



Statement of Interest (SOI)

FY26 DRL/IRF Global Request for Statements of Interest

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor,
Office of International Religious Freedom,
Department of State

Opportunity number: DFOP0019929

Application deadline: December 7, 2026

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**U.S. Department of State
Statement of Interest**

A. Basic Information

1. Overview

Funding Opportunity Title	DRL/IRF FY 2026 Global Request for Statements of Interest
Funding Opportunity Number	DFOP0019929
Funding Instrument Type	Grant or Cooperative Agreement
Deadline for Applications	December 7, 2026 11:59 PM ET
Assistance Listing Number	19.345
Length of performance period	24 to 48 months
Number of awards anticipated	15 – 25 awards
Award amounts	Awards may range from a minimum of \$1,000,000 to a maximum of \$3,000,000
Total available funding	Up to \$40 million pending availability of funds
Type of Funding	FY26/27 Democracy Funds
Anticipated project start date	6-9 months

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

The U.S. Department of State, Office of International Religious Freedom (DRL/IRF) announces an open competition for organizations to submit statements of interest (SOI) to carry out programs to promote religious freedom. Organizations may submit **up to five** SOIs in response to this request as prime applicants. This is a global solicitation. Organizations may submit single- or multi-country project proposals.

Proposed programming must address restrictions on religious freedom and must be in line with the U.S. Government’s foreign policy goals. Applicants are encouraged to review the International Religious Freedom Act for additional information, which can be found at the following links:

[International Religious Freedom Act of 1998](#)

[Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act \(2016 amendment\)](#)

Applicants will be responsible for ensuring program activities and products are implemented in accordance with the Establishment Clause of the United States Constitution.

The submission of the SOI is the first step in a two-step process. Applicants must first submit a **concise 3-page statement of interest** designed to clearly communicate a program idea and objectives. In addition to this 3-page SOI, applicants are encouraged to include a cover page that details the proposed program title, period of performance, budget request, place(s) of performance, known program partners (subawards, etc.), and program category (if this RSOI has

multiple categories). Please consult Section II.C of the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for RSOIs for a Cover Page template.

This is not a full proposal. The purpose of the SOI process is to allow applicants to submit program ideas for evaluation prior to requiring the development of a full proposal application. Upon a merit review of eligible SOIs, selected applicants will be invited to expand on their program ideas by submitting a full proposal application. A second merit review panel will review full proposals and submit funding recommendations for approval, depending on funding availability.

B. Eligibility

1. Eligible Applicants

The following organizations are eligible to apply:

- Foreign-based non-profit organizations/nongovernment organizations (NGO)
- U.S.-based non-profit organizations/NGOs with or without 501(c)(3) status
- Public International Organizations
- Private, public, or state institutions of higher education
- For-profit organizations or businesses

DRL/IRF's preference is to work with **non-profit entities**; however, there may be some occasions when a for-profit entity is best suited. Applications from for-profit entities may be subject to additional review following the panel selection process. The Department of State does not allow for-profit or commercial organizations to make a profit from its assistance awards. Profit is defined as any amount more than allowable direct and indirect costs. The allowability of costs incurred by commercial organizations is determined by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR 30, Cost Accounting Standards Administration, and 48 CFR 31 Contract Cost Principles and Procedures.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Providing cost sharing, matching, or cost participation is not required for this RSOI and will not improve competitive ranking of an application. According to 2 CFR 200.306, any budget items proposed for cost share must be allowable per 2 CFR 200, Subpart E—Cost Principles.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

Organizations are not required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) issued via SAM.gov or a valid registration in SAM.gov when submitting a SOI. **However, if a SOI is approved, applicants are required to have a UEI and SAM.gov registration before submitting a full application. Applicants without a UEI or SAM.gov registration at the time of the full proposal application will be technically ineligible. Therefore, DRL/IRF recommends starting the process of obtaining a UEI and SAM.gov registration as soon as possible.** Please note that there is no cost associated with UEI or SAM.gov registration. Please see Section E.3 for more information. Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov

See information in Section C about the number of SOIs that applicants may submit.

C. Program Description

1. *Goals and Objectives*

The United States promotes the right of all individuals to religious freedom, inspired by the principles of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. As established by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (IRF Act), the policy of the United States includes “standing for liberty and standing with the persecuted...to promote respect for religious freedom by all governments and peoples.”

Programs supported with funds under the authority of the Ambassador at Large and by the Office of International Religious Freedom (DRL/IRF) are guided by DRL/IRF’s statutory mandate established by the IRF Act and align with Executive Order 13926, “Advancing International Religious Freedom.” President Trump declared in EO 13926 that “Religious freedom, America's first freedom, is a moral and national security imperative. Religious freedom for all people worldwide is a foreign policy priority of the United States.”

DRL/IRF invites organizations to submit a maximum of **FIVE (5) SOIs as prime applicants for programs outlined below.** There is no restriction on how many applications an organization may be part of as a subrecipient.

Goals: SOIs should address one of the following programmatic category goals:

1. **Government and Policy Advancements:** Governments and regional and international bodies codify and/or implement laws, policies, and regulations that protect religious freedom and pursue accountability for violations.
2. **Promoting Societal Respect/Combating Religious Discrimination:** Communities develop and practice mutual respect for all members of society, irrespective of their religious beliefs or practices. This includes enhancing efforts to prevent or respond effectively to religiously motivated abuses perpetrated by community members.
3. **Media:** The public has greater access to fair, balanced, and quality information related to religious freedom, and religious freedom advocates improve their abilities to effectively engage with media groups.
4. **Strengthening Resilience:** Religious communities and leaders have increased resilience to and/or reduced vulnerability to suppression by authoritarian governments or efforts by authorities to coopt religious institutions. Religious groups gain the awareness and skills to more effectively collaborate on topics of mutual interest and shared challenges, including through raising awareness of religious freedom abuses.

Programmatic themes that fall under the above category goals may include but are not limited to: combatting religious persecution and violence; combatting antisemitism – including education and training to combat related harassment, intimidation, and violence; anti-Christian bias and violence; other religious based hatred; religious freedom advocacy at local, provincial, national, regional, and international levels; legal protections and accountability mechanisms for individuals persecuted or targeted due to their religious affiliation, or the absence of one;

documentation of and accountability for religious freedom violations and abuses; religious and cultural heritage preservation; and institutional strengthening of civil society, government officials, security forces, and other relevant stakeholders to promote religious freedom.

Geographic areas: DRL/IRF prioritizes addressing issues in countries determined to have committed particularly severe violations of religious freedom as well as countries designated as a [Country of Particular Concern](#). DRL/IRF anticipates funding programs in additional priority countries, including, in alignment with department objectives to strengthen religious freedom among civilizational allies and the prioritization of the Western Hemisphere as a top foreign policy priority in the 2025 US National Security Strategy. Other countries may include, but are not limited to, countries designated on the Special Watch List and countries that have Entities of Particular Concern operating within their borders.

DRL/IRF prioritizes single-country SOIs; however will consider multi-country proposals that include no more than three countries within the same State Department-defined region (AF, EAP, EUR, NEA, SCA, and WHA). Justifications for multi-country concepts must be strong to be considered.

All SOI proposals must:

- Clearly indicate which category the SOI falls under.
- Clearly indicate the place(s) of performance the program will operate in.
- Include a theory of change that clearly outlines how project activities support project outcomes and objectives. Please note that due to the three-page limit, a full logic model is not required at the SOI stage – a brief paragraph outlining the project’s theory of change is sufficient.
- Include a brief feasibility analysis, including assessing operating environment risk and potential mitigation measures.
- Demonstrate broad impact (i.e., beyond a small set of participants).

Proposal periods of performance may range from 24 to 48 months. Proposal budget requests may range between \$1 million and \$3 million. If an application is submitted with a period of performance or budget request outside of these ranges, the application may be considered technically ineligible.

All programs should aim to have impact that leads to reforms and the potential for sustainability beyond DRL/IRF resources.

DRL/IRF will entertain applications for continuation grants funded under these awards beyond the initial budget period on a non-competitive basis subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the program, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the U.S. Department of State.

Certification Regarding Compliance with Applicable Federal Anti-Discrimination Laws:

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

1. Its compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of title 31, United States Code and;
2. It does not operate any programs promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws. A program promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion means a program whose purpose is to promote preferences based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origins, such as in training or hiring.

Activities that are **not** typically considered competitive include, but are not limited, to:

- Provision of humanitarian aid;
- English language instruction;
- Development of advanced computer or communications software and/or hardware;
- Purely academic exchanges or fellowships;
- External exchanges or fellowships lasting longer than six months;
- Activities conducted outside the target country that are not clearly connected to local initiatives and impact, or are not necessary due to security concerns;
- Theoretical studies of human rights or democracy issues, including programs focused mainly on research and evaluation without training or capacity-building for local civil society;
- Micro-loans or similar small business development initiatives.

2. Substantial Involvement

DRL/IRF plans to award either a grant or cooperative agreement based on the program's needs and risks. The Grants Officer will make a final determination on the type of award. The main difference between grants and cooperative agreements is the level of "substantial involvement" by the federal government. Cooperative agreements require more Federal government participation. If a cooperative agreement is awarded, DRL/IRF will be significantly involved as needed. Examples of this involvement include, but are not limited to:

- Actively participating or collaborating with the recipient in carrying out the award
- Reviewing one stage of work before the next can begin
- Reviewing key provisions of proposed sub-awards or contracts beyond existing Federal policy
- Reviewing a recipient's work plan before the award is final

D. Application Contents and Format

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

1. Mandatory application forms

- Completed and signed **SF-424** and **SF-424B** forms, as directed on MyGrants or Grants.gov (refer to DRL/IRF's PSI for SOIs for guidance on completing the SF-424s);
- **Cover Page** that details the proposed program title, period of performance, budget request, place(s) of performance, known program partners (subawards, etc.), and program

category. Note: the Cover Page does not count as one of the three pages in an applicant's Statement of Interest.

- A **3-page Statement of Interest** that includes: a brief summary of the program with a clear breakdown of the program's objectives, activities, and expected results per objective including how it will demonstrate impact and engage relevant stakeholders. Applicants must also demonstrate their expertise and ability to implement the program and manage a U.S. government award.

Please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity
- All documents are in English
- All budgets are in U.S. Dollars
- All pages are numbered
- All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper
- All documents are single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. Captions and footnotes may be 10-point Times New Roman font. Font sizes in charts and tables, including the budget, can be reformatted to fit within one page width.

E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

1. Address to Request Application Package

Application forms required above are available at www.grants.gov and MyGrants (<https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com>) under the announcement title “DRL/IRF FY 2026 Global Request for Statements of Interest,” funding opportunity number “**DFOP0019929**.” If reasonable accommodation is needed for persons with disabilities or for security reasons, please contact the DRL/IRF point of contact listed below. Note that reasonable accommodations do not include deadline extensions.

2. Department of State Contacts

For technical submission questions related to this RSOI, please contact IRFGrants@state.gov.

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

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

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

Required Registrations

Organizations are not required to have a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number—formerly referred to as a DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) number—and an active SAM.gov

registration to apply for this solicitation through MyGrants. **However, if a SOI is approved, these will need to be obtained before an organization is able to submit a full application. Therefore, we recommend starting the process of obtaining a UEI and SAM.gov registration as soon as possible.** Please note that there is no cost associated with UEI or SAM.gov registration.

4. Submission Dates and Times

SOI applications are due no later than December 7, 2026 11:59 PM ET.

Unless otherwise specified, all application submissions must be made electronically via www.grants.gov or MyGrants (<https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com>). DRL/IRF is not responsible for disqualification due to applicants not being registered before the due date, system errors in MyGrants or Grants.gov, or other errors in the application process. Applicants must save a screenshot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

DRL/IRF encourages organizations to **submit applications during normal business hours** (Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM ET). If an applicant experiences technical difficulties and has contacted the appropriate help desk but is not receiving timely assistance (e.g., no response within 48 hours), they may **contact the DRL/IRF point of contact listed in Section E.2**. The point of contact may assist in contacting the appropriate help desk.

5. Funding Restrictions

Any applicant listed on the Excluded Parties List System in the [System for Award Management \(SAM.gov\)](http://www.sam.gov) (www.sam.gov) or who has a current debt to the U.S. government is not eligible to apply for an assistance award, according to OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 and 12689, “Debarment and Suspension.” Additionally, no entity or person listed on the Excluded Parties List System in SAM.gov can take part in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the Excluded Parties List System in SAM.gov to make sure no ineligible entity or person is included in their application.

DRL/IRF will not consider applications that provide support for any member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization. For more information, refer to the list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

Program activities that directly benefit foreign militaries or paramilitary groups or individuals will not be considered for DRL/IRF funding due to funding restrictions.

According to Department of State policy on terrorism, applicants are advised that successful passing of a vetting process to evaluate the risk that funds may benefit terrorists or their supporters is a condition for receiving an award. If selected for an award, applicants will need to provide information required by DS Form 4184, Risk Analysis Information about their company and its principal personnel. Vetting information is also required for all sub-award performance on assistance awards identified by the Department of State as having a risk of terrorist financing. Vetting information may also be requested for program beneficiaries and participants. Failure to

provide the requested information or to pass the vetting process may result in the proposal being rejected.

The Leahy Law prohibits Department of State 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, program beneficiaries or participants from a foreign government’s security forces may need to be vetted by the Department before the provision of any assistance. If a proposed grant or cooperative agreement will provide assistance to foreign security forces or personnel, compliance with the Leahy Law is required.

U.S. foreign assistance for Burma or Burmese beneficiaries is subject to restrictions. This includes restrictions, pursuant to section 7043(a)(3) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2024 (SFOAA) (Div. F, P.L. 118-47), as carried forward by the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2025 (Div. A, P.L. 119-4), on funds appropriated under title III of the act for assistance for Burma. Section 7043(a)(3) provides that “none of the funds appropriated by this Act that are made available for assistance for Burma may be made available to the State Administration Council or any organization or entity controlled by, or an affiliate of, the armed forces of Burma, or to any individual or organization that has committed a gross violation of human rights or advocates violence against ethnic or religious groups or individuals in Burma, as determined by the Secretary of State.” In addition, funds cannot be made available to any individual or organization that has committed serious human rights abuse.

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

Prohibition on Funding Activities that Encourage Mass-Migration Caravans towards the United States Southwest Border: None of the funds awarded under this grant may be made available to encourage, mobilize, publicize, or manage mass-migration caravans towards the United States southwest border. Funds may not be made available for legal counseling on the United States asylum process; and/or for referrals to legal or representation in the United States. Funds may only be used for cash cards for use in the country in which they are provided or to facilitate assisted voluntary returns and other purposes that do not encourage, mobilize, publicize, or manage mass migration caravans towards the United States southwest border. The provision of humanitarian assistance is permitted.

Certification Regarding Compliance with applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws: If the place of performance or delivery of any award made under this Statement of Interest will be **within the United States**, applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award:

- Its compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of title 31, United States Code and;
- It does not operate any programs promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws. A program promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion means a program whose purpose is to promote preferences based on race, color religion, sex, or national origins, such as in training or hiring.

Certification Regarding Compliance with 20 U.S.C. 1011f and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements: Applicants are advised that IHEs must certify the following at the time of award, and that this certification requirement must be included in any subaward agreements to IHEs:

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

Certification of Trafficking in Persons Compliance and Compliance Plan: Applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award for awards where the estimated value of services to be performed outside the United States exceeds \$500,000:

- To the best of the Recipient's knowledge, neither the Recipient, nor any subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor of the Recipient or any agent of the recipient or of such a subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor, is engaged in any of the activities described in [2 CFR 175.105\(a\)](#);
- The recipient has implemented a Trafficking in Persons compliance plan to prevent activities described in [2 CFR 175\(a\)](#) and is compliant with this plan; and the compliance plan must follow the minimum requirements described in [2 CFR 175\(b\)\(5\)](#).
- That the Recipient has and will implement procedures to prevent activities described in [2 CFR 175.105\(a\)](#) and to monitor, detect, and terminate any subrecipient, contractor, subcontractor, or employee of the recipient engaging in these activities.

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

Prohibition on Unmanned Aircraft Systems Manufactured or Assembled by American Security Drone Act-Covered Foreign Entities

- *Definitions*
 - *American Security Drone Act-covered foreign entity* means an entity included on a list developed and maintained by the Federal Acquisition Security Council

(FASC) and published in the System for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov>.

- *FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system* means an unmanned aircraft system manufactured or assembled by an American Security Drone Act-covered foreign entity.
- *Unmanned aircraft* means an aircraft that is operated without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the aircraft.
- *Unmanned aircraft system* means an unmanned aircraft and associated elements (including communication links and the components that control the unmanned aircraft) that are required for the operator to operate safely and efficiently in the national airspace system.
- *Prohibition.* Recipients of funding under this Statement of Interest (including subawards and subcontracts issued by the recipient) will be prohibited from:
 - Delivering any FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system, which includes unmanned aircraft (i.e., drones) and associated elements;
 - On or after December 22, 2025, operating a FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system in the performance of the award; and
 - On or after December 22, 2025, using Federal funds for the purchase or operation of a FASC-prohibited unmanned aircraft system.
- *Exemptions, exceptions, and waivers.* The prohibitions described above will not apply if the agency determines that an exemption, exception, or waiver applies and the award indicates that such a determination has been made. [See sections 1823 through 1825 and 1832 of Public Law 118-31 ([41 U.S.C. 3901](#) note prec.) for statutory requirements pertaining to exemptions, exceptions, and waivers.].

Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance (PHFFA): Applicants for foreign assistance awards should be aware of requirements in 2 CFR Part 602, 603, and 604. These policies are referred to collectively as the Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance (PHFFA) Policy.

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

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

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

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

Organizations should be aware of these restrictions when developing proposals, as they will need to conduct proper due diligence on program beneficiaries and work with DRL/IRF to ensure compliance. Due diligence vetting will apply to any individuals or entities receiving foreign assistance funding or support and will include a review of publicly available information.

F. Application Review Information

1. Review Criteria

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

Quality of Program Idea

Applications should align with the program framework and policy objectives in the RSOI; be suitable for the country/region; and show originality, substance, precision, and relevance to DRL/IRF's mission of promoting religious freedom. Programs should aim for immediate impact leading to long-term, sustainable reforms. DRL/IRF prefers new approaches that do not duplicate efforts but will consider programs that improve or expand existing successful programs in a new way. In countries where similar activities are already happening, applicants must explain how new activities will not duplicate or simply add to existing ones and how these efforts will be coordinated. SOIs that offer creative solutions to ongoing challenges are encouraged.

Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives

A strong SOI will show how the proposed activities contribute to the overall program goal and objectives, with each activity included. Objectives should be ambitious yet measurable, results-focused, and achievable within a reasonable timeframe.

SOIs should address how the program will engage relevant stakeholders and should identify local partners as appropriate. If local partners are identified, applicants should describe the division of labor among the prime applicant and any local partners.

Institution's Record and Capacity

DRL/IRF will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. SOIs should demonstrate a record of successful religious freedom and/or human rights programs, responsible fiscal management, and compliance with reporting requirements and federal procurement regulations. Programs should have potential for continued funding beyond DRL/IRF resources.

Rights-Based Approach

DRL/IRF aims to advance the rights of all persons and requests program approaches dedicated to strengthening rights-respecting societies as a necessary pillar of strong democracies. Discrimination and violence targeting any members of society undermines collective security and threatens democracy. The proposal should show how the program will further engagement in persecuted communities and improve the respect for the rights of these individuals at the societal and/or governmental level.

2. *Review and Selection Process*

A warranted Grants Officer will determine technical eligibility for all applications. A merit review panel will evaluate all eligible applications based on the criteria above.

The DRL/IRF merit review panel typically includes representatives from DRL/IRF, the appropriate Department of State regional bureau, and if possible, U.S. Embassies. If embassy personnel cannot join the panel, their feedback will be incorporated via regional bureau participants. At the end of the panel's discussion about an application, the review panel votes on whether to invite the applicant to the full proposal stage. All panelists must sign non-disclosure agreements and conflicts of interest agreements.

DRL/IRF merit review panels 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. To ensure effective use of DRL/IRF funds, conditions or recommendations may include requests to increase, decrease, clarify, and/or justify costs and project activities.

3. *Risk Review*

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

- Financial stability
- Management systems and standards
- History of performance
- Audit reports and findings
- Ability to effectively implement requirements

Before issuing a federal award with a total federal share over \$350,000, the Department of State must review information about the applicant found in the designated integrity and performance system on SAM.gov (41 USC §2313). Applicants can review and comment on any information about themselves in this system. The Department of State will consider these comments, along with other information in the system, to assess the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under federal awards.

G. Other Information

Applicants should be aware that DRL/IRF 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 DRL/IRF cannot guarantee that such information will not be disclosed, including pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or other similar statutes.

Background information on DRL/IRF can be found on <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-foreign-assistance-humanitarian-affairs-and-religious-freedom/office-of-international-religious-freedom/>.

