

Department of State
Public Notice

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Request for Statements of Interest:
Annual Program Statement for Statements of Interest for Human Rights, Accountability, and
Access to Information in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea)

I. Requested Objectives for Statements of Interest

The U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) announces an open competition for organizations interested in submitting Statements of Interest (SOI) for projects that support the policy objective to promote human rights, accountability, and access to information in the DPRK.

PLEASE NOTE: DRL strongly encourages applicants to immediately access [SAMS Domestic](https://www.grants.gov) or www.grants.gov in order to obtain a username and password. For instructions on how to register with SAMS Domestic for the first time, please refer to the Proposal Submission Instructions for Statements of Interest at: <https://www.state.gov/bureau-of-democracy-humanrights-and-labor/programs-and-grants/>.

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

This solicitation includes two (2) categories in which applicants are able to submit SOIs under. **Organizations may submit no more than one (1) SOI per category and must explicitly identify the category the SOI is being submitted.** If a SOI may fit within more than one category, the organization must explicitly identify which category they determine is the best fit for the work proposed. **If a SOI does not explicitly identify one of the below categories on the first page of the SOI, it may be deemed technically ineligible and may not be forwarded to the review panel for consideration.**

For all programs, projects should aim to have impact that leads to reforms and should have the potential for sustainability beyond DRL resources. DRL's preference is to avoid duplicating past efforts by supporting new and creative approaches. This does not exclude from consideration projects that improve upon or expand existing successful projects in a new and complementary way. Programs should seek to include groups that can bring perspectives based on their religion, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, and/or sexual orientation and gender identity. Programs should be demand-driven and locally led to the extent possible. DRL also requires all of its programming to be non-discriminatory and expects implementers to include strategies for integration of individuals/organizations regardless of religion, gender, disability, race, ethnicity,

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

To maximize the impact and sustainability of the award(s) that result(s) from this SOI/NOFO, DRL reserves the right to execute a non-competitive continuation amendment(s). Any noncompetitive continuation is contingent on performance and **availability of funds**. A noncompetitive continuation is not guaranteed; the Department of State reserves the right to exercise or not exercise the option to issue non-competitive continuation amendment(s).

Where appropriate, competitive proposals may include:

- Opportunities for beneficiaries to apply their new knowledge and skills in practical efforts.
- Solicitation of feedback and suggestions from beneficiaries when developing activities in order to strengthen the sustainability of programs and participant ownership of project outcomes.
- Input from participants on sustainability plans and systematic review of the plans throughout the life of the project with adjustments made as necessary.
- Inclusion of vulnerable populations.
- Joint identification and definition of key concepts with relevant stakeholders and stakeholder input into project activities.
- Systematic follow up with beneficiaries at specific intervals (3 months, 6 months, etc.) after the completion of activities to track how beneficiaries are retaining new knowledge as well as applying their new skills.

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

- The provision of large amounts of humanitarian assistance;
- Purely academic exchanges;
- Off-shore activities that are not clearly linked to in-country initiatives and impact or are not necessary for security concerns;
- Theoretical explorations of human rights or democracy issues;
- Micro-loans or similar small business development initiatives.

Fostering the Free Flow of Information into, out of, and within the DPRK

DRL seeks projects that promotes human rights and accountability through the programmatic approach of fostering the free flow of information into, out of and within the DPRK. Illustrative program activities include:

- Producing and transmitting radio broadcasts into North Korea, including managing the transmissions of radio broadcasts into North Korea on behalf of existing defector-led or Seoul-based organizations producing radio programs for North Korean audiences;

- Producing content and/or acquiring existing content of interest to North Korean audiences;
- Exploring new mechanisms or expanding existing mechanisms for sharing or consuming information and content;
- Raising awareness of legal rights under existing DPRK domestic laws and its international human rights obligations;
- Raising awareness of international best-practices and norms; and,
- Promoting fundamental freedoms, including freedoms of expression, movement, association, and peaceful assembly.

Organizations may propose activities not specifically identified above that align with the approach of fostering the free flow of information to promote human rights. **Organizations submitting applications for this category are strongly encouraged to do so in partnership with at least one other organization.** The organization submitting the application is designated as the lead applicant with partner organizations included as sub-award recipients. While organizations are limited to submitting only one (1) application under this category, this limitation does not extend to being included as a partner in another organization's application.

Documentation and Advocacy

DRL seeks projects that promotes human rights and accountability through the programmatic approach of increasing the amount of objective, credible information available about human rights in the DPRK, raising international awareness about human rights conditions, and engaging international actors to adopt approaches or actions that facilitate improvements in human rights conditions and/or lead to increased accountability for human rights violations and abuses. Illustrative program activities include:

- Establishing and/or maintaining a public online database of prisons and gulags in the DPRK, including a list of political prisoners;
- Documenting cases of human rights violations and abuses against DPRK citizens, including cases of forced repatriations or other human rights violations or abuses of North Korean people outside of the DPRK;
- Publishing reports that meaningfully contribute to, but do not duplicate or repackage, public information on DPRK human rights conditions;
- Increasing information available on perpetrators of human rights violations or abuses;
- Amplifying the documentation work of the UN Commission of Inquiry on the situation in the DPRK;
- Submitting reports or conducting advocacy campaigns at international or other relevant forums; and,
- Expanding global partnerships to mobilize increased support in other regions and countries for human rights in North Korea.

II. Eligibility Information

Organizations submitting SOIs must meet the following criteria:

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

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

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

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

No entity listed on the Excluded Parties List System in the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#) is eligible for any assistance or can participate in any activities under an award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR 1989 Comp., p. 235), “Debarment and Suspension.” Additionally, no entity listed on the EPLS can participate in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the EPLS in SAM to ensure that no ineligible entity is included.

Organizations are not required to have a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number—formerly referred to as a DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) number—and an active SAM.gov registration to apply for this solicitation through SAMS Domestic. **However, if a SOI is**

approved, these will need to be obtained before an organization is able to submit a full application. Therefore, we recommend starting the process of obtaining a SAM.gov registration as soon as possible. Please note that there is no cost associated with UEI or SAM.gov registration.

III. Application Requirements, Deadlines, and Technical Eligibility

All SOIs must conform to DRL's posted Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for Statements of Interest, as updated in September 2018, available at <https://www.state.gov/bureau-ofdemocracy-human-rights-and-labor/programs-and-grants/>.

For all SOI documents please ensure:

- 1) All documents are in English and all costs are in U.S. dollars. 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 document is provided in both English and a foreign language, the English language version is the controlling version);
- 2) All pages are numbered;
- 3) All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper; and,
- 4) All documents are single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. Captions and footnotes may be 10-point Times New Roman font. Font sizes in charts and tables can be reformatted to fit within one page width.

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

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

- d) A brief description of the applicant(s) that demonstrates the applicant(s) expertise and capacity to implement the program and manage a U.S. government award.

An organization may submit **no more than one (1) SOI per category, for a total of two (2) SOIs, and must explicitly identify the category the SOI is being submitted. SOIs that request less than \$750,000 or more than \$3,000,000 may be deemed technically ineligible.**

SOIs are due by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on January 08, 2020; March 09, 2020; and September 18, 2020 on www.grants.gov or SAMS Domestic (<https://mygrants.servicenow.com>) under the announcement titled “Annual Program Statement for Statements of Interest for Human Rights, Accountability, and Access to Information in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea),” funding opportunity number “SFOP0006703.” DRL reserves the right to review applications on a rolling basis and more frequently than the three identified deadlines. Organizations can submit SOIs for each round that DRL reviews SOIs regardless of the outcome of the previous SOIs. Applicants should be aware that SOIs received by March 09, 2020 will be considered for funding in Fiscal Year 2020 whereas SOIs received after March 09, 2020 will likely be considered for funding in Fiscal Year 2021 unless additional funding remains available for Fiscal Year 2020.

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

IV. Review and Selection Process

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

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

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

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

Review Criteria

Quality of Program Idea

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

Program Planning

A strong SOI will include a clear articulation of how the proposed program activities and expected results (both outputs and outcomes) contribute to specific program objectives and the overall program goal. Objectives should be ambitious, yet measurable, results-focused, and achievable in a reasonable time frame.

Ability to Achieve Objectives/Institutional Capacity

SOIs should address how the program will engage relevant stakeholders and should identify local partners as appropriate. If local partners are identified, applicants should describe the division of labor among the applicant and any local partners. SOIs should demonstrate the organization's expertise and previous experience in administering programs, preferably similar programs targeting the requested program area or similarly challenging environments.

For additional guidance, please see DRL's posted Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for Statements of Interest, as updated in September 2018, available at <https://www.state.gov/bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/programs-and-grants/>.

V. Additional Information

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

Due to the determination made under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) for FY 2020, certain assistance that benefits the DPRK may be subject to a restriction under the TVPA. Because the TVPA restriction applies only to assistance to governments, activities proposed for these countries should not include government beneficiaries.

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

Restrictions may apply to any proposed assistance to police or other law enforcement. Among these, pursuant to section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA), no assistance may be furnished to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country when there is credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. In accordance with the requirements of section 620M of the FAA, also known as the Leahy law, program beneficiaries or participants from a foreign government's security forces may need to be vetted by the Department before the provision of any assistance.

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

Organizations should also be aware that if ultimately selected for an award, the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards set forth in 2 CFR Chapter 200 (Sub-Chapters A through F) shall apply to all non-Federal entities, except for assistance awards to Individuals and Foreign Public Entities. Please note that as of December 26, 2014, 2 CFR 200 (Sub-Chapters A through E) now applies to foreign organizations, and Sub-Chapters A through D shall apply to all for-profit entities. The applicant/recipient of the award and any sub-recipient under the award must comply with all applicable terms and conditions, in addition to the assurance and certifications made part of the Notice of Award. The Department's Standard Terms and Conditions can be viewed on DRL's Resources page at: <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/c72333.htm>.

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

This solicitation will appear on www.grants.gov, [SAMS Domestic \(https://mygrants.servicenow.com/grants/portal_login.do\)](https://mygrants.servicenow.com/grants/portal_login.do) and DRL's website <https://www.state.gov/bureau-ofdemocracy-human-rights-and-labor/programs-and-grants/>.

Background Information on DRL and DRL Funding

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

Additional background information on DRL and the human rights report can be found on <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-civilian-security-democracy-and-human-rights/bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/>.

VI. Contact Information

SAMS Domestic Help Desk:

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

Grants.gov Helpdesk:

For assistance with Grants.gov accounts and technical issues related to using the system, please call the Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 or email support@grants.gov. The Contact Center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except federal holidays.

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

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

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