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Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
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Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for Statements of Interest

Updated: December 2024

PLEASE REFER TO THIS DOCUMENT WHEN PREPARING A STATEMENT OF INTEREST.

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SECTION I: ELIGIBILITY

A. Eligibility Requirements

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) welcomes Statements of Interest (SOIs) in response to DRL Requests for Statements of Interest (RSOIs) from:

- Foreign-based non-profit organizations/nongovernment organizations (NGO);
- U.S.-based non-profit organizations/NGOs with or without 501(c)(3) status;
- Public International Organizations;
- Private, public, or state institutions of higher education;
- 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 from for-profit entities may be subject to additional review following the panel selection process. The Department of State does not allow for-profit or commercial organizations to make a profit from its assistance awards. Profit is defined as any amount more than allowable direct and indirect costs. The allowability of costs for commercial organizations is determined by the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR 30, Cost Accounting Standards Administration, and 48 CFR 31 Contract Cost Principles and Procedures.

Applicants should have, or be able to develop, active partnerships with thematic or local partners, entities, and relevant stakeholders, including private sector partners and NGOs. Applicants should also have **proven experience** in managing successful and preferably similar projects. DRL encourages applications from foreign-based NGOs located in the regions or countries relevant to this RSOI.

Applicants may **form consortia** to combine different expertise into one comprehensive SOI. However, only one organization can be designated as the prime applicant, while the remaining organizations must be designated as partners or sub-awardees. The prime applicant must meet the eligibility criteria listed above. DRL may ask for more background information from applicants without previous federal grant experience, and these applicants might receive limited funding on a trial basis.

DRL is committed to an **anti-discrimination** policy in all its programs and activities. DRL welcomes applications regardless of race, ethnicity, color, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or other status. DRL looks for applications that show the recipient does not discriminate against any beneficiaries when implementing a potential award. This means not withholding, negatively affecting, or denying equitable access to the benefits of the award based on any factor not stated in the award. This includes 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 status. The recipient should insert this provision, including this paragraph, in all sub-grants and contracts under a potential award.

B. System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

Any applicant listed on the Excluded Parties List System in the [System for Award Management \(SAM.gov\)](http://www.sam.gov) (www.sam.gov) or who has a current debt to the U.S. government is not eligible to apply for an assistance award, according to OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 and 12689, "Debarment and Suspension." Additionally, no entity or person listed on the Excluded Parties List System in SAM.gov can take part in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the Excluded Parties List System in SAM.gov to make sure no ineligible entity or person is included in their application.

Organizations do not need a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) or an active SAM.gov registration to apply for this solicitation in MyGrants. **However, if a SOI is approved, they will need to get these before submitting a full application. Therefore, we recommend starting the process of obtaining a UEI and SAM.gov registration as soon as possible.** Please note that there is no cost associated with UEI or SAM.gov registration.

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

C. Eligible SOI Applications

Technically eligible SOIs must:

- Be submitted electronically via MyGrants or Grants.gov by the designated due date and time noted in the RSOI. If reasonable accommodations are approved by the Grants Officer, SOIs must still be received by DRL by the designated due date and time noted in the RSOI.
- Be in English and all costs in U.S. Dollars.
- Follow all instructions and not break any guidelines stated in this solicitation and the PSI for Statements of Interest.

DRL is not responsible for disqualification due to system errors in MyGrants or Grants.gov or other errors in the application process. Applicants must save a screenshot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully. DRL encourages organizations to **submit applications during normal business hours** (Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM EST).

FORMAT REQUIREMENTS

All SOI documents should follow the below format requirements:

- All pages are numbered;
- All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper; and,
- All documents are single-spaced, 12-point Calibri font, with 1-inch margins.

A. SOI Requirements

Complete SOI submissions **must** include:

1. Completed and signed **SF-424** and **SF-424B** forms, as directed on MyGrants or Grants.gov (refer to DRL's PSI for SOIs for guidance on completing the SF-424); and,
2. A **program statement** (no more than three pages in Microsoft Word) that includes:
 - A table listing:
 - Name of the organization;
 - Target country/countries;
 - Total amount of funding requested from DRL, total amount of cost-share (if any), and total program amount (DRL funds + cost-share); and,
 - Program length;
 - A brief summary of the program, including how it will have a demonstrated impact and engage relevant stakeholders. Identify local partners if appropriate.
 - A clear breakdown of the program's objectives, activities, and expected results for each objective.
 - A brief description of the applicant(s) that shows their expertise and ability to implement the program and manage a U.S. government award.

DRL can ask for additional documents not mentioned in the RSOI and this PSI. To ensure fair evaluation, the DRL review panel will only review up to the page limit for each section.

SECTION II: GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION COMPONENTS

A. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Regulations

Organizations should be aware that if ultimately selected for an award, 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 [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, and the [U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS](#).

B. SF-424 Forms

Organizations must complete, sign, and submit SF-424 and SF-424B forms as directed on MyGrants or Grants.gov. **All communications about the SOI will be sent to the points of contact listed on the SF-424 forms.**

I. SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance: Follow these guidelines when filling out the SF-424 form. Complete all fields except those marked as "Leave Blank" below.

1. Type of Submission: Application.
2. Type of Application: New.
3. Date Received: Leave blank. This will be assigned automatically.
4. Applicant Identifier: Leave blank.
- 5a. Federal Entity Identifier: Leave blank.
- 5b. Federal Award Identifier: Leave blank.
6. Date Received by State: Leave blank. This will be assigned automatically.
7. State Application Identified: Leave blank. This will be assigned automatically.
- 8a. Enter the legal name of the prime applicant organization submitting the application. Do NOT list abbreviations or acronyms unless they are part of the organization's legal name.
- 8b. Employer/Taxpayer ID Number: Non-U.S. organizations enter 44-4444444.
- 8c. Enter organizational Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).
- 8e. Enter the headquarters address of the prime applicant organization.
- 8f. Enter the name of the primary organizational unit (and department or division) that will undertake the assistance activity, as applicable.
- 8g. Enter the name, title, and all contact information of the person to be contacted regarding this application. This is the only person who will receive updates on the application.
9. Select an applicant type: Select the type of organization applying.
10. Enter: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
11. Select: 19.345.
12. Enter the Funding Opportunity Number and title. This title and number will already be entered on electronic applications.
13. Enter the Competition Identification Number and title. This number will already be entered on electronic applications.
14. Areas Affected by Project: Enter country or region intended for project. Multiple countries may be entered for regional programs.
15. Enter the descriptive title of applicant's program. Note, there is a 30-character limit including spaces.
16. (16a) Congressional districts of Applicant: Applicants based in the United States should enter congressional district. Foreign applicants should enter "90." (16b) All applicants should enter "70."
17. Enter projected start date and projected end date. Refer to the funding opportunity for guidance on projected start dates.
18. (18a) Enter the total amount of funding requested for the program described in the full proposal under "Federal"; (18b) enter any cost-share under "Applicant." If not proposing cost-share, enter zeros. For (18c-f), enter zeros. For (18g), the total budget for the program (Federal + Cost-Share) should automatically populate.
19. Select "c. Program is not covered by E.O 12372."
20. Select the appropriate box. If the answer is "yes" to this question, provide an explanation.
21. Enter the name, title, and all contact information of the individual authorized to sign for the application on behalf of the applicant organization.

II. SF-424 B Assurances – Non-Construction Programs:

This form must be completed and signed online in MyGrants or Grants.gov. Public international organizations are required to sign the form to submit their proposal, but may submit an additional letter declaring the following:

“Our organization is a Public International Organization and therefore is not subject to any of the assurances and certifications referring to U.S. law.” Ensure the document is signed by an Authorized Official. The Authorized Official is generally the authorized signatory at the organization or business.

SECTION III: SOI SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

The U.S. Department of State requires that SOIs be submitted electronically via MyGrants (<https://mygrants.service-now.com>) or Grants.gov (www.grants.gov). Both systems require registration by the applicant at no cost.

DRL is not responsible for disqualification due to system errors in MyGrants or Grants.gov, or other errors in the application process. Applicants must save a screenshot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

DRL encourages organizations to **submit applications during normal business hours** (Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM EST). If an applicant experiences technical difficulties and has contacted the appropriate help desk but is not receiving timely assistance (e.g., no response within 48 hours), they may contact the DRL point of contact listed in the RSOI. The point of contact may assist in contacting the appropriate help desk.

Applicants experiencing technical difficulties should follow these three steps:

1. Contact the help desk for either Grants.gov or MyGrants immediately.
2. Document (including screenshots) technical issues AND efforts to contact the help desk.
3. If there are continued difficulties submitting documents, email all required documents to the DRL point of contact listed in the RSOI before the deadline.

Note: Eligibility is not guaranteed, and each SOI will be reviewed individually by an authorized Grants Officer. The Grants Officer will decide if the SOI is technically eligible and acceptable. DRL strongly encourages applicants to apply before the deadline to address any potential technical issues.

A. MyGrants Applications

All applicants are strongly encouraged to submit SOIs via MyGrants (<https://MyGrants.servicenow.com>).

Applicants using MyGrants for the first time should complete the “New Organization Registration.” To register with MyGrants, go to <https://MyGrants.servicenowservices.com> and click “Create an Account” under “New User.” Select “Create a SAMS/MyGrants Applicant/Grantee Account” and complete all required fields.

MyGrants will send an email to verify the account, followed by an “Okta Account” set-up, which 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 ILMS help desk and request instructions on MFA for Windows PC.

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

Applicants should not expect a separate notification from DRL when their application is received. Incomplete applications will not receive any notification.

MyGrants Help Desk:

For assistance with **MyGrants** 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.servicenowservices.com/ilms>. Customer support is available 24/7.

B. Grants.gov Applications

Applicants who do not submit applications via **MyGrants** may submit via www.grants.gov. The Grants.gov registration process **can take ten business days or longer**, even if all registration steps are completed promptly.

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 a SOI. Validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days.

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

Applicants should not expect a separate notification from DRL when their application is received. Incomplete applications will not receive any notification.

Grants.gov Helpdesk:

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.

SECTION IV: SOI REVIEW PROCESS

The warranted Grants Officer will determine technical eligibility for all applications. A review panel will evaluate all eligible SOIs based on the same criteria: quality of program idea, program planning/ability to achieve objectives, institution's record and capacity, and addressing barriers to equal participation. 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 policy and program offices. All panelists must sign non-disclosure agreements and conflicts of interest agreements. Once a SOI is approved, selected applicants will be invited to submit full proposal applications based on their SOIs. Unless directed otherwise by the applicant, DRL may also refer SOIs for possible consideration in other U.S. government funding opportunities.

DRL's review panel may give conditions and recommendations on SOIs to improve the proposed program. These must be addressed in a full proposal application. To use DRL funds effectively, conditions and recommendations may include requests to increase, decrease, clarify, or justify costs and program activities. DRL's Front Office has the final determination on all funding decisions, depending on the availability of funds.

Except for technical submission questions, U.S. Department of State staff in Washington, D.C. and overseas shall not discuss this competition with applicants until the entire proposal review process is complete and rejection and approval letters have been sent.

A. SOI Review Criteria

Each SOI will be evaluated and rated based on the evaluation criteria, listed below in order of importance. **Do not structure your SOI according to these sub-sections.**

Quality of Program Idea

SOIs should align with the program framework and policy objectives in the NOFO; be suitable for the country/region; and show originality, substance, precision, and relevance to DRL's mission of promoting human rights and democracy. Programs should aim for immediate impact leading to long-term, sustainable reforms. DRL prefers new approaches that do not duplicate efforts but will consider programs that improve or expand existing successful programs in a new way. In countries where similar activities are already happening, explain how new activities will not duplicate or just add to existing ones and how these efforts will be coordinated. Proposals that offer creative solutions to ongoing challenges are encouraged. DRL prioritizes programs with inclusive approaches for advancing these rights.

Addressing Barriers to Equal Participation

DRL aims to advance the rights and dignity of all persons. As the U.S. government's lead bureau dedicated to promoting democratic governance, DRL requests program approaches 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 programs that assess and address barriers to access for individuals and groups based on race, ethnicity, religion, income, geography, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability. The proposal should show how the program will further engagement in underserved communities and with individuals from these communities. This approach should be included in the program concept and design, as well as in implementation of all proposed activities, objectives, and monitoring. Strong proposals will provide specific analysis, measures, and targets to 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.

Program Planning

A strong SOI will show how the proposed activities contribute to the overall program goal and objectives, with each activity included. Objectives should be ambitious yet measurable, results-focused, and achievable within a reasonable timeframe.

SOIs should address how the program will engage relevant stakeholders and should identify local partners as appropriate. If local partners are identified, applicants should describe the division of labor among the prime applicant and any local partners.

Institution's Record and Capacity

DRL will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. SOIs should show a record of successful democracy and human rights programs, responsible fiscal management, and compliance with reporting requirements. Programs should have potential for continued funding beyond DRL resources.

SECTION V: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

DRL will not consider SOIs that include support for any member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization. For more information, refer to the list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations: <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>

Program activities that directly benefit foreign militaries or paramilitary groups or individuals will not be considered for DRL funding due to funding restrictions.

According to Department of State policy on terrorism, applicants are advised that successful passing of a vetting process to evaluate the risk that funds may benefit terrorists or their supporters is a condition for receiving an award. If selected for an award, applicants will need to provide information required by DS Form 4184, Risk Analysis Information 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 having a risk of terrorist financing. Vetting information may also be requested for program beneficiaries and participants. Failure to provide the requested information or to pass the vetting process may result in the proposal being rejected.

The Leahy Law prohibits Department of State 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, program 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.

Applicants should be aware that DRL understands that some information contained in SOIs 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.

Organizations should also be aware that if ultimately selected for an award, 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 [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, and the [U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS](#).

Projects that utilize private security contractors must comply with the International Code of Conduct. Contractor(s) must be a member of the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers’ Association (ICoCA) in good standing, i.e., not currently suspended or terminated from the ICoCA. Contractor(s) must operate in accordance with the principles of the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC). In addition, contractor(s) must conform to the requirements set forth in the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standard entitled PSC-1-2012 for the duration of their performance.

The information in this RSOI and “Proposal Submission Instructions for Statements of Interest” is binding. Explanatory information provided by DRL that contradicts this language will not be binding.

Issuance of this RSOI 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.

DRL 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.

A. Background Information on DRL and General DRL Funding

Background information on DRL and its programs 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/>.