

Department of State
Public Notice

**Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues (S/GWI) Request for Statements of Interest:
Global Support for Women's Economic Empowerment – Access and Reform
Implementation by Civil Society**

Statement of Interest (SOI) Deadline:	11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST) April 18, 2021
Federal Agency Contact:	SGWIPROJECTPROPOSALS@state.gov
Date Opened:	February 17, 2021
Questions Deadline:	5:00 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST) March 3, 2021
Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement
Estimated Number of Awards:	One
Estimated Funding Amount:	\$3,000,000
Award Ceiling:	\$3,000,000
Award Floor:	\$3,000,000
Cost Sharing:	Not required
Length of Project Period:	Up to five years
Fiscal Year of Funding:	FY 2020
Anticipated Award Date:	July 30, 2021
Estimated Program Start Date:	August 1, 2021

I. Funding Opportunity Synopsis

S/GWI announces a Request for Statements of Interest (RSOI) outlining concepts and capacity to manage a program that will partner equitably with a range of local, women's civil society organizations¹ in no fewer than two countries and regions to advance women's economic empowerment (WEE) by reducing barriers to women's participation in the economy. Concept components should include organizational capacity building to advance civil society organizations' core growth and sustainability, as requested by local civil society organizations and approved by S/GWI. The submission of a Statement of Interest (SOI) is the first step in a two-part process. Applicants must first submit a SOI consisting of: (a) a concise, 3-page concept note that clearly communicates a program idea and its objectives; and (b) a 1-page statement of global capacity as outlined below. For the purposes of this RSOI, "global capacity" means relevant capacity in as many regions and priority countries as possible. The purpose of the SOI process is to allow applicants to submit program ideas for S/GWI to evaluate prior to requiring the development of a full proposal.

Each **prime** applicant may submit up to two SOIs. There is no limit to the number of SOIs on which an applicant may serve as a **sub**-awardee. Upon review of eligible SOIs, S/GWI will invite selected applicants to expand their ideas into full proposal applications. In the event that a

¹ Women-led, or women-serving organizations.

prime applicant has submitted two SOIs and both are deemed competitive, the applicant will be asked to submit a full proposal for the more competitive of the two.

Note: S/GWI strongly encourages applicants to immediately access SAMS Domestic, which is the required system for SOI submission, in order to obtain a username and password. For further instructions, please see Section IV below.

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

Priority Regions and Countries: Applicants must propose work equal to the planned funding amount (\$3,000,000) in no fewer than two countries in two different regions. Applicants must **demonstrate the ability** to work in as many as possible of each of the following regions: sub-Saharan Africa (AF); East Asia and the Pacific (EAP); Europe (EUR); the Middle East and North Africa (MENA); South and Central Asia (SCA); and the Western Hemisphere (WHA).² Final country selection will be confirmed in consultation between the successful applicant and S/GWI. Additional countries may be selected during project implementation. Country selections may be subject to additional approvals and/or vetting.

The following countries are not currently priorities for this RSOI due to existing or planned assistance programs: Eswatini, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Tajikistan, Timor Leste, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, and Uzbekistan.

Applicants to this RSOI should be aware of, complement, build on, and not overlap with existing in-country programming.

Ineligible Beneficiaries:

Given restrictions on funding, no assistance under this RSOI will be provided for military or paramilitary forces. Likewise, no assistance under this RSOI will be provided for law enforcement. Assistance for law enforcement may only be provided in certain limited circumstances. Unless prohibited by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) or other restrictions, programming may provide technical assistance to government officials or include government officials or to provide training or outreach to governments or involving government officials on the implementation of legal, policy and regulatory reforms. Civil society should generally be the beneficiaries of the program. Additional restrictions may apply to certain countries or activities. As noted above, country selections may be subject to additional approvals. Any assistance under this RSOI must comply with all applicable legal restrictions.

Eligible Applicants:

Organizations submitting SOIs must meet the following criteria:

² Due to the determination made for FY 2020 under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), certain assistance may be subject to a restriction under the TVPA. Because the TVPA restriction applies only to assistance to governments, activities proposed for those countries should not include government beneficiaries.

- Be a U.S.- or foreign-based non-profit/non-governmental organization (NGO); or
- Be a private, public, or state institution of higher education; and
- Have existing, or the capacity to develop, active and **equitable** partnerships with in-country partners, entities, and relevant stakeholders, including NGOs and private sector actors; and
- Have demonstrable experience administering successful and preferably similar programs in size, scope, and focus. S/GWI reserves the right to request additional background information on organizations that do not have previous experience administering federal awards. These applicants may be subject to limited funding on a pilot basis.

Public International Organizations (PIOs) are not eligible to apply as prime applicants under this RSOI, though they may partner on a proposal as a sub-awardee.

S/GWI maintains an anti-discrimination policy in all of its programs and activities. S/GWI welcomes SOI submissions irrespective of race, ethnicity, heritage, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or other status.

S/GWI works to ensure the integration of gender equality and the advancement of women and girls in the formulation and conduct of U.S. foreign policy. S/GWI programs promote respect and advance human rights, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBTQI+). S/GWI programs are flexible, civil society-focused, and global in reach. They are designed to incubate locally informed and implemented civil society-based solutions, inspiring and providing best practices to the Department to advance women's equality and empowerment as a keystone of U.S. foreign policy. S/GWI does not fund large-scale programs or long-term development work, but instead engages in shorter-term practical efforts to realize U.S. foreign policy priorities. Learning from this program will inform other U.S. policy, programs, and partnerships. S/GWI is dedicated to promoting human rights, fundamental freedoms, and equality for all and seeks partners that will strive to inclusively implement these democratic values.

No entity listed on the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS) in the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#) is eligible for assistance or can participate in any activities under an 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." All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the EPLS in SAM to ensure that no ineligible entity is included.

All prime applicant organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number – formerly referred to as a DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) number – and an active SAM.gov registration before submitting an application. **S/GWI may not review applications from or make awards to applicants that have not completed all applicable UEI and SAM.gov requirements.** A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards. The 2 CFR 200 requires that subgrantees

obtain a UEI number. Please note that the UEI for subgrantees is not required at the time of application but will be required before the award is processed and/or directed to a subgrantee.

All prime organizations must also continue to maintain an **active** SAM.gov registration with current information at all times during which they have an active Federal award or application under consideration by a Federal award agency. Please note that a “pending renewal” registration status will not be considered “active.” SAM.gov requires all entities to renew their registration once a year in order to maintain an active registration status in SAM.gov. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements at the time of application, S/GWI may determine that the applicant is technically ineligible to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

Note: The process for obtaining or renewing a SAM.gov registration has changed. S/GWI encourages all organizations to begin the process of registering or renewing with SAM.gov as early as possible. The registration process may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks on average.

- If you are **based in the United States** or pay employees within the United States, prior to registering in SAM.gov you will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), a Commercial and Government Entity (CAGE) code, and a UEI number from Dun and Bradstreet.
- If you are based **outside of the United States** and do not pay employees within the United States, you do not need an EIN from the IRS. Prior to registering in SAM.gov you will need a NATO CAGE (NCAGE) code and UEI number from Dun and Bradstreet.

Legal Business Name and Banking Physical Address (entities must ensure that the physical address used is the same physical address used when establishing the primary banking account and that both addresses match) must be precise and **match exactly** when entering it into the IRS, D&B DUNS, NCAGE, and SAM.gov websites. Legal Business Name and Banking Physical Address given must be exactly the same—this includes spaces, parentheses, capitalization, small letters, punctuation, letters with accents, etc.; other features not commonly used in U.S. English should be avoided. A mismatch of information will cause validation to fail.

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

In October 2017, new information was added to the SAM.gov website to help international registrations, including “Quick Start Guide for International Registrations” and “Helpful Hints.” Navigate to SAM.gov, click Help in the top navigation bar, then click International Registrants in the left navigation panel. Please note, guidance on SAM.gov and the guidance on GSA’s website about requirement for registering in SAM.gov is subject to change. Applicants should review the website for the most up-to-date guidance.

An exemption from these requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis if:

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

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

Note: Foreign organizations will be required to register with the NATO Support Agency (NSPA) to receive a NCAGE code in order to register in SAM.gov. NSPA will forward your registration request to the applicable National Codification Bureau (NCB) if your organization is located in a NATO or Tier 2 Sponsored Non-NATO Nation. As of October 2019, NATO nations included Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States of America. As of October 2019, Tier 2 nations included Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Colombia, Finland, India, Indonesia, Israel, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Morocco, New Zealand, Serbia, Singapore, Sweden, United Arab Emirates, and Ukraine.

NSPA and/or the appropriate NCB forwards all NCAGE code information to all Allied Committee 135 (AC/135) nations, which as of October 2019 also included Afghanistan, Belarus, Bosnia, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Egypt, Georgia, Japan, Jordan, North Macedonia, Oman, Peru, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Thailand.

All organizations are strongly advised to take this into consideration when assessing whether registration may result in possible endangerment.

II. Requested Objectives for Statements of Interest

Background Information:

When women and men have equal access to opportunities to participate fully in their economies and societies, countries are safer and more prosperous. When women are economically empowered, they invest in their families and communities, producing a multiplier effect that increases economic growth and stability. Women's economic empowerment boosts productivity and income equality. Research shows that progress towards equal participation in the labor market could generate as much as \$12 trillion towards global annual GDP by 2025.³ Companies also benefit from women's economic participation, including at leadership levels. Companies with three or more women in senior management positions score higher in all dimensions of

³ <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth#>

organizational performance.⁴ However, women remain one of the greatest underutilized resources and continue to face significant barriers to full and free economic participation.

Opportunities for women are not equal when laws, regulations, policies, and social and cultural practices restrict women's full participation. Constraints in laws, regulations, and related policies limit women's ability to enter the workforce, start and scale their businesses, and advance their economic status. These barriers can be exacerbated for indigenous and marginalized women, by virtue of ethnicity, race, religion, geography, etc. Specifically, when women can move more freely without the permission of a male guardian have an official identification card to prove their identity to access institutions, work outside the home, be head of household, inherit and manage property and assets, work in the same jobs and sectors as men, and receive equitable pay, they are more likely join the workforce and strengthen the economy. One in two women in low-income countries do not have official personal identification cards as proof of legal identity, thereby limiting their access to critical services and participation in political and economic life.⁵

Since 2017, 40 economies have enacted 62 reforms enhancing gender equality. However, worldwide it is still estimated that women only have seventy-five percent the legal rights of men.⁶ Economic research shows that removing legal barriers to women's participation in the economy and society has large benefits not only for women and children, but also for overall development of a modern, advanced economy.

Policy Statement:

The *National Security Strategy* mandates the championing of the American value of empowering women. Women's meaningful economic participation is integral to achieving greater security and prosperity: when women are empowered economically, they invest in their families and communities, fostering economic growth and more stable societies. The project resulting from this RSOI will be a cornerstone of S/GWI's WEE programming.

Funding for the award resulting from this RSOI must meet the legislative requirements of the following Congressional mandates: women's empowerment (\$3 million of this award must be used for this purpose) and women's leadership (\$2 million of this award must be used for this purpose). Please refer to the Annex A: Appropriations Directives for more information on how to align activities with the appropriations earmarks for fiscal year (FY) 2020.

SOIs must support the policy guidance and Congressional directives described above, while complementing existing local and national initiatives.

⁴ <https://www.empowerwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/empowerwomen/resources/hlp%20briefs/unhlp%20full%20report.pdf?la=en> .

⁵ World Bank Group, 2019. Identification for Development (ID4D) Practitioner's Guide Draft June 2019. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/248371559325561562/ID4D-Practitioner-Guide-Draft-for-Consultation>

⁶ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32639/9781464815324.pdf>

RSOI Results Framework:

Theory of Change:

If women's civil society organizations have support for advocacy and programmatic efforts to reduce barriers to women's participation in the economy, including the development and implementation of legal, regulatory, and policy reform, then they will improve the enabling environment for women's full and free participation in the economy.

Goal:

To grow and sustain the leadership of women's civil society organizations in improving the enabling environment for women's full and free participation in the economy, including through support to women-led advocacy for legal, regulatory, and policy reform; implementation of such reform; accountability for such reforms; and reduction of social and cultural barriers.

Objectives:

Applicants should propose objectives that:

- 1. Support an enabling environment for WEE:** Advance WEE efforts to improve the enabling environment for women's full and free participation in the economy in no fewer than two countries and regions. This may include support for advocacy and programmatic efforts targeting the development of legal, regulatory, and policy reform; implementation of such reform; accountability for reforms; and reduction of social and cultural barriers to promote an enabling environment for women's full and free participation in the economy.
- 2. Support to women's civil society organizations:** Partner equitably with a range of local women's civil society organizations advancing locally designed WEE efforts, including but not limited to organizational capacity-building and technical assistance to advance civil society organizations' core growth and sustainability.

Activities may also include workforce development, skills training, assistance to increase the access of women entrepreneurs and business owners to financing and opportunities, or other activities that complement Objective 1, strengthening the enabling environment for women's economic empowerment. Activities must align with the Congressional directives for women's empowerment and women's leadership associated with the funding.

Intended Results:

Possible intended results may include:

- Women's civil society organizations are supported to design, implement, evaluate, and provide oversight of locally designed WEE initiatives that improve the enabling environment for women's economic participation and advance women's full participation in the economy.
- Women's civil society organizations have the ability to advocate for the enactment of legal, regulatory, and policy reforms that advance women's economic empowerment.

- Women's civil society organizations have the ability to establish accountability mechanisms to track and advance the implementation of legal, regulatory, and policy reforms that advance women's economic empowerment.
- Women's civil society organizations have the ability to design, implement and evaluate programs and initiatives to reduce social and cultural barriers to women's economic empowerment.
- Women's civil society organizations have the ability to fundraise, professionalize, grow, and sustain their organizations and leadership in WEE.
- Women's civil society organizations have strengthened networks with private sector, government, and civil society stakeholders to improve the enabling environment for women's economic empowerment and advance women's economic participation.

Indicators:

Possible indicators for inclusion in a monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plan at the proposal stage, though not required, may include:

- GNDR-1: Number of legal instruments drafted, proposed or adopted with U.S. Government assistance designed to promote gender equality or non-discrimination against women or girls at the national or sub-national level.
- GNDR-2 Percentage of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources (assets, credit, income or employment)
- GNDR-4 Percentage of participants reporting increased agreement with the concept that males and females should have equal access to social, economic, and political resources and opportunities
- GNDR-5 Number of legal instruments drafted, proposed, or adopted with USG assistance designed to improve prevention of or response to sexual and gender based violence at the national or sub-national level
- GNDR-6 Number of people reached by a USG funded intervention providing GBV services (e.g., health, legal, psycho-social counseling, shelters, hotlines, other)
- GNDR-8 Number of persons trained with USG assistance to advance outcomes consistent with gender equality or female empowerment through their roles in public or private sector institutions or organizations
- ES.4-2b Number of service providers trained who serve vulnerable persons
- EG.5-3b Number of [female] microenterprises supported by USG Assistance
- EG.6-14 Percent of individuals who complete USG-assisted workforce development programs [Number of women]
- EG 6-15 Percent of individuals with new employment following participation in USG-assisted workforce development programs [Number of whom are women]
- DR4.2-2 Number of civil society organizations (CSOs) receiving USG assistance engaged in advocacy interventions
- DR 4.3-1 Number of USG-assisted CSOs that participate in legislative proceedings and/or engage in advocacy with national legislature and its committees

SOI Requirements:

Applicants should propose sufficient yet lean and scalable staffing structures that provide adequate oversight and central management, but maximize appropriate support to civil society organizations and inclusion of local expertise and leadership. Detailed budgets of applicants selected to submit full proposals will be evaluated on the proportion budgeted to support civil society organizations.

SOIs should propose an inclusive process for mapping and co-creating equitable local partnerships in their selected three or more countries, consistent with the Objectives. Applicants may propose support to civil society groups over an extended period of time to foster capacity building and sustainability, and/or propose support to address specific shorter-term needs. In all cases, designs must reflect concrete plans for local ownership with an eye towards beneficiary organizations' leadership, growth, and sustainability. If needed in the country context, activities within a country may include a mix of national and sub-national activities, as well as activities to connect the two.

Proposals should be based on evidence of what works in WEE programming, while adhering to principles of Do No Harm and conflict sensitivity. Applicants must explicitly address in their SOI(s) how the proposed program can be carried out during challenges related to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

While landscape assessments, gender and inclusion analyses, MEL plans, risk assessment and mitigation plans including safeguards to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), provision of psychosocial support for staff and beneficiaries, and detailed exit strategies and sustainability plans⁷ are **not** required as part of the SOI, all organizations that are invited to submit a full proposal **will** be required to submit this information. Full proposals, once solicited, should also seek to minimize the harmful effects of local competition for resources⁸ in their program designs. Please review this RSOI in full – including all annexes – to inform your SOI design and ensure your requested budget amount sufficiently covers these award requirements.

Applicants are advised that an award may be conditioned upon vetting to evaluate the risk that funds may benefit terrorists or their supporters.

Substantial Involvement:

Applicants submitting SOIs should be aware that if their application results in an award, S/GWI will be involved in the program and management performance of the grant in the form of a cooperative agreement, which allows S/GWI consultation and technical collaboration rights on specified project activities. Examples of substantial involvement can include:

- a. Approval of the Recipient's annual work plans, including: planned activities for the following year and changes to any activity to be carried out under the agreement;

⁷ Please see *Stopping as Success* for more information: <https://www.stoppingassuccess.org/>

⁸ Erin Blankenship (2014), "Aid in Contested Spaces: Afghanistan," Oxfam America Research Backgrounder series, <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/publications/delivering-aid-in-contested-spaces-afghanistan>

- b. Coordination with U.S. government stakeholders and partners on programming and efforts around legal reform and women's economic participation;
- c. Approval of sub-award recipients, concurrence on the substantive provisions of the sub-awards, and coordination with other cooperating agencies;
- d. Approval of detailed country-specific proposals, including but not limited to country selection and priorities, prior to activity implementation;
- e. Approval of communication and branding strategies to inform public-facing materials, social media, and publications;
- f. Approval of Terms of Reference (TOR) or scope for program evaluations;
- g. Approval of hiring/opportunity announcements and selection/assignment of technical experts, including but not limited to key personnel;
- h. Approval of the MEL plan(s) for the Recipient and sub-award recipients;
- i. Collaboration in assessing progress and identifying issues that might affect the success of the program; and
- j. Other approvals that will be included in the award agreement.

Incremental Funding and Non-Competing Continuation:

Continuations beyond the initial budget period or funding amount of an award will be contingent upon the availability of funds; grantee's progress in meeting grant requirements, including timely submission of required reports and compliance with all terms and conditions of the award; timely submission of a request for additional funding; and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the Department of State.

Pending successful implementation of this program and pending the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, S/GWI may add incremental funding and/or extend the award for additional time, not to exceed a five (5) year total program period.

III. Funding Restrictions

This cooperative agreement will be funded from money appropriated under the "Economic Support Fund" (ESF) heading in the Department of State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Act, 2020 (Div. G, P.L. 116-94) (SFOAA). ESF is available for foreign assistance programs supporting economic or political stability. Under Section 531(e) of the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA), as amended, ESF may not be used for military or paramilitary purposes. Given restrictions under Section 660 of the FAA, assistance may be provided to law enforcement forces only under certain circumstances. Activities that involve assistance to law enforcement will be subject to vetting to ensure compliance with Section 620M of the FAA ("[Leahy Vetting](#)").

The total \$3,000,000 grant funding available under this RSOI must be directed for work to support women's empowerment. At least \$2,000,000 of the funding available under this RSOI is directed for work to support women's leadership. Activities must align with this earmark; please see the appropriations language in Annex A.

Organizations should note that if a **full proposal** is deemed successful and recommended for award, they will be required to adjust the budget submissions to include the breakdown of these

earmarks in its proposed budget and a brief explanation of how the proposed activities align with congressional requirements, which will be confirmed with S/GWI and the Grants Officer during award negotiations.

The Recipient is reminded that funds provided under this agreement must be used in a manner fully consistent with U.S. law. All assistance must be provided consistent with the relevant authorities in the SFOAA and the FAA.

The Recipient agrees that none of the funds provided by this award shall be used to lobby for or against abortion. The Recipient agrees that none of the funds provided by this award shall be used to pay for the performance of abortion as a method of family planning or to motivate or coerce any person to practice abortions.

Due to the determination made under section 110 the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (Div. A, P.L. 106-386) (TVPA), assistance to the governments of certain countries may be subject to a restriction under the TVPA during FY 2021. Because the TVPA restriction applies only to assistance to governments, activities proposed for those countries should not include government beneficiaries or government participants in program activities. For FY 2021, assistance for the governments of the following countries is subject to restriction under the TVPA that has not been waived for ESF: Burundi, China, Comoros, Cuba, DPRK, Eritrea, Iran, Russia, South Sudan, and Syria.

The following activities and costs **will not** be considered under this announcement in SOIs or in subsequent proposals submitted by applicants to S/GWI:

- Construction.
- Activities that appear partisan or that support individual or party electoral campaigns.
- Engagement with religious leaders and communities is encouraged; however, direct support or the appearance of direct support for any religious organization for the sole purposes of promoting religious beliefs cannot be included for funding.
- Military assistance of any kind, including weapons buy back or rewards programs.
- Purchase of firearms, ammunition, or removal of unexploded ordnance.
- Payments for any partner government, military, or civilian government employee salary or pension.
- Duplication of services immediately available through municipal, provincial, or national government.
- Funds for market research, advertising (unless public service related to grant program) or other promotional expenses.
- **U.S.-based** activities, study tours, scholarships, or exchange projects.
- Initiatives directed towards a permanent diaspora community as ultimate beneficiaries.
- Projects that have a predominant academic or basic research focus.
- Social welfare projects that purely provide service-delivery or humanitarian assistance.
- Costs incurred to complete activities begun with other funds.
- Medical and psychological research or clinical studies using human subjects.
- Projects exclusively of a commercial or profit-making nature.

- Cultural presentations, cultural research, cultural clubs, or festivals, etc. unless they have a specific programmatic purpose.
- Entertainment costs (e.g., receptions, social activities, ceremonies, guided tours) unless they have a specific programmatic purpose.

IV. Submission Instructions and Technical Eligibility

Required Documents:

Complete SOI submissions **must** include the following:

1. Completed and signed SF-424 and SF424B and SF-LLL, as directed on SAMS Domestic (please refer to the PSI for SOIs for guidance on completing these forms); and,
2. Program Statement (not to exceed three [3] pages in Microsoft Word) that includes:
 - a) A table listing:
 - i. Name of the organization;
 - ii. The target countries;
 - iii. The total amount of funding requested from S/GWI, total amount of cost-share (if any; cost share is NOT required), and total program amount (S/GWI funds + cost share); and,
 - iv. Program length;
 - b) A synopsis of the program, including a brief statement on how the program will have a demonstrated impact and engage relevant stakeholders. The synopsis must address how the applicant will conduct gender and inclusion analysis addressing intersectionality and underrepresented populations including LGBTQI+, MEL, and foster sustainability. The SOI should identify local partners as appropriate;
 - c) A concise breakdown explicitly identifying the program's objectives and the activities and expected results that contribute to each objective; and,
 - d) A brief description of the applicant(s) that demonstrates relevant organizational and staff expertise and capacity to implement the program and manage a U.S. government award. This description can reference and/or refer the reader to additional detail in the Global Capacity Statement as appropriate.
3. Global Capacity Statement (not to exceed two [2] pages in Microsoft Word) that lists:
 - a) Relevant, WEE-related work for each region and any of the priority countries in which the applicant has that experience (please indicate relevant experience for as many priority countries as possible/relevant);
 - b) How recent experience is for the WEE-related work in each country;
 - c) Program successes from that work; and
 - d) **In addition**, the applicant may also describe WEE opportunities it sees in one or more countries not listed as priority countries in this RSOI – within the total 2-page limit for this document.

NOTE: Applicants who elect to submit two SOIs should submit no more than one Global Capacity Statement.

Applicant Questions:

Questions must be submitted by the Questions Deadline to SGWIProjectProposals@state.gov using the email subject line, “2021 WEE RSOI: [Applicant Organization Name] Questions.” To maintain fairness and transparency in competition, S/GWI will compile any substantive questions received along with the responses and post them in a document on grants.gov and SAMS Domestic. Substantive questions will not be fielded outside of this process or after the deadline.

With the exception of technical submission questions, during the solicitation period, U.S. Department of State staff in Washington D.C. and overseas will not discuss this competition with applicants until the entire proposal review process has been completed and rejection and approval letters have been transmitted.

Technical Eligibility:

S/GWI reserves the right to award more or less than the funds requested, including estimated individual award floor and ceiling amounts, under such circumstances as it may deem to be in the best interest of the U.S. government.

Technically eligible SOIs are those which:

1. Arrive electronically via SAMS Domestic (see below) by the deadline, under this announcement.
2. Are in English.
3. Heed all instructions and do not violate any of the guidelines stated in this solicitation

For all SOI documents please ensure:

1. All pages are numbered;
2. All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper; and,
3. All documents are single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. Captions and footnotes may be 10-point Times New Roman font. Font sizes in charts and tables can be reformatted to fit within one page width.

SAMS Domestic automatically logs the date and time a submission is made, and the Department of State will use this information to determine whether it has been submitted on time. Late submissions are neither reviewed nor considered unless the S/GWI point of contact listed on Page 1 of this RSOI is contacted prior to the deadline and is provided with evidence of a system error caused by SAMS Domestic (<https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com>) that is outside of the applicant’s control and is the sole reason for a late submission. Applicants should not expect a notification from S/GWI upon receiving their SOI(s). It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all material submitted in the SOI package is complete, accurate, and current.

Submission:

All application submissions must be made electronically via SAMS Domestic (<https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com>). S/GWI will **not** accept SOIs submitted via grants.gov, email, fax, the postal system, delivery companies, or couriers.

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

Faxed, couriered, or emailed documents will **not** be accepted. Reasonable accommodations may, in appropriate circumstances, be provided to applicants with disabilities or for security reasons. Applicants must follow all formatting instructions in the applicable RSOI and these instructions.

S/GWI encourages organizations to **submit applications during normal business hours** (Monday – Friday, 9:00AM - 5:00PM Eastern Standard Time [EST]). If an applicant experiences technical difficulties and has contacted the appropriate helpdesk but is not receiving timely assistance (e.g., if you have not received a response within 48 hours of contacting the helpdesk), you may contact the S/GWI point of contact listed on page 1 of this RSOI. The point of contact may assist in contacting the appropriate helpdesk.

Note: The Grants Officer will determine technical eligibility of all applications.

SAMS Domestic Applications:

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

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

SAMS Domestic Help Desk:

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

V. Application Review and Selection Process

The Grants Officer will determine technical eligibility for all SOI submissions. All technically eligible SOIs will then be reviewed against the same five criteria by an S/GWI Review Panel: Organizational Capacity and Past Performance; Program Strategy; Gender Analysis, Inclusion and Do No Harm; Performance Monitoring, Learning, and Evaluation; and Sustainability.

Additionally, the Panel will evaluate how the SOI meets the solicitation request, U.S. foreign policy goals, and S/GWI's overall priority needs. Panelists review each SOI individually against the evaluation criteria, not against competing SOIs. To ensure all SOIs receive a balanced evaluation, the S/GWI Review Panel will review each document up to the specified page limit and no further. All Panelists must sign non-disclosure agreements and conflict of interest agreements.

S/GWI Review Panels generally include representatives from S/GWI policy and program teams as well as other State Department offices. 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 organization, S/GWI may also refer SOIs for possible consideration in other U.S. government related funding opportunities.

The Panel may provide conditions and/or recommendations on SOIs to enhance the proposed program, which must be addressed by the organization in the full proposal application. To ensure effective use of limited S/GWI funds, conditions and recommendations may include requests to increase, decrease, clarify, and/or justify costs and program activities.

S/GWI reserves the right to make a final determination regarding all funding matters, pending funding availability.

Review Criteria:

1. Organizational Capacity and Past Performance:

- Applicant demonstrates an institutional record of successful relevant programs in women's economic empowerment and gender equality; and advocacy, capacity building and/or oversight of implementation for legal, regulatory, and policy reform.
- Applicant demonstrates the expertise and capacity to co-design and implement programs **globally** in equitable partnership with existing local women's organizations.

2. Program Strategy

- Applicant proposes evidence-based approaches to addressing the objectives of the RSOI.
- Applicant demonstrates concrete approaches for equitable partnership with a range of existing women-led civil society organizations to further their impact.
- Application complements/builds on/does not overlap with existing in-country efforts.
- Applicant proposes sufficient yet lean and scalable staffing structures that leverage appropriate internal and external expertise, but maximize support and funding for local leadership and civil society.

3. Gender and Inclusion Analysis, Do No Harm:

- Applicant demonstrates plans and capacity for effectively applying a gender and inclusion analysis to program design and implementation.
- Applicant describes sound approaches to inclusion, including but not limited to ethnic and religious minorities and other historically marginalized groups.

- Applicant demonstrates application of Do No Harm and conflict sensitivity principles.
4. Performance Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL):
 - Applicant clearly describes the results to be achieved and demonstrates capacity to measure progress towards those results in a way that reflects local perspectives.
 - Proposed outcomes are tangible and achievable within the grant program period.
 - Applicant describes how MEL will be adaptable and local ownership of MEL will be included in design and implementation.
 5. Sustainability:
 - Applicant articulates an approach to building local partner capacity to continue their work once funding from this program ends.

VI. Additional Information

S/GWI will not consider SOIs that reflect any type of support for any member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization.

S/GWI may ask successful applicant(s) to incorporate coordination of an implementer and stakeholder meeting into the Scope of Work of the final project. S/GWI will discuss this possibility with particular applicant(s) during the proposal negotiation phase.

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 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.

Organizations should be aware that S/GWI understands that some information contained in SOIs may be considered sensitive or proprietary and will make appropriate efforts to protect such information. However, organizations are advised that S/GWI 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, the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards set forth in 2 CFR Chapter 200 (Sub-Chapters A through F) shall apply to all non-Federal entities, except for assistance awards to Individuals and Foreign Public Entities. Please note that as of December 26, 2014, 2 CFR 200 (Sub-Chapters A through E) now applies to foreign organizations.

The applicant/recipient of the award and any sub-recipient under the award must comply with all applicable terms and conditions, in addition to the assurance and certifications made part of the Notice of Award. The Department's Standard Terms and Conditions can be viewed at

<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/U.S.-Department-of-State-Standard-Terms-and-Conditions-10-21-2020.pdf>. In addition, applicants/recipients of the award and any sub-recipient under the award must comply with the S/GWI-specific award provisions included in Annex B.

The information in this solicitation including its Annexes is binding and may not be modified by any S/GWI representative. **Explanatory information provided by S/GWI that contradicts this language will not be binding.** Issuance of the solicitation and negotiation of SOIs or applications does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government. S/GWI reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program evaluation requirements.

This solicitation will appear on www.grants.gov and SAMS Domestic (<https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com>) although SOI submissions will only be accepted through SAMS Domestic.

ANNEX A: Relevant Statutory Language

<https://www.congress.gov/116/plaws/publ94/PLAW-116publ94.pdf>

PUBLIC LAW 116–94—DEC. 20, 2019

133 STAT. 2920

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED
PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2020

FY2020 GENDER EQUALITY SEC. 7059.

(a) WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT.—

1) GENDER EQUALITY.—Funds appropriated
by this Act shall be made available to promote gender equality in United States Government
diplomatic and development efforts by raising the status, increasing the participation, and
protecting the rights of women and girls worldwide.

(b) WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP.—Of the funds appropriated by title III of this Act, not less than
\$50,000,000 shall be made available for programs specifically designed to increase leadership
opportunities for women in countries where women and girls suffer discrimination due to law,
policy, or practice, by strengthening protections for women’s political status, expanding
women’s participation in political parties and elections, and increasing women’s
opportunities for leadership positions in the public and private sectors at the local, provincial,
and national levels.

ANNEX B: Bureau-Specific Award Provisions

I. Program Impact, Highlights, Success Stories

In quarterly reporting, the Recipient shall share program success stories and/or highlights – or confirm that there were none for that quarter. Examples include program impact stories about (a) individual beneficiaries; and (b) organizational, project, or program-level highlights. The Recipient should indicate whether the information can be used in public communications by S/GWI and/or the broader U.S. Government. This may include, but is not limited to, remarks, social media, and website text. The privacy and safety of program beneficiaries is paramount; the Recipient shall ensure that appropriate permissions have been granted by those included in text and photos and that risks have been assessed and mitigated prior to including the information in quarterly reporting. The reporting should include high-resolution photos, photo credit information, and confirmation that appropriate permissions have been obtained from subjects/photographers for using the photos, where applicable.

II. Program Evaluations

The Recipient is required to budget and arrange for independent program evaluations in accordance with its approved proposal and any subsequent changes agreed with S/GWI in writing. In the spirit of the Evidence Act,⁹ S/GWI ask that evaluation reports be written with the expectation that they will be made public. **S/GWI prioritizes the safety and security of partners, participants, and beneficiaries of its work.** The Recipient should therefore aim to limit the amount of sensitive, potentially sensitive, or personal identifying information (PII) in evaluation narratives to allow this information to be easily redacted. Alternatively, this type of information can be placed in an annex that can be withheld from publication. In the event that this is not feasible or there is any concern for partners', participants', or beneficiaries' safety, an evaluation will not be made public. S/GWI will make this determination on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Recipient.

III. Gender and Inclusion Analysis

The Recipient shall regularly monitor and reflect upon the gender and inclusion analysis together with local partners and propose in writing any significant adjustments to the program design for S/GWI concurrence. This process shall take place at the frequency set out in the Recipient's proposal, unless otherwise agreed with S/GWI in writing.

Within its Quarterly Progress Reports (QPRs) and its final evaluation(s), the Recipient will report specifically on progress towards addressing the gaps and opportunities identified in the gender and inclusion analysis.

IV. Risk Assessments and Do No Harm

In line with Do No Harm principles, Recipient risk assessment and mitigation plans must address risk to project beneficiaries in addition to risks to staff and project implementation.

⁹ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/4174>

These should explicitly address gender-related risks and mitigating actions, as identified in the gender and inclusion analysis.

V. Combatting Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

(a) *Policy.* S/GWI has zero tolerance for inaction regarding allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) occurring in relation to a federal award, and advocates for a survivor-centered approach to addressing such misconduct. The Recipient, Recipient employees, and their agents must:

- (1) Not engage in sexual exploitation and abuse of award beneficiaries in the performance of this award;
- (2) Adopt a zero tolerance for inaction policy and take all reasonable and lawful measures to prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse occurring under this award.

(b) *Recipient Requirements.* To comply with the Policy in paragraph (a)(2), the Recipient shall:

- (1) Develop and adhere to a minimum set of organization-wide policies and internal controls necessary to reasonably prevent, detect, address, and resolve incidents of SEA, which must include:
 - (i) A zero tolerance policy for inaction in addressing SEA;
 - (ii) A readily available organizational policy or code of conduct for employees that includes safeguarding and [IASC principles](#);
 - (iii) A safe, accessible, and confidential internal reporting mechanism, such as a hotline, for reporting SEA, with appropriate safeguards to protect whistle-blowers and survivors, including express protection against retaliation for reports of SEA;
 - (iv) Investigative procedures that provide due process to the accused;
 - (v) Hiring policies aimed at preventing re-circulation of perpetrators on successive government awards, including policies on the impact of misconduct on rehiring or transfer and referencing for subsequent employers
- (2) Prohibit all personnel from engaging in SEA and notify employees of relevant policies, including remedies against employee perpetrators;
- (3) Take appropriate action against perpetrators that commit SEA or fail to take reasonable steps to prevent it;
- (4) Upon obtaining credible information of SEA, take prompt and reasonably appropriate action to stop harm occurring, investigate, and report to relevant authorities (for criminal matters) in a manner consistent with a survivor-centered approach. The Recipient must maintain appropriate standards that govern the conduct of its personnel and subrecipients and a suitable mechanism for complete and comprehensive reporting of such conduct.

(c) *Notification.* The Recipient shall inform the Grants Officer (GO) and Grants Officer Representative (GOR) immediately of:

- (1) Any credible information it receives from any source (including host country law enforcement) that alleges a Recipient employee, sub-awardee, sub-awardee employee, or Recipient's agent has engaged in conduct included in paragraph (a) of this Combatting Sexual Abuse and Exploitation clause; and
- (2) Any actions taken against a Recipient employee, sub-awardee, sub-awardee employee, or Recipient's agent pursuant to this Combatting Sexual Abuse and Exploitation clause.
- (3) Each notification referred to in paragraph (c)(1) and (c)(2) will indicate, as reasonably available to Recipient: the agreement number, description of the alleged SEA, date of alleged SEA, date of first report to the Recipient, location, involvement of subrecipient, state of affairs concerning the investigation and the action that will be taken by the Recipient, and whether the case is referred to law enforcement. The Recipient will provide updates on the status of the case. The notice will be given in writing.
- (4) It is understood and accepted that the Recipient's duty to report on SEA is subject to not compromising the safety, security, privacy, and due process rights of any concerned persons and limitations that may be imposed by applicable law. Any information or documentation provided in accordance with this Combatting Sexual Abuse and Exploitation clause will be treated by State Department with utmost discretion in order to ensure, inter alia, the probity of any investigation, protect sensitive information, ensure the safety and security of persons or assets, and respect the due process rights of all involved. State Department will presume information/documentation to be confidential, deliberative, and investigatory and will ensure that information/documentation provided to State Department personnel will be available solely to those who strictly require access to such information/documentation. Any disclosure of such information/documentation beyond such personnel will require notification and consultation with the Recipient.

(d) *Full Cooperation.* Recipient will:

- (1) Fully cooperate with State Department in the event of investigation, audit, or corrective action, including by disclosing info, providing timely and complete responses, and providing reasonable access to facilities; and
- (2) Take measures designed to ensure that employees suspected of being victims of or witnesses to prohibited activities are not subjected to additional prohibited conduct, harassment or retaliation, and shall not prevent or hinder the ability of these employees from cooperating fully with Government authorities.
- (3) Full cooperation will have the meaning prescribed at 48 C.F.R. 52.203-13 and be subject to the applicable law.

(e) *Subawards.* The Recipient shall include the substance of this clause in all subawards and in all contracts with agents.

(f) *Policies and Procedures and Oversight.*

- (1) The Recipient shall provide copies of its Code of Conduct and related policies and procedures to S/GWI upon request and by no later than within 60 days of award, unless a different schedule is agreed in writing.
- (2) Should any change be made to the Recipient's code of conduct and related PSEA policies and procedures during the validity period of this agreement, the Recipient shall inform S/GWI in writing within thirty (30) days of the changes.
- (3) State Department or any of its duly authorized representatives may at all times carry out reviews, evaluations, or other oversight measures to verify the Recipient's zero tolerance for SEA. The Recipient will fully cooperate with State Department or any of its duly authorized representatives or agents to carry out such oversight measures.

(g) *Termination.* Failure to comply with the terms of this provision may result in termination of the award.

(h) *Definitions.* As used in this clause

- "Information" means any communication or representation of knowledge such as facts, data, or opinions, in any medium or form, including textual, numerical, graphic, cartographic, narrative, or audiovisual (Committee on National Security Systems Instruction (CNSSI) 4009);
- "Sexual Abuse" means any actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. For child sexual abuse, it specifically includes but is not limited to fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials;
- "Sexual Exploitation" means any actual or attempted abuse by Recipient or subawardee employees or agents of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another;
- "Survivor-centered approach" means an approach for which the survivor's dignity, experiences, considerations, needs, and resiliencies are placed at the center of the process, from the initial award design to investigating and responding to potential incidents. Consistent with the UN Protocol on Allegations of SEA Involving Implementing Partners, the survivor should be informed, participate in the decision-making process, and provide consent on the possible use and disclosure of their information. Those interacting with the survivor and/or handling information regarding the allegation must maintain confidentiality, ensure safety of the survivor, and apply survivor-centered principles which are safety, confidentiality, respect, and non-discrimination. When the survivor is a child, the approach must consider the best

interests of the child and engage with the family/caregivers as appropriate. Staff and partners should comply with host country and local child welfare and protection legislation and international standards, whichever gives greater protection;

- “Credible information” - information that, considering its source and the surrounding circumstances, supports a reasonable belief that an event has occurred or will occur;
- “Zero Tolerance for Inaction” means that every allegation is treated seriously and appropriate action is pursued to resolve it.