A NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY
Support to Fact-Checking Networks

Table of Contents:

Attachments:

Appendix 1: Performance Indicators
Appendix 2: Sample – Letter of Institutional Support
Appendix 3: Sample Results Chain and Glossary of Terms
Appendix 4: Preferred Benefitting Countries

Support to Fact-Checking Networks

Section A. Funding Opportunity Program Description

Announcement Type:	**Cooperative Agreement**
Funding Opportunity Title**:**	**Support to Fact-Checking Networks**
Funding Opportunity Number:	SFOP0008566
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:	19.040
Funding Amount:	$500,000
Key Dates:	

1. Application must be submitted by 11:59 P.M. on **Thursday, April 7, 2022**
2. Notification of project approval and award signing expected by Friday, September 30, 2022

Executive Summary:

The Global Engagement Center (GEC) at the Department of State, announces the Notice of Funding Opportunity ("NOFO") for **Support to Fact-Checking Networks**. The agreement awarded will use U.S. Fiscal Year 2021 Economic Support Funds (ESF).

Eligibility is limited to U.S. and foreign non-profit/nongovernmental organizations, educational institutions, and commercial entities. Applicants from high-income countries are eligible to be proposed implementers or sub-implementers.

One (1) **Cooperative Agreement** for up to $500,000 U.S. Dollars (USD) in FY 2021 ESF will be awarded for work that will support a more robust international network of fact-checking professionals. The initial period of performance will be for 12 months. Funding authority rests under the FY2021 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act (Div. K, P.L. 116-260) and the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended.

Proposals should suggest implementation locations. Proposed locations are limited to those reflected in the list of eligible benefitting countries in Appendix 4. (Note: High-income countries are excluded from consideration given policies on the use of foreign assistance funds. Countries are considered "high-income" as defined by the World Bank.) Locations will be finalized upon selection and must conform with the requirements established by Congress for ESF funds and gain concurrence from Department of State. GEC may consider extension or expansion of the project contingent on favorable performance and the availability of funds.

Contact Person: The Global Engagement Center, GEC-PROGRAMS@state.gov

Please read the entire solicitation package carefully, including Section D. Application and Submission Information. There are steps that you should take immediately in order to make your submissions by the deadline.

A1. Background

As mandated by law, the Global Engagement Center (GEC) directs, leads, synchronizes, integrates, and coordinates efforts of the Federal Government to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign state and foreign non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining or influencing the policies, security, or stability of the United States, as well as U.S. allies and partner nations. GEC also identifies current and emerging trends in foreign propaganda and disinformation to coordinate and shape the development of tactics, techniques, and procedures to expose and refute foreign propaganda and disinformation.

GEC engages through partners to carry out these and other functions and to work toward associated policy goals. GEC does not address United States domestic audiences, nor engage in domestic discussions of United States policy. Therefore, no activities supported under this Notice of Funding Opportunity shall be directed toward U.S. persons. Any such engagement, if determined by GEC to have been intentional may constitute grounds for termination for cause of this award.

This will be a single-stage competitive process. Interested applicants will submit a full proposal addressing the proposed program objectives and recommending countries which have relatively underdeveloped fact-checking capabilities, and which are targets for propaganda and disinformation by the People's Republic of China (PRC). Final country selection may be adjusted and will require State Department concurrence. Proposals will be evaluated and scored by a merit review panel.

Fact-checking is a proven method to mitigate the adverse effects of propaganda, disinformation, and misinformation. Foreign civil society organizations, journalists, and academics require access to trusted and factual information to ensure foreign information ecosystems remain open and vibrant.

The Department of State proposes awarding one cooperative agreement to provide the technical skills necessary for objective and independent fact-checking to flourish globally. This award will support efforts to create an enabling environment for media, ensure the free flow of information, and support the professional and institutional capacities of foreign media.

This project will increase access to trusted and factual information to create a healthier information ecosystem for information consumers overseas. It aims to develop fact checking support by providing the technical skills necessary for objective and independent fact checking to flourish globally. The project will also strengthen credible third-party organizations with the capacity to withstand various forms of information manipulation.

A2. Program Objectives

The overall objectives of this project are:

- **Objective 1:** Build the fact-checking capacity of media, civil society, and social media influencers to increase the production and accessibility of factual information for target audiences to foster resilience against disinformation and propaganda and create a healthier information ecosystem.

- **Objective 2:** Encourage a network of global fact-checkers to share skills and expertise in fact-checking globally.

A3. Expected Outcomes, Outputs, and Activities

Proposals should use a results chain (Appendix 3) to demonstrate an ability to achieve the following specific results among the project's target audience (target audiences should be specific enough to measure changes in ability, behavior, or perception):

Objective 1: Build the fact-checking capacity of media, civil society, and social media influencers in targeted foreign countries to increase the production and accessibility of factual information for target audiences to foster resilience against disinformation and propaganda and create a healthier information ecosystem.

- **Outcome 1.1:** Project participants demonstrate enhanced fact-checking skills against disinformation and propaganda.

    - **Potential Outputs:** Outputs may include:
        - Capacity-building trainings for project participants.
        - Technology and tools to facilitate fact-checking efforts.
        - Resources outlining successful fact-checking methodologies elsewhere.

    - **Potential Activities:** Activities may include:
        - Conduct trainings, conferences, or workshops that build fact-checking resiliency among civil society, independent media representatives, and local influencers.
        - Support the adaptation of existing fact-checking technology or tools or the creation of new, innovative technology or tools.

- **Outcome 1.2:** Project participants increase fact-checking efforts and receive more requests, responses, and views.

    - **Potential Outputs:** Outputs may include:
        - Mentorships, fellowships, or grant opportunities that support the production of factual information by civil society, independent media representatives, and local influencers.
        - Promotion campaigns to raise awareness about new fact-checking products or tools.

    - **Potential Activities:** Activities may include:
        - Provide resources and support to project participants to increase their fact-checking experience and ability.
        - Conduct events, trainings, briefings, or social media campaigns to engage relevant populations with new fact-checking products or tools.

Objective 2: Encourage a network of global fact-checkers to share skills and expertise in fact-checking globally.

Outcome 2.1: New or expanded sustainable information sharing network(s) of fact-checkers created by identifying, engaging, and convening network partners with capacity or potential to share fact-checking skills and expertise to counter foreign propaganda and mis/disinformation.

- **Potential Outputs:** Outputs may include:
    - Collaborative fact-checking partnerships or networks.

- **Potential Activities:** Activities may include:
  - Facilitate collaborative partnerships between countries that have developed expertise in identifying and countering propaganda and disinformation and those that have not.

Outcome 2.2: New or expanded formal network partnerships created to build capacity in fact-checking to identify and expose foreign propaganda and mis/disinformation.

- **Potential Outputs:** Outputs may include:
  - New or enhanced fact-checking organizations in countries where capacity would be beneficial.

- **Potential Activities:** Activities may include:
  - Facilitate collaboration with international communities of practice.

A4. Performance Indicators

The project should monitor and report on performance indicators that are specific, measurable, achievable, reasonable, and time bound. Establish performance baseline data and expected performance targets for each expected result and include details on what sources of data will be used to document performance, how the indicators will be measured, frequency of measurement, and units of measure. Where applicable, indicators should also allow for relevant disaggregation (gender, country, cohort, etc.).

Potential indicators for this project could include:

Whole-of-Society/Resilience -

- Percent of participants in resilience activities that demonstrate an increased ability to identify disinformation.
- Number of U.S. partners and allies that seek out training or support from the GEC to conduct counter propaganda and disinformation activities.

Whole-of-Society/Resilience - Networking

- Number of individuals actively participating in a network.
- Number of organizations actively participating in a network.
- Number of participants at networking events.
- Number of new network connections.
- Percent of network members that declare intent to continue to participate in network.

Whole-of-Society/Resilience - Training

- Number of individuals trained.
- Percent of training participants that demonstrate an increase in subject matter knowledge.
- Percent of training of the trainer participants that lead subsequent trainings.
- Percent of training participants that publish content as a result of training.

Whole-of-Society/Resilience - Fact-Checking

- Number of facts checked.
- Number of requests to fact-checking organization for fact-checking.

Whole-of-Society/Resilience - Media Capacity

- Percent change in media organization or journalist capacity per GEC capacity assessment.
- Percent of trained journalist utilizing their new skills to publish investigative content.
- Percent of participating media organizations or journalists that demonstrate an increase of the reach of their content after capacity building.

Refer to Appendix 1 for additional potential performance indicators and disaggregates. All applicable output and outcome metrics should be included in the proposal and, subsequent to the award, routine, periodic reporting on all indicators will be required.

The State Department takes into consideration the quality of data reported by recipients as part of the award activities, therefore applicants should be aware that recipients will be subject to data quality assessments, which may require the sharing of draft survey and interview questions, raw data, and proof of indicator performance.

A5. Substantial Involvement

Substantial involvement in this project will include, but may not be limited to:

- Review and approval of one stage of work before another can begin
- Joint preparation and/or presentation of results with the recipient
- Approval of international travel before travel commences
- Approval of M&E tools
- Approval of training curricula/materials
- Assisting in coordination with other relevant entities including U.S. government agencies
- Review, input, and approval of other proposed activities or products associated with this cooperative agreement.

Section B. Federal Award Information

B1. Available Funding

Overall grant-making authority for this project is contained in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. GEC has funding available for a single award of up to $500,000 USD to **Support to Fact-Checking Networks**. The initial period of performance will be for 12 months. Depending on the quality of performance and other factors, GEC may consider additional supplemental funding to continue activities and extend the period of performance, if funds are available and GEC and the Recipient mutually agree.

This notice is subject to availability of funding. The U.S. Government reserves the right to make an award in excess of the award ceiling and the right to make an award below the floor outlined in this notice. The U.S. Government also reserves the right to award funding to applicants under this announcement for a period of up to two years after the application deadline.

Summary of Award Information

Type of Award	Cooperative Agreement
Fiscal Year Funds	FY 2021
Approximate Total Funding:	$500,000 USD
Approximate Number of Awards:	1
Anticipated Award Date:	June 30, 2022
Anticipated Project Completion Date:	June 29, 2023

Timeline for Award Adjudication

Deadline for Applications	April 7, 2022
Notice of Award Signing	September 30, 2022

B2. Award Management

The successful applicant awarded under this NOFO will need to routinely collaborate with relevant U.S. Government agencies, including DoS, regional bureaus, and embassies. The Recipient must ensure that all funds are used in a manner consistent with U.S. Government laws on the use of Public Diplomacy or foreign assistance funds, including any applicable restrictions on funding.

Section C. Eligibility Information

C1. Eligible Applicants

Eligibility is limited to U.S. and foreign non-profit/nongovernmental organizations, educational institutions, and commercial entities. Applicants from high-income countries are eligible to be proposed implementers or sub-implementers.

Technically eligible submissions are those which (1) arrive electronically to SAMS Domestic by the designated deadline, (2) have heeded all instructions contained in the NOFO, including length and completeness of submission, and (3) do not violate any of the guidelines stated in the solicitation and this document.

C2. Cost Share

Cost share is not required for this application.

C3. Other – Eligibility Criteria

Implementers/Sub-Implementers from High-Income Countries: Foreign assistance policies **do not preclude** organizations from high-income countries being implementers or sub-implementers.

One Submission Per Organization: Each applicant organization may submit only one application to this NOFO. Submission of more than one proposal by the same applicant organization will result in all proposals being rejected as technically ineligible.

Consortia: Organizations can apply as a consortium only if no consortium member has submitted a separate application under this NOFO.

Sub-Awards: Sub-awards will be considered under this NOFO, contingent on final approval by the Department of State. Organizations proposed as a sub-awardee in an application may also apply as a prime applicant in another application.

Previous Submissions: Re-submissions of proposals which have been evaluated and scored under another GEC NOFO within the past twelve months will not be considered.

Section D. Application and Submission Information

D1. General Guidelines and Restrictions

Please read the entire announcement carefully and follow the guidelines below before sending inquiries to GEC-Programs@state.gov or submitting proposals to SAMS Domestic.

Once the NOFO deadline has passed, GEC staff may not discuss this competition with an applicant until the proposal review process has been completed.

D2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Any prospective applicant who has questions concerning the contents of this NOFO should submit them by email to GEC-Programs@State.gov. Please refer to the funding opportunity number. Any updates about this NOFO will also be posted on SAMS Domestic.

Applicants **must i**nclude the following in the proposal submission. All submissions must be in English.

- Table of Contents that lists application contents and attachments (if any);
- Completed and signed SF-424, SF-424A and SF424B, as directed on SAMS Domestic. The Certifications and Assurances that your organization is agreeing to in signing the 424 are available at https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html;
- If your organization engages in lobbying activities, a Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL) form is required.
- Letter of Disclosure for proposed consultants/personnel (if applicable) of potential conflicts of interest, employment with a local/state/federal government; and

- Letter(s) of Institutional Support to indicate that your organization's leadership is providing their support of the application. See sample letter in Appendix 2.
- Proposal Narrative (see Narrative Components below)
- Summary and detailed line-item budget and budget narrative (see Budget Components below)

Please note: Other items NOT required for submission, but which may be requested if your application is selected to move forward in the review process include:

- Copies of relevant human resources, financial, or procurement policies
- Copies of other relevant organizational policies or documentation that would help the Department determine your organization's capacity to manage a federal award
- Completion of a pre-award organizational information sheet to determine what financial controls and standard operating procedures an organization uses to procure goods and services, hire staff and track time and attendance, pay for grant-related travel, and execute other financial transactions that may be necessary to undertake the activities in your application
- GEC reserves the right to request any additional programmatic and/or financial information regarding the proposal.

An important part of the application is the **Proposal Narrative**. The Proposal Narrative is not to exceed 15 pages, single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font in Microsoft Word, and should have one-inch margins. It should be organized using the following section headings: Executive Summary, Organizational Capacity and Past Performance, Program Strategy, Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, and Management Plan. CVs, budget components and the SF-424s do not count as part of the 15-page limit. A proposal narrative in excess of these requirements will be excluded from further consideration. The point value shown for each section indicates its relative importance in the application review process. Please see Section E for more information. Evaluation values are based on six narrative components and two budget components.

Proposal Narrative Components

1. Executive Summary

A one-page summary including: the name and contact information for the project's main point of contact; the project's purpose; targeted countries; target audience; program length (dates/duration); total funding requested (indicate any sub-grants proposed); project's goals, primary objectives and expected results (highlighting any aspects of innovation, sustainability and impact of the project); involvement or use of any NGO's or civil society organizations; sustainability; and a one-paragraph program description. **Benefitting countries are those countries or participants from countries that will receive financial or technical support as a result of this project.**

2. Organizational Capacity and Past Performance

This section of the application provides information about the applicant organization. It provides evidence that the applicant can successfully carry out the program activities of the agreement.

- Provide a description of the applicant organization – including its general purpose, goals, annual budget (including funding sources), and major past and current activities and projects undertaken.
- Discuss the applicant's experience in developing fact checking capacity in a range of countries and contexts as well as a capacity to develop networks of fact checkers globally.

- As an attachment (which does not count as part of the 15 pages), please provide at least one past performance reference which describes any contracts, grants, cooperative agreements which the applicant organization has implemented involving similar or related programs over the past three years. Please provide the reference in an attachment and include the following information: name and address of the organization for which the work was performed; current telephone number and email address of responsible representative from the organization for which the work was performed; contract/grant name and number (if any), annual amount received for each of the last three years and beginning and end dates; brief description of the project/assistance activity and key project accomplishments/results achieved to date.

3. Program Strategy

- Propose a clear and realistic implementation plan to significantly address the Program Objectives in Section A2.
- The proposal should further outline the expected and achievable results for the project which could include suggestions in Section A3. It should also outline the relevant and appropriate outputs and activities to accomplish the objectives and outcomes, which could include those found in Section A3. Explain the assumptions on which the success of the project depends, and the involvement of other stakeholders.
- In table format, please present a brief, one- to two-page work plan matrix (which does count as part of the 15 pages), with a timeline including target dates for activities for the life of the agreement, which reflects the overall program approach, and objectives. The following timeline below is provided as an example.
- The proposal should clearly explain how progress toward the program goals will be sustained after the end of the period of performance.
- The proposal should clearly explain how the program strategy is innovative, unique, or otherwise adds special value.

Primary Activities, Deliverables, and/or Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Etc.
Project Monitoring Plan (may be requested within 30 days after the start of the activity)	X					
Activity 1.1	X	X	X	X		
Activity 1.2			X	X	X	
Activity 2.1			X	X	X	
Etc.				X	X	X

4. Performance Management, Project Assessment, and Evaluation

- Discuss how progress towards the expected results will be measured, as outlined by the Performance Indicators in Section A4. Identify which performance indicators will be measured and how data on these indicators will be collected, analyzed, and used for program management. Present indicators linked to specific project outcomes or outputs in table format and include source of data and proposed frequency of collection.
    - Proposals must include a detailed plan on how the project's impact and effectiveness will be monitored and evaluated throughout the project. Successful monitoring and evaluation depends upon writing objectives that are clear, attainable, measurable, and can be achieved during the period of performance.
    - Linking project activities to stated objectives.

  - Developing performance indicators that are quantifiable, have realistic targets, and are categorized into outputs or outcomes. The recipient will be required to develop outcome indicators that capture behavior and sentiment changes among the target audience as a result of the project.
  - The recipient will be required to report to GEC on progress made towards indicator targets.

- See potential Performance Indicators in Section A4 and Appendix 1.

5. <u>Communications and Outreach Plan</u>

- Discuss how project assessment information, results, and success stories will be collected and disseminated throughout the life of the project.
- Discuss how project activities will be communicated to stakeholders to encourage continued engagement with the project.
- Identify primary channels of communication, key communication platforms, primary and secondary audiences, and communications products.
- Identify existing resources available for communications and outreach and discuss how these will be applied or improved for use in the host country
- Discuss how project activities will be coordinated between the Recipient organization, U.S. government, host government, and other stakeholders.

6. <u>Management Plan</u>

- Describe the proposed management structure for this project and provide a project organizational chart in the attachments. Include in the narrative a description of the responsibilities of all principal organizations and staff involved, reporting relationships, authority and lines of communication within and between each of these organizations, as well as communications with GEC and other USG offices as listed in section B2 of this announcement.
- Include job descriptions and CVs of key staff (Project Director, etc.) as attachments (do not count as part of the 15-page limit), which demonstrate that the proposed key staff are consistent with the requirements and needs of the project. The project should have a designated Project Director who will be expected to have lead responsibility for communicating with GEC. Note the location where key staff will be based.
- Include details of any public communications or outreach activities

Budget Components

- Refer to the Excel Budget Template for guidance on compiling a budget and associated budget narrative.
- Summary Budget in USD, in Excel, printable on letter-sized paper, using the format in the provided Excel Budget Template.
- Detailed Budget in USD in Excel, printable on letter-sized paper, using the format in the provided Excel Budget Template:
  - The budget should be for the entire project period. Successful applicants may be asked to provide a year-by-year budget after the award is signed
  - All sub-award costs should be listed under Line F, “Contractual,” and should also be broken out and organized according to the subcategories. All sub-awardees must be organizations with unique entity identifier (DUNS) numbers (certain exceptions apply).

Individual contractors should also be listed under Line F and should each be listed separately from sub-grantee line items.

- Budget Narrative (not to exceed 10 pages) that includes an explanation for each line item in the spreadsheet, as well as the source and description of all cost share offered.
- If your organization has a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, include your latest NICRA as a pdf file. Organizations that have previously established indirect cost rates must submit timely indirect cost proposals to the cognizant agency as required by Appendix III & IV of 2 CFR 200. If indirect cost proposals have not been submitted for re-negotiation as required, out-of-date NICRAs may not be considered.
- A PDF file copy of your organization's most recent program (A-133 /2 CFR 200) audit, if applicable. If not, please include a copy of your most recent independent audit, if available.

The GEC reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the GEC's program needs and availability of funds.

The Budget Components will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1. Budget Appropriateness

- Budgeted items are necessary to the achievement of the objectives and activities as presented in the proposal.

2. Cost-effectiveness

- Proposals keep estimated overhead and administrative costs as low as possible and have proposed expenditures that are reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the proposed project activities and reflect the applicant's understanding of the allowable cost principles established by Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 2 CFR 200. Amount of funding contributed by the applicant, sub-awardees, and other partners shows a commitment to the success of the project.
- As per Section C2 cost-share is not required, however, should applicants incorporate cost-share, this can be achieved through leveraging existing projects, partnering, and/or providing in-kind goods and services.

D3. Unique entity identifier (DUNS) and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is excepted from those requirements under 2 CFR §25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR §25.110(d)) is required to: (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. The Federal awarding agency may not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Federal awarding agency is ready to make a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

In addition, if the organization plans to sub-contract or sub-grant any of the funds under an award, those sub-awardees must also have a unique entity identifier (DUNS) number. (Certain exceptions apply)

Required Registrations:
All organizations applying must obtain these registrations. All are free of charge:

- Unique Identifier Number from Dun & Bradstreet (DUNS number)
- NCAGE/CAGE code
- SAM registration
- SAMS Domestic Registration

Step 1: Apply for a DUNS number and an NCAGE number (these can be completed simultaneously)

- DUNS application: Organizations must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet, if your organization does not have one already, you may obtain one by calling 1-866-705-5711 or visiting: http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/displayHomePage.do;jsessionid=81407B1F03F2BDB123DD47D19158B75F. http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform
- NCAGE application: Application page here: https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/scage/CageList.aspx
  Instructions for the NCAGE application process: https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/Docs/US%20Instructions%20for%20NSPA%20NCAGE.pdf
  For help from within the U.S., call 1-888-227-2423
  For 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: Register in SAM by logging onto https://www.sam.gov. SAM registration must be renewed annually.

Step 3: SAMS Domestic Registration:
The Department of State's SAMS Domestic provides the only portal through which applications to this opportunity will be accepted. Please refer to the SAMS Portal Info for Applicants PDF for instructions on how to register for SAMS Domestic. Please note that although this opportunity will be published on grants.gov, all applications must be submitted through the SAMS Domestic portal. Applications may not be submitted through grants.gov.

D4. Submission Dates and Times

Applicants are urged to begin the application process well before the submission deadline. No exceptions will be made for organizations that have not completed the necessary steps. All applications must be submitted by 11:59 pm Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on **Thursday, April 7, 2022.** Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

D5. Funding Restrictions

The following activities and costs are **not covered** under this announcement:

- Social welfare projects
- Paying to complete activities begun with other funds (however, new activities that build from lessons learned as the result of an earlier project are acceptable)
- Activities that appear partisan or that support individual or party electoral campaigns

- Exchange programs (however, reasonable international travel incidental to the accomplishment of program objectives will be considered)
- One-time events, such as stand-alone conferences and one-off round tables (however, a series of workshops within a larger programmatic concept are acceptable)
- Medical research and clinical studies
- Cultural presentations, cultural research, cultural clubs, or festivals, etc., and
- Entertainment (e.g., social activities, ceremonies, alcoholic beverages, guided tours)

D6. Other Submission Requirements – Proposal Format Requirements

Proposals must be submitted electronically via SAMS Domestic (https://mygrants.service-now.com).

To register to use SAMS Domestic, an organization must complete several steps, which include those registration requirements listed in D3. Completing these steps can take up to 4 weeks, especially for an international organization. Additionally, SAMS Domestic requires multi-factor authentication.

Section E. Application Review Information

E1. Criteria

Each application will be evaluated and scored on the five-part Proposal Components and the two-part Budget Components using a 100-point scale by a committee of Department of State and other experts, as appropriate.

Proposal Narrative: The committee will score each of the five sections of the Proposal Narrative based on how completely they address the bulleted points described in the Proposal Narrative Guidance in Section D2. The importance of each section is indicated by the maximum score as follows:

- Executive Summary – 5 points
- Organizational Capacity and Past Performance – 20 points
- Program Strategy – 25 points
- Performance Monitoring and Evaluation – 15 points
- Communications and Outreach Plan – 10 points
- Management Plan – 5 points

Budget: The committee will also review the budget components in order to assign up to 20 points for the overall program budget and cost-effectiveness. Proposals should keep estimated overhead and administrative costs as low as possible and have proposed expenditures that are reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the proposed project activities and reflect the applicant's understanding of the allowable cost principles established by Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 2 CFR 200. Amount of funding contributed by the applicant, sub-awardees, and other partners shows a commitment to the success of the project.

- Budget Appropriateness – 10 points
- Cost-effectiveness – 10 points

E2. Review and Selection Process

Applications will be reviewed by a technical review panel. The applications will be scored based on the strengths and weaknesses of the aforementioned categories and for consistency with the program goals and key areas of interest as contained in this NOFO.

Section F. Federal Award Administration Information

F1. Federal Award Notices

The award shall be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer subsequent to the panel review and selection of proposals. The Grants Officer is the Government official delegated the authority by the U.S. Department of State Procurement Executive to write, award, and administer grants and cooperative agreements. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document, and it will be provided to the Recipient electronically through SAMS Domestic. Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified in writing.
Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government, nor does it commit the Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the Government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

F2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Prior to applying, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award to ensure that they will be able to comply. These include 2 CFR 200, 2 CFR 600, as well as the certifications and assurances and the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, all of which are available through the State Department's procurement website at: https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/

Applicants should plan to coordinate with GEC throughout the course of the agreement to ensure assistance is provided only to eligible participants.

Banking Requirements
If the award is approved, payments may be made through the online Payment Management System (PMS). Please consult with GEC regarding how to proceed with PMS registration.

F3. Reporting

The Recipient, at a minimum, shall provide GEC with the following reports (Please note that all data collected, supporting documentation, and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the GEC upon request):

Financial Reports

The Recipient is required to submit quarterly financial reports throughout the project period, using Form FFR SF-425, the Federal Financial Report form, as well as forms suggested by the Grants Officer Representative. If payment is made through the Payment Management System, all financial reports must be submitted electronically through the Payment Management System. The grantee is also required to upload to SAMS Domestic a pdf version of all financial reports (Federal Financial report) they have submitted in the Payment Management System. Form FFR (SF-425) can be found on OMB's website here: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/post-award-reporting-forms.html#sortby=1

Financial reports are due on/before 30 days after the end of each quarter.

Progress Reporting

The awardee is required to upload all progress reports to the award file in SAMS Domestic. Progress reports must be submitted quarterly. Awardees can use the Performance Progress Report (Form SF-PPR), signed, and completed as a cover page to progress reports, which should be compiled according to the objectives, outcomes, and outputs of the project as outlined in the statement of work below, consistent with the project proposal and monitoring and evaluation and sustainability plans (Optional cover sheet for progress reporting on awards). Reports should also include an update on expenditures during the quarter. The awardee is expected to anticipate the reporting due dates by tracking implementation, outcome and financial progress throughout the reporting period. At minimum, it is expected that the quarterly progress reports will include:

- Significant activities of the period and how activities reflect progress toward achieving objectives
- Evaluation of progress on objectives with quantitative and qualitative data, as appropriate
- Any problems/challenges in implementing the project and a corrective action plan
- Evaluation of accomplishments with quantifiable information on objectives to date as available, including reporting on agreed-upon indicators
- An update on expenditures during the reporting period. Supporting documentation or products related to project activities (such as surveys, travel, etc.)
- Performance indicator results and supporting documentation, and
- Project Spotlight highlighting a significant area of progress under the agreement as well as photos of implementation

Quarterly progress reports should also reflect the awardee's continued focus on measuring the project's impact on the objectives of the projects. An assessment of the overall project impact, as appropriate, should be included in each quarterly project report.

Final Report

The final report will be due no later than 120 days after the end date of the award or termination of all project activities. The Final Report shall include the following elements:
executive summary, indicator data, successes, outcomes, best practices, how the project will be sustained, and a final financial report. Additional guidance may be provided prior to the award end date.

Section G. Federal Awarding Agency Contact

Any prospective applicant who has questions concerning the contents of this NOFO should email them to GEC-PROGRAMS@state.gov.

Note that once the Request for Proposals deadline has passed State Department staff in Washington DC and overseas at U.S. Embassies/Missions may not discuss this competition with applicants until the review process has been completed.

Section H. Other Information

H1. 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

H2. Applicant Vetting

Applicants are advised that proposals will be evaluated against the potential risk that federal funds may inadvertently be passed to the wrong hands and that funds may benefit terrorist groups or their supporters. Applicants may be asked to submit information required by DS Form 4184, Risk Analysis Information (attached to this solicitation), about their company and its principal personnel. Vetting information is also required for all sub-award performance on assistance awards identified by DOS as presenting a risk of terrorist financing. When vetting information is requested by the Grants Officer, information may be submitted on the secure web portal at: https://ramportal.state.gov, via email to RAM@state.gov, or hardcopy to the Grants Officer

Questions about the form may be emailed to RAM@state.gov. Failure to submit information when requested, or failure to pass vetting may be grounds for rejecting your proposal.

H3. Marking Policy

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 on: https://www.state.gov/about-us-office-of-the-procurement-executive/

H4. 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: http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/evaluation/2015/236970.htm. Further, recipient organizations are encouraged to conduct their own and/or independent evaluations on their Department of State funded programs to assess performance and outcomes.

H5. Guidelines for Budget Justification

Personnel: Describe the wages, salaries, and benefits of temporary or permanent staff who will be working directly for the applicant on the program, and the percentage of their time that will be spent on the program.

Fringe benefits: Calculate any allocable fringe benefits for personnel to be working directly on the program. Fringe benefits must be justified by an organization's written HR policies or NICRA.

Travel: Estimate the costs of travel and per diem for this program. If the program involves international travel, include a brief statement of justification for that travel.

Equipment: Describe any machinery, furniture, or other personal property that is required for the program, which has a useful life of more than one year (or a life longer than the duration of the program), and costs at least $5,000 per unit.

Supplies: List and describe all the items and materials, including any computer devices, that are needed for the program. If an item costs more than $5,000 per unit, then put it in the budget under Equipment.

Contractual: Describe goods and services that the applicant plans to acquire through a contract with a vendor. This includes independent consultants. Also describe any sub-awards to partners that will help carry out a substantial portion of the scope of work.

Other Direct Costs: Describe any other costs directly associated with the program, which do not fit in the other categories. For example, shipping costs for materials and equipment or applicable taxes. All "Other" or "Miscellaneous" expenses must be itemized and explained.

Indirect Costs: These are costs that cannot be linked directly to the program activities, such as overhead costs needed to help keep the organization operating. If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, attach a copy of your latest NICRA. Organizations that have never had a NICRA may request indirect costs of 10% of the modified total direct costs as defined in 2 CFR 200.68. For-profit entities with a formally established overhead rate may apply that rate.

"Cost Sharing" refers to contributions from the organization or other entities other than the U.S. Embassy. It also includes in-kind contributions such as volunteers' time and donated venues.

APPENDIX 1 – PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Below are additional potential performance indicators and disaggregates. All applicable output and outcome metrics should be included in the proposal. Subsequent to award, periodic reporting of all indicators will be required.

The State Department takes into consideration the quality of data reported by recipients as part of the award activities. Applicants should be aware that recipients will be subject to data quality assessments, which may require the sharing of draft survey and interview questions, raw data, and proof of indicator performance

Applicants must fill out this table and insert it into the proposal document (rows may be deleted for those indicators that do not pertain to the grant project). Additional indicators may be added by adding rows to the chart. All outcomes and indicators will be required to be reported upon, in keeping with the programmatic reporting due dates to be determined under the final agreement. Applicants may use smaller but legible font size in tables.

Indicators	**Related Activities**	**Methodology**	**Quarterly Targets** Add columns for all semiannual periods under the task order					**Cumulative Total Target**
List indicators relevant to the project	Related Outcome or Output Number	Describe how indicator data will be collected	**FYXX Q1**	**FYXX Q2**	**FYXX Q3**	**FYXX Q4**	**FYXX Q1**	
Percentage of fact-checking requests that receive a response	Outcome 1.1	Pre/post Test	0	0	0	0	0	80%
Number of local media outlets and CSOs that form official, publicly advertised partnerships with project implementers	Outcome 1.2	Follow up surveys and collected evidence	0	0	0	0	0	10
Number of networking tools or platforms created	Outcome. 2.1	Follow up with policy makers; monitoring of policy discussions	0	0	0	1	1	6
Number of fact-checking tools developed	Outcome 2.2	Follow up surveys and collected evidence	0	0	0	1	1	4
Percent increase in the number of fact-checking staff or volunteers	Outcome 2.2	Volunteer rosters	0	0	0	0	0	50%

(Add rows for additional indicators or delete rows for fewer indicators)								

APPENDIX 2 – SAMPLE LETTER OF INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Global Engagement Center
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

[Applicant's Institutional Letterhead]

Date

[Name of higher executive supportive of the proposal submission}
Street Address
State, and zip code

Attention: Global Engagement Center
U.S. Department of State

RE: Letter of support for NOFO SFOPXXXX

[Name of the applicant institution] is happy to endorse the proposal entitled "XXXXXXX" in response to the NOFO SFOPXXXXentitled XXXXXXX. Our organization has been working in this area for the last X years and have developed extensive expertise in selected countries/region. If you have established contacts, describe those. Briefly explain why you are interested in committing your organizational resources such as staffing and in-kind contribution in support of the NOFO goals.

If your project intends to engage in collaborative efforts through sub-awards, please explain the rationale and your institution's objective for sub-awarding funds to local organizations. If you know the local institutions, please indicate that you have worked with relevant staff and explain the areas of collaborative work.

Sincerely,

[Sr. officer of the institution]

APPENDIX 3 – EXAMPLE RESULTS CHAIN AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Below you will find an example of a results chain to support the construction of your own results chain in the NOFO application or proposal. The results chain is a critical process to follow and a necessary component of your project's overall logical framework.

The logical framework is what drives planning, performance monitoring, and evaluation, which makes it one of the most important documents in this project's lifetime. The logical framework outlines the logic of the project's theory of change, or your hypothesis of how your project activities will cause the desired change in the environment or target audience.

For instructions on how to construct a results chain, please review the detailed guidance under Section A, A1-A4 in the NOFO template.

Note: Country names and activities below are fictional and illustrative.

The main purpose of the example project is to increase the resilience of Ravkan society against state-sponsored information operations and drive institutional change towards strategic communication in Ravka by supporting and facilitating a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. Please see below for the results chain that would support this project.

<u>PROJECT OBJECTIVES</u>

Objective 1: Integrate a whole-of-government approach into Ravkan state policies and practice of key government sectors in strategic communication efforts.

Outcome 1.1: Ravkan government institutions have increased understanding of how to develop joint coordination mechanisms to conduct planning and execution of strategic communication and counter disinformation efforts.

- Output 1.1.1: Desk research reports.
    - ➢ Activity 1.1.1.1: Assessment of Ravkan government institutional and structural capacities and gaps in conducting joint strategic communications efforts through open-source desk research.
- Output 1.1.2: Key-informant interviews conducted.
    - ➢ Activity 1.1.2.1: Implementer conducts structured interviews with key personnel in Ravkan government institutions to determine counter disinformation and strategic communications planning, cooperation, and coordination needs and challenges.
- Output 1.1.3: Social media monitoring reports produced.

- Activity 1.1.3.1: Implementer collects social media monitoring data on key Ravkan governmental institutions' response capabilities to countering Fjerdan disinformation and produces a report with the findings at the beginning and end of the project.

- Output 1.1.4: Briefings with government stakeholders to share research findings

  - Activity 1.1.4.1: Conduct 3 briefings with government stakeholders to discuss research findings, implications, and recommendations.

Outcome 1.2: The capacity of Ravkan governmental institutions to design and implement strategic communication campaigns is increased.

- Output 1.2.1: Opinion polls that assess current attitudes and perceptions.

  - Activity 1.2.1.1: Implementer conducts public opinion polling and teaches Ravkan officials to increase their understanding of attitudes and perceptions of their audiences.

- Output 1.3.1: Series of message testing focus groups.

  - Activity 1.3.1.1: Ravkan government officials will test their developed messaging and campaign concepts in a series of conducted focus group discussions to evaluate the reception and impact of their messaging and make any adjustments to the counter disinformation campaign narratives.

- Output 1.4.1: Series of experimental tests in cooperation with leading strategic communication experts on narrative-building.

  - Activity 1.4.1.1: Implementer will cooperate with leading strategic communication experts to use their evidence-based techniques to assess patterns in public attitudes and provide tailored recommendations on narrative building to Ravkan government officials.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Below, you will find a glossary of key terms and definitions critical to the Monitoring and Evaluation development process.

Term	**Definition**
Activity	An activity is an action taken under a specific period of time (period of performance) to produce a specific output. Each activity should be aligned to only one output and its associated outcome and objective.

Assumptions	Factors which must be assumed for the success of the activities, outputs, and outcomes. These are hypotheses that are accepted as truths at the start of a project or program, but they may turn out to be false.
Baseline	The status of services and outcome-related measures of knowledge, attitudes, norms, behaviors, and conditions before a project begins. Baselines provide a measure against which project or program progress can be assessed.
Beneficiaries	The individuals, groups, or organizations that benefit from a project, program, or process. These will often be participants in the project.
Contextual Assumption	Those factors directly pertinent to the project that must remain the same for the project's logic to remain valid.
Data	Quantitative or qualitative information used to measure indicators, project activities (such as surveys), and project outcomes.
Evaluation	The Department of State defines evaluation as the "systematic collection and analysis of information about the characteristics and outcomes of programs, projects, and processes as a basis for judgments, to improve effectiveness, and/or inform decision-makers about current and future activities." Evaluation focuses on why changes did or did not occur, as well as question of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and impact.
Goal	The highest-order outcome or end state to which a program, project, process or policy is intended to contribute. These are the significant and long-term changes that are anticipated from the cumulative effects of projects or programs. Goals differ from objectives in that they will not necessarily be accomplished during the period of performance of a project.
Impact	A result or effect that is caused by or attributable to a program, project, process, or policy. Impact is often used to refer to higher-level effects that occur in the medium or long term and can be intended or unintended and positive or negative.
Indicator	A qualitative or quantitative variable that provides a valid and reliable metric of if the project or program achieved the expected objective, outcome, or output and is used to measure actual results against expected results. This should be a clearly defined, observable, measurable, and verifiable.
Logical Framework	What drives planning, monitoring, and evaluation, which makes it one of the most important documents in this project's lifetime. The logical framework outlines the logic of the project's theory of change, or your hypothesis of how your project activities will cause a desired change in the environment or target audience.

Method	The means of acquiring data for an indicator, such as key informant interviews, surveys, focus groups, content analysis, expert panels, direct observation, etc.
Monitoring	The collection of real-time information on context, implementation, and results to assess progress against established objectives and to inform programmatic decisions.
Objective	The changes a program, project, or process seeks to achieve Within the project's period of performance. Like outcomes, objectives are usually envisioned in chains of early, middle, and high-level desired changes. Objectives should be SMART (see definition below).
Outcome	The result, change, or effect that is caused by or attributable to project activities implemented and their outputs. Outcomes describe the changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs that are necessary preconditions for the objective to be realized. Each objective listed will have its own unique outcomes that are required to achieve the objective. Therefore, all outcomes must align logically to the objective they are meant to help achieve. Outcomes should be SMART (see definition below).
Output	A short-term, immediate results of the program, project, or process that leads to longer-term outcomes. Outputs are the products, goods, or services which results from conducting activities and are typically things that can be counted, such as reports, workshops, and campaign plans. There can only be one output that results from an activity.
Performance Standard	An articulation of what constitutes quality work by those implementing the activity.
Results	Includes the outputs, outcomes, and impact of your project. Any product or change that occurs due to project activities.
Results Chain	The part of your logical framework that outlines the project's objectives; the outcomes as the changes that must occur for the objective to be achieved; the outputs, or what needs to be created or completed to cause the outcomes to occur; and the activities, or what you plan to do over a period of time to create the respective outputs.
Risk	The potential that project or program events will not occur as was assumed which may be an impediment to the success of the project or program. Known risks are those that can be identified at the start of the project or program and mitigated. Unknown risks are those that are not foreseen
SMART (indicators, outcomes, objectives)	• *Specific* – there is a clear degree of change intended to occur within a stated population • *Measurable* – there is only one change in the indicator, and it is feasible to collect data on this factor in a reasonable amount of time and in a cost-effective manner

	• *Accurate* – the indicator is a direct signal of the change, which is often context-specific • *Reliable* – different people would all be able to draw a similar conclusion through data collection and/or interpretation of the indicator's language (do not provide jargon without definitions) • *Time-Bound* – the indicator includes a specific timeframe
Target	The amount of change expected within a specific timeframe. Targets are usually applied to indicators and are a benchmark of what the project hopes to achieve.
Target Audience	The specific group which a project or intervention seeks to affect in order to change the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs of the group. The better defined a target audience is, the more likely the project is to accomplish its objectives.
Theory of Change (TOC)	The hypothesis of how your project activities will cause a desired change in the environment or target audience. The TOC contains the casual and contextual assumptions on which the project's logic rests. The TOC should draw on current knowledge about how such changes unfold, adapted to the project context. The hypothesis and the assumptions you make in your project's design need to be tested throughout the life of the award to ensure the project is having the desired effect.

APPENDIX 4 – ELIGIBLE BENEFITTING COUNTRIES

East Asia Pacific

- Burma
- Cambodia
- Fiji
- Indonesia
- Laos
- Malaysia
- Mongolia
- Papua New Guinea
- Philippines
- Thailand
- Timor-Leste
- Vietnam

Europe and Eurasia

- Albania
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Bulgaria
- Montenegro
- Turkey

Near East

- Egypt
- Jordan
- Morocco

South Central Asia

- India
- Kazakhstan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Maldives
- Nepal
- Pakistan
- Sri Lanka
- Tajikistan
- Uzbekistan

Sub-Saharan Africa

- Angola
- Benin
- Cameroon
- Kenya
- Liberia
- Senegal
- Tanzania

Western Hemisphere

- Argentina
- El Salvador
- Haiti
- Peru