

Department of State- U.S. Embassy Kabul

Program Office: Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy Kabul
Funding Opportunity Title: Management and Establishment of Lincoln Learning Centers in Afghanistan
Announcement Type: Cooperative Agreement
Funding Opportunity Number: SCAPPD-10-CA-001-SCA-100509
Deadline for Applications: November 16, 2009
CFDA 00.0000

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the United States information and education exchange act of 1948, Public Law 80-402 22 USC, key statute at Section 501 (a), also known as the Smith-Mundt Act. The purpose of the Act is “provide for interchanges between the United States and other countries of books and periodicals, including government publications, for the translation of such writings, and for the preparation, distribution, and interchange of other educational materials.” The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

CONTACT INFORMATION

- A) For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726.
- B) For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation or to request a Solicitation Package, contact Grachel Kubaitis in the Office of Press and Public Diplomacy, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, 2201 C Street, NW Washington, D.C. 20520, telephone: 202-647-8124; fax: 202-647-6589 email: KubaitisGJ@state.gov. Please refer to the Funding Opportunity Number SCAPPD-10-CA-001-SCA-100509 located at the top of this announcement when making your request.

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul announces an open competition for a cooperative agreement to coordinate logistics associated with establishing and administering Lincoln Learning Centers during the period of January 5, 2010 to May 31, 2011. Lincoln Learning Centers are information and program venues located in non-U.S. government sites throughout Afghanistan. Locations of the new Lincoln Learning Centers will be determined by the U.S. Embassy. Lincoln Learning Centers help maintain open dialogue and build bridges of understanding, representing the nation's long-standing commitment to spread the ideas and values of American democracy and civil society. Materials, hardware, furnishings, and renovation costs will be supplied by U.S. Embassy Kabul.

Administration and National Policy Perspective

The U.S. Government (USG) is providing resources to promote diplomatic solutions, through language training, critical skills development and other public diplomacy programs. These resources support the people, platforms and programs necessary to meet the international challenges to American security and welfare.

II. BACKGROUND

Lincoln Learning Centers are part of the worldwide American Corners network. They are dedicated information and program spaces hosted in schools, libraries and other partner institutions in Afghanistan. The heart of a Lincoln Learning Center is its commitment to provide public diplomacy programs that engage various local audiences. Most offer collections of books, magazines, music, on- and off-line databases, publicly accessible computer work stations and an area for small programs.

Objectives

To serve as "outside-the-wire" programming platforms offering English language classes, libraries, programming venues, and educational and other counseling services. The goal is to reach 5,000 Afghan citizens per month per location.

Lincoln Learning Centers are particularly important venues to show a non-military/non-security side of the United States, and to do capacity building in Afghanistan. In some locations, the Lincoln Learning Center is the only place training and workshops can happen due to the country's infrastructure challenges.

Core Characteristics of a Lincoln Learning Center

1. Status is covered by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), drafted and signed by the Embassy and the Afghan Provincial government which outlines the shared commitment and respective responsibilities of each institution;
2. Collections of information on the U.S. such as books, IIP publications, CD-ROMs, periodicals, videos, DVDs, and posters, which are publicly accessible (at least 800 titles);
3. Reference desk that is modeled on American public library service;
4. Supervised public computer and Internet access;
5. Multifunctional program platform;
6. A minimum of two programs per month in addition to regular classes and workshops;
7. Staff that is almost always conversant in English; and
8. Provision of free Internet and training to members of the community.

Lincoln Learning Centers in Afghanistan, on the average, have the following characteristics:

- Good location and easy public access
- Minimum of approximately 150 square meters;
- Library - minimum of 18 square meter of book shelf space;
- Library - 800 books (minimum);
- Venue for programs to accommodate 30 seats;
- 10 Computer work stations;
- Furniture (reading tables, chairs, book shelves, etc.);
- Equipment (UPS units, printer, copier, scanner, digital camera, heaters, TV, etc.)

Lincoln Learning Centers currently exist in eight locations around Afghanistan: Bamyan, Gardez, Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul University, Khost, Kunduz, and Mazar-e-Sharif. An additional Lincoln Learning Center is scheduled to open in the Women's Garden in Kabul in the next few months.

Current plans call for placing nine new Lincoln Learning Centers in Badghis, Parwan, Takhar, Nuristan, Paktika, Helmand, Farah, Ghazni, and Kandahar. The U.S. Embassy plans to open one new Lincoln Learning Center approximately every two months. Note that the U.S. Embassy reserves the right to change these proposed locations and timetable at any time.

For calculating budgets, applicants should take into consideration the following timetable for new Lincoln Learning Centers.

Province	Opening Date	Administration Costs – Average Cost Per Month in U.S. dollars	Administration Costs – # of Months Covered by Cooperative Agreement
Badghis	January 2010	\$3,500	17
Parwan	February 2010	\$3,500	16
Takhar	April 2010	\$3,500	14
Nuristan	June 2010	\$3,500	12
Paktika	August 2010	\$3,500	10
Helmand	October 2010	\$3,500	8
Farah	December 2010	\$3,500	6
Ghazni	February 2011	\$3,500	4
Kandahar	April 2011	\$3,500	2

The State Department anticipates that this timetable could change. Budgets will be renegotiated at the time of such changes.

Scope of Award

PAS and the award recipient would agree to participate jointly in the management of the Lincoln Learning Centers. Each party would have specific obligations and responsibilities under the terms of the Cooperative Agreement which are outlined below.

1. *The award recipient shall provide the following overall support:*
 - A. Establishing and administering nine new Lincoln Learning Centers during the period of January 5, 2010 to April 30, 2011. This support will include overseeing the renovation of the sites, selected by the U.S. Embassy, to house the Centers.
 - B. Administering nine Lincoln Learning Centers that are operating as of October 31, 2009, for the period of February 1, 2010 to May 31, 2011.

2. *The award recipient shall provide the following support for each Lincoln Learning Center:*
 - A. Employ two qualified full-time staff members, selected by PAS, to oversee each Lincoln Learning Center, formally outline and sign their terms of employment and pay their monthly salaries in a timely manner. The first staff member is the Lincoln Learning Center Coordinator, responsible for overall management of the site and programming held at

- the Center. The second staff member assists the Coordinator, and is often dedicated to computer services.
- B. Pay for general maintenance, security and additional utilities that are not covered by the MOU.
 - C. Provide regular oversight of the Lincoln Learning Centers including quarterly assessment visits addressing the management, administrative and maintenance concerns at each site.
 - D. Negotiate with outside vendors, establish and sign contracts and pay for services.
 - E. Establish a standard list of office supplies required by the Coordinators, purchase supplies as necessary and distribute accordingly.
 - F. Oversee the management of revenues generated from the Lincoln Learning Center services and the use of provided equipment, ensuring that funds are reinvested in equipment maintenance and supplies.
 - G. Build the capacity of Afghan citizens to manage public access information centers without foreign-based assistance.
 - H. Submit itemized monthly reports to the U.S. Embassy on program activities and budgets for each Lincoln Learning Center.
 - I. Submit itemized quarterly financial reports and an end-of-year full report.

The U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section (PAS) shall provide the following support:

1. Identify Government partners and select locations throughout Afghanistan.
2. Establish signed Memoranda of Understanding outlining responsibilities of Government partners in consultation with the Recipient.
3. Cover initial renovation costs for Lincoln Learning Centers.
4. Provide furniture and furnishings for the Lincoln Learning Centers.
5. Purchase computer equipment and pay for continuous internet connection to the Lincoln Learning Centers.
6. Select staff members.
7. Provide and maintain the inventory of an information resource collection including books, periodicals, DVD's and CD-ROM's about the United States.
8. Develop and continually review programming presented at the Lincoln Learning Centers to ensure programs support U.S. objectives and are pertinent to Afghan audiences.
9. At PAS discretion and with Recipient guidance, PAS will replace damaged or outdated electronic equipment to ensure continued services and information access to patrons.

10. When possible, PAS agrees to provide funds for travel, per diem, and tuition for Lincoln Learning Center staff to attend relevant training programs at locations in Afghanistan or abroad.
11. Produce and provide appropriate public diplomacy materials for free distribution to patrons.
12. Review monthly budget expenditures.
13. Cover extra-ordinary costs associated with building maintenance or security enhancements
14. Ensure that security for operating Lincoln Learning Centers is provided by the provincial and local governments.

III. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Eligibility is limited to not-for-profit organizations subject to 501 (c) (3) of the U.S. tax code or registered as a non-profit organization in the entity's home country.
- Direct funding for non-U.S. entities IS available under this announcement.
- The Department encourages organizations that have not previously received international program funding from the U.S. Government to apply under this announcement.
- Applicants must have demonstrated experience in the following subject areas:
 - Working in Afghanistan, especially with vendors, suppliers, contractors, etc.
 - Working in the cultural, library or educational fields
 - Management of budgets and human resources, and
 - Development and implementation of a program.
- Organizations must have appropriately staffed offices in Afghanistan as of the date of application.
- Expertise and established relationships with indigenous NGOs and/or local officials in the countries in which the programs will be conducted will be considered favorably.

- Organizations with a majority Afghan staff will be given special consideration.

Cost Sharing or Matching

This program does not require cost sharing.

Other Special Eligibility Criteria

Not Applicable.

IV. AWARD INFORMATION

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement

Fiscal Year Funds: 2009 Supplemental

Approximate Total Funding: \$1,950,000 pending availability of funds, this includes costs of U.S. Embassy support outlined in this solicitation.

Approximate Number of Awards: 1

Anticipated Award Date: Pending availability of funds, January 3, 2010

Anticipated Project Completion Date: May 31, 2011

Additional Information:

Pending successful implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, it is the Embassy's intent to renew this cooperative agreement, with possible amendments, for up to four additional fiscal years, before openly competing it again.

APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A pre-application teleconference will be offered on October 27, 2009, prior to the closing date for this announcement. The purpose of the pre-application teleconference is to review the program announcement and discuss the project with the U.S. Embassy Kabul before submitting a proposal. Please submit all questions by October 19, 2009 to Grachel Kubaitis, KubaitisGJ@state.gov. She will contact you with the exact time of the teleconference and provide you with any materials needed for the meeting.

Application Submission Process: Applicants must submit proposals electronically using Grants.gov. Thorough instructions on the Grants.gov application process are available at <http://www.grants.gov>. For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726.

For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation or to request a Solicitation Package, contact Grachel Kubaitis, Grants Program Specialist, in the Office of Press and Public Diplomacy, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, 2201 C Street, NW, Room 4440, Washington, D.C. 20520, telephone: (202) 647-8124, fax: (202) 647-6589, email: KubaitisGJ@state.gov. Please refer to the Funding Opportunity Number SCAPPD-10-CA-001-SCA-100509 located at the top of this announcement when making your request.

Application Deadline: All applications must be submitted on or before November 16, 2009, 11:59 p.m. eastern time. Applications submitted after 11:59 p.m. will be ineligible for consideration. **Begin the application process early**, as this will allow time to address any technical difficulties that may arise in advance of the deadline. There will be no exceptions to this application deadline.

All applicants must register with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application. **Registering with Grants.gov is a one-time process; however, it could take as long as two weeks to have the registration validated and confirmed. Please begin the registration process immediately to ensure that the process is completed well in advance of the deadline for applications.** Until that process is complete, you will not be issued a user password for Grants.gov, which is required for application submission. There are four steps that you must complete before you are able to register:

1. Obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet (if your organization does not have one already) by calling 1-866-705-5711;
2. Register with Central Contractor Registry (CCR);
3. Register yourself as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR); and
4. Be authorized as an AOR by your organization. For more information, go to www.grants.gov. Please note that your CCR registration must be annually renewed. Failure to renew your CCR registration may prohibit submission of a grant application through Grants.gov.

Application Content: Applicants must follow the RFP instructions and conditions contained herein and supply all information required. **Failure to furnish all information or comply with stated requirements will result in disqualification from the competition.** Applicants must set forth full, accurate, and complete information as required by this RFP. The penalty for making false statements in proposals to the USG is prescribed on 18 U.S.C.1001.

The proposals may not exceed 8 double-spaced pages in 12-point, Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins. This requirement excludes the allowable appendices, which are identified in Section 6 below. Organizations are permitted to submit multiple proposals, but should be aware that SCA/PPD seeks to provide opportunities to as many organizations as possible, and is unlikely to fund an organization to work in more than one location.

The proposal must consist of the following:

Section 1 - Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424):

This form can be found on-line at:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/forms.html>.

Section 2 - Abstract:

The abstract is limited to 300 words in length. It must provide a summary of the identified need, proposed activities, and expected results.

Section 3 - Problem Statement:

The problem statement must describe the need for the project, with regards to: location, local resources, and regional educational challenges. This statement should also identify the demographic target for the Lincoln Learning Centers.

Section 4 – Project Objectives/Implementation Plan:

The applicant must specify the goals and objectives of the project, relative to the problem statement. The proposed activities should be described in sufficient detail to show how objectives and goals will be met. This section should also describe how success will be measured via performance indicators. Finally, this section must include a time-task plan that clearly identifies the objectives and major activities.

Section 5 - Organizational Capability:

Applications must include a clear description of the applicant's management structure, and organizational experience and background in Afghanistan as these relate to the proposed activities. The description should include information on the logistical strengths of the organization in Afghanistan, i.e. offices, vehicles, infrastructure, security, etc. Besides information about the organization as a whole, this section must also identify the proposed management structure and staffing plan for the proposed project. The proposal should include a statement on how security would be provided for recipient staff members. While the award recipient is

responsible for providing their own security, related expenses may be included in the proposal budget.

Section 6 - Appendices:

The concept paper submission must include three appendices. Only the appendices listed below may be included as part of the application:

- (a) **Budget (Required)** – the budget must identify the total amount of funding requested, with a breakdown of amounts to be spent in the following budget categories: personnel; travel; equipment; supplies; consultants/contracts; other direct costs; and indirect costs. The budget may not exceed 1 page in length, and may include an estimated cost for continuation activities, which will be considered for successful applicants to this RFP in future fiscal years based on performance and the availability of funds. Budget may include security requirements.
- (b) **Resume (Required)** – a resume, not to exceed 1 page in length, must be included for the proposed key staff persons, such as the Project Director and any other staff in decision-making positions.

V. AWARD SELECTION CRITERIA

Consistent with the federal grant regulations, the Department reserves the right to give priority for its funds to those organizations working on key USG objectives that are and have been supportive, in policy and programs, of USG policies on Public Diplomacy.

Evaluation Criteria: Applicants should note that the following criteria (1) serve as a standard against which all proposals will be evaluated, and (2) serve to identify the significant matters that should be addressed in all proposals. The USG will award grants to the applicants whose offers represent the best value to the USG on the basis of technical merit and cost.

Each application will be evaluated by a peer review committee of Department of State and other experts, as deemed appropriate. The evaluation criteria have been tailored to the requirements of this RFP.

- **Problem Statement (10 points):** This section should identify the importance and relevance of the applicant’s proposal to the broader U.S. Public Diplomacy policy objectives as well as relevance to the program objectives of the Department of State as described under the first two Sections of this solicitation. A compelling statement on the approach to the

establishment of the Lincoln Learning Centers, will be given great consideration by the review panel.

- **Implementation Plan (30 points):** Applicants should describe what they propose to do and how they will do it. The proposed activities must directly relate to meeting the goals and objectives, and applicants should include information on how they will measure activities' effectiveness. The review panel will be viewing the implementation plan in terms of how well it addresses the problem statement, relevance of the goals and objectives, feasibility of the proposed activities and their timeline for completion, and the extent to which the impact of the project will continue beyond the conclusion of the funding period. As relates to point #8 on page 6, the review panel will be interested in seeing practical and innovative plans including partnering with Afghan organizations; the hiring of Afghan staff and/or providing training on library or education related topics. In developing these plans applicants should consider including staff from other relevant organizations in the same geographical area as the Lincoln Learning Center, such as public libraries or cultural centers.

- **Organizational Capability (35 points):** Applicants must demonstrate how their resources, capabilities, and experience will enable them to achieve the stated goals and objectives. In addition, applicants should describe how and with whom they will collaborate to meet project goals. The application must distinguish all key partners and organizations that will be involved in the establishment of the Lincoln Learning Centers.

- **Appendices (25 points):**
 - **Budget:** Costs shall be evaluated for realism, control practices, and efficiency. The Department of State must determine that the costs paid for this award are reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the proposed project activities. This will consist of a review of the Budget to determine if the overall costs are realistic for the work to be performed, if the costs reflect the applicant's understanding of the allowable cost principles established by OMB Circular A-122 and if the costs are consistent with the program narrative.
 - **Resume:** The review panel will consider the appropriateness of the selected project director, in view of the role and responsibility that person will play in guiding the project through implementation to completion. Position descriptions submitted in lieu of the resume will

be reviewed for the appropriateness of the qualifications and skills identified.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Award Notices: The co-operative agreement shall be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. 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 through either mail or facsimile transmission. Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified in writing.

Issuance of this RFP 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.

- **Reporting Requirements:** Grantees are required to submit quarterly program progress and financial reports throughout the project period. Progress and financial reports are due 30 days after the reporting period. Final programmatic and financial reports are due 90 days after the close of the project period. Progress reports at a minimum should be submitted via electronic mail to an address to be provided in the award.

VII. DISCLAIMER

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with the award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of the Department of State.