

Department of State
Public Notice

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Request for Statements of Interest:
FY20 Iraq Programs

I. Requested Objectives for Statements of Interest

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) announces a Request for Statements of Interest (RSOI) outlining project concepts and capacity to manage programs in Iraq that will: strengthen effective governance; increase political participation and civic activism; promote fundamental freedoms; and support atrocity prevention, accountability, and reconciliation.

PLEASE NOTE: DRL strongly encourages applicants to immediately access [SAMS Domestic](#) or [www.grants.gov](#) in order to obtain a username and password. For instructions on how to register with SAMS Domestic for the first time, please refer to the Proposal Submission Instructions for Statements of Interest at: <https://www.state.gov/key-topics-bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/open-solicitations-and-proposal-submission-instructions/open-solicitations-and-proposal-submission-instructions/proposal-submission-instructions-psi-for-statements-of-interest-updated-september-2018/>.

The submission of a SOI is the first step in a two-part process. Applicants must first submit a SOI, which is a concise, 3-page concept note designed to clearly communicate a program idea and its objectives before the development of a full proposal application. The purpose of the SOI process is to allow applicants the opportunity to submit program ideas for DRL to evaluate prior to requiring the development of full proposal applications. Upon review of eligible SOIs, DRL will invite selected applicants to expand their ideas into full proposal applications.

REQUESTED STATEMENT OF INTEREST PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

U.S. human rights and democracy assistance in Iraq will be tailored to promote governance based on democratic principles, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and peaceful coexistence. It will also provide for the protection of and advocacy for the rights of the most vulnerable, including youth, women, and religious and ethnic minorities, and mitigate the impact of conflict on Iraqi communities.

Proposed programming must be responsive to immediate needs in-country; flexible in its ability to respond to the shifting context; and in line with the U.S. Government's democracy, governance, and human rights goals for Iraq. Programming should also contribute to and support Iraqi efforts where possible. Helpful resources for applicants include the annual Iraq Human Rights Report, International Religious Freedom Report, and Trafficking in Persons Report (<https://www.state.gov/reports-bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/>).

Applicants must clearly designate under which category the SOI is being submitted for consideration, in addition to organization name, proposal title, budget amount, program length, and point of contact.

With the above in mind, DRL invites organizations to submit statements of interest for programs in the following areas:

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, AND CIVIC

ACTIVISM. Programming should promote inclusive, transparent, and responsive governance and should focus on one or more of the following areas. Elections-related programs should consider not only the anticipated general/national elections, but also promote the establishment of best practices and inclusive institutional policies for future elections, including provincial and regional elections:

I. Promoting Effective Governance

- Empower officials at the national and local levels to engage on and be responsive to human rights concerns, including the rights of marginalized communities. Increase the capacity and awareness of non-traditional and community leaders to adequately, inclusively, and effectively represent their communities/constituents in governance mechanisms, and to engage with and address the needs of diverse segments of Iraqi society in formal governance processes.
- Enhance the accountability and responsiveness of the Government of Iraq (GOI) and/or Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to demands for anti-corruption efforts. Program activities may include: supporting advocacy and watchdog NGOs to collaborate with and/or encourage government transparency and responsiveness to anti-corruption efforts; supporting journalists to further their engagement and reporting on corruption; and supporting independent and citizen media outlet oversight and integrity in reporting, including fact-based reporting and independent media reporting on corruption and transparency.
- Address the spread of disinformation, particularly where disinformation campaigns target electoral processes and civic activists. Program activities should strengthen the capacity of local stakeholders to address vulnerabilities in information security; identify and report on bot activity and other disinformation tactics targeting electoral processes and civic activists; and raise awareness of disinformation threats designed to hinder political participation and citizen engagement. Programming should also facilitate the adaptation of tools to the Iraqi context.
- Address labor concerns within Iraq and increase access to improved employment by promoting adherence to Iraqi labor laws and international labor conventions. Programs should assist worker organizations or worker-focused institutions in representing worker interests in Iraqi democracy and in advocating for decent and safe jobs, free from discrimination and harassment, the ability to collectively bargain, and freedom of association. Programs may also assist democratic worker organizations in improving their operations to better represent their diverse operations to better represent their members, sustain outreach to Iraqi workers, and ensure accountability to Iraqi laws in order to prevent labor exploitation. Programming focused on supporting women workers, workers with disabilities, or other traditionally marginalized groups is encouraged.

II. Increasing Political Participation

- Strengthen Iraqi citizens' ability to engage their representatives at the local and national level on social, political, and economic issues, with a particular focus on increasing civil society engagement with the GOI. Applicants should facilitate and sustain locally-driven coalition-building efforts within Iraqi civil society where possible to aggregate and more effectively vocalize citizen concerns.
- Promote the participation and leadership of women and minorities in decision-making institutions, including federal, provincial, and local government, as well as cross-cutting institutional bodies and political parties.
- Promote full participation in Iraq's civic processes, such as elections, particularly addressing barriers to access resulting from specific vulnerabilities (i.e., internally displaced persons, those lacking civil documentation, those with low literacy or mobility issues, etc.). Applicants should facilitate the outreach, education, and championing of IDP-specific interests in elections, particularly as they relate to electoral districts, ID requirements, and voting ability.
- Promote increased transparency and accountability in electoral processes by preventing voter intimidation and electoral violence – especially against traditionally marginalized populations – and supporting legal efforts that enfranchise voters and compel adherence to electoral laws. Programs should focus on supporting transparency in the pre- and/or post-election environment ensuring a peaceful and inclusive transition of power and demonstrating that elections processes are free, fair, and transparent.
- Engage workers and worker organizations in strengthening freedom of association initiatives and democracy best practices. Programs should clearly demonstrate links between community demands and worker-derived solutions for feeding into public policy and advocacy. This may include linking worker groups and rank-and-file workers to tripartite dialogues, supporting worker-centered approaches to problems of national importance, and assisting worker organizations in upholding or advancing human rights and democratic norms both inside their institutions and at the governmental level. Programs should include traditionally marginalized worker voices like those of women, young workers, unemployed workers, or people with disabilities.

III. Supporting Civic Activism

- Build the capacity of Iraqi activists by: providing basic skills and training in democratic activism, including advocacy, community organizing, coalition-building, non-violence, conflict resolution, and accountability capabilities; providing ongoing mentoring, coaching, and networking opportunities to participating activists and organizations; developing sustainable tools and approaches to achieve impact on policy outcomes and political freedoms. Activities should focus on the design, organization, and implementation of public advocacy campaigns on specific topics rather than general training programs directed to basic organizational capacity.

- Create and deepen linkages between emerging democratic activists and watchdog civil society groups towards the goal of building a national network of likeminded individuals and groups.
- Respond to protestor demands to address corrupt practices and grievances around poor governance related to pollution and environmental issues. Activities should promote a culture of respect for the environment within Iraq with the recognition that a safe and clean environment is a fundamental human right, and that corrupt practices and lax regulations have served as a launching point for peaceful democratic protests. Activities should also focus on improving community awareness of pollution and environmental issues, support to communities advocating for environmental justice, and the passage and enforcement of environmental protection legislation.
- Improve and enforce national social safety net programs and engagement between the private and public sector in line with Iraqi law. Advance multi-stakeholder partnerships that target cross-cutting issues of human rights. Examples may include advocacy by labor-business partnerships to reduce environmental degradation in Iraq or business's adherence to legal frameworks regarding occupational safety, health, and taxation. Programs that bring diverse coalitions together to engage on common social issues or issues concerning renewal of the country's democratic social contract are encouraged. Support civil society in Iraq via targeted small grants and technical assistance.
 - DRL will award this program as a cooperative agreement. The applicant must demonstrate strong ties to local NGOs across Iraq that can serve as local partners, and demonstrate an ability to effectively manage sub-grants, sub-awards, and subcontracts. DRL will negotiate with the recipient the conditions and criteria under which these small grants will be awarded. Both DRL and the lead implementer may propose small grants and partners for activities under this program. Successful candidates will demonstrate the ability to support a wide range of activities, from advocacy to direct assistance. DRL may request that the recipient provide targeted assistance to other NGOs or individuals operating in Iraq, either through direct technical assistance or as financial support for these services provided through a small grant. DRL will award this program as a cooperative agreement.

FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS. Programming should protect and advance fundamental freedoms, including freedom of the press, expression, association, and peaceful assembly, and should focus on one or more of the following areas:

I. Freedom of Expression

- Build the independence of Iraqi media, including by strengthening professionalism, specialization, sustainability, editorial independence, advocacy, and/or management of regulatory relationships. Address problematic legislation, including interpretation and implementation of existing legislation that restricts the fundamental freedom of expression and promotes freedom of expression without fear of retaliation.
- Expand and protect Internet freedom in Iraq by enabling civil society to safely access the open, secure, interoperable, and reliable global Internet through support for

proven and next generation technical solutions that provide access to the uncensored Internet during periods of blocking and Internet shutdowns.

- Empower civil society to engage in domestic and regional advocacy to support the development of laws and regulations that protect the exercise of human rights online. This may include building the capacity of local advocates to encourage policy reform; supporting regional advocacy networks to enhance coordination; and fostering like-minded coalitions to unite civil society, the private sector, technical communities, and other Internet freedom stakeholders.
- Provide targeted digital security and safety capacity-building support to assist civil society organizations, human rights defenders, and journalists to stay safe online. This may include training for at-risk individuals; training of digital safety trainers; organizational security audits; public awareness-raising campaigns on online risks and harms; online and mobile training resources; and emergency response services to provide rapid assistance to human rights defenders, particularly women human rights defenders, who are attacked for their online activities.

II. Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly

- Provide broad-based support to civil society groups and activists in Iraq's southern provinces. Proposals should take into consideration both the difficult operating environment for CSOs operating in southern provinces pre-2019 as well as the increasingly difficult situation facing those organizations in the current context.
- Address problematic legislation restricting fundamental freedoms through advocacy and reform efforts, and support implementation of existing laws that promote equitable status and rights. Programming should include raising awareness within communities on human rights according to Iraqi law. Programming may also include support to lawyers targeted for their casework and advocacy on human rights issues.
- Support government efforts to ensure equitable access to decent and safe work through skills training to formal and informal sector workers. Programming should include knowledge training for workers regarding key Iraqi legal frameworks like adherence to the labor law, social security law, and other statutes governing worker rights and obligations. Programming may also work on barriers that prevent specific populations from accessing and participating in public life. Examples may include barriers to women's participation in certain types of careers or the ability of youth to access and exercise their fundamental right to peaceful assembly.

ATROCITY PREVENTION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND RECONCILIATION.

Programming should support inclusive efforts to protect human rights, reduce and prevent violence, and rebuild trust within and between communities and between citizens and the state, and should focus on one or more of the following areas:

I. Atrocity Prevention

- Provide personal safety counseling, psychosocial support, and digital safety skills to strengthen the self-protection capacity and resiliency of activists, journalists, lawyers, and civil society organizations.

- Provide psychosocial support and awareness around violence and healing from violence. Programs may assess needs, plan treatments, and build referral pathways, and train community practitioners/community development workers to work with those affected by violence, either at the community level or in detention centers.
- Support survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including access to protection (e.g., shelters, either government-run or otherwise) and access to services; activities designed to change societal attitudes and address harmful gender norms that normalize gender-based violence (GBV) or stigmatize and shun survivors, prevent individuals from safely accessing assistance and reporting crimes, and relegate issues of violence against women outside of established justice processes; and promote survivor protection and dignity by providing sensitivity training and technical expertise to advocacy groups. Programs that engage men and boys and include family- and community-based approaches will be viewed favorably.
- Establish a context-specific, flexible response mechanism to provide emergency support to survivors of GBV and technical support to organizations working to prevent and respond to GBV in Iraq. The mechanism must advance local solutions for addressing GBV and survivors' needs, and be able to operate nationwide. Applicants must demonstrate strong ties with local NGOs working on GBV issues across Iraq, and an ability to effectively manage sub-awards and direct cash assistance to individuals. Coalitions of organizations with nationwide reach, who identify one organization as the lead applicant, will be viewed favorably. DRL will award this program as a cooperative agreement.
- Address the systemic, legal, religious, and cultural barriers preventing the safe, dignified, and voluntary return and reintegration of former ISIS captives and their children, including Turkmen and Yezidis. Programming should consider the needs and vulnerabilities of Iraqi women and children facing barriers to return and reintegrate safely into Iraq from outside the country.
- Address issues that give rise to intercommunal conflict, including political and social marginalization, impunity and lack of access to justice, violence against women and girls, and other early warning indicators and risks that could potentially lead to escalation of atrocities. Develop and use innovative and sustainable methods to identify and map vulnerable communities and create early warning mechanisms for potential atrocities.
- Enable Iraqi civil society and advocacy groups to engage constructively and collaboratively with security forces, particularly on inclusive security sector reform and/or oversight to ensure that all parties promote security in a manner that protects all civilians, minimizes the impact of conflict on communities, respects human rights, adheres to the rule of law, and facilitates accountability for atrocities committed against Iraqi communities.

II. Accountability

- Advance accountability for atrocities committed in Iraq through available legal avenues for justice, including those in third countries, by providing legal, psychosocial, and other types of assistance to victims of abuses.

- Monitor, track, and document the targeting of civil society organizations, activists, journalists, women human rights defenders, and other vulnerable groups, as well as politically motivated attacks including media incitement of violence.
- Document and promote accountability for human rights abuses, with a focus on abuses committed by security forces. Combat impunity for human rights violations through legal advocacy and other channels, with consideration given to the unique needs of women and girls.
- Monitor juvenile and adult detention facilities and judicial proceedings, including gender-sensitive documentation of treatment and anti-torture measures, as well as advocacy for access to information and legal representation. Programs that include activities in pre-trial detention facilities will be viewed favorably.
- Support to national-level governmental bodies responsible for human rights monitoring, documentation, and reporting.
- Build the technical capacity of GOI and KRG stakeholders focused on the search and identification of missing and disappeared persons based on international best practices; support the collection, standardization, and preservation of information and potential evidence on the missing and disappeared for a range of accountability and other transitional justice processes; create and manage public education and awareness-raising campaigns that also build trust with local communities, especially families of the missing and disappeared; map and secure mass graves; and support the recovery of victims' remains and accurate victim identification for justice, truth, and accountability efforts.

III. Reconciliation

- Promote the rehabilitation, reintegration, and protection of conflict-affected youth, particularly children in detention centers. Programs may include community reintegration, protection of civil rights, provision of or access to legal assistance, psychosocial support, and advocacy with the government on juvenile detention issues.
- Help restore the relationship between citizens and the state in areas where violence or mistrust has or continues to impact individual and community participation in democratic processes.
- Support targeted, community-based dispute resolution, conflict management, and non-violent coexistence programs. Programs may include non-humanitarian assistance to help displaced persons integrate in host communities and/or reintegrate should they voluntarily return home; efforts to promote reintegration and non-violent coexistence with those who are negatively impacted by perceived affiliations based on family, tribe, religious or ethnic identity, and area of origin, or between citizens and the state; and advocacy for acknowledgment and recognition of atrocities. Programs that leverage and support women's participation are encouraged.
- Engage tribal leaders and communities in the peaceful, gender-responsive, and sustainable reintegration of individuals and families with actual or perceived former ties to ISIS.

OTHER PROGRAM INFORMATION:

Projects should aim to have impact that leads to democratic reforms and should have the potential for sustainability beyond DRL resources. DRL's preference is to avoid duplicating past efforts by supporting new and creative approaches. This does not exclude from consideration projects that improve upon or expand existing successful projects in a new and complementary way.

Applicants should conduct program activities throughout Iraq, including within the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR), and where security conditions allow, activities should take place within the beneficiaries' communities. Travel outside of Iraq for civil society representatives in furtherance of a program's objectives will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, programs proposing activities inside IDP/refugee camps or targeting Syrian refugees in Iraq will not be deemed competitive. Training or workshops may be used as a tool to a larger goal but should not be the main focus of a program. Projects for which assessments have already been completed that support certain targeted activities or interventions will be viewed favorably. Projects that have a strong academic, research, or conference focus will not be deemed competitive.

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

- The provision of humanitarian assistance.
- English language instruction.
- Development of high-tech computer or communications software and/or hardware.
- Purely academic exchanges or fellowships.
- External exchanges or fellowships lasting longer than six months.
- Off-shore activities that are not clearly linked to in-country initiatives and impact or are not necessary due to security concerns.
- Theoretical explorations of human rights or democracy issues, including projects aimed primarily at research and evaluation that do not incorporate training or capacity-building for local civil society.
- Micro-loans or similar small business development initiatives.
- Initiatives directed towards a diaspora community rather than current residents of targeted countries.
- Activities that go beyond an organization's demonstrated competence or fail to provide clear evidence of the ability of the applicant to achieve the stated impact.

Applicants should request not less than \$750,000 and not more than \$4,000,000. The target period of performance for projects must be between 18 and 48 months, but upon review of the SOI, DRL may request that the period of performance be extended to ensure safe and effective implementation of proposed program activities. Applicants must develop unique objectives that speak to the categories outlined in this request.

A proven ability to implement programs in Iraq must be demonstrated. All proposed program objectives must impact Iraqis inside the country, and working with local partners should be a central aspect of any proposed program. Proposed programs should also thoughtfully and

specifically address the participation and integration of women, persons with disabilities, ethnic and religious minority communities, and other marginalized populations in all program elements, where relevant and possible. SOIs that utilize technology in safe and creative ways where possible to shape innovative program strategies will be viewed favorably.

DRL is conscious of the ever-changing security situation in Iraq. SOIs must realistically address the challenges and limitations the applicant would likely face implementing this program, both within the current context in Iraq and in anticipation of a further evolving landscape.

Applicants invited to submit full proposals upon completion of the SOI process will also be requested to submit:

- A security plan in order to demonstrate situational awareness and preparedness.
- Contingency plans for proposed activities.
- Lessons learned from past programs in Iraq that demonstrate how the implementer has safely operated and responded to challenges, learning from both successes and failures, in the operating environment.
- A section in the proposal and budget to reflect appropriate resources and support for the psychosocial health of staff (i.e., activities can range from access to educational materials and training opportunities to counseling services to other contextually-relevant support).¹
- A gender analysis that clearly articulates how the program's design will address the different considerations for men, women, boys, girls, and the marginalized groups within these populations throughout implementation.

To maximize the impact and sustainability of the awards that results from this RSOI, DRL reserves the right to execute non-competitive continuation amendments. The total duration of any award, including a potential non-competitive continuation amendment(s), shall not exceed 60 months or five years. Any non-competitive continuation is contingent on performance and **availability of funds**. A non-competitive continuation is not guaranteed; the Department of State reserves the right to exercise or not exercise the option to issue non-competitive continuation amendment(s). Additionally, DRL may ask successful applicant(s) to incorporate coordination of a stakeholder meeting into the Scope of Work of the final project. DRL will discuss this possibility with particular applicant(s) during the proposal negotiation phase.

II. Eligibility Information

Organizations submitting SOIs must meet the following criteria:

- Be a U.S.- or foreign-based non-profit/non-governmental organization (NGO), or a public international organization; or

¹ For reference to international guidance, please see the following: Core Humanitarian Standard Commitment 8.9 (<http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/files/CHS-Guidance-Notes-and-Indicators.pdf>); and IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings Action Sheet 4.4 (http://redirect.state.sbu/?url=http://www.who.int/mental_health/emergencies/guidelines_iasc_mental_health_psychosocial_june_2007.pdf).

- Be a private, public, or state institution of higher education; or
- Be a for-profit organization or business (noting there are restrictions on payment of fees and/or profits under grants and cooperative agreements, including those outlined in 48 CFR 30, “Cost Accounting Standards Administration”, and 48 CFR 31, “Contract Cost Principles and Procedures”); and
- Have existing, or the capacity to develop, active partnerships with thematic or in-country partners, entities, and relevant stakeholders including private sector partner and NGOs; and
- Have demonstrable experience administering successful and preferably similar programs. DRL reserves the right to request additional background information on organizations that do not have previous experience administering federal awards. These applicants may be subject to limited funding on a pilot basis.

Applicants may **form consortia** and submit a combined SOI. However, one organization should be designated as the lead applicant with the other members as sub-award partners.

DRL’s preference is to work with non-profit entities; however, there may be occasions when a for-profit entity is best suited. For-profit entities should be aware that its application may be subject to additional review following the panel selection process, and that the Department of State generally prohibits profit under its assistance awards to for-profit or commercial organizations. Profit is defined as any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs. The allowability of costs incurred by commercial organizations is determined in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR 30, Cost Accounting Standards Administration, and 48 CFR 31 Contract Cost Principles and Procedures. Program income earned by the recipient must be deducted from the program’s total allowable costs in determining the net allowable costs on which the federal share of costs is based.

DRL is committed to an anti-discrimination policy in all of its programs and activities. DRL welcomes SOI submissions irrespective of race, ethnicity, color, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or other status.

No entity listed on the Excluded Parties List System in the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#) is eligible for any assistance or can participate in any activities under an 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 listed on the EPLS can participate in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the EPLS in SAM to ensure that no ineligible entity is included.

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 SAMS Domestic. **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 SAM.gov**

registration as soon as possible. Please note that there is no cost associated with UEI or SAM.gov registration.

III. Application Requirements, Deadlines, and Technical Eligibility

All SOIs must conform to DRL's posted Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for Statements of Interest, as updated in September 2018, available at <https://www.state.gov/key-topics-bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/open-solicitations-and-proposal-submission-instructions/open-solicitations-and-proposal-submission-instructions/proposal-submission-instructions-psi-for-statements-of-interest-updated-september-2018/>.

Complete SOI submissions **must** include the following:

1. Completed and signed SF-424 and SF424B, as directed on SAMS Domestic or Grants.gov (please refer to DRL's PSI for SOIs for guidance on completing the SF-424); and,
2. Program Statement (not to exceed three [3] pages in Microsoft Word) that includes:
 - a) A table listing:
 - i. Name of the organization;
 - ii. The target country/countries;
 - iii. The total amount of funding requested from DRL, total amount of cost-share (if any), and total program amount (DRL funds + cost-share); and,
 - iv. Program length; and,
 - v. SOI Category
 - b) A synopsis of the program, including a brief statement on how the program will have a demonstrated impact and engage relevant stakeholders. The SOI should identify local partners as appropriate;
 - c) A concise breakdown explicitly identifying the program's objectives and the activities and expected results that contribute to each objective; and,
 - d) A brief description of the applicant(s) that demonstrates the applicant(s) expertise and capacity to implement the program and manage a U.S. government award.

An organization may submit up to three (3) SOIs total for this solicitation. Organizations may submit multiple SOIs within the same category. Applicants must also clearly designate under which category the SOI is being submitted for consideration. As a reminder these categories are: 1) Effective Governance, Political Participation, and Civic Activism; 2) Fundamental Freedoms; and 3) Atrocity Prevention, Accountability, and Reconciliation. If your proposal addresses multiple categories, please designate a primary category. Applicants must create separate applications for each SOI submitted.

SOIs that request less than \$750,000 or more than \$4,000,000 may be deemed technically ineligible. Please also note that applicants who propose budgets of \$4,000,000 must make a clear and compelling case for requesting the maximum amount of funding. Organizations that do not provide adequate justification may be asked to reduce the amount of funding requested.

Technically eligible SOIs are those which:

- 1) Arrive electronically via SAMS Domestic or Grants.gov by **11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (ET) on Friday, December 4, 2020 under the announcement titled “DRL Request for Statements of Interest: Iraq,” funding opportunity number SFOP0007345.**
- 2) Are in English;
- 3) Heed all instructions and do not violate any of the guidelines stated in this solicitation and the PSI for Statements of Interest.

For all SOI documents please ensure:

- 1) All pages are numbered;
- 2) All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper; and,
- 3) 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 can be reformatted to fit within one page width.

Grants.gov and SAMS Domestic automatically log the date and time a submission is made, and the Department of State will use this information to determine whether it has been submitted on time. Late submissions are neither reviewed nor considered unless the DRL point of contact listed in section VI is contacted prior to the deadline and is provided with evidence of a system error caused by www.grants.gov or [SAMS Domestic \(https://mygrants.service-now.com/grants/portal_login.do\)](https://mygrants.service-now.com/grants/portal_login.do) that is outside of the applicant’s control and is the sole reason for a late submission. Applicants should not expect a notification upon DRL receiving their SOI. It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all material submitted in the SOI package is complete, accurate, and current. DRL **will not** accept SOIs submitted via email, fax, the postal system, delivery companies, or couriers. DRL strongly encourages all applicants to submit SOIs before Friday, December 4, 2020 to ensure that the SOI has been received and is complete.

IV. Review and Selection Process

The Department’s Office of Acquisitions Management (AQM) will determine technical eligibility for all SOI submissions. All technically eligible SOIs will then be reviewed against the same four criteria by a DRL Review Panel: quality of program idea, inclusivity of marginalized populations, program planning, and ability to achieve objectives/institutional capacity. Additionally, the Panel will evaluate how the SOI meets the solicitation request, U.S. foreign policy goals, and DRL’s overall priority needs. Panelists review each SOI individually against the evaluation criteria, not against competing SOIs. To ensure all SOIs receive a balanced evaluation, the DRL Review Panel will review the first page of the SOI up to the page limit and no further. All Panelists must sign non-disclosure agreements and conflict of interest agreements.

In most cases, the DRL Review Panel includes representatives from DRL policy and program offices. Once a SOI is approved, selected applicants will be invited to submit full proposal applications based on their SOIs. Unless directed otherwise by the organization, DRL may also refer SOIs for possible consideration in other U.S. government related funding opportunities.

The Panel may provide conditions and/or recommendations on SOIs to enhance the proposed program, which must be addressed by the organization in the full proposal application. To ensure effective use of limited DRL funds, conditions and recommendations may include requests to increase, decrease, clarify, and/or justify costs and program activities.

DRL's Front Office reserves the right to make a final determination regarding all funding matters, pending funding availability.

Review Criteria

Quality of Program Idea

SOIs should be responsive to the program framework and policy objectives identified in the country/regional context, and should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to DRL's mission of promoting human rights and democracy. Projects should have the potential to have an immediate impact leading to long-term sustainable reforms. DRL prefers new approaches that do not duplicate efforts by other entities. This does not exclude from consideration projects that improve upon or expand existing successful projects in a new and complementary way. In countries where similar activities are already taking place, an explanation should be provided as to how new activities will not duplicate or merely add to existing activities and how these efforts will be coordinated. Proposals that promote creative approaches to recognized ongoing challenges are highly encouraged. DRL prioritizes project proposals with inclusive approaches for advancing these rights.

Addressing Barriers to Equal Participation

DRL strives to ensure its projects advance the rights and uphold the dignity of all persons. As the USG's lead bureau dedicated to promoting democratic governance, DRL requests a programming approach dedicated to strengthening inclusive societies as a necessary pillar of strong democracies. Violence targeting any members of society undermines collective security and threatens democracy. DRL supports program models that assess and address the barriers to access created by violence and discrimination targeting individuals and groups based on their religion, gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Applicants should describe how programming affects all of its beneficiaries, including support that specifically targets communities under threat of violence and discrimination. This approach should be an integral part of both the concept and explicit design of all proposed project activities and objectives. Strong proposals will provide specific analysis, measures, and corresponding targets as appropriate. Stakeholders shall identify the difference between opportunities and barriers to access and design programs that do not perpetuate these inequalities but rather enhance programmatic impact by including all people in society. The goal of this approach is to bring communities and those in power together in support of stable and secure societies.

Program Planning

A strong SOI will include a clear articulation of how the proposed program activities and expected results (both outputs and outcomes) contribute to specific program objectives and the

overall program goal. Objectives should be ambitious, yet measurable, results-focused, and achievable in a reasonable time frame.

Ability to Achieve Objectives/Institutional Capacity

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 applicant and any local partners. SOIs should demonstrate the organization's expertise and previous experience in administering programs, preferably similar programs targeting the requested program area or similarly challenging environments.

For additional guidance, please see DRL's posted Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for Statements of Interest, as updated in September 2018, available at <https://www.state.gov/key-topics-bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/open-solicitations-and-proposal-submission-instructions/open-solicitations-and-proposal-submission-instructions/proposal-submission-instructions-psi-for-statements-of-interest-updated-september-2018/>.

V. Additional Information

DRL will not consider SOIs that reflect any type of support for any member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization.

DRL may ask successful applicant(s) to incorporate coordination of an implementer and stakeholder meeting into the Scope of Work of the final project. DRL will discuss this possibility with particular applicant(s) during the proposal negotiation phase.

Project activities that directly benefit foreign militaries or paramilitary groups or individuals will not be considered for DRL funding given purpose limitations on funding.

DRL requires U.S. government Risk Analysis Management vetting of all individuals programming in Iraq, which may include the board of directors from grantee and sub-award organizations, program staff, and any program participants receiving direct assistance through grant funds. Depending on the type of vetting, the required information requested may include for each individual: full name, date of birth, place of birth, nationality, a government issued ID number (drivers licenses are not accepted for any country; if the individual is a U.S. person, a SSN is required), and one piece of contact information (phone number, email address, or Skype account (if Skype is submitted an email must accompany it)). **Please keep these vetting requirements in mind when designing your program.**

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 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.

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

Organizations should also be aware that if ultimately selected for an award, 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. Please note that as of December 26, 2014, 2 CFR 200 (Sub-Chapters A through E) now applies to foreign organizations, and Sub-Chapters A through D shall apply to all 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 on DRL's Resources page at: <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/c72333.htm>.

The information in this solicitation and DRL's PSI for SOIs, as updated in September 2018, is binding and may not be modified by any DRL representative. **Explanatory information provided by DRL that contradicts this language will not be binding.** Issuance of the solicitation and negotiation of SOIs or applications does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government. DRL reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program evaluation requirements.

This solicitation will appear on www.grants.gov, [SAMS Domestic \(https://mygrants.service-now.com/grants/portal_login.do\)](https://mygrants.service-now.com/grants/portal_login.do) and DRL's website <https://www.state.gov/statements-of-interest-requests-for-proposals-and-notice-of-funding-opportunity/>.

Background Information on DRL and DRL Funding

DRL has the mission of promoting democracy and protecting human rights globally. DRL supports programs that uphold democratic principles, support and strengthen democratic institutions, promote human rights, prevent atrocities, combat and prevent violent extremism, and build civil society around the world. DRL typically focuses its work in countries with egregious human rights violations, where democracy and human rights advocates are under pressure, and where governments are undemocratic or in transition.

Additional background information on DRL and the human rights report can be found on <https://www.state.gov/reports-bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/>.

VI. Contact Information

SAMS Domestic Help Desk:

For assistance with SAMS Domestic accounts and technical issues related to the system, please contact the ILMS help desk by phone at 1-888-313-4567 (toll charges for international callers) or through the Self Service online portal that can be accessed from <https://afsitsm.servicenowservices.com/ilms/>. Customer Support is available 24/7/365.

Grants.gov Helpdesk:

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.

See <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/snow-dismissal-procedures/federal-holidays/> for a list of federal holidays.

For technical questions related to this solicitation, please contact DRL-GP-Iraq@state.gov.

With the exception of technical submission questions, during the solicitation period U.S. Department of State staff in Washington and overseas shall not discuss this competition until the entire review process has been completed and rejection and approval letters have been transmitted.