Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Fiscal Transparency Innovation Fund Projects

Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, Department of State

Opportunity number: DFOP0017006

Application deadline: January 13, 2025

Contents

A. **Basic Information** 3
B. **Eligibility** 4
C. **Program Description** 4
D. **Application Contents and Format** 6
E. **Submission Requirements and Deadlines** 7
F. **Application Review Information** 9
G. **Award Notices** 12
H. **Post-Award Requirements and Administration** 13
I. **Other Information** 15

U.S Department of State
Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs
Notice of Funding Opportunity

A. Basic Information

1. Overview

Funding Opportunity Title	Fiscal Transparency Innovation Fund
Funding Opportunity Number	XXXX
Announcement Type	Initial announcement of funding opportunity
Deadline for Applications	January 13, 2025 12:00 PM EST
Assistance Listing Number	19.XXX
Length of performance period	10 to 24 months with option to extend
Number of awards anticipated	One to two
Award amounts	Up to $740,009
Total available funding	$740,009
Type of Funding	FY24 Economic Support Funds under the Foreign Assistance Act.
Anticipated project start date	September 2025

Funding Instrument Type: This will be a grant award

Project Performance Period: Proposed projects should be implemented over the course of 10-24 months, with an option to extend project timeframe based on performance and availability of funds.

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

2. Executive Summary

The Department of State's Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs (EB) is pleased to announce a public competition for Fiscal Transparency Innovation Fund (FTIF) projects. FTIF projects assist governments and civil society organizations in promoting budget transparency. We seek proposals that offer the greatest benefit in helping governments meet core fiscal transparency requirements. These include the completeness, reliability, and public availability of budget information and public debt obligation data, as well as transparency in natural resource extraction licensing and tendering and procurement procedures. Funds are available to support projects only in countries assessed in the

Department's annual Fiscal Transparency Report (FTR).

B. Eligibility

1. Eligible Applicants

The following organizations are eligible to apply:

- Not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations
- Public and private educational institutions
- Public International Organizations and Governmental institutions

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

There will be no cost sharing.

C. Program Description

1. Goals and Objectives

In 2012, Congress created the FTIF to support government and civil society efforts to enhance public sector budget transparency, advance best practices in public financial management, and improve the transparency of natural resource management. FTIF projects assist governments and civil society organizations in promoting budget transparency.

EB is opening $740,009 in FTIF funding to public competition for proposals that offer the greatest benefit in helping governments assessed in the Fiscal Transparency Report (FTR) meet core fiscal transparency requirements. These include the completeness, reliability, and public availability of budget information and public debt obligation data, as well as transparency in natural resource extraction licensing and tendering and procurement procedures. Applications should include details on how the project will advance U.S. strategic priorities and advance fiscal transparency. Projects may be regional to address similar needs across several countries.

State permits FTIF programming only in countries evaluated as part of the FTR, and State will prioritize projects supporting efforts in countries that did not meet the minimum requirements as identified in the 2024 FTR, including countries classified as making significant progress, although State also welcomes proposals for projects in countries that met the minimum requirements in the 2024 FTR. Successful project proposals should facilitate improvements recommended in the 2024 FTR and/or in one or more of the following areas:

- Reliability, completeness, public availability, and timeliness of public-sector budget data.
- Transparent formulation of national public expenditure budgets.
- Transparent reporting and analysis of budget execution.
- Parliamentary/legislative oversight of the national budget process.
- Public participation in the budget process at the national or sub-national levels.
- Effective budget oversight, including execution, monitoring, and reporting.
- Independent and sufficiently resourced supreme audit institutions, with a mandate to publish substantive and timely audit reports.
- Transparent management of natural resources, including a legal framework that outlines procedures for natural resource extraction contracts, licenses, and revenues.
- Analysis and publication of information that should improve public expenditure transparency, including of state-owned enterprises, sovereign debt, debt sustainability and debt restructuring programs, tenders and procurement, and subsidies.
- Sovereign wealth funds with sound legal frameworks that disclose sources of funding and general approaches to withdrawals.
- Open governance reforms related to improving access to government services and government accountability to citizens.
- Media or third-party amplification of fiscal and budget data, including through investigative journalism.

Eligible project activities may include support to government-led reforms that improve the transparency or reliability of budget information, or capacity building for independent actors such as watchdog agencies, civil society, think tanks, and independent media. Projects should amplify other U.S. multilateral engagement priorities, such as promoting debt transparency for governments with current IMF programs that focus on improving fiscal transparency and public financial management. Previously funded FTIF projects include:

- Training for journalists on fiscal reporting.
- Technical assistance and training for government officials on public financial management, supreme audit functions, and natural resource management.
- Preparation and dissemination of information on the budget process and cycles and increased public participation in public financial management.
- Development of IT infrastructure to improve information sharing.

Each proposal should include a project narrative, funding estimate, and performance metrics that can be tracked on a quarterly basis as part of required reporting. FTIF project managers are required to submit quarterly progress reports that include a description of key activities and accomplishments, challenges, planned work, and a Federal Financial Report (Standard Form 425).

D. Application Contents and Format

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

Content of Application

Please ensure:

- The application 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 fit 8 ½ x 11 paper, and
- All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12-point Calibri font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.

Applications must include the following:

1. Mandatory application forms

- SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance – organizations) on Grants.gov
- SF-424A (Budget Information for Non-Construction programs) on Grants.gov

2. Summary Page (optional)

Cover sheet stating the applicant's name and organization, proposal date, project title, project country, project period proposed start and end date, and brief purpose of the project.

3. Proposal (10 pages maximum)

The proposal should contain sufficient information so that anyone not familiar with it would understand exactly what the applicant intends to do with the funding. Applicants may use their own proposal format,but must include all the items below.

- **Proposal Summary:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed project, including project objectives and anticipated impact in the target country.
- **Introduction to the Organization or Individual applying**: A description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the project, including information on all previous grants from the State Department and/or U.S. government agencies.

- **Problem Statement:** Clear, concise, and well-supported statement of the problem to address and why the proposed project is needed.
- **Project Goals and Objectives:** The "goals" describe what the project intends to achieve. The "objectives" refer to the intermediate benchmarks along the path to accomplishing the goals. These should be achievable and measurable.
- **Project Activities**: Describe the proposed activities and how they will help achieve the objectives.
- **Project Methods and Design**: A description of how the applicant expects the project will address the stated problem and achieve the goal. Include a logic model as appropriate.
- **Proposed Project Schedule and Timeline:** The proposed timeline, including the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.
- **Key Personnel:** Names, titles, roles, and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the project. What proportion of their time will be used to support the proposed project?
- **Project Partners:** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations and sub-awardees.
- **Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** Throughout the grant timeframe, how will the applicant monitor activities to ensure they are executed in a timely manner, and how will the applicant evaluate the project to make sure it meets the goals of the grant?
- **Future Funding or Sustainability:** Applicant's plan for continuing the project beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable.

4. Budget Justification Narrative

In addition to filling out the SF-424A Budget form (referenced above), applicants should create a separate file to describe the budget expenses in detail. See section I. Other Information: Guidelines for Budget Submissions below for further information.

5. Attachments

- 1-page Curriculum Vitae (CV) or resume of key personnel working on the project
- Letters of support from project partners describing the roles and responsibilities of each partner
- Most recent Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) as a PDF file (if your organization includes NICRA charges in the budget)
- Official permission letters, if required for project activities.

E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

1. Application Package

Visit MyGrants and grants.gov to access required application forms: SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance) and SF-424A (Budget Information for Non-Construction programs).

2. Department of State Contacts

If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact: Lewis May (mayal@state.gov) and Geoffrey Thomas (thomasgf@state.gov).

The State Department will be hosting a digital information session for interested applicants on November 21, 2024, at 9:00 pm. Please register here or reach out to Lewis May (mayal@state.gov) to request a meeting invite.

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

Required Registration
All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration in SAM.gov **at the time of submitting an application**. A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards. An applicant must maintain an active registration while it has a proposal under review by the Department and must continue to keep the registration active for the entire duration of the period of performance of any Federal award that results from this NOFO. The 2 CFR 200 requires subrecipients to obtain a UEI. Please note that State does not require the UEI for subrecipients at the time of application but will require UEI registration before processing and/or directing an award to a subrecipient.

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

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

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

Exemptions
An exemption from the UEI and sam.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis. See 2 CFR 25.110 for a full list of exemptions.

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the NOFO at least two weeks prior to the deadline in the NOFO providing a justification of their request. Approval for a SAM.gov exemption must come from the warranted Grants Officer at State Department before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

4. Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due no later than January 13, 2025, at 12:00 pm EST.

5. Funding Restrictions

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

ii. 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.

iii. Funds can only be used for programming countries that were evaluated as part of State Department's 2024 Fiscal Transparency Report, which can be found here on State's website.

6. Other Submission Requirements

Applications must submit materials electronically through www.Grants.gov or MyGrants.

F. Application Review Information

1. Review Criteria

The evaluation and selection process will use the criteria outlined below:

1. Fiscal Transparency Objectives (25%)
    - The project should target specific findings and recommendations identified by the 2024 Fiscal Transparency Report.

2. Alignment to FITF Objectives (25%)
    - The project should align with FTIF's program priorities.
    - State encourages regional or multi-country projects for applicants with the appropriate capacity.
    - The project utilizes creative approaches to address FTIF objectives.
    - Project proposals should include activities that:
        1. Bolster quality, transparency, and public availability of public-sector budget data.
        2. Increase oversight of the national budget process and implementation.
        3. Support independence and capacity of supreme audit institutions.
        4. Strengthen capacity of civil society organizations to engage on fiscal transparency issues and work with government stakeholders and public participation in the budget process.
        5. Support transparent management revenues from natural resource extraction.
        6. Improve transparency, disclosure requirements, and legal frameworks for sovereign wealth funds.
        7. Improve media capacity and third-party for review and amplification of fiscal and budget data.
        8. Support alternate approaches that fit under FTIF's mandate to improve fiscal transparency.

3. Project Design and Sustainability (20%)
    - The proposal demonstrates the organization's expertise and previous experience in administering projects.
    - The proposal is communicated well and outlines a reasonable timeline.
    - The proposal includes clear objectives and activities to achieve concrete, significant, and measurable outcomes.
    - The project produces sustainable results after implementation.
    - If using a local partner, the proposal describes the partner's role and experience.

4. Alignment to U.S. Strategies (10%)

    - The project aligns with broader U.S. government strategies, including:
        1. U.S. Strategy on Countering Corruption
        2. Open Government Partnership (OGP) Standards
        3. Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) Standard
        4. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Sustainable Development Goals
        5. IMF Article IV recommendations

- In accordance with the Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Underserved Communities, the proposal demonstrates how the project advances equity with respect to race, ethnicity, religion, income, geography, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability.

5. Risk Mitigation and Monitoring (10%)
    - The applicant has secured stakeholder buy-in from host government/civil society/public.
    - The proposal identifies potential challenges to achieving outcomes.
    - The proposal outlines a clear plan for monitoring project implementation and progress.

6. Budget and Cost Effectiveness (10%)
    - The budget justification is cost-effective and clearly linked to project objectives.
    - The budget justification is detailed.
    - The budget does not significantly overestimate or underestimate costs.
    - The budget narrative demonstrates the ability to economize and plan effectively.
    - Administrative costs are necessary, justified, and in good proportion to direct activity costs.

2. Review and Selection Process

An independent review committee of State Department and USAID employees will evaluate all eligible applications. The Federal Assistance team decides the size and make-up of the panel, whose members will sign non-disclosure agreements and not have conflicts of interest. Discussions held during the panel meeting related to applicant organizations and grant applications are sensitive and will not be discussed with parties outside the Department.

3. Risk Review

Risk factors

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

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

f. If there are any project specific risk factors that will be considered, describe them here.

Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov
The Federal awarding agency, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, must review and consider (see 41 U.S.C. 2313) that an applicant can review and comment on any information in the responsibility/qualification records available in SAM.gov.

Before making decisions in the risk review required by 2 CFR 200.206, the Department will consider any comments by the applicant, along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov.

G. Award Notices

A Grants Officer at State Department will serve as the point of contact for the award with the recipient organization. The State Department Grants Officer will write, award and administer the award to the recipient organization. The award agreement is the authorizing document, and the Department of State will provide the agreement to the recipient for review and counter-signature. The recipient may only start incurring project expenses beginning on the start date shown on the award document signed by the Grants Officer.

State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding to projects selected for funding. The Department of State has the discretion to increase funding or extend the period of performance of the award.

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.

Unsuccessful applicants:
State will notify unsuccessful applicants in writing by March 1, 2025.

Payment Method:
Payments under this award will be made through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Payment Management System (PMS), or recipients can request payments by completing form SF-270—Request for Advance or Reimbursement and submitting the form to the relevant Grants Officer at State Department.

H. Post-Award Requirements and Administration

1. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

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

- 2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT

- 2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION

- 2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

- 2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE (FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE)

- 2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY

- 2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS
- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

In accordance with the Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Underserved Communities, proposals should demonstrate how the project advances equity with respect to race, ethnicity, religion, income, geography, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability. The proposal should also demonstrate how the project 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 project'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 project will support and advance equity and engage underserved communities in project administration, design, and implementation.

2. Reporting

Reporting Requirements:
State requires funding recipients to submit quarterly reports that include a description of key activities and accomplishments, challenges, planned work and a Federal Financial Report (Standard Form 425). Recipients will also submit performance and finance data as part of State's Annual Performance Plan. State will work with successful applicants to identify additional reporting requirements at the awarding stage, but applicants should expect to submit regular financial and narrative reporting as well as individual success stories.

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). Successful applicants will be required to report and draw down federal funding based on the appropriate FADR Data Elements, indicated within their award documentation. In cases of more than one FADR Data Element, typically project or sector and/or regions or country, the successful applicant will be required to maintain separate accounting records.

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

I. Other Information

Guidelines for Budget Justification

Personnel and Fringe Benefits: Describe the wages, salaries, and benefits of temporary or permanent staff who will be working directly for the applicant on the project, and the percentage of their time that will be spent on the project.

Travel: Estimate the costs of travel and per diem for this project, for project staff, consultants or speakers, and participants/beneficiaries. If the project involves international travel, include a brief statement of justification for that travel.

Equipment: Describe any machinery, furniture, or other personal property required for the project, which has a useful life of more than one year (or a life longer than the duration of the project), and costs at least $10,000 per unit.

Supplies: List and describe all the items and materials, including any computer devices, that are needed for the project. If an item costs more than $10,000 per unit, then put it in the budget under Equipment.

Contractual: Describe goods and services that the applicant plans to acquire through a contract with a vendor. Also describe any sub-awards to non-profit partners that will help carry out the project activities.

Other Direct Costs: Describe other costs directly associated with the project, which do not fit in the other categories. For example, shipping costs for materials and equipment or applicable taxes. All “Other” or “Miscellaneous” expenses must be itemized and explained.

Indirect Costs: These are costs that cannot be linked directly to the project activities, such as overhead costs needed to help keep the organization operating. If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, attach a copy of your latest NICRA. Organizations that have never had a NICRA may request indirect costs of 15% of Modified Total Direct Costs as defined in 2 CFR 200.1.

“Cost Sharing” refers to contributions from the organization or other entities other than the U.S. Embassy. It also includes in-kind contributions such as volunteers’ time and donated venues.

Alcoholic Beverages: Please note that award funds cannot be used for alcoholic beverages.

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