

United States Department of State
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL)
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): DRL Nothing About Us Without Us: Building Evidence
for an Integrated Human Rights Framework and Justice in Evaluation Practice

This is the announcement of funding opportunity number **SFOP0009665**

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.345

Type of Solicitation: Open Competition

Application Deadline: 11:59 PM EST on July 18, 2023

Total Funding Floor: \$1,780,601

Total Funding Ceiling: \$1,780,601

Anticipated Number of Awards: 1-2

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement

Period of Performance: 30-36 months

Anticipated Time to Award, Pending Availability of Funds: 5-6 months

A. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The U.S. Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) announces an open competition for organizations interested in submitting applications for an applied research program that supports the following goal: contribute to building a portfolio of evidence in the field of evaluative practice and interventions that employ human rights frameworks and complexity- and culturally- responsive methods, while also strengthening strategic and evaluative frameworks to contribute to the body of global and equitable human rights evaluative practice.

The purpose of this evaluative research is to contribute to the global body of evaluative tools and practice by developing a human rights framework that espouses the principles of “do no (more) harm,” and “nothing about us without us.” Based on the principles articulated above, the research should result in an actionable framework for human rights programming and evaluation practices—both of which would bolster democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) programming and evaluation practices.

Background

DRL predicates its programmatic support on the idea that democratic authority lies within and is drawn from citizens, and that any enabling environment for democracy must inherently be rights-respecting. In this way, the Bureau views democracy and human rights programs as fundamentally linked.¹ When human rights are infringed upon, that infringement erodes democratic principles, behaviors, and values that underpin the institutions and systems of democracy. Furthermore, human rights violations reflect a neglect of the human dignity that is fundamental to the protection of human rights. Efforts to address human rights abuses in autocratizing and restrictive environments often fail to sufficiently integrate a human rights-based approach amid design, implementation, and evaluation.

DRL recognizes that the communities impacted by human rights violations and abuse – where implementing partners invest their time, resources, and funding – have historically had limited opportunities to influence these efforts and limited agency over funding decisions or viewed simply as “beneficiaries.” This removes impacted communities from the process design, making them, even in theory, merely the recipients of foreign assistance, and threatens to impose the values and understandings of external actors on how programs are conceived, received, and assessed. Rather, communities – and the expertise gained through their strategic and lived experiences – should have a dynamic, central, and leading role in developing human rights foreign assistance interventions. When community leaders and in country actors actually lead a “bottom-up approach” that is inclusive of diverse actors, human rights programming is more effective. Donors hold a unique position of power whereby they have a responsibility in facilitating a partner-centered approach to account for and reset this dynamic.

DRL is cognizant that inequities remain in the body of human rights program design, implementation, and evaluation. Further, in a context of global human rights erosion there is increased need to allocate funds towards human rights programs that are maximally sustainable, scalable, and impactful, and to assess the role of inclusive and participatory methods within foreign assistance programming.

Successful evaluation as an intervention should be transformative², as it is informative; restorative, beyond being non-extractive; and partner and community-centered and based on indigenous knowledge³ and in-country researchers, rather than structural inequity in epistemology devoid of context devised to address evaluation questions. As the practice of a rights-based approach in all phases of program design and implementation is critical to

¹ Goodhart, M. (2008). Human Rights and Global Democracy. *Ethics & International Affairs*, 22(4), 395-420. doi:10.1111/j.1747-7093.2008.00177.x

² Olavarria, C. & Mertens, D.M. (2022) Challenging democracy, human rights, and governance evaluation capacity development through a transformative lens. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2022, 43-51. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.20530>

³ Badjo, S.-Y.A (2022). *Made in Africa: Understanding Indigenous African Approaches to democracy, human rights, and governance evaluation through the study of proverbs.* *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2022, 79-85. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev/20526>

successful human rights programming, evaluative interventions should be epistemologically just⁴ and endeavors to continue establishing an evidence base for a human rights framework.

The [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) serves as a foundation for the DRG community—that is democracy, human rights, and governance actors that include policymakers, grant making organizations, implementing organizations, think tanks, researchers and related groups—that collectively endeavors to advance the protection of human rights for marginalized groups across the globe, in all their diverse identities. The DRG community has long recognized that around the world, people belonging to marginalized communities, including women and girls, minoritized religious, racial and ethnic groups, LGBTQI+ persons, indigenous communities, and others are disproportionately discriminated against, forced to endure high levels of violence and harsh or unsafe labor conditions, and are systematically denied equal access to justice and full political, economic, and social participation in society.

With these structural inequities, the DRG community, in particular foreign assistance program stakeholders, tends to operate under the following implicit theory of change:

If fundamental freedoms and dignity for all persons are preserved and ***if*** universal human rights are a keystone to representative democracy (along with rule of law, inclusive economic growth, free and independent flow of information, transparency, accountability, and representative governance), ***then*** democratic actors and institutions respecting principles of human rights and inclusion will be able to strengthen their legitimacy, resilience, and ability to fulfill their responsibilities for all people, while facing emergent opportunities and threats.

This applied research will challenge, test, and refine this theory of change within these contexts of autocratization processes⁵:

- Democratic Erosion/Backsliding: A decline in the quality of democracy within a democratic polity that does not necessarily produce a transition to autocracy.
- Democratic Breakdown: The point at which autocratization processes shift a country from an electoral democracy to electoral autocracy.
- Authoritarian Deepening: Autocratization within existing authoritarian states that further harden or entrench autocratic systems of government.

In doing so, the research should explore assumptions in this theory of change, identify potential gaps within it, and recommend evidence-based revisions to the theory of change as appropriate. Examining each element of the implicit theory of change across these democratic-

⁴ Dazzo, G.P. (2022) Humanizing human rights evaluation: Integrating human rights principles to maintain methodological rigor, axiological commitments, and epistemic justice. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2022, 53-67. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.20528>

⁵ Anna Lührmann & Staffan I. Lindberg (2019) A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?, *Democratization*, 26:7, 1095-1113, DOI: 10.1080/13510347.2019.1582029

autocratic contexts will equip the DRG community to sharpen their approaches to specifically address the core issues that stem from which rights violations are taking place.

DRL is committed to fostering community and partner-centered demand for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people globally and will continue to serve as a dedicated steward. This approach resonates with White House Executive Order 13985 and Executive Order 14091 which acknowledges that striving for racial equity and equality for all marginalized communities is a multigenerational undertaking that requires steady stewardship. Since this award will be issued as a cooperative agreement, DRL will work with the selected applicant's research team throughout implementation on specific areas of substantial involvement.

Research Questions

The applied research will assess a series of global human rights programming, starting with programs focused on the rights of marginalized groups, where the first phase will focus on LGBTQI+ persons in all their diverse identities. Based on the emergent evidence and learning loops that stem from the first phases of the evaluation, subsequent phases of the applied research will sample from additional sub-populations or thematic programs, such as Disabilities, Gender, Religious Minorities, Media, or Emergency Assistance for Human Rights Defenders.

While research questions will be refined in collaboration with DRL, the questions below are illustrative of the scope of the applied research. Competitive proposals will outline how overarching questions and sub-questions below will be addressed.

Overarching human rights programming

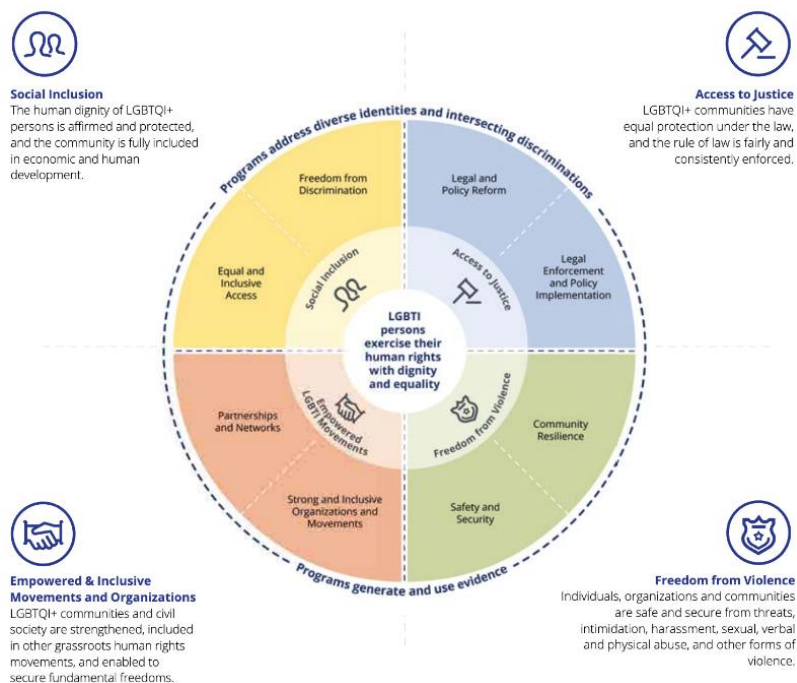
1. Explain: In what ways are human rights programs advancing and protecting rights of marginalized communities to facilitate their full political, economic, and social participation in the various democratic-autocratic contexts? What objectives and outcomes do such human rights programs achieve?
 - a. What factors help and/or hinder the achievements of human rights program objectives and outcomes?
 - b. What are significant unintended outcomes (positive, negative, or benign) of human rights programs? Which groups are affected directly by these outcomes?
 - c. How relevant and appropriate were the program designs in the governing context in which these programs were implemented?
 - d. What practices should be sustained and what are the opportunities for scaling?
2. Explain: How critical is the enforcement of human rights and dignity for members of marginalized communities as a pathway to inclusive, representative democracy?
 - a. Define and illustrate the typologies of human rights programming that are designed to uphold fundamental freedoms and dignity for self-identified members of marginalized communities across the democratic-autocratic contexts.

b. Which typologies are most effective in catalyzing progress towards inclusive and representative democracy?

3. Strategize: Which strategies—including rights-based program designs that are partner, community, or movement-driven; epistemologically just evaluation methods in program cycles; funding mechanisms or coordination with funders, among others—that fit best for the range of DRG stakeholders and their unique positionality in advancing and protecting human rights as a pathway towards inclusive, representative democracy?

Global Equality Fund

The initial sample population will be LGBTQI+ persons engaged in the [Global Equality Fund](#). The GEF is a coalition of governments, companies, nongovernmental organizations, and foundations that demonstrates a shared global commitment to promote and protect the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons. These protections are a valuable end in and of itself, but also necessary to counter methods deployed by anti-rights actors to manipulate the stigma against these and other communities in ways that undermine democracy and rule of law for all persons.



Though the GEF framework was developed in 2016 and has been instrumental in measuring the collective work of LGBTQI+ movements across the four pillars of the framework (social inclusion, empowered movements, access to justice, and freedom from violence), the shifting political and social landscape creates an opportunity for evolving the current framework further. While a coordinated wave of legislation sweeping across the globe to criminalize the rights of LGBTQI+ persons globally, GEF's implementing partners have sustained the movement and achieved legislative successes to protect LGBTQI+ rights. To preserve the wins and mitigate losses of this global initiative, DRL is investing in evaluative research to:

1. Explore: What are the GEF's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in protecting rights of marginalized communities in order to facilitate their full political, economic, and social participation in society with respect to:
 - a. Partnerships and communication
 - b. Mechanism-level management
 - c. Project-level management
 - d. Use of the strategic framework and MEL
 - e. Support to specific elements of the strategic framework
 - f. Support to institutions/infrastructures that build movement sustainability
 - g. Support to specific regions
 - h. Intersectionality and responsiveness to anti-gender movements
 - i. Intersectionality and responsiveness to humanitarian crises?

2. Explain: What are the most significant GEF programmatic successes of the past five years?
 - a. What about them makes them most significant?
 - b. How did GEF programming contribute to change in these cases?
 - c. What conditions are shared among these successes? Which are divergent?
 - d. In what ways did the program strategy contribute to the achievement of outcomes in these cases?

3. Strategize: What approaches, issues, actors, or geographic areas should the GEF invest in more in the next five years? Where should it invest in less? What role should policy and diplomatic engagement play in the next five years?

Design and Methodology

Competitive proposals will apply complexity- and culturally- responsive evaluation and epistemologically just methodologies, that are aligned with democratic and human rights frameworks. For this evaluative research and applied research project, methodology will play a key role in the choosing of an implementing partner. Competitive applications will detail the proposed methodology substantiated with citations to justify the selected methodology. Proposals should include operational definitions of key dependent and independent variables as part of a conceptual framework and should also include potential theories applicable to DRG funders and practitioners. In addition, applicants should demonstrate their knowledge of current bodies of evidence in the human rights and rights-based foreign assistance programming in an abbreviated literature review.

The following section outlines the phases of the evaluative research and associated deliverables that would address the questions outlined above.

Phase A: Designing the Integrated Human Rights Framework and Justice in Evaluation Practice Deliverables

- Literature review – a report (or annotated bibliography) and annexed spreadsheet that demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of human rights frameworks and epistemologically just, transformative evaluation methodologies.
- Partner-centered design workshop process note – a document that explains how communities where human rights programs are implemented will be engaged in the evaluative research.
- Partner-centered design workshop – a convening for key stakeholders, particularly communities where human rights programs are implemented, to ensure the evaluative research will meet their needs.
- Inception report – following the design workshop this report details the how the evaluative research will be implemented, how stakeholders will be engaged, how research questions will be addressed, what security measures will be taken, among other components that are collaboratively determined with DRL.

Phase B: Refining the strategic framework of the Global Equality Fund (GEF) as a potential basis for a broader human rights framework

Deliverables:

- Data Collection Tools – DCTs are partner-centered and will be designed accordingly. The number and types of DCTs will rely on the recommendations that are generated in the design workshop and consultation with DRL.
- Refined GEF framework – a document that includes a visualization and description of the framework thematic pillars, impacts, and intermediate results.
- Revised GEF framework indicators – based on the refined framework, indicators should be revised in deep collaboration with GEF partners.
- GEF evidence brief (no longer than one page, two-sided) – this resource serves as a public document that summarizes the evaluative research findings (based on the answers to GEF research questions 1-3), lessons, and recommendations to encourage utilization of the evidence generated.
- Program design checklist/guidance – this document serves as the utilization guide (accompanying the evidence brief described above) for LGBTQI+ program managers and implementers seeking to improve their program designs. The checklist/guidance may include steps for operationalizing the refined framework as part of program design.

Phase C: Continuing partner centered and participatory processes for additional global thematic issues (such as Disabilities, Gender, Religious Minorities, Media, or Emergency Assistance for Human Rights Defenders among others, to be selected in consultation with DRL) to expand the applied research

Deliverables:

- Partner-centered sampling process note – a document that details sampling frame and strategies for including additional thematic human rights program portfolios, which should specify the community centered and participatory methodologies

employed and may include a recommended sequence for the additions to the applied research.

- For each added global thematic program, deliverables include an evidence brief and program design checklist/guidance that matches the descriptions above, and an updated human rights framework as necessary.

Phase D: Leveraging this evidence base to demonstrate the impact of thematic programming
Deliverables:

- Dissemination plan – a report that details dissemination plans for how the framework materials, evidence briefs, and deliverables listed above will be presented publicly and made accessible to different audiences, particularly the communities engaged in the research. All communications products must be [508 compliant](#) and applicants should plan for coordination with State Department’s 508 Compliance team before finalizing deliverables. Competitive proposal submissions should explain how the applicant will facilitate the utilization of research findings by the intended audiences.
- Human rights programming strategic framework that is distinct and also harmonized with existing democracy strategic framework(s).
- Human rights program evidence brief – this resource serves as a public document that summarizes the evaluative research findings (based on the answers to the overarching human rights programming research questions 1-3), lessons, and recommendations to encourage utilization of the evidence generated.
- Human rights program design guide – this document serves as the utilization guide (accompanying the evidence brief described above) for human rights program managers and implementers seeking to improve their program designs. The checklist/guidance may include steps for operationalizing the refined framework as part of program design. Additionally, this document presents the essential steps for ensuring program staff are equipped to ethically engage prospective focal communities or representatives of the communities, protocols for consent, criteria for establishing reciprocal relationships with communities, among other components to be agreed upon with DRL.
- Production of a video or a series of videos (no longer than 10 minutes), that are subtitled and includes sign language support for relevant languages to facilitate public dissemination of the human rights framework materials and just evaluation practice.
- Final overarching report (40 pages maximum, not including appendices).

The project should aim to have **impact that leads to reforms** and have the **potential for sustainability** beyond DRL resources. This may be operationalized through a strong dissemination and learning plan for utilizing evidence-based products created for knowledge sharing among other methods to encourage applicability to democracy and human rights programs globally beyond DRL. DRL’s preference is to avoid duplicating past efforts by supporting new and creative approaches. This does not exclude from consideration programs that improve upon or expand existing successful programs in a new and complementary way.

Last, because these programs are considered sensitive as they support communities under a high degree of risk and threat, successful applications will include a detailed plan for risk awareness, mitigation, and “do no (more) harm” practices in all aspects of the project process, as well as data storage, security, and disposition plans.

DRL is committed to **advancing equity and support for underserved and underrepresented communities**. In accordance with the Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Underserved Communities, programs should implement strategies for integration and inclusion of individuals/organizations/beneficiaries that can bring perspectives based on their religion, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, national origin, age, genetic information, marital status, parental status, pregnancy, political affiliation, or veteran’s status. Programs should be demand-driven and locally led to the extent possible.

DRL **requires all programs to be non-discriminatory** and expects implementers to include strategies for nondiscrimination of individuals/organizations/beneficiaries based on race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, sexual orientation, pregnancy, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, marital status, parental status, political affiliation, or veteran’s status.

Competitive proposals may also include a summary budget and budget narrative for 6 additional months following the proposed period of performance, indicated above. This information should indicate what objective(s) and/or activities could be accomplished with additional time and/or funds beyond the proposed period of performance.

Team Requirements

The implementing partner shall form an expert team consisting of one senior applied Research Team Lead along with three mid-level researchers, a communications or data visualization specialist, and one administrative coordinator. However, there is flexibility to propose an alternative staffing structure with proper justification from the applicant. The following includes illustrative profiles of key background and experience DRL seeks from the implementing partner. Competitive proposals will include an applied Research Team Lead in Key Personnel.

1. The team should, as a whole, have knowledge of and expertise in the areas of human and labor rights and democracy, including both practical and academic knowledge of applicable theories, and human rights and labor foreign assistance mechanisms. At least one member of the research team should have experience working in trauma informed approaches. Proposed staff can be based inside the United States and/or in countries relevant to the research to demonstrate experience collaborating with in-country evaluation or research institutions.
2. Capability with methods for virtual data collection that allow for secure communication and data storage.
3. Experience with a variety of research and evaluation methodologies appropriate for this assignment. The ability to analyze, synthesize and draw conclusions and lessons learned from

various sources of data and findings. The research team should have the ability to take complex process and findings and communicate them in way that is accessible to practitioners and policy officers.

4. The Research Team Lead will be responsible for final approval of research methodology, tools, and findings prior to presentation to DRL. The Research Team Lead will also be responsible for preparing and managing the drafting of interim and final reports, and related research deliverables; and, preparing briefings to be provided to DRL and partners. The Research Team Lead must be comfortable working in close coordination with DRL, implementing partners, government officials and other donors, and project participants and beneficiaries; and, must possess exceptional organizational and communication skills. The Team Lead should have a minimum of 8 years of designing and implementing research projects, including experience leading a research team. The Team Lead should possess a PhD in a relevant field and have a demonstrated ability of analyzing foreign assistance programming addressing human rights issues. Doctoral education can be used towards experience in designing and implementing research projects. Strong preference is given to individuals with experience conducting research in restrictive settings and with marginalized populations.

5. Mid-level researchers will be responsible, with the team lead, for conducting and coordinating the overall research efforts, including the preparation of the research design and methodology and data collection instruments. The mid-level researchers will be primarily responsible for conducting the desk review, conducting data collection, data analysis, writing the draft and final reports, and assisting in the preparation of the briefings to be provided to DRL and partners. The mid-level researchers should have a minimum of 5 years' experience in conducting applied research and at a minimum hold a Master's Degree in a relevant field. Recently graduated or current students will also be considered for these positions.

6. One communication or data visualization specialist: The specialist will assist with the production of copy edits and content in the final products from the research. These produces must clearly communicate recommendations and implications for practitioner and policy audiences in a manner that facilitates learning and understanding. They should also be familiar to approaches to ensure materials are 508 compliant and be prepared to coordinate with the State Department 508 Team.

7. One or two administrative assistant(s) or coordinator(s): Personnel in this role will also provide logistical and administrative support to the proposed team. Individual(s) will be responsible for ensuring accessibility for each of the deliverables listed above, to include and not limited to: translation of documents into relevant languages and coordinating subtitles and/or sign language interpretation for video.

Where appropriate, competitive proposals may include:

- Opportunities for beneficiaries to apply their new knowledge and skills in practical efforts;
- Solicitation of feedback and suggestions from beneficiaries when developing activities in order to strengthen the sustainability of programs and participant ownership of project outcomes;

- Input from participants on sustainability plans and systematic review of the plans throughout the life of the project, with adjustments made as necessary;
- Inclusion of vulnerable populations;
- Joint identification and definition of key concepts with relevant stakeholders and stakeholder input into project activities;
- Systematic follow up with beneficiaries at specific intervals after the completion of activities to track how beneficiaries are retaining new knowledge as well as applying their new skills.

Activities that are **not** typically allowed include, but are not limited to:

- The provision of humanitarian assistance;
- English language instruction;
- Development of high-tech computer or communications software and/or hardware;
- Purely academic exchanges or fellowships;
- External exchanges or fellowships lasting longer than six months;
- Off-shore activities that are not clearly linked to in-country initiatives and impact or are not necessary per security concerns;
- Theoretical explorations of human rights or democracy issues, including projects aimed primarily at research and evaluation that do not incorporate training or capacity-building for local civil society;
- Micro-loans or similar small business development initiatives;
- Initiatives directed towards a diaspora community rather than current residents of targeted countries.

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Primary organizations can submit 1 application in response to the NOFO.

The U.S. government may: (a) reject any or all applications, (b) accept other than the lowest cost application, (c) accept more than one application, and (d) waive irregularities in applications received.

The U.S. government may make award(s) on the basis of 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 (though it is under no obligation to do so), however, to enter into 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.

DRL anticipates awarding either a grant or cooperative agreement depending on the needs and risk factors of the program. The final determination on award mechanism will be made by the Grants Officer. The distinction between grants and cooperative agreements revolves around the existence of “substantial involvement.” Cooperative agreements require greater Federal government participation in the project. If a cooperative agreement is awarded, DRL will undertake reasonable and programmatically necessary substantial involvement. Examples of substantial involvement can include, but are not limited to:

- Active participation or collaboration with the recipient in the implementation of the award;
- Review and approval of one stage of work before another can begin;
- Review and approval of substantive provisions of proposed sub-awards or contracts beyond existing Federal policy;
- Approval of the recipient’s budget or plan of work prior to the award.

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, DRL 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 and a half 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

FOR APPLICATION INFORMATION, PLEASE SEE THE PROPOSAL SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS (PSI), UPDATED DECEMBER 2022 ON OUR WEBSITE.

C.1 Eligible Applicants

DRL welcomes applications from U.S.-based and foreign-based non-profit organizations/nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and public international organizations; private, public, or state institutions of higher education; and for-profit organizations or businesses. DRL’s preference is to work with **non-profit entities**; however, there may be some occasions when a for-profit entity is best suited.

Applications submitted by for-profit entities may be subject to additional review following the panel selection process. Additionally, the Department of State prohibits profit to for-profit or commercial organizations under its assistance awards. Profit is defined as any amount in excess

of allowable direct and indirect costs. The allowability of costs incurred by commercial organizations is determined in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR 30, Cost Accounting Standards Administration, and 48 CFR 31 Contract Cost Principles and Procedures.

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

Applicants should have existing, or the capacity to develop, active partnerships with thematic or in-country partners, entities, and relevant stakeholders, including private sector partners and NGOs, and have **demonstrable experience** in administering successful and preferably similar projects. DRL encourages applications from foreign-based NGOs headquartered in the geographic regions/countries relevant to this NOFO. Applicants may **form consortia** in order to bring together organizations with varied expertise to propose a comprehensive program in one proposal. However, one organization should be designated in the proposal as the lead applicant, with the other members designated as sub-award partners. DRL reserves the right to request additional background information on applicants that do not have previous experience administering federal grant awards, and these applicants may be subject to limited funding on a pilot basis.

DRL is committed to an **anti-discrimination** policy in all of its programs and activities. DRL welcomes applications irrespective of race, ethnicity, color, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or other status. DRL seeks applications that demonstrate that the recipient does not discriminate against any beneficiaries in implementation of a potential award, such as, but not limited to, by withholding, adversely impacting, or denying equitable access to the benefits provided through this award on the basis of any factor not expressly stated in the award. This includes, for example, race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), national origin, disability, age, genetic information, marital status, parental status, political affiliation, or veteran's status. The recipient should insert this provision, including this paragraph, in all sub-grants and contracts under a potential award.

Any applicant listed on the Excluded Parties List System in the [System for Award Management \(SAM.gov\)](http://www.sam.gov) (www.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.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

D.1 Address to Request Application Package

Applicants can find application forms, kits, or other materials needed to apply on www.grants.gov and SAMS Domestic (<https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com>) under the announcement title “**DRL Nothing About Us Without Us: Building Evidence for an Integrated Human Rights Framework and Justice in Evaluation Practice**,” funding opportunity number “**SFOP0009665**.” Please contact the DRL 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 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 budgets and attachments;
- All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper; and,
- All documents are single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. Captions and footnotes may be 10-point Times New Roman font. Font sizes in charts and tables, including the budget, can be reformatted to fit within one 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. Please see SF-424 instructions in Section 2B of the PSI.
- 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**). Please see SF-LLL guidance in Section 2B of the PSI.

- 3) **Cover Page** (not to exceed one (1) page, preferably as a Word Document) that includes a table with the organization name, project title, target country/countries, project synopsis, and name and contact information for the application's main point of contact. Please see *Cover Page* Section 2C of the PSI for a template and more details.
- 4) **Executive Summary** (not to exceed one (1) page, preferably as a Word Document) that outlines project goals, objectives, activities, etc.
 - **The Executive Summary should include a brief section that explicitly states: (1) the problem statement addressed by the project, (2) research-based evidence justifying the unique project approach, and (3) quantifiable project outcomes and impacts.**
- 5) **Table of Contents** (not to exceed one (1) page, preferably as a Word Document) listing all documents and attachments with page numbers.
- 6) **Proposal Narrative** (not to exceed ten (10) pages, preferably as a Word Document). Please note the ten-page limit **does not include** the Cover Page, Executive Summary, Table of Contents, Attachments, Detailed Budget, Budget Narrative, Audit, or NICRA. Applicants are encouraged to combine multiple documents into a single Word Document or PDF (i.e. Cover Page, Table of Contents, Executive Summary, and Proposal Narrative in one file). Please see *Proposal Narrative Guidelines* in Section 2F of the PSI for more details.
 - The Proposal Narrative should demonstrate the applicant's commitment to ensuring the participation of all people as a strategy for implementation. Please integrate inclusion strategies in all sections of the Proposal Narrative to enhance programmatic impact.
- 7) **Budget** (preferably as an Excel workbook) that includes three (3) columns containing the request to DRL, 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). Please see *Budget Guidelines* Section 2G of the PSI for more information.
 - The programming approach should be dedicated to strengthening inclusive societies as a necessary pillar of strong democracies. Please include costs associated with this commitment in the Budget and Budget Narrative.
 - Competitive proposals may include a summary budget for 6 additional months following the proposed period of performance.
- 8) **Budget Narrative** (preferably as a Word Document) that includes substantive explanations and justifications for each line item in the detailed budget spreadsheet, as well as the source and a description of all cost-share offered. Please see *Budget Guidelines* Section 2G of the PSI for more information.

- Competitive proposals may include a summary budget narrative for 6 additional months following the proposed period of performance.
- 9) The organization's most recent **audit**, if applicable. This should be a single audit, program-specific audit, or other audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS). Please see *Audit* Section 2H of the PSI for more information.
 - 10) **Logic Model** (preferably as a Word Document). Please see *Logic Model* Section 2I of the PSI for more information.
 - 11) **Risk Analysis** (preferably as a Word Document). Please see *Risk Analysis* Section 2K of the PSI for more information on this requirement, including Do No Harm principles and Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) policies/plans.
 - 12) **Key Personnel** (not to exceed two (2) pages, preferably as a Word Document). Please include short bios that highlight relevant professional experience. Given the limited space, CVs are not recommended for submission.
 - 13) **Timeline** (not to exceed one (1) page, preferably as a Word Document or Excel Sheet). The timeline of the overall proposal should include activities, evaluation efforts, and program closeout.
 - 14) **Gender and Inclusion Analysis** (not to exceed three (3) pages, preferably as a Word Document) that provides 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 power and 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. A set of guiding questions can be found in Section 2L of the PSI.
 - 15) **Security Plan** addressing 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 submitted risk assessment. Costs may also be identified within the budget and budget narrative. Applicants are also encouraged to include contingency plans for in-person or online activities.

- 16) **Contingency Plan** for proposed activities should the originally planned activities not be able to be implemented. The Contingency Plan should be submitted as an additional annex. Applicants should demonstrate consideration of the risks identified in the submitted risk assessment 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 result in a larger Total Award Value than the identified as the “competition ceiling.” DRL requires prior approval by the Grants Officer of the “plan” before any activities can take place, or costs can be incurred against the “plan.”
- 17) **Lessons Learned** (not to exceed one (1) page, preferably as a Word Document) from past programs (insert country or theme) that demonstrate how the implementer has safely operated and responded to programmatic challenges, learning from both successes and failures, in the operating environment. To be incorporated into the ten (10) pages allowed for “Proposal Narrative.”
- 18) **Psychosocial Assistance** (to be incorporated into the ten (10) pages allowed for “Proposal Narrative,” and into “Budget” and “Budget Narrative”). A section in the proposal, budget, and budget narrative to reflect appropriate resources and support for the psychosocial health of staff (i.e., activities can range from access to educational materials and training opportunities to counseling services to other contextually relevant support).
- References: For reference to international guidance, please see the following: Core Humanitarian Standard Commitment 8.9 (<https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/files/files/CHS-Guidance-Notes-and-Indicators.pdf>); and IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings Action Sheet 4.4 (http://www.who.int/mental_health/emergencies/guidelines_iasc_mental_health_psychosocial_june_2007.pdf).
- 19) **Burma Due Diligence Assessment** (not to exceed one (1) page, preferably in Microsoft Word) that outlines existing organizational practices for vetting program beneficiaries and capacity to conduct due diligence vetting as outlined in the solicitation.

Applications that do not include the elements listed above will be deemed technically ineligible.

D.2.2 Additional Application Documents

Strong applications will also contain the following:

- Individual Letters of Support and/or Memorandum of Understanding. Letters of support and MOUs must be specific to the project implementation (e.g. from proposed partners or sub-award recipients) and will not count towards the page limit.

Please refer to the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI), updated December 2022, on DRL's website for detailed guidance on the documents above: <https://www.state.gov/bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/programs-and-grants/>. For an application checklist and sample templates please see the Resources page on DRL's website: <https://www.state.gov/resources-for-programs-and-grants/>. The sample templates provided on the DRL website are suggested, but not mandatory.

DRL reserves the right to request additional documents not included in this NOFO. Additionally, to ensure that all applications receive a balanced evaluation, the DRL review panel will review from the first page of each section up to the page limit and no further.

Note: If ultimately provided with a notification of non-binding intent to make a federal award, applicants typically have two to three weeks to provide additional information and documents requested in the notification of intent. The deadlines may vary in each notification of intent and applicants must adhere to the stated deadline in the notification of intent.

D.2.3 Additional Information Requested For Those 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 DRL 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 Department's Financial Management Survey, if receiving DRL funding for the first time;
- Submission of required documents to register in the Payment Management System managed by the Department of Health and Human Services, if receiving DRL funding for the first time (unless an exemption is provided);
- 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;
- Applicants who submit their applications through Grants.gov will be required to create a SAMS Domestic account in order to accept the final award. Accounts must be logged into to every 60 days in order to maintain an active account.

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

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 the SAM.gov **before submitting an application**. DRL 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 the 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. **Please note that as of February 2023, organizations based in the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a Commercial and Government Entity (CAGE) code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities.**
 - If an applicant organization is mid-registration and wishes to remove an 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 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 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 December 2022, 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 CAGE (NCAGE) code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities.**
 - If an applicant organization is mid-registration and wishes to remove an 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 an 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 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>

For NCAGE help from within the United States, call +1 (888) 227-2423.

For NCAGE help from outside the United States, call +1 (269) 961-7766.

Or, email NCAGE@dlis.dla.mil for any problems in applying for an NCAGE code.

Step 2: After receiving an NCAGE code, proceed to SAM.gov to obtain a UEI and complete the SAM.gov registration process. SAM.gov registration must be renewed annually.

All prime organizations must also continue to maintain active SAM.gov registration with current information at all times during which they have an active Federal award or application under consideration by a federal award agency. SAM.gov requires all entities to renew their registration once a year in order 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.

Please refer to 2 CFR 25.200 for additional information.

Note: SAM.gov is not the same as SAMS Domestic. It is free of charge to register in both systems, but the registration processes are different.

Information is included on the SAM.gov website to help international registrations, including “Quick Start Guide for International Registrations” and “Helpful Hints.” Navigate to

www.SAM.gov, click “HELP” in the top navigation bar, then click “Explore” and “New to SAM.gov?” for general information. Please note, guidance on SAM.gov and the guidance on GSA’s website about requirement for registering in SAM.gov is subject to change and is currently being updated. Applicants should review the website for the most up-to-date guidance.

The attached “AQM Guidance for NCAGE-SAM.gov for Grant Applicants as of Dec. 2022” is a compilation of resources gathered by the Department’s Office of Acquisitions Management (AQM). Any content shown from SAM.gov is not owned by the Department of State. This guidance and instruction are to the best of our knowledge based at the time of posting this solicitation. **Where guidance in these attachments differs from the SAM.gov website, SAM.gov prevails and the applicant is encouraged to seek and document responses provided by the SAM.gov help desk.**

D.3.1 Exemptions

An exemption from these 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 UEI and completing SAM.gov registration prior to receiving a federal award. In these instances, federal awarding agencies must require the recipient to obtain a UEI and complete SAM.gov registration within 30 days of the federal award date.

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

*Note: As of December 2022, 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 CAGE (NCAGE) code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities. As of February 2023, organizations **based in the United States** that do not intend to apply for U.S. DoD awards are no longer required to have a Commercial and Government Entity (CAGE) code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities.*

D.4 Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due no later than **11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST), on July 18, 2023** on <https://www.grants.gov/> or SAMS Domestic (<https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com>) under the announcement title “DRL Nothing About Us Without Us: Building Evidence for an

Integrated Human Rights Framework and Justice in Evaluation Practice,” funding opportunity number “SFOP0009665.”

Grants.gov and SAMS Domestic automatically log the date and time an application submission is made, and the Department of State will use this information to determine whether an application has been submitted on time. Late applications are neither reviewed nor considered. Known system errors caused by Grants.gov or SAMS Domestic (<https://mygrants.service-now.com>) that are outside of the applicant’s control will be reviewed on a case by case basis. Applicants should not expect a notification upon DRL receiving their application.

D.5 Funding Restrictions

Prior to issuing a federal award with a total amount of federal share greater than \$250,000, the Department of State is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is found in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (41 USC §2313). An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM.gov and comment on any information about itself that a federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov. 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 2 CFR 200.206.

DRL 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 DRL funding given purpose limitations on funding.

In accordance with Department of State policy for terrorism, applicants are advised that successful passing of vetting to evaluate the risk that funds may benefit terrorists or their supporters is a condition of award. If chosen for an award, applicants will be asked to submit information required by DS Form 4184, Risk Analysis Information (attached to this solicitation) about their company and its principal personnel. Vetting information is also required for all sub-award performance on assistance awards identified by the Department of State as presenting a risk of terrorist financing. Vetting information may also be requested for project beneficiaries and participants. Failure to submit information when requested, or failure to pass vetting, may be grounds for rejecting your proposal prior to award.

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.

U.S. foreign assistance for Burma or Burmese beneficiaries is subject to restrictions. This includes restrictions, pursuant to section 7043(a)(3) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2020 (Div. G, P.L. 116-94)(SFOAA), on funds appropriated under title III of the act for assistance for Burma. Section 7043(a)(3) provides that such funds “may not be made available to any organization or entity controlled by the armed forces of Burma, or to any individual or organization that advocates violence against ethnic or religious groups or individuals in Burma, as determined by the Secretary of State.” 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 DRL to ensure compliance with these restrictions. Program beneficiaries subject to due diligence vetting will include any individuals or entities that are beneficiaries of foreign assistance funding or support. Due diligence vetting will include a review of open-source materials.

Federal awards generally will not allow reimbursement of pre-award costs; however, the Grants Officer may approve pre-award costs on a case-by-case basis. Generally, construction costs are not allowed under DRL awards. For additional information, please see the DRL Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for Applications: <https://www.state.gov/bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/programs-and-grants/>.

D.6 Application Submission

All application submissions must be made electronically via www.grants.gov or SAMS Domestic (<https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com>). Both systems require registration by the applying organization. Please note that the Grants.gov registration process can take ten (10) business days or longer, even if all registration steps are completed in a timely manner.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that it has an active registration in SAMS Domestic or Grants.gov. Applicants are required to document that the application has been received by SAMS Domestic or Grants.gov in its entirety. DRL bears no responsibility for disqualification that result from applicants not being registered before the due date, for system errors in either SAMS Domestic or Grants.gov, or other errors in the application process. Additionally, applicants **must** save a screen shot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

Faxed, couriered, or emailed 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.

DRL encourages organizations to **submit applications during normal business hours** (Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST)). If an applicant experiences technical difficulties and has contacted the appropriate help desk but is not receiving timely assistance (e.g. if you have not received a response within 48 hours of contacting the help desk), you may contact the DRL point of contact listed in the NOFO in Section G. The point of contact may assist in contacting the appropriate help desk.

The Grants Officer will determine technical eligibility of all applications.

SAMS Domestic Applications:

Applicants using SAMS Domestic for the first time should complete their “New Organization Registration.” To register with SAMS Domestic, click “Login to <https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com>” and follow the “create an account” link.

Organizations **must** remember to save a screen shot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

SAMS Domestic Help Desk:

For assistance with SAMS Domestic accounts and technical issues related to the system, please contact the ILMS help desk by phone at +1 (888) 313-4567 (toll charges apply for international callers) or through the Self Service online portal that can be accessed from <https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com>. Customer support is available 24/7.

Grants.gov Applications:

Applicants who do not submit applications via SAMS Domestic may submit via www.grants.gov.

Please be advised that completing all the necessary registration steps for obtaining a username and password from Grants.gov **can take ten (10) business days or longer**.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a

validation e-mail from Grants.gov upon the successful submission of an application. Validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days. Additionally, organizations **must** remember to save a screenshot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

Grants.gov Helpdesk:

For assistance with Grants.gov, please call the Contact Center at +1 (800) 518-4726 or email support@grants.gov. The Contact Center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except federal holidays.

See <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/federal-holidays/> for a list of federal holidays.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

E.1 Proposal Review Criteria

The DRL 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**.

Quality of Project Idea

Applications should be responsive to the program framework and policy objectives identified in the NOFO, appropriate in the country/regional context, and should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to DRL's mission of promoting human rights and democracy. Projects should have the potential to have an immediate impact leading to long-term, sustainable reforms. DRL prefers new approaches that do not duplicate efforts by other entities. This does not exclude from consideration projects that improve upon or expand existing successful projects in a new and complementary way. In countries where similar activities are already taking place, an explanation should be provided as to how new activities will not duplicate or merely add to existing activities and how these efforts will be coordinated. Proposals that promote creative approaches to recognized ongoing challenges are highly encouraged. DRL prioritizes project proposals with inclusive approaches for advancing these rights.

Project Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives

A strong application will include a clear articulation of how the proposed project activities contribute to the overall project objectives, and each activity will be clearly developed and detailed. A comprehensive monthly work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and the logistical capacity of the organization. Objectives should be ambitious yet measurable, results-focused and achievable in a reasonable timeframe. A complete application must include a Logic Model to demonstrate how the project activities will have an impact on its

proposed objectives. The Logic Model should match the objectives, outcomes, key activities, and outputs described in the narrative. Applications should address how the project will engage relevant stakeholders and should identify local partners as appropriate.

If local partners have been identified, DRL strongly encourages applicants to submit letters of support from proposed in-country partners. Additionally, applicants should describe the division of labor among the direct applicant and any local partners. If applicable, applications should identify target geographic areas for activities, target participant groups or selection criteria for participants, and the specific roles of sub-awardees, among other pertinent details.

DRL recognizes that all programs have some level of risk due to internal/external variables that have the potential to adversely affect a program. Risk management should address how the project design incorporates the identification, assessment, and management of key risk factors. DRL will review the Risk Analysis based on the organization's ability to identify risks that could have an impact on the overall program as well as how the organization will manage these risks.

Institution's Record and Capacity

DRL will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Applications should demonstrate an institutional record of successful democracy and human rights programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past grants. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the project's objectives. Projects should have potential for continued funding beyond DRL resources.

Addressing Barriers to Equal Participation

DRL strives to ensure its projects advance the rights and uphold the dignity of all persons. As the U.S. government's lead bureau dedicated to promoting democratic governance, DRL requests a programming approach dedicated to strengthening inclusive societies as a necessary pillar of strong democracies. Discrimination, violence, inequity, and inequality targeting any members of society undermines collective security and threatens democracy. DRL prioritizes inclusive and integrated program models that assess and address the barriers to access for individuals and groups based on their race, ethnicity, religion, income, geography, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability. The proposal should also demonstrate how the project will further engagement in underserved communities and with individuals from underserved communities. Applicants should describe how programming will impact all of its beneficiaries, including support for underserved and underrepresented communities. This approach should be an integral part of both the concept and explicit design, and implementation of all proposed project activities, objectives, and monitoring. Strong proposals will provide specific analysis, measures, and corresponding targets as appropriate. Stakeholders shall identify the difference between opportunities and barriers to access, and design projects accordingly to not perpetuate these inequalities, but rather enhance programmatic impact by including all people in society. The goal of this approach is to bring communities and those in power together in support of more stable and secure societies.

Cost Effectiveness

DRL strongly encourages applicants to clearly demonstrate project cost-effectiveness in their application, including examples of leveraging institutional and other resources. However, cost-sharing or other examples of leveraging other resources are not required. Inclusion of cost-sharing in the budget does not result in additional points awarded during the review process. Budgets should have low and/or reasonable overhead and administration costs, and applicants should provide clear explanations and justifications for these costs in relation to the work involved. All budget items should be clearly explained and justified to demonstrate necessity, appropriateness, and connection to the project objectives.

Please note: If cost share is included in the budget, the recipient must maintain written records to support all allowable costs that are claimed as its contribution to cost share, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. In the event the recipient does not meet the minimum amount of cost-sharing as stipulated in the recipient's budget, DRL's contribution may be reduced in proportion to the recipient's contribution.

Multiplier Effect/Sustainability

Applications should clearly delineate how elements of the project will have a multiplier effect and be sustainable beyond the life of the grant. A good multiplier effect will have an impact beyond the direct beneficiaries of the grant (e.g. participants trained under a grant go on to train other people; workshop participants use skills from a workshop to enhance a national level election that affects the entire populace). A strong sustainability plan may include demonstrating continuing impact beyond the life of a project or garnering other donor support after DRL funding ceases.

Project Monitoring and Evaluation

Complete applications will include a detailed M&E Narrative, which detail how the project's progress will be monitored and evaluated. Incorporating well-designed monitoring and evaluation processes into a project is an efficient method for documenting the change (intended and unintended) that a project seeks. Applications should demonstrate the capacity to provide objectives with measurable outputs and outcomes.

The quality of the M&E sections will be judged on the narrative explaining how both monitoring and evaluation will be carried out and who will be responsible for those related activities. The M&E Narrative should explain how evaluation(s), internal or external, will be incorporated into the project implementation plan or how the project will be systematically assessed in the absence of one. Please see the section on *Monitoring and Evaluation Narrative* in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for more information on what is required in the narrative.

Note: Applicants are no longer required to submit a detailed Monitoring and Evaluation Plan in their proposals. However, applicants should be aware that, should an application move forward for funding consideration, DRL will request a detailed Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for further review and approval.

The output and outcome-based performance indicators should not only be separated by project objectives but also should match the objectives, outcomes, and outputs detailed in the Logic Model and Proposal Narrative. Performance indicators should be clearly defined (i.e., explained how the indicators will be measured and reported) either within the table or with a separate Performance Indicator Reference Sheet (PIRS). For each performance indicator, the table should also include baselines and quarterly and cumulative targets, data collection tools, data sources, types of data disaggregation, and frequency of monitoring and evaluation. There should also be metrics to capture how project activities target those who face discrimination due to their religion, gender, disabilities, ethnicity or sexual orientation and gender identity, where applicable. Please see the section on *Monitoring and Evaluation Plan* in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for more information on what is required in the plan.

E.2 Review and Selection Process

DRL strives to ensure that each application receives a balanced evaluation by a DRL review panel. AQM will determine technical eligibility for all applications. All technically eligible applications for a given NOFO are reviewed against the same seven criteria, which include quality of project idea, project planning/ability to achieve objectives, institutional record and capacity, inclusive programming, cost effectiveness, multiplier effect/sustainability, and project monitoring and evaluation.

Additionally, the DRL review panel will evaluate how the application addresses the NOFO request, U.S. foreign policy goals, and the priority needs of DRL overall. DRL may also take into consideration the balance of the current portfolio of active projects, including geographic or thematic diversity, if needed.

In most cases, the DRL review panel includes representatives from DRL, the appropriate Department of State regional bureau (to include feedback from U.S. embassies), and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) (to include feedback from USAID missions). In some cases, additional panelists may participate, including from other Department of State bureaus or offices; U.S. government departments, agencies, or boards; representatives from partner governments; or representatives from entities that are in a public-private partnership with DRL. At the end of the panel's discussion about an application, the review panel votes on whether to recommend the application for approval by the DRL Assistant Secretary. If more applications are recommended for approval than DRL can ultimately fund, the review panel will rank the recommended applications in priority order for consideration by the DRL Assistant Secretary. The Grants Officer Representative (GOR) for the eventual award does not vote on the panel. All panelists must sign non-disclosure agreements and conflicts of interest agreements.

DRL review panels 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. To ensure effective use of DRL funds, conditions or recommendations may include requests to increase, decrease, clarify, and/or justify costs and project activities.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

F.1 Federal Award Notices

DRL 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 review panel 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 panel's conditions and recommendations; being registered in required systems, including the U.S. government's Payment Management System (PMS), unless an exemption is provided; and completing and providing any additional documentation requested by DRL or AQM. Final approval is also contingent on Congressional Notification requirements being met and final review and approval by the Department's warranted Grants Officer.

The notice of Federal award signed by the Department's warranted Grants Officers is the sole authorizing document. If awarded, the notice of Federal award will be provided to the applicant's designated Authorizing Official via SAMS Domestic to be electronically counter-signed in the system.

F.2 Administrative and National Policy and Legal Requirements

DRL 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/>.

Additionally, DRL supports implementation of the **National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality**; the **Women Peace and Security (WPS) Act of 2017**, which highlights the U.S. commitment to the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, management, and resolution; and the Department of State WPS Implementation Plan. For additional information, please refer to the following link: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/1141>.

Due to the determination made under the **Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA)** for funds obligated during FY 2023, assistance that benefits the governments of the following countries may be subject to a restriction under the TVPA. The Department of State determines on a case-by-case basis what constitutes assistance to a government; the general principles listed below apply.

Assistance to the government includes:

- All branches of government (executive, legislative, judicial) at all levels (national, regional, local);
- Public schools, universities, hospitals, and state-owned enterprises, as well as government employees;
- Cash, training, equipment, services, or other assistance provided directly to the government, assistance provided to an NGO or other implementer for the benefit of the government, and assistance to government employees.

Subject to TVPA for funds obligated during FY 2023:

AF: Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, South Sudan

EAP: Burma, China (PRC), Macau, North Korea

EUR: Belarus, Russia

NEA: Iran, Syria

SCA: Afghanistan

WHA: Cuba, Curacao, Nicaragua, Sint Maarten

Additional requirements may be included depending on the content of the program.

F.3 Reporting

Applicants should be aware of the post-award reporting requirements for federal assistance awards as reflected in 2 CFR 200 Appendix XII - Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters. DRL awards require that all reports (financial and progress) are uploaded to the federal award file in SAMS Domestic on a quarterly basis. The Federal Financial Report (FFR or SF-425) is the required form for financial reports and must be submitted in PMS, and a copy of the report submitted in PMS then uploaded to the award file in SAMS Domestic. Progress reports uploaded to the award file in SAMS Domestic must include a narrative as described below as well as Program Indicators (or other mutually agreed upon format approved by the Grants Officer), including standard (F) framework indicators and DRL framework indicators. F and DRL framework indicators will be reviewed and negotiated during the final stages of issuing an award on a project-by-project basis.

Narrative progress reports should reflect the focus on measuring the project's progress on the overarching objectives and should be compiled according to the objectives, outcomes, and outputs as outlined in the award's Scope of Work (SOW) and in the Monitoring & Evaluation Narrative. An assessment of the overall project's achievements should be included in each progress report. Where relevant, progress reports should 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 approved M&E Plan. In addition, attach the M&E Plan, comparing the target and actual numbers for the indicators;
- Any qualitative impact or success stories from the project, when possible;
- Copy of baseline, 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 F and/or DRL framework indicator(s) for the quarter as well as aggregate data by fiscal year;
- Program Indicators or other mutually agreed upon format approved by the Grants Officer;
- Proposed activities for the next quarter; and,
- Additional pertinent information, including analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs, if applicable.

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. In cases of more than one FADR Data Element, typically program or sector and/or regions or country, the successful applicant will be required to maintain separate accounting records.

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. DRL 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 **DRL-GP-ALE@state.gov**.

For assistance with SAMS Domestic accounts and technical issues related to the system, please contact the ILMS help desk by phone at +1 (888) 313-4567 (toll charges apply for international callers) or through the Self Service online portal that can be accessed from <https://afsism.service-now.com/ilms/home>. Customer support is available 24/7.

Please note that establishing an account in SAMS Domestic may require the use of smartphone for multi-factor authentication (MFA). If an applicant does not have accessibility to a smartphone during the time of creating an account, please contact the helpdesk and request instructions on MFA for Windows PC.

For assistance with Grants.gov accounts and technical issues related to using the system, please call the Contact Center at +1 (800) 518-4726 or email support@grants.gov. The Contact Center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except federal holidays.

For a list of federal holidays visit:

<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/federal-holidays/>

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 DRL 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 DRL 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 and “Proposal Submission Instructions for Applications” is binding and may not be modified by any DRL representative. Explanatory information provided by DRL that contradicts this language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO and negotiation of applications does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government. DRL reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets.

This NOFO will appear on www.grants.gov, [SAMS Domestic](http://SAMS.Domestic), and DRL’s website <https://www.state.gov/bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/programs-and-grants/>.

Background Information on DRL and General DRL Funding

DRL has the mission of promoting democracy and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms globally. DRL supports projects designed through an evidence-based framework that empower local civil society partners to promote and defend democracy globally, including efforts to counter authoritarianism, promote human rights, and meaningfully address diversity, equity, and inclusion as a core element of good governance. DRL typically focuses its work in countries facing human rights violations and abuses, where democracy and human rights defenders are under pressure, and where governance infrastructure is undemocratic, in transition, or at risk of backsliding.

Additional background information on DRL and its efforts can be found on

<https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-civilian-security-democracy-and-human-rights/bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/>.