

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS (EAP)
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**

Announcement Type:	New Announcement
Assistance Type:	Cooperative Agreement
Funding Opportunity Title:	Mekong Connections: Supporting Governance, Transparency and Local Voices
Funding Opportunity Number:	SFOP0007050
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:	19.124
Funding Amount:	\$888,888 for 1 award
Key Dates:	1. Application must be submitted by 11:59 P.M. Eastern Time (ET) on August 3, 2020. 2. Deadline for Receipt of Questions by 11:59 P.M. Eastern Time (ET) on June 25, 2020. 3. Notification of project approval and award signing expected by September 2020.
Eligibility Category:	U.S. Non-profit/non-governmental organizations (NGOs) having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, or overseas-based non-profit/non-governmental organizations, and U.S. or overseas private/state institutions of higher education (See full eligibility criteria below in Section C).

A. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A.1. Background

The U.S. Department of State, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP), Office of Multilateral Affairs (MLA), announces an open competition for organizations to submit applications to a funding opportunity for an implementing partner to cultivate a network of individuals and community voices and actors having an impact throughout the Mekong by providing networks for engagement. The implementing partner must develop a Mekong network to, 1) assure that Mekong development projects and engagements are designed in consultation with and for the benefit of local communities and regional connectivity, 2) identify and manage a network of small-grant awardees focused on governance and transparency projects in the Mekong (Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam), and 3) support a network of rising talent and the next generation of policy practitioners in the Mekong. The implementing partner should demonstrate proficiency working in multi-lateral contexts and showcase an ability to

identify regional individuals and institutions having a measurable impact on priority challenges affecting the Mekong.

An engaged community can pay dividends by supporting transparency and governance initiatives focused on improving government service delivery. This funding opportunity supports greater government accountability and transparency through the development of civil society and institutions that reflect the interests of the public in Mekong communities. The implementing partner will be responsible for competitively awarding small-grants to nonprofit nongovernmental organizations and associations (NGOs), nonprofit civil society organizations (CSO) and/or independent grassroots local organizations, watchdog groups and activists throughout the Mekong. The implementing partner must possess strong regional connections throughout all five Mekong countries and the ability to identify local individuals and institutions. The implementing partner must be able to convey the positive impact of both the small-grant awardee's organization and effects their project has had in improving the lives of people and communities in the Mekong. In addition to providing small-grant awards, the implementing partner must be able to support small-grant award winners by connecting them with other like-minded small-grant winners within the award network. A successful application will incorporate a plan to connect small-grant awardees on a regional scale, to share their work on a regional scale; to increase public and government awareness of the positive outcomes from an engaged civil society; and increase support of community-driven projects.

Not only is it important to support community voices, participation from the next generation of scholars and policy practitioners is vital to fostering resiliency and ensuring that the voices of early and mid-career professionals have a central place and space to shape the development of the Mekong. This network will include rising early to mid-career talent with strong policy voices and an ability to convey conflicts and issues affecting the Mekong and clearly present policy solution and alternatives. It is expected that the selected Fellows will comprise a cohort of experts focused on a variety of subjects. Mekong Policy Network Fellows will be selected to cover both country and functional issues such as public policy, public health, regional connectivity, science and technology, and governance. Fellows must possess a proven track record of success.

Once awarded, the implementing partner will be responsible for identifying potential community and local organizations with the capacity to manage and implement small-grants advancing the development of good governance and transparency and sustainable environmental and infrastructure development throughout Mekong communities in alignment with USG priorities in the region. These priorities include 1) efforts to curb the trafficking of wildlife and resources; 2) developing growth-oriented, sustainable policies for Mekong River governance; and 3) addressing top health and environmental challenges in the region. U.S.-based, non-Mekong-based, and individuals will not be eligible to receive small-grants under this program, the intention is to provide small grant opportunities for Mekong-based implementers. The implementing partner must strive to strengthen civic institutions within Mekong communities, including increasing the participation and representation of citizens from all different backgrounds in civic life. It is expected that the implementing partner will endeavor to equitably distribute small-grant funding opportunities between all five Mekong countries. This goal should be achieved through public engagement and advocacy and mutual accountability between

citizens and their governments. It is important that the implementing partner demonstrate efforts to incorporate cross-border utility and the sharing of best-practices in neighboring Mekong countries. While the operating environments vary between Mekong countries and issues, an opportunity to learn from others in the Mekong facing similar issues, now or in the past, is a useful tool to stand united against regional threats to Mekong centrality. The implementing partner will be responsible for all monitoring and evaluation of small-grant awardees and must track and share success stories or demonstrate widespread successes to the Department of State via regular reporting. The implementing partner must provide selection criteria, and monitoring and evaluation standards that meet EAP standards which will be applied during the selection process and project monitoring for all small-grant awardees. Applicants responding to this NOFO must demonstrate a record of successfully managing and monitoring small-grant awards in their proposal.

To support Mekong Policy Network Fellows, proposals must showcase a strong regional network within each Mekong country to provide local support for Fellows. The network will also promote rising voices and perspectives of early to mid-career professionals by providing targeted training activities and opportunities to publish their work regionally and beyond. A plan must be developed to amplify Fellows' written products throughout the Mekong and abroad during their fellowship year. The implementing partner must also provide a strong plan to incorporate and sustain an alumni network for continued engagement after the fellowship year has ended. Additionally, the implementing partner must demonstrate strong local connections to academic, press, and policy networks and must demonstrate a record of previous experience managing cohorts. At the end of each fellowship year, fellows will present their work at a regional symposium showcasing the interconnectedness of their work and collaboration over their fellowship year. A cohort of Fellows will be selected each year during the life of the project.

In addition to virtually connecting small-grant awardees and Mekong Policy Fellows throughout the duration of the project, it is expected that the implementing partner will provide opportunities for project beneficiaries to convene in-person and share lessons learned, best practices, and propose policy solutions in an effort to connect small-grant awardees and Fellows with like-minded regional partners and projects impacting neighboring Mekong countries. The ability to convene and share lessons-learned, share best practices, and propose policy solutions is a key component of this project. These in-person opportunities should help propel trans-border connections to amplify Mekong community voices on pressing region-wide regional threats to Mekong centrality. The implementing partner should budget for one workshop to be held at the mid-point and one near the conclusion of the life of the project for small-grant awardees and a yearly symposium for Fellows.

A successful proposal will include the following project objectives and deliverables:

Project Objectives:

- Create a network focused on governance and transparency projects from the perspectives of community actors;
- Enhance and develop regional networks to connect community perspectives to central policy debates in the Mekong and further support Mekong civic and policy leaders;

- Share global lessons learned and best practices on transboundary challenges in the region and beyond and propose concrete policy approaches to topics discussed.

Project Requirements:

- All subrecipient and Fellow activities must take place in one or more Mekong country with a strong preference for projects that support connectivity across the region;
- The implementer will regularly report back to EAP on successes and areas for improvement;
- Identify small-grant applicants that are financially and institutionally capable of responsibly managing the small-grant funds;
- The implementing organization will provide grant management support and capacity building to the small-grant awardees to increase their grant management capacity.

A2. Program Goals

This project is designed to fund multiple smaller projects and a small cohort of early to mid-career professionals that align with Department of State priorities but are too small to be administered directly by DOS. The implementing organization will identify qualifying organizations and individuals and then administer small-grants and the Fellowship cohorts that enable recipients to continue or expand their work in the Mekong. This project seeks to strengthen civil society, especially in a cross-border context, by supporting local organizations that otherwise wouldn't be able to successfully complete their work due to a lack of local resources or inability to connect with other organizations and individuals in the Mekong region. Small-grant awardees and Fellows must demonstrate measurable and significant impact throughout the Mekong on the identified key issue areas. A particular focus is building a regional network and sharing lessons learned. This is achieved through activities which support bringing together funding beneficiaries to share best practices, success stories, exchange ideas, and collaborate on messaging of successful project impact and implementation or policy solutions and proposals.

A3. Expected Results

It is expected that small-grant awardees and Fellows funded through this project will strengthen community voices and civil society directly through community engagement and proposed policy solutions. This project will strengthen cross-border Mekong regional networks. This project promotes the value of partnering with the United States and amplifies U.S. priorities of transparent, rules-based governance in the region and the free-flow of ideas. It is expected that once funds have been awarded, the small grant awardees and Fellows will continue to have a significant impact on vital governance and transparency debates and actions throughout the Mekong. With additional resources and support, the small-grant recipients will have an opportunity for cross-border learning and exchange of ideas with other small-grant award recipients, thus further amplifying their message on transboundary issues. This regional cohesion will lead to a stronger, more unified Mekong message. All project beneficiaries will be expected to meet and share and contribute to a Mekong network.

A4. Main Activities

- The implementing organization will competitively provide multiple small-grants up to \$24,999 to locally based Mekong organizations to support governance and transparency projects. It is expected that the implementing organization will provide no less than 5 grants per year during the life of the project. The implementing organization should seek to equitably award small-grants to each Mekong country during each year of the project;
- Hold two regional trainings; the first midway through the project and the second towards the end of the project, to connect organizations working on similar challenges, share success stories, best practices, and creatively collaborate among Mekong small-grant awardees;
- Proposals should include metrics for successful media engagement. The implementing partner must develop messaging or a narrative for public media use, which could include news, media, video, op-eds, social media including short videos on each project, highlight videos of multiple projects, and social-media-ready descriptions of projects and outcomes. The media requirements will be dependent on the operating environment and decisions on public media consumption will be determined by the implementing partner and EAP. Media plans should propose dissemination of the work conducted by the small-grant awardees and Fellows across local Mekong and international networks;
- Competitively select a cohort of Mekong Policy Fellows each year during the life of the project;
- Each year, Fellows must produce and publish at least three (3) op-eds during the course of the year which connects their policy focus with the public debate. The pieces should be published in English and local languages and the implementing partner will help find placement in local and international press or think-tanks;
- Each year, the implementing partner must highlight the work of current year's Fellows during a public research symposium;
- Develop a plan to remain engaged with Mekong Policy Fellows after their fellowship year has ended.

Activities that are not typically allowed include, but are not limited to:

- The provision of humanitarian assistance;
- Projects that support partisan political activities;
- Fundraising campaigns;
- Academic or scientific research or exchanges;
- English language instruction;
- Development of high-tech computer or communications software and/or hardware;
- Initiatives directed towards a diaspora community rather than current residents of targeted countries.

A5. Performance Indicators

The project should monitor and report on performance indicators that are specific, measurable, achievable, reasonable, and time-bound. Establish, where possible, performance baseline data

and expected performance targets for each expected result, and include details on what sources of data will be used to document performance, how the indicators will be measured, frequency of measurement, and units of measure. Where possible, indicators should also allow for sex disaggregation.

<i>Outcome Indicators</i>	<i>Targets</i>
1. Local or national news story on small-grant awardees positive impact in the Mekong	10
2. Regional workshop for small-grant awardees	2
3. Percent of women who attended the workshops.	At least 50% of workshop attendees are women.
4. Number of policy issues or topics identified during the workshops that are related to governance and transparency and are prevalent throughout the Mekong region.	At least 5
5. End-of-year symposium for Mekong Policy Fellows	1 per year
6. Number of published pieces per Mekong Policy Fellows	3 per Fellow
7. Percent of published pieces written by women.	At least 50% of published pieces written by women.
8. Number of small grants up to \$24,999 that support governance and transparency projects in the Mekong region.	At least 5 per year during the life of the project.
9. Number of networks composed of project fellows and alumni.	1 network for project Fellows and alumni.

All applicable indicators and outcome metrics should be included in the proposal and subsequent to the award, routine, periodic reporting all outcomes will be required. The implementer will be responsible for quarterly reporting on each performance indicator included in the cooperative agreement as well as analysis of progress or impediments to reach indicator targets.

The State Department takes into consideration the quality of data reported by grant recipients as part of the award activities, therefore applicants should be aware that recipients will be subject to data quality assessments.

A.6. Substantial Involvement

A cooperative agreement (CA) differs from a grant (GR) in the area of the substantial involvement of key persons from the funding organization. For this cooperative agreement (CA), it is anticipated that the Department of State (EAP) will be substantially involved in the following areas at a minimum:

1. Approval and review of all selection and monitoring and evaluation criteria employed during the life of the project;
2. Final approval of selected small-grant awardees and Mekong Policy Fellow cohorts;
3. Participation and involvement in the planning of events featuring small-grant awardees and Mekong Policy Fellows;
4. Final approval of any published or public-facing materials which may include but is not limited to: summary reports, branding, promotional and traditional media/social media engagement and proposals;
5. U.S. Embassies will aid in announcing the open applications and help the implementing partner identify potential applicants for small-grant and Fellowship opportunities.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

EAP anticipates having approximately \$888,888 of FY19 Economic Support Funds (ESF) available to support one successful application submitted in response to this NOFO, subject to the ability of funding. The authority for this funding opportunity is found in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA).

Applicants should include an anticipated start date no later than September 2020 and the period of performance should be between 3 to 4 years.

The Department of State may make award(s) on the basis of initial applications received, without discussions or negotiations. Therefore, each initial application should contain the applicant's best terms from a cost and technical standpoint. The Department of State reserves the right (though it is not under obligation to do so), however, to enter into discussions with one or more applicants in order to obtain clarifications, additional detail, or to suggest refinements in the project description, budget, or other aspects of an application.

EAP anticipates awarding a cooperative agreement as a result of this NOFO, pending the availability of funds. The distinction between grants and cooperative agreements revolves around the existence of “substantial involvement.” Cooperative agreements require greater involvement from the Federal government during the implementation of the award agreement. For examples of potential substantial involvement, refer to section A.6.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

C.1 Eligible Applicants

EAP welcomes applications from U.S. Non-profit/non-governmental organizations (NGOs) having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, or overseas-based non-profit/non-governmental organizations, and U.S. or overseas private/state institutions of higher education

For-profit and commercial firms are not eligible to apply in response to this NOFO.

Please see 2 CFR 200.307 for regulations regarding program income.

C.2 Cost Sharing or Matching

Providing cost sharing, matching, or cost participation is not an eligibility requirement for this NOFO.

Please note: If cost-share is included in the budget then the recipient must maintain written records to support all allowable costs that are claimed as its contribution to cost-share, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. In the event the recipient does not meet the minimum amount of cost-sharing as stipulated in the recipient's budget, EAP's contribution may be reduced in proportion to the recipient's contribution.

C.3 Other Eligibility Requirements

In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a unique entity identifier (Data Universal Numbering System/DUNS number from Dun & Bradstreet), as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Please see Section D.3 for information on how to obtain these registrations.

Any applicant listed on the Excluded Parties List System in the System for Award Management (SAM)(www.sam.gov) 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." Additionally, no entity listed on the Excluded Parties List System in SAM can participate in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the Excluded Parties List System in SAM to ensure that no ineligible entity is included.

Organizations may only submit one application per organization. If more than one application is submitted by an organization, only the first application received from that institution will be reviewed for eligibility and funding.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

D.1 Address to Request Application Package

Applicants can find application forms and other materials need to apply on SAMS Domestic (<https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com>) under the announcement title "Mekong Connections: Supporting Governance, Transparency and Local Voices," funding opportunity number SFOP0007050. Please contact the EAP point of contact listed in section G if requesting reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities or for security reasons. Please note: reasonable accommodations do not include deadline extensions.

D.2 Content and Form of Application Submission

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

For all submitted application documents, please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity
- All documents are in English. If an original document within the application is in another language, an English translation must be provided (please note: the Department of State, as indicated in 2 CFR 200.111, requires that English is the official language of all award documents. If any documents are provided in both English and a foreign language, the English language version is the controlling version);
- All budget costs are in U.S. dollars;
- All pages are numbered, including budgets and attachments;
- All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper; and,
- All documents are single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. Captions and footnotes may be 10 point Times New Roman font. Font sizes in charts and tables, including the budget, can be reformatted to fit within 1 page width.

Complete applications must include the following required documents:

1. Completed and signed **SF-424**, **SF-424A**, and **SF-424B** and **SF-LLL** forms. These forms are available electronically via SAMS Domestic <https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com>. *The SF-424 B 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. The SF-LLL is required for applicants that may engage in lobbying activities.*
2. **Table of Contents** (not to exceed one [1] page in Microsoft Word) that includes a page numbered contents page, including any attachments.
3. **Executive Summary** (not to exceed two [2] pages in Microsoft Word) that includes:
 - a) The target country/countries and thematic area;
 - b) Name and contact information for the project's main point of contact;
 - c) The total amount of funding requested and project length;
 - d) A statement of work or synopsis of the project, including a concise breakdown of the project's objectives, activities, and expected results; and,
 - e) A brief statement on how the project is innovative, sustainable, and will have a demonstrated impact.
4. **Proposal Narrative** (not to exceed ten [10] pages, single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font in Microsoft Word, at least one-inch margins). Please note the 10 page limit does not include the Table of Contents, Executive Summary, Attachments, Audit, Detailed Budget, Budget Narrative, or Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA). Applicants are encouraged to submit multiple documents in a single Microsoft Word or Adobe file, (i.e., Table of Contents, Executive Summary, and Proposal Narrative in one file).
5. **Summary and Detailed Line-Item Budget** (in Microsoft Excel) that includes three [3] columns including the request to EAP, any cost sharing contribution, and total budget

(see below for more information on budget format). **The federal share requested should not exceed the amount of funds available under section B.** A summary budget should also be included using the OMB approved budget categories (see SF-424A for budget categories). Costs must be in U.S. dollars. Detailed line-item budgets for sub-awardees should be included in additional tabs within the excel workbook. A template budget is provided, but is not required, as long as the submitted budget follows OMB budget categories.

6. **Budget Narrative** (in Microsoft Word) that includes substantive explanations and justifications for each line item in the detailed budget spreadsheet, as well as the source and a description of all cost-share offered. For ease of review, EAP recommends applicants order the budget narrative as presented in the detailed budget. Personnel costs must include a clarification of the roles and responsibilities of all staff, base salary, and percentage of time devoted to the project. The budget narrative should support the activities described in the proposal and provide additional information that might not be readily apparent in the detailed-line item budget, not simply repeat what is represented numerically in the budget, i.e. salaries are for salaries or travel is for travel. The budget narrative should also explain any cost share provided.
7. **Project Monitoring and Evaluation**
Complete applications will include a plan of how the project's progress and impact will be monitored and evaluated throughout the project. Applications should demonstrate the capacity to provide objectives with measurable outputs and outcomes and engage in robust monitoring and assessment of project activities. The quality of the M&E plan will be judged on the narrative explaining how both monitoring and evaluation will be carried out, and who will be responsible for those related activities
8. Attachments (not to exceed thirteen [13] pages total, preferably in Microsoft Word) that include the following in order:
 - a) Logic model – Page 1-2. The logic model must demonstrate how the project will have an impact on its proposed objectives.
 - b) Narrative of Monitoring and Evaluation Plan – Pages 3-4.
 - c) Monitoring and Evaluation Performance Indicator Table – Pages 5-8. This section can be up to three pages long if necessary.
 - d) Timeline of the overall proposal – Page 9: Components should include activities, evaluation efforts, and project closeout:
 - e)

Primary Activities, Deliverables, and/or Milestones	FY21 Q1	FY21 Q2	FY21 Q3	FY21 Q4	FY22 Q1	FY22 Q2	FY22 Q3
Project Monitoring Plan (may be requested within 90 days after the start of the activity)	X						

Activity 1.1	X	X	X	X			
Activity 1.2		X	X	X			
Activity 2.1				X	X		
Etc.					X	X	X

- f) Additional optional attachments – Page 10-13: Attachments may include further timeline information, letters of support, memorandums of understanding/agreement, etc. If applicable, a Letter of Disclosure for proposed consultants/personnel of potential conflicts of interest, employment with a local/state/federal government. Letters of support and MOUs must be specific to the projects implementation (e.g. from proposed partners or sub-award recipients) and will not count towards the page limit.

9. C.V.s for all key program personnel

10. **NICRA:** If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, your most recent NICRA should be included as a PDF file. This document will not be reviewed by the panelists, but rather used by project and grant staff if the submission is recommended for funding and therefore does not count against the submission page limitations. If your proposal involves subawards to organizations charging indirect costs, please submit the applicable NICRA). Per 2 CFR200.414(f), organizations that have never had a NICRA may request a de minimis indirect rate of up to 10% of the Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC) as defined in 2 CFR 200.68. *MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs and the portion of each subaward in excess of \$25,000.* The budget narrative must indicate what costs will be covered using the 10% de minimis rate.
11. A copy of your organization's most **recent audit** (single audit, if applicable, is required, otherwise standard audit)
12. A contingency plan to avoid or mitigate interruptions to the implementation of the project during the period of performance, due to travel restrictions related to COVID 19.

Note: Applications that do not include all required documents will be marked as incomplete, and will therefore be deemed technically ineligible.

EAP retains the right to ask for additional documents not included in this NOFO. Additionally, to ensure all applications receive a balanced evaluation, the EAP Review Panel will review the first page of the requested section up to the page limit and no further. EAP encourages organizations to use the given space effectively.

Additional information that successful applicants may be asked to submit after notification of intent to make a Federal award, but prior to issuance of a Federal award, may include:

- Written responses and any revised application documents addressing any conditions or recommendations from the Review Panel;
- Completion of the Department's Financial Management Survey, if receiving EAP funding for the first time or requested by the Grants Officer;
- Submission of required documents to register in the Payment Management System managed by the Department of Health and Human Services if receiving EAP funding for the first time, unless an exemption is provided;
- Other requested information or documents included in the notification of intent to make a Federal award or subsequent communications prior to issuance of a Federal award.

D.3 Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

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

- Unique Entity Identifier from Dun & Bradstreet (DUNS number)
- NCAGE/CAGE code
- www.SAM.gov registration

Step 1: Apply for a DUNS number and an NCAGE number (these can be completed simultaneously)

DUNS application: Organizations must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet. If your organization does not have one already, you may obtain one by calling 1-866-705-5711 or visiting <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>

NCAGE application: Application page here:

<https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/scage/CageList.aspx>

Instructions for the NCAGE application process:

<https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/Docs/US%20Instructions%20for%20NSPA%20NCAGE.pdf>

For NCAGE help from within the U.S., call 1-888-227-2423

For NCAGE help from outside the U.S., call 1-269-961-7766

Email NCAGE@dlis.dla.mil for any problems in getting an NCAGE code.

Step 2: After receiving the NCAGE Code, proceed to register in SAM.gov by logging onto: <https://www.sam.gov>. SAM registration must be renewed annually.

Applicants must have an active registration in SAM (www.sam.gov) prior to submitting an application, must prove a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number, formerly referred to as a DUNS number, and must continue to maintain an active SAM.gov registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by the U.S. government. **If an organization does not have an active registration in SAM.gov prior to submitting an application, the application will be deemed**

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

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 is the Federal government's primary database for complying with FFATA reporting requirements. OMB designated SAM 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 obtain a UEI number and register in SAM.

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

An exemption from this requirement may be permitted on a case-by-case basis if the applicant's identity must be protected due to possible endangerment of their mission, their organization's status, their employees, or individuals being served by the applicant. Organizations requesting an exemption should email the point of contact listed in Section G of this NOFO.

Please note: foreign organizations will be required to register with the NATO Support Agency (NSPA) to receive a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code in order to register in SAM. NSPA will forward your registration request to the applicable National Codification Bureau (NCB) if your organization is located in a NATO or Tier 2 Sponsored Non-NATO Nation. (As of January 2015, NATO nations included Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States of America; and Tier 2 nations included Australia, Austria, Brazil, Finland, Israel, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Morocco, New Zealand, Serbia, and Singapore.)

NSPA and/or the appropriate NCB forwards all NCAGE code information to all Allied Committee 135 (AC/135) nations, which as of January 2015 also included Afghanistan, Argentina, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Colombia, Egypt, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Montenegro, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand, Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, and the United Arab Emirates.

D.4 Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (ET), on August 3, 2020 in SAMS Domestic (<https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com>) under the announcement title “Mekong Connections: Supporting Governance, Transparency and Local Voices” funding opportunity number SFOP0007050.

Applications will not be accepted via www.grants.gov.

SAMS Domestic automatically logs the date and time an application submission is made, and the Department of State will use this information to determine whether an application has been submitted on time. Late applications are neither reviewed nor considered unless the EAP point of contact listed in section G is contacted prior to the deadline and is provided with evidence of system errors caused by [SAMS Domestic](#) that is outside of the applicants' control and is the sole reason for a late submission. Applicants should not expect a notification upon EAP receiving their application.

If ultimately provided with a notification of intent to make a Federal award, applicants typically have two to three weeks to provide additional information and documents requested in the notification of intent. The deadlines may vary in each notification of intent and applicants must adhere to the stated deadline in the notification of intent.

D.5 Funding Restrictions

EAP will not consider applications that reflect any type of support for any member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization. No entity listed on the Excluded Parties List System in SAM is eligible for any assistance.

Project activities that provide training or other assistance to foreign militaries or paramilitary groups or individuals will not be considered for EAP funding given purpose limitations on funding.

The Leahy Law prohibits Department foreign assistance funds from supporting foreign security force units if the Secretary of State has credible information that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. Per 22 USC §2378d(a) (2015), "No assistance shall be furnished under this chapter [FOREIGN ASSISTANCE] or the Arms Export Control Act [22 USC 2751 et seq.] to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country if the Secretary of State has credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights." Restrictions may apply to any proposed assistance to police or other law enforcement. Among these, pursuant to section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA), no assistance provided through this funding opportunity may be furnished to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country when there is credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. In accordance with the requirements of section 620M of the FAA, also known as the Leahy law, project beneficiaries or participants from a foreign government's security forces may need to be vetted by the Department before the provision of any assistance.

If a proposed grant or cooperative agreement will provide assistance to foreign security forces or personnel, compliance with the Leahy Law is required. Federal awards generally will not allow reimbursement of pre-award costs; however, the Grants Officer may approve pre-award costs on a case-by-case basis. Generally, construction costs are not allowed under EAP awards.

Various policy and legal restrictions may apply to assistance to certain countries. For example, the use of FY 2019 economic support funds for assistance to the government of Cambodia, including to Cambodian government officials, is restricted. Certain assistance to the government

of Cambodia for democracy programs may be permitted. In addition, all activities for Burma are would be subject to additional review and would require prior written approval by EAP.

D.6 Other Submission Requirements

All application submissions must be made electronically via SAMS Domestic (<https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com>). This system requires registration by the applying organization.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that it has an active registration in SAMS Domestic and that an application has been received by SAMS Domestic in its entirety. EAP bears no responsibility for disqualification that result from applicants not being registered before the due date or for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes. Additionally, you must save a screen shot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

Faxed, couriered, or emailed documents **will not** be accepted. Reasonable accommodations may, in appropriate circumstances, be provided to applicants with disabilities or for security reasons.

Applicants must follow all formatting instructions in the applicable solicitation and these instructions.

SAMS Domestic Applications:

Applicants using SAMS Domestic for the first time should complete their “New Organization Registration.” To register with SAMS Domestic, go to <https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com> follow the “create an account” link. Users will then complete the form with the requested information and click “submit.” A confirmation email will be sent once the account has been created. If users are experiencing difficulties obtaining a user login and completing the registration process, please contact ILMS Support.

ILMS Support (SAMS Domestic Help Desk):

For assistance with SAMS Domestic accounts and technical issues related to the system, please contact the ILMS Support 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.servicenow.com/ilms/home>. Customer Support is available 24/7/365.

Should an applicant experience technical issues, contacted the helpdesk, and is not receiving timely assistance (e.g. if you have not received a response after 2 days of contacting the helpdesk), you may contact the EAP point of contact listed in section G, who may assist in contacting the appropriate helpdesk. Applicants should document their efforts in contacting the helpdesk.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

E.1 Criteria

Each application will be evaluated individually against the following criteria, listed below in order of importance, and not against competing applications.

Quality of Project Idea (30 points)

Applications should be responsive to the NOFO, appropriate in the country/regional context, and should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to EAP's mission. EAP prioritizes innovative and creative approaches rather than projects that simply duplicate or add to efforts by other entities. This does not exclude projects that clearly build off existing successful projects in a new and innovative way from consideration. 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.

Project Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives (25 points)

A strong application will include a clear articulation of how the proposed project activities contribute to the overall project objectives, and each activity will be clearly developed and detailed. Objectives should be ambitious, yet measurable, results-focused and achievable within the requested period of performance. Applications should address how the project will engage relevant stakeholders and identify any local partners as appropriate/applicable. If local partners have been identified, EAP strongly encourages applicants to submit letters of support from proposed in-country partners. Additionally, applicants must describe the division of labor among the direct applicant and any sub-recipients/local partners. If applicable, applications should identify target areas for activities, target participant groups or selection criteria for participants, and the specific roles of sub-recipients, among other pertinent details. In particularly challenging operating environments, applications should include contingency plans for overcoming potential difficulties in executing the original work plan and address any operational or programmatic security concerns and how they will be addressed.

Multiplier Effect/Sustainability (20 points)

Applications should clearly delineate how elements of the project will have a multiplier effect and be sustainable beyond the life of the grant. A good multiplier effect will have an impact beyond the direct beneficiaries of the grant (e.g. participants trained under a grant go on to train other people, workshop participants use skills from a workshop to enhance a national level election that affects the entire populace). A strong sustainability plan may include demonstrating continuing impact beyond the life of a project or garnering other donor support after EAP funding ceases.

Project Monitoring and Evaluation (15 points)

Complete applications will include a detailed plan (both a narrative and table) of how the project's progress and impact will be monitored and evaluated throughout the project. Incorporating a well-designed monitoring and evaluation component into a project is one of the most efficient methods of documenting the progress and results (intended and unintended) of a project. Applications should demonstrate the capacity to provide objectives with measurable outputs and outcomes and engage in robust monitoring and assessment of project activities.

The quality of the M&E plan will be judged on the narrative explaining how both monitoring and evaluation will be carried out, who will be responsible for those related activities.

Institution's Capacity and Past Performance (10 points)

EAP will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Applications should demonstrate an institutional record of successful projects, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past awards. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the project's objectives.

E.2 Review and Selection Process

EAP strives to ensure each application receives a balanced evaluation by an EAP Review Panel. All technically eligible applications for a given notice of funding opportunity are reviewed against the same criteria, listed above. Additionally, the EAP Review Panel will evaluate how the application addresses the NOFO request, U.S. foreign policy goals, and the priority needs of EAP overall.

The EAP Review Panel generally includes representatives from EAP, as well as other representatives from the Department of State, and may include additional panelists from U.S. embassies, other U.S. government departments, agencies, or boards, representatives from partner governments, or representatives from entities that are in a public-private partnership with EAP. All Panelists must sign non-disclosure agreements and conflicts of interest agreements.

EAP Review Panels may provide conditions and recommendations on applications to enhance the proposed project, which must be addressed by the applicant before further consideration of the award. To ensure effective use of EAP funds, conditions or recommendations may include requests to increase, decrease, clarify, and/or justify costs and project activities.

E.3 Federal Awardee Performance & Integrity Information System

The Department of State, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313).

The applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.

The Department of State will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

F.1 Federal Award Notices

EAP will provide a separate notification to applicants on the result of their applications. Successful applicants will be notified by EAP via email. This email may include a request for the applicant respond to panel conditions and recommendations. This notification is not an authorization to begin activities and does not constitute formal approval or a funding commitment.

Final approval is contingent on the applicant successfully responding to the panel's conditions and recommendations, being registered in required systems, including the U.S. government's Payment Management System (PMS), unless an exemption is provided, and completing and providing any additional documentation requested by the Department of State. Final approval is also contingent on Congressional Notification requirements being met and final review and approval by the Department's warranted Grants Officer.

The grant award or cooperative agreement will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the warranted Grants Officer. The assistance award agreement is the sole authorizing document and it will be provided electronically to the recipient's authorized signatory for review and signature through SAMS Domestic. The recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date show on the 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 as the discretion of the Department of State.

F.2 Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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. Sub-Chapters A through E shall apply to all foreign organizations, and Sub-Chapters A through D shall apply to all U.S. and foreign 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 at <https://www.state.gov/m/a/ope/index.htm>.

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.

F.3 Reporting

Recipients will be required to complete and upload regular financial reports and program progress reports to the grant file in SAMS Domestic. The award document will specify how often these reports must be submitted. EAP typically requests that reports are submitted on a quarterly basis. Please note that all substantiating documentation supporting reporting and data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Department of State upon request. All reports must be written in English

- 1. Financial Reports:** The recipient is required to submit quarterly financial reports through the project period. The Federal Financial Report (FFR or SF-425) is the required form for the financial reports. If the recipient will receive funds through the Payment Management System (PMS), the recipient will be required to complete financial reports in PMS. Financial reports are due 30 days after the end of the reporting period.
- 2. Progress Reports:** The recipient is required to submit quarterly narrative progress reports in SAMS Domestic. Progress reports are due 30 days after the end of the reporting period. Narrative progress reports should reflect the focus on measuring the project's impact on the overarching objectives and should be compiled according to the objectives, outcomes, and outputs as outlined in the award's Scope of Work (SOW) and in the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Statement. An assessment of the overall project's impact, should be included in each progress report. Where relevant, progress reports should include the following sections:
 - Relevant contextual information (limited);
 - Explanation and evaluation of significant activities of the reporting period and how the activities reflect progress toward achieving objectives, including meeting benchmarks/targets as set in the M&E plan. In addition, attach the M&E plan, comparing the target and actual numbers for the indicators;
 - Any tangible impact or success stories from the project, when possible;
 - Copy of mid-term and/or final evaluation report(s) conducted by an external evaluator; if applicable;
 - Relevant supporting documentation or products related to the project activities (such as articles, meeting lists and agendas, participant surveys, photos, manuals, etc.) as separate attachments;
 - Description of how the Recipient is pursuing sustainability, including looking for sources of follow-on funding;
 - Any problems/challenges in implementing the project and a corrective action plan with an updated timeline of activities;
 - Reasons why established goals were not met;
 - Data for the required F Framework indicator(s) for the quarter as well as aggregate data by fiscal year using the SF-PPR-B: Project Indicators or other mutually agreed upon format approved by the Grants Officer. Evaluation indicators from the Foreign Assistance Framework can be found at <http://state.gov/foreign-assistance-resource-library> ;
 - Proposed activities for the next quarter;
 - Additional pertinent information, including analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs, if applicable.

- 3. Final Report:** A final narrative report and financial report will be required within 90 days after the completion of the award. The final narrative should include an in-depth impact assessment and/or project evaluation.

Please note: delays in reporting may result in delays of payment approvals and failure to provide required reports may jeopardize the recipients' ability to receive future U.S. government funds.

EAP reserves the right to request any additional programmatic and/or financial project information during the award period of performance.

G. CONTACT INFORMATION

Any prospective applicant who has questions concerning the contents of this NOFO should email them to Jocelyn Roberts and Nicole Smolinske with the subject "[Applicant Name] Mekong Connections: Supporting Governance, Transparency and Local Voices." To maintain fairness and transparency in competition, EAP will not answer substantive NOFO questions except when posting questions and answers to the announcement page as described below.

All questions must be submitted via email to Jocelyn Roberts, RobertsJD2@state.gov, and Nicole Smolinske, SmolinskeNL@state.gov, by June 25, 2020. EAP will create a document of submitted questions with answers and upload it to the announcement page in grants.gov no later than July 2, 2020. Note that once the NOFO deadline has passed, DOS staff in Washington, D.C. and overseas and U.S. Embassies/Missions may not discuss this completion with applicants until the review process has been completed.

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.service-now.com/ilms/home>. Customer Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except federal holidays.

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 with applicants until the entire proposal review process has been completed and an award has been made.

H. OTHER INFORMATION

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

The information in this NOFO is binding and may not be modified by any EAP representative. Explanatory information provided by EAP that contradicts this language will not be binding.

Issuance of the NOFO and negotiation of applications does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government. EAP reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the project evaluation requirements.

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. The U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

This NOFO will appear on www.grants.gov and SAMS Domestic (<https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com>).

H1. Monitoring Site Visits

A monitoring site visit, at least once during the lifetime of a grant, is required by Department of State grant policy. The site visit is conducted to gather additional information on the recipient's ability to properly implement the project, manage EAP funds, and share substantiating document for programmatic, indicator, and financial reporting. Specifically, the site visit will involve the review of the programmatic progress (progress on activities, sub-recipient/consultant work, data quality, etc.) as well as administrative and financial management and controls.