

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)
Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Announcement Type:	New Announcement
Funding Opportunity Title:	Think Tank Capacity Building
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:	19.700
Funding Amount:	\$800,000
Number of Awards:	One (1)
Cost Sharing Requirement:	Not Required
Assistance Type:	Grant
Funding Type:	Discretionary
Authority:	Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 as amended
Source of Funding	Economic Support Fund
Funding Activity Category:	Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG)
NOFO Issuance Date:	April 3, 2020
Closing Date for Submission of Applications:	Complete proposal packages must be submitted through www.grants.gov by June 2, 2020, 11:59 pm EST
Electronic Requirement:	Yes E-mailed, faxed or mailed proposal packages, or individual documents, that failed to transmit during application submission will <u>NOT</u> be considered.
Deadline for Receipt of Questions:	April 20, 2020, 5:00 pm, EST
Eligibility Category:	U.S. - based non-profit/non-governmental organizations having a 501(c) (3) status with the IRS; overseas non-governmental non-profit organizations; for-profit organizations; public and private educational institutions; and Foreign Public Entities (FPEs); For-profit commercial firms are not eligible to apply in response to this NOFO. No exceptions.

Type of Applicant: Organizations Only. Individuals are not eligible to apply.

Number of Applications: One (1) per applicant organization

Note: Organizations may form consortia and submit a combined proposal. However, only **one** organization may be designated as the lead applicant. The lead applicant must meet the eligibility criteria listed in this NOFO.

Anticipated Award Date: The successful applicant will receive notification within approximately nine to twelve weeks of the closing of this announcement. The U.S. Department of State is under no obligation to fund any of the proposals submitted under this funding opportunity.

Est. Project Start Date: September 2020

Est. Project End Date: September 2022

Project Duration: 24 months

This funding opportunity is posted on www.grants.gov and SAMS Domestic and may be amended. Answers to questions from potential applicants will be posted as an attachment to this NOFO. Applicants should regularly check the websites for the most recent information pertaining to this NOFO. **Department of State bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes associated with electronic submissions via www.grants.gov. Incomplete application packages will not be considered.** Missing e-mailed, faxed or mailed documents will NOT be considered.

Applicants must provide a Unique Entity Identifier, or Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS), when submitting application on www.grants.gov in response to this NOFO.

SAM.gov registration (www.sam.gov) is required. **Applicants that do not have a valid DUNS number and completed www.sam.gov registration will NOT be eligible for consideration.**

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the application package has been received by SAMS Domestic or Grants.gov in its **entirety**. Incomplete applications will be considered **ineligible**. Individual e-mailed or faxed documents that failed to transmit during application submission will **not** be considered.

The decision for the final eligibility and award determination rests with the Grants Officer.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States Department of State's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA) announces a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for a bilateral project that strengthens the capacity of think tanks in Sri Lanka.

Pending availability of funds and satisfactory performance, including compliance with the award's terms and conditions, SCA may consider adding funds to the award. SCA intends to support one (1) award as a result of this NOFO.

Department of State reserves the right to fund any or none of the proposals submitted and reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase the budget in accordance with the needs of the project and the availability of funds.

The Federal award signed by the State Department Grants Officer is the **only** authorizing document.

This NOFO consists of the following sections:

- I. Funding Opportunity Description
- II. Award Information and Application Evaluation and Scoring
- III. Eligibility Information
- IV. Agency Contacts

Eligible organizations interested in submitting an application are encouraged to review this NOFO thoroughly to understand the type of project sought and the application submission requirements and review process as outlined in this NOFO.

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND

Strong and independent think tanks undertake rigorous research, promote innovative thinking, and contribute to important policy debates. Their role in the market place of ideas is critical, however, consultations in country revealed numerous operational challenges due to limited financial and human resources that have the potential to threaten long-term success. In order to remain impactful, think tanks seek to forge connections locally and internationally, strengthen research skills, and build organizational capacity. This project should focus on these lines effort.

PROJECT'S GOALS

SCA seeks to improve the quality and accuracy of Sri Lanka's information space by supporting the independence, impact, and capacity of think tanks. Ultimately, the project aims to build upon ongoing efforts to contribute to a strong and independent civil society, build connections among thought leaders, and improve the quality of the information space.

PROJECT'S DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

The project has 2 key objectives:

- Foster regional and/or international connections with think tanks and/or other research institutes.
- Strengthen institutional effectiveness and improve research quality and impact

Organizational capacity building can include a range of issues, such as research skills, institutional governance, strategy, and culture, communication and engagement, and organizational independence.

The implementer should be able to demonstrate how think tanks are stronger and more connected than before the project. Proposals should be innovative in how they will address the goals of this project.

II. AWARD INFORMATION AND APPLICATION EVALUATION AND SCORING

SCA will issue an award to the applicant whose proposal represents the best value to the U.S. Government on the basis of technical merit, efficient use of U.S. Government funds, and satisfactory organizational capacity.

The Department of State reserves the right to make an award on the basis of initial application received with or without discussion or negotiations. Therefore, applications should contain the applicants' best terms from both cost and technical standpoints.

It is Department of State policy that English is the official language and U.S. dollar is the controlling currency. Proposal and related supporting documents must be English and accompanying budget in U.S. dollars.

SCA will conduct a merit review of all eligible applications as outlined in this NOFO. Applications will be reviewed by an independent review panel consisting of qualified subject matter experts from Department of State bureaus and offices, U.S. Embassies, or other U.S. Government agencies. Final approval resides with the Department of State Grants Office.

The independent review panel will evaluate each application individually against the following criteria, listed below in order of importance.

1. Quality of Project Idea

- The proposal responds to the NOFO and is appropriate in the country context;
- The proposal exhibits originality but is feasible;

- The proposal directly connects proposed activities with the desired outcomes (goals and objectives), including how the activities will lead to an improved space for civil society.

2. Project Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives

- The proposal provides a detailed work plan of proposed project activities and includes a clear articulation of how these activities will contribute to the overall project's goals and objectives;
- The articulated project activities are specific, measurable, attainable, and placed in a reasonable time frame (SMART).

3. Organizational Capability and Record of Performance

- The proposal demonstrates an institutional record of previous successfully implemented projects in target regions outlined in this NOFO;
- The proposal articulates past performance and experience in working with relevant organizations and communities;
- The proposal clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of primary staff under this project;
- The proposal describes the division of labor among the Recipient organization and potential implementing partner organization(s) and identifies local partner organization(s) that would assist with implementation, where appropriate;
- Proposal addresses how the project will engage or obtain support from relevant stakeholders.

4. Cost Effectiveness

- The administration of the proposal budget, including salaries and honoraria, are explained and justified for the work involved;
- Proposed costs are reasonable and necessary and linked to program objectives and demonstrate efficient use of U.S. Government funds.

NOTE: This NOFO does not require cost-share. Applicants may voluntarily offer cost share; however, cost share will not be factored in during proposal review.

5. Project Monitoring and Evaluation

- The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan includes narrative explaining how M&E will be carried out and who will be responsible for M&E activities (including potential contracted M&E experts, if applicable).

6. Sustainability of Impact

- Clearly delineates how impact will be sustainable beyond the life of the grant.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION INFORMATION:

Please refer to the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for additional application submission instructions, including information on required documents and format.

Please follow both, the PSI and the NOFO, to ensure that the proposal package submission is in full compliance with the requirements. Proposal submissions that do not meet all of the requirements outlined in this NOFO and PSI will **not** be considered.

FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION:

Issuance of this NOFO does **not** constitute a commitment on the part of the Department of State to issue an award nor does it commit the U.S. Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. Furthermore, award cannot be issued until funds have been fully appropriated, allocated, and committed through internal DOS procedures. While it is anticipated that these procedures will be successfully completed, potential applicants are hereby notified of these requirements. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.400 g, it is U.S. Department of State policy **not** to award profit under assistance instruments.

2 CFR §200.501 requires domestic/US non-federal entities that *expend* \$750,000, or more, in federal assistance during organization's fiscal year to have a single or program-specific audit conducted for that year. In addition, the entity must report the collected audit data elements on the form SF-SAC and submit it to the FAC. Any findings such as material weaknesses, significant deficiencies, or material noncompliance are reported on the SF-SAC.

The Federal award signed by the Grants Officer is the only authorizing document.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Recipient will be required to submit Quarterly Progress and Quarterly Financial Reports (SF-425), unless special conditions apply, describing key activities undertaken during the reporting period towards accomplishment of the stated objectives. Financial Reports provide a means of monitoring expenditures.

NOTE: It is Department of State policy that English is the official language of all award documents. If reports or any other supporting documents are provided in both English and a foreign language, it must be stated in each version that the **English language version is the controlling version. U.S. dollar is the controlling currency.** Financial reports must be submitted in U.S. dollars.

OTHER INFORMATION:

Mandatory disclosures (2 CFR 200.113)

Non-federal entity, recipient or applicant for a federal award must disclose, in a timely manner, in writing to the federal awarding agency or pass-through entity all violations of federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the federal award. Non-federal entities that have received a Federal award including the term and condition outlined in Appendix XII of the 2 CFR 200—Award Terms and Conditions for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters -- are required to report certain civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings to www.sam.gov.

Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in §200.338 Remedies for Noncompliance, including suspension or debarment.

Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS)

A federal awarding agency, prior to making a federal award, will review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through www.sam.gov (currently FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313). Applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through www.sam.gov 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 www.sam.gov. Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system. Applicant organizations must demonstrate adherence to equal opportunity employment practices and commitment to non-discrimination with respect to beneficiaries. Non-discrimination includes equal treatment without regard to race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and political affiliation. Applicants are reminded that U.S. Executive Orders and U.S. law prohibits transactions with or support to individuals or organizations associated with terrorism.

Proposals that reflect any type of support for any member, affiliate, or representative or a designate to terrorist organization or narcotics trafficker, including elected members of government, will NOT be considered. This provision must be included in any sub-awards/sub-contracts issued under this award.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

See the cover page, Eligibility Category.

Applicants should also demonstrate in-depth understanding of Sri Lanka cultural contexts and governance structures.

Previous experience working in South Asia is preferred.

IV. AGENCY CONTACTS

Any prospective applicant desiring an explanation or interpretation of this NOFO must request it in writing by the *deadline for questions* specified on page one (cover page). Information given to a prospective applicant concerning this NOFO will be furnished promptly to all other prospective applicants as a 'Questions and Answers' attachment to this NOFO.

Any questions concerning this NOFO should be submitted in writing, by email, to Gaia Self at SelfGS@state.gov along with the project's title as outlined in the NOFO; the funding opportunity number; and applicant's legal name and organizational status.