

Department of State Embassy of the United States in Dushanbe, Tajikistan
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Program Office: Public Diplomacy Section, Embassy Dushanbe

Funding Opportunity Title: Democracy Commission Small Grants Program

Announcement Type: Grant **OR** Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: STI400-24-AW-0002

Deadline for Applications: June 20, 2024 (11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Standard Time)

CFDA Number: 19.900 – Assistance to Eastern Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia

CONTACT INFORMATION

- For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726.
- For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation, contact GrantProposalsDushanbe@state.gov
- To inquire about the process for obtaining a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) contact Donald Hunter at HunterDS@state.gov.

Authorization to submit proposals through www.Grants.gov is a multi-step process that requires prior successful registration with two sites: [SAM](#), and www.Grants.gov. Please begin the registration processes immediately to ensure the registrations are completed well in advance of the submission deadline. The process can require up to six weeks for the registrations to be validated and confirmed. See *Section D: Submission Requirements* for further details.

Due to the volume of applicants and inquiries, Public Diplomacy Section (PDS) does not accept letters of intent, concept papers, or requests for meetings or phone calls prior to application.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the application package has been received in its entirety. Incomplete applications will be considered ineligible. Applicants are urged to begin the application process well before the submission deadline. No exceptions will be made for organizations that have not completed the necessary steps.

A. Funding Opportunity Description Summary

Executive Summary:

The U.S. Embassy Dushanbe Public Diplomacy Section (PDS) of the U.S. Department of State is pleased to announce a call for proposals through the Embassy's Democracy Commission Small Grants Program. **This program supports the development of Tajikistan's democratic institutions and civil society by competitively awarding small grants to Tajikistan's nonprofit, for-profit nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and associations, to nonprofit civil society organizations (CSOs), and to independent local media organizations.**

Background:

The U.S. Embassy Public Diplomacy Section (PDS) in Dushanbe is soliciting proposals for grants from Tajikistan's civil society and independent media organizations that focus on one of the priority areas/themes specified below. Applicants should pay close attention to the Public Diplomacy Section's goals, priority program areas, target audiences when developing their proposals.

TOPIC 1: Equal Rights for Marginalized Communities

Background: Projects under this funding opportunity should support the efforts of empowering marginalized communities, which include groups that have been traditionally discriminated against because of their identity (race, nationality, gender and gender identity, religious affiliation, disability and socioeconomic status, marital status, and ethnicity) or are particularly vulnerable to marginalization. Competitive projects will clearly identify the challenges facing a marginalized group and sustainable efforts to help advocate for, secure, or exercise their rights.

For example, domestic violence (DV) and gender-based violence (GBV) remains a serious issue in Tajikistan—and much of the world. In a USAID-funded survey in Tajikistan, 97% of men and 60% of women believed spousal abuse was justified. Studies have also shown a link between radicalization of both perpetrators and victims of GBV. Cases of GBV and DV are underreported because victims wish to avoid humiliation, reprisal, or social stigmatization, or believe it may have been warranted. Further, authorities wishing to promote traditional gender roles frequently dismiss domestic violence as a “family matter” or only gave a warning or fine. Government resources for survivors are also limited.

Project Goal: Empower marginalized and vulnerable communities to exercise their human rights by increasing the capacity of civil society and independent media organizations to implement prevention, education, and response efforts in combatting GBV and DV.

Project Audience(s): The primary target audience for these projects should be men and women from religiously or socially conservative communities; youth and emerging leaders (14-35 years old); spouses or families of labor migrants; families, government bodies; civil society or advocacy groups; and/or independent media. Projects that support other well-defined

marginalized groups and/or with a nexus to family members of radicalized individuals will also be considered.

Project Objectives: Each project should achieve one or more of the following objectives:

1. Increase the ability of civil society organizations and advocacy groups to implement and advocate for initiatives combatting GBV and DV through capacity building training. Training topics may include but are not limited to advocacy campaign planning, digital communication tools, messaging best practices, and media engagement strategies.
2. Raise awareness among the Tajik general public of the prevalence, impacts, and consequences of GBV and DV, or discrimination of other marginalized communities, within Tajik society in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways.
3. Facilitate collaboration between civil society organizations, independent media firms and the government bodies to identify and address gaps in existing laws and policies related to GBV/DV prevention or other forms of discrimination through policy dialogues and roundtable discussions.

Examples of activities include but are not limited to:

- Enlisting men as allies in an information campaign to dismantle harmful, violent behavior, and raise awareness among vulnerable women about laws concerning early marriage, domestic abuse, harassment, divorce, alimony, and other civil rights related to women in the family.
- Conducting educational/outreach/raising awareness activities on the topics related to DV, human trafficking, gender equality, laws related to early marriage, harassment, divorce, and other human rights violation.
- Training advocacy groups to more effectively work with government, local authorities, or well-defined audiences to end discrimination, hostility, or violence against marginalized communities, such as persons with disabilities.
- Building the capacity of advocacy or support groups assist the survivors of GBV and DV or other marginalized populations.
- Conducting trainings on business planning and income-generating initiatives designed to help women and girls, or the organizations supporting them, achieve economic independence.
- Creating or strengthening platforms for women to seek support, learn about their rights, and how to protect themselves and defend their rights in society.
- Training women and girls in rural communities in various entrepreneurial skills as well as in using social and traditional media to showcase their stories.

TOPIC 2: Enabling Environment for Media and the Free Flow of Information

Background

Independent journalists in Tajikistan face certain career difficulties. These include incomplete or outdated training, lack of prospects outside of state-sponsored media sources, and—for early career journalists—lack of experience in telling a story or creating informative, accurate, reliable content. As circulation and revenues from traditional media continue to fall, audiences and journalists increasingly turn to social media for information and profit, but few know how to effectively produce content for this medium that can compete with misinformation, propaganda, and extremist content. Those who do have a better understanding of the techniques and craft of digital production can find themselves chasing audiences with populist topics that may lack journalistic content or integrity. Additionally, many who want to pursue a career in journalism are unable to support themselves and their families financially or are not able to express themselves freely.

The U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe previously supported projects that expanded the reach of bloggers and their access to studios, equipment, and materials for visual content and helped bloggers and journalists make more effective use of social media, trained social media influencers on topics of public interest, and provided incentives for them to report on topics as media professionals.

Project Goal: To contribute to press freedom, the dissemination of accurate information, and the safeguarding journalists including citizen journalist rights by increasing the capacity of journalists and media professionals to produce quality and accurate content that counters misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda.

Project Audience(s): Early to mid-career professional journalists, bloggers, social media influencers, and media experts in Tajikistan. Projects to promote and defend media independence and freedom of expression could include media organizations, advocacy groups, managers/editors of media outlets and other influential voices.

Project Objectives: Each project should achieve one or more of the following objectives:

1. Strengthen the ability of media associations and organizations to adopt measures that protect their employees and affiliated media professionals from censorship or cyber threats such as hacking, phishing attempts, and website defacement.
2. Equip media associations and organizations with the ability to develop and implement sustainable funding models or revenue strategies that ensure their survival and long-term viability.
3. Improve the reporting of journalists, citizen journalists, bloggers, social media influencers, and other information professionals with regards to ethical reporting practices, investigative journalism, and the use of data analysis tools.
4. Increase media professionals' knowledge and awareness about the prevalence and common tactics used in the spread of misinformation, including but not limited to the widespread use of headlines and manipulated content.

5. Strengthen media professionals' ability to identify and counter misinformation by providing training in fact checking techniques, ethical reporting practices and source verification methods.
6. Increase media professionals' knowledge and awareness on the capabilities and application of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and techniques in journalistic reporting, showcasing both their benefits and potential risks, such as content generation and manipulation.

Examples of activities include but are not limited to:

- Inviting U.S. or other subject matter experts to train Tajik media professionals and/or advocacy organizations or offer peer to peer mentoring programs.
- Training Tajik journalists, editors, and media professionals in fact-checking, confirming sources, authenticating images, and identifying bots and AI-produced media.
- Offering training for bloggers, social media influencers, or amateur citizen journalists with a U.S. expert or other subject matter expert in creating documentary stories for digital media; this could include audio or podcasted stories, short films, or articles that cover issues of local or public interest.
- Consulting for Tajik media outlets to understand how to monetize their content to become economically sustainable.
- Support fact-checking platforms and educate media professionals and the public on how to identify and verify reliable sources of information, such as through media literacy campaigns and community engagement.

TOPIC 3: Countering Violent Extremism

Background

Tajik youth are increasingly radicalized through messages they receive through social media and messenger apps where radical voices are often more active, organized, and better funded than competing voices that advocate tolerance and non-violence. Economically disadvantaged and marginalized youth are most susceptible to radicalization often look to celebrities, athletes, and online imams for guidance over their local community leaders. Additionally, the online space is constantly growing in Tajikistan with roughly 80% of social media users being male. To effectively target this audience, projects must compete with the glossy messaging of extremist accounts.

The U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe previously supported projects that focused on small target groups in specific communities of Tajikistan, occasionally using traditional media to amplify moderate voices to a wider audience and also transferred this success to social media, as it offers the best chance to reach a wide audience with limited resources.

Project Goal: To provide positive and constructive alternatives to those most at-risk of recruitment into extremist groups by increasing government and/or civil society capacity and engagement in this sphere.

Project Audience(s): The primary target audiences are those at-risk of recruitment (Tajik males (ages 15-35) living in rural Tajikistan and Russia, including labor migrants, who have received limited formal education), civil society organizations and government bodies working on countering violent extremism, and respected and popular figures in society who are considered credible voices by those at-risk (religious leaders, teachers, influencers).

Project Objectives: *Each project should achieve one or more of the following objectives:*

1. Raise awareness of target communities and at-risk individuals on the prevalence of violent extremism and recruitment techniques through educational or training initiatives.
2. Equip target communities and individuals at-risk of recruitment into extremist groups with vocational and job search skills for the local job market, focusing on sectors with growth potential.
3. Increase the ability of credible voices to create high quality content in the Tajik language focused on countering violent extremism or raising awareness about the how terrorism financing occurs (and how to avoid it) and about the consequences of violent extremism through sharing real life stories of victims and survivors on social media platforms.
4. Build the capacity of organizations and government in this sphere to take a community-centered approach to address the drivers pushing at-risk individuals to join extremist groups.

Examples of activities include but are not limited to:

- Organize summer camps where at-risk youth learn goal setting, soft-skills, and vocational skills/job training, and participate in team building activities, learn about healthy conflict resolution, increase their emotional intelligence, and learn how to tolerate diversity in society.
- Train at least 10 well-known Tajik athletes (particularly mixed martial artists, boxers, wrestlers, bodybuilders, and football players) or other influential and credible voices to those at-risk (who have a wide following on social media) on the consequences of violent extremism and how to be effective public speakers on the topic.
- Produce and distribute one documentary video that includes testimony from multiple survivors of violent extremism who share their personal stories.
- Hold trainings and workshops, with Tajik or foreign experts, in order to build the capacity of government and civil society or other relevant organizations to advocate for or make the changes needed to address the drivers pushing those at-risk, such as economic concerns.

Topic 4: Low Emissions Development Planning for Energy

Background: Climate change poses a serious threat to all aspects of Tajikistan's society. As the climate warms and natural disasters become more frequent, segments of Tajikistan's

population that are already vulnerable to economic shocks will become more dependent on the support of civil society and the government to survive. Climate change threatens agriculture and energy sectors through the melting of glaciers and more variable rainfall while also harming the population's health through increased air pollution.

Tajikistan's reliance on hydropower can serve as a positive example for a world transitioning to renewable sources of energy, but hydropower is also threatened by climate change, as it is highly dependent on glacial melt. Glaciers are receding in Tajikistan at an alarming rate, thus reducing water levels in the reservoirs that power the hydropower plants. Reduced water from glaciers and changing rainfall patterns not only threatens Tajikistan's energy security, but also agriculture, and thus has the potential to affect all aspects of society, leading to food insecurity and economic problems. While many parts of Tajikistan have installed micro-hydropower stations, solar power panels are less well-known and utilized. Continued reliance on coal power and polluting industries causes Dushanbe to have the worst levels of air pollution in Central Asia.

In March 2024, Tajikistan officially joined the Global Methane Pledge, which seeks to reduce methane emissions, which in Tajikistan are primarily produced by the livestock sector. The U.S. government has long supported Tajikistan's efforts to increase reliance on renewable energy, diversify power production through regional energy markets, and protect its environment. The CASA-1000 project, supported by the U.S. government along with other donors, aims to export Tajikistan's hydropower to Pakistan, increasing Tajikistan's economic development and energy security. A Post-funded Environmental Awareness and Action Campaign in 2020-2021 led to the installation of solar-powered hot water heaters in several schools and facilities around Tajikistan and raised awareness about renewable energy. Previous Democracy Commission-funded projects installed air quality monitors in eight major cities of Tajikistan, including two in Dushanbe.

Project Goal: Support national and sub-national frameworks for low-emissions development by increasing the use of renewable and sustainable energy sources in Tajikistan.

Project Audience(s): The primary target audience for these projects should be national and subnational government organizations, civil society, media consumers and outlets, young entrepreneurs, and other well-defined key audiences.

Project Objectives: *Each project should achieve one or more of the following objectives:*

1. Build expertise and capacity in government, private sector, and civil society organizations to analyze emissions sources, set emission reduction targets, and develop mitigation plans through the use of renewable and sustainable energy sources in Tajikistan.
2. Increase collaboration between local, state, and civil society actors/stakeholders to develop practical solutions to combat climate change, advocate for environmental protection legislation, and/or help Tajikistan meet its Global Methane Pledge.

3. Increase public awareness and knowledge about the impact of climate change and air pollution in Tajikistan, the causes of these threats, and how to reduce or prevent their effects.
4. Increase participation of youth, civil society, and community leaders in educational projects and activities focused on mitigating the effects of climate change through capacity building training that supports implementation of climate-resilient projects and initiatives.

Examples of activities include but are not limited to:

- Conduct workshops, trainings, and/or exchanges to reach the project objectives. This could include hackathons or pitch competitions for young entrepreneurs or those working in related fields (such as data analytics, tech, etc.).
- Awareness Campaigns – promote awareness of emissions and air quality through social and traditional media, produce short video clips for social media and/or TV about environmental issues.
- Install air quality monitors, test water quality, or improve local capability to conduct data collection, analysis, and reporting on emissions.
- Organize camps and ongoing actions that teach participants about the environment, promote reforestation initiatives, and/or increase appreciation for nature, including the need for low-emissions development practices.

B. Federal Award Information

Length of performance period: *9-12 months*

Number of awards anticipated: *15-20 awards* (dependent on amounts)

Estimated Award Ceiling: *\$50,000*

Estimated Award Floor: *\$10,000*

Award amounts: awards may range from a minimum of *\$10,000* to a maximum of *\$50,000*

Total available funding: *\$500,000*

Type of Funding: FY24/25 Assistance for Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia under the Foreign Assistance Act

Anticipated programs start date: September 1, 2024- October 1, 2025

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

Funding Instrument Type: Grant or Cooperative Agreement

Cooperative agreements are different from grants in that Embassy staff are more actively involved in the grant implementation. In case of a cooperative agreement, the U.S. Embassy may be involved in selection of participants for the project, prior review or approval of proposed publications, and may provide additional technical support for the recipient in implementing select project activities.

Program Performance Period: Proposed programs should be completed in *12 months* or less.

The Department of State 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.

Support for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA): All programs should consider strategies for expanding the pool of individuals/organizations/beneficiaries to afford opportunities for as diverse and inclusive population as is feasible to bring diverse perspectives based on religion, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, national origin, and age to implementation of the program.

The Public Diplomacy Section reserves the right to award less or more than the funds described under circumstances deemed to be in the best interest of the U.S. government, pending the availability of funds and approval of the designated grants officer.

C. Eligibility Information

1. The following organizations are eligible to apply:
 - Not-for-profit organizations
 - For-profit organizations
 - Civil society/non-governmental organizations

For this announcement, only Tajikistan-based organizations are eligible to apply.

2. Organizations may sub-contract with other entities, but only one, non-profit, non-governmental entity can be the prime recipient of the award. When sub-contracting with other entities, the responsibilities of each entity must be clearly defined in the proposal.
3. In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a unique entity identifier, as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov.
4. Cost sharing or matching is not required for this funding opportunity.
5. Pre-award costs are not an allowable expense for this funding opportunity.
6. This award does not allow:
 - Projects relating to partisan political activity;
 - Conferences abroad or individual trips abroad;
 - Charitable or development activities; including direct social services;
 - Construction projects;
 - Projects that support specific religious activities;
 - Fund-raising campaigns;

- Lobbying for specific legislation or programs
- Medical, scientific research or surveys;
- Art or cultural projects;
- Commercial projects; or
- Projects that duplicate existing projects

D. Statement of Interest Submission Information: First Round

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

Application Deadline: All Statements of Interest (**Attachment 1**) must be received by **June 20, 2024 (11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Standard Time)**. For the purposes of determining if an award is submitted on time, PDS will utilize the time-stamp provided by Grants.gov. This deadline is firm and is not a rolling deadline. If organizations fail to meet the deadline noted above their application will be considered ineligible and will not be considered for funding.

Every **Statement of Interest** must:

1. Clearly indicate the grant priority area to which it is being submitted for consideration;
2. Focus on the key audiences specified in the areas (i.e., women, youth, etc.), and note key geographic areas and other indicators of focus populations;
3. Clearly delineate how elements of the program will have a multiplier effect and be sustainable beyond the life of the grant;
4. Identify specific outcomes to be achieved by the end of the grant period;
5. Provide a plan for program outcomes, including social media outreach and monitoring, where applicable; and
6. Provide an approximate funding amount.

Content and Form of Statement of Interest Submission

Please ensure:

1. The Statement of Interest clearly addresses the goals, audiences, and objectives of this notice.
2. All documents are in English.
3. All budgets are in U.S. dollars. Applicants may choose to use the attached Budget Proposal Template (**Attachment 2**) to submit their proposed budget.
4. All pages are numbered.
5. All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper.
6. All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.
7. All applicant authorized signatures are provided where indicated on the various, required forms.

8. **Statements of Interest cannot exceed three pages. Statements of Interest over three pages long will not be considered for the second round.**

All Statements of Interest should address the following areas:

- a. Explain the problem your project will address and why this project is needed.
- b. Give a short summary that outlines your proposed project.
- c. List your project goal and objectives. The “goal” describes what the project is intended to achieve. The “objectives” refer to the intermediate accomplishments on the way to the goals. These should be achievable and measurable.
- d. Describe a sample project activity and how it will help achieve the objectives.
- e. Describe the expected results of the program.

Application Submission Process: There are two application submissions methods available to applicants. Applicants may submit their application using Submission Method A or Submission Method B outlined below.

- **Submission Method A:** Submitting all application materials directly to the following email address: GrantProposalsDushanbe@state.gov. Applicants opting to submit applications via email to GrantProposalsDushanbe@state.gov **must** include the Funding Opportunity Title and Funding Opportunity Number in the subject line of the email.
- **Submission Method B:** Submitting all application materials through Grants.gov. For those opting to apply through Grants.gov, thorough instructions on the application process are available at <http://www.grants.gov>. For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 or go to <https://www.grants.gov/support.html>. Please note that GrantProposalsDushanbe@state.gov is unable to assist with technical questions or problems applicants experience with Grants.gov.

Required Registrations

Applicants utilizing Grants.gov must register with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application. **Registering with Grants.gov is a one-time process; however, it could take as long as two weeks to have the registration validated and confirmed. Please begin the registration process immediately to ensure that the process is completed well in advance of the deadline for applications.** Until that process is complete, you will not be issued a user password for Grants.gov, which is required for application submission.

All organizations applying for grants must obtain these registrations. All are free of charge:

- Unique Entity Identifier (IUE)
- www.SAM.gov registration

The Unique Entity Identifier (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.

SAM.gov is the Federal government's primary database for complying with FFATA reporting requirement. OMB designated SAM.gov as the central repository to facilitate applicant and recipient use of a single public website that consolidates data on all federal financial assistance. Under the law, it is mandatory to register in SAM.gov.

Note: As of April 2022, a DUNS number is no longer required for federal assistance applications.

Please note that as of November 2022 and February 2022 respectively, organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code or CAGE code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities.

If an applicant organization is mid-registration and wishes to remove a CAGE or NCAGE code from their SAM.gov registration, the applicant should [submit a help desk ticket \("incident"\)](#) with the Federal Service Desk (FSD) online at www.fsd.gov using the following language: "I do not intend to seek financial assistance from the Department of Defense. I do not wish to obtain a CAGE or NCAGE code. I understand that I will need to submit my registration after this incident is resolved in order to have my registration activated."

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO NOT plan to do business with the DoD should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Proceed to SAM.gov to obtain a UEI and complete the SAM.gov registration process. SAM.gov registration must be renewed annually.

Starting April 2022, the UEI is assigned when the organization registers or renews its registration in SAM.gov at www.SAM.gov. To access SAM.gov an organization is required to have a login.gov account. Organizations can create an account at <https://login.gov/>.

Applicant must acquire all required registration and rights in the United States and in Tajikistan. All intellectual property considerations and rights must be fully met in the United States and in Tajikistan.

Individual applicants are not required to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and register in SAM.gov.

For more information, go to www.grants.gov. Please note that your SAM registration must be annually renewed. Failure to renew your SAM registration may prohibit submission of a grant application through Grants.gov.

After completing the required steps above to obtain a UEI ID, and SAM.gov registration, follow the steps below to complete Grants.gov registration:

Step 1: Once SAM registration is confirmed, continue to Grants.gov organization registration <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>. Organization

must maintain an active SAM registration (www.sam.gov) with current information at all times during which they have an active Federal award or an application under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. SAM registration must be renewed annually. Given the volume of applications, review may take up to 90 days, and we are unable to individually confirm receipt of proposals.

Applicants must acquire all required registrations and rights in the United States and Tajikistan. All intellectual property considerations and rights must be fully met in the United States and Tajikistan.

Any sub-recipient organization must also meet all the U.S. and Tajikistan requirements described above.

E. Technical Requirements for Application- Second Round:

Embassy Dushanbe will review all **Statements of Interest** and invite shortlisted projects to submit full grant applications as below:

Technical Requirements for the Second round (if the applicant is shortlisted)

When submitting a proposal, applicants are required to include the following documents and information from Sections 1–5 below, as applicable:

Section 1—Standard Form 424 Family

All submissions must include the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance (**Attachment 3**) and the SF-424A Budget Information—Non-Construction (**Attachment 4**). These forms and the instructions for completing them are available at <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms.html> under the heading “SF-424 Family.” (**NOTE:** The SF-424B is required only for those applicants who have not registered in SAM.gov or recertified their registration in SAM.gov since February 2, 2019 and completed the online representations and certifications. An authorized signature by the applicant must be provided on this form).

Please note:

1. Other items NOT required/requested for submission, but which *may* be requested if your application is approved for funding include:
 - a. Copies of an organization or program audit within the last two (2) years
 - b. Copies of relevant human resources, financial, or procurement policies
 - c. Copies of other relevant organizational policies or documentation that would help the Department determine your organization’s capacity to manage a federal grant award overseas.
2. The Embassy reserves the right to request any additional programmatic and/or financial information regarding the proposal.

Section 2—Organization Information

A. Applicant Organizational Information Sheet: Applicants may complete and submit the form provided (**Attachment 5**). This form is not required, but the information requested should be conveyed in a format chosen by the applicant. An authorized signature by the applicant should be provided on this form.

B. Proof of Registration: A copy of the organization's registration should be provided with the proposal application. U.S.-based organizations should submit a copy of their IRS determination letter. Tajikistan-based organizations should submit a copy of their certificate of registration from the appropriate government organization.

Section 3—Technical Proposal

Applicants must submit a complete narrative proposal in a format of their choice, or they may use the attached proposal template (**Attachment 6**). The proposal shall not exceed twelve (12) pages. Refer to the evaluation criteria in Part G below for further detail about what makes a strong proposal. All proposals must address the following areas:

- Organizational Description and Capacity
- Project Justification, Sustainability, and Impact
- Project Goals, Audiences, Objectives, Activities, and Deliverables
- Implementation Timeline
- Monitoring and Evaluation (see note below)

Monitoring & Evaluation (has

- 1. Monitoring and Evaluation Narrative:** In narrative form, applicants should describe how they intend to monitor and evaluate the activities of their award and collect data that tracks award performance. In addition, the applicant should describe any M&E processes, including key personnel, management structure (where M&E fits into the overall program's staff structure), technology, and provide a brief budget narrative explaining any line-item expenditures for M&E listed in the program's budget. This narrative is limited to two pages (**Attachment 7**).
- 2. Theory of Change Diagram:** Applicants will be expected to submit either a Theory of Change diagram or an If-Then Statement that illustrates how project activities will lead to intended outcomes. Attachment 7 includes a suggested format for these requirements including Instructions.
- 3. Monitoring and Evaluation Datasheet:** The applicant must include their proposed activities and their expected outputs and outcomes as well as the goals and objectives as written in the NOFO. The datasheet's purpose is to explicitly illustrate how a project's activities lead to tangible results (such as increased beneficiary skills, knowledge, or attitudes) that ultimately address a PDS objective. For more information, please see

Attachment 7.1: Instructions. Where feasible, applicants are encouraged to assess at least one of the following:

- a. Participant satisfaction with the program
- b. Participant learning, such as increased knowledge, aptitude, skills, and changed understanding and attitude.
- c. Participant behavior, such as concrete actions to apply knowledge in work or community; greater participation and responsibility in civic organizations; interpretation and explanation of experiences and new knowledge gained; continued contacts between participants, community members, and others.
- d. Institutional changes, such as increased collaboration and partnerships, policy reforms, new programming, and organizational improvements.

Section 4—Budget

A. Budget and Budget Detail: Applicants must submit a detailed budget and budget narrative justification. Applicants are encouraged to utilize the template provided with the funding opportunity but are not required to do so (**Attachment 8**). Line-item expenditures should be listed in the greatest possible detail. Personnel salaries should include the level of effort and the rate of pay, which should cover the percentage of time each staff member will dedicate to grant-based activities. If your organization is charging an indirect cost rate, you must apply it to the modified total budget costs (MTDC), refer to 2CFR [§200.68](#). Budgets that are not in the provided format will not be considered. **Budgets shall be submitted in U.S. dollars** and final grant agreements will be conducted in U.S. dollars.

- a. Publishing short informational publications, manuals and public informational materials are allowable. All publishing should be clearly linked to the project activity, should describe the intended audience, provide a clear understanding of the material's content, how materials will be distributed, and specify who is responsible for the distribution of the materials.
- b. Salaries (including income tax and social deductions), equipment, and other administrative expenses are allowable only as they relate to specific project activities. Salary or honoraria should be listed according to rate of pay and percentage of time spent on program-related activities. While salary expenses are permissible for local personnel, payment of honoraria and other expenses for foreign experts will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The Democracy Commission strongly urges applicants to consider utilizing local and regional experts.
- c. Equipment bought with Democracy Commission grant money can only be procured locally. Any request for computer equipment must include the procurement of original, not pirated, software.
- d. Any equipment which is procured grant funds is loaned to the NGO and remains the property of the U.S. Embassy for a minimum of three years. This is to ensure that equipment will not be used for personal matters and that equipment will be returned to the U.S. Embassy should the NGO cease its activities. At the end of

project or three years, the Democracy Commission will review the work of the NGO to determine whether 1) the loan will be extended, 2) the equipment will be given permanently to the NGO, or 3) the equipment will be returned to the U.S. Embassy.

- e. Coffee breaks and working lunches only will be considered on case-by-case basis and should be clearly justified and limited to a maximum of 10% of the total award amount. This includes expenses associated with individual per diems for grant-related activities.
- f. Lodging costs should be indicated separately from meal costs related to the project activities.
- g. Democracy Commission funds should not be used to pay for travel to the United States or for travel grants. Projects involving regional travel will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must have a clear justification outlining why the travel is integral to the project.
- h. Alcohol and entertainment costs are not allowable expenses.

B. Audit Requirements: Please note the audit requirements for Department of State awards in the Standard Terms and Conditions

<https://www.state.gov/m/a/ope/index.htm> and [2CFR200](#), Subpart F – Audit Requirements. The cost of the required audits may be charged either as an allowable direct cost to the award OR included in the organization's established indirect costs in the award's detailed budget.

Section 5—Key Personnel and Project Partners

A. Key Personnel: A résumé, not to exceed one page in length, must be included for the proposed key staff persons, such as the Project Director and Finance Officer, as well as any speakers or trainers (if applicable). If an individual for this type of position has not been identified, the applicant may submit a 1-page position description, identifying the qualifications and skills required for that position, in lieu of a résumé.

B. Project Partners: Letters of support should be included for sub-recipients or other partners. The letters must identify the type of relationship to be entered into (formal or informal), the roles and responsibilities of each partner in relation to the proposed project activities, and the expected result of the partnership. The individual letters cannot exceed 1 page in length.

C. Permission Letters: Official permission letters, if required for project activities

Special Characters in Submissions

Grants.gov does not accept all UTF-8 special characters in file attachment names. Applicants are able to enter all special characters from the UTF-8-character set when submitting applications and information to Grants.gov. However, if the grantor's system is not yet compatible with

these special characters, the grantor system may produce garbled or missing text in the application. As a result, the application may be rejected.

F. Review and Selection Process

- 1. Acknowledgement of receipt.** Applicants will receive acknowledgment of receipt of their proposal.
- 2. Review.** All submissions are screened for technical eligibility. **If a submission is missing any required forms/documents listed, it will be considered ineligible and will not be reviewed by the grants review committee.** A technical review panel will review the proposal and based upon the criteria noted in this NOFO.
- 3. Follow up notification.** Applicants will generally be notified within **[90 days]** after the NOFO deadline regarding the results of the review panel.

G. Application Evaluation Criteria

Criteria: Round 1 – Statements of Interest will be evaluated based on the criteria listed below: (total 30 points). Each application submitted under this announcement will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the criteria enumerated below. The criteria are designed to assess the quality of the proposed project, and to determine the likelihood of its success. Note: see section “Round 2” for details on each criterion.

- **Project Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives – 10 points.**
- **Relevance of the Proposed Title to Priority Themes and Target Audience – 10 points**
- **Budget – 5 points**
- **Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Grants – 5 points**

Round 2 - Full proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria listed below: (total 100 points)

- **Project Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives – 35 points:** The project plan is well developed, with sufficient detail about how activities will be carried out. The proposal specifies target audiences, participant recruitment, and geographic areas of implementation. The proposal outlines clear, achievable objectives. The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline. The project scope is appropriate and clearly defined.
 - A media or amplification plan (if appropriate) that shows how the organization will use social or traditional media or otherwise increase the number of people who gain exposure to the issue and knowledge of the activities beyond the core participants.
- **Quality and Feasibility of the Program Idea – 15 points:** The program idea should be innovative and well developed, with sufficient detail about how project activities will be

carried out. The proposals should demonstrate originality and outline clear, achievable objectives. The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline. The project scope is appropriate and clearly defined.

- **Budget – 15 points:** The budget and narrative justification are sufficiently detailed. The budget demonstrates that the organization has devoted time to accurately determine expenses associated with the project instead of providing rough estimates. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The results and proposed outcomes justify the total cost of the project. Budget items are reasonable, allowable, and allocable.
- **Media Amplification - 10 points:** The project plan shows how the organization will use social or traditional media or otherwise increase the number of people who gain exposure to the issue and knowledge of the activities beyond the core participants.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation - 15 points:** Applicant demonstrates it is able to measure program success against key indicators and provides milestones to indicate progress toward goals outlined in the proposal. The organization has clearly articulated how it will assess and measure its own performance throughout the project implementation phase using concrete quantitative and qualitative assessment tools.
 - Expenses directly associated with monitoring and evaluation are considered allowable. The suggested template includes a space to list the portion of the total budget amount directly associated with monitoring and evaluation activities.
- **Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Grants – 10 points:**
 - The project proposal demonstrates that the organization has sufficient expertise, skills, and human resources to implement the project.
 - The organization demonstrates that it has a clear understanding of the underlying issue that the project will address.
 - The organization demonstrates capacity for successful planning and responsible fiscal management. This includes a financial management system and a bank account.
 - Applicants who have received grant funds previously have been compliant with applicable rules and regulations.
 - Where partners are described, the applicant details each partner's respective role and provides curriculum vitae (CVs) for persons responsible for the project and financial administration. Proposed personnel, institutional resources, and partners are adequate and appropriate.

H. Federal Award Notices

The grant award or cooperative agreement will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document, and it will be provided to the recipient for review and signature by email. The recipient may only start incurring project expenses beginning on the start date shown on the grant award document signed by the Grants Officer.

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the discretion of the Department of State.

The Federal government is not obligated to make any Federal award as a result of the announcement. 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. The U.S. government also reserves the right to make an award in excess of the award ceiling.

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Terms and Conditions: Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply. These include: 2 CFR 200, 2 CFR 600, Certifications and Assurances, and the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, all of which are available at: <https://www.state.gov/m/a/ope/index.htm>

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: NOTE:

- President's September 2, 2020 memorandum, entitled Memorandum on Reviewing Funding to State and Local Government Recipients of Federal Funds that Are Permitting Anarchy, Violence, and Destruction in American Cities;
- Executive Order on Protecting American Monuments, Memorials, and Statues and Combating Recent Criminal Violence (E.O. 13933); and
- Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 85 FR 49506 on August 13, 2020, particularly on:
 - o Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an objective process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
 - o Prohibiting the purchase of certain telecommunication and video surveillance services or equipment in alignment with section 889 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019 (Pub. L. No. 115—232) (2 CFR part 200.216),
 - o 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),

- o 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
- o Terminating agreements in whole or in part to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340).

Reporting

Recipients are required to quarterly program progress and financial reports throughout the project period. Progress and financial reports are due 30 days after the reporting period. Final certified programmatic and financial reports are due 120 days after the close of the project period.

All reports are to be submitted electronically.

Awardees that are deemed to be high risk may be required to submit more extensive and frequent reports until their high-risk designation has been removed.

The Awardee must also provide the Embassy on an annual basis an inventory of all the U.S. government provided equipment using the SF428 form.

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 both program 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 that is 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 \$5,000 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 \$5,000 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 10% of the modified total direct costs as defined in 2 CFR 200.68.

“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.

Branding Requirements

As a condition of receipt of a grant award, all materials produced pursuant to the award, including training materials, materials for recipients or materials to communicate or promote with foreign audiences a program, event, project, or some other activity under an agreement, including but not limited to invitations to events, press materials, and backdrops, podium signs, etc. must be marked appropriately with the standard, rectangular U.S. flag in a size and prominence equal to (or greater than) any other logo or identity. Note: Exceptions to the branding requirement are allowable under certain conditions. If an applicant is notified that their award has been chosen for funding, the Grants Officer will determine, in consultation with the applicant, if an exception is applicable.

Copyrights and Proprietary Information

If any of the information contained in your application is proprietary, please note in the footer of the appropriate pages that the information is Confidential – Proprietary. Applicants should also note what parts of the application, program, concept, etc. are covered by copyright(s), trademark(s), or any other intellectual property rights and provide copies of the relevant documentation to support these copyrights.