

Advancing Integrity in Media (AIM)

Addendum

to

**The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
Democracy Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA)
Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance**

**Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) for
*Adapting USAID's Democracy, Rights, and Governance (DRG) Assistance to Better Address
Global Trends***

Background/Challenge

USAID is interested in identifying opportunities for co-creation, co-design, co-investment and collaboration on research and development interventions to address the growing phenomenon of exploitation of new information technologies to corrupt the information landscape, spread disinformation, and falsely amplify messages and narratives that undermine the legitimacy of democracy. These nefarious efforts directly impact upon the effectiveness of USG efforts to support democracy, human rights, and good governance in the development context. The problem is compounded by the novelty of the speed at which disinformation travels, the scale of people affected, and the diversity of actors as disinformation sources in a globalized phenomenon. It takes place in a largely unregulated online environment where democracy and democratic governance have not advanced apace with rapidly evolving technology.

The White House's National Security Strategy (NSS) of the United States of America, released in December 2017, states that, "A democracy is only as resilient as its people. An informed and engaged citizenry is the fundamental requirement for a free and resilient nation. For generations, our society has protected free press, free speech, and free thought." (p.14) The NSS articulates the critical challenge to securing these freedoms in the 21st century--the corruption of the information landscape, in particular through disinformation and the false amplification of messages. Today, authoritarian leaders and other actors, "are using information tools in an attempt to undermine the legitimacy of democracies."

To date, USAID's response to the malign use of information has been limited to support for local independent civil societies and media sectors more broadly, and isolated preventative measures and responses to individual cases and contexts. USAID has not elaborated a studied, evaluated, or systematic approach to this problem. For the purposes of the activity proposed, we define the problem as the use of information for malign intent, for example to exploit social cleavages, to stoke fear or violence, or to undermine the legitimacy of democratic political processes and institutions. Whereas in the past, the manipulation of information may have been achieved through propaganda or censorship, the dominance and accessibility of social media platforms has created new opportunities to spread disinformation with greater volume, velocity, and variety. Citizens are increasingly burdened with discerning quality amidst a vast flow of information online. And social media platforms, only now admitting to the problem, are grappling with how

to minimize the degree to which disinformation is actively promoted on their platforms, while doing so may run counter to their current business models; they are also confronting greater demand for transparency on their data and how it is handled, and demand for regulation.

Solutions Sought and Guidance for Concepts

Building on previous investments, USAID seeks a broad array of partnerships to craft innovative solutions through partnerships or coalitions that address the legal, political, economic, and technological issues that enable disinformation to adversely affect democracy. USAID seeks to contribute to a growing body of knowledge on the scope of this problem and its impacts, with a focus on the parts of the world where USAID works. USAID seeks concepts that reflect the views and interests of a range of stakeholders including from media/journalism, law and policy, technology, advertising, education, think tanks, academia, and civil society.

Disinformation is manifesting as a challenge in many countries where USAID works. It undermines the effectiveness of democracy and good governance interventions that USAID supports. Disinformation destabilizes public discourse and acts as a spoiler de-legitimizing political processes, the work of civil society and independent media, and exploits faultlines in societies in ways that threaten social accord. Additionally, in a media environment with the capacity of spreading vast amount of information widely and rapidly, weaponized disinformation is increasingly used by a wide range of actors within and without political systems.

Given the expanding scope and shifting nature of the problem with technological advances and potential innovation in terms of the tools and techniques for disinformation and the threat they pose to democracy; and given the limits on USAID's knowledge of effective development interventions to combat these tools, USAID seeks to develop strategies and tactics that will be dynamic and adaptable to different contexts and technological advancements, and respectful of the essential norms necessary for informed political participation.

Objectives: This co-creation process will enable USAID and its partners to:

- A. Assess the threat of information and media corruption in local contexts;
- B. Consider best practices that will inform assistance strategies and priorities; and/or
- C. Develop and scale innovative, adaptive and measurable efforts to resist media and information corruption and strengthen responses by local actors.

USAID will convene stakeholders from across the Agency with leaders in the technology sector, media, law, advertising, think tanks, internet user advocates, legislators, and universities working on this issue, in line with the NSS recommendation that, "the American public and private sectors must recognize this and work together to defend our way of life." (p.14) This co-creation process will synergize expertise to identify gaps in knowledge, identify best practices in assistance to date, and co-create and co-design solutions that USAID and its partners can deploy to counter and build resiliency against malign influence campaigns and propaganda as part of their long-term development work.

As a result of the co-creation process, USAID Missions will be better equipped to assess and

address the issue of disinformation in its assistance through a range of interventions. Thus, USAID seeks concepts that propose partnerships that will enable USAID and its partners to:

- A. Assess the threat of information and media corruption in local contexts;***
- B. Consider best practices that will inform assistance strategies and priorities;***
- C. Develop and scale innovative, adaptive and measurable efforts to resist disinformation and strengthen responses by local actors;***

Submission Instructions

Please describe your idea/approach to advance integrity in media that can help protect democracies from the corrosive effects of disinformation, and highlight your group's value to the partnership. Organizations are encouraged to consider collaborating with peer organizations that bring differing perspectives and/or comparative advantages.

Submitted Expressions of Interest will:

1. Be submitted in English
2. Be submitted electronically to DRG_BAA@usaid.gov
3. Not exceed 1500 words, excluding header and optional graphic(s)
4. Contain a header with the following information, not counted in word count:
 - a. Respondent Name/Group and Contact Information:
 - b. Response Title:
 - c. BAA Addendum Name/Number:
5. Be in .docx or .pdf format
6. Contain the following:
 - a. Describe your organization's idea/approach to addressing the issue of disinformation in the developing world
 - i. Your organization's approach
 - ii. Whom your organization targets
 - iii. How your approach will be sustainable
 - iv. How you will monitor and evaluate your approach
 - b. Describe talent and other resources you are willing to dedicate to this collaboration.
 - c. Provide your organization's unique perspectives and capabilities, as well as your ability to harness the comparative advantage of other partners.

Review of Submissions and Selection Criteria

- Stage 1: USAID will review and select Expressions of Interest submitted in accordance with the guidelines and criteria set forth in this Addendum ***and the Evaluation Criteria described in Section III of the Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) for Adapting USAID's Democracy, Rights, and Governance (DRG) Assistance to Better Address Global Trends.*** USAID reserves the right not to review any Expressions of Interest that do not meet the guidelines above.
- Stage 2: Selected groups will be invited to join the co-development process which will consist of one or more co-creation workshop(s) in TBD or remotely, where USAID, partners, and selected groups will gather to collaboratively develop program(s) designed to achieve the objectives articulated here. This will result in one or more concept papers

of 5-7 pages each, outlining a concrete programmatic plan, focus areas, goals, timelines, etc. Travel costs for participants will not be reimbursed by USAID.

- Stage 3: Final concept papers will be submitted to USAID's Review Board. Approved concept papers for programs will be further refined (co-design) and potentially implemented, based on a decision at that time whether to proceed to implementation.

Your expression of interest, if accepted, will result in your participation in one or more co-creation events with other successful applicants, to jointly develop programs and activities for funding. All applicants are encouraged to read the full announcement closely for guidance on the co-creation process.

Criteria

The following criteria will be applied to all Expressions of Interest:

- 1) **Idea/Approach:** Soundness of your idea/approach, including appropriate evidence, to fostering systems that address challenges and harness opportunities. USAID will focus on how the applicant contributes fresh, informed, and realistic thinking, and how the applicant uses supporting evidence and analysis to clearly demonstrate how the proposed idea will address the challenge. Equally important are the unique qualities that the applicant would bring to the discussion.
- 2) **Partnership Expectations and Value:** Strengths of your organization as a partner, including your ability to make a unique contribution to the critical development challenge. USAID seeks the ability to connect disparate communities, i.e. academia, private sector, civil society, as well as connecting with experts in nontraditional and diverse sectors. Please provide specific examples of collaboration or co-creation with other parties or partners.
- 3) **Diversity of Perspectives and Capabilities:** USAID seeks to bring together a diverse set of co-creators in collaboration in order to enable broader thinking and innovation. The selection of individual applicants will be made with the goal of achieving this diversity.
- 4) **Impact and goals of the program:** Indicate broad and discrete goals of the concept and how they relate to USAID's policy and objectives.
- 5) **Private-Sector Partnerships:** Indicate specific relationships with private **sector** actors, and any pre-existing company/industry partnership commitments focused on media integrity advocacy.

USAID is not obligated to issue a financial instrument or award as a result of this Addendum.

Response Date

Please submit your expression of interest in English to DRG_BAA@usaid.gov no later than 11:59pm EST on **May 29, 2018**.