

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
U.S. Embassy Yerevan
Statement of Interest (SOI)**

Funding Opportunity Title: Media and Information Literacy Hackathon
Funding Opportunity Number: Media-FY23-ARM3
Deadline for Applications: April 23, 2023 (11:59 p.m. local/Armenia time)
CFDA Number: 19.900
Total Amount Available: up to \$70,000 (pending funds availability)

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The U.S. Embassy Yerevan, of the U.S. Department of State, announces an open competition for organizations to submit a statement of interest (SOI) to implement the “Media and Information Literacy Hackathon” program in Armenia. Please carefully follow all instructions below.

The submission of the SOI is the first step in a two-step process. Applicants must first submit a concise (two to three pages) statement of interest designed to clearly communicate the program idea and objectives. This is not a full proposal. The purpose of the SOI process is to allow applicants to submit program ideas for evaluation prior to requiring the development of a full proposal application. Upon a merit review of eligible SOIs, selected applicants will be invited to expand on their program idea(s) by submitting a full proposal application. Full proposals will go through a second merit review before final funding decision(s) are made.

The due date for receipt of this proposal is April 23, 2023 (11:59 p.m. local/Armenia time). Before submitting the proposal, your organization should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications and assurances to ensure that your organization will be able to comply.

Issuance of this solicitation does not constitute an award commitment by the U.S. Department of State. A final award cannot be made until the proposal has been reviewed and approved, and an award agreement is drawn up and signed by the Grants Officer. The Bureau/Embassy reserves the right to decide not to issue an award after receipt of the proposal. The Bureau/Embassy also reserves the right to reduce, revise, and/or increase proposal budget in accordance with the needs of the program and availability of funds.

Priority Region:
Armenia.

Program objectives:

The **goal** of this program is to promote the creative thinking and problem-solving skills of the Armenian youth and to empower them to produce innovative solutions that can advance media and information literacy in Armenia.

Specific project **objectives** include:

- **Objective 1:** Organize a media and information literacy hackathon in Armenia that will advance the creative thinking, entrepreneurial, and problem-solving skills of around 50 young Armenians, aged 16-30, with a focus on university students.
- **Objective 2:** Through the hackathon activity, empower the Armenian youth to ideate at least 10 innovative solutions aimed at promoting overall media/information literacy and disinformation resiliency in Armenia.
- **Objective 3:** Support the implementation of at least three media and information literacy solutions, proposed within the hackathon, and introduce the resources to at least 200 beneficiaries through awareness-raising activities.

The project should include the following **activities**:

- Organize a media and information literacy hackathon that will bring together at least 50 young people as well as tech specialists, media practitioners, and media literacy experts for joint activities. The hackathon may include thematic workshops, masterclasses, panel discussions, unstructured ideation, and project design segments.
- Organize a pitching ceremony at the conclusion of the hackathon with a professional review panel to assess the proposed solutions.
- Set up a prize fund of at least \$10,000 to support the implementation of at least three media and information literacy solutions selected by the hackathon panel. Project applicants are encouraged to proactively engage private sector partners to potentially augment the prize fund.
- Upon the conclusion of the hackathon activity, design tailored mentorship programs for successful hackathon participants to facilitate the effective implementation of the proposed solutions.
- Involve at least one prominent U.S. expert to lead dedicated activities during the hackathon and to act as a mentor during the post-hackathon mentorship period.
- Project applicants are encouraged to connect successful participants with ecosystem partners from the United States for ongoing mentorship support, consultation, and possible collaboration.

Expected program **results** include:

- Armenian youth gain advanced soft and entrepreneurial skills and are engaged in creative problem solving.
- Innovative media literacy solutions are developed and implemented in Armenia and improve overall disinformation resiliency.

Participants and Audiences:

The primary audience of this program are young people from Armenia, aged 16-30, with a focus on university students. Applicants are strongly encouraged to proactively involve beneficiaries from regional and rural communities of Armenia. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the program will support and advance equity and engage underserved communities in the program.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Length of performance period: up to 12 months

Number of awards anticipated: 1

Award amounts: up to \$70,000

Type of Funding: FY 22/23 Assistance to Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia (AEECA) funds under the Foreign Assistance Act

Anticipated program start date: August 1, 2023

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

Funding Instrument Type: U.S. Embassy Yerevan anticipates awarding a cooperative agreement. Cooperative agreements involve “substantial involvement” or greater U.S. government participation in the project. U.S. Embassy Yerevan will undertake reasonable and programmatically necessary substantial involvement. Examples of substantial involvement can include, but are not limited to:

- Active collaboration with the recipient in the implementation of the award;
- Joint preparation or presentation of results with the recipient;
- Approval of invited international speakers;
- Approval of the hackathon award winners.

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

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

Not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations, from Armenia and the United States are eligible to apply to this program.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing or matching is not required.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Please see Section E.4 for more information. Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Content and Form of Application Submission:

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

Content of SOI must include:

- A brief project description summarizing goals, objectives, outcomes, performance indicators, beneficiaries, and proposed timeline;
- A clear statement of the applicant's organizational capacity to carry out the proposed activity and manage U.S. Government funds;
- The anticipated total budget amount (in U.S. dollars);
- Brief information on the project key personnel.

All documents must be fully in English.

2. Submission Dates and Times

SOIs are due no later than April 23, 2023 (11:59 p.m. local/Armenia time).

3. Funding Restrictions

The funds requested under this program CANNOT fund partisan political activity; humanitarian aid and charities or charitable activities; scientific research; fundraising campaigns; commercial projects; trade activities; conferences and individual trips abroad; projects aimed primarily at the institutional development of the recipient organization. Please note that award funds cannot be used to purchase alcoholic beverages.

4. Other Submission Requirements

All application materials must be submitted by email to yerevangrants@state.gov.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Criteria

Each SOI will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the evaluation criteria outlined below:

Quality of Program Idea – 50 points: The SOI is responsive to program framework. The idea is communicated well and is feasible. SOIs that promote creative approaches to address program objectives are highly encouraged. The proposed timeline is reasonable.

Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Grants –35 points: The SOI should demonstrate the organization's expertise and previous experience in administering programs. If a local partner is identified, SOIs should briefly describe the partner's role and experience.

Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives – 15 points: The SOI should clearly articulate proposed program activities and expected results towards achieving program objectives and goal(s).

2. Review and Selection Process

Grants Review Committee will evaluate all eligible SOIs. All eligible SOIs will be reviewed against the criteria listed above. SOIs are reviewed individually against the criteria and not against competing SOIs. For a balanced review, all panelists will review the first page of the SOI up to the page limit and no further. The panel may provide conditions and/or recommendations on SOIs to enhance the proposed program. Conditions must be addressed, and recommendations should be addressed in a full proposal application.

3. Following the review, any successful SOI applicants will be contacted and instructed to submit full applications. A full application will include:
 - **SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance – organizations)**
 - **SF424A (Budget Information for Non-Construction programs)**
 - **SF424B (Assurances for Non-Construction programs) for individual or organization exempted from registering in SAM.**
4. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

Required Registrations:

All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration with the SAM.gov. A 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.

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

The 2 CFR 200 requires that sub-grantees obtain a UEI number. Please note the UEI for sub-grantees is not required at the time of application but will be required before an award is processed and/or directed to a sub-grantee.

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

- Organizations **based outside of the United States** and that do not pay employees within the United States do not need an EIN from the IRS but do need a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.
- **Please note that as of November 2022 and February 2022 respectively, organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and**

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

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

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

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO plan to do business with the DoD in addition to Department of State should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Apply for an NCAGE code by following the instructions on the NSPA NATO website linked below:

NCAGE Homepage:

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

NCAGE Code Request Tool (NCRT):

Exemptions

An exemption from the UEI and sam.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis if:

- An applicant’s identity must be protected due to potential endangerment of their mission, their organization’s status, their employees, or individuals being served by the applicant.
- For an applicant, if the Federal awarding agency makes a determination that there are exigent circumstances that prohibit the applicant from receiving a unique entity identifier and completing SAM registration prior to receiving a Federal award. In these instances, Federal awarding agencies must require the recipient to obtain a unique entity identifier and complete SAM registration within 30 days of the Federal award date.

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the NOFO at least two weeks prior to the deadline in the NOFO providing a justification of their request. Approval for a SAM.gov exemption must come from the warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

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

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

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