United States Department of State
Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): 4th Mekong Research Symposium
Funding Opportunity Number: DFOP0016585

Assistance Listing Number: 19.017
Solicitation Type: Open Competition
Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement
Application Deadline: 11:59 PM EST on July 22, 2024
Total Funding Ceiling: $430,000
Funding Authority: Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA);
Cost Sharing: Not Required
Anticipated Number of Awards: 1
Period of Performance: 12-24 months
Application Submission: Electronic
Eligible Applicants: U.S.-based non-profit/non-governmental organizations with or without 501(c) (3) status of the U.S. tax code; foreign-based non-profit organizations/nongovernment organizations (NGO); Public International Organizations; Foreign Public Organizations; U.S.-based private, public, or state institutions of higher education; Foreign-based institutions of higher education, and U.S. for-profit organizations or businesses.

Number of Applications: 1 per applicant organization.

Table of Contents

Section A: Funding Opportunity Description

A.1. Summary

The U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs' Office of Conservation, and Water (OES) announces the Notice of Funding Opportunity ("NOFO") for a program to help address and identify solutions to shared water challenges in the Mekong sub-region by developing and hosting the 4th Mekong Research Symposium (MRS), under the Mekong-U.S. Partnership (MUSP). The MRS will convene stakeholders (*including academia, private sector, media and journalists, local government, donors, development and financing partners, non-profits, civil society organizations, and indigenous communities*) to present on advancements in science and technology, including local solutions, and raise awareness of existing initiatives and resources to provide long-term, equitable benefits across the sub-region.

A.2. Background

The people living in the Mekong River Basin face unprecedented challenges, including rapid population growth and infrastructure development, changes in river flow and land use conversion, and increased frequency and intensity of floods and droughts, all resulting in accelerated changes to the basin's physical and ecological processes. These changes in the river basin contribute to more prolonged and frequent – and less predictable – variation in water supplies. Building from recent regional, technical, and political dialogues, the 2025 MRS will explore how data (*including socio-economic impacts and vulnerabilities, hydrological, land use, energy, and infrastructure operations*) can be put to action for locally driven solutions to provide long-term, equitable benefits across the Mekong sub-region.

The previous MRS, held in 2023, was organized under the theme of 'Data into Action for a Resilient Mekong' and took place in March 2023 in Chiang Rai, Thailand. Over 200 participants, and more than 30 speakers from five Lower Mekong countries and beyond, discussed how research data — including 'big data' from earth observation — can be used to inform decision making.

MRS 2023 successfully emphasized the importance of trust building among civil society and policy makers, the value of stable and predictable funding for research, and the need to prioritize science communication to inform decision making and the application of data.

Building on the strong foundation of interest and understanding created by MRS 2023, MRS 2025 will seek to mobilize a diverse group of stakeholders to continue the conversation on the application of data, technology, and resources to inform equitable governance and management of water and environment issues in the region. MRS 2025 will be a prime opportunity to educate the aforementioned stakeholders on emerging tools, technologies, and services.

A.3. Project Goals

1. Develop the Mekong sub-region's capacity to address transboundary environmental and water challenges.

2. Increase and diversify stakeholder engagement with new and existing research partnerships, technologies, and training opportunities available to people living in the Mekong sub-region.

A.4. Objectives

<u>Objective 1:</u> Plan, create, and host the 4th MRS, with a focus on how data, technology, and collaboration can be used to better manage water issues in the Mekong sub-region.

- The MRS should convene local and international stakeholders, academia, and the private sector, and be designed to expand shared knowledge, build the community of collaboration, deconflict and coordinate activities, share best practices, and to leverage collective efforts to achieve a more resilient Mekong sub-region.

- The MRS should be held in-person, in one of the following countries: Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, or Vietnam; target at least 200 participants; and should be developed to take place sometime between June and September 2025, *with the final dates and location being selected in coordination with OES.*

- The launch of new technologies, including the new Shared Vision Planning tool and other United States Government (USG)-funded initiatives, should be incorporated into MRS activities.

- At least one MRS activity should be focused on journalists and the media.

Objective 2: Award at least three short-term fellowship opportunities for MRS participants to explore and expand on possible solutions or other issues discussed during the MRS.

- A competitive selection process should be developed and completed in time for any awards to be announced during the conclusion of the MRS.

- Fellowship opportunities should include at least one deliverable, such as an academic paper or research project.

A.5. Performance Indicators

Applicants must propose and report against at least one performance indicator, in addition to tracking general details of the participants (*number of participants, gender, stakeholder category of participant (e.g.* a*cademia, private-sector, media…) country of origin, etc*); and media coverage of the MRS.

Additional performance indicators may be added following consultation with OES. All applicable indicators and outcome metrics should be included in the proposal. Subsequent to the award, routine, periodic reporting of all outcomes is required. The State Department takes into consideration the quality of data reported by grant recipients as part of the award activities, therefore applicants should be aware that recipients will be subject to data quality assessments.

A.6. Key Considerations

- The MRS will be developed in coordination with OES, the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP), the Mekong River Commission (MRC), and local and international partners identified by OES.

- Translation and interpretation services should be provided to allow meaningful engagement by local non-English-speaking participants.

- Applicants must have the capacity to receive and utilize new funding from both domestic and international non-Federal sources throughout the award's period of performance.

- Applicants must have the capacity to coordinate planning and implementation with other organizations and stakeholders, including the Mekong River Commission (MRC) and Arizona State University (ASU), as identified by OES.

- Applicant must make documents, materials, event design and other related symposium materials available to a regional partner, such as the MRC, for future MRS planning purposes.

- Applicants can expect to engage directly with other USG agencies, including but not limited to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and USAID.

- Applicant organizations, unless based within the Mekong sub-region, must identify and plan to work closely with at least one implementing partner based locally in the Mekong sub-region.

- Applicant organizations should strive for gender parity within the design and implementation of the program, and make reasonable efforts to ensure there is diversity among any panels, speakers, presenters, and participants.

- As a part of the proposal's "Program Monitoring and Evaluation Narrative and Plan", applicants should utilize both pre- and post-event surveys to determine participant understandings and perspectives on the resources, tools, issues, and other topics included in the MRS.

A.7. Substantial Involvement

OES anticipates awarding a cooperative agreement. The distinction between grants and cooperative agreements revolves around the existence of "substantial involvement." Cooperative agreements require greater Federal government participation in the project. OES will undertake reasonable and programmatically necessary substantial involvement. Substantial involvement areas can include, but are not limited to:

- Active collaboration on MRS planning including incorporation new technologies, including the **Shared Vision Planning** tool and other United States Government (USG)-funded initiatives into MRS activities

- Soliciting and provided programmatic feedback from relevant DOS bureaus such as Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EAP).

- Collaboration on selection of fellowships under Objective 2.

- Approval of locally-based, Mekong sub-region implementing partner(s) (*required if applicant organization is not locally based*.)

- Assisting in identifying thematic focus areas, target audience, other possible participants, and other government and international entities for all activities under the award;

- Providing direction and guidance on the creation of pre- and post-award surveys for MRS participants, and other evaluation material;

- Providing direction and guidance on the creation of follow-up documents (*e.g., reflections, structured exchanges, joint analysis, joint drafting, etc.*), including specific target audiences for dissemination;

- Providing direction and guidance on the creation of outward-facing informational and communication products, and well as non-traditional media messaging, including areas for dissemination;

- Providing suggestions and possibly directly assisting with identifying, contacting, and leveraging participation and/or other forms of support from external government and/or nongovernment entities; and

Specific areas of substantial involvement will be dependent upon the objectives of the proposal and outlined in the final Agreement. The final determination on award mechanism will be made by the Grants Officer.

SECTION B: FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

B.1. Available Funding

This notice is subject to availability of funding. The authority for this funding opportunity is found in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA).

Applicants can submit one application in response to the NOFO. If more than one application is submitted by an organization, only the first application received, and time stamped by either grants.gov or MyGrants will be reviewed for eligibility.

Organizations may form a consortium and submit a combined proposal. However, only one organization must be designated as the lead applicant, with the remaining organizations designated sub-awardees. The lead applicant must meet the eligibility criteria listed in Section C.

The Department of State reserves the right to (a) fund any or none of the applications received; (b) reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase the budget in accordance with bureau proprieties and the availability of funds; (c) accept other than the lowest cost application.

The U.S. government may make award(s) on the basis of initial applications received, without discussions or negotiations. Therefore, each initial application should contain the applicant's best terms from a cost and technical standpoint. The U.S. government reserves the right (though it is under no obligation to do so), however, to enter into discussions with one or more applicants in order to obtain clarifications, additional detail, or to suggest refinements in the project description, budget, or other aspects of an application.

B.2. Award Management

The successful applicant will need to routinely collaborate with OES through regular meetings and conference calls to discuss progress, challenges, emerging topics, etc. The successful applicant must ensure that all funds are used in a manner consistent with any applicable restrictions on funding. See D.5 below for funding restrictions.

SECTION C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

C.1. Eligible Applicants:

OES welcomes applications from U.S.-based non-profit/non-governmental organizations with or without 501(c) (3) status of the U.S. tax code; foreign-based non-profit organizations/nongovernment organizations (NGO); Public International Organizations; Foreign Public Organizations; U.S.-based private, public, or state institutions of higher education; Foreign-based institutions of higher education, and U.S. for-profit organizations or businesses.

Applications submitted by for-profit entities may be subject to additional review following the panel selection process. Additionally, the Department of State prohibits profit to for-profit or commercial organizations under its assistance awards. Profit is defined as any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs. The allowability of costs incurred by commercial organizations is determined in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR 30, Cost Accounting Standards Administration, and 48 CFR 31 Contract Cost Principles and Procedures.

Please see 2 CFR 200.307 for regulations regarding program income.

C.2. Cost*-Sharing *or Matching

The non-Federal share of costs, frequently called “cost share” or “matching costs”, refers to that portion of the project or program costs not borne by the Federal Government. This may include cash and third-party in-kind contributions. These costs must reflect the realistic capacity of the applicants and any third-party contributors.

Providing cost sharing, matching, or cost participation is not an eligibility factor or requirement for this NOFO and providing cost share will not result in a more favorable competitive ranking. Per 2 CFR §200.306, items that are proposed for cost share must be allowable per 2 CFR §200, Subpart E—Costs Principles.

Voluntary cost-share: Should the applicant choose to contribute voluntary cost-share, in the event the applicant does not meet the minimum amount of the voluntary cost-sharing stipulated in the applicant's budget, DOS contribution may be reduced in proportion to the Applicant's contribution.

C.3. Other Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must have existing, or the capacity to develop, active partnerships, local in-country partners, entities, and relevant stakeholders and have demonstrable experience in administering successful and preferably similar projects.

Applicant organizations, unless based within the Mekong sub-region, must identify and plan to work closely with at least one implementing partner based locally in the Mekong sub-region.

Any applicant with an exclusion in the Exclusions section of the System for Award Management (sam.gov) is not eligible to apply for an assistance award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR, 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR, 1989 Comp., p. 235), "Debarment and Suspension." Additionally, no entity listed on the EPLS can participate in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the EPLS in sam.gov to ensure that no ineligible entity is included.

SECTION D: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

D.1. Address to request Application Package

Applicants can find application forms, kits, or other materials needed to apply on **grants.gov** and MyGrants under the announcement title "4th Mekong Research Symposium," funding opportunity number "DFOP0016585." Please contact the OES point of contact listed in Section G if requesting reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities or for security reasons. Please note that reasonable accommodations do not include deadline extensions.

D.2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Proposal packages must adhere to the attached Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI). Proposal submissions that do not meet all of the requirements outlined in this NOFO and the PSI will be deemed technically ineligible. To ensure that all applications receive a balanced evaluation, the review panel will review from the first page of each section up to the page limit and no further.

Complete applications must include the following as defined in the PSI:

1. Completed and signed SF-424, SF-424A, and SF-424B forms (OPTIONAL but strongly encourage for FPE/PIOs)
2. Organizations that engage in lobbying the U.S. government, including Congress, or pay for another entity to lobby on their behalf, are also required to complete the SF-LLL "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities" form (only if applicable).
3. Cover Page/Executive Summary
4. Proposal Narrative
5. Budget Documents (two (2) component submission requirement)
6. Program Monitoring and Evaluation Narrative and Plan
7. Key Personnel
8. Timeline
9. Racial Equity and Underserved Communities Analysis
10. Attachments, (if applicable):
    - Letters of support from program partners describing the roles and responsibilities of each partner
    - Official permission letters, if required for project activities

D.3. Unique entity identifier (UEI) and System for Award Management (sam.gov)

The Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all federal awards. The federal government's primary database for complying with FFATA reporting requirements is www.sam.gov. OMB designated www.sam.gov as the central repository to facilitate applicant and recipient use of a single public website that consolidates data on all federal financial assistance. Under the law, it is mandatory to obtain a UEI number and register in **sam.gov before submitting an application**. OES may **not** review applications from or make awards to applicants that have not completed all applicable UEI and SAM.gov requirements.

The 2 CFR 200 requires that sub-grantees obtain a UEI number. Please note the UEI for sub-grantees is not required at the time of application but will be required before the award is processed and/or directed to a sub-grantee.
UEI is assigned by **sam.gov** assigned to organizations that have to register/or renew their **sam.gov** registration.

Note: The process of obtaining a* sam.gov *registration may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks. Please begin your registration as early as possible. Numerous errors require correction, such as an address mismatch, and can delay final registration. If the application is not corrected within 90 calendar days of original registration/or renewal submission, it will be automatically deleted, and the organization will need to re-start the process.

- Organizations **based in the United States** or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Also, a Commercial and Government Entity (CAGE) code is needed and issued through SAM.gov as is the UEI number. Once received continue with the remainder of the SAM.gov registration.
- Organizations **based outside of the United States** and do not pay employees within the United States do not need an EIN from the IRS but do need a UEI number prior to registering in **sam.gov**. **Please note that as of November 2022 and February 2023 respectively, newly registering organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to**

apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO CAGE (NCAGE).

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

- NCAGE/CAGE code (as applicable)
- www.sam.gov UEI and registration

If you are an organization based outside the U.S. and DO NOT plan to do business with the Department of Defense:

Step 1: Proceed to SAM.gov to obtain a UEI and complete the registration.

If you are an organization based outside the U.S. and plan to do business with the Department of Defense:

Step 1: Apply for an NCAGE number

NCAGE Homepage:
https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/sc/CageList.aspx
NCAGE Code Request Tool (NCRT):
https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/Codification/CageTool/home
For NCAGE help from within the U.S., call 1-888-227-2423
For NCAGE help from outside the U.S., call 1-269-961-7766
Email NCAGE@dlis.dla.mil for any problems in getting an NCAGE code.

Step 2: After receiving the NCAGE Code, proceed to SAM.gov to obtain a UEI and complete registration.

All prime organizations must also continue to maintain 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. SAM.gov requires all entities to renew their registration once a year in order to maintain an active registration status in SAM.gov. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure it has an active registration in SAM.gov and to maintain that active registration. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements at the time of application, the applicant may be deemed technically ineligible to receive an award and that determination will be used as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

Information is included on the SAM.gov website to help international registrations: Please note, guidance on SAM.gov and the guidance on GSA's website about requirement for registering in SAM.gov is subject to change and currently being updated. Applicants should review the website frequently for the most up-to-date guidance.

The attached "UEI and SAM.gov FAQ updated 013124" is a resource provided by the grants policy office. Any content shown from SAM.gov is not owned by the Department of State. The guidance and instruction provided are to the best of our knowledge at the time of posting this solicitation. Where guidance in this attachment differs from the SAM.gov website, SAM.gov prevails and the applicant is encouraged to seek and document clarity provided by the SAM.gov helpdesk.

D.3.1 Exemptions

An exemption from the requirements listed above may be permitted under the following circumstances:

- For any applicant or recipient, if the Federal awarding agency determines that it must protect information about the entity from disclosure if it is in the national security or foreign policy interests of the United States, or to avoid jeopardizing the personal safety of the applicant or recipient's staff or clients.

- For a foreign organization or foreign public entity applying for or receiving a Federal award or subaward for a project or program performed outside the United States valued at less than $25,000, if the Federal awarding agency deems it to be impractical for the entity to comply with the requirement(s). This exemption must be determined by the Federal awarding agency on a case-by-case basis while utilizing a risk-based approach and does not apply if subawards are anticipated.

- For an applicant, if the Federal awarding agency makes a determination that there are exigent circumstances that prohibit the applicant from receiving a unique entity identifier and completing SAM registration prior to receiving a Federal award. In these instances, Federal awarding agencies must require the recipient to obtain a unique entity identifier and complete SAM registration within 30 days of the Federal award date.

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

D.4. Submission Dates and Times

Applications are due no later than 11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time (EST), on 22 July, 2024 on grants.gov or under MyGrants the announcement title "4th Mekong Research Symposium," funding opportunity number "DFOP0016585."

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.
It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that it has an active registration in **grants.gov** or **MyGrants** and that an application has been received by the system in its entirety. Application submissions are automatically logged by date and time when made in **Grants.gov** and **MyGrants** of State will use this information to determine whether an application has been submitted on time. Late applications are neither reviewed nor considered. Applicants should not expect a notification upon OES receiving their application. OES bears no responsibility for disqualification that results from applicants not being registered before the due date, for registration errors in either system, or other errors in the application process.

D.5. Funding Limitations, Restrictions, and Other Considerations

OES will not consider applications that reflect any type of support for any member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization. Please refer the link for Foreign Terrorist

Organizations: [https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/.](https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/) Consistent with Department guidance on State Funding and the Risks of Terrorist Financing, for all State Department funded programs and requirements, Department bureaus must assess the likelihood that the funds or Department funded activities, goods, services, training, expert advice or assistance, or other benefits to be provided, could inadvertently or incidentally benefit terrorist organizations or their members or supporters, and put in place appropriate risk mitigation measures to mitigate such risk. In accordance with 14 FAM 247, and consistent with the 2 FAM 050, Counterterrorism (CT) name-check vetting may be performed in countries and programs designated by the Department.

Project activities whose direct beneficiaries are foreign militaries or paramilitary groups or individuals will not be considered for OES funding given purpose limitations on funding.

The Leahy Law prohibits Department 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, project 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.

U.S. foreign assistance for Burma or Burmese beneficiaries is subject to restrictions. This includes restrictions, pursuant to section 7043(a)(3) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2020 (Div. G, P.L. 116-94) (SFOAA), on funds appropriated under title III of the act for assistance for Burma. Section 7043(a)(3) provides that such funds "may not be made available to any organization or entity controlled by the armed forces of Burma, or to any individual or organization that advocates violence against ethnic or religious groups or individuals in Burma, as determined by the Secretary of State." In addition, funds cannot be made available to any individual or organization that has committed serious human rights abuse.

The following activities and costs are <u>not</u> covered under this announcement (this list is NOT exhaustive):

- Construction or renovation is not an allowable activity under this award;
- Projects intended primarily for the growth or institutional development of the applicant organization;
- Projects seeking funds for personal use;
- Administration of a project that will make a profit;
- Expenses incurred before or after the specified dates of award period of performance (unless prior written approval is received);
- Projects designed to advocate policy views or positions of foreign governments or views of a particular political faction;
- Alcoholic beverages;

- Costs of entertainment, including amusement, diversion, and social activities, and any associated costs, are unallowable, except where specific costs that might otherwise be considered entertainment have a programmatic purpose and are authorized either in the approved budget for the federal award or with prior written approval of the Grants Officer.

Representation by Organization Regarding a Delinquent Tax Liability or a Felony Criminal Conviction: In accordance with section 7073 of Division K of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (Public Law 113-76) none of the funds made available by that Act may be used to enter into an assistance award with any organization that –

> (1) Was "convicted of a felony criminal violation under any Federal law within the preceding 24 months, where the awarding agency has direct knowledge of the conviction, unless the agency has considered, in accordance with its procedures, that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government"; or
>
> (2) Has any "unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, unless the Federal agency has considered, in accordance with its procedures, that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government."

For the purposes of Section 7073, it is the Department of State's policy that no award may be made to any organization covered by (1) or (2) above, unless the Procurement Executive has made a written determination that suspension or debarment is not necessary to protect the interests of the U.S. Government.

Organizations should be cognizant of these restrictions when developing project proposals. Funding restrictions will require appropriate due diligence of program beneficiaries and collaboration with OES to ensure compliance with these restrictions. Program beneficiaries subject to due diligence vetting will include any individuals or entities that are beneficiaries of foreign assistance funding or support. Due diligence vetting will include a review of open-source materials.

Section E: Application Review Information

E1. Proposal Review Criteria

The OES review panel will evaluate each application individually against the following criteria, listed below in order of importance, and not against competing applications. Please use the below criteria as a reference, but **do not structure your application according to the sub-sections**.

<u>Applications should contain the applicant's best terms from both cost and technical standpoints. The implementing partners (sub-recipients) of the primary recipient will be subject to Department of State approval.</u>

1. **Quality and Feasibility of Project Idea (30 points)**

The program idea is well developed and responsive to the policy and program objective of the NOFO. The applicant describes the project's potential contribution to solving the problem addressed in the problem statement. The application clearly defines the problem; it's causes; stakeholders; and existing research/data; the approach taken to solve the problem; realistic milestones to indicate progress.

2. **Organizational Capacity and Record of Performance (25 points)**:

The applicant demonstrates an institutional record of successful projects in the content area proposed. The applicant demonstrates experience (e.g., has previously worked and/or has established contacts/partners) in the proposed country/territory/region. The organization has expertise in its stated field and has adequate staffing to manage the proposed project. The applicant demonstrates capacity for responsible fiscal management of donor funding (e.g., successful management of a previous grant or sub-award).

3. **Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives (20 points)**

Goals and objectives are clearly stated and project approach is likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results. The applicant proposes activities that are feasible, and are also practical, and/or experiential in nature to encourage innovation. The applicant addresses how the project will engage or obtain support from relevant stakeholders and/or identifies local partners. Program logic is sound showing plausible pathways to achieve project outcomes. Key assumptions and risks have been identified and their potential influences described. The applicant acknowledges if activities similar to those proposed are already taking or have taken place previously and provides an explanation as to how proposed new activities will not duplicate or merely add to existing/recent activities.

4. **Financial Capacity and Cost Effectiveness (10 points):**

The budget justification is detailed, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results and provide detail of calculations, including estimation methods, quantities, unit costs, labor in-put and responsibilities, procurement practice and policy information, and other similar quantitative detail. Applications that maximize direct activity costs and minimize administrative costs are encouraged. **Final approval of the budget resides with the Grants Officer.**

5. **Monitoring & Evaluating and Sustainability (10 points):**

Applicant demonstrates it is able to measure program success against key indicators and provides milestones to indicate progress toward goals outlined in the proposal. The program includes output and outcome indicators and shows how and when those will be measured and who will be responsible for them. The applicant clearly details how activities will result in benefits that will continue beyond the funding period.

6. **Support of Equity and Underserved Communities (5 points):**

Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the program will support and advance equity and engage underserved communities in program administration, design, and implementation.

E.2. Review and Selection Process

The Department of State is committed to ensuring a competitive and standardized process for awarding funding. Applications will be screened initially in a Technical Eligibility Review stage to determine whether applicants meet the eligibility requirements outlined in section C and have submitted all required documents outlined in section D. Applications that do not meet these requirements will not advance beyond the Technical Eligibility Review stage and will be deemed ineligible for funding under this NOFO.

All applications that are deemed eligible will move forward to the Merit Review Panel consisting of U.S. government subject matter and/or country-specific experts and will be rated on a 100-point scale. OES reserves the right to request the assistance of non-US government Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), if appropriate to the solicitation. Panel Reviewers will determine scores based on the strengths and weaknesses of the afore-mentioned categories and for consistency with the program goals and objectives outlined in this NOFO. Panel Reviewers' ratings, and any resulting recommendations, are advisory. Panel Reviewers may provide conditions and recommendations on applications to enhance the proposed project, which must be addressed by the applicant before further consideration of the award. To ensure effective use of US Government funds, conditions or recommendations may include requests to increase, decrease, clarify, and/or justify costs and project activities.

OES reserves the right to make an award based on the initial application received with or without discussion or negotiations. Therefore, applications should contain the Applicants' best terms from both cost and technical standpoints.

Final selection authority resides with OES senior level official. Final award decisions will be influenced by whether the application meets the Department of State's programmatic goals and objectives, how it supports the Department's overarching foreign policy priorities, and the geographic distribution of the top-ranking applications.

E.3. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov (formerly FAPIIS)

The Department of State, prior to making a federal award with a total amount of federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (formerly FAPIIS) (see 41 U.S.C. 2313).

The applicant, at its option, may review information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through www.sam.gov. Currently, federal agencies create integrity records in the integrity module of the Contractor Performance Assessment and Reporting System (CPARS) and these records are visible as responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov.

The Department of State will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

Applicants are reminded that U.S. Executive Orders and U.S. law prohibits transactions with or support to individuals or organizations associated with terrorism.

- Proposals that reflect any type of support for any member, affiliate, or representative or a designate to terrorist organization or narcotics trafficker, including elected members of government, will NOT be considered. This provision must be included in any sub-awards/sub-contracts issued under this award.
- U.S. Applicant organizations must demonstrate adherence to equal opportunity employment practices and commitment to non-discrimination with respect to beneficiaries. Non-discrimination includes equal treatment without regard to race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and political affiliation.
- Applicants under DOS-funded projects are responsible for complying with all applicable tax treaties and federal, state, and local laws on tax withholding and reporting for project participants.

Section F: Federal Award Administration Information

F.1. Federal Award Notices

OES will provide a separate notification to applicants on the result of their applications. Successful applicants will receive a letter electronically via email requesting that the applicant respond to review panel conditions and recommendations. This notification is **not** an authorization to begin activities and does not constitute formal approval or a funding commitment.
Final approval is contingent on the applicant successfully responding to the review panel's conditions and recommendations, Congressional Notification requirements, registration in required systems; and completing and providing any additional documentation requested by OES or the Department's warranted Grants Officer.

The Grants Officer is the U.S. Government official delegated the authority by the U.S. Department of State, Procurement Executive to write, award, and administer grants and cooperative agreements. The notice of Federal award signed by the Grants Officers is the sole authorizing document. The recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date shown on the grant award document signed by the Grants Officer. If awarded, the notice of Federal award will be provided to the applicant's designated Authorizing Official via MyGrants to be electronically counter-signed in the system.

Additional information that successful applicants may be required to submit after notification of intent to make a Federal award, but prior to issuance of a Federal award, may include:

- Written responses and any revised application documents addressing any conditions or recommendations from the Review Panel and awarding bureau;
- Completion of the Department's Financial Management Survey, if receiving funding for the first time or requested by the Grants Officer;
- If applicable, submission of required documents to register in the Payment Management System (PMS) managed by the Department of Health and Human Services if receiving funding for the first time. PMS registration is bureau-specific;
- Other requested information or documents included in this funding opportunity or subsequent communications with the recommended applicant prior to issuance of a federal award.

Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.400(g), it is U.S. Department of State's policy **not** to award profit under assistance instruments.

Payments under this award will be made through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Payment Management System (PMS) or by completing form SF-270—Request for Advance or Reimbursement and submitting the form. Final determination will be made in conjunction with the Grants Officer. Unless otherwise stipulated, the Recipient may request payments on a reimbursement or advance basis. Instructions for requesting payments via PMS are available at: https://pms.psc.gov/. Instructions for requesting payments via SF-270 are available at: https://www.grants.gov/forms/forms-repository/post-award-reporting-forms.

Advance payments must be limited to the minimum amounts needed and be timed to be in accordance with the actual, immediate cash requirements of the recipient in carrying out the purpose of this award. The timing and amount of advance payments must be as close as is administratively feasible to the actual disbursements by the Recipient for direct program or project costs and the proportionate share of any allowable indirect costs.

2 CFR §200.501 requires domestic/US non-federal entities that expend $750,000, or more, in federal assistance during organization's fiscal year to have a single or program-specific audit conducted for that year. In addition, the entity must report the collected audit data elements on the form SF-SAC and submit it to the FAC. Any findings such as material weaknesses, significant deficiencies, or material noncompliance are reported on the SF-SAC.

To maximize the impact and sustainability of the award(s) that result from this NOFO, OES retains the right to execute non-competitive continuation amendment(s). The total duration of any award, including potential non-competitive continuation amendments, shall not exceed 54 months, or four and a half years. Any non-competitive continuation is contingent on performance and **pending availability of funds.** A non-competitive continuation is not guaranteed, and the Department of State reserves the right to exercise or not to exercise this option.

F.2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

OES requires all recipients of foreign assistance funding to comply with all applicable Department and Federal laws and regulations, including but not limited to the following:

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. Sub-Chapters A through E shall apply to all foreign organizations, and Sub-Chapters A through D shall apply to all U.S. and foreign for-profit entities. 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 assurances and certifications made part of the Notice of Award. The Department's Standard Terms and Conditions can be viewed at https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/. Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply. These include:

- 2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT
- 2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION
- 2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS
- 2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE (FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE)
- 2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY
- 2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS
- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, the Department of State will review and consider applications for funding, as applicable to specific programs, pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity in accordance with the following:

- The President's September 2, 2020, memorandum, entitled *Memorandum on Reviewing Funding to State and Local Government Recipients of Federal*

Funds that Are Permitting Anarchy, Violence, and Destruction in American Cities;

- *Executive Order on Protecting American Monuments, Memorials, and Statues and Combating Recent Criminal Violence* (E.O. 13933); and
- Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 85 FR 49506 on August 13, 2020, particularly on:
  - Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an objective process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
  - Prohibiting the purchase of certain telecommunication and video surveillance services or equipment in alignment with section 889 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019 (Pub. L. No. 115—232) (2 CFR part 200.216),
  - Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with *Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty* (E.O. 13798) and *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (E.O. 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),
  - Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
  - Terminating agreements in whole or in part to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340).

Due to the determination made under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) for FY 2022, assistance that benefits the governments of the following countries may be subject to a restriction under the TVPA. The Department of State determines on a case-by-case basis what constitutes assistance to a government; the general principles listed below apply.
Assistance to the government includes:

- All branches of government (executive, legislative, judicial) at all levels (national, regional, local);
- Public schools, universities, hospitals, and state-owned enterprises, as well as government employees;
- Cash, training, equipment, services, or other assistance provided directly to the government, assistance provided to an NGO or other implementer for the benefit of the government, and assistance to government employees.

Subject to TVPA for funds obligated during FY 2024:
AF: Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, South Sudan
EAP: Burma, China (PRC), Malaysia, North Korea
EUR: Belarus, Russia
NEA: Iran, Syria
SCA: Afghanistan
WHA: Cuba, Curacao, Nicaragua, Sint Maarten
Additional requirements may be included depending on the content of the program.

F.3. Reporting

Reporting is critical to effective program management and oversight. Reports are required as a means of evaluating the recipient's progress and utilization of resources. They are divided between a performance progress report and a financial status report. Applicants should be aware that OES awards will require that all reports (financial and progress) are uploaded to the grant file in MyGrants on a quarterly basis.

Financial Reports
The Recipient will be required to submit quarterly financial reports (unless stipulated otherwise in the final Agreement) throughout the project period, using form SF-425, the Federal Financial Report form. If payment is made through the Payment Management System, all financial reports must be submitted

electronically through the Payment Management System. The Recipient will also be required to upload to MyGrants a pdf version of all financial reports (Federal Financial report) they have submitted in the Payment Management System. Form (SF-425) can be found here by clicking on the Forms tab: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/post-award-reporting-forms.html#sortby=1

Program Reporting

The Recipient will be required to submit quarterly narrative progress reports (unless stipulated otherwise in the final Agreement) throughout the project period to the award file in MyGrants.

Narrative progress reports should reflect continued focus on measuring the project's progress in achieving the overarching. Explain and evaluate how activities reflect progress toward expected outcome and outcomes towards achieving objectives. In addition, attach the M&E Tracker, comparing the target and actual numbers for the indicators. Reports should also include an update on expenditures during the quarter. Where relevant, progress reports should also include the following:

- Relevant contextual information (limited);
- Any tangible impact or success stories from the project, when possible;
- Copy of mid-term and/or final evaluation report(s) conducted by an external evaluator; if applicable;
- Relevant supporting documentation or products related to the project activities (such as articles, meeting lists and agendas, participant surveys, photos, manuals, etc.) as separate attachments;
- Description of how the recipient is pursuing sustainability, including looking for sources of follow-on funding;
- Any problems/challenges in implementing the project and corrective action plan with an updated timeline of activities;

- Reasons why activities have not been conducted or deliverables were not met in accordance with the timeline;
- Proposed activities for the next quarter; and,
- Additional pertinent information, including analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs, if applicable.

Final Reporting

A final financial and progress report will be due no later than 120 calendar days after the end date of the award. The Final Progress Report shall include the following elements: executive summary, successes, outcomes, best practices, how the project addresses gender issues and marginalized communities, and how the project will be sustained. Additional guidance may be provided prior to the award end date.

NOTE: Delays in reporting may result in delays of payment approvals and failure to provide required reports may jeopardize the recipients' ability to receive future U.S. government funds. OES reserves the right to request any additional programmatic and/or financial project information during the award period of performance.

It is the Department of State's policy that English is the official language of all award documents. If reports or any other supporting documents are provided in both English and a foreign language, it must be stated in each version that the English language version is the controlling version. The U.S. dollar is the controlling currency. Financial reports must be submitted in U.S. dollars. Applicants should be aware of the post award reporting requirements reflected in 2 CFR 200 Appendix XII—Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters.

The Foreign Assistance Data Review (FADR)

As required by Congress, the Department of State must make progress in its efforts to improve tracking and reporting of foreign assistance data through the

Foreign Assistance Data Review (FADR). FADR requires tracking of foreign assistance activity data from budgeting, planning, and allocation through obligation and disbursement. Geographical and program area information is now coded within the subaccount/award number. Recipients will be required to report and draw down federal funding based on the appropriate FADR Data Elements, indicated within their award documentation. In cases of more than one FADR Data Element, typically program or sector and/or regions or country, the Recipient will be required to maintain separate accounting records and request expenses to each account separately.

SECTION G: FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT

G.1. Contacts

For technical submission questions related to this NOFO, please contact (Charles Pritchard, Senior Water Advisor, PritchardCH@state.gov).

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://afsitsm.servicenowservices.com/ilms/home. Customer support is available 24/7.

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.

For a list of federal holidays visit:
https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/federal-holidays/
Except for technical submission questions, during the NOFO period U.S. Department of State staff in Washington and overseas shall not discuss this

competition with applicants until the entire proposal review process has been completed and rejection and approval letters have been transmitted.

G.2. Question Submission Deadline

To maintain fairness and transparency in competition, OES will not answer questions related to proposal concept or design. All questions must be submitted via email to contact listed in G.1. by 11:59 PM EST on 8 July, 2024. OES will create a document of submitted questions with answers and post it in grants.gov. Questions and answers will be posted within 24-48 hours from the date of receipt. Prospective applicants are advised to regularly review the announcement page in grants.gov for any updates.

Explanatory information provided by any OES representative that contradicts this NOFO will not be binding. Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

SECTION H: OTHER INFORMATION

The information in this NOFO is binding and may not be modified by any OES representative. Explanatory information provided by OES that contradicts this language will not be binding. Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

H.1. Conflict of Interest

In accordance with applicable Federal awarding agency policy, applicants must disclose in writing any potential conflict of interest to the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity.

H.2. Freedom of Information Act

Applicants should be aware that OES understands that some information contained in applications may be considered sensitive or proprietary and will make appropriate efforts to protect such information. However, applicants are advised that OES cannot guarantee that such information will not be disclosed, including pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or other similar statutes.

H.3. Marking Policy (Not applicable to Foreign Public Organizations or Public International Organizations)

Applicants are advised that recipients and sub-recipients of Federal assistance awards are subject to the State Department's Marking Policy. More information on this policy can be found in Section N of the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions.

H.4. Evaluation Policy

Applicants are advised that recipients and sub-recipients of Federal assistance awards are subject to the Department of State Evaluation Policy. More information on this policy can be found here: Department of State Managing for Results.

H.5. Monitoring Site Visits

A monitoring site visit, at least once during the lifetime of an award, may be conducted by Department of State personnel. The site visit is conducted to gather additional information on the recipient's ability to properly implement the project, manage DOS funds and share substantiating documents for programmatic and financial reporting. Specifically, the site visit may involve the review of the programmatic progress (progress on activities, sub-recipient/consultant work, etc.) as well as administrative and financial management controls.

H.6. Privacy Disclosure

DOS understands that some information contained in applications may be considered sensitive or proprietary and will make appropriate efforts to protect such information. However, applicants are advised that DOS cannot guarantee that such information will not be disclosed, including pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or other similar statutes.

H.7. Mandatory disclosures (2 CFR 200.113) (Not applicable to Foreign Public Organizations or Public International Organizations)

Non-federal entity, applicant or applicant for a federal award must disclose, in a timely manner, in writing to the federal awarding agency or pass-through entity all violations of federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the federal award. Non-federal entities that have received a federal award including the terms and conditions outlined in Appendix XII of the 2 CFR 200—Award Terms and Conditions for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters -- are required to report certain civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings to www.sam.gov. Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in §200.338 Remedies for Noncompliance, including suspension or debarment.

H.8. Background Information on U.S. Engagement on Water

The Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) at the U.S. Department of State is a lead implementing partner of the U.S. Global Water Strategy (GWS), and the White House Action Plan on Global Water Security. The GWS envisions a water-secure world that advances health, prosperity, stability, and resilience through sustainable and equitable water resources management as well as sustainable and equitable access to safe drinking water, sanitation services, and hygiene. This program will address all of the Strategic Objectives of the GWS and also will contribute to Pillar 3 of the White House Action Plan: “Ensuring multilateral action mobilizes cooperation and promotes water security.”

Through its international engagements, the U.S. government seeks to elevate efforts in multilateral fora to build committed support to strengthen climate-resilient water infrastructure worldwide. Promoting greater transparency, advancing accountability, and reducing corruption and inequality in the water sector is also fundamental. The U.S. government seeks to bolster the participation of marginalized people and communities across sector institutions and processes and seeks to partner and champion civil society organizations, particularly those led by and for underserved or marginalized groups, to support their capacity to identify and resolve policy barriers and improve access to and use of relevant data for decision-making.