UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
UNITED STATES EMBASSY ABIDJAN
NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)

This is the announcement of notice of funding opportunity:

NOFO Title: Bolstering the Ability of African Governments to Conduct Sovereign Debt Negotiations

NOFO Number: DOS-ABJ-FY23-02

Federal Assistance Listing/Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.989

Type of Award: Grant

Total Funding: $4,937,500 (FY 2022 Economic Support Funds (ESF)), Program Area EG.4 (Economic Growth – Financial Sector)

Anticipated Number of Awards: 1

Period of Performance: 3 years

Type of Solicitation: Open Competition

Eligibility Category: U.S.-based non-profit/non-governmental organizations subject to section 501(c) (3) of the U.S. tax code; foreign-based non-profit organizations/nongovernment organizations (NGO); Public International Organizations; Foreign Public Organizations; and private, public, or state institutions of higher education.

Questions Deadline: 7:59 PM EDT, Washington, D.C. on August 1, 2023, 11:59 PM Local Abidjan Time on August 1, 2023

Application Deadline: 7:59 PM EDT, Washington, D.C. on August 10, 2023, 11:59 PM Local Abidjan Time on August 10, 2023

Anticipated Award Signing: September 2023

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

A. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

U.S. Embassy Abidjan announces an Open Competition for organizations interested in submitting applications for projects that support the provision of transaction advisory services

and capacity-building to African governments in their dealings with non-traditional official lenders.

A.1 Background

U.S. Embassy Abidjan announces an open competition for organizations to submit applications to carry out a new project designed to bolster the ability of African governments to negotiate effectively with non-traditional official lenders on sovereign debt and commercial transactions. Priorities include the provision of transaction advisory services and capacity-building activities for African government entities.

Priority region is Africa. Locations for proposed activities would be selected in consultation with African host governments receiving the transaction advisory services and capacity-building programs.

A.2 Goals

In line with the Department of State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy objective to "improve economic governance and regional integration for trade and investment, including the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement," projects should bolster the ability of African governments to negotiate effectively with non-traditional official lenders.

Projects should be designed to achieve the following U.S. Embassy Policy/Program Objectives:

Objective 1: Empower host governments to negotiate effectively with non-traditional official lenders.

Objective 2: Enhance African debtor countries' understanding of debt contracting with non-traditional official lenders.

A.3 Expected Results

Specific results could include the following:

- Host governments develop debt management strategies.
- Host governments can engage with creditors and implement new financing arrangements to restructure sovereign debt.
- African borrowers have an enhanced understanding of non-traditional official lenders, negotiation strategies to be adopted with such lenders, and the impact of specific contractual provisions found in non-traditional lending documentation.

A.4 Main Activities

To achieve the goals and expected results, the project should include the following:

- A review of the requesting government's debt to develop a detailed understanding of the composition and potential legal exposure related to such debt.

- The provision of legal analysis and recommendations to requesting governments related to the restructuring of these debts, including an assessment of the risks and benefits of different courses of action and strategies.
- In-person or virtual trainings on key issues for African government officials related to contracting with non-traditional lenders.
- Country-specific reviews and evaluations of loan documentation to ensure alignment with the best practices highlighted in the trainings.

A.5 Performance Indicators

- Number of new fair and balanced lending and restructuring agreements with non-traditional creditors initiated and concluded by governments supported by the project.
- Number of trained African government officials reporting an increase in knowledge and skills in sovereign debt management as a result of the capacity-building activities.

Competitive proposals must demonstrate the applicant's ability to:

- Provide legal advisory services to African governments; and
- Build the capacity of African governments through the provision of technical expertise on sovereign debt.

All applicants will be required to address **A. Project Description** in the **Scope of Work** (*Bolstering the Ability of African Governments Draft Scope of Work (SOW)*) attachment (see Section D.2.1.6).

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Organizations can submit one application in response to the NOFO. If more than one application is submitted by an organization, only the first application received will be reviewed for eligibility and funding.

The U.S. Government may: (a) reject any or all applications, (b) accept more than one application, and (c) waive irregularities in applications received.

The U.S. Government may make award(s) based on initial applications received, without discussions or negotiations. Therefore, each initial application should contain the applicant's best terms from a cost and technical standpoint. The U.S. Government reserves the right to enter discussions with one or more applicants in order to obtain clarifications, additional detail, or to suggest refinements in the project description, budget, or other aspects of an application.

U.S. Embassy Abidjan anticipates awarding a grant.

The authority for this funding opportunity is found in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA).

To maximize the impact and sustainability of the award(s) that result from this NOFO, U.S. Embassy Abidjan retains the right to execute non-competitive continuation amendment(s). The total duration of any award, including potential non-competitive continuation amendments, shall not exceed 54 months, or four years. Any non-competitive continuation is contingent on performance and **pending availability of funds.** A non-competitive continuation is not guaranteed, and the Department of State reserves the right to exercise or not to exercise this option.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

C.1 Eligible Applicants

U.S. Embassy Abidjan welcomes applications from U.S.-based non-profit/non-governmental organizations subject to section 501(c) (3) of the U.S. tax code; foreign-based non-profit organizations/nongovernment organizations (NGO); Public International Organizations; Foreign Public Organizations; and private, public, or state institutions of higher education.

Please see 2 CFR 200.307 for regulations regarding program income.

C.2 Cost Sharing or Matching

Providing cost sharing, matching, or cost participation is not an eligibility factor or requirement for this NOFO and providing cost share will not result in a more favorable competitive ranking.

C.3 Other Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must have existing, or the capacity to develop, active partnerships with local in-country partners, entities, and relevant stakeholders and have successfully administered similar projects.

Any applicant listed on the Excluded Parties List System in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) and/or has a current debt to the U.S. government is not eligible to apply for an assistance award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR,1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR,1989 Comp., p. 235), "Debarment and Suspension." Additionally, no entity or person listed on the Excluded Parties List System in SAM.gov can participate in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the Excluded Parties List System in SAM.gov to ensure that no ineligible entity or person is included in their application.

In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Please

see Section D.3 for more information. Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov.

Applicants, including U.S. affiliates of international organizations must provide a valid Unique Entity Identification (UEI), and **completed** SAM.gov registration when submitting application on GRANTS.gov in response to this NOFO. **Applicants that do not have a valid UEI and completed SAM.gov registration will NOT be eligible for consideration. Implementing partners/sub-recipient organizations are required to have a valid UEI number.**

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

D.1 Address to Request Application Package

Applicants can find application forms and other materials needed to apply on GRANTS.gov (www.GRANTS.gov) under the announcement title "**Bolstering the Ability of African Governments to Conduct Sovereign Debt Negotiations**" funding opportunity number "**DOS-ABJ-FY23-02"**. Please contact the U.S. Embassy Abidjan point of contact listed in Section G if requesting reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities or for security reasons. Please note that reasonable accommodations do not include deadline extensions.

D.2 Content and Form of Application Submission

For all application documents, please ensure:

- All documents are in English and all costs are in U.S. Dollars. If an original document within the application is in another language, an English translation must be provided **(please note the U.S. Department of State, as indicated in 2 CFR 200.111, requires that English is the official language of all award documents)**. If any document is provided in both English and a foreign language, the English language version is the controlling version;
- All pages are numbered, including attachments with the exception of Excel documents;
- All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper; and,
- All documents are single-spaced, 12-point Calibri font, with 1-inch margins. Captions and footnotes may be 10-point Calibri font. Font sizes in charts and tables, can be reformatted to fit within 1 page width.

D.2.1. Application Requirements

Complete applications must include the following:

1. Completed and signed **SF-424**, **SF-424A**, and **SF-424B** forms.

2. Organizations that engage in lobbying the U.S. Government, including Congress, or pay for another entity to lobby on their behalf, are also required to complete the **SF-LLL** "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities" form (**only if applicable**).

3. **Cover Page/Executive Summary** (not to exceed two (2) pages). Include the organization name, project title, target country/countries, and name and contact information for the application's main point of contact and brief section that clearly outlines the (1) the problem statement addressed by the project, (2) research-based evidence justifying the applicant's approach, and (3) quantifiable project outcomes and impacts.

4. **Table of Contents**

5. **Proposal Narrative*** (not to exceed ten (10) pages). *Please note the ten-page limit does not include the following:
    - SF-424
    - SF-424A
    - SF-424B
    - SF-LLL (if applicable)
    - Cover Page/Executive Summary
    - Table of Contents
    - Scope of Work (*Bolstering the Ability of African Governments Draft Scope of Work (SOW)*; required template provided as an attachment)
    - Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Narrative and Plan (sample template provided as an attachment)
    - Timeline
    - Gender and Inclusion Analysis
    - Detailed Budget (sample template provided as an attachment)
    - Budget Narrative (sample template provided as an attachment)
        - If the Budget includes subawards, please include a separate Budget Narrative for each organization.
    - NICRA Letter
    - Single Audit or recent independent financial audit
    - Key Personnel Summary
    - CV or Resume of Key Personnel
    - Security Plan
    - Contingency Plan
    - COVID Contingency Plan
    - Additional Attachments (if applicable):
        - Letters of support from program partners
        - Official permission letters, if required for project activities
        - Letter of Disclosure for proposed consultants/personnel
        - Letter(s) of Institutional Support

The Proposal Narrative must include the following:

- **Introduction to the Organization**: A description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the project, including information on all relevant or similar type projects from previous grants from the U.S. Embassy and/or U.S. Government agencies.

Using the **Scope of Work** *Bolstering the Ability of African Governments Draft Scope of Work (SOW)* (see Section D.2.1.6) provided as an attachment to this NOFO by U.S. Embassy Abidjan, the Proposal Narrative should address the applicant's unique approach to the following:

- **Project Methods and Design:** A description of how the project is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal.
- **Project Goal:** The "goal(s)" describe the larger intended outcome
- **Project Objectives:** The intermediate accomplishments and measurable targets to achieve a goal. Objectives of the project should be SMART:
    - **S**pecific: Detailed and specifies what will be achieved
    - **M**easurable: have associated metrics or measurements of success
    - **A**ttainable: appropriately challenging, objectives can be reasonably attained give the available resources
    - **R**elevant: align with the policy/program goal and appropriate within the country or beneficiary audience
    - **T**ime-Bound: achievable within the timeframe of the project
- **Project Activities:** Describe specific actions taken under each Objective. All activities should be clearly developed and sufficiently explain the resource and time requirements (inputs) and things done or produced (outputs). Activities should detail: target areas, participant groups or selection criteria for participants; how relevant stakeholders will be engaged; and actions taken by local partners as appropriate/relevant.
- **Project Management Plan:** Describe the proposed management structure for this project. Include a description of the responsibilities of all principal organizations and staff involved, reporting relationships, authority, and lines of communication within and between each of these organizations.
- **Project Partners:** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations and sub-awardees, if applicable.
- **Future Funding or Sustainability** Applicant's plan for continuing the project beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable. Include ways project activities will ensure sustainability.
- **Risk Analysis* -** identify the internal and external risks associated with the proposed project, rate the likelihood of the risks, rate the potential

impact of the risks on the project, and identify actions that could help mitigate the risks. *Please see Security Plan and Contingency Plan.

6. **Scope of Work (SOW)** (Applicants should use the *Bolstering the Ability of African Governments Draft Scope of Work (SOW)* template provided by U.S. Embassy Abidjan and attached to this NOFO.) SOW should provide a summary of the applicant's unique approach to the following as indicated in Section 5 **Proposal Narrative**:
    - **Project Goal**
    - **Project Objectives**
    - **Project Activities**
    - **Project Indicators**

    Required *Bolstering the Ability of African Governments Draft Scope of Work (SOW)* template is provided as an attachment to this NOFO.

7. **Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Narrative and Plan** (see provided sample template)**:**

    a. **Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Narrative** details how a project's performance monitoring and evaluation system will be carried out and by whom. It explains how the project's performance toward its objectives will be tracked over time. It should provide a clear description of the approach and data collection strategies and tools to be employed (e.g., pre- and post-test surveys, interviews, focus groups). The description should also include how the applicant will track and document whether activities occurred (outputs) and the results or changes caused by these activities (outcomes). If the project includes work with local partners or sub-partners, explain how performance monitoring and evaluation efforts will be coordinated amongst these organizations. Explain if an external evaluation will be included. Evaluations, internal or external, should be systematic studies that use research methods to address specific questions about project performance. They should provide a valuable supplement to ongoing monitoring activities. Evaluation activities generally include baseline assessments, mid-term and final evaluations.

    b. **Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Plan** should draw on the objectives, activities and expected changes from the Scope of Work, and link those areas to indicators. The Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Plan is generally structured as a table with output-based and outcome-based indicators. It explains how data will be collected (data collection methods) to show that certain changes occurred. It outlines baselines (where your project is starting) and quarterly targets (what you would like to achieve) for each indicator.

The project should monitor and report on performance indicators that are specific, measurable, achievable, reasonable, and time-bound. Establish, where possible, performance baseline data and expected performance targets for each expected result and include details on what sources of data will be used to document performance, how the indicators will be measured, frequency of measurement, and units of measure. Where possible, indicators should also allow for sex disaggregation. Indicators should reflect key project outputs or outcomes that reflect the primary goals or objectives of the project and that the implementer can collect with high quality data.

A sample *Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Narrative and Plan Template* is provided as an attachment to this NOFO.

8. **Timeline** (not to exceed one (1) page, preferably as a Word Document or Excel Sheet). The timeline of the overall proposal should include activities and monitoring and evaluation efforts outlined in either in a monthly or quarterly format.

Activities, Monitoring & Evaluation, Etc.	(Oct-Dec 2023) **OR** October 2023	(Jan-Mar 2024) **OR** November 2023	(Apr-May 2024) **OR** December 2023
Activity X	X	X	
Indicator X	X	X	X
Activity Z		X	X
Etc.			

9. **Gender and Inclusion Analysis** (not to exceed two (2) pages, preferably as a Word Document). Provide a concise analysis of relevant gender norms, equity and equality for underserved communities and marginalized populations, power relations, and conflict dynamics in target countries. Potential domains of analysis include institutional practices and barriers, cultural norms, gender roles, access to and control over assets and resources, and patterns of decision-making. Applicants should briefly explain how they have integrated findings from their analysis into project design and/or other proposal documents, including a plan for regularly reviewing and updating the gender and inclusion analysis with local partners/beneficiaries, and making any necessary adjustments to project implementation.

10. **Detailed Budget** (must be an Excel workbook) that includes three (3) columns containing the request to U.S. Embassy Abidjan for U.S. share of cost, any cost sharing contribution, and the total budget. A Summary Budget should also be

included using the OMB-approved budget categories (see SF-424A as a sample) in a separate tab. Costs must be in U.S. Dollars. Detailed line-item budgets for sub-grantees should be included as additional tabs within the Excel workbook (if available at the time of submission).

For more information, *Budget Guidance and Template for New Awards (FY2023)* is provided as an attachment to this NOFO.

Use of the Detailed Budget template (*Budget Guidance and Template for New Awards (FY2023*) is not required, however, the submitted budget must follow OMB budget categories. If an applicant's budget does not follow OMB budget categories, the application will be deemed technically ineligible and will not be considered for funding.

11. **Budget Narrative** (preferably as a Word Document; (no maximum page limit). Justify each line-item in the budget and explain how the amounts were derived, consistent with the applicant's documented policies, as well as the source and description of all proposed costs (and cost-share, if applicable). The Budget Narrative should complement the budget rather than repeat information provided in the budget. For example, the narrative should provide details on the purpose of costs, reasonability of costs, cost price analysis, explain allocations, explain any yearly variances, and tie expenses to project activities and/or objectives where appropriate. Sources of all cost-share offered in the application should be identified and explained in the budget narrative.

    Personnel costs must include a clarification of the roles and responsibilities of all staff, base salary, and percentage of time devoted to the project (also known as level of effort). The Budget Narrative should support the activities described in the proposal and provide additional information that might not be readily apparent in the Detailed Budget, not simply repeat what is represented numerically in the budget, i.e., salaries are for salaries or travel is for travel.

    If the Detailed Budget includes subawards, please include a <u>separate</u> Budget Narrative for each organization. Please note that subaward organizations must have a SAM.gov unique entity identifier (UEI) number (certain exceptions apply).

    For ease of review, it is highly recommended that applicants order the Budget Narrative in the same order as the Detailed Budget.

    See Tab 1 of *Budget Guidance and Template for New Awards (FY2023*), provided as an attachment, for more information.

    A sample *Budget Narrative Template* is provided as an attachment to this NOFO.

12. **NICRA Letter:** If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, your latest NICRA letter should be included as a PDF file. This document will not be reviewed by the Merit Review Panel but will be used by project and grant team if the submission is recommended for funding. Organizations that have previously established indirect cost rates must submit timely indirect cost proposals to their cognizant agency as required by Appendix III & IV of 2 CFR 200. If indirect cost proposals have not been submitted for re-negotiation, as required, out-of-date NICRAs may not be considered. If your proposal involves subawards to organizations charging indirect costs, please submit their NICRA, if applicable.

13. **Single Audit:** a PDF file copy of your organization's most recent single audit is required, if your organization meets the threshold as defined in 2 CFR 200 Subpart F. If your organization has not had a recent single audit (within your organization's previous 3 fiscal years), you must submit your organization's most recent independent financial audit.

14. **Key Personnel Summary:** (not to exceed two (2) pages, preferably as a Word Document). Include short bios that highlight relevant professional experience. Provides names, titles, roles, and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program. Note the location where key staff will be based and percentage of their time (level of effort) that will be used in support of this program.

15. **CV or Resume of Key Personnel:** (no maximum page limit per CV or Resume). Include name, work history and experience or qualifications of key personnel who are proposed for the project.

16. **Security Plan** (not to exceed three (3) pages). Address any issues involving in-person events and recruitment for said events, and safety for any online programs or communications, including independent IT security audits (to include a vulnerability assessment) of any proposed web application or platform. Organization's Security Plan should demonstrate consideration of the risks identified in the Proposal Narrative risk analysis. Costs may also be identified within the Detailed Budget and Budget Narrative. Applicants are also encouraged to include contingency plans for in-person or online activities.

17. **Contingency Plan** (not to exceed three (3) pages). The Contingency Plan, for proposed activities should the originally planned activities not be able to be implemented, should be submitted as an additional annex. Applicants should demonstrate consideration of the risks identified in the Proposal Narrative risk analysis and include specific alternative activities or locations as part of the Contingency Plan. Any proposed "plan" must comply with 2CFR200.433 – Contingency provisions. Plans must not include unallocable or unallowable

expenses and must not exceed the notified Total Funding. U.S. Embassy Abidjan requires prior approval by the Grants Officer of the "contingency reserve" before any activities can take place, or costs can be incurred against the "contingency reserve."

18. **Additional Attachments:**
    - Letters of support from project partners describing the roles and responsibilities of each partner, if applicable
    - Official permission letters, if applicable
    - Letter of Disclosure for proposed consultants/personnel (if applicable) of potential conflicts of interest, employment with a local/state/Federal government.
    - Letter(s) of Institutional Support to indicate that your organization's leadership is providing their support of the application.

Applications that do not include the elements listed above will be deemed technically ineligible. To ensure that all applications receive a balanced evaluation, the Merit Review Panel will review from the first page of each section up to the page limit and no further.

D.2.2 Additional Information Requested of Successful Applicants Receiving Notification of Intent

Successful applicants must submit, after notification of intent to make a Federal award, but prior to issuance of a Federal award:

- Written responses and revised application documents addressing conditions and recommendations from the Merit Review Panel;
- A copy of the applicant's latest NICRA as a PDF file, if the applicant has a NICRA and includes NICRA charges in the budget;
- A completed copy of the U.S. Department of State's Financial Management Survey, if receiving U.S. Government funding for the first time;
- Submission of required banking information to U.S. Embassy Abidjan at request of Grants Officer Representative or Financial Management Officer for new vendor creation in U.S. Department of State financial management systems;
- Other requested information or documents included in the notification of intent to make a Federal award or subsequent communications prior to issuance of a Federal award.

D.3 Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

Required Registrations:

All prime organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration with SAM.gov **before submitting an application**. U.S. Embassy Abidjan may **not** review applications from or make awards to applicants that have not completed all applicable UEI and SAM.gov requirements. A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards.

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

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

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

- Organizations **based in the United States** or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.

- Organizations **based outside of the United States** and that do not pay employees within the United States do not need an EIN from the IRS but do need a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.

- **Please note that as of November 2022 and February 2022 respectively, organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code or CAGE code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities.** If an applicant organization is mid-registration and wishes to remove a CAGE or NCAGE code from their SAM.gov registration, the applicant should submit a help desk ticket ("incident") with the Federal Service Desk (FSD) online at www.fsd.gov using the following language: "I do not intend to seek financial assistance from the Department of Defense. I do not wish to obtain a CAGE or NCAGE code. I understand that I will need to submit my registration after this incident is resolved in order to have my registration activated."

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

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

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

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

NCAGE Homepage:

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

NCAGE Code Request Tool (NCRT):

https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/Codification/CageTool/home

All prime organizations must, at all times during which they have an active Federal award or application under consideration by any Federal awarding agency, maintain an active SAM.gov registration with current information. SAM.gov requires all entities to renew their registration once a year to maintain an active registration status in SAM.gov. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure it has an active registration in SAM.gov and to maintain that active registration. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements at the time of application, the applicant may be deemed technically ineligible to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

D.3.1 Exemptions

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

- An applicant's identity must be protected due to potential endangerment of their mission, their organization's status, their employees, or individuals being served by the applicant.

- For an applicant, if the Federal awarding agency makes a determination that there are exigent circumstances that prohibit the applicant from receiving a unique entity identifier and completing SAM registration prior to receiving a Federal award. In these instances, Federal awarding agencies must require the recipient to obtain a unique entity identifier and complete SAM registration within 30 days of the Federal award date.

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the NOFO in Section G at least **two weeks prior to the deadline stated in the NOFO and provide a justification for their request**. UEI/SAM.gov Exemption must be approved by a warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

D.4 Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due no later than 7:59 PM EDT, Washington, D.C. on August 10, 2023, 11:59 PM Local Abidjan Time on August 10, 2023 via email to U.S. Embassy Abidjan to **AF-Econ-Grants** at AF-Econ-Grants@state.gov with the subject line "Project Proposal: Bolstering the Ability of African Governments to Conduct Sovereign Debt Negotiations."

Late applications are neither reviewed nor considered. Applicants should not expect a notification from U.S. Embassy Abidjan confirming receipt of their application.

D.5 Funding Limitations, Restrictions, and other Considerations

U.S. Embassy Abidjan will not consider applications that reflect any type of support for any member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization. Please refer the link for Foreign Terrorist Organizations: https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/ Project activities whose direct beneficiaries are foreign militaries or paramilitary groups or individuals will not be considered for U.S. Embassy Abidjan funding given purpose limitations on funding.

The Leahy Law prohibits Department foreign assistance funds from supporting foreign security force units if the Secretary of State has credible information that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. Per 22 USC §2378d(a) (2017), "No assistance shall be furnished under this chapter [FOREIGN ASSISTANCE] or the Arms Export Control Act [22 USC 2751 et seq.] to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country if the Secretary of State has credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights." Restrictions may apply to any proposed assistance to police or other law enforcement. Among these, pursuant to section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA), no assistance provided through this funding opportunity may be furnished to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country when there is credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. In accordance with the requirements of section 620M of the FAA, also known as the Leahy law, project beneficiaries or participants from a foreign government's security forces may need to be vetted by the Department before the provision of any assistance. If a proposed grant or cooperative agreement will provide assistance to foreign security forces or personnel, compliance with the Leahy Law is required.

In addition, funds cannot be made available to any individual or organization that has committed serious human rights abuse.

Organizations should be cognizant of these restrictions when developing project proposals as these restrictions will require appropriate due diligence of program beneficiaries and collaboration with U.S. Embassy Abidjan to ensure compliance with these restrictions. Project beneficiaries subject to due diligence vetting will include any individuals or entities that are beneficiaries of foreign assistance funding or support.

D.6 Other Submission Requirements

All application submissions must be made via email to **AF-Econ-Grants** at AF-Econ-Grants@state.gov.

Faxed or couriered documents will not be accepted. Reasonable accommodations may, in appropriate circumstances, be provided to applicants with disabilities or for security reasons.

Applicants must follow all formatting instructions in the applicable NOFO and these instructions.

U.S. Embassy Abidjan encourages organizations to **submit applications during normal business hours** (Monday-Thursday, 7:45 AM – 5:00 PM and Friday, 7:45 AM – 12:30 PM Local Abidjan Time).

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

E.1 Proposal Review Criteria

The U.S. Embassy Abidjan Merit Review Panel will evaluate each application individually against the following criteria, listed below in order of importance, and not against competing applications. Please use the below criteria as a reference, but **do not structure your application according to the sub-sections**.

Organizational Capacity – 30 points: The applicant demonstrates an institutional record of successful projects in the content area proposed. The applicant demonstrates experience (e.g., has previously worked and/or has established contacts/partners) in the proposed country/territory/region. The organization has expertise in its stated field and has adequate staffing to manage the proposed project. The applicant demonstrates capacity for responsible fiscal management of donor funding (e.g., successful management of a previous grant or sub-award, single audit findings, exclusions, etc.).

Quality and Project Design – 20 points: The project idea is well-developed and responsive to the policy and program objective of the NOFO. The applicant describes the project's potential contribution to solving the problem addressed in the problem statement. The application clearly: defines the problem, its causes, stakeholders, and existing research/data; the approach taken to solve the problem; and realistic milestones to indicate progress.

Monitoring & Evaluation/Sustainability – 20 points: Applicant demonstrates ability to measure project success against key indicators and provides milestones to indicate progress toward goals outlined in the proposal. The project includes output and outcome indicators and shows

how and when those will be measured and who will be responsible for them. The applicant clearly details how activities will result in benefits that will continue beyond the funding period.

Project Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives – 15 points: Goals and objectives are clearly stated and project approach is likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results. The applicant proposes activities that are feasible, and are also practical, and/or experiential in nature to encourage innovation. The applicant addresses how the project will engage or obtain support from relevant stakeholders and/or identifies local partners. Project logic is sound showing plausible pathways to achieve project outcomes. Key assumptions and risks have been identified and their potential influences described. The applicant acknowledges if activities similar to those proposed are already taking or have taken place previously and provides an explanation as to how proposed new activities will not duplicate or merely add to existing/recent activities.

Detailed Budget & Budget Narrative – 10 points: The budget justification is detailed, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results and provide detail of calculations, including estimation methods, quantities, unit costs, labor in-put and responsibilities, procurement practice and policy information, and other similar quantitative detail.

Support of Equity and Underserved Communities – 5 points: Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the project will support and advance equity and engage underserved communities in project administration, design, and implementation.

E.2 Review and Selection Process

The Department of State is committed to ensuring a competitive and standardized process for awarding funding. Applications will be screened initially in a Technical Eligibility Review stage to determine whether applicants meet the eligibility requirements outlined in section C and have submitted all required documents outlined in section D. Applications that do not meet these requirements will not advance beyond the Technical Eligibility Review stage and will be deemed ineligible for funding under this NOFO.

All applications that are deemed eligible will proceed to the Merit Review Panel consisting of U.S. Government subject matter and/or country-specific experts and will be rated on a 100-point scale. U.S. Embassy Abidjan reserves the right to request the assistance of non-U.S. Government Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), if appropriate to the solicitation. Point values for individual elements of the application are presented Section E.1 *Proposal Review Criteria*. Merit Review Panel Reviewers' ratings, and any resulting recommendations, are advisory. Merit Review Panel Reviewers may provide conditions and recommendations on applications to enhance the proposed project, which must be addressed by the applicant before further consideration of the award.

The Merit Review Panel's recommendations may be subject to a final review and high-level approval at the discretion of the U.S. Embassy Abidjan's senior level official and will be influenced by whether the application meets the Department of State's programmatic goals and objectives, how it supports the Department's overarching foreign policy priorities, and the geographic distribution of the top-ranking applications. The decision for the final award determination rests with the Grants Officer.

E.2 Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov (formerly, FAPIIS)

The Department of State anticipates that the Federal share announced under this NOFO may be greater than the simplified acquisition threshold over the period of performance (see §200.01 Simplified Acquisition Threshold) and is therefore informing all applicants that:

1. The Department of State, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the U.S. government designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);

2. An applicant, at its option, may review and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. Currently, federal agencies create integrity records in the integrity module of the Contractor Performance Assessment and Reporting System (CPARS) and these records are visible as responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov;

3. The Department of State will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.206 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

F.1 Federal Award Notices

U.S. Embassy Abidjan will provide a separate notification to applicants on the result of their applications. Successful applicants will receive a letter electronically via email requesting that the applicant respond to the Merit Review Panel's conditions and recommendations. This notification is not an authorization to begin activities and does not constitute formal approval or a funding commitment.

Final approval is contingent on the applicant successfully responding to the review Merit Review Panel's conditions and recommendations; being registered in required systems; and completing and providing any additional documentation requested by U.S. Embassy Abidjan or the Grants Officer. Final approval is also contingent on Congressional Notification requirements

being met and final review and approval by the U.S. Department of State's warranted Grants Officer.

The notice of Federal award signed by the U.S. Department of State's warranted Grants Officer is the sole authorizing document. The recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date shown on the grant award document signed by the Grants Officer. If awarded, the notice of Federal award will be provided to the applicant's Authorizing Designated Official via email to be electronically countersigned.

The Recipient must request payment under this award by completing form SF-270—Request for Advance or Reimbursement and submitting the form to the Grants Officer. Unless otherwise stipulated, the Recipient may request payments on a reimbursement or advance basis.

Advance payments must be limited to the minimum amounts needed and be timed to be in accordance with the actual, immediate cash requirements of the Recipient in carrying out the purpose of this award. The timing and amount of advance payments must be as close as is administratively feasible to the actual disbursements by the Recipient for direct program or project costs and the proportionate share of any allowable indirect costs.

F.2 Administrative and National Policy and Legal Requirements

U.S. Embassy Abidjan requires all recipients of foreign assistance funding to comply with all applicable Department and Federal laws and regulations, including but not limited to the following:

The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards set forth in 2 CFR Chapter 200 (Sub-Chapters A through F) shall apply to all non-Federal entities, except for assistance awards to Individuals and Foreign Public Entities. Sub-Chapters A through E shall apply to all foreign organizations, and Sub-Chapters A through D shall apply to all U.S. and foreign for-profit entities. The applicant/recipient of the award and any sub-recipient under the award must comply with all applicable terms and conditions, in addition to the assurance and certifications made part of the Notice of Award. The Department's Standard Terms and Conditions can be viewed at https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/.

Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply. These include:

- 2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT
- 2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION
- 2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS
- 2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE (FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE)

- 2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY
- 2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS

In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, the Department of State will review and consider applications for funding, as applicable to specific programs, pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity in accordance with the following:

- Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 85 FR 49506 on August 13, 2020, particularly on:
    - Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an objective process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
    - Prohibiting the purchase of certain telecommunication and video surveillance services or equipment in alignment with section 889 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019 (Pub. L. No. 115—232) (2 CFR part 200.216),
    - Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with *Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty* (E.O. 13798) and *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (E.O. 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),
    - Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
    - Terminating agreements in whole or in part to the greatest extent authorized by law if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340).

Additional requirements may be included depending on the content of the project, and all projects must comply with relevant legal restrictions.

F.3 Reporting

Applicants should be aware that U.S. Embassy Abidjan awards will require that all reports (financial and performance progress) be submitted via email to the Grants Officer and Grants Officer Representative on a quarterly basis. The Federal Financial Report (FFR or SF-425) is the required form for the financial reports. The performance progress reports must: include a narrative as described below; reflect the focus on measuring the project's progress on the overarching objectives; and be compiled according to the objectives, outcomes, and outputs as outlined in the award's Scope of Work (SOW) and in the Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Narrative and Plan (PMENP). An assessment of the overall project's impact should be included in each performance progress report. Where relevant, performance progress reports could include the following sections:

- Relevant contextual information (limited);

- Explanation and evaluation of significant activities of the reporting period and how the activities reflect progress toward achieving objectives, including meeting benchmarks/targets as set in the SOW and PMENP;
- Any tangible impact or success stories from the project, when possible;
- Copy of mid-term and/or final evaluation report(s) conducted by an external evaluator; if applicable;
- Relevant supporting documentation or products related to the project activities (such as articles, meeting lists and agendas, participant surveys, photos, manuals, etc.) as separate attachments;
- Description of how the recipient is pursuing sustainability, including looking for sources of follow-on funding;
- Any problems/challenges in implementing the project and a corrective action plan with an updated timeline of activities;
- Reasons why established goals were not met;
- Data for the required indicator(s) for the quarter as well as aggregate data by fiscal year;
- Proposed activities for the next quarter; and,
- Additional pertinent information, including analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs, if applicable.

Recipient is responsible for monitoring the activities, performance, and expenditures of any subrecipient(s). Recipient must have monitoring tools in place to ensure that subaward(s) is used for authorized purposes, and that the subrecipient(s) is complying with applicable regulations and the terms and conditions of the subaward (2 CFR §200.332).

Applicants should be aware of the post award reporting requirements reflected in 2 CFR 200 Appendix XII—Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters.

Foreign Assistance Data Review: As required by Congress, the Department of State must make progress in its efforts to improve tracking and reporting of foreign assistance data through the Foreign Assistance Data Review (FADR). The FADR requires tracking of foreign assistance activity data from budgeting, planning, and allocation through obligation and disbursement. Successful applicants will be required to report and draw down Federal funding based on the appropriate FADR Data Elements, indicated within their award documentation.

A final narrative and financial report must also be submitted within 120 days after the expiration of the award.

Please note: Delays in reporting may result in delays of payment approvals and failure to provide required reports may jeopardize the recipient's' ability to receive future U.S. Government funds. U.S. Embassy Abidjan reserves the right to request any additional programmatic and/or financial project information during the award period.

G. CONTACT INFORMATION

For technical submission questions related to this NOFO, please contact to **AF-Econ-Grants** at **AF-Econ-Grants@state.gov.**

Except for technical submission questions, during the NOFO period U.S. Department of State staff in Washington and overseas shall not discuss this competition with applicants until the entire proposal review process has been completed and rejection and approval letters have been transmitted.

H. OTHER INFORMATION

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

The information in this NOFO is binding and may not be modified by any U.S. Embassy Abidjan representative. Explanatory information provided by U.S. Embassy Abidjan that contradicts this language will not be binding. Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award 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 proposals. Further, the U.S. Government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

Attachments:

- *Bolstering the Ability of African Governments Draft Scope of Work (SOW)*
- *2023 Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Narrative and Plan (PMENP) Template*
- Detailed Budget - *Budget Guidance and Template for New Awards (FY2023)*
- Budget Narrative - *2023 Budget Narrative Template*