Criteria*. Merit Review Panel Reviewers' ratings, and any resulting recommendations, are advisory. Merit Review Panel Reviewers may provide conditions and recommendations on applications to enhance the proposed project, which must be addressed by the applicant before further consideration of the award.

The Merit Review Panel's recommendations may be subject to a final review and high-level approval at the discretion of the U.S. Embassy Yerevan's senior level official and will be influenced by whether the application meets the Department of State's programmatic goals and objectives, how it supports the Department's overarching foreign policy priorities, and the geographic distribution of the top-ranking applications. The decision for the final award determination rests with the Grants Officer.

E.3. Federal Awardee Performance & Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)

For any Federal award under a notice of funding opportunity, if the Federal awarding agency anticipates that the total Federal share will be greater than the simplified acquisition threshold on

any Federal award under a notice of funding opportunity may include, over the period of performance (see §200.88 Simplified Acquisition Threshold), this section must also inform applicants:

- i. That the Federal awarding agency, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);
- ii. That an applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM;
- iii. That the Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

F.1 Federal Award Notices

U.S. Embassy Yerevan will provide a separate notification to applicants on the result of their applications. Successful applicants will receive a letter electronically via email requesting that the applicant respond to the Merit Review Panel's conditions and recommendations. This notification is not an authorization to begin activities and does not constitute formal approval or a funding commitment.

Final approval is contingent on the applicant successfully responding to the review Merit Review Panel's conditions and recommendations; being registered in required systems; and completing and providing any additional documentation requested by U.S. Embassy Yerevan or the Grants Officer. Final approval is also contingent on Congressional Notification requirements being met and final review and approval by the U.S. Department of State's warranted Grants Officer.

The notice of Federal award signed by the U.S. Department of State's warranted Grants Officer is the sole authorizing document. The recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date shown on the grant award document signed by the Grants Officer. If awarded, the notice of Federal award will be provided to the applicant's Authorizing Designated Official via email to be electronically countersigned.

The Recipient must request payment under this award by completing form SF-270—Request for Advance or Reimbursement and submitting the form to the Grants Officer. Unless otherwise stipulated, the Recipient may request payments on a reimbursement or advance basis.

Advance payments must be limited to the minimum amounts needed and be timed to be in accordance with the actual, immediate cash requirements of the Recipient in carrying out the purpose of this award. The timing and amount of advance payments must be as close as is administratively feasible to the actual disbursements by the Recipient for direct program or project costs and the proportionate share of any allowable indirect costs.

F.2 Administrative and National Policy and Legal Requirements

U.S. Embassy Yerevan requires all recipients of foreign assistance funding to comply with all applicable Department and Federal laws and regulations, including but not limited to the following:

The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards set forth in 2 CFR Chapter 200 (Sub-Chapters A through F) shall apply to all non-Federal entities, except for assistance awards to Individuals and Foreign Public Entities. Sub-Chapters A through E shall apply to all foreign organizations, and Sub-Chapters A through D shall apply to all U.S. and foreign for-profit entities. The applicant/recipient of the award and any sub-recipient under the award must comply with all applicable terms and conditions, in addition to the assurance and certifications made part of the Notice of Award. The Department's Standard Terms and Conditions can be viewed at <https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>.

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

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

Please note the U.S Flag branding and marking requirements in the Standard Terms and Conditions.

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

- [Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations](#) (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 85 FR 49506 on August 13, 2020, particularly on:

- Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an objective process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
- Prohibiting the purchase of certain telecommunication and video surveillance services or equipment in alignment with section 889 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019 (Pub. L. No. 115—232) (2 CFR part 200.216),
- Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with *Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty* (E.O. 13798) and *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (E.O. 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),
- Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
- Terminating agreements in whole or in part to the greatest extent authorized by law if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340).

In accordance with the Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Underserved Communities, proposals should demonstrate how the program advances equity with respect to race, ethnicity, religion, income, geography, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability. The proposal should also demonstrate how the program will further engagement in underserved communities and with individuals from underserved communities. Proposals should demonstrate how addressing racial equity and underserved communities will enhance the program's goals and objectives, as well as the experience of participants.

The support of underserved communities will be part of the review criteria for this opportunity. Therefore, proposals should clearly demonstrate how the program will support and advance equity and engage underserved communities in program administration, design, and implementation.

F.3 Reporting

Applicants should be aware that U.S. Embassy Yerevan awards will require that all reports (financial and performance progress) be submitted via email to the Grants Officer and Grants Officer Representative on a quarterly basis. The Federal Financial Report (FFR or SF-425) is the required form for the financial reports. The performance progress reports must: include a narrative as described below; reflect the focus on measuring the project's progress on the overarching objectives; and be compiled according to the objectives, outcomes, and outputs as outlined in the award's Scope of Work (SOW) and in the Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Narrative and Plan (PMENP). An assessment of the overall project's impact should be included in each performance progress report. Where relevant, performance progress reports should include the following sections:

- Relevant contextual information (limited);
- Explanation and evaluation of significant activities of the reporting period and how the activities reflect progress toward achieving objectives, including meeting benchmarks/targets as set in the SOW and PMENP;
- Any tangible impact or success stories from the project, when possible;

- Copy of mid-term and/or final evaluation report(s) conducted by an external evaluator; if applicable;
- Relevant supporting documentation or products related to the project activities (such as articles, meeting lists and agendas, participant surveys, photos, manuals, etc.) as separate attachments;
- Description of how the recipient is pursuing sustainability, including looking for sources of follow-on funding;
- Any problems/challenges in implementing the project and a corrective action plan with an updated timeline of activities;
- Reasons why established goals were not met;
- Data for the required indicator(s) for the quarter as well as aggregate data by fiscal year;
- Proposed activities for the next quarter; and,
- Additional pertinent information, including analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs, if applicable.

Recipient is responsible for monitoring the activities, performance, and expenditures of any subrecipient(s). Recipient must have monitoring tools in place to ensure that subaward(s) is used for authorized purposes, and that the subrecipient(s) is complying with applicable regulations and the terms and conditions of the subaward (2 CFR §200.332).

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

Foreign Assistance Data Review: As required by Congress, the Department of State must make progress in its efforts to improve tracking and reporting of foreign assistance data through the Foreign Assistance Data Review (FADR). The FADR requires tracking of foreign assistance activity data from budgeting, planning, and allocation through obligation and disbursement. Successful applicants will be required to report and draw down Federal funding based on the appropriate FADR Data Elements, indicated within their award documentation.

A final narrative and financial report must also be submitted within 120 days after the expiration of the award.

Please note: Delays in reporting may result in delays of payment approvals and failure to provide required reports may jeopardize the recipient's' ability to receive future U.S. Government funds. U.S. Embassy Yerevan reserves the right to request any additional programmatic and/or financial project information during the award period.

G. CONTACT INFORMATION

For technical submission questions related to this NOFO, please contact yerevangrants@state.gov.

For assistance with GRANTS.gov, please call 1-800-518-4726 (U.S.) or 1-606-545-5035 (International) or email support@grants.gov. Grants.gov is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week excluding federal holidays.

For a list of Federal holidays visit:

<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/federal-holidays/>

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

H. OTHER INFORMATION

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

The information in this NOFO is binding and may not be modified by any U.S. Embassy Yerevan representative. Explanatory information provided by U.S. Embassy Yerevan that contradicts this language will not be binding. Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. Government, nor does it commit the U.S. Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. Government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

Attachments:

- Scope of Work (SOW)
- *Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Narrative and Plan (PMENP) Template*
- Detailed Budget - *Budget Guidance and Template for New Awards*
- Budget Narrative - *Budget Narrative Template*