Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Supporting Implementation of the Regional Economic Integration Framework (REIF) in the Great Lakes Region of Africa

Bureau of African Affairs, U.S. Department of State

Opportunity number: DFOP0019574

Application deadline: September 9, 2026, by 11:59 pm ET

Contents

U.S Department of State
Bureau of African Affairs
Notice of Funding Opportunity

A. Basic Information

1. Overview

Funding opportunity title	**Supporting Implementation of the Regional Economic Integration Framework (REIF) in the Great Lakes Region of Africa**
Funding opportunity number	DFOP0019574
Announcement type	Initial
Deadline for applications	September 9, 2026, by 11:59 pm ET
Deadline for questions and notice of intent to apply	August 18, 2026, by 11:59 pm ET
Assistance Listing Number	19.989
Number of awards anticipated	1 award
Anticipated award amounts	Up to approximately $14,490,000
Total available funding	Approximately $14,490,000, pending availability of funds
Type of funding	$14,490,000 in FY25 Development Assistance (DA) funding; must be obligated by no later than September 30, 2026
Length of performance period	48 months
Anticipated project start date	October 1, 2026

The Bureau of African Affairs (AF), Office of Assistance, of the U.S. Department of State ("Department," below) announces an open competition for organizations to submit a proposal to carry out a program consistent with one or more of the four objectives described below. While applicants may propose a program that addresses fewer than four objectives, preference will be given to those that meaningfully address all objectives rather than only some.

Funding Instrument Type: Cooperative agreement. Cooperative agreements include substantial involvement of the bureau or embassy in program implementation of the project. Examples of substantial involvement are included in section C below.

Program Performance Period: Proposed programs should be completed in 48 months or less.

The Department of State will entertain applications for continuation grants funded under these awards beyond the initial budget period on a non-competitive basis subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the program, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the U.S. Department of State.

This notice is subject to availability of funding and Congressional notification requirements.

2. Executive Summary

The, "Supporting Implementation of the Regional Economic Integration Framework (REIF) in the Great Lakes Region of Africa," project advances America's national interests by harnessing market-based, private sector-led growth in the area of Critical Minerals Investment in Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Uganda. Consistent with the Trump Administration's America First foreign policy, this program reflects the State Department's mandate to ensure foreign assistance is delivered with greater accountability and efficiency and that every program funded advances demonstrable U.S. interests.

As Secretary Rubio has stated: "We will prioritize trade over aid, opportunity over dependency, and investment over assistance." African partner nations have made clear they want investment that empowers sustainable growth, not decades of aid dependency. When U.S. and U.S.-aligned companies compete and win in African markets, they build transparent, rules-based business environments that reduce corruption, lower barriers to trade, and create jobs and infrastructure. African partners want to stand on their own two feet, thus reducing, not entrenching, reliance on U.S. foreign assistance.

The Regional Economic Integration Framework (REIF) between the DRC and Rwanda is meant to promote peace and prosperity in the Great Lakes region and create the conditions for U.S. investors to enter mining industries and thrive across the region, including in Uganda and Burundi. This program aims to improve governance and regulation to attract American business and counter corrupt and unfair practices that hamper economic growth in the region, disadvantage the competitive process, and handicap companies that adhere to rule of law. The project will accomplish these objectives by providing targeted technical and advisory support to relevant host nation institutions and individuals involved in the mining industries within the DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda.

Programming to support implementation of the Regional Economic Integration Framework (REIF) in the Great Lakes Region of Africa must be targeted, time-limited, and designed to produce measurable results. It will prioritize partner nations that have demonstrated both the ability and willingness to help themselves, channeling resources where they generate lasting economic benefit and catalyze durable private sector investment, including by American companies.

This project builds upon the foreign assistance framework established in Section 496 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (FAA) by emphasizing market-based, private sector-led approaches consistent with the Administration's priorities and national interests of the United States. As recognized by the FAA, these national interests may require economic support for countries, and AF will program all assistance consistent with the applicable authorities in the

FAA and other statutes, including the authority to furnish assistance to countries in order to promote economic and political stability.

B. Eligibility

1. Eligible Applicants

The following organizations are eligible to apply as prime applicants*:*

- Not-for-profit organizations
- For-profit organizations
- Institutions of higher education (IHEs)

These eligibility criteria apply at the prime (lead) applicant level. Subrecipients or (sub)contractors under the prime can be any type of organization. Subcontractors may also be individuals.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing is not required.

While applicants may propose cost share or matching, cost-sharing/matching will not be evaluated as part of the merit review process. Opportunities for cost sharing and matching may be discussed during negotiation, if applicable. Per 2 CFR §200.306, items that are proposed for cost share must be allowable per 2 CFR §200, Subpart E—Cost Principles.

See also "Resource Contributions," in Section D., below. Non-USG resource contributions will be evaluated as part of the merit review process, though they do not have to be cost share specifically.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

<u>UEI and sam.gov registration requirement</u>
All prime applicant organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) issued via SAM.gov as well as a valid registration in SAM.gov in order to submit an application. Please see Section D.3 for more information.

<u>One proposal per organization</u>

- Applicants are only allowed to submit one proposal per organization. For this purpose, "organization" is defined as an entity with its own sam.gov registration and UEI. If more than one proposal is submitted from an organization, all proposals from that institution will be considered ineligible for funding.
- Applicants may, however, submit one proposal as a prime applicant while also appearing in one or more other applicants' proposals as a proposed subrecipient (subgrantee) or subcontractor.

<u>Single prime applicant, consortia, and subrecipient vs. contractor determinations</u>

- Each application must have one prime applicant which is the only party that will directly enter into a grant or cooperative agreement with the Department if the proposal is successful.
- If an applicant proposes a "consortium," the consortium must have one prime (lead) applicant that submits the proposal. Any other parties that receive funding under the award would be subrecipients or contractors under the prime applicant as defined in 2 CFR 200.1.
- It is up to the applicant to determine whether each party is a non-funded partner; or a subrecipient or contractor in accordance with 2 CFR 200.331.

C. Program Description

Overview: The REIF between the DRC and Rwanda is meant to promote peace and prosperity in the Great Lakes region and create the conditions for U.S. and U.S.-aligned investors to enter mining industries and thrive across the region, including in Uganda and Burundi. This program aims to improve governance and regulation to attract American business and counter corrupt and unfair practices that hamper economic growth in the region, disadvantage the competitive process, and handicap companies that adhere to rule of law. The program will accomplish these objectives by providing targeted technical and advisory support to relevant host nation institutions and individuals involved in the mining industries within the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda.

This program seeks market-based solutions that strengthen the environment for foreign investment in sub-Saharan Africa through transparent and competitive processes, creating sustainable economic growth in critical minerals investment. Projects must demonstrate clear, measurable benefits to one or more of the targeted countries, such as increased investment from high-quality U.S. and U.S.-aligned companies. Applicants are also encouraged to identify how their projects create conditions that enable U.S. commercial participation.

1. Goals and Objectives

Strategic Focus Area:

Critical Minerals Investment – Strengthens responsible critical minerals development throughout the Great Lakes region, including by increasing host country governance and technical capacity to amend regulatory and legislative frameworks as needed, increasing knowledge of transparent negotiation best practices, and furthering local value-addition capabilities to de-risk and drive quality foreign investment, including from U.S. and U.S.-aligned companies.

Goal

This program aims to improve mining sector governance and strengthen regulatory policies and practices in the mining sectors of DRC, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, to counter illicit activities in minerals production, trade, and export that undercut U.S. companies and/or U.S. access to critical minerals. In particular, focus shall be placed on illicit cross-border activities.

Objectives and Illustrative (Sample) Activities for Each:

1. **Objective 1*: Improve Transparency and Licit Trade***

- Baseline assessment: Identify key regulatory bodies tasked with mining sector governance and conduct a political economy baseline assessment to highlight trade synergies and historical deficiencies in regulation. Detail the regulatory roles and gaps within relevant regional bodies such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and East Africa Community (EAC).
- Work with the REIF Joint Technical Working Group (JTWG) and national and local regulatory agencies to mitigate the internal and cross-border deficiencies highlighted in the baseline assessment related to policy and fiscal frameworks, enforcement mechanisms, ICT, and coordination.
- Assess and strengthen the self-reliance of select national and local regulatory agencies to inspect and certify mining sites using high-quality standards, audit mining and export licenses, collect production and export data, guarantee taxation at appropriate jurisdictions, and track chains of custody from mine sites through point of export, in alignment with the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct.
- Through training and technology, capacitate agencies to identify governance violations, such as falsified production reports or smuggling, and incorporate lawful dispute resolution mechanisms.

2. **Objective 2*: Promote Trusted Information and Communication (ICT) Infrastructure Technology Deployment***

- Leverage blockchain or other technology to help establish and deploy a secure information management system that will serve as a Trade Information Portal, accessible to cross-border traders, smelters, refiners, and U.S. companies further downstream in the supply chain that require access to real-time sourcing information.
    - This tool could provide market actors with reliable data on the full chain of custody, including security incidents, to provide auditable proof that minerals do not finance armed conflict or support other malign actors to enable sourcing by U.S. downstream companies.
    - It may also implement strong cybersecurity protocols and data protection measures, given the sensitive nature of mining data and the involvement of multiple stakeholders.
- In collaboration with the State Department Grant Officer's Representative (GOR)/Embassy Commercial Diplomacy Working Group, regularly convene U.S. and U.S.-aligned mining investors across countries of implementation to provide training on deployed technologies, elicit perspectives on the impact of the project, and address perceived shortfalls.

3. **Objective 3*: Enforce Licit Finance***

- Work with U.S.-based global digital payments providers to promote financial technology solutions for market actors in order to improve traceability.
- Coordinate with national financial intelligence units (FIUs) to enhance information sharing related to cross-border financial activity in order to enforce sanctions and combat corrupt practices.
- Coordinate with mining authorities and oversight institutions to enforce disclosure of beneficial ownership and cross-reference this information against corporate registries, immigration records, and international databases to identify shell companies and nominee arrangements. Provide this information to the appropriate law enforcement agencies on a regular basis.

4. **Objective 4**: ***Promote Responsible Investment Exemplified by U.S. Investors***

- Undertake efforts to promote licit, transparent, and responsible investment in the mining sectors in each country, as appropriate.

The program must complement rather than duplicate:

- Efforts to train and equip customs officials with detecting and investigating smuggling and customs fraud at points of control and entry
- Programming from the Development Financing Corporation (DFC), U.S. Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM), U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA), U.S. Department of Energy (DoE), or other USG-funded efforts
- Other U.S. foreign assistance programs across the health sector, counter-narcotics and law enforcement, humanitarian assistance, and any future U.S. initiatives—reinforcing a whole-of-government approach to U.S. foreign assistance. Ideally, U.S. foreign assistance provided through the project should complement and support DFC and EXIM projects and demonstrate measurable returns to help close and deliver those projects.

Unallowable activities:

- Conferences, awareness campaigns, multi-stakeholder dialogues, or communications activities as standalone deliverables.\
- Programs that operate through long causal chains that do not generate clear and immediate returns to U.S. strategic priorities and supply chain security
- Programming that duplicates what DFC, EXIM, USTDA, DoE, or other USG agencies are already delivering

Sample Key Performance Indicators:

- Value of critical minerals investments, transactions, and offtake agreements advanced toward financial close, including U.S. and U.S.-aligned private sector investment

- Number of companies, including U.S. companies, participating in identified host nations' critical minerals sectors through transparent and competitive processes
- Increase in identified host nations' government revenues generated from successful transparent and competitive critical minerals projects
- Number of identified host nations with strengthened regulatory frameworks supporting transparent, competitive critical minerals projects
- Value ($) of non-donor resources mobilized for local development and economic growth priorities
- Increase in regional government seizure of illicit minerals attempted to be smuggled illegally across borders
- Development of transparent processing facilities in the region that will enable licit supply chains to emerge in the region

Illustrative expected intermediate results/outcomes:

- Improved policy and fiscal frameworks at national and cross-border levels, developed jointly with the REIF JTWG and regulatory agencies
- Strengthened enforcement mechanisms and improved ICT/coordination systems across regulatory agencies
- Increased number of mining sites inspected and certified against high-quality standards aligned with OECD Due Diligence Guidance
- Improved accuracy and completeness of production/import and export data collection and license auditing
- Increased tax revenue collection at appropriate jurisdictional levels due to reduced leakage
- Functional chain-of-custody tracking systems from mine site to point of export
- Increased availability of real-time, reliable sourcing data across critical minerals supply chain in the GL region
- Verifiable, auditable proof that traded minerals are conflict-free, reducing the risk of financing armed groups or malign actors
- Increased access to formal credit for licit, conflict-free ASM operators through local and U.S. subsidiary bank lending
- U.S. downstream companies feel sufficiently comfortable in transparency to resume/increase sourcing of critical minerals from the region
- Growth in the number of ASM operators transitioning from informal to formal sector status
- Expanded adoption of fintech/digital payment solutions among market actors, improving financial traceability
- Enhanced information-sharing mechanisms between national FIUs on cross-border financial activity
- Increased number of sanctions enforcement actions and corruption cases identified through improved financial intelligence

- Measurable increase in public reporting/exposure of illicit mining practices by trained local stakeholders
- A comprehensive, actionable risk mitigation plan in place to protect whistleblowers from reprisal
- Enhanced reputation and market share for U.S. and U.S.-aligned investors as the "responsible investment" alternative in the sector

Applicants must propose concrete deliverables, indicators, targets, and milestones for each year of the project to measure success.

Countries for Implementation: DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda. The program should include work for all countries but may focus programming on DRC while proposing cost-effective programmatic solutions to advance the goals under this NOFO in the other three countries (Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda).

Application Evaluation Approach and Selection Preference:

This program seeks market-based solutions that strengthen the sub-Saharan African foreign investment environment through transparent and competitive processes, creating sustainable economic growth. Preference will be given to applicants that demonstrate clear and immediate pathways for U.S. business participation and contributions to U.S. supply chain security. Preference will be given to those that prioritize development of transparent, competitive business environments for quality foreign investment, including for U.S. companies. Projects should create conditions that reward merit-based competition and generate sustainable economic benefits through approaches that advance African development objectives while enabling U.S. commercial engagement where mutually reinforcing.

The targeted geographic areas face persistent political fragility, insecurity, armed group activity, public health risks, inadequate infrastructure, and weak governance. Applicants that demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of these dynamics—and propose credible, context appropriate strategies for achieving measurable results—will receive preferential consideration. Applicants are also encouraged to demonstrate their capacity to mobilize private sector financing that leverages and amplifies U.S. assistance.

The applicant's proposed team should have technical capability and demonstrated experience in areas such as the following where relevant to the proposed project:

- Implementing extractives governance, anti-corruption, financial crimes, or supply chain traceability programs in Africa
- Blockchain, ICT, or digital traceability system design and deployment
- Anti-money laundering and beneficial ownership transparency
- Financial sector engagement (fintech, digital payments)
- Demonstrated operational presence, established partnerships, or a credible plan to rapidly establish presence in mining zones of DRC, Rwanda, Uganda or Burundi

Management Approach and Key Personnel: DOS expects applicants to propose key personnel and leadership capable of communicating effectively in both English and French and engaging with senior diplomatic officials, host-country government authorities, community-based organizations, and the private sector in support of achieving results and the America First foreign assistance strategy. Leadership should demonstrate a combination of management and technical expertise relevant to the program's stated objectives and be accountable for results and quality control.

2. Substantial Involvement

Areas of substantial involvement will be finalized during award negotiations and may include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Active collaboration with the recipient in the implementation of the award
- Approval of a three-month start-up and mobilization plan to be submitted no less than 10-business days of the signing of the award.
- Review and approval of the results/outcomes for each stage of work before the next can begin.
- Joint preparation or presentation of results with the recipient
- Approval of any substantial media and outreach events (including branding and marking).
- Involvement in the selection of program participants / beneficiaries
- Approval of short-term and long-term technical assistance from the successful applicant's home office, where applicable.
- Approval of work plans and / or monitoring, evaluation, and learning plans.
- Alignment of project to complement other USG-supported efforts including those of DFC and EXIM.

D. Application Contents and Format

<u>Please follow all instructions below carefully</u>. Proposals that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible.

Content of Application

Please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity
- All documents are in English
- All budgets are in U.S. dollars
- All pages are numbered
- All documents are formatted to fit 8 ½ x 11 paper, and

- All documents are single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins. 10 point font may be used within any tables or charts, with the exception of the “Table Listing Critical Details” (see below).
- With the exception of a detailed budget submitted in Excel, all documents for the proposal submission must be submitted as part of a single PDF document. Documents within the PDF must be ordered as listed below.

The following documents are **required**:

1. Table Listing Critical Details (1 page maximum; include as the first page of the PDF submission)

I. Proposed Project Title

II. Name of the Organization and Contact Information

III. Total U.S. Federal Share Requested (as value and as percentage of III + IV)

IV. Estimated Value of non-USG Resource Contributions (as applicable)

V. Partners (proposed subrecipients, key subcontractors, and key non-funded partners, if applicable)

VI. Performance and Impact Indicators (The applicant should propose using at least one of the sample key indicators from the NOFO, where relevant.)

VII. Name(s) and Organizational UEI and those of any proposed subrecipients, if known

2. Proposal

The proposal should contain sufficient information that anyone not familiar with it would understand exactly what the applicant wants to do. You may use your own proposal format, but it must include all the items below.

- **Proposal Narrative (15 pages maximum), including:**
    - **Proposal Summary:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed project, including project objectives and anticipated impact.
    - **Introduction to the Organization applying**: A description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the program, including information on all previous grants from the State Department and/or U.S. government agencies.
    - **Problem Statement:** Clear, concise and well-supported statement of the problem to be addressed and why the proposed program is needed
    - **Project Goals and Objectives:** The “goals” describe what the program is intended to achieve. The “objectives” refer to the intermediate accomplishments on the way to the goals. These should be achievable and measurable.
    - **Project Activities**: Describe the program activities and how they will help achieve the objectives. When feasible, list an approximate percentage of the overall budget anticipated for each activity.

  - **Project Methods and Design**: A description of how the program is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal. Include a logic model as appropriate.
  - **Key Personnel:** Names, titles, roles and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program. What proportion of their time will be used in support of this program?
  - **Project Partners:** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations, including any proposed subrecipients (subgrantees) and subcontractors.
  - **Resource Contributions / Co-Financing / Burden Sharing and/or Cost Share from non-federal sources (if applicable):**
    - Describe any proposed cost-share (per 2 CFR 200.306) or any proposed leverage from outside sources which will be brought to the proposed project and explain the valuation. Explain the status and likelihood of securing the resources.
    - Leverage:
      - is defined as the mobilization of non-U.S. Government resources such as cash, in-kind contributions, expertise, or technology from public or private partners to expand the impact of the project, even if not formally incorporated into the award as cost-share; and
      - must be explicitly mobilized to directly contribute to the project or activity, or augment its results to make it more sustainable or effective.
    - Please also briefly describe any relevant burden sharing by other governments.
  - **Local Ownership:** Applicant's plan for; a) ensuring the provided U.S. foreign assistance is time-bound; b) and facilitating host government or other appropriate local ownership of the work beyond the grant period.
- **Proposed Project Schedule and Timeline (2 pages maximum):** The proposed timeline for the program activities. Include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.
- **Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (5 pages maximum):** This is an important part of successful grants. Throughout the timeframe of the grant, how will the activities be monitored to ensure they are happening in a timely manner, and how will the program be evaluated to make sure it is meeting the goals of the grant?
- **Unmanned Aircraft System Impact Assessment and Plan (no page limit):** Submit the information required in the UAS guidance for the proposed project if you or a subrecipient will:
  - Purchase or lease any drone or UAS component using US government funds, OR
  - Operate a drone in any way that involves processing, storing, or transmitting Federal information (e.g., collecting images, video, GPS data, or other data on behalf of a federal program). See guidance for definition of "Federal Information."
  - Also confirm whether UAS will be used for Federal information by any subcontractors.
  - If neither of the above apply, include a page with the applicant organization's confirmation of those facts.
- **Detailed Budget in Excel** (do not include within PDF submission; sample budget template provided)

3. ***Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan (five pages maximum; include as part of the single PDF)***

Identify the internal and external risks associated with the proposed project in the application, 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. Applicants should rate the likelihood of a risk and potential impact of the risk as "high", "medium", or "low." Analyze risks including but not limited to risks to the project, the organization, and participants or community members. Covered risks should include but not be limited to safety/security, diversion, anti-terrorist financing, and protection risks including human trafficking and other forms of sexual exploitation and abuse.

4. ***Budget Justification Narrative (include as part of the single PDF)***

After filling out the SF-424A Budget (above), use a separate Word file to describe each of the budget expenses in detail. See section *I. Other Information: Guidelines for Budget Submissions* below for further information.

5. ***Attachments (include as part of the single PDF)***

- 1-page Curriculum Vitae (CV) or resume of key personnel who are proposed for the program
- Letters of support from program partners describing the roles and responsibilities of each partner
- Official permission letters, if required for program activities and available at this stage
- Documentation of access / rights needed to carry out the project, where applicable
- Documentation of commitments and valuations of non-USG resources where available
- If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, include your latest NICRA as a PDF file.
- Policies / code(s) of conduct for preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse including human trafficking.

6. ***Mandatory application forms (available on grants.gov and MyGrants; include as part of the single PDF)***

- SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance)
- SF-424A (Budget Information for Non-Construction programs)
- SF-424B (Assurances for Non-Construction programs) is not required as a standalone document as it is part of the required registration in sam.gov
- SF-LLL—Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (**Note:** only required for organizations that engage in lobbying activities as described on the form);

7. ***Summary and Detailed Budgets***

A proposal budget must be submitted in spreadsheet format (e.g., Microsoft Excel). A sample template is located under the Related Documents section of this NOFO announcement on www.grants.gov for applicants as a reference. Refer to additional guidance within the template and in Section I – Other Information, below.

- One tab of the spreadsheet shall contain a Summary Budget based on the OMB-approved budget categories in the SF-424A. It must show the total estimated cost per category
- One tab of the spreadsheet shall contain the Detailed Budget, which breaks down the OMB-approved budget categories into individual line items and provides detailed calculations and cost estimates per line item.
- If applicable, U.S. federal costs and recipient cost share must be reported in separate columns

<u>Indirect Costs</u>

- Applicants and subrecipients subject to 2 CFR 200 Subpart E cost principles that do not have an approved NICRA can elect to charge a de minimis rate of up to 15% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) for indirect costs in accordance with 2 CFR 200.414.
- For profits: The Department does not apply Subpart E of 2 CFR § 200, which established the de minimis rate, to for- profit entities. In accordance with 2 CFR 600, it applies Federal Acquisition Regulation Part 31 cost principles to for-profits. For profit entities that have formally established overhead or General and Administrative (G&A) rates should use those rates. For-profit applicants that do not have a formally established overhead or G&A rate should allocate indirect costs into the appropriate direct cost categories.
- Prohibition against profit. The Department will not provide funds as profit to any for-profit entity (or other entity) receiving or administering Federal financial assistance as a recipient or subrecipient—including any awards that are fixed amount awards. Federal financial assistance does not include contracts (or subcontracts) as defined at 2 CFR 200.1. Profit is any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs.

E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

1. Address to Request Application Package

Application forms required above are available at grants.gov and MyGrants.

2. Department of State Contacts

Submit questions and an optional notice of intent to apply in writing to: AF-A-Proposals@state.gov

- **Deadline for Questions and Notice of Intent to Apply:** August 18 by 11:59 pm ET
  - **<u>Applicants should be sure include any questions or concerns about the PHFFA funding restrictions in E.5.vi, below. Do not assume a PHFFA waiver will be made, even if the applicant has received a waiver on a different program.</u>**
- Anticipated Response to Questions: August 25

Please submit questions and the notice of intent to apply within the body of an email rather than as an attachment.

Include the opportunity number DFOP0019574 **in the email subject line.**

Questions and answers will be anonymized and posted on Grants.gov and MyGrants. Questions submitted after the deadline will not be addressed.

The intent to apply is a notification to the Bureau of African Affairs via email expressing tentative intent to submit a proposal under this announcement.

- The notification does not require any specific format or template although within the body of an email is preferred.
- The intent to apply is optional and non-binding. It is requested as a courtesy for informational planning purposes only.
- Even if an organization does not submit a notice of intent to apply or does not do so by the Q&A deadline, the organization can still apply.

3. *Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)*

Required Registrations

All prime applicant organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration in SAM.gov. 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. An applicant must maintain an active registration while it has a proposal under review by the Department and must continue to keep the registration active for the entire duration of the period of performance of any Federal award that results from this NOFO.

The 2 CFR 200 requires subrecipients to obtain a UEI. Please note the UEI for subrecipients is not required at the time of application but will be required before a subrecipient award is approved by the Grant Officer and processed and/or directed to a subrecipient. UEIs are not required for subcontractors.

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

- 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 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 prior to registering in SAM.gov.

- **<u>Organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of War (DoW) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code to apply for non-DoW foreign assistance funding opportunities.</u>** 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 DoW 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 DoW 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):
> NCAGE Code Request Tool (nato.int)

Exemptions
An exemption from the UEI and sam.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis. See 2 CFR 25.110 for a full list of exemptions.

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the NOFO at least a week 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.

4. *Submission Dates and Times*

Applications are due no later than September 9, 2026 by 11:59 pm ET.

5. *Funding Restrictions*

i. Funding Restrictions for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)

None of the funds awarded resulting from this Notice of Funding Opportunity may be made available for subawards, direct financial support, or otherwise used to provide any payment or transfer to United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

ii. Certification Regarding Compliance with applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws

If the place of performance or delivery of any award made under this NOFO will be within the United States, applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award:

1) Its compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of

title 31, United States Code and;

2) It does not operate any programs promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws. A program promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion means a program whose purpose is to promote preferences based on race, color religion, sex, or national origins, such as in training or hiring.

iii. Certification Regarding Compliance with 20 U.S.C. 1011f and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs)

Applicants are advised that IHEs must certify the following at the time of award, and that this certification requirement must be included in any subaward agreements to IHEs:

1) Its compliance in all respects with section 1011f of title 20, United States Code, and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements is material for purposes of section 3729 of title 31, United States Code, and for receipt of appropriate Federal grant funds.

iv. Certification of Trafficking in Persons Compliance and Compliance Plan

Applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award for awards where the estimated value of services to be performed outside the United States exceeds $500,000:

- To the best of the Recipient's knowledge, neither the Recipient, nor any subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor of the Recipient or any agent of the recipient or of such a subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor, is engaged in any of the activities described in 2 CFR 175.105(a);

  The recipient has implemented a Trafficking in Persons compliance plan to prevent activities described in 2 CFR 175(a) and is compliant with this plan; and the compliance plan must follow the minimum requirements described in 2 CFR 175(b)(5).

- That the Recipient has and will implement procedures to prevent activities described in 2 CFR 175.105(a) and to monitor, detect, and terminate any subrecipient, contractor, subcontractor, or employee of the recipient engaging in these activities.

  Recipients do not need to submit a copy of the plan. However, they must provide it to the Grants Officer upon request, and as appropriate, must post the useful and relevant contents of the plan or related materials on their website and at the workplace. Recipients must re-certify on an annual basis for the entire award period of performance.

v. Prohibition on Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). If your project involves the purchase or use of an UAS, see related guidance (https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/UAS-NOFO-Guidance-current.pdf) at this link for requirements and information you must include in your application.

vi. Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance (PHFFA)

Applicants for foreign assistance awards should be aware of requirements in 2 CFR Part 602, 603, and 604. Review the U.S. Federal Register rules for each, and the Department's PHFFA frequently asked questions (https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/PHFFA-Implementation-Information-and-FAQ.pdf), both in detail here (https://www.state.gov/federal-assistance-policies-appeals/) before submitting related questions to the Bureau of African Affairs.

These policies are referred to collectively as the Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance (PHFFA) Policy.

602: The award term imposes certain abortion-related requirements on foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), United States NGOs, public international organizations, foreign governments, and parastatals.

603: The award term imposes certain requirements relating to gender ideology on foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), United States NGOs, international organizations, foreign governments, and parastatals.

604: The award term imposes certain requirements relating to discriminatory equity ideology on foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), United States NGOs, international organizations, foreign governments, and parastatals.

The Department recognizes there are costs associated with these policies. Potential one-time and recurring costs the Department identifies for recipients and grantees are for familiarization with the policy, development and delivery of organizational training and implementation guidance, routine compliance monitoring, and recordkeeping and reporting requirements.

Requirements vary by organization type and in some cases apply to non-USG-funded work. Review the FAQ in detail. At this time, requirements apply to prime applicants and subrecipients and not to subcontracts.

6. Other Submission Requirements

Applications must be submitted electronically through MyGrants.

Applicants experiencing technical difficulties with MyGrants or with sam.gov registration must contact the respective systems' helpdesks. If an applicant is unable to resolve their technical issues before the application deadline, they must reach out to AF-A-Proposals@state.gov with a timestamped screenshot of the issue and copies of help desk correspondence. Mark the email as "urgent" and include, "DFOP0019574 REIF NOFO – technical issue." in the subject line. Do not leave submission until the last minute.

F. Application Review Information

1. Review Criteria

Each application will be evaluated and rated based on the evaluation criteria outlined below, using the following scale for each criteria:

4 – Very Strong
3 – Strong
2 – Acceptable
1 – Needs improvement to be acceptable
0 – Unacceptable

Weight assigned to each criteria is shown below in percentages:

- **Quality and Feasibility of the Program Idea and Planning – 50%:**
  - The project idea is well developed, with detail about how program activities will be carried out and achieve the proposed impact.
  - The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline, including considerations for a start-up and mobilization plan.
  - The proposal demonstrates an informed and realistic understanding of opportunities, challenges, and constraints including but not limited to level of buy-in among host government and other stakeholders.
  - Goals and objectives are clearly stated.
  - The program approach is likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results and incorporates the principals of the America First strategy for region.

  - Applicant addresses at least one objective of the NOFO, preferably meaningfully addressing all four.
  - Applicant demonstrates clear and immediate pathways for U.S. business participation and contributions to U.S. supply chain security.
  - Applicant prioritizes development of transparent, competitive business environments for quality foreign investment, including for U.S. companies.
  - The project creates conditions that reward merit-based competition and generate sustainable economic benefits through approaches that advance African development objectives while enabling U.S. commercial engagement where mutually reinforcing.
  - Applicant demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of complex dynamics in the implementation countries and proposes credible, context appropriate strategies for achieving measurable results.
  - Applicant demonstrates how the proposed project complements, rather than duplicates, related existing efforts in applicable sector(s) and geographies.

- **Organizational and Staff Capacity and Experience – 30%:**
  - The organization and key subrecipient(s)/subcontractors have the necessary experience, technical expertise, French language skills, demonstrated success with projects of a similar nature, and relevant country level expertise for each country included in the proposal.
  - The prime applicant has demonstrated capacity to oversee a multi-country project of this type, including subrecipient and subcontractor oversight.
  - The applicant's proposed key personnel and leadership have the requisite language, technical, and management skills to carry out the project.
  - The applicant's proposed team (staff, consultants, etc.) has strong technical capability and demonstrated experience with projects of similar size, scope, and complexity.
  - The applicant demonstrates capacity to mobilize private sector financing that leverages and amplifies U.S. assistance.
  - The proposed Chief of Party candidate should possess a minimum of 15 years of experience in a similar leadership role, be fluent in English and French, and demonstrate strong technical and managerial expertise. The candidate must also be capable of effectively engaging with U.S. Government leadership, host-country officials, community representatives, and private-sector stakeholders. All key personnel are expected to reinforce and promote the America First foreign assistance strategy.
  - The applicant and subrecipients have demonstrated alignment with or a commitment to U.S. supply chain goals and transparent, rules-based business practices.

- Choice of subrecipients: the applicant's proposed subrecipients have suitable records of integrity and performance and strong relevant experience, expertise, and relationships with key stakeholders.

Note:

- Some partners (subrecipients, key subcontractors) and key personnel may be to-be-determined at the proposal stage. However, reviewers may assess projects with more identified and/or confirmed personnel and partners as stronger in terms of capacity, experience, and / or program feasibility.
- Applicants and subrecipients are required to have experience relevant to the proposed project. It need not be U.S. government-funded grant or contract experience specifically, though that is one type of relevant experience.

- **Budget and sustainability– 20%:**
  - The budget is reasonable, realistic, and cost-effective in terms of the impact that can be achieved relative to resources spent.
  - The design reflects a realistic plan for time-bound U.S. assistance with a transition to local ownership and/or the private sector where appropriate.
  - The project ensures that U.S. taxpayer dollars catalyze substantial commercial returns.

2. Indirect Costs

If two or more applications receive equivalent scores based on the evaluation criteria outlined in this NOFO, preference will be given to the applicant with the lower indirect cost rate, as consistent with Executive Order 14332, Section 4(b)(iii). "Indirect cost rate" here means a NICRA, use of the de minimis rate in line with 2 CFR 200.414, or a for-profit's established indirect cost rates. This preference will only be applied as a tie-breaking mechanism and does not supersede the primary evaluation criteria.

If an applicant does not have an indirect rate and instead allocates all costs directly, the tie-breaking scenario is not applicable.

An applicant can elect to claim rates lower than their established rates if otherwise in accordance with applicable cost principles (2 CFR 200 Subpart E for not-for-profits, or FAR Part 31 for for-profits).

3. Review and Selection Process

A review committee will evaluate all eligible applications. Scoring members of review committees generally include representatives from AF and other DOS bureaus. Additionally, Department of State often welcomes participation from interagency colleagues and other USG or non-USG subject matter experts (SMEs) onto MRPs. All committee members sign non-disclosure agreements and conflict of interest agreements.

Final selection and funding authority resides with a senior level official.

4. Risk Review

i. Risk factors

Under the merit review as required by 2 CFR 200.206, prior to making a Federal Award the Department will review and consider the following risk factors:

a. Financial stability
b. Management systems and standards
c. History of performance
d. Audit reports and findings
e. Ability to effectively implement requirements

ii. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov

The Federal awarding agency, 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)

An applicant can review and comment on any information in the responsibility/qualification records available in SAM.gov.

Before making decisions in the risk review required by 2 CFR 200.206, the Department will consider any comments by the applicant, along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov.

G. Award Notices

The cooperative agreement will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The award agreement is the authorizing document, and it will be provided to the recipient for review and counter-signature. The recipient may only start incurring project expenses beginning on the start date shown on the award document signed by the Grants Officer.

The mechanism type (either a cost-reimbursement or fixed amount award type cooperative agreement can be proposed by the applicant but is up to the final determination of the grants officer. Cooperative agreements are envisioned under this NOFO given substantial involvement of the Department to help align the program with other USG-supported efforts.

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the discretion of the Department of State.

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.

Unsuccessful applicants: Unsuccessful applicants will be notified via email within approximately 90 days of submitting an application.

Payment method for the prime recipient:

For a U.S.-based recipient, payments under this award will be made through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Payment Management System (PMS). Recipients may not draw down funds without the affirmative authorization of the Department of State. In addition, recipients must submit, with each PMS payment request, a detailed explanation justifying the request.

A non-U.S.-based recipient will be required to request payments by completing form SF-270—Request for Advance or Reimbursement and submitting the form to the Grants Officer. Recipients may not receive funds without the affirmative authorization of the Department of State. In addition, recipients must submit, with each SF-270 payment request, a detailed explanation justifying the request.

Payment methods between a prime recipient and subrecipients or (sub)contractors are determined by the prime recipient.

H. Post-Award Requirements and Administration

1. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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:

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 89 FR 30046 on April 22, 2024, particularly on:
    - Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an impartial process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
    - 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 pursuant to the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, including, to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340). For the avoidance of doubt, the Department has sole discretion over the determination that an award no longer effectuates program goals or agency priorities, and this provision permits awards to be terminated at the Department's convenience, including when it determines that the award no longer advances the national interest.

- 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

- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Recipients must comply with all applicable Executive Orders A searchable list can be found in the Federal Register: https://www.federalregister.gov/

2. ***Reporting***

Reporting Requirements: Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify what reports are required and how often these reports must be submitted.

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.

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.

3. Branding and Marking

The Department of State, its programs, and U.S. Government funding and assistance should be easily identifiable to the Department's global audiences.

Recipients of federal assistance awards must follow the branding guidance published at Guidance for Contracts and Grants - U.S. Department of State Brand System. Branding policy exceptions are outlined in the U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual 10 FAM 416, Policy Exceptions.

For more information, visit: https://brand.america.gov/

I. Other Information

Guidelines for Budget Justification

Personnel and Fringe Benefits: Describe the wages, salaries, and benefits of temporary or permanent staff who will be working directly for the applicant on the program, and the percentage of their time that will be spent on the program.

Travel: Estimate the costs of travel and per diem for this program, for program staff, consultants or speakers, and participants/beneficiaries. If the program involves international travel, include a brief statement of justification for that travel.

Equipment: Describe any machinery, furniture, or other personal property that is required for the program, which has a useful life of more than one year (or a life longer than the duration of the program), and costs at least $10,000 per unit.

Supplies: List and describe all the items and materials, including any computer devices, that are needed for the program. If an item costs more than $10,000 per unit, then put it in the budget under Equipment.

Contractual: Describe goods and services that the applicant plans to acquire through a contract with a vendor. Also describe any sub-awards to non-profit partners that will help carry out the program activities.

Other Direct Costs: Describe other costs directly associated with the program, which do not fit in the other categories. For example, shipping costs for materials and equipment or applicable taxes. All "Other" or "Miscellaneous" expenses must be itemized and explained.

Indirect Costs: These are costs that cannot be linked directly to the program activities, such as overhead costs needed to help keep the organization operating. If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, attach a copy of your latest NICRA. Organizations that have never had a NICRA may request indirect costs of up to 15% of Modified Total Direct Costs as defined in 2 CFR 200.1.

"Cost Sharing" refers to contributions from the organization or other entities other than the U.S. Embassy. It also includes in-kind contributions such as volunteers' time and donated venues.

Alcoholic Beverages: Please note that award funds cannot be used for alcoholic beverages.

For this NOFO, "Construction means the creation of a building, structure, or facility, including the installation of equipment, site preparation, landscaping, associated roads parking, environmental mitigation, and utilities, which provides space not previously available. It includes freestanding structures, additional wings or floors, enclosed courtyards or entryways, and any other means to provide usable space that did not previously exist (excluding temporary facilities). Major Renovation (Alterations & Renovation (A&R)) is considered a structural change (e.g., to the foundation, roof, floor, or exterior or load-bearing walls of a facility, or an extension to an existing facility) to achieve the following: increase the floor area; and/or change function and purpose of an existing building, structure, or facility." (SF-424A Instructions v.1, OMB #4040-0006).