

U.S. Department of State**Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**

Funding Opportunity Title: Preserving Cultural Heritage and Promoting Religious Freedom and Tolerance in the Pacific Islands

Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0016835

Deadline for Applications: September 2, 2024

CFDA Number: 19.345

Total Amount Available: \$450,000

Estimated Number of Awards: 1

Maximum Award Amount: \$450,000

Award Type: Cooperative Agreement

Period of Performance: 1 year

Anticipated Start Date: September 30, 2024

I. Program Description

The U.S. Department of State announces an open competition for organizations to submit applications to increase capacity of civil society to promote freedom of religion or belief and inter-religious cooperation in the Pacific Islands region. This program will reduce the vulnerability of Pacific Island countries to disinformation, false narratives, and efforts by foreign actors from countries with severe violations of religious freedom and will achieve these outcomes by engaging with established opinion leaders, such as religious actors.

II. Background

In the Pacific Islands, the overwhelming majority of people identify as having religious or spiritual beliefs. The United States and Pacific Island countries have long enjoyed shared values of upholding respect for freedom of religion or belief (FoRB), promoting tolerance and religious pluralism, and protecting space for civil society, including religious actors to gather and seek positive and shared outcomes on regional and global issues. By contrast, some foreign actors spread disinformation and false narratives about their motives and actions on a range of topics with religious actors, including to legitimize human rights abuses against members of religious and spiritual minority groups. These false narratives and concealed motives risk eroding FoRB, tolerance, and religious pluralism and reduces the capacity of religious actors in the Pacific to make independent

decisions based on their beliefs. Increasing awareness and capacity among Pacific Islanders to recognize these foreign actors' negative track record on religion and regional and global issues will help them to weigh these considerations against such foreign actors' offers of economic and security cooperation.

There is also untapped potential to engage Pacific Island civil society and highlight U.S. shared values related to religion or belief and regional and global issues. The United States is seeking a project that engages with civil society, including faith-based organizations, community leaders, cultural groups, and students/youth through education, culture, and people-to-people exchange.

Applicants will be responsible for ensuring program activities and products are implemented in accordance with the [Establishment Clause](#) of the United States Constitution.

III. Project Description

The U.S. Department of State Office of International Religious Freedom invites **eligible applicants (see Section IV)** to submit applications for projects that have the goal to promote and protect religious freedom, tolerance, and inter-religious cooperation, resulting in civil society leaders and religious actors having increased capacity to advocate for freedom of religion or belief, and raise awareness about foreign actors' false narratives about their actions and motives on regional and global issues, including but not limited to human rights.

Helpful resources for applicants include the annual country-specific International Religious Freedom Reports (<https://www.state.gov/international-religious-freedom-reports/>) and annual country-specific Human Rights Reports (<https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/>).

A range of civil society representatives should be encouraged to participate, including religious actors and members of faith-based organizations; those representing non-Christian religions or beliefs in the Pacific (e.g. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Buddhist); those who hold no religious beliefs; leaders of cultural or community groups with shared values; women leaders; and students and youth.

The project should include participants from Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and/or Vanuatu.

Program outcomes may include but are not limited to:

- Pacific Island religious communities have increased resilience to and/or reduced vulnerability to disinformation, false narratives, and efforts by foreign actors on global and regional issues, including about these foreign actors' human rights violations, abuses of freedom of religion and belief, and ongoing transnational repression.
- Pacific Island civil society and publics have increased understanding of freedom of religion or belief, tolerance, and cooperation and their positive impact on addressing regional and global issues and shared challenges.
- International communities better understand the religious landscape of the Pacific Islands, including diverse and influential religious actors and stakeholders for each Pacific Island country participating
- Groups engage more frequently, consistently and effectively among participating countries on issues that foster respect and tolerance and take collective action on regional and global issues and shared challenges, including through raising awareness about foreign actors' disinformation, false narratives, and motives in the region.
- Local civil society have increased capacity to promote religious tolerance and belief, address regional and global challenges, and address false narratives and motives by egregious foreign actors.
- Participants have increased awareness of disinformation on religious issues and human rights, as well as how to address false narratives on regional and global issues that these foreign actors spread.
- Participants have increased and sustainable networks of religious and civil society actors who have participated in these programs or who have interest/expertise in the region on advancing religious tolerance and belief and dispelling false narratives about these foreign actors track record on religion, human rights, and regional and global issues, including through cooperation with the United States and likeminded partners.

Activities can include but are not limited to:

- Mapping out the landscape of influential and diverse religious groups and actors to engage with in the Pacific
- Forming diverse, multi-faith and civil society stakeholder groups, including but not limited to youth and religious actors, to discuss shared concerns and collaborate on initiatives of shared concern
- Organizing a series of inter-religious dialogues on diversity that also discuss regional and global challenges of interest to the region
- Creating alumni networks of stakeholders from these dialogues for follow on engagement
- Organizing exhibits and roadshows that highlight the intersection of religion and culture that could feature music, art, film, food, language, customs, and storytelling
- Conducting third party speaking engagements including by one or more members of religious groups from countries that repress religious practice and beliefs, and to share their experiences on transnational repression.

Support for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA):

All programs should consider strategies for expanding the pool of individuals/organizations/beneficiaries to afford opportunities for as diverse and inclusive population as is feasible to bring diverse perspectives based on religion, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, national origin, and age to implementation of the program.

The Department reserves the right to award less or more than the funds described under circumstances deemed to be in the best interest of the U.S. government, pending the availability of funds and approval of the designated grants officer.

IV. Eligibility Information

Eligible applicants include:

- Overseas non-profit/non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Public and private educational institutions
- For-profit organizations
- Public international organizations and governmental institutions

Cost Sharing or Matching: Cost sharing is not required.

1. Other Eligibility Requirements

In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Please see Section D.6 for more information. Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov.

APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

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 8 ½ x 11 paper, and
- All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12 point Calibri font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.

The following documents are **required**:

1. Mandatory application forms

- **SF-424, SF424A, and SF424B** at <https://www.grants.gov/forms>

2. Summary Coversheet (optional): Cover sheet stating the applicant's name and organization, proposal date, program title, program period proposed start and end date, and brief purpose of the program.

(For the project proposal and budget narrative, you may use the templates attached.)

3. Proposal (10 pages minimum): 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 Summary:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed program, including program objectives and anticipated impact.
- **Introduction to the Organization:** A description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the program, including information on all previous **federal assistance awards** from the U.S. Embassy 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
- **Program 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.
- **Program Activities:** Describe the program activities and how they will help achieve the objectives.
- **Program Methods and Design:** A description of how the program is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal.
- **Proposed Program Schedule and Timeline:** The proposed timeline for the program activities and analytical reports. Include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.
- **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?
- **Program Partners:** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations and sub-awardees.
- **Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** This is an important part of successful **federal assistance awards**. Throughout the timeframe of the grant **or cooperative agreement**, 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?
- **Future Funding or Sustainability** Applicant’s plan for continuing the program beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable.

4. Budget (preferably as an Excel workbook) that includes three (3) columns containing the request, 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).

5. Budget Justification Narrative: After filling out the SF-424A Budget (above), include a substantive explanation and justification for each line item in the detailed budget spreadsheet, as well as the source and a description of all cost-share offered. See section *H. Other Information: Guidelines for Budget Submissions* below for further information.

Note: Not mandatory, but you may use the templates provided here:
[Proposal Template](#) / [Budget Template](#)

6. Attachments:

- 1-page 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
- If your organization has a NICRA and includes NICRA charges in the budget, your latest NICRA should be included as a PDF file.
- Official permission letters, if required for program activities

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

Required Registrations:

All organizations (except individuals) must obtain these registrations. All are free of charge:

- www.SAM.gov registration which will generate a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

Any applicant with an exclusion in the System for Award Management (SAM) 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."

The Unique Entity Identifier (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. SAM.gov is the Federal government's primary database for complying with FFATA reporting requirements. OMB designated SAM.gov as the

central repository to facilitate applicant and recipient use of a single public website that consolidates data on all federal financial assistance. Under the law, it is mandatory to register in SAM.gov.

Starting April 2022, the UEI will be assigned when an organization registers or renews its registration in SAM.gov at www.SAM.gov. To access SAM.gov an organization is required to have a Login.gov account. Organization can create an account at <https://login.gov/>. As a reminder, organizations need to renew its sam.gov registration annually.

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

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

Note: www.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.

If an organization plans to issue a sub-award, those sub-awardees must also have a unique entity identifier (UEI number). Those entities can register for a UEI only at SAM.gov.

All organizations (except individuals) must obtain these registrations, which are free of charge.

Note: As of April 2022, a DUNS number is no longer required.

Exemptions

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

- An applicant's identity must be protected due to potential endangerment of their mission, their organization's status, their employees, or individuals being served by the applicant.
- For an applicant, if the Federal awarding agency makes a determination that there are exigent circumstances that prohibit the applicant from receiving a unique entity identifier and completing SAM registration prior to receiving a Federal award. In these instances, Federal awarding agencies must require the recipient to obtain a unique entity identifier and complete SAM registration within 30 days of the Federal award date.

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

8. Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due no later than September 2, 2024, 11:59 p.m. GMT+9

9. Funding Restrictions

Award funds cannot be used for construction, vehicle purchases.

10. Other Submission Requirements

All application materials must be submitted by email to: IRF-Project@state.gov.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. Criteria

The proposal will not be compared against other proposals. However, it will be reviewed to ensure that it is sufficiently strong in the following areas to merit funding:

- **Quality and Feasibility of the Program Idea:** The program idea should be innovative and well developed, with sufficient detail about how project activities will be carried out. The proposals should demonstrate originality and outline clear, achievable objectives. The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline. The project scope is appropriate and clearly defined. Proposals should also demonstrate how the program will support diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) principles and engage underserved communities in their program's administration, design, and implementation. Requires demonstrated understanding of the Pacific Islands and Oceania region and alignment with program goals.
- **Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Federal Assistance Awards:** The project proposal demonstrates that the organization has sufficient expertise, skills, and human resources to implement the project. The organization demonstrates that it has a clear understanding of the underlying issue that the project will address. The organization demonstrates capacity for successful planning and responsible fiscal management. This includes a financial management system and a bank account. Applicants who have received federal assistance awards previously have been compliant with applicable rules and regulations.

Where partners are described, the applicant details each partner's respective role and provides curriculum vitae (CVs) for persons responsible for the project and financial administration. Proposed personnel, institutional resources, and partners are adequate and appropriate.

- **Project Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives:** The project plan is well developed, with sufficient detail about how activities will be carried out. The proposal specifies target audiences, participant recruitment, and geographic areas of implementation. The proposal outlines clear, achievable objectives. The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline. The project scope is appropriate and clearly defined.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** There is a complete and thorough draft submission of a M&E Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP). This will include a list of proposed project activities, corresponding milestones, output, and outcome indicators, a description of data collection methods, and a timeline for collecting such information. The proposal presents a clear theory of change on how the program will address that problem. Further, if the project requires selecting participants, or beneficiaries, the proposal should articulate how the selection will be done in an equitable way. Use of the suggested template (Attachments 3 & 3.1) will satisfy these requirements. Funded projects will have their plans finalized during the negotiation phase, and monitoring plans may be subject to periodic updates throughout the life of the project.
- **Sustainability:** The project proposal describes clearly the approach that will be used to ensure maximum sustainability or advancement of project goals after the end of project activity.

VII. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) will be a critical component of this program to ensure its success and sustainability. Applicants must include a detailed M&E plan in their proposals, addressing the following points:

Performance Indicators: Define clear, measurable indicators to track progress towards achieving the program's objectives. These should include both qualitative and quantitative metrics.

Data Collection Methods: Outline the methods and tools for collecting data, including baseline data, to assess the program's impact.

Frequency of Monitoring: Specify how often data will be collected and reported, ensuring regular monitoring and timely adjustments to the program as needed.

Evaluation Framework: Describe the evaluation methodologies to be used for assessing the program's effectiveness and efficiency. This should include mid-term and final evaluations.

Reporting: Detail the process for compiling and submitting regular progress reports, including any templates or formats to be used, as well as analytical reports that map out the challenges and opportunities on this topic in Pacific Island countries.

Stakeholder Involvement: Explain how stakeholders, including local partners and beneficiaries, will be involved in the M&E process to ensure their perspectives and feedback are incorporated.

Budget: The budget justification is detailed. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The budget is realistic, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities.

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

For any Federal award under a notice of funding opportunity, if the Federal awarding agency anticipates that the total Federal share will be greater than the simplified acquisition threshold over the period of performance (see §200.88 Simplified Acquisition Threshold), this section must also inform applicants that:

- i. 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 (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);

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

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

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Federal Award Notices

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

If 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 solicitation letter 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 proposal received.

Payment Method: SF-270

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Terms and Conditions: Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply. These include: 2 CFR 200, 2 CFR 600, and the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions which are available at: <https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/>. Note the U.S Flag branding and marking requirements in the Standard Terms and Conditions.

3. Reporting

Reporting Requirements: Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports as well as detailed reports of the analytical mapping. The award document will specify 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.

FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

If you have any questions about the grant application process, please contact: IRF-Project@state.gov.

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 \$5,000 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 \$5,000 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 10% of the modified total direct costs as defined in 2 CFR 200.68.

“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.

V. Application and Submission Information

Application Deadline: Applications are due by September 2, 2024.

Submission Requirements: Applications must be submitted via email to IRF-Project@state.gov by September 2, 2024. Late submissions will not be considered.

VI. Award Administration Information

Award Notices: Successful applicants will be notified via email by September 11, 2024.

Reporting Requirements: Award recipients will be required to submit regular progress and financial reports.

VII. Contact Information

For questions regarding this NOFO, please contact: IRF-Project@state.gov.

VIII. Disclaimer

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 application.

By providing this comprehensive framework, the U.S. Department of State aims to support the Pacific Island in efforts to promote shared values of upholding respect for freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) and promoting tolerance of religious pluralism.