

**Department of State
Public Notice**

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Request for Proposals: Justice and Dignity Initiative

PLEASE NOTE: DRL strongly urges applicants to access immediately www.grants.gov in order to obtain a username and password. It may take up to a week to register with www.grants.gov. Please see the section titled “DEADLINE AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS” below for specific instructions.

Background and Introduction:

As Secretary Clinton said at the Forum for the Future in Doha in January 2011, “While some countries have made great strides in governance, in many others people have grown tired of corrupt institutions and a stagnant political order. They are demanding reform to make their governments more effective, more responsive, and more open.” Yet despite demands from their people, many governments around the world are unwilling to make the changes their citizens deserve – changes that include the establishment of transparent, accountable institutions; a commitment to and implementation of basic human rights protections; the ability for citizens to freely choose their government and then hold government officials accountable; and an open space in which media and civil society organizations can operate without fear of harassment, physical threat or harm, detention, or imprisonment.

To address this growing trend, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) announces a Request for Proposals (RFP) for organizations interested in implementing large, country-specific projects—in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region only—that will address new challenges as they unfold on the ground in countries that routinely and systematically infringe on the fundamental freedoms of association, assembly, expression, and religion, or that will leverage new opportunities as they arise.

Activities of the Justice and Dignity Initiative:

The activities to be administered under the Justice and Dignity Initiative must promote the fundamental freedoms of association, assembly, expression, and religion in countries that routinely and systematically infringe on those freedoms. The grantee will be expected to efficiently and effectively implement, at times within a matter of weeks, a wide range of program activities, including, but not limited to, providing technical assistance to and building the capacity of civil society activists/organizations, media actors, and new and opposition political parties; developing public advocacy and civic education campaigns; documenting human rights abuses; and improving access to justice and legal aid. More specifically, these activities could include, but are not limited to, training and mentoring local and citizen journalists; increasing public awareness and understanding of religious freedom and tolerance; engaging women in political party activities; building coalitions among youth groups; bolstering the capacity of independent

worker organizations; or expanding access for at-risk populations, including women and disabled and indigenous people, to justice or civic participation.

The scope of activities that are eligible to be undertaken in this cooperative agreement is broad and meant to cover the complete spectrum of assistance activities that will promote fundamental freedoms. The individual programs of the initiative will be larger in scope and can be administered over multiple years.

Cooperative Agreement for NGO Consortium:

DRL will award a cooperative agreement to a consortium of at least four NGOs with global reach (“Consortium”), with one lead organization serving as the primary recipient/applicant (“Primary Applicant” or “Lead Organization”). One member of the Consortium may implement one program, two or more may work on similar activities separately, or two or more may work jointly. DRL employs this cooperative agreement mechanism in order to provide the Consortium with a pre-approved grant vehicle that allows for rapid response/disbursement of resources when the situation on the ground requires it.

The Consortium will work closely with DRL to design in a timely fashion targeted programs that address a myriad of issues in various ways. DRL may approach the Consortium with an idea for a program or the Consortium may propose a program idea to DRL, but the two will work together to design the program that one or more members of the Consortium will implement. Regardless of which party proposes the idea, the Consortium will prepare proposals for each program idea pursuant to the guidelines outlined in the “Technical Requirements for Proposals for Activities Administered under the Justice and Dignity Initiative” section below, which DRL will review.

The Primary Applicant need not be based in the U.S. but must be a non-profit organization registered in the U.S., meet the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3), and have demonstrated experience administering successful projects in various countries. (See “Primary Applicant/Organization Criteria” section below for more information.)

Consortium members must demonstrate a region-wide reach, the capacity to implement in a time-sensitive manner large program activities that could be multi-year in nature, and the technical expertise for the broad scope of activities to be undertaken in this cooperative agreement.

The Primary Applicant will be required to develop a detailed program plan outlining the role and responsibilities of the other NGO partners in the Consortium and how the Consortium will work and consult with DRL. The Primary Applicant should submit a letter of commitment from each NGO partner in the Consortium.

Proposals should allocate requested funding to provide as much direct assistance to the program’s activities as possible and keep overhead costs to a minimum. The Lead

Organization shall obtain receipts and/or reimbursement documentation for all expenditures over \$10,000 and for those under \$10,000 to the extent possible.

The Consortium should ensure that it has a solid reach across the MENA region, and can maintain, through a demonstrated track record, strong relationships with experienced, reliable, local partner NGOs across the region. Strategies to develop stronger contacts to improve the administration of the program can be included, but associated costs must be reasonable and kept to a minimum.

Vetting will be required in accordance with the Department's standard vetting procedures.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE JUSTICE AND DIGNITY INITIATIVE

Proposals should conform to DRL's posted Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI), available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/p/c12302.htm>. **(For this solicitation, applicants must use the Revised PSI dated October 2010.)**

Proposals that do not meet the requirements of the announcement and PSI may not be considered. **Proposals that request less than the award floor or more than the award ceiling will be deemed technically ineligible.**

For all application documents, please ensure that:

- 1) All pages are numbered, including budgets and attachments;
- 2) All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper; and
- 3) All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.

Complete applications should include the following for proposal submission:

- 1) Completed and signed **SF-424, SF-424a (Budget Summary) and SF424b (Assurances)**, most recent **A-133 Audit, and Certifications Regarding Lobbying forms** as directed on www.grants.gov. Please refer to the PSI for directions on how to complete the forms.
- 2) **Table of Contents** (not to exceed one [1] page in Microsoft Word) that includes a page-numbered contents page, including any attachments.
- 3) **Executive Summary** (not to exceed one [1] page in Microsoft Word) that includes:
 - a) Name and contact information for the project's main point of contact and
 - b) A brief statement on the unique capacity of the Primary Applicant and the members of the proposed Consortium to implement quickly programs that address a broad range of human rights, democracy, and rule of law issues.
- 4) **Proposal Narrative** (not to exceed twenty-five [25] pages in Microsoft Word). Please note the 25-page limit does not include the Table of Contents, Executive Summary, Attachments, Detailed Budget, Budget Narrative, or NICRA. Applicants

may submit multiple documents in one Microsoft Word file, i.e., Table of Contents, Executive Summary, Proposal Narrative, and Budget Narrative in one file or as separate, individually submitted files. Submissions should address three specific criteria (Institution's Record and Capacity, Technical Understanding, and Past Performance). With regard to the "Past Performance" criteria, the Lead Organization and each member of the Consortium are required to submit one-paragraph summaries of three (3) past or current programs, which should include the start and end dates of the program, goals, objectives, activities, and outcomes/outputs of the program, as well as the projected budget and the actual final budget, if the grant has been completed, which should be submitted as attachments (see below under 7) Attachments). Further details about these criteria are described in the Review Process section below.

- 5) **Budget Narrative** (preferably in Microsoft Word) that includes an explanation/justification for each line item in the detailed budget spreadsheet, as well as the source and description of all cost-share offered. For ease of review, it is recommended that applicants order the budget narrative as presented in the detailed budget. Primarily Headquarters- and Field-based personnel costs should include a clarification on the roles and responsibilities of key staff and percentage of time devoted to the project. In addition, cost-effectiveness is one of the key criteria for rating the competitiveness of a program proposal. Applicants that include cost share in their budget should note that cost share is considered a commitment and that the grantee will be held responsible for meeting the amount of cost share included. It is recommended that budget narratives address the overall cost-effectiveness of the proposal, including any cost share offered (see the PSI for more information on cost-sharing and cost-effectiveness).
- 6) **Detailed Line-Item Budget** (in Microsoft Excel or similar spreadsheet format) that breaks down the administrative costs of overseeing the Justice and Dignity Fund and overseeing program activities. The budget should contain three [3] columns including DRL request, any cost-sharing contribution, and total budget. A summary budget should also be included using the OMB-approved budget categories (see SF-424 as a sample). See the PSI for more information on budget format. Costs must be in U.S. Dollars. Please note that a budget outlining the costs for administering and overseeing the fund should be submitted. DRL does not expect budgets for individual projects that will be administered under the Fund as budgets for these individual projects will be negotiated when the need for those projects arise.
- 7) **Attachments** (Attachments A through C not to exceed six [6] pages total, preferably in Microsoft Word) that include the following in order:
 - a) Pages 1-2: Administration and Oversight Plan. Please explain how the Primary Organization will administer the Fund and oversee the NGO Consortium.
 - b) Page 3: Roles and responsibilities of key program personnel with short bios that highlight relevant professional experience. CVs are not recommended for submission.

- c) Pages 4-6: Additional optional attachments. Attachments may include letters of support, Memoranda of Understanding/agreements, etc. For applicants with a large number of letters/MOUs, it may be useful to provide a list of the organizations/government agencies that support the program rather than the actual documentation.
 - d) Pages 7-XYZ: Budgets. Submit the projected budget and the actual final budget, if the grant has been completed, of the three (3) past or current programs being used as examples under the “Past Performance” criterion. The projected budget and actual final budget should be no longer than 2 pages each per program example.
- 8) If your organization has a **negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA)** and includes NICRA charges in the budget, your latest approved/valid NICRA agreement should be sent as a .pdf file. This document will not be reviewed by the panelists, but rather used by program and grant staff if the submission is recommended for funding. Hence, this document does not count against the submission page limitations. If your organization does not have a NICRA agreement with a cognizant agency, the proposal budget should not have a line item for indirect cost charges. Rather, any costs that may be considered as indirect costs should be itemized and included in specific budget line items as Other Direct Costs. Furthermore, if your proposal involves sub-grants to organizations charging indirect costs, and those organizations also have a NICRA, please submit the applicable NICRA as a .pdf file (see the PSI for more information on indirect cost rate).

Note: To ensure all applications receive a balanced evaluation, the DRL Review Committee will review the requested section only up to the page limit and no further. DRL encourages organizations to use the given space effectively.

Additional Information

Before applying, all applicants are encouraged to call DRL.

The Bureau anticipates awarding a cooperative agreement in the third quarter of 2011. The bulk of funding activities should take place during a three-year time frame. Projects that leverage resources from funds internal to the organization or other sources, such as public-private partnerships, will be highly considered. Projects that have a strong academic or research focus will not be highly considered. Cost sharing is strongly encouraged, and cost-sharing contributions should be outlined in the proposal, budget, and budget narrative.

Pending availability of funds, this cooperative agreement will have an authorized funding level of **approximately USD \$2,075,000 total** to address the parameters above over a three-year timeframe. DRL anticipates granting one award totaling approximately USD \$2,075,000 in FY2011 to support the program and administrative costs required to implement this initiative. DRL envisions that between six to 12 programs will be implemented, each in the \$250,000 to \$500,000 range. Additional future funding may be possible, pending the availability of resources.

DRL will not consider proposals that reflect any type of support for any member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization, whether or not they are elected members of government.

PRIMARY APPLICANT/ORGANIZATION CRITERIA

Lead Organizations submitting proposals must meet the following criteria:

- Be a U.S. non-profit organization meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c) (3) **or** a comparable organization headquartered internationally.
- Have demonstrated experience administering successful and preferably similar projects. DRL reserves the right to request additional background information on organizations that do not have previous experience administering federal grant awards. These applicants may be subject to limited funding on a pilot basis.
- Be a registered user of www.grants.gov.
- Have existing, or the capacity to develop, active partnerships with in-country entities and relevant stakeholders including industry and non-government organizations.
- Organizations **must** form a Consortium and submit a joint proposal. However, **one** organization **must** be designated as the Primary Applicant/Lead Organization.
- An OMB policy directive published in the Federal Register on Friday, June 27, 2003, requires that all organizations applying for Federal grants or cooperative agreements must provide a Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number when applying for all Federal grants or cooperative agreements on or after October 1, 2003. Please reference http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg/062703_grant_identifier.pdf for the complete OMB policy directive.

REVIEW PROCESS FOR SELECTING LEAD ORGANIZATION AND NGO CONSORTIUM OF JUSTICE AND DIGNITY INITIATIVE

The Bureau will review all proposals for eligibility. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance of Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. Final signatory authority for assistance awards resides with the Department's Grants Officer. DRL and the Grants Office reserve the right to request any additional programmatic and/or financial information regarding the proposal.

Proposals will be funded based on an evaluation of how the proposal meets the solicitation review criteria, U.S. foreign policy objectives, and the priority needs of DRL. A Department of State Review Committee will evaluate proposals submitted under this request. Each proposal will be rated along three criteria. Review criteria will include:

1) Institution's Record and Capacity (40%)

The Lead Organization and each member of the Consortium must demonstrate that they have the institutional capability to carry out the work described in the section "Activities of the Fundamental Freedoms Fund." More specifically and in order of importance, the Lead Organization and Consortium members must demonstrate the ability to a) evaluate country conditions and draw on theory, experience, and lessons learned to design innovative, effective, and workable programs within their respective areas of expertise as new opportunities and challenges unfold on the ground; b) effectively and efficiently manage programs, including the capability to place them in the field quickly with all necessary support and to start program activities rapidly; c) build and maintain relationships with other organizations, including at the local levels, and key stakeholders; and d) monitor and evaluate program implementation, results, and impact, solve problems, and make course corrections when necessary.

2) Technical Understanding (40%)

The Lead Organization and each member of the Consortium must demonstrate their understanding of the activities of the Fundamental Freedoms Fund by describing the technical approaches they each have used or may use when establishing programs within their respective areas of expertise and which, in some cases, are specifically outlined in this RFP. The Lead Organization and Consortium members must a) demonstrate technical soundness of analysis and proposed programmatic strategies, based on knowledge and understanding of their specific area of expertise and lessons learned; b) include innovative approaches and strategies that are responsive to complex political environments and challenges such as working with limited resources; and c) demonstrate understanding of different strategic approaches and programming priorities as determined by varying country contexts.

3) Past Performance (20%)

The past performance of the Lead Organization and each member of the Consortium will be evaluated, as required by section 4 "Proposal Narrative" under "Technical Requirements for Proposals for the Fundamental Freedoms Fund." This part of the evaluation will focus on a) the quality of programs, including consistency in meeting goals and targets, achievement of clearly defined outputs and outcomes within the projected timeframe of the program, and effectiveness in addressing and learning from problems; b) cost controls, including forecasting costs and accuracy in financial reporting; and c) effectiveness of key personnel.

DEADLINE AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Applicants must submit proposals using www.grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST) on **July 14, 2011**. Please note that over the next several months www.grants.gov will experience higher than normal application volume due to Recovery Act-related opportunities. DRL will still require applications to be submitted via www.grants.gov but will work with applicants who have trouble in the actual submission process.

Several of the steps in the www.grants.gov registration process can take several weeks. Therefore, applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this solicitation to confirm or determine their registration status with www.grants.gov.

Please note: In order to safeguard the security of applicants' electronic information, www.grants.gov utilizes a credential provider to confirm, with certainty, the applicant organization's credentials. The credential provider for www.grants.gov is Operational Research Consultants (ORC). Applicants **MUST** register with ORC to receive a username and password which you will need to register with www.grants.gov as an authorized organization representative (AOR). Once your organization's E-Business point of contact has assigned these rights, you will be authorized to submit grant applications through www.grants.gov on behalf of your organization.

Each organization will need to be registered with the Central Contractor Registry (CCR), and you will need to have your organization's DUNS number available to complete this process. For more information regarding the DUNS number, please visit www.dnb.com or call 1-866-705-5711. After your organization registers with the CCR, you must wait approximately three to five business days before you can obtain a username and password. This may delay your ability to post your proposal. **Therefore, DRL strongly urges applicants to begin this process on www.grants.gov well in advance of the submission deadline.**

No exceptions will be made for organizations that have not completed the necessary steps to post applications on www.grants.gov.

Once registered, the amount of time it can take to upload an application will vary depending on a variety of factors including the size of the application and the speed of your Internet connection. In addition, validation of an electronic submission via www.grants.gov can take up to two business days. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through www.grants.gov.

The www.grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the www.grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "For Applicants" section of the website. DRL strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly www.grants.gov, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the www.grants.gov system.

Direct all questions regarding www.grants.gov registration and submission to:
www.grants.gov Customer Support
Contact Center Phone: 800-518-4726
Business Hours: Monday – Friday, 7AM – 9PM Eastern Standard Time
Email: support@grants.gov

Applicants have until 11:59 p.m. EST of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to www.grants.gov. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after midnight of the application deadline date will be automatically rejected by the www.grants.gov system and will be technically ineligible.

Please refer to www.grants.gov 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 www.grants.gov upon the successful submission of an application. Again, validation of an electronic submission via www.grants.gov can take up to two business days. DRL will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

Faxed, couriered, or emailed documents will not be accepted at any time. Applicants must follow all formatting instructions in this document and the PSI.

It is the responsibility of all applicants to ensure that proposals have been received by www.grants.gov in their entirety. DRL bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The information contained in this solicitation is binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the Bureau that contradicts this language will not be binding. Issuance of the solicitation does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program evaluation requirements.

This request for proposals will appear on www.grants.gov and DRL’s website www.state.gov/g/drl.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For questions related to proposal submissions, please contact Benton Wisehart at (202) 632-2064 or via email WisehartBP@state.gov.

Once the RFP deadline has passed, U.S. Government officials—including those in the Bureau, the Department, and at embassies/missions overseas—must not discuss this competition with applicants until the entire proposal review process is completed.