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Subject: **NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO) NUMBER: 72012118RFA00004**

Program Title: The Media Program in Ukraine

Issuance Date: March 22, 2018
Deadline for Questions: April 16, 2018 by 16:00 Kyiv Local Time
Full Application Closing: May 10, 2018 by 16:00 Kyiv Local Time

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through the Regional Contracting Office in Kyiv, Ukraine is seeking applications from qualified U.S. or Non-U.S. non-profit or for-profit Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and other qualified non-USG organizations for funding of an activity entitled "The Media Program in Ukraine."

Eligible organizations interested in submitting an application are encouraged to read this NOFO thoroughly to understand the type of project sought (Section I), the application submission requirements (Sections III and IV), and the evaluation process and review criteria (Section V). To be eligible for award, the applicant must provide all information required in this NOFO, and meet eligibility standards in Section III. Applications must be received by the date and time indicated at the top of this cover letter.

This funding opportunity is posted on www.grants.gov and may be amended. Any future amendments to this NOFO can be downloaded from www.grants.gov. Potential applicants should regularly check the website to ensure they have the latest information pertaining to this NOFO. Applicants will need to have available or download Adobe program to their computers in order to view and save the Adobe forms properly. If you have difficulty registering on www.grants.gov or accessing the NOFO, please contact the Grants.gov Helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or via mail at support@grants.gov for technical assistance.

Any questions concerning this NOFO should be submitted in writing to Ms. Marina Orlova, Senior Acquisition & Assistance Specialist, via email at morlova@usaid.gov with a copy to me at dharter@usaid.gov by the deadline stated above. Responses to the questions will be made available to all applicants through an amendment to this NOFO and posted on www.grants.gov.

Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute any 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 an application. Further, USAID reserves the right to reject any or all applications received. Final award cannot be made until funds have been fully appropriated, allocated, and committed through internal USAID procedures. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense. Thank you for your interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

Daniel Harter
Regional Agreement Officer

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SECTION I – PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Program Title: The Media Program in Ukraine

I. Introduction

The purpose of the Media Program is to strengthen the civically relevant role of media in democratic processes in Ukraine, and expand citizens' access to quality information in order to counter malign influence and support European integration. USAID/Ukraine will provide up to $35,000,000, subject to the availability of funds, for the five-year Program, of which at least 50% should be sub-granted to Ukrainian organizations.

II. Background and Problem Statement

The 2013 EuroMaidan and 2014 Revolution of Dignity have pushed Ukraine towards democratic reform and European integration. At the same time, the Government of Russia has been seeking to undermine this process and maintain its traditional political, economic, and military influence by waging a covert war and a massive campaign of disinformation. Although IREX's Media Sustainability Index[1] has tracked Ukraine's media sector's upward trend, key development problems remain related to the quality of information, professionalism, audience trust, supporting institutions, and legal reforms, as described below. These problems are exacerbated by Russia-linked aggression in the information space, an economic slowdown, unresolved conflict in the East and the purported annexation of Crimea, and the growth of political populism in advance of the 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections. <u>Therefore, the primary development challenges that the Program should address are the lack of an accountable media sector that provides quality, accessible information on public interest topics; an insufficiently media literate populace; and, a media environment that is vulnerable to malign Kremlin-supported narratives.</u>

To inform the development of this Program, USAID conducted consultations with key practitioners and stakeholders from Ukraine's media sector, and analyzed numerous studies, indices, assessments, and briefing reports (see List of Analytical Resources at the end of this Section). These consultations and literature review noted that while Ukraine's media sector has undergone a significant, positive transformation since the 2014 Revolution of Dignity, key processes, institutions, and capacities need to be strengthened in order to sustain such advances.

Coordinated Campaign of Disinformation: Among the most overt forms of Russia-linked aggression in Ukraine has been a coordinated campaign of disinformation and propaganda aimed at undermining democratic reform and European integration, sowing disunity among Ukrainians and prolonging the conflict on the Government of Russia's terms. Ukrainian leaders and media outlets have largely responded to this campaign with counter-propaganda of their own. Authorities have outlawed Russian broadcast and information products, including popular Internet sources, and have instituted new policies requiring increased use of the Ukrainian language. The

[1] Available here: https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2017-ukraine.pdf

most popular television channels in the country are oligarch-controlled and often reinforce malign Kremlin narratives characterizing Ukraine as unstable and intolerant; even independent news sources are often skewed in other, overtly political ways.[2]

Trust Gap: Kremlin-linked disinformation has severely damaged trust in Russian media in Ukraine, and has dragged down opinion of other media with it.[3] According to USAID's U-Media 2017 Consumption Survey[4], trust in national media has decreased from a high of 61% in 2015 to 54% in 2017 and in regional media from a high of 52% last year to 46% in 2017. When reporting on military actions in Donbas, 40.4% of Ukrainians trust national media, compared to only 22.2% of residents in the East (in the Ukraine-government controlled areas), as cited in a separate survey done by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology and Detector Media in late 2016.[5] Experts and literature consulted for this Program design attribute this decrease in trust to a variety of factors, including the information war with Russia in the context of the conflict and larger geopolitical issues, public political disputes among oligarch owners of major media outlets, and increased awareness by citizens of political and economic pressure on outlets.

The U-Media survey has tracked a steady increase in awareness of *jeansa*, or paid content disguised as news, over the past few years to a current high of 55%, however respondents' inconsistent ability to distinguish it and growing indifference to the problem suggest the need for improvements in media literacy efforts. While the Academy of Ukrainian Press (AUP) and StopFake have been active for many years in educating thousands of teachers, students, and community leaders through formal and informal approaches, both cite the need for a more systematic approach to media literacy. They point to the need for a "pyramid of support," including constant updating of educational materials and training; mandatory integration of media literacy into the curriculum, either through stand-alone modules or existing curricula; and adult education, including through libraries, discussion clubs, work training programs, infotainment, and other multiplier activities.

East and South: Russia's illegal occupation of Crimea and the conflict resulting from actions of Russia-led forces in the eastern regions of Luhansk and Donetsk have forced much of local, independent media to work in exile in other parts of Ukraine, leaving an information vacuum there and a growing divergence in public narratives of events on both sides of the contact lines. The Institute of Mass Information's (IMI) "Analysis of the Media Situation in Southern and Eastern Oblasts of Ukraine" in 2017 noted that the majority of local news covers military topics, crimes, scandals, and politics, with very little on socially relevant issues, like health care and education.[6] While the Government of Ukraine (GOU) has restored some of its radio and television broadcasting in parts of the Donbas, the broadcasting signals do not reach very far and

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2 USAID/U-Media and Internews Network. *Media Consumption Survey*, 2017. https://www.internews.org/sites/default/files/2017-09/USAID_UMedia_AnnualMediaConsumptionSurvey_2017_FULL_eng.pdf

3 Chatham House Report. The Struggle for Ukraine, 2017. https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/struggle-for-ukraine

4 USAID/U-Media and Internews Network. *Media Consumption Survey*, 2017

5 http://osvita.mediasapiens.ua/detector_media_en/reports_eng/survey_of_russian_propaganda_influence_on_public_opinion_in_ukraine_findings/

6 http://imi.org.ua/monitorings/doslidzhennya-media-sytuatsiji-v-pivdennyh-i-shidnyh-oblastyah-ukrajiny-2017/

are frequently jammed or completely inaccessible inside the uncontrolled territories. Authorities have blocked access to at least 60 Ukrainian websites in Crimea and to 113 in Donbas, according to IMI. One promising trend, as noted in USAID's Assessment[7] of the Donbas Region of Ukraine, however, is the diversification of the media environment in the digital space, which has been covering reform-oriented issues in ways mainstream media are not. In spite of this, the narrowing of the information space has led to a severe lack of trust in media in general. Trust in national Ukrainian broadcasters in the GOU-controlled areas is at 22%, or half the national figure[8]; and rumor, word-of-mouth, and other informal information sources have become disproportionately influential.

Implementation of Key Transformational Media Reforms: While parliament has passed major reforms since 2014 to strengthen the legal and economic framework for media to operate, including the creation of a public service broadcaster, de-statization of print media, and transparency of media ownership, full implementation of such reforms remains problematic.

In 2016, President Poroshenko signed into law the transformation of Ukraine's state radio and television companies into the National Public Broadcasting Company of Ukraine (UA:PBC), with an independent supervisory board. The establishment of a public broadcaster is required for accession to the European Union (EU), and represents a commitment by the GOU to pursuing pro-European reforms, building a more diverse and pluralistic media sector, and fostering a cohesive national identity through constructive, inclusive narratives. At the same time, the development of a truly independent public broadcaster in Ukraine remains hampered by vulnerability to political pressure, significant under-financing, the lack of effective and independent oversight mechanisms, and resistance to reforms among many employees.

The law on de-statization of print media also came into force in 2016, with the goal of protecting state- and municipal-owned outlets' editorial independence from government interference. The process of privatizing more than 600 outlets has been slow, however, and these newspapers face enormous challenges in restructuring staffing, running their operations as a business, and creating multimedia platforms. The law on transparency of media ownership for television and radio companies was adopted in 2015, requiring them to disclose information about the identities of their owners. The law does not stipulate publication of information about ultimate beneficiaries, however, and does not apply to online outlets.

Professionalism and Ethical Standards: Regular monitoring by Detector Media has shown that problems with balance and objectivity of news across Ukraine persists. Journalists frequently fail to distinguish between fact and opinion; do not verify statements; accept payment for directed content while rarely explaining this to the audience; unwittingly copy-paste content that helps spread misinformation and disinformation; and often rely on single-source reporting. Niche reporting is almost nonexistent and news items seldom include expert analysis, particularly on topics like health care, education, and politics. Moreover, coverage of recent government

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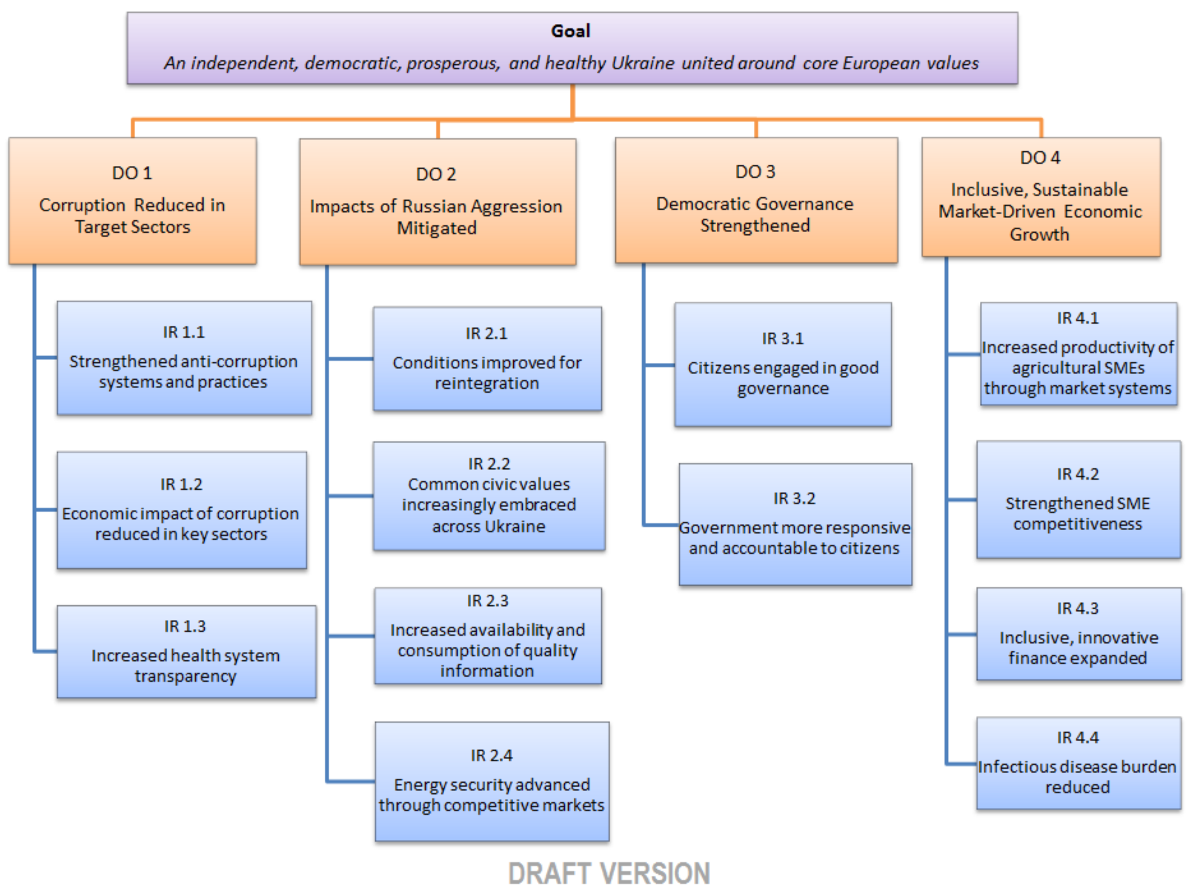
7 http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pa00mpjs.pdf

8 USAID/U-Media and Internews Network. *Media Consumption Survey*, 2017

reforms, including in the energy sector and on pensions, frequently lacks background, depth, and relevance to ordinary citizens' lives. These issues are exacerbated by a weakened economy where oligarchs often drive the editorial policies, and are particularly problematic among local media outlets, which face further decreased capacity and resources.

III. Relationship to Mission Strategy

USAID/Ukraine is finalizing its five-year Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for the 2018-2023 period. It reflects U.S. Government (USG) strategic priorities to tackle corruption, strengthen democracy, and improve Ukraine's economic prospects. The Program will support USAID/Ukraine's strategic goal of advancing an independent, democratic, prosperous, and healthy Ukraine united around core European values. To this end, the Program will cut across three Development Objectives (DOs), pending final approval of the Mission's new strategy: Corruption Reduced in Target Sectors (DO1), Impacts of Russian Aggression Mitigated (DO2), and Democratic Governance Strengthened (DO3):



Specifically, anti-corruption interventions will focus on support to investigative journalism through skills-building, improved access to resources (including for digital and legal security), and increased networking between reporters and anti-corruption activists to address citizen demands for reform. Media Program will counter malign narratives by the Kremlin in the information space by supporting the development and exchange of quality, engaging, and civically relevant content, with a particular focus on the East and South and local outlets outside of urban areas. Media literacy interventions, including media monitoring, aimed at journalists, community leaders, and citizens will also mitigate the impact of disinformation efforts by exposing the problem, improving critical thinking skills, and increasing the demand for fact-based, objective news and information. Finally, assistance to critical media reforms and institutions -- including strengthening the institutional capacity of UA:PBC to produce marketable, quality content; completing de-statization of print media and transparency of media ownership processes; strengthening governance bodies and improving financial viability of the media -- will help advance democratic governance that is responsive, accountable, and empowered by citizens.

IV. Program Approach

Incomplete transformational media reforms, manipulation in the information space (internally and externally), and the need to consolidate key capacities among media practitioners have hampered the media's ability to inform, engage, and unite citizens around key governance reforms. These problems, in turn, have also slowed the country's progress toward institutionalizing democracy and embracing core European values. The overall purpose of the Media Program is to strengthen the civically relevant role of media in democratic processes in Ukraine, and expand citizens' access to quality information in order to counter malign influence and support European integration. This can be achieved through advancing transformational media reforms; increasing high-quality, engaging content; increasing public demand for quality information; and strengthening key media institutions and processes.

Development Hypothesis: the Media Program's underlying hypothesis is that *IF* transformational media reforms are implemented, high-quality, engaging content is increased, public demand for quality journalism grows, and self-governance of the sector improves, *THEN* the civically relevant role of media will be strengthened and citizens will be equipped with quality information that counters malign influence and supports European integration.

Diverse Partnerships to Address Media Challenges: Building on the achievements and lessons learned of previous USAID/Ukraine media assistance programs, as well as ongoing activities related to anti-corruption efforts, civil society, rule of law, governance, and other sectors, as outlined in the sections below, the Media Program should take an inclusive and creative approach to address the aforementioned challenges. The Program should target its efforts on journalists, managers, media outlets, media support organizations, educators, citizens, and reform-minded allies in government; while also exploring new partnerships and coalitions with non-traditional media actors, including information technology professionals, social entrepreneurs, private sector representatives, and creative communities, among others. Close and continuous coordination with relevant implementing partners and projects will be required, and all interventions should be developed in consultation with local stakeholders to accurately reflect the context and challenges.

Flexibility and Contingency Planning: This Program will operate in a highly dynamic, unpredictable environment that will require flexibility in both planning and implementation. Challenges and uncertainties include adapting to Russian-linked aggression in the information space, the unresolved conflict in the Donbas, and upcoming elections in 2019, as well as the overall pace of reform. While targeting and tailoring interventions to achieve the objectives stated above, the Program should nevertheless be flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances. Comprehensive contingency planning will help ensure this ability to respond as needed and in a timely fashion.

Geographic Targeting: The Media Program will operate at both the national and sub-national (oblast, raion, and/or municipality) levels. While a number of interventions, such as those related to implementation of media sector reforms, will have national impact, the Program is expected to focus a number of its interventions towards populations most vulnerable to malign narratives and distrustful of mediated news/information, which are currently concentrated in Ukraine's eastern (Donetsk, Luhansk) and southern (Kherson, Mykolaiv, Odesa) oblasts. This will also include access to objective information by Crimeans (both on and displaced from the Peninsula), as well as coverage of Crimean issues and professional development of Crimean journalists. The Program is expected to work collaboratively with USAID to refine this geographic and demographic targeting throughout the life of the Program, in line with changing attitudes and consumption habits, as well with opportunities related to local-level implementation of national reforms.

Grant Mechanisms: The Program is expected to sub-grant approximately 50% of the total budget to Ukrainian media organizations. Grant mechanisms will vary depending on the program needs, nature of activities, and other factors, and may include: competitive and non-competitive grants; innovative "open door" grants to provide funding on a rolling basis for unsolicited applications that support strategic program objectives; seed grants to emerging organizations; and institutional support for core partners advancing reforms. Grants may be issued to national or local organizations, including partnerships and coalitions. The recipient will determine grant priorities in close consultation with USAID. USAID will have substantial involvement in approving all sub-grant awards under this award. Grant activities and achievements will be closely monitored and information on successful initiatives will be shared regionally and nationally. The grant-making mechanism will be structured in such a way to allow for swift approval of grants and simplified administrative and financial reporting requirements for nascent organizations. A minimum of 5% of the sub-grants pool will be reserved for a flexible, rapid-response grant pool to capitalize on unique opportunities or emerging challenges.

V. Activity Purpose, Objectives, Sub-Level Results and Activities

The purpose of the Media Program is to strengthen the civically relevant role of media in democratic processes in Ukraine, and expand citizens' access to quality information in order to counter malign influence and support European integration. USAID anticipates the following Program breakdown: (1) Increase high-quality, engaging content (approximately

50%)[9]; (2) Increase public demand for quality information (approximately 25%); (3) Implement critical media reforms (approximately 15%); and, (4) Strengthen and sustain key media institutions and processes (approximately 10%).

Overall Expected Results

- High-quality, engaging content increased throughout Ukraine, particularly in the East and South
- Public demand for quality information increased
- Critical media reforms implemented
- Key media institutions and processes strengthened and sustained

Objective 1: Increase high-quality, engaging content throughout Ukraine, particularly in the East and South (approximately 50%)

Aggressive disinformation efforts by the Kremlin, incomplete media reforms, and the unresolved conflict in the East and South have exacerbated long-standing problems related to the declining quality of journalism and the public's growing distrust of media. They have also underscored the urgency to support content production. Interventions under this component will promote high-quality content on public-interest topics that engages and educates audiences, and bolsters public debate on critical issues.

Increasing and Improving Content Production on Reforms and Other Key Developments: Recent studies in Ukraine suggest a strong correlation between public awareness of reforms and support for them.[10] To address the lack of quality coverage that not only informs *but engages* the public on socially important issues, the Program will support the production of news, discussions, and infotainment across all platforms (TV, radio, print, and digital media) about key reforms at the national level (anti-corruption, decentralization, healthcare, pension, energy, and others) and their relevance for local communities. This includes support for UA:PBC and its local affiliates on thematic programs, political talk shows, and debates.

Supporting Investigative Journalism: Investigative journalism will be an essential part of this program for the purpose of fulfilling the watchdog role of a free press, exposing corruption, and holding government accountable. This intervention will also include support for local investigative journalists using open data in innovative ways to cover these topics.

Improving Elections Coverage: Media will play a critical role covering the 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections. Activities shall include grants for election programming and monitoring, as well as specialized training in how to cover elections; legal aid to media; training on the election law particularly as it relates to journalists' rights and how to use public opinion and exit polling data; assistance for organizing candidate debates and issues discussion fora, and other

[9] Notional distribution of Activity resources among objectives.

[10] http://www.pactworld.org/sites/default/files/Civic_Literacy_BY-MD-UA_2017_en.pdf

efforts. Approximately 5% of overall life-of-project funds shall be reserved for election related activities.

Strengthening Professional Development and Cross-regional Linkages: The Program will support or, where necessary, create mechanisms, such as hubs or Press Clubs, for sustained professional development and content exchange throughout Ukraine. Whenever possible, the hubs should seek to build on existing spaces where such activities may already be occurring. The hubs will provide long-term coaching and mentorship opportunities for journalists and citizen reporters on both fundamental professional codes of conduct and substantive continuing education on public policy topics and niche reporting, including analyzing and reporting on open data sets effectively. Targeted trainings will also focus on improving financial viability and business management in key areas, such as audience measurement and analysis and diversifying revenue sources, and on creating engaging content through platform-specific approaches, a broader range of technologies and tools, and storytelling skills. Moreover, the hubs will strengthen linkages and partnerships through domestic and regional exchanges and fellowships, networking activities, and collaborative reporting and content exchange mechanisms. The hubs can be physical or virtual, depending on what is needed in the proposed areas, but will provide *sustained* and centralized access for local media practitioners to training and resources that build professional networks, strengthen business practices, improve content production and exchange, and increase audience engagement. These efforts should focus to the maximum extent possible on building on existing mechanism or structures, such as tailoring the functions of existing Press Clubs to serve as regional hubs. New hubs should only be pursued in high-need areas and sustainability plans post-the Media Program must be built in to hub design.

Emphasizing Interventions in the East and South: The Program will give special attention to programming that reaches the East and South, where events have limited residents' access to independent, objective news and information, increased the vulnerability of communities to Russian malign influence and manipulation, deepened social tensions, and presented a challenge for Ukraine's transition to a stable, democratic future. The implementer will be expected to utilize and continue media research, studying audience consumption and other sentiment in the region supported by USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives' Ukraine Confidence-Building Initiative (UCBI), which works to strengthen social cohesion in the East and South, and runs through 2019. The Media Program interventions will increase citizens' access in these regions to high-quality, locally relevant (through local as well as tailored national content), fact-based news and information through content production grants and targeted, technical assistance for local media, including local UA:PBC branches. This will also include interventions to increase access to information for Crimeans, both on and displaced from the Peninsula. The expansion of Ukrainian narratives as an alternative to Kremlin-supported ones will be crucial to help fill the information gap with more trusted, accurate sources of news and information, and ultimately advance a more inclusive Ukrainian identity.

Sublevel Results for Objective 1

- Quality content on UA:PBC and local affiliates increased

- Local coverage of key national reforms increased
- Coverage on the 2019 elections that bolsters public debate on policy issues increased
- Local capacity for in-depth and investigative reporting using open data sets strengthened
- Journalism skills in developing engaging, tailored content improved
- New regional mechanisms for collaborative reporting, content exchange, and continuing professional growth developed
- Collaborative reporting and content exchange across regions increased
- Access of residents in Ukraine's East and South to objective, high-quality, local information expanded

Objective 2: Increase public demand for quality information (approximately 25%)

Given Russian influence in the information space and increased political and financial capture of media outlets (particularly leading up to the elections), the extent to which the media sector improves in the next few years will be significantly influenced by internal pressure from within the profession and public demand.

Streamlining Media Literacy Efforts: USAID has invested heavily in media literacy efforts in Ukraine to improve critical thinking skills and stimulate demand for better journalism by the general public, as well as within the profession. This intervention will build on existing formal and informal media literacy activities to expand efforts and ensure coordination across initiatives. This will include expanding implementation of developed curriculum throughout additional schools in Ukraine; providing regular refresher training for teachers currently implementing the curriculum; exploring integration of media literacy into other subject areas, such as civic education or history; introducing innovative and interactive methods into modules; leveraging multiplier activities to reach adults and community leaders; and establishing complaint mechanisms for media professionals and general public to report violations of professional standards. As multiple donors have already been engaged in such efforts directly and indirectly with schools, libraries, houses of culture, and other spaces,the Media Program will amplify and coordinate the work of partners like the Academy of Ukrainian Press, StopFake, Detector Media, Internews Ukraine, the Ministry of Education and Science, and other stakeholders.

Expanding Media Monitoring Efforts: The Program will build on previous efforts by local organizations to monitor media for evidence of disinformation, directed content, paid news, censorship, conflict of interest, and other violations of professional standards. To this end, grants and technical support will ensure that local monitoring efforts meet rigorous methodological standards that prioritize objectivity, accuracy, and reliability. Assistance will include guidance and support on packaging data for different audiences, in a timely manner and a user-friendly format; providing action-oriented recommendations; outreach activities; and, maintaining a centralized, easily accessible library of materials for domestic and international actors. The target audience will include the media industry itself, government and civic leaders, international organizations, foreign governments, and the general public.

Sublevel Results for Objective 2

- Media literacy efforts expanded to more schools and other audiences, particularly in the East and South
- Citizen skills to determine quality media content improved, particularly in the East and South
- Consumption of high-quality content increased
- Media monitoring organizations regularly document and publish analysis on violations of journalism standards
- Ukrainian and international media consumers have reliable information pertaining to media professionalism
- Feedback mechanisms established within media support organizations and media outlets for journalists and citizens to report on ethical violations

Objective 3: Implement critical media reforms (15%)

The current U-Media Activity helped foster the passage of critical media reforms, including access to information, the transition from a state broadcaster to a public service broadcaster, privatization of print media, and transparency of ownership of media outlets. Interventions under this component will focus on enforcing consistent and equal application of these laws in line with international, and particularly European, norms; providing access to legal information, advice, and protection; and supporting ongoing monitoring and advocacy efforts for press freedom. As government institutions play a key role in this area, including the National Council for Television and Radio and the Ministry of Transportation and Communication and other government institutions, interventions under this objective can include training and other technical assistance to state institutions.

Supporting Application of Key Media Reforms: The Program will capitalize on the passage of key legal reforms for media to ensure their consistent and equitable application and enforcement. Interventions related to public service television and radio broadcasting reform will strengthen the independence of UA:PBC from state interference, including oversight mechanisms, and advocate for full funding of the entity under the current statute requiring 0.2% of the state budget. As multiple donors have been involved in this effort, assistance will be closely coordinated with the Governments of the United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden, Japan, the Council of Europe, and other stakeholders. Support for consolidating the process of privatizing state and municipal print outlets will include building on existing assistance programs, such as with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and targeting outlets that demonstrate potential to serve as progressive partners. For this identified group, assistance would include providing tailored and embedded mentoring in areas such as business management, digital convergence, content strategy, financial sustainability, and legal assistance. In the area of transparency of ownership, assistance will target organizations that monitor, analyze, and educate about media ownership, including concentration of ownership and financial transparency, and their implications for the sector’s independence from internal and external influence.

Providing Legal Assistance: Journalists, editors, and owners need regular access to legal information, advice, and protection, particularly in the wake of the aforementioned reforms and upcoming elections. Support for ongoing assistance to inform media professionals about their legal rights and limitations and help them navigate processes related to access to information, libel, tax investigations, licensing, and other areas, will be included under this objective, with special emphasis on regional media. Targeted assistance will also be provided for organizations to provide training, resources, and legal counsel for media outlets and practitioners undergoing de-statization that demonstrate potential for a successful transition.

Supporting Advocacy and Oversight: The Program will provide grants and technical assistance to local organizations conducting general advocacy and oversight for the enabling environment for press freedom, including for implementation and enforcement of the recent, key legal reforms, as well as relevant draft or newly adopted media legislation. These efforts can include exchanges for media reform leaders within and outside of Ukraine to share lessons and strengthen advocacy networks, the establishment of a flexible fund for ad-hoc, collective advocacy initiatives, and/or competitive grants for innovative partnerships and coalitions on media reforms among civil society organizations, media support organizations, and private sector groups. The target audience for interventions under this component includes the media industry itself (including Internet freedom advocates), policymakers, judges, civil servants, advisory bodies, civic leaders, international watchdog organizations, foreign governments, and the general public. Advocacy and monitoring efforts will inform these target audiences and catalyze continuing citizen engagement on freedom of expression and press freedom in Ukraine. In the area of access to information, support will help expand the supervisory powers of the Ombudsperson and specify the provisions of the laws defining public information and its types.

Sublevel Results for Objective 3

- Role of UA:PBC as an independent, appropriately funded source of quality information institutionalized
- More state/municipal print media reformed into private outlets
- Transparency of ownership law monitored and fully implemented
- Access to information law consistently adhered to and equally applied by public authorities
- Media practitioners' access to legal aid and protection increased
- Monitoring and advocacy for the legal enabling environment for press freedom by Ukrainian organizations strengthened

Objective 4: Strengthen and sustain key media institutions and processes (10%)

The 2014 Revolution of Dignity brought a reform-oriented government into power and created opportunities for advancing democratic change, including in the media and information space. Interventions under this objective will seek to consolidate recent gains made in the media sector, as well as over the past 25 years, by building on USAID/Ukraine's predecessor projects that have sought to indigenize media development efforts and strengthen the country's media support organizations. Ensuring a strong foundation for local efforts to continue after the Media Program ends will help capitalize on decades-long investments by donors and strengthen the response by local actors to unfinished reforms and ongoing challenges in the democratic process.

Financial viability is one of the biggest challenges facing Ukrainian media and media support organizations, particularly those engaged in oversight and advocacy initiatives. Although a few organizations have had some success in generating funds in recent years, media watchdog organizations that advocate for professional standards, adhere to democratic principles, and expose violations are unlikely to generate the level of resources needed to carry out their activities from the Ukrainian government, businesses, or citizens.

To this end, the Program will strengthen media governance mechanisms, expand partnerships and coalitions, and lay the foundation for more sustained local media actors' engagement in Ukraine's democratic process.

Supporting Pivotal Governance Mechanisms: The primary regulatory body for media in Ukraine is the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council (NTRC) of Ukraine, whose main function is to issue licenses and ensure media operators comply with the law. Media practitioners are currently discussing the potential for co-regulation with the NTRC that would include an expert body of private industry representatives, modeled after structures in Great Britain and Austria. Another important body is the Parliamentary Committee on Freedom of Speech and Information Policy, which works on issues regarding press freedom. Additionally, the Independent Media Council, which was established in 2015, functions as a self-regulatory body, with a mandate to monitor professional standards and mediate instances of noncompliance with media laws, international standards, or ethical violations. The newly reconstituted Commission for Journalists' Ethics also functions as a self-regulatory body, and comprises highly respected and influential members. Some media representatives have also discussed creating a new, more progressive journalists' union. Interventions in this area should streamline and coordinate efforts across regulatory, co-regulatory, and self-regulatory approaches to the sector's compliance. They should also support established feedback mechanisms within media organizations and outlets for citizens to report on ethical violations. Given the significant amount of control by political and financial interests in the editorial process of media outlets generally and declining trust by the public in the media as an institution on the one hand, and the investment by donors in media literacy on the other, trustworthy and effective governance mechanisms will be a crucial lever for increasing public demand and peer pressure for improvement in the media sector.

Strengthening and Expanding Partnerships and Coalitions: Support under this component will build on all of the interventions under the previous objectives, but particularly the hubs under Objective 1, to connect media practitioners with non-traditional actors (such as technology professionals, social entrepreneurs, civic tech activists, artists, industry associations, and digital security experts) to foster partnerships for wider impact and more sustainable change in the media sector. Specifically, assistance will focus on improving financial viability and business management, and will provide opportunities for media professionals to share experiences, insights, and ideas through cross-pollinating dialogue, particularly between national and regional actors. This could include activities that link these communities to improve financial viability, develop innovative ideas for content engagement strategies, engrain a culture of digital security at the individual *and* organizational level, and create advocacy coalitions around issues of common interest (like Internet freedom, community media support, and open government) to build solidarity and develop multi-tiered approaches to advance democratic solutions.

Laying the Foundation for Sustained Local Media Actors' Engagement in Democratic Processes: In 2016, USAID's UNITER civil society project conducted a feasibility study[11] to identify key options to continue UNITER's efforts of increasing citizen support for and participation in civil society activities, including long-term support for broad-based monitoring and advocacy. Building on UNITER's feasibility study, USAID's current civil society project, Enhance Non-Governmental Actors and Grassroots Engagement (ENGAGE) continues to explore viable approaches to sustain citizens and civil society engagement in Ukraine's democratic reform process after ENGAGE ends. This includes exploring several options: 1) working with one or several local organizations to stoke their passion and develop their competency as convener, advisor, and donor to local civil society organizations (CSOs) and civic coalitions; 2) establishing a new organization or organizations to fill this role; 3) leaving behind a legacy of independent CSOs able to attract donor funding without the need of an intermediary Ukrainian donor organization; or, 4) a new and innovative model of sustainability. Similarly, the Media Program will lay the foundation for sustained local media actors' engagement in Ukraine's democratic process. Throughout this effort, the Program should closely coordinate and collaborate with ENGAGE and other USAID capacity building projects, including the Capacity Building Marketplace, and the UCIPR Citizens in Action program, as well as other donors, to consider how to better-sustain local media actors' engagement in the democratic process. Applicants are invited to propose technically sound, contextually appropriate sustainable solutions to achieve this objective.

Sublevel Results for Objective 4

- Media governance institutions and feedback mechanisms strengthened
- Models for regulatory, self-regulatory, and co-regulatory approaches developed
- Innovative partnerships between media practitioners and non-traditional stakeholders established
- Digital security practices by journalists and organizations strengthened and institutionalized
- Media organizations' business development, financial, and management skills improved
- Strategic Sustainability Plan to ensure long-term local media actors' engagement in democratic process developed

11 https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/content/Detail.aspx?ctID=ODVhZjk4NWQtM2YyMi00YjRmLTkxNjktZTcxMjM2NDBmY2Uy&rID=MzczODIx&inr=VHJ1ZQ==&dc=YWRk&bckToL

VI. Coordination with Other Technical Assistance Programs

As a cross-cutting effort, the Media Program will be implemented in close collaboration with all Mission activities, including those outside of the democracy and governance portfolio[12]. This will help identify areas of complementarity, ensure consistency and accuracy on policy and reform messages, and understand how potential collaboration can contribute to stronger development outcomes. This collaboration will in particular focus on new USAID activities in eastern Ukraine as part of a broader effort to mitigate the impacts of Russian aggression. Efforts to build an economy resilient against Russian manipulation, engage local communities around common priorities, and form a common civic identity that connects to national reforms and Ukraine's future within Europe will be amplified through coordination with the Media Program. USAID/OTI's UCBI, which works to strengthen social cohesion in the East and South, is anticipated to operate through 2019. UCBI has been working with a large pool of media partners, including studying audience consumption and sentiment in those regions. Where possible and appropriate, the Media Program will build on the work of UCBI.

Additionally, the Media Program will closely coordinate with activities such as Responsible, Accountable and Democratic Assembly (RADA), ENGAGE, and Accurately Reflecting the Ukraine-Europe Union Association Agreement in Ukrainian Media (Solidarity Fund PL) on involving citizens in the legislative process, engaging civil society organizations in the democratic transition, and raising public awareness on policy reforms and EU integration. Additional activities that are important for coordination include Transparency and Accountability in Public Administration and Services (TAPAS), which includes a component on open data initiatives; Support to Anti-Corruption Champion Institutions (SACCI), which promotes transparency and accountability by empowering the government and citizens to fight corruption together; and the Europe and Eurasia Bureau's Regional Investigative Journalism Network (RIJN), which builds citizen demand to reduce corruption, fraud, and other criminal activities through increased exposure to professionally produced investigative journalism.

The U.S. Department of State funds several assistance projects that contribute to strengthening the media sector in Ukraine. These include "Neighbors," implemented by Internews, which is a capacity-building and content exchange program covering Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine; Eurasia Media Innovation Challenge, implemented by the International Center for Journalists and the Media Diversity Institute, which funds innovative content projects aimed at Russian-language audiences; Ukraine Media Partnership Program, implemented by IREX, which is a long-term professional exchange and leadership development program; and the Learn to Discern Program implemented by IREX and co-funded by the Embassies of the United Kingdom and the United States, which helps citizens identify misinformation and propaganda. The Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine also provides small grants under its Media Development Fund. The implementer will be expected to consult with these and any future State Department partners on media-related programming.

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[12] Mission activities across all sectors can be found here: https://www.usaid.gov/ukraine

Finally, the Mission has worked closely with more than 30 donors over the past year to improve information sharing, leverage funding, connect technical subject-matter experts, and link activity design and implementation for greater sustainability. In particular, maintaining clear communication on division of labor with donors regarding various sub-sectors of media assistance, such as support to UA:PBC or access to information in eastern Ukraine, will be crucial. The implementer will coordinate and collaborate with a number of other donors funding media projects, including: the European Union; the Council of Europe; Embassies of Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain, Canada, Japan, Czech Republic, Poland and others; International Renaissance Foundation; Konrad Adenauer Foundation; National Endowment for Democracy; Article 19, International Media Support; the OSCE and other donors. USAID has actively collaborated with all media donors and this process should continue.

Once the award has been made, the implementing partner must provide supporting documents regarding mandatory coordination and communication with other stakeholders carrying out related activities. Partners should share implementation plans and reports, as appropriate, to ensure effective coordination.

VII. Mandatory Cross-Cutting Considerations

The following cross-cutting considerations will be incorporated throughout this program.

Gender: USAID requires that all activities address gender considerations, ensuring that both men and women benefit from USAID support and that gender awareness is a built-in component of project activities. USAID/Ukraine's Gender Analysis Report summarizes the major observations and recommendations for technical support in Ukraine.[13]

Ukraine ranks 56th in the Gender Gap Index out of 142 countries.[14] The Government of Ukraine has stated that gender equality is a priority and has demonstrated this commitment through such actions as a robust legal framework to support gender equality and the creation of a National Program on Gender Equality. However, several challenges and obstacles remain, which contribute to and explain Ukraine's poor gender equality rankings, including: the lack of prioritization of gender equality in national policy and administrative reforms; the non-integration of gender in national statistics, planning, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation of State programs; overt sexism in mass media, advertising, and from public officials; and the lack of donor coordination and commitment to mainstreaming gender into programs and development considerations. In particular, media monitoring by the Volyn Press Club (VPC) and IMI have found that women are underrepresented as consulted experts in both national and regional news media coverage. Citing results from monitoring more than 220 print and online news publications in February and August of 2017, VPC reports that only 29-31% of print and online media attribute comments and expert opinions to women.

[13] http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pa00mq3k.pdf

[14] https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017

The Media Program does not envision a stand-alone gender component. However, applicants must place considerable focus on the integration of gender considerations ensuring that men and women both benefit from USAID's support and are treated without discrimination; gender awareness is a built-in component of all Program interventions; and resources are fairly distributed, taking into account the different needs of women and men. The Program is required to address the recommendations of USAID's Gender Analysis report. Specifically, successful applicants must:

- Invite Ukrainian gender experts (for example, those that train journalists) to conduct basic training for Activity partners on how to recognize and not inadvertently reproduce gender stereotypes.
- Activity will implement events that are directed to promoting non-stereotyped depictions of women and men, and periodically review partner program approaches to screen for harmful stereotypes.
- Build Activity Program stakeholders and beneficiaries awareness that gender analysis is a vital component of the democratic reform process;
- Support dedicated gender analysis of the barriers to women's advancement in mass media outlets.
- Promote the development of best practices to include female opinion leaders in media coverage of a variety of subjects.
- Encourage media outlets to develop self-regulation systems and ethical standards to ensure that gender stereotypes and sexism are not part of media reporting.
- Provide Activity grant recipients or sub-agreement recipients briefings on gender equality and gender analysis;
- Ensure Activity staff accountability for developing performance indicators for measuring success in contributing to gender equality in Ukraine;
- Include performance indicators in the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan that acknowledge the impact of gender relations on expected results as well as the impact of interventions on gender relations;
- Disaggregate Program performance indicators data by sex as appropriate and feasible;
- Clearly indicate the areas or aspects of the Program in which gender is relevant and demonstrate through the work and MEL Plans how gender issues will be addressed, how results will be determined taking gender into account, and what resources will be required and provided to do this.
- Clearly indicate the areas or aspects of the Media Program in which gender is relevant and specifically show in the Implementation Plan and MEL how gender issues will be addressed, how results will be determined taking gender into account; and what resources will be provided to do this.

USAID will monitor the implementation of the gender requirements. For more information about USAID requirements to address gender equality and women's empowerment in all projects, see

ADS Chapter 205, Integrating Gender Equality and Female Empowerment in USAID's Program Cycle.

Inclusive Development: The inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWD), Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), veterans, youth, the elderly, minorities, gender and sexual minorities (such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex persons [LGBTI]), and other vulnerable groups remains a challenge for Ukraine's democratic development and governance reforms. Where legal protections do exist, implementation remains ad hoc or ineffective at protecting the rights of the most vulnerable. Applicants should propose interventions and approaches that apply USAID policies and visions on Persons with Disabilities, LGBTI, and Youth, as well as international best practices on inclusive development, towards achieving the stated objectives.

Additionally, applicants should demonstrate understanding of and attention to issues affecting the inclusion of persons affected by the conflict in eastern Ukraine--taking a broad definition of "conflict affected" beyond those in direct humanitarian need as a result of Russian aggression--to include populations most vulnerable to malign influence and narratives about Ukraine, particularly regarding democratic reform and European integration. Inclusion of these conflict-impacted groups will have both geographic and demographic dimensions, which will be refined and applied by the implementing partner, in consultation with the USAID Agreement Officer's Representative, throughout the life of the program.

Sustainability: Sustainability has been fundamental to USAID's work over the 50 years of its existence and it is now a core part of its development policy and reform agenda. The Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development, the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, and the USAID Policy Framework recognize the critical importance of emphasizing sustainability in development cooperation. For the purpose of this Program, sustainability will be achieved when sector reforms are fully and responsibly implemented by empowered host country counterparts; beneficiary media organization and sector governance bodies take ownership of development processes; and citizen demand for civically-relevant news and information, and an ability to differentiate reliable sources from propaganda, is fostered.

LIST OF ANALYTICAL RESOURCES

Links to the following documents are provided to applicants as reference only. None of the information contained in these documents should be viewed as an official endorsement of a particular approach or strategy in responding to this RFA.

1. Abbott, Susan, Center for International Media Assistance. Rethinking Public Broadcasting, 2016. http://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/CIMA_2016_Public_Service_Broadcasting.pdf
2. Anand, Bharat. The Content Trap: A Strategist's Guide to Digital Change, 2016. https://www.thecontenttrap.com/
3. Ash, Timothy, Janet Gunn, John Lough, Orysia Lutsevych, James Nixey, James Sherr and Kataryna Wolczuk, Chatham House. The Struggle for Ukraine, 2017. https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/publications/research/2017-10-18-struggle-for-ukraine-ash-gunn-lough-lutsevych-nixey-sherr-wolczukV5.pdf
4. Bureychak, Tetyana. Studies on Men and Masculinities in Ukraine: Dynamics of (Under) Development, 2015. http://balticworlds.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/males-studies.pdf
5. Centre for Democracy and Rule of Law. Roadmap of Media Reforms for Ukraine, 2017. http://cedem.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/media_eng_final.pdf
6. Detector Media. Kremlin Influence Index, 2017. http://osvita.mediasapiens.ua/detector_media_en/reports_eng/kremlin_influence_index/
7. Detector Media. Main Trends in Media Coverage of Socio-political Processes in Ukraine 2014-2017. http://osvita.mediasapiens.ua/detector_media_en/reports_eng/main_trends_in_media_coverage_of_sociopolitical_processes_in_ukraine_in_20142017_based_on_ngo_detector_medias_monitoring_results/
8. Detector Media. Survey of Russian Propaganda Influence on Public Opinion in Ukraine Findings, 2016. http://osvita.mediasapiens.ua/detector_media_en/reports_eng/survey_of_russian_propaganda_influence_on_public_opinion_in_ukraine_findings/
9. Detector Media. Overcoming Barriers: Media in Covering Conflict-Sensitive Issues, 2016. http://osvita.mediasapiens.ua/detector_media_en/reports_eng/special_report_overcoming_barriers_media_in_covering_conflictsensitive_issues/
10. Foster, Michelle, Center for International Media Assistance. Media Feast, News Famine: Ten Global Advertising Trends that Threaten Independent Journalism, 2017. http://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/CIMA-Media-Feast-News-Famine_REV_web150ppi.pdf
11. Institute of Mass Information. Analysis of Media Situation in Southern and Eastern Oblasts of Ukraine, 2017. https://www.gfk.com/fileadmin/user_upload/dyna_content/UA/2_news-2016/Report_Media-poll_in_Six_Oblasts_ENG.pdf

12. International Center for Journalists. ICFJ Survey: The State of Technology in Global Newsrooms, 2017. http://www.icfj.org/sites/default/files/ICFJTechSurveyFINAL.pdf
13. Internews. 2017 Media Consumption in Ukraine Survey, https://www.internews.org/resource/media-consumption-ukraine-2017
14. Internews Media Monitoring Library materials, http://monitoring.internews.in.ua/en/
15. Kalathil, Shanthi, Center for International Media Assistance. A Slowly Shifting Field: Understanding Donor Priorities in Media Development, 2017. http://www.cima.ned.org/publication/slowly-shifting-field/
16. Kyiv International Institute of Sociology's databank and publications, http://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng
17. Nelson, Anne, World Association of Newspapers. Financially Viable Media in Emerging and Developing Markets, 2011. http://www.wan-ifra.org/sites/default/files/field_article_file/Financial_Viability_Report_WAN-IFRA.pdf
18. Reanimation Package of Reforms, Media Reform section http://rpr.org.ua/en/groups-rpr/11media-reform/
19. Reporters Without Borders and Institute of Mass Information, Media Ownership Monitor: Ukraine, 2016. http://ukraine.mom-rsf.org
20. Schiffrin, Anya, ed., Center for International Media Assistance. In the Service of Power: Media Capture and the Threat to Democracy, 2017. http://www.cima.ned.org/publication/media-capture-in-the-service-of-power/
21. USAID. Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Assessment for Ukraine, November 2015. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00KX12.pdf
22. USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy, 2018-2023.
23. USAID Gender Analysis Report, Ukraine, 2017. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pa00mq3k.pdf
24. USAID Performance Evaluation of the Ukrainian Media Project, 2011-2015. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00KZCX.pdf
25. USAID Strategy on Democracy, Human Rights, Governance, 2013. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID%20DRG_%20final%20final%206-24%203%20%281%29.pdf
26. U.S. Department of State, Foreign Assistance Standardized Program Structure and Definitions. https://www.state.gov/f/releases/other/255986.htm
27. Women's Consortium of Ukraine. Alternative Report on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in Ukraine, 2016. http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/UKR/INT_CEDAW_NGO_UKR_45_10229_E.pdf
28. 2016 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index Ukraine. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/CSOSI_Report_7-28-17.pdf
29. 2016 Human Rights Report for Ukraine, Department of State, https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper
30. 2017 Freedom of the Press Index Ukraine, Freedom House, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2017/ukraine

31. 2017 Freedom on the Net Ukraine, Freedom House. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2017/ukraine
32. 2017 Media Sustainability Index Ukraine, IREX, https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/pdf/media-sustainability-index-europe-eurasia-2017-ukraine.pdf
33. 2017 Nations in Transit Ukraine, Freedom House, https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2017/ukraine
34. 2017 World Press Freedom Index, Ukraine, Reporters Without Borders, https://rsf.org/en/ukraine

[END OF SECTION I]

SECTION II – FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. Estimated Total Funding Available and Number of Awards Contemplated

Subject to funding availability, USAID anticipates awarding one (1) Cooperative Agreement with a total estimated amount up to $35,000,000 over a 5-year period. The actual funding amount is subject to availability of funds.

2. Start Date and Period of Performance for Federal Awards

The estimated start date will be on or about September 30, 2018. The anticipated period of performance will be five (5) years from the effective date of the award.

3. Substantial Involvement

Through a Cooperative Agreement, USAID reserves the right of substantial involvement in assistance awards (including monitoring performance, reviewing reports, and/or providing approvals, in order to effectively support the achievement of the expected results, in addition to the standard prior approvals). USAID considers collaboration with the awardee crucial for the successful implementation of this program. Substantial involvement is deemed necessary and therefore is anticipated between USAID and the recipient during the performance of this activity.

Substantial involvement under the proposed award shall include the following:

- Review and approval of the Recipient's Initial Implementation Plan, Annual Implementation Plans (Work Plans), including the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan. Any significant changes to the approved Implementation Plan and the MEL Plan will require additional approval of the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR).
- Review and approval of key personnel and any changes by the AOR;
- Subawards (sub-contracts and sub-grants): Approval of all subawards including extensions. The AOR will be substantially involved in approval of subawards and contracts, in accordance with 2CFR200.308 (c)(6).

The above substantial involvement will be delegated to the AOR. The AOR will be responsible for oversight and technical guidance of the Recipient, both in writing and verbally. The recipient will be expected to meet regularly (via phone, email or in person) with the AOR or his/her designee to review the status of activities, and should be prepared to make periodic briefings to USAID as appropriate.

4. Title to Property

Property Title will be vested with the Recipient in accordance with 2 CFR 200.311.

5. Authorized Geographic Code

The authorized Geographic Code for procurement of goods and services under this award is 110 and 937 as described in 22 CFR 228.

6. Purpose of the Award

The principal purpose of the relationship with the Recipient and under the subject activity is to transfer funds to accomplish a public purpose of support of the Media Program in Ukraine described in the Program Description, in Section I of this NOFO.

The Recipient will be responsible for ensuring the achievement of the activity objectives and the efficient and effective administration of the award through the application of sound management practices. The Recipient will assume responsibility for administering Federal funds in a manner consistent with underlying agreements, activity objectives, and the terms and conditions of the Federal award. The Recipient using its own unique combination of staff, facilities, and experience, has the primary responsibility for employing whatever form of sound organization and management techniques may be necessary in order to assure proper and efficient administration of the resulting award.

[END OF SECTION II]

SECTION III - ELIGIBLITY INFORMATION

A. Types of Entities Eligible to Apply

USAID encourages applications from potential new partners. USAID will not accept applications from individuals.

To be eligible for award of a Cooperative Agreement, in addition to other conditions of this NOFO, organizations must have a commitment to non-discrimination with respect to beneficiaries and adherence to equal opportunity employment practices. Non-discrimination includes equal treatment without regard to race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and political affiliation.

The following types of entities are **eligible** to apply for funding under this RFA:

1. U.S. and Non-U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

a) U.S. and Non-U.S. Non-Profit Organizations

U.S. and non-U.S. private non-profit organizations may apply for funding under this RFA.

b) U.S. and Non-U.S. For-Profit Organizations

U.S. and non-U.S. private for-profit organizations may apply for funding under this RFA. Potential for-profit applicants should note that, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.400(g), profit, which is any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs, is not an allowable cost for recipients of USAID assistance awards, and cannot be part of the project budget. However, the prohibition against profit does not apply to procurement contracts made under the assistance instrument when the recipient procures goods and services in accordance with the Procurement Standards found in 2 CFR 200.317 to 326.

c) U.S. and Non-U.S. Colleges and Universities

U.S. and non-U.S. colleges and universities may apply for funding under this RFA. USAID generally treats colleges and universities as NGOs, rather than governmental organizations; hence, both public and private colleges and universities are eligible, except public colleges and universities in countries that are ineligible for assistance under the FAA or related appropriations acts. Please note, however, that this RFA is focused on people-to-people programming that addresses divisions within a community and is not intended to fund academic research.

2. Public International Organizations (PIOs)

PIOs may apply for funding under this RFA. Please see ADS 308 for USAID policy on PIOs: http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/308

B. Registration as a Private Voluntary Organization (PVO)

NGOs that meet the definition of a Private Voluntary Organization (PVO) as defined in 22 CFR 203 http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2014-title22-vol1/xml/CFR-2014-title22-vol1-part203.xml are encouraged to register as a PVO with USAID. Applicants may find registration instructions here: http://www.usaid.gov/pvo .

C. New Partners

USAID encourages applications from new partners that have not previously received USG funding. However, resultant awards to these organizations may be delayed because USAID generally must conduct pre-award surveys of these organizations in order to make a risk assessment decision, in accordance with ADS 303.3.9 (for NGOs; ADS 308 for PIOs). Please refer to Section V of this NOFO, for additional information on pre-award surveys.

D. Number of Applications that May be Submitted

Any one entity may submit one application for funding in response to this NOFO.

E. Cost Sharing

ADS 303.3.10 Cost Share defines cost share as "the resources a recipient contributes to the total cost of an agreement. It is the portion of project or program costs not borne by the Federal Government." Although not required for this RFA, USAID/Ukraine encourages the potential applicants to propose cost sharing since "it is critical that the activity continues after USAID assistance ends." These cost sharing requirements can ensure that the project establishes adequate alternate sources of funding, as well as give the applicant a financial stake in the success of the program. The applicants' proposed cost share may enable additional worthwhile activities to be undertaken which USAID funds could not support. Cost share may secure the programmatic and financial sustainability of the initiatives. USAID encourages applicants to propose for which activities and in which amount cost sharing will be applied. The exact level of cost share is left to applicants to propose per 303.3.10.1 (http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303.pdf). For NGO recipient contributions to qualify as cost share, the cost share must be verifiable from the recipient's records; for U.S. organizations it is subject to the requirements of 2 CFR 200.306, and for non-U.S. organizations it is subject to the Standard Provision, "Cost Share"; and can be audited. If the recipient does not meet its cost sharing requirement, it can result in questioned costs. The USAID Mission Agreement Officer will determine whether any proposed cost share shall become a condition of the award. For PIO recipients, while the term "cost sharing" is not used in USAID grants and cooperative agreements with PIOs, the concept of cost sharing is manifested by the USAID requirement that USAID must have audit rights, and the recipient must comply with USAID's procurement requirements, if USAID will be the sole contributor to a trust fund established by a PIO.

Any proposed cost share will be reviewed for compliance with applicable regulations and policies describe above in this section.

F. Third Country Participant Training

Third-country training must **not** take place in countries that are:

- Considered unfriendly by the U.S. Department of State and to which travel by U.S. citizens is prohibited; or
- Identified as terrorist countries by the Department of State.

[END OF SECTION III]

SECTION IV – APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. POINT OF CONTACT INFORMATION:

The point of contact for this NOFO is Ms. Marina Orlova at morlova@usaid.gov, with a copy to Mr. Daniel Harter at dharter@usaid.gov. The point of contact will receive all questions related to this NOFO by the deadline specified in the cover letter. Responses to the questions will be made available to all potential applicants through an amendment to this NOFO and posted on www.grants.gov. The point of contact will also receive all applications related to this NOFO by the closing date specified on the cover letter.

To be considered for this funding opportunity, all applicants must follow the procedures set out in this NOFO. USAID may exclude applicants from further consideration if any submission is not within these parameters. Applications and all supporting material must be submitted in English.

B. APPLICATION MATERIALS AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION:

The federal grant process is web-enabled, allowing for applications to be submitted on-line. Complete Application packages shall be submitted electronically through grants.gov, and must be received no later than the closing date and time as indicated on the cover letter of the NOFO. Instructions to submit applications electronically on-line in response to this NOFO are found on Grants.gov in the "For Applicants" section – under "Apply for Grants."

Applications must also be submitted electronically via e-mail to the point of contact for this NOFO, Ms. Orlova at morlova@usaid.gov, with a copy to Mr. Harter at dharter@usaid.gov. Note: Hard copy or faxed applications are not acceptable.

All applications received by the closing date and time indicated on the cover letter will be reviewed for responsiveness and programmatic merit in accordance with the specifications outlined in these guidelines and the application format. Section V. addresses the selection criteria and evaluation procedures for the applications.

Complete application packages must be received by USAID no later than the closing date and time indicated at the top of the NOFO cover letter at the place designated for receipt of applications. Failure to include all information or to organize the application in the manner prescribed may result in rejection of the application as being unacceptable. Applications which are received late or incomplete will not be considered unless the Agreement Officer determines it to be in the U.S. Government's interest.

Applicants who include data that they do not want disclosed to the public for any purpose or used by the U.S. Government except for evaluation purposes should:

(i) Mark the title page with the following legend:

"This application includes data that shall not be disclosed outside the U.S. Government and shall not be duplicated, used, or disclosed - in whole or in part - for any purpose other than to evaluate this application. If, however, a grant is awarded to this applicant as a result of - or in connection with - the submission of this data, the U.S. Government shall have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting grant. This restriction does not limit the U.S. Government's right to use information contained in this data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction are contained in pages___."; and

(ii) Mark each sheet of data it wishes to restrict with the following legend:

"Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this application."

Applications shall be submitted in two separate parts: (a) Technical Application, and (b) Cost or Business Application. Both the technical and cost portions of the application shall have a cover page which includes the point of contact for the organization, including name, title, address, DUNS number, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address. Applications should be submitted in **TWO** e-mails inclusive of attachments. The TWO e-mails inclusive of attachments should be labeled as follows:

1) ORGANIZATION NAME – MEDIA RFA - TECHNICAL APPLICATION
2) ORGANIZATION NAME – MEDIA RFA - COST APPLICATION

USAID will send confirmation e-mails when the electronic files are successfully received. If no email confirmation has been provided, then the electronic materials were not received. Applicants should retain for their records one copy of all enclosures which accompany their application.

Applications should be prepared according to the structural format set forth below. Technical applications should be specific, complete and presented concisely. **A lengthy application does not in and of itself constitute a well thought out proposal.** Applications shall demonstrate the applicant's capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this program. Applications should take into account the merit review criteria found in Section V. of the NOFO.

C. FORMAT AND CONTENT OF APPLICATION

1. GENERAL APPLICATION FORMAT

Technical Applications (electronic copy) **must be in MS Word or PDF** format, single spaced, utilizing **Times New Roman 12-font size**, typed on standard 8½"x11" sized paper with 1" margins on top, bottom, left and right, numbered consecutively, and **not exceed 30 pages.** <u>The cover page, table of contents, acronyms list, executive summary, and annexes</u> will not count toward the page limitation of the Technical Application. Any pages that exceed the page limitation will not be considered by the review committee. All materials and supporting documentation must be submitted in English.

Applications will be evaluated on programmatic merit and subsequently on cost. As such, the Technical Application will have more significance than the Cost Application in the selection of a successful applicant. The Technical Application should demonstrate the applicant's capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this program. Therefore, it should be specific, concise, and complete. It should take into account and be arranged in the order of the merit review criteria specified in Section V.

Each applicant shall furnish the information required by this NOFO. The applicant shall sign the application and certifications and print or type its name on the cover page of the technical and cost applications. Applications signed by an agent shall be accompanied by evidence of that agent's authority, unless that evidence has been previously furnished to the issuing office.

2. TECHNICAL APPLICATION FORMAT AND CONTENT:

The Technical Application will be the most important item of consideration in selection for award of the proposed Cooperative Agreement. Therefore, it should be specific, complete and concise. The Technical Application will consist of the sections presented below. For ease of review, please place a header at the beginning of each new section.

The following outlines the page limits for the application. Pages exceeding these page limits will not be evaluated. In addition, if the annexes contain information that relates to the technical application, they will not be scored (e.g. placing elements of technical understanding and proposed approaches in an annex is unacceptable). Elaborate art work and/or visual and other presentation aids are neither necessary nor wanted.

The substance of the Technical Application should be used to address those considerations in Section V, APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION. The cover page, table of contents, acronyms list, executive summary, and annexes are not included in the page limit of 30 pages, however the executive summary should not exceed 3 pages. The number of pages used for annexes should be reasonable and include only minimum of necessary information.

There is a 20-page limit for the combination of the Technical Approach, the Implementation Plan, and the Staffing Plan. These 20 pages, after any negotiated revisions, will be included in the resultant Cooperative Agreement. Additionally, there is a 5-page limit for the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan. There is a 3-page limit for the Institutional Capability and a 2-page limit for Past Performance. The aggregate length of technical application should not exceed 30 pages.

The following are the details of the Technical Application content. The Technical Application should be submitted in the following format:

a) Cover Page (not included in page limitations) -

The cover page must include at a minimum the following information:

- NOFO Number
- Project Title
- Name of the organization(s) submitting the proposal (the lead or primary applicant clearly identified)
- Contact person for the prime applicant, including this individual's name (both typed and his/her signature), title or position with the organization/institution, address, telephone and fax numbers and e-mail address.
- Any proposed sub grantees (or implementing partners) should be listed separately

Applicants should also state clearly whether the identified contact person has the authority to negotiate on behalf of the applicant, or, if not, the contact information for the appropriate person with the authority to negotiate.

b) Table of Contents (not included in page limitations) -

This page shall list all sections of the Technical Application with page numbers and attachments.

c) Acronyms List (not included in page limitations) -

This page shall include the list of acronyms used in the Technical Application.

d) Executive Summary (not included in page limitations; should not exceed 3 pages) -

This section shall briefly describe:

- Concise summary of the approach and core activities that will lead to anticipated results and stated objectives; and
- Concise summary of how the overall project will be managed and implemented.

e) Technical Approach (included in the 20 page limitation) -

In this section, the applicant is not to merely repeat what is already described in this NOFO. The applicant should present a program description that focuses on describing the program that the applicant will implement. In this description, the applicant should discuss how they propose to achieve the objectives and make a significant contribution toward achieving the strategic purpose and priorities identified in USAID's activity description. Applicants will present a convincing and compelling articulation of their program and technical approach and demonstrate why it is the most effective way to realize the objectives of this activity, including a reasonable course of action and tasks relevant to the current needs of Ukraine.

The technical approach must clearly describe, and with enough details, the conceptual approach, methodology and proposed activities for the implementation, accomplishment and evaluation of the objectives. The rationale for the appropriateness of the suggested approach in Ukraine should be provided. The applicant's program description must clearly demonstrate the application of state-of-the-art approaches, models, tools and lessons learned from other projects.

At a minimum, the applicant's program description should address the following:

- Discussion of the proposed intervention, and how each will ultimately lead to achievement of expected results;
- Results and interventions applicants believe should be prioritized and why;
- Discussion of relevant and meaningful indicators at each level - intervention, outcome, Expected Results (ER) - which should each be linked or flow from each level unto the next. For example, each intervention must correspond to an outcome and each outcome must correspond to an ER. The relationship should be clear and/or explained in the narrative;
- Discussion on coordination with other USAID activities, stakeholders and other donor activities. Applicants should provide specific examples on how they will capitalize on possible synergies with other implementing partners and other USAID activities in this area;
- Strategy for capitalizing on existing local capacity and building on it to position the sub-recipient(s) to effectively manage the project;
- Strategy for the phase-out and sustainability of activities and results;
- Implementation timelines schedule; and
- Proposed plan for effective rapid launch of activities.

<u>Mandatory cross-cutting considerations:</u> The following cross-cutting considerations need to be incorporated throughout applicants' program (details are in Section I, Program Description):

- Gender;
- Inclusive Development;
- Sustainability; and
- Geographic Targeting

f) Implementation Plan (included in the 20 page limitation) -

Applicants shall include a draft implementation plan that describes how and when specific core activities will be developed over the life of the activity. Applicants must present a detailed explanation for the first year, with illustrative *key* activities, benchmarks, and results for the remaining years. The implementation plan should clearly outline links between the proposed results, conceptual approach, performance milestones, and a realistic timeline for achieving the semi-annual, annual, and end-of-program results. The implementation plan serves several purposes including a guide to program implementation, a demonstration of links between activities, strategic objectives and intended results, a basis for budget estimates, and the foundation for the monitoring and evaluation plan.

The implementation plan, at a minimum, shall include:

- Brief situation analysis in the context of what other donors and implementing partners and host-country governments are contributing;
- Milestones (or benchmarks) toward achieving those results over the duration of the program;
- Partner involvement and contributions to achieving the results;
- Timeline.

g) Staffing and Management Plan (should be included in the 20 page limitation) -

This section shall include the composition and organizational structure of the proposed team and a description of each team member's role, technical expertise, and estimated amount of time to be devoted to each relevant activity. The applicant should specify the structure of the entire program team, including home office support and implementing partners (i.e., sub-recipient(s)), and the applicant's overall approach to managing the program. The applicant should demonstrate how it will ensure effectiveness and efficiency, in order to achieve maximum benefits and results, and how it will utilize Ukrainian professionals for country staff.

Identification of key personnel and long-term staff positions, including their technical and managerial roles and responsibilities and qualifications, experience in international technical assistance projects, and abilities of proposed key personnel relevant to successful implementation of the proposed technical approach.

A one-page organizational chart may be included as an Annex that does not count against the 20-page limit.

Applicants must propose two key leadership positions which will be designated as Key Personnel under the resulting award.

Example:
- ***Chief of Party (COP) or equivalent title***
- ***Deputy Chief of Party (DCOP) or equivalent title***

Applicants must demonstrate that the Key Personnel proposed have:

- Experience managing complex media or related programs;
- Track record of successfully building and effectively managing diverse teams of employees

- Expertise in political analysis, media and democracy programming at large
- Effective interpersonal skills, creative problem-solving and ethical management; and
- Prior experience in working in a similar development sector and/or with other international donors.

Applicants should include in the staffing plan the desired complement of local personnel, including position titles, qualifications, and how their inclusion would best achieve the results of this project. Other information required includes:

- Organizational chart for the program team, including sub-awardee staff, if applicable (sub-awardee/subcontractor excludes local media organizations receiving support under this project);
- A plan which allows for early identification and proposed resolution of problems by the prime awardee and provision of related information to USAID;
- Description of lines of communication between the prime recipient and its sub-awardees (including both Ukrainian local partners or other non-local partners) which ensures a cohesive working relationship and achievement of results;
- List of proposed staff with attention to gender balance, and the development of indigenous Ukrainian capacity;
- If the applicant plans to collaborate with other organizations for the implementation of this activity, the services to be provided by each organization shall be described. [Note: indigenous organizations receiving sub-awards or technical assistance from the project would be considered recipients, and therefore should not be included in the proposal]
- The activity should have at minimum one staff member with gender programming and integration skills and expertise.

In an Annex to the Technical Application, applicants should provide résumés for the candidates proposed **for all Key Personnel positions.** The résumés should demonstrate that the proposed Key Personnel possess the skills and knowledge to effectively carry out their proposed responsibilities. Résumés may <u>not exceed three pages</u> in length and shall be in chronological order starting with most recent experience. Each résumé shall be accompanied by a signed Letter of Commitment from each candidate indicating his/her: (a) availability to serve in the stated position, in terms of days after Award; (b) intention to serve for a stated term of the service; and, (c) agreement to the compensation levels corresponding to the Cost Application. References may be checked for all proposed key personnel; **a minimum of three references for each proposed key personnel is required.** There is no special format for the references. Applicants should provide current phone, e-mail address information for each reference contact.

Applicants are encouraged to maximize the use of local staff wherever possible. Local staff should be fluent in Ukrainian and English. Knowledge of other languages from the region is a plus.

h) Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan (not to exceed 5 pages) -

The Application shall contain an illustrative (draft) Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan. The MEL Plan should explain how the applicant proposes to monitor the program and assess performance and progress toward achieving program results.

The applicant shall draft an illustrative MEL Plan using the guidelines set forth in SECTION VI – AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION, REPORTING, *B. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan*, of this NOFO.

In designing the overall MEL Plan, applicants should consider the human and financial resources necessary for its implementation. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all costs related to the implementation of the MEL Plan are included in the Cost Application.

i) Institutional Capability (not to exceed **3 pages) -**

Applicants must provide evidence of their technical and managerial resources and expertise (or their ability to obtain such) in program management, grants management, budget/financial management, technical assistance and capacity building provision, and training, as well as their experience in managing similar activities in the past.

The applicant should provide similar information for major partnering organization(s) *(if proposed)* that will be directly involved in program implementation. Information in this section should include (but is not limited to) the following:

- Brief description of organizational history/expertise;
- Past experience and examples of accomplishments in developing and implementing similar activities, including:
  - Provision of technical assistance and organizational development and institutional capacity building in the area of media;
  - Collaborations with donors, host country governments, and other stakeholders including civil society and media.
- Relevant experience with proposed approaches;
- Institutional strength as represented by breadth and depth of corporate experience in project relevant disciplines/areas.

j) Past Performance (not to exceed 2 pages) -

Past Performance information will only be reviewed as part of the Apparently Successful Applicant risk assessment and is not evaluated at the merit review stage.

Applicants must list all contracts, grants and cooperative agreements which the organization, both the primary applicant as well as any partnering organization(s) *(if proposed),* has implemented involving similar or related programs over the past five years.

Please include the following information under past performance information:

- Name, address, current telephone number and email address of responsible representative(s) from the organization for which the work was performed;
- Contract/grant name and number (if any), annual amount received for each of the last five years and beginning and end dates;
- Brief description of the project/assistance activity.

Past performance of the applicant and any major partnering organization(s) *(if proposed)* will be reviewed based on the implementation of programs or program elements of similar size and scope, and ability to achieve results. References may be asked to comment on both quality and timeliness of service, business relations, customer satisfaction with performance, effectiveness of key personnel, and effectiveness in quickly staffing a project and launching program activities.

k) Annexes (are not included in 30 pages) -

In the annexes the applicant shall include resumes for all key personnel candidates (per the details above, prescribed in section Staffing Plan).

Applicants shall also include signed letters of commitment for any major partnering organization(s) *(if proposed)* that will have significant role in the implementation of the program (excluding Ukrainian organizations that will receive assistance under this program).

3. COST/BUSINESS APPLICATION FORMAT AND CONTENT:

Cost is a required evaluation criterion and will be evaluated separately. Although the Cost Application will not be assigned points, it is an important evaluation criteria, although less significant than technical merit criteria.

The Cost/Business Application is to be submitted under separate cover from the technical application. Budget spreadsheets **must be in U.S. Dollars**, **in unlocked Microsoft Excel** format, pages with signatures in Word or PDF format.

The budget should be for 5 years and for $35,000,000 and should reflect the Technical Application.

The following sections describe the documentation that applicants for an Assistance award must submit to USAID prior to award. While there is no page limit for the cost application, applicants are encouraged to be as concise as possible, but still provide the necessary detail to address the following:

- **Detailed Budget (no page limit),** which provides a breakdown by elements of cost (e.g. personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, construction, other direct costs, indirect costs, cost sharing (if any)) for the total estimated amount of implementation of the project according to your organization's approach. The budget shall include costs associated with all programmatic activities during the project implementation. Budget must be in U.S. Dollars.

- **Budget Narrative**, which provides detailed budget explanations and supporting justification of each proposed budget line item. It must briefly describe programmatic relevance and clearly identify the basis of estimate (i.e. how the budget number was determined fair and reasonable) for each cost element, such as market surveys, price quotations, current salaries, historical experience, etc. The budget narrative should demonstrate how the budget supports and allocates sufficient and appropriate funding for all elements of the program activities described in Section I. Funding Opportunity Description (Program Description) of this NOFO.

The applicant must sign and submit the following MANDATORY standard forms as a part of the cost application:

- **(MANDATORY) SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance):** This form is provided in Annex 3 of the NOFO, or applicants may also download the form from the Grants.gov website. Applicants need only complete the fields in the form that are marked with an asterisk(*), as applicable. The form must be signed and dated by an authorized representative of the applicant organization. Instructions on how to complete the form are available on the Grants.gov website at: http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424-instructions.html.

- **(MANDATORY) SF-424A (Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs):** This form is provided in Annex 4 of the NOFO, or applicants may also download the form from the Grants.gov website. Instructions for completing this form are available on the Grants.gov website at: http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424a-instructions.html.

- **(MANDATORY) SF-424B (Assurances – Non-Construction Programs):** This form is provided in Annex 5 of the NOFO, or applicants may also download the form from the Grants.gov website. Instructions for completing this form are available on the Grants.gov website at: http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424b-instructions.html

The cost application should contain the budget categories as shown on the SF-424A:

- ***Personnel/Labor:*** Direct salaries and wages should be proposed in accordance with the organization's personnel policies. Details on the basis of estimate for each proposed salary should be sufficiently addressed in the budget narratives for all positions [key, consultants, short term technical assistance and non-Key Personnel]. Any proposed salary increase must be sufficiently justified and supported with the organization’s personnel policies (to be provided as annex to the cost application).

Note: **Annual salary increase** and/or promotional increase may be granted in accordance with the applicant's established policies.

- ***Fringe Benefits:*** If accounted for as a separate item of cost, fringe benefits should be accounted in accordance with local labor law.

- ***Travel and Per Diem:*** The application budget and narrative should indicate the purpose of trip(s), number of trips, domestic and international, and the estimated unit cost of each. Specify the origin and destination for each proposed trip, duration of travel and number of individuals traveling. Proposed per diem rates must be in accordance with the applicant's established policies and practices that are uniformly applied to federally financed and other activities of the applicant.

- ***Equipment:*** The application should specify the procurement of any tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by the non-Federal entity for financial statement purposes, or $5,000. The application should indicate the quantity of the equipment to be purchased, the unit cost and the total price.

- ***Supplies:*** The application should specify the procurement of all tangible personal property other than those described in Equipment. A computing device is a supply if the acquisition cost is less than the lesser of the capitalization level established by the non-Federal entity for financial statement purposes or $5,000, regardless of the length of its useful life. The application should indicate the quantity of the equipment to be purchased, the unit cost and the total price.

- ***Contractual****:* The application should include, if any, subaward(s). Applicants who intend to utilize other partnering organization(s) should indicate the extent intended and a complete cost breakdown, as well as all the information required herein for the applicant. **Major partnering organization(s) financial plans should follow the same cost format as submitted by the applicant.**

- ***Construction:*** Construction will not be funded by USAID under this program.

- ***Other Direct Costs (ODC):*** could include costs related to program activities described in the PD; communications, office rental, utilities, report preparation costs, other office operation costs, branding/marking costs, supplies, etc. The narrative should provide a complete breakdown and support for each item of other direct costs.

- ***Cost share****:* ADS 303.3.10 Cost Share defines cost share as "the resources a recipient contributes to the total cost of an agreement. It is the portion of project or program costs not borne by the Federal Government." Although not required for this RFA, it is encouraged.

The following information should be taken into consideration when developing the budget:

(1) Salaries and wages must be reflective of the "market value" for each position. Salaries and wages may not exceed the applicant's established written personnel policy and practice, including the applicant's established pay scale for equivalent classifications of employees, which shall be certified by the applicant. Salaries for locally employed staff should not exceed the Local Compensation Plan for USAID/Ukraine.

The US Embassy/USAID local compensation plan is an objective benchmark for evaluation the reasonableness of proposed salaries of local employees. Ukrainian labor market conditions are the same for USAID-funded contracts or assistance agreements.

The maximum daily rate <u>for senior locally hired specialists</u> is $251 under USAID contracts. Applicants are expected to conduct their own market research for determining the salary scale for locally hired positions in Ukraine or rely on their previous work experience and other implementing partners' experience in the region.

(2) This USAID-funded project implemented under the anticipated cooperative agreement will be for an estimated period of performance of five (5) years; also referred to as the award period. Unless the applicant/Recipient demonstrates otherwise to the USAID Agreement Officer's satisfaction, Cooperating Country Nationals (CCNs) employed by the applicant/Recipient solely to work under the USAID-funded project under this agreement are considered by USAID as employed by the applicant/Recipient for a specified period not to exceed the agreement period.

(3) The name (if identified), annual salary, and expected level of effort of each candidate named or TBD and charged to the activity. Provide annual salary history for at least the three most recent years for all proposed key personnel.

(4) If applying fringe benefit rates, the applicant must provide information regarding how this rate is being applied for each category of employees and an explanation of the benefits included in the rate. Should the applicant have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with the U.S. Government, submission of their approved NICRA is all that is required.

(5) Travel, per diem and other transportation expenses detailed to include number of trips, expected itineraries, number of per diem days and per diem rates.

(6) All equipment proposed to be purchased.

(7) Applicants should include any estimated USAID branding and marking costs in their budget. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all costs related to the implementation of the MEL Plan and Activity Location Data are included in the cost application. Applicants need to account for resources required for implementing and monitoring the environmental compliance activities in the technical application and in the budget and describe associated costs in detail to the degree possible in the budget narrative.

(8) Details regarding the level of cost share your organization is proposing for this activity **if any**. Cost sharing is desired but not required.

(9) Indirect Charges: The applicant and/or Major Partners must provide the organization's Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) if it has one.

D. RISK ASSESSMENT PRIOR TO ANY AWARD

The AO will make a risk determination as required by ADS 303.3.9 and 2 CFR 200.205 prior to making an award.

Specifically, applicants must submit the following information:

1. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement

The applicant must submit a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement NICRA if the organization has such an agreement with an agency or department of the U.S. Government. If no NICRA the applicant should submit the following:

<u>Reviewed Financial Statements Report</u>: a report issued by a Certified Public Account (CPA) documenting the review of the financial statements was performed in accordance with Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services; that management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework and for designing, implementing and maintaining internal control relevant to the preparation. The account must also state the he or she is not aware of any material modifications that should be made to the financial statements; or

<u>Audited Financial Statements Report</u>: An auditor issues a report documenting the audit was conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Auditing Standards (GAAS), the financial statements are the responsibility of management, provides an opinion that the financial statements present fairly in all material respects the financial position of the company and the results of operations are in conformity with the applicable financial reporting framework (or issues a qualified opinion if the financial statements are not in conformity with the applicable financial reporting framework.

2. **Certifications, Assurances and other Statements of the Applicant**

Required assurance, certifications and representations: Applicants are required to complete Certifications, Assurances and other Statements of the Recipient. Please note that these certifications are required for both the applicant and all sub-grantees. Applicants may view the current Certifications, Assurances and Other Statements of the Recipient in ADS 303: http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mav (Parts I-V).

3. **Additional Information**

Applicants shall submit any additional evidence of financial responsibility deemed necessary for the Agreement Officer to make a positive risk assessment to manage USG funds. The information submitted should substantiate that the applicant:

- Has adequate financial, management and personnel resources and systems, or the ability to obtain such resources as required during the performance of the award;
- Has the ability to comply with the award terms and conditions, taking into account all existing and currently prospective commitments of the applicant, both nongovernmental and governmental;
- Has a satisfactory record of performance. Generally, relevant unsatisfactory performance in the past is enough to justify a finding of non-responsibility, unless there is clear evidence of subsequent satisfactory performance or the applicant has taken adequate corrective measures to assure that it will be able to perform its functions satisfactory;
- Has a satisfactory record of integrity and business ethics;
- Is otherwise qualified to receive an award under applicable laws and regulations.

4. **Certificate of Compliance**

Please submit a copy of your Certificate of Compliance if your organization's systems have been certified by USAID/Washington's Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA).

5. **Statutory and Regulation Certifications:**

The applicant shall complete the certifications in Required Certifications (see above) and sign and date in the signature space provided. The signed and dated printout must then be submitted with the application as an attachment to the cost application.

E. DUN AND BRADSTREET UNIVERSAL NUMBERING SYSTEM (DUNS) NUMBER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT (SAM)

USAID may not make an award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable DUNS and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time USAID is ready to make an award, USAID may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

Each applicant (unless the applicant has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to:

(i) Be registered in SAM (www.sam.gov) **before submitting its application**. SAM is streamlining processes, eliminating the need to enter the same data multiple times, and consolidating hosting to make the process of doing business with the government more efficient;
(ii) Provide a valid unique entity identifier DUNS number in its application; and
(iii) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active U.S. Government award or an application or plan under consideration by a U.S. Government awarding agency.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all necessary documentation is complete and received on time.

Prospective applicants who are not currently registered in SAM are advised to begin the registration process IMMEDIATELY. For assistance with registering in SAM, please contact the supporting Federal Service Desk (FSD) at https://www.fsd.gov/. To obtain a DUNS number, please visit http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform.

Quick reference guides for new grantee registration in SAM are provided in Annexes of this NOFO.

F. FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

Any award will not allow for the reimbursement of pre-award costs.

USAID policy is not to award profit under assistance instruments to the Prime recipient. However, all reasonable, allocable, and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect, which are related to the agreement program and are in accordance with applicable cost principles under 2 CFR 200 Subpart E. of the Uniform Administrative Requirements may be paid under the anticipated award.

G. POTENTIAL REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Upon consideration of award or during the negotiations leading to an award, applicants may be required to submit additional documentation deemed necessary for the Agreement Officer to make an affirmative determination of responsibility. **Applicants should not submit the information below with their applications.** The information in this section is provided so that applicants may become familiar with additional documentation that may be requested by the Agreement Officer.

The information submitted should substantiate:

- Bylaws, constitution, and articles of incorporation, if applicable.
- Whether the organizational travel, procurement, financial management, accounting manual and personnel policies and procedures, especially regarding salary, promotion, leave, differentials, etc., submitted under this section have been reviewed and approved by any agency of the Federal Government, and if so, provide the name, address, and phone number of the cognizant reviewing official. The applicant should provide copies of the same.

[END OF SECTION IV]

SECTION V – APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

A. MERIT REVIEW CRITERIA

USAID will conduct merit reviews of all applications received that comply with the instructions in this NOFO. Technical Applications will be evaluated in accordance with the merit review criteria set forth below. The cost application of the "Apparent Successful Applicant" will be reviewed for general reasonableness, allowability, and allocability.

Applications will be evaluated using an adjectival evaluation scale (exceptional, very good, satisfactory, marginal and unsatisfactory).

The criteria set forth below will be used by the technical review committee to evaluate all applications submitted in response to this RFA. The criteria are listed in descending order of importance.

1. **Technical Approach:** Evaluation under this factor will focus on the soundness, clarity, realism, feasibility and sustainability in achieving all the program objectives and results identified in this RFA. In the evaluation of this factor the following will be considered:

    - Extent to which the proposed program is well-conceived, clear, technically sound, innovative and ambitious, yet feasible in achieving all the objectives identified in this RFA, with specific descriptions and illustrative examples of proposed interventions.
    - Extent to which the proposed approach demonstrates understanding of Ukrainian media development and challenges related to the accomplishment of program objectives.
    - Extent to which the program clearly capitalizes on Ukrainian capacity to implement activities related to the applicant's objectives and seeks to further develop that capacity beyond the life of the project.
    - Extent to which the proposed approach demonstrates an understanding of, complements, and leverages related USAID- and other donor-funded programs, as well as Ukrainian governmental mechanisms and initiatives.
    - Clarity, appropriateness, consistency and soundness of an *illustrative (draft) Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan* for measuring progress in achieving expected results of the program, including suggested performance indicators and a plan for collecting baseline and actual data.
    - Appropriateness and clarity of an implementation plan for efficient start-up and meeting objectives during the project period.

2. **Staffing and Management Plan:**

    - Key Personnel: The extent to which the proposed Key Personnel have the experience and capability in the following areas: managing complex media or related programs; track record of successfully building and effectively managing diverse teams of employees; expertise in political analysis, media and democracy programming at large; demonstrated effective interpersonal skills, creative problem-solving and ethical management; prior experience in working in a similar development sector and/or with other international donors.

- Management: Appropriateness of the management, composition, and organizational structure of the in-country project team and headquarters support to achieving the expected results. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates an ability to operate independently and effectively to deliver the results of the program. Relevant and demonstrated experience of proposed staff with successful similar programs, especially in the region. A clear and effective staffing plan with roles and responsibilities among different positions adequately delineated to demonstrate an efficient and effective use of human resources in meeting the objectives identified in this RFA.

3. **Cross-Cutting Considerations:** The extent to which the applicant addresses the cross-cutting considerations identified in Section I, Program Description, including: gender, inclusive development, sustainability, and geographic targeting. USAID will review the appropriateness of the proposed approach to these cross-cutting considerations, including the activities and staff proposed to integrate these considerations, as well as the applicant's innovative approaches to address these issues throughout program implementation.

4. **Institutional Capability:** The extent to which the applicant's organizational capability and experience demonstrates its ability to manage technical and administrative aspects of similarly complex media programs, achieve measurable results, and work effectively and efficiently with key stakeholders leveraging expertise to enhance impact.

II. COST REVIEW

Review of Proposed Award Budget

Cost is less important than programmatic merit and is not weighted. USAID will review the cost application of only the apparently successful applicant. Other considerations are the completeness of the application adequacy of budget detail and consistency with elements of the technical application. In addition, the organization must demonstrate adequate financial management capability, to be measured under a risk assessment.

If USAID does not successfully negotiate an award with the apparently successful applicant, based on programmatic merit, then USAID will consider the next highest ranked applicant and review its cost application.

Estimated costs should be in compliance with 2 CFR 200, USAID's and applicants' policies. Estimated costs will be evaluated for realism, reasonableness, allowability, allocability, and cost effectiveness. The applicant must justify in advance the proposed costs for each element of the program. The pre-award evaluation of cost effectiveness will include an examination of the application's budget detail to ensure it is a realistic financial expression of the proposed program and does not contain estimated costs which may be unallocable, unreasonable, or unallowable.

Proposed costs may be adjusted, for purposes of evaluation, based on results of the cost analysis and its assessment of reasonableness, completeness, and credibility.

To facilitate review of Cost Applications, please present your budget per SF-424A structure provided in the Annex of this NOFO.

III. PRE-AWARD SURVEYS

Prior to making an award under this competition, the USAID Agreement Officer may perform a pre-award survey of a prospective NGO recipient if he/she determines that any of the following criteria apply, in accordance with USAID ADS Chapter 303.3.9.1:

- USAID is uncertain about the prospective recipient's capacity to perform financially or programmatically.
- The prospective recipient has never had a USAID grant, cooperative agreement, or contract. This requirement does not apply to Fixed Amount Awards.
- The prospective recipient has not received an award from any Federal agency within the last five years. This requirement does not apply to Fixed Amount Awards.
- USAID has knowledge of deficiencies in the applicant's annual audit (Single Audit or equivalent).
- The USAID Agreement Officer determines it to be in the best interest of the U.S. Government.

Accounting systems, audit issues, and management capability questions may be reviewed as part of this process in order to determine whether the prospective recipient has the necessary organization, experience, accounting and operational controls, and technical skills in order to achieve the objectives of the program, or whether specific conditions will be needed. If notified by USAID that a pre-award survey is necessary, applicants must prepare in advance the required information and documents. A pre-award survey does not commit USAID to make an award to any organization.

[END OF SECTION V]

SECTION VI – AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Federal Award Notices

Award of the agreement contemplated by this NOFO cannot be made until funds have been appropriated, allocated and committed through internal USAID procedures. While USAID anticipates that these procedures will be successfully completed, potential applicants are hereby notified of these requirements and conditions for the award. The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. No costs chargeable to the proposed Agreement may be incurred before receipt of either a fully executed Agreement or a specific, written authorization from the Agreement Officer.

1. A written award mailed or otherwise furnished to the successful applicant within the application’s validity time as specified either in the application or in this NOFO (whichever is later) shall result in a binding Cooperative Agreement without further action by either party. Before the application's specified validity expiration time, the Government may accept an application, whether or not there are negotiations after its receipt, unless a written notice of withdrawal is received by the applicant before award. Negotiations or discussions conducted after receipt of an application do not constitute a rejection or counteroffer by the Government.

2. Applicants must set forth full, accurate and complete information as required by this NOFO. The penalty for making false statements to the Government is prescribed in 18 U.S.C. 1001.

3. Neither financial data submitted with an application nor representations concerning facilities or financing, will form a part of the resulting Cooperative Agreement unless explicitly stated otherwise in the agreement.

4. USAID reserves the right to perform a pre-award survey which may include, but is not limited to: (1) interviews with individuals to establish their ability to perform agreement duties under the project conditions; (2) a review of the prime recipient’s financial condition, business and personnel procedures, etc.; and (3) site visits to the prime recipient’s institution.

B. Award Administration

USAID/Ukraine Mission will be responsible for the negotiation and obligation, and subsequent management and administration, of award which develop from successful application. The Mission Agreement Officer will be responsible for conducting negotiations, making the awards, and obligating costs to recommended partner(s). He/she will only do so after making a positive risk assessment or responsibility determination that the applicant possesses, or has the ability to obtain, the necessary management competence in planning and carrying out assistance programs and that it will practice mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets

provided by USAID. The Agreement Officer will also designate an Agreement Officer Representative (AOR) to assist in the technical management and oversight of the award.
Resulting awards to **U.S. non-governmental organizations** will be administered in accordance with 2 CFR 700, 2 CFR 200, and Chapter 303 of USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS), including ADS 303maa, Standard Provisions for U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations. These policies and federal regulations are available at the following websites:

- 2 CFR 700:
http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=c51d0ac519854fd1da7a3c31f3b3f301&node=pt2.1.700&rgn=div5

- 2 CFR 200:
http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2014-title2-vol1/xml/CFR-2014-title2-vol1-subtitleA-chapII.xml

- ADS 303maa, Standard Provisions of U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations:
http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303maa

- ADS Chapter 303:
http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303

Resulting award to **non-U.S., non-governmental organizations** will be administered in accordance with Chapter 303 of USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS), including ADS 303mab, Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations. The Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Nongovernmental organizations are available at http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mab. ADS Chapter 303 is available at http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303.

Additional policies and federal regulations are available at the following websites:

- 2 CFR 700:
http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=c51d0ac519854fd1da7a3c31f3b3f301&node=pt2.1.700&rgn=div5

- 2 CFR 200:
http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2014-title2-vol1/xml/CFR-2014-title2-vol1-subtitleA-chapII.xml

Resulting awards to **public international organizations** will be administered in accordance with Chapter 308 of USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS), including the Standard Provisions set forth in ADS 308.3.14. ADS Chapter 308 is available at http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/308 .

Authority to Obligate the Government: The Agreement Officer is the **only** individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditures of public funds. No costs chargeable to the proposed Cooperative Agreement may be incurred before receipt of either a fully executed Cooperative Agreement or a specific, written authorization from the Agreement Officer.

REPORTING:

1. Financial Reporting

Financial reporting will depend on the payment provisions of the award, which cannot be determined until after the successful applicant(s) is/are selected. Financial reporting requirements will be specified in awards. In accordance with 2 CFR 200.327, financial reporting will be required no less frequently than annually nor more frequently than quarterly except in unusual circumstances, for example where more frequent reporting is necessary for the effective monitoring of the award or could significantly affect program outcomes.

2. Program Reporting

The Recipient will provide the following documents to the USAID Agreement Officer (AO) and the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR), as specified below and in the Substantial Involvement Provisions.

A. Initial Implementation Plan:

Within 60 days of the signing of Cooperative Agreement, the Recipient will present an Initial Implementation Plan to the USAID AOR for review and approval (electronic copy). The AOR must provide written comments on the draft Plan and when the Plan is finalized, the AOR will provide written approval.

The Initial Implementation Plan should include a list of tasks to be completed during the year, grouped under the objective that they seek to support. For each task, the Awardee should 1) explain in brief its connection to the objective; 2) define the necessary steps to complete the tasks; 3) assign responsibilities for completing those steps; 4) provide any quantitative or qualitative targets; and 5) a timeline for the implementation of the task.

The AOR will review the Plan and provide comments and recommendations for changes no later than 30 days after receipt of the draft. The Recipient shall incorporate AOR's comments and recommendations into the final version of the Initial Implementation Plan and submit it for AOR's written approval. All substantial changes in the Initial Implementation Plan require prior written approval of the AOR.

B. *Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan:*

Within 60 days of the signing the Cooperative Agreement and before major activity implementation actions begin the Recipient shall submit the Media Program MEL Plan together with the Initial Implementation Plan to the USAID/AOR for review and approval.

Based on the draft MEL Plan submitted as part of its Application, the Recipient will develop a detailed Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) plan to monitor performance data, ensure progress is made towards expected results, understand the impact of new interventions on outcomes, and to use data to adapt activity implementation as necessary to achieve activity results.

This plan will include Standard Program Structure & Definitions (SPSD) indicators ***to strengthen the civically relevant role of media in democratic processes in Ukraine, and expand citizens' access to quality information in order to counter malign influence and support European integration.*** The performance indicators should comply with the following criteria: be direct, objective, practical, adequate, and useful in managing results. MEL Plan data collection will be based on the US fiscal year (October 1 – September 30). As appropriate, indicator data will be disaggregated by sex, age and other categories as required. Only those indicators that Mission needs for activity management rather than the entire set of all indicators an implementer uses for its management purposes will be included in this MEL Plan. Final list of indicators will be confirmed in collaboration with USAID.

The AOR will review the plan and provide comments and recommendations for changes no later than 30 days after receipt of the draft. The Recipient shall incorporate AOR comments and recommendations into the final version of the MEL Plan and submit it for AOR written approval within 15 days. After the plan is finalized, the AOR will provide written approval. All substantial changes in the MEL Plan require prior written approval of the AOR.

The program budget must include costs of data collection, analysis, and reporting as a separate line item to ensure that adequate resources are available.

The MEL Plan should include a comprehensive strategy for monitoring and reporting progress made towards activity purpose and results.

The MEL Plan will include the following elements:

- project purpose and results;
- performance indicators;
- baseline information (year and value) and timeline for collecting baseline information;
- annual targets for indicators and a timeline for developing targets;
- schedule for data collection;
- names of individuals responsible for data collection;
- detailed plans for data analysis, review and reporting to USAID;

- Data Quality Assurance (DQA) checks to be conducted periodically.

The Recipient will develop the Performance Indicator Reference Sheets (PIRS) for each indicator and include the following information:

- Indicator name and definition
- Unit of measure
- Numerator/Denominator
- Method of data collection and frequency
- Source of data collection
- Disaggregation by sex, age, geographic locality, type of assistance, etc. as needed
- Rationale for indicator and target
- Reporting level
- Data limitations

The MEL Plan for this Activity will also be consistent with and meet the data collection needs of the Project MEL Plan, the USAID's Performance Management Plan (PMP), and the Mission's annual Performance Plan and Report (PPR).

According to USAID regulations, performance indicator data reported externally, including annual Performance Reports sent to USAID/Washington, must have a data quality assessment (DQA). The purpose of the DQA is to ensure that managers are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the data and the extent to which the data can be trusted to influence management decisions. DQA must be conducted within twelve months prior to reporting data to USAID for new indicators, and every three years thereafter. Conducting DQA on a rolling basis will reduce the burden of handling indicators all at once.

To be useful in managing for results and credible for reporting, the Recipient should ensure that the performance data meet the following five data quality standards: validity, reliability, timeliness, precision and integrity. If performance data do not fully meet all five standards, the known data limitations should be documented. The AOR can combine a random check of Recipient's data during a regularly scheduled site visit and include data quality items into site visit reports. This minimizes the costs associated with the DQA. When conducting a DQA, AOR will examine the data in light of the five quality standards noted above, reviewing the systems and approaches for collecting data and whether they are likely to produce data of an acceptable quality over time.

A Recipient, as part of the award, can conduct the DQA, provided that USAID staff review and verify DQAs. This may entail site visits to physically inspect records maintained by the activity implementing partner. The activity implementer will document DQA findings, including decisions concerning data quality problems and steps identified to address them. The activity implementer will share DQA findings and action plan to address data quality issues with the AOR. The AOR will follow up with the activity implementer to check progress on implementation of the action plan within the timeline outlined in the action plan against each action.

In addition, the Media Program MEL Plan will contribute to higher level performance monitoring and information needs aligned with USAID/Ukraine priorities, including measuring progress towards CDCS objectives.

The MEL Plan is subject to final approval by USAID and is separate from the regular financial and other reports required by the standard Cooperative Agreement provisions.

USAID reserves the right to propose an activity implementer to integrate into the MEL Plan a number of indicators to help USAID measure the immediate activity and relevant project results.

NOTE: The MEL Plan must be developed strictly in accordance with the criteria stipulated in ADS 201.

Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA)

USAID/Ukraine is committed to obtaining stakeholder input into all activities, coordinating implementing partners' efforts for greater efficiency and effectiveness, and measuring high-level indicators in an effort to apply the following Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning objectives: evaluate the level of collaboration with other USG and other donor-supported programs and improve synergies; use lessons learned to strengthen management systems and activity implementation; and provide recommendations and improvement to adapt current activities and follow-on programs.

The Media Program in Ukraine is expected to contribute to USAID/Ukraine's commitment to a multi-faceted Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) approach to development. The CLA approach is based on the understanding that development efforts yield more effective results if they are coordinated and collaborative, test promising new approaches in a continuous yet also rapid, targeted search for generating improvements and efficiencies, and build on what works and eliminate what doesn't.

- **Collaborating**: To facilitate coordination, the Implementing Partner will be a key member of the Donor Working Group on Civil Society and Media. The partner will participate in other stakeholder meetings as convened by USAID/Ukraine which may include sharing of summary annual work plans, bi-annual progress reports, best practices, and challenges. Active outreach, knowledge sharing, and dissemination efforts are crucial for achievements of the Media Program's objectives and purpose.

  The Media Program will coordinate with other USG partners, other donors, civil society, development partners, and the Government of Ukraine ***to strengthen the civically relevant role of media in democratic processes in Ukraine, and expand citizens' access to quality information in order to counter malign influence and support European integration.***

For the Media Program to succeed, Implementing Partner will employ a collaborative approach with other relevant USAID projects and donors, other stakeholders, exchanging knowledge and ensuring complementarity rather than duplication of activities.

- **Learning**: The Media Program will systematically and continuously review evidence from program implementation and external sources to inform program strategy, design and management. The Media Program will generate evidence through program performance data, formative research to guide design of new interventions, periodic evaluations, and operational research - documenting and sharing results with stakeholders.

- **Adapting**: The Media Program will translate learning from the implementation experience and external sources, while also considering changing conditions that impact achievement of expected results into strategic and programmatic adjustments throughout the course of the activity. A key feature of the Media Program will be its flexibility to rapidly adapt to effectively ***strengthen the civically relevant role of media in democratic processes in Ukraine, and expand citizens' access to quality information in order to counter malign influence and support European integration.***

C. *Program Evaluation:*

Evaluation enables the Mission to account for success and failure, and to assist management decision making. Evaluation also offers opportunity to learn from prior experience, identify the results of innovative approaches to problems, and inform future project design by recognizing prior successes or failures and drawing conclusions on the cause.

USAID/Ukraine intends to conduct at least one evaluation of the Media Program in Ukraine. A mid-term program performance evaluation in FY 2021 will inform the Mission on overall activity progress towards higher-level outcomes as well as any necessary course-correction in the second half of activity implementation. The Mission may elect to conduct a final performance evaluation of the Media Program, or to include the Media Program or components thereof in evaluating progress towards higher level project and/or strategy-level outcomes. Deviations in meeting performance indicator targets set up for intermediate results, as well as significant changes in the operating environment, could trigger unplanned performance evaluations of Media Program. The activity implementer shall fully cooperate with USAID and the evaluation team to ensure that the evaluation accurately reflects activity results, outcomes, and/or impacts.

Sample evaluation questions for the Media Program may include:

- To what extent does/did the increase in high-quality, engaging news/information content result in an increase in viewership of and/or trust in these types of media?
- To what extent does/did media literacy activities increase demand for and/or trust in civically-relevant, non-propaganda information?
- To what extent did/does Media Program effectively address USAID/Ukraine strategic priorities across three Development Objectives?

D. *Annual Implementation Plans:*

Annual implementation plans for subsequent years are due to the AOR 60 days before the end of the preceding award year (electronic copy). Annual Implementation Plans should include all the sections as the initial implementation plan discussed above. In addition, the subsequent annual Implementation Plans shall review the activities of the year that is ending, the activities that were implemented, the results achieved, and problems that existed and how they were resolved. These subsequent Annual Implementation Plans shall propose program adjustments to reflect any lessons learned.

The AOR will review the plan and provide comments and recommendations for changes no later than 30 days after receipt of the draft. The Recipient shall incorporate AOR comments and recommendations into the final version of the Annual Implementation Plan and submit it for AOR written approval within 15 days. After the Plan is finalized, the AOR will provide written approval. In addition, all substantial changes in Implementation Plan require prior written approval of the AOR.

E. *Semi-annual Performance Reports:*

The Recipient shall submit semi-annual performance reports (an electronic copy) to the USAID AOR. These reports shall summarize the outcomes of the Recipient's activities during the particular reporting period, document any program accomplishments or progress towards results during the reporting period, compare those results to the planned tasks in the Implementation Plans and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan, and discuss any potential constraints that might prevent the Recipient from meeting agreed upon targets and benchmarks. Reports should also contain, as an attachment, a list of all subgrants issued under the award during the reporting period, information on study tours and their participants taken place during the reporting period and other relevant information. The list should contain the name and contact information for each subgrantee, the title and duration of the program, the amount of the award, and a brief description of the program. At least one success story which provides information that demonstrates the impact that the activity/program has had during the reporting period through materials such as narratives, quotes, photos and captions. These success stories shall also be submitted separately via the Agency's Telling Our Story website (http://www.usaid.gov/stories/). Note: the USAID/Ukraine Mission's Communications Officer can assist in editing stories prior to their posting on the website.

Semi-annual reports are to be submitted to the AOR within 30 calendar days of the end of the reporting period.

F. *Annual Performance Reports:*

The Recipient shall submit annual performance reports (an electronic copy) to the USAID AOR in lieu of the second semi-annual report for each project year. The Annual Report shall be due by September 30 of each year.

The second semi-annual report of each award year will provide USAID annual data on the agreed upon performance indicators as well as any additional qualitative results information the awardee would like to include to demonstrate the results achieved vis-à-vis the project's objectives during that particular reporting period.

Additionally, the Recipient will be expected to gather and provide data for USAID's Annual Report, Operational Plan, and periodic portfolio reviews.

G. Geospatial Reporting Requirements:

Activity Location Data
The Recipient must submit Activity Location Data to indicates the geographic location or locations where the activity is implemented according to the following requirements:

I. Level of Geographic Detail
The activity location(s) must be recorded at the [Insert level of geographic detail]. When collected, latitude and longitude coordinates must be submitted in Decimal Degrees (hddd.ddddd) with at least five decimal places using the Geographic Coordinate System World Geodetic System 1984 (GCS WGS 1984) spatial reference.

II. Data Submission Frequency
Activity Location Data must be submitted twice annually as part of the 2nd Quarterly Performance Report and the Annual Report. If the Activity Location Data has not changed since the previous data submission, it must be indicated when the data is submitted.

III. Data Submission Method
Activity Location Data shall be compiled in the "General Info & Locations" worksheet in the Geographic Location Report Template (GLR) and submitted electronically. If Activity Location Data exists in a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) format: 1) it must also be submitted in a Shapefile (.shp) or GeoJSON (.geojson) file format; 2) use the Geographic Coordinate System World Geodetic System 1984 (GCS WGS 1984) spatial reference; and 3) include metadata ISO 19115 using the ISO 19139 XML implementation schema.

H. Final Report:

A final performance report (two hard copies and one electronic) will be required under this award. The Final Report is due 90 days after the award's completion date. USAID will review and comment within 30 days of receipt. The Final Performance Report shall contain the following information:

- Overall description of the activities under the program during the period of this Cooperative Agreement, and the significance of these activities;
- Description of the methods of assistance used and the pros and cons of these methods;

- Life-of-project results towards achieving the project objectives and the performance indicators;
- Analysis of how the indicators illustrate the project's impact (impact data will be supplied as approved in the M&E Plan and will be measured against projections);
- Summary the program's accomplishments, as well as any unmet targets and the reasons for them;
- Summary of challenges, issues and problems that emerged during program implementation and the lessons learned in dealing with them;
- Comments and recommendations regarding unfinished work and/or future needs and directions for assistance in Ukraine;
- Recommendations for what issues no longer require donor assistance;
- Possible lessons learned.

The Recipient shall submit the original and one copy of the USAID approved Final Report to the AOR and Agreement Officer and one additional copy shall be submitted to the Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination, Development Experience Clearinghouse PPC/DEC.

E-Mail all documents via the web at: http://dec.usaid.gov. Paper copies or non-electronic materials should be sent to:

Development Experience Clearinghouse
M/CIO/KM
RRB M.01
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington DC 20523

The title page of all reports forwarded to USAID must include a descriptive title, the author's name, grant number, the project number and title, the grantee's name, the name of the USAID office, and the publication or issuance date of the report.

BRANDING STRATEGY AND MARKING PLAN:

It is a federal statutory and regulatory requirement (see Section 641, Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended and 2 CFR 700.16) that all USAID programs, projects, activities, public communications, and commodities that USAID partially or fully funds under a USAID grant or cooperative agreement or other assistance award or sub-award must be marked appropriately overseas with the USAID identity. In accordance with ADS 320.3.3 Branding and Marking Requirements for Assistance Awards USAID's policy is that programs, projects, activities, public communications, or commodities implemented or delivered under co-funded instruments – such as grants, cooperative agreements, or other assistance awards that usually require a cost share – generally are "co-branded and co-marked."

The Apparently Successful Applicant will be required to submit a branding strategy and marking plan for the Agreement Officer approval prior to award. The applicant may request a presumptive exemption to marking requirements established in 2 CFR 700.16. More information on Branding strategy and Marking plan are available at https://www.usaid.gov/branding/assistance-awards.

The branding strategy and marking plan will become a material element of the cooperative agreement. Information on USAID's branding "assistance" applies to this NOFO. ADS Chapter 320 sections concerning "acquisition" do not apply to this NOFO. ADS Chapter 320 can be found on USAID website: http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/320.pdf.

When requesting a Branding Strategy and Marking Plan, the Agreement Officer will establish a reasonable time frame for submittal, review, and negotiation. If the Apparently Successful Applicant(s) fail(s) to submit or negotiate an acceptable Branding Strategy within the time specified by the Agreement Officer, that/those applicant(s) become(s) ineligible for award.

The Agreement Officer will review the proposed Branding Strategy and Marking Plan for adequacy to ensure that it complies with the Agency branding and marking guidance that can be found at
http://www.usaid.gov/branding/ and at
http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/320.pdf .

Applicants need to include anticipated costs for branding strategy and marking plan in the budget and describe these costs in detail to the degree possible in the budget narrative. The Agreement Officer will ensure that any estimated costs associated with branding and marking are included in the Total Estimated Amount of the grant or cooperative agreement or other assistance award.

The Solicitation Standard Provisions for the Branding Strategy and Marking Plan are provided in Annex 2 of this NOFO.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE:

1) The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, Section 117 requires that the impact of USAID's activities on the environment be considered and that USAID include environmental sustainability as a central consideration in designing and carrying out its development programs. This mandate is codified in Federal Regulations (22 CFR 216) and in USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS) ADS 201 and ADS 204, which, in part, require that the potential environmental impacts of USAID-financed activities are identified prior to a final decision to proceed and that appropriate environmental safeguards are adopted for all activities. Applicant's environmental compliance obligations under these regulations and procedures are specified in the following paragraphs of this NOFO.

2) In addition, the recipient must comply with host country environmental regulations unless otherwise directed in writing by USAID. In case of conflict between host country and USAID regulations, the latter shall govern.

3) No activity funded under this award will be implemented unless an environmental threshold determination, as defined by 22 CFR 216, has been reached for that activity, as documented in a Request for Categorical Exclusion (RCE), Initial Environmental Examination (IEE), or Environmental Assessment (EA) duly signed by the Bureau Environmental Officer (BEO). (Hereinafter, such documents are described as "approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation.")

4) A Request for Categorical Exclusion (RCE) number 2018-UKR-020 (Annex 1 of this NOFO) has been approved for the Program funding this NOFO. It will cover program activities through September 2023. USAID has determined that a Categorical Exclusion applies to all activities discussed in the Section I, Program Description, of this NOFO.

5) As part of its initial Implementation Plan, and all Annual Implementation Plans thereafter, the Recipient, in collaboration with the USAID Agreement's Officer's Representative (AOR) and Mission Environmental Officer or Bureau Environmental Officer, as appropriate, shall review all ongoing and planned activities under this award to determine if they are within the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation.

6) If the Recipient plans any new activities outside the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation, it shall prepare an amendment to the documentation for USAID review and approval. No such new activities shall be undertaken prior to receiving written USAID approval of environmental documentation amendments.

7) Any ongoing activities found to be outside the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation shall be halted until an amendment to the documentation is submitted and written approval is received from USAID.

Applicants need to account for resources required for implementing and monitoring the environmental compliance activities in the technical application and in the budget and describe associated costs in detail to the degree possible in the budget narrative.

[END OF SECTION VI]

SECTION VII – AGENCY CONTACTS

Any prospective applicant desiring an explanation or interpretation of this NOFO must request it in writing by the deadline for questions specified in the cover letter to allow a reply to reach all prospective applicants before the submission of their applications. Any information given to a prospective applicant concerning this NOFO will be furnished promptly to all other prospective applicants as an amendment of this NOFO, if that information is necessary in submitting applications or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicants.

Any questions or comments concerning this NOFO must be submitted in writing by emails to morlova@usaid.gov and dharter@usaid.gov by the deadline for questions indicated at the top of this NOFO's cover letter.

[END OF SECTION VII]

SECTION VIII – OTHER INFORMATION

USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

ANNEXES:

ANNEX 1 - REQUEST FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION 2018-UKR-020 (ATTACHED)

ANNEX 2 – Solicitation Standard Provisions (ATTACHED)

ANNEX 3 – SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance) (ATTACHED)

ANNEX 4 – SF-424A (Budget Information – Non-construction Programs) (ATTACHED)

ANNEX 5 – SF-424B (Assurances – Non-Construction Programs) (ATTACHED)

ANNEX 6 - Quick Start Guide for New Grantee Registration in SAM (in English) (ATTACHED)

ANNEX 7 - Quick Start Guide for New Foreign Registrations in SAM (in Ukrainian) (ATTACHED)

[END OF NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY]