

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF SECURITY AND TRANSNATIONAL AFFAIRS
Request for Statements of Interest and Capacity (RSOI)**

Funding Opportunity Title: U.S.-Pakistan Women's Council Initiative Advancing Women's Economic Leadership

Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0008983

Deadline for Applications: July 17, 2022

CFDA Number: 19.108

Total Amount Available: \$296,296

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA) announces a Request for Statements of Interest (RSOI) for organizations to submit a statement of interest (SOI) to carry out a \$300,000 program to advance the economic empowerment of women in Pakistan and to close the gender pay gap. The proposed program would launch a platform in coordination with the U.S.-Pakistan Women's Council through which businesses, non-profits, and international government leaders in Pakistan and the United States would be able to sustainably partner with Pakistani businesses, civil society organizations, and Pakistani women-led private and non-profit organizations to co-create programs that aim to close the gender pay gap and create an enabling environment for women's economic advancement and leadership in Pakistan. Priority will be given to organizations that cost-share and to organizations that have experience in developing collaborative relationships with private sector entities, particularly those that support women's economic empowerment. The proposed program could collaborate with women's mental health access providers and support women's safety in the workplace, and other services critical to support Pakistani women in the formal economy. SCA invites organizations interested in potential funding to submit SOI applications outlining program concepts that reflect this goal.

The submission of a SOI is the first step in a multi-phased selection process that includes a co-creation workshop. Applicants must first submit a concise four-page SOI designed to clearly communicate the program idea and objectives. This is not a full proposal. The purpose of the SOI process is to allow applicants to submit program ideas for evaluation prior to the development of a full proposal application in response to a future Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Upon review of eligible SOIs, SCA will invite selected applicants to participate in a one-day co-creation workshop, to be accessible virtually, to further develop the proposed concepts through interactive and collaborative discussions with Pakistani women leaders and women-led organizations, U.S. and Pakistani businesses, U.S. government officials, subject matter experts, and other potential implementing partners. Only participants of the workshop will be eligible to submit a full proposal application. Full proposals will go through a second merit review before final funding decisions are made.

PURPOSE:

SCA invites SOIs for programs that will create a self-sustaining platform through which businesses, non-profits, civil society, and government leaders in the United States and Pakistan will be able to work together to support women's economic advancement and leadership in the formal economy in Pakistan, focused particularly on efforts that aim to close the gender pay gap in Pakistan.

BACKGROUND:

Women represent less than 23 percent of Pakistan's formal economy and less than two percent of the country's entrepreneurs operating in the formal economy. Emerging from the pandemic, Pakistan's gender gap in job recovery rates is approximately 10 percent, indicating women have uniquely and disproportionately been affected by the pandemic. The International Monetary Fund estimates that closing the gender gap in Pakistan's economy could increase the country's gross domestic product by 30 percent. Improvements to the enabling environment for women's entrepreneurship and workforce participation, including supporting women's working conditions, fostering women's leadership, and efforts that increase women's access to markets can contribute to reducing the gender pay gap and support women's participation in Pakistan's economic recovery.

Since 2012, the U.S.-Pakistan Women's Council has been working to catalyze private sector, civil society, and government commitments to advance women's economic empowerment in Pakistan. The public-private partnership between Texas A&M University and the State Department counts on the support of member organizations representing leading U.S. and Pakistani corporations and non-profit organizations.

By creating a coalition of private sector, civil society, and government institutions in the United States and Pakistan, the program would aim to reduce barriers to women's economic leadership and advancement in the formal economy.

THE PROCESS:

RSOI and Co-Creation

Through the RSOI and co-creation workshop process, SCA aims to bring non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, and the U.S. interagency together to develop creative and inclusive approaches to the creation of platforms through which women-led organizations, businesses, non-profits, and international government leaders in the U.S. and Pakistan can together improve the economic empowerment of Pakistani women. The intent of the co-creation process is to foster collaboration across organizations with different perspectives and experiences, to co-design, co-develop, pilot, and innovate practical, inclusive, and scalable solutions to complex problem sets.

Due to the collaborative nature of the co-creation workshop, organizations submitting SOIs will need to feel comfortable discussing their proposed approach with other applicants as well as participating experts and observers, including but not limited to non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, and the U.S. interagency. Further, participating organizations will need to feel comfortable that any records related to the co-

creation workshop which are in the possession of a U.S. government agency may be released if covered by a Freedom of Information Act request.

Following the co-creation workshop, applicants with accepted SOIs will be invited to submit full proposal applications integrating feedback and recommendations from the workshop through a future limited competition process. **Only applicants who have participated in the workshop will be eligible to submit full proposal applications.**

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Length of performance period: Up to 60 months

Number of awards anticipated: 1 award

Award amount: Up to \$296,296.00

Type of Funding: FY2022 ESF

Anticipated program start date: Any time before September 30, 2022.

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

Funding Instrument Type: Cooperative agreement

SCA retains the right to execute non-competitive continuation amendment(s). Any amendment(s) is based on performance, is pending availability of funds and is not guaranteed.)

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

- The following organizations are eligible to apply:
- ***Both U.S. and foreign Not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations***
- ***Both U.S. and foreign Educational institutions***
- ***Both U.S. and foreign For-profit organizations***
- ***Both U.S. and foreign Public Entities (FPE)***

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing is highly encouraged. When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal.

- ### **3. In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on**

www.SAM.gov. Please see Section E.2 for more information. Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov.

4. Other Eligibility Requirements

Applicants are only allowed to submit one SOI per organization, per round though applicants can form partnerships to support multiple applications. If more than one SOI is submitted from an organization, all SOIs from that institution will be considered ineligible. An organization or individual selected for participation in the co-creation workshop may not be guaranteed to receive funding.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Application Package

Application forms required below are available at SAMS Domestic.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

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

Content of application

Please ensure the following:

- Documents are in English
- All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper
- All pages are numbered
- All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.
- The anticipated total budget amount is in U.S. dollars

The following documents are **required**:

1. **Concept Note (4 pages maximum):** The concept should contain sufficient information that anyone not familiar with it would understand exactly what the applicant wants to do. You may use your own format, but it must include all the items below.
 - **A table listing:**
 - Name of the organization;
 - The target country/countries;
 - The total amount of funding requested, total amount of cost-share (if any), and total program amount; and,
 - Program length;
 - **A synopsis of how the program will advance Pakistani women's economic empowerment or security in Pakistan. The following elements should be included:**

- A reflection of the applicant’s understanding of the economic landscape for Pakistani women in the formal economy;
- A general plan to incorporate Pakistani women, civil society leaders, and/or women-led organizations;
- A general description of the platform the program will create, including:
 1. A general plan of how the platform will enable co-creation process with partners
 2. A general plan for identifying, soliciting, and on-boarding new partners and affiliates
 3. A description of how the proposed platform might integrate the existing U.S.-Pakistan Women’s Council governance structure that allows for co-chairs, applicant, current partners, and future partners to provide input on programming decisions, including: onboarding partners, branding, communication, and public events etc.
 4. A general description of how the platform will receive, manage, and make use of additional resources received outside of the initial program budget, including from private sector partners, to further the program goal.
- How the program will leverage private sector engagement that supports one or more of the following key pillars:
 1. **Foster institutional commitments to foster women’s leadership and address barriers to women’s workforce participation:** Foster cooperation with the private sector that propels women forward in the workforce, including through career enhancing capacity building, upskilling or mentorship opportunities; and access to ICT; and/or investments in the enabling environment; and
 2. **Address the gender pay gap:** Create a platform through which cooperating corporations identify gender pay gaps and identify actionable solutions.
- How the program might coordinate with, involve, leverage, or tie-in existing initiatives that support gender-based violence prevention and response, foster women’s mental health access and resilience; and/or foster accessibility for individuals living with disabilities to increase program efficacy in support of the overall goal.
- A commitment to addressing safeguarding, do no harm, and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) in the full proposal if the SOI is accepted.
- **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.**

3. Submission Dates and Times

SOIs are due no later than 11:59 PM EST July 17, 2022

4. Funding Restrictions

None at this stage.

5. Other Submission Requirements

All application materials must be submitted electronically through www.Grants.gov or SAMS Domestic.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Criteria

Each SOI will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the evaluation criteria outlined below. Criteria are listed in order of importance.

Quality and Feasibility of the Program Idea (40 points):

- The concept responds to the RSOI and is appropriate in the context of the proposed country/region.
- The concept exhibits originality but is feasible.
- The concept includes a reasonable implementation timeline.
- The concept directly connects proposed activities with the desired outcomes (goals and objectives).
- The concept has demonstrated consultation with Pakistani women leaders and/or Pakistani women-led organizations.

Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives (20 points):

- The concept provides a general plan of proposed project activities and includes a clear articulation of how these activities will contribute to or align with the overall project's goals and objectives.
- Concept provides a summary of how the implementer will monitor and evaluate the project's progress and overall achievement of its objectives.
- The concept addresses how the project will engage or obtain support from the private sector and other relevant Pakistani and international stakeholders.

Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Grants (30 points):

- The concept demonstrates an institutional record of previous successfully implemented projects in Pakistan and on the issues and regions outlined in this RSOI.
- The concept articulates past performance and experience in working with local, Pakistani-led organizations, communities, and the private sector.

Coordination with Existing initiatives (10 points):

- The concept provides a general plan of how existing initiatives would be leveraged to support gender-based violence prevention and response, including work-place harassment, foster women's mental health access and resilience; and/or foster

accessibility for individuals living with disabilities.

2. Review and Selection Process

SCA will conduct a merit review of all eligible applications as outlined in this RSOI. SOIs will be reviewed by an independent review panel consisting of qualified subject matter experts from other Department of State bureaus and offices, U.S. Embassies, or other U.S. Government agencies to be invited to participate in co-creation workshop.

The submission of a SOI is the first step in a multi-phased, selection process. Applicants must first submit a SOI, which is a concise concept note designed to clearly communicate a program idea and its objectives before the development of a full proposal application for this project.

SCA will review SOIs and based on favorable evaluation by the panel, selected participants will receive an invitation from SCA to participate in the virtual co-creation workshop, which will likely be **held in early July 2022**. Please note that selected participants for the workshop are not guaranteed funding. The amount of resources made available under the grant for this program will depend on the number of concept notes received and the availability of funds. SCA reserves the right to fund any or none of the proposals submitted and discussed at the co-creation workshop.

The SOI process is to allow applicants the opportunity to submit program ideas for SCA to evaluate prior to a co-creation workshop and development of full proposal applications. The co-creation workshop is meant to develop some or all of their ideas into full proposal applications.

Following the co-creation workshop and the selection of participants whose ideas are ripe for potential implementation, recipients will be invited to submit applications via a limited competition notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) process in SAMS Domestic and write formal proposal applications with the end goal of signing at least one federal award by September 2022.

Required Registrations:

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

- www.SAM.gov registration which will generate a UEI
- NCAGE/CAGE code

Any applicant with an exclusion in the System for Award Management (SAM) is not eligible to apply for an assistance award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR, 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR, 1989 Comp., p. 235), “Debarment and Suspension.”

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 requirements. 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.

Starting April 2022, the UEI will be assigned when an 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. Organization can create an account at <https://login.gov/>. As a reminder, organizations need to renew its sam.gov registration annually.

US-based organizations: A CAGE code will be automatically assigned when the U.S. organizations registers in www.sam.gov. CAGE must be renewed every 5 years. Site for CAGE: <https://cage.dla.mil/Home/UsageAgree>. Grantees may be asked for more information to finalized and must comply.

Foreign-based organizations: Must apply for a NCAGE code before registering in SAM.gov. Go to: <https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/CageTool/home> to apply for a NCAGE code. NCAGE codes must be renewed every 5 years.

It is in the organization's best interest to check if their CAGE/or NCAGE codes are active. Organizations are required to register/or renew their CAGE or NCAGE codes **prior** to registering or renewing www.sam.gov. Both registration and renewals for both CAGE and NCAGE can take up to 10 days. Organization's legal address in NCAGE/CAGE must mirror www.sam.gov.

www.sam.gov requires all entities to renew their registration once a year in order to maintain an active registration status in SAM.gov. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure it has an active registration in SAM.gov.

If an organization plans to issue a sub-contract or sub-award, those sub-awardees must also have a unique entity identifier (UEI number). Those entities can register for a UEI only at SAM.gov.

If an organization does not have an active registration in SAM.gov prior to submitting an application, the application will be deemed **ineligible**. All organizations applying for grants (except individuals) must obtain these registrations, the latter are free of charge.

Note: As of April 2022, a DUNS number is no longer required.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Terms and Conditions: Before submitting the SOI, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply if a full proposal application is requested and awarded, to ensure that they will be able to comply. These include:

2 CFR 200, 2 CFR 600, and the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions which are available at: <https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

If you have any questions about the SOI application process, please contact: (pritchardch@state.gov)

A Bidding Conference will be held via Microsoft Teams video conference in early July (date to be determined) to answer questions from all potential applicants. Please contact pritchardch@state.gov for an invitation to this conference.