USAID | SOUTHERN AFRICA
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Issuance Date:	**November 13, 2023**
Questions Deadline:	**November 30, 2023, at 17H00 South African Time**
Submission Deadline:	**December 18, 2023, at 15H00 South African Time**
Subject:	**Justice, Rights and Security Annual Program Statement (JRS-APS) #7200AA22APS00007**
Opportunity Title:	**Southern Africa Regional Investigative Journalism Activity – South Africa Addendum APS No. 72067424APS00001**

To: All Interested Respondents/Parties:

The United States Government, represented by United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/ Southern Africa Mission (USAID/SA) invites concept notes that are focused on the Southern Africa Regional Investigative Journalism Activity.

Subject to the availability of funds, an award will be made to the responsible applicant(s) whose application(s) best meets the objectives of this funding opportunity and the selection criteria contained herein. USAID/SA anticipates supporting one new Cooperative Award of up to $8 million over the course of five (5) years. USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the application(s) received.

This NOFO and the assistance selection process contains three phases as follows:

- Phase I – Concept Notes Submission and Merit Review
- Phase II – Oral Presentation
- Phase III – Core-Creation , Full Application Submission and Merit Review.

To be eligible for award, the applicant must provide all information as required in this NOFO and meet eligibility standards of this NOFO. This funding opportunity is posted on www.grants.gov and may be amended. Interested applicants should regularly check the website to ensure they have the latest information pertaining to this notice of funding opportunity. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the entire NOFO has been received from the internet in its entirety and USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion process. 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 email at support@grants.gov for technical assistance.

USAID may not award to an Applicant unless the Applicant has complied with all applicable **Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (SAM**) requirements. The registration process may take several weeks or even months to complete. Therefore, Applicants are encouraged to begin registration as early in the process as possible. Proposed sub-awardees do not need full SAM registration, they need to only obtain a UEI. **Applicants need to be registered in SAM when submitting the full application. Applicants do not need to be registered in SAM when submitting a concept paper.**

Any questions concerning this NOFO must be submitted electronically to PretoriaApplications@usaid.gov and SDladla@usaid.gov with a copy to GBoateng@usaid.gov by no later than the time indicated above.

The concept notes (Phase I) and, at the later stage, the full application (Phase III) must be submitted electronically to PretoriaApplications@usaid.gov and with a copy to SDladla@usaid.gov. The concept notes must be received by not later than the time and date indicated above.

Issuance of this notice of funding opportunity does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government nor does it commit the Government to pay for any costs incurred in preparation or submission of comments/suggestions or an application. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Thank you for your interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

GEORGE KWABENA BOATENG (affiliate)
Digitally signed by GEORGE KWABENA BOATENG (affiliate)
Date: 2023.11.13 10:08:52 -05'00'

George Boateng
Agreement Officer

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
ANNOUNCEMENT CALL FOR CONCEPT NOTES:
SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM ACTIVITY, APS NO.72067424APS00001

UNDER EXISTING

JUSTICE, RIGHTS AND SECURITY ANNUAL PROGRAM STATEMENT (JRS-APS) NO.7200AA22APS00007

PLEASE NOTE: This is an addendum to an existing announcement (#7200AA22APS00007). All interested organizations should carefully review both this addendum AND the full announcement, which can be found here: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=340272. Important information contained in the full worldwide APS is not necessarily repeated in this documentation.

This program is authorized in accordance with Part 1 of the Foreign Assistance act of 1961, as amended.

Through this Addendum to the Justice, Rights, and Security Annual Program Statement(JRS-APS) #7200AA22APS00007 (APS Full Announcement), USAID/SA is making a special call for the submission of Concept Notes focused on Southern Africa Regional Investigative Journalism Activity.

I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Southern Africa Regional Investigative Journalism Activity is to strengthen the capacity and collaboration among Southern African investigative journalists, editors and their newsrooms to produce investigative reports of local, regional, and global importance on crime and corruption, including its transnational dimensions. The Activity will cultivate a new and diverse cadre of investigative journalists in the region with expanded skills for reporting, editing and reaching audiences, and help them use technology to collaborate across borders, access information, work with data, and produce innovative ways of telling the stories they unearth to the communities most affected.

With the principle of "do no harm" across all interventions, the Activity will enhance the ability of journalists to address and mitigate risks to their safety in a holistic manner, addressing the physical security, digital hygiene, psychosocial well-being, and legal dimensions of safety in an increasingly

restrictive, and in some cases outright hostile, environment where journalists and newsrooms often face repercussions for exposing powerful or criminal actors.

This Activity will identify and build out critical investigative journalism capacity and will favor collaborations (cross-border or that bring together diverse expertise) in the Southern Africa region. In countries in the region that have robust or emerging investigative journalism activity and capacity, and where partnerships are in place, the program should level up capacity and collaboration. The Activity will give preference to the production of stories on cross-border issues in the region for local audiences, such as wildlife trafficking, using reporting projects as vehicles for a longer-term sustained effort to develop a pipeline of diverse, emerging investigative reporting talent.

Throughout this document, USAID is defining investigative reporting based on the following characterizations from the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN):

> *"While definitions of investigative reporting vary, among professional journalism groups there is broad agreement of its major components: systematic, in-depth, and original research and reporting, often involving the unearthing of secrets. Others note that its practice often involves heavy use of public records and data, with a focus on social justice and accountability."* (From GIJN: What is Investigative Journalism)

Applicants may propose activities in selected countries in the SADC region. Applicants should propose criteria for country selection, prioritizing countries under USAID's Regional Development and Cooperation Strategy for Southern Africa (Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa). Final country selection will be determined through co-creation between successful applicants and USAID. It is expected that broader collaboration with African and global actors may be required, as investigative reporting projects broaden in their complexity and geographical scope.

II. BACKGROUND:

Globally, the investigative journalism sector has developed its networks and capacities to investigate and uncover transnational organized crime networks that are active not only locally but across the region and worldwide. This may entail sensitive cases exposing powerful actors such as criminal syndicates and their links with local officials who enable criminal activity. Much of this reporting has a strong human angle that can engage a broader public including most directly affected communities. Examples include crimes associated with the extraction of natural resources or the large-scale trafficking in wildlife or narcotics. According to the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, the most pervasive criminal actors in Southern Africa are

criminal networks, state embedded actors, and foreign actors, with wildlife crimes identified as a significant issue linked to other transnational crime.[1]

Carrying out these investigations often means investigating actors on other continents, securing access to data and information, tracking the activity of transnational crime syndicates, or following where the reporting leads. It may require partners outside of the journalists' countries, including to follow the money or illegal goods across borders, access databases and corporate registries, link with civil society groups that track related issues or produce data, or contact affected populations.

III. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES:

The development hypothesis of the Southern Africa Investigative Journalism Activity is as follows: *IF* locally-led investigative journalism networks' exposure of crime, corruption, and abuses of power across the region is supported; and *IF* new and diverse entrants to the field are fostered; and *IF* investigative journalists' ability to reach audiences is strengthened; and *IF* more proactive, comprehensive approaches to safety and security are developed and advanced, *THEN* investigative journalism will promote greater government accountability and transparency in the region.

The Southern Africa Investigative Journalism Activity seeks to achieve the following goals:

- A preference for collaboration by investigative journalists and newsrooms in the region that pools diverse expertise and skills.
- Increased availability of and access to engaging, high-quality collaborative investigative reporting by diverse audiences, especially those most affected
- A robust cadre of investigative journalists and editors participating in collaborative investigative reporting projects, through a program of training, mentoring, and learning by doing.
- Improved resiliency[2] of the investigative journalism sector and increased integrated, holistic, and proactive approaches to safety and security support.

[1] Global Organized Crime Index Profile: Southern Africa : https://ocindex.net/region/southern_africa

[2] The definition of resilience used here reflects Partners Global and Civicus' definition in their Resiliency + Framework report. It includes the ability to anticipate and adapt swiftly and purposefully to shocks or impacts in such a way as to not only survive, but also thrive in an uncertain environment. At the sectoral level, resiliency is the ability for civil society organizations, media outlets, or other civic groupings, and individual practitioners to effectively communicate and collaborate as a whole to both manage, adapt to, and overcome challenges in a changing environment. These challenges include safety and security, financial viability, and audience trust, among others. More can be found at https://www.partnersglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Resiliency-Framework.pdf (accessed 10/2/2023):

Objective 1: Locally-led investigative journalism newsrooms and networks are supported and strengthened

Investigative journalists in Southern Africa need support to report sensitive stories. Working together, across the region, they can investigate issues that affect multiple countries; working in collaboration with organizations and expertise that enriches a story (such as with data expertise or sectoral expertise), they can develop new leads and incorporate a broad range of evidence and information for the public. With proper skills and resources, including core funding, a successful investigative network will be able to break stories of broad, even international agenda-setting importance. Under this Objective, the Activity will seek to nurture collaboration, develop the pipeline of talent, build capacity, and provide access to tools.

This objective will prioritize local efforts to create and sustain collaborative networks among investigative newsrooms, freelance investigative journalists, and other relevant partners that bring in specialized skills and tools in the Southern Africa region. The activity will work through both formal and informal networks to strengthen investigative newsrooms and foster more consistent collaborations to produce reporting projects that will have resonance among local and regional audiences. Applicants may propose support to expand existing and emerging networks of investigative journalism centers across the region to accommodate new emerging investigative journalism centers, mainstream publications that produce or publish investigations, as well as freelance investigative journalists.

Collaborations, when efficiently managed, can strengthen reporting output and impact, for example in identifying partners that can help follow a story that crosses borders; providing the safety of publication in another country's media; syndication for publishing reports to reach multiple audiences; editorial support and sharing of skills; pooling of common resources (data, human resources, funding, tools); introducing specialized skills and talents (for example with data skills or sectoral expertise) to enrich a story; or fostering a community of learning and advancement with new trends in reporting and technological innovations.

Activities under this objective should strengthen newsrooms that work on collaborative investigative reporting with resources, including core funding, to enable them to pursue a variety of different and important stories, including databases and corporate registries; share knowledge; participate in convenings; or provide mutual support. To pursue investigations, newsrooms may also need support to improve staffing at the reporting and editing levels; bolster audience building strategies; focus on financial sustainability; and address other organizational barriers to collaboration.

Activities under this objective should also provide organizations the resources to cultivate the next generation of investigative journalists and editors and foster a more diverse cadre, including women journalists and journalists from underrepresented populations. The applicant may propose activities to scale learning-by-doing programs, such as internships or mentorships, as well

as activities to keep current and new journalists current with trends in data journalism and technology.

Objective 2: Investigative reporting in Southern Africa is produced and amplified through relevant information channels, reaching broader audiences, to deliver impact and create societal resonance

This objective will support the publication of investigative reports that can reach broad local and regional (and where appropriate global) audiences. It should consider how to produce and market investigative reporting to be more accessible and "sticky" for more diverse audiences. This involves embracing the platforms needed if investigative stories are going to reach people where they are, for example, TikTok feeds or rural radio stations. The objective will deliberately consider how to grow the audiences for investigative reporting and reach new ones though projects that:

- consider their target audiences from the outset, ensuring relevance to the stakeholders, and using publication strategies, formats, and languages that are appropriate and accessible to them, to ensure the resonance of reporting projects and their influence in the public conversation; and
- provide target audiences, when possible, actions they can take to foster greater transparency and accountability in their communities.

The Activity will provide resourcing that enables investigative journalists to follow leads, chase big stories, conduct follow-up reporting, and tracking of the impact of their stories over time. It will enable investigative reporters to experiment with reporting formats to grow and engage populations not usually reached by investigative journalism. These investigations may range in terms of the thematic areas they pursue, focusing on crime, corruption and abuses of power, and enabling reporters to pursue the story, even as it crosses borders.

Investigations funded through this activity should be open access, so that any media can carry it, and its databases should be opened for other journalists and/or civil society groups to study it and develop new, or follow on stories.

Objective 3: More proactive, comprehensive, and holistic approaches to safety and security for investigative journalists are developed and advanced

Activities proposed under this objective will help address, prevent and mitigate the risks of physical, digital, psychosocial, and legal harms that journalists and newsrooms working on investigative reporting may encounter in the course of their professional work.

The Activity must incorporate preventative and mitigative measures and responses to barriers to investigative journalism throughout the planning and implementation phases of this Activity; as well as responsive capacity, for example, mental health and well being support, or respite care, as needed. Given the specific threats that women in the newsroom face, it is imperative that the activity adopt a differentiated approach tailored to enhance their safety and security needs.

As legal threats and strategic litigation against public participation (SLAPPs) are on the rise in Southern Africa targeting journalists, distracting them from their important reporting projects, and potentially stifling investigative reporters' ability to conduct or publish their reporting, Applicants may propose activities to reduce the risk of lawsuits through training, pre-publication legal review, or funding for legal assistance to fight lawsuits meant to intimidate and financial burden reporters. Applicants may consider supporting newsrooms to seek membership in the newly launched "Reporters Shield" initiative.

Expected results under this objective also include the adoption of secure shared communication systems, digital technology applications, and other security protocols in collaborations among investigative journalists.

Coordination with Other Initiatives

Applicants are expected to coordinate with USAID, US Government, and other efforts to support investigative journalism and media development in the region. Currently, many of USAID's bilateral missions in Africa are supporting independent media and freedom of expression programming as well as anti-corruption and even investigative journalism programs. This new effort should be additive to and coordinated with them in order to identify potential partners that can be part of a larger ecosystem of investigative journalism across the region. Given that there will likely arise the needs to support the organizational and financial sustainability of investigative news centers and local media that may be beyond the scope of this Activity it is suggested that the Activity will work with or make referrals to USAID's global media support programs such as the **Media Viability Accelerato**r which works on the development of solutions to improve the business models of independent media (to be launched in early 2024);[3] and ensure that investigative reporters and their outlets have access to the legal support provided by membership in **Reporters Shield** (to be available in 2024).[4]

Where appropriate, applicants should also leverage cross-sectoral programs supported by USAID/Southern Africa, such as regional programs focused on anti-corruption, countering wildlife crime, and environmental protection. This presents an opportunity for cross-sectoral synergies among stakeholders involved in these programs, including investigative journalists, relevant civil society and community based organizations, and marginalized and underrepresented groups.

IV. SOLICITATION:

In publishing this addendum to the Justice, Rights, and Security Annual Program Statement(JRS-APS) APS #7200AA22APS00007, USAID is making a special call for the submission of concept notes focused on Southern Africa Regional Investigative Journalism.

[3] Media Viability Accelerator: https://internews.org/media-viability-accelerator/
[4] Reporters Shield: https://www.reporters-shield.org/

Subject to the availability of funding, USAID/SA anticipates supporting up to one (1) new award under this addendum, over the course of five (5) years. USAID reserves the right to award more awards ***or*** none ***or*** to change the amount of funding for any or all awards issued. All interested organizations should carefully review both this addendum AND the full APS, which can be found here: (**https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=340272**)

V. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Eligibility for this funding opportunity is restricted to local entities in selected countries in the SADC region, excluding Zimbabwe, Tanzania, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Local entity means an individual, a corporation, a nonprofit organization, or another body of persons that—

(1) is legally organized under the laws of;

(2) has as its principal place of business or operations in;

AND

(3) is

(A) majority owned by individuals who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of; and

(B) managed by a governing body the majority of who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of a country receiving assistance.

For purposes of this definition, "majority-owned' and "-managed by" include, without limitation, beneficiary interests and the power, either directly or indirectly, whether exercised or exercisable, to control the election, appointment, or tenure of the organization's managers or a majority of the organization's governing body by any means."

VI. EVALUATION CRITERIA:

USAID/SA will follow a three-tier selection process as follows:

- First stage is the merit review of the concept notes. The concept notes will be reviewed by a panel of USAID employees who will determine whether the concept has sufficient technical merit, and the applicant has sufficient experience and management capacity to warrant participation at co-creation and preparation of a full application.
- Successful concept notes will proceed to the second stage and will make an oral presentation of the concept to USAID.
- Based on oral presentations, the most highly ranked applicants may be invited to co-creation with USAID to develop the program description. The third stage is the merit review of a full application for potential applicants who fulfill the needed merit review factors and criteria at the concept paper stage and were invited for co-creation.

1. Concept Notes Merit Review

Concept notes received under this NOFO will be evaluated by a USAID Merit Review Committee (MRC) in accordance with the merit review criteria detailed below. The purpose of this review is to ensure that prospective applicant(s) bring appropriate capabilities, experiences, and potential contributions to the co-creation process and ultimately the implementation of activities. A concept note is determined to be successful using a **PASS/FAIL** methodology based on the merit review criteria. Any applicant that receives a FAIL rating on any criteria, will not advance beyond this phase, and will be notified via email and no detailed feedback will be provided in relation to their applications.

Proposed concept notes under this addendum will be evaluated based on the extent to which the concept note:

1. Advances relevant JRS programmatic Priorities and Objectives based on the country context;
2. Proposes creative, feasible, and technically sound activities to achieve the objectives and results described in the addendum;
3. Proposes partnerships with diverse stakeholders working on investigative journalism and safety/security issues, including in non-permissive environments;
4. Integrates the cross-cutting themes of gender equality and empowerment of women, youth, and marginalized populations throughout program activities; and
5. Demonstrates the applicant's prior experience implementing activities to strengthen investigative reporting capacity and collaboration and outlines the results of such experiences.

2. Oral presentation

Applicants that have successful concept papers may be invited to make an oral presentation to USAID. USAID will present an opportunity to discuss the concept paper and the applicant(s) technical approach and vision in detail. Following the presentation, successful applicant(s) will be invited by USAID to participate in the co-creation workshop and submit a full application.

Presentation will be evaluated on how well the applicant present their technical approach and vision. The presentation will be scored using the adjective method as follows:

Adjective	Merit Review Criterion
Exceptional	An **Exceptional presentation** has the following characteristics: • Demonstrates a **comprehensive and thorough understanding** of the objectives. • **Addresses all** weaknesses that may have been identified on the proposed vision, technical approach, and overall concept note.
Very Good	A **Very Good presentation** has the following characteristics**:** • Demonstrates a **strong** grasp of the objectives. • **Significantly addresses** any weaknesses that may have been identified on the proposed vision, technical approach, and overall concept note.
Satisfactory	A **Satisfactory presentation** has the following characteristics: • Demonstrate a **reasonably sound response and a good** grasp of the objectives. • **Adequately addresses** any weaknesses may have been identified on the proposed vision, technical approach, and overall concept note.

Marginal	A **Marginal presentation** has the following characteristics: • Demonstrate a **limited** understanding of the objectives. • **Do not adequately address** the weaknesses that may have been identified on the proposed vision, technical approach, and overall concept note.
Unsatisfactory	An **Unsatisfactory presentation** has the following characteristics: • Demonstrate a **lack of understanding** of the objectives. • **Significantly fail** to address all the weaknesses that may have been identified on the proposed vision, technical approach, and overall concept note.

3. Co-Creation and Full Application Merit Review

After the oral presentations are evaluated, successful applicant (s) may be invited to continue the co-creation and collaboration process to identify and develop the activities that will help achieve the results desired under this APS and specific addendum; identify and incorporate additional partners; and determine respective roles and responsibilities related to the implementation of those activities. Full applications will be reviewed with the same merit review criteria stated above. Detailed submission instructions will be submitted at that time.

VII. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS:

Concept notes must be submitted in English, via email as a Microsoft Word or PDF attachment. The main body of the concept note must not exceed 5 pages and must use standard margins and 12pt Times New Roman font. Concept notes in response to Southern Africa Regional Investigative Journalism APS addendum must include the following three components. Please organize the Concept Note according to the outline below.

a. Cover Page (1 page maximum)

1. USAID Addendum Reference;
2. Name and address of organization;
3. Contact person (lead contact name, telephone number, and e-mail Information);
4. Title of proposed program; country(tries) and sector(s) being proposed; total dollar amount of funds requested for the proposed period of performance;
5. Identify the type of applying organization (e.g., local NGO);
6. Names of other donor organizations to whom you are submitting the application and/or which are funding the proposed activities; and
7. Signature, name and title of the authorized representative of the applicant.

b. Technical Instructions (5 page maximum)

The Concept note must include:

1. A brief background on the specific development challenge(s)/opportunity(ies) and needs to be addressed by the application;
2. Statement of the objectives and proposed activities, demonstrating how they relate to specific challenges/opportunities in the region and proposed countries and sector(s);
3. Demonstration of how gender equality, women, youth, and marginalized populations' empowerment will be integrated throughout program activities;
4. Anticipated results and indicative measures to monitor and evaluate results;
5. Role of proposed partners (such as NGOs and/or alliances with private businesses);
6. A notional budget including type of budget support requested from USAID disaggregated

by Direct, program costs as well as Indirect costs;
7. How the proposed activities will be sustained after the grant ends.

c. Attachments (includes past performance, institutional capabilities, and supporting information) (no page limit; but please be as concise as possible)

1. Statement of USAID assistance received during the preceding five-year period; a brief description of activities, donor(s) and amount of support (Organizations that did not receive funds during the preceding five-year period must state this fact);
2. Concise description of the Applicant's development experience including project descriptions, results and evaluations;
3. A brief statement of the history of the organization; its primary development focus, capabilities and challenges;
4. An organizational chart of the Applicant organization; and
5. Proposed staff roles and responsibilities.

2. Preparation of Full Applications

NOTE: USAID IS NOT REQUESTING THIS INFORMATION AT THIS TIME. THE MOST HIGHLY RATED APPLICANT(S) WILL BE REQUESTED BY USAID TO SUBMIT A FULL APPLICATION FOLLOWING THE EVALUATION OF THE CONCEPT PAPERS AND ORAL PRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN THE CO-CREATION.

VI. QUESTIONS AND FURTHER ASSISTANCE:

Questions regarding the substance and objectives of this addendum should be directed to PretoriaApplications@usaid.gov with a copy to SDladla@usaid.gov and GBoateng@usaid.gov by not later than **November 30, 2023 at 17:00** South African Time.