Issue Date:	March 15, 2019
Deadline for Question:	April 5, 2019 09:00 a.m. Almaty Time
Closing Date:	May 15, 2019 09:00 a.m. Almaty Time
Closing Time:	17:00 p.m. Almaty Time
Subject:	Notice of Funding Opportunity Number: 72011519RFA00005
Program Title:	Regional Civil Society Program in Central Asia

Ladies/Gentlemen:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is seeking applications for a Cooperative Agreement from qualified entities to implement the Regional Civil Society Program in Central Asia. Eligibility for this award is restricted to qualified U.S. and Non-U.S. organizations.

USAID intends to make an award to the applicant(s) who best meets the objectives of this funding opportunity based on the merit review criteria described in this NOFO subject to a risk assessment. Eligible parties interested in submitting an application are encouraged to read this NOFO thoroughly to understand the type of program sought, application submission requirements and selection process.

To be eligible for award, the applicant must provide all information as required in this NOFO and meet eligibility standards in Section C of this NOFO. This funding opportunity is posted on www.grants.gov, and may be amended. It is the responsibility of the applicant to regularly check the website to ensure they have the latest information pertaining to this notice of funding opportunity and to ensure that the NOFO has been received from the internet in its entirety. USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion process. If you have difficulty registering on www.grants.gov or accessing the NOFO, please contact the Grants.gov Helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or via email at support@grants.gov for technical assistance.

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements detailed in Section D. The registration process may take many weeks to complete. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to begin registration early in the process.

Please send any questions to the point(s) of contact identified in Section D. The deadline for questions is shown above. Responses to questions received prior to the deadline will be furnished to all potential applicants through an amendment to this notice posted to www.grants.gov.

Issuance of this notice of funding opportunity does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government nor does it commit the Government to pay for any costs incurred in preparation

or submission of comments/suggestions or an application. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Thank you for your interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

/s/

Jonathan Chappell
Regional Agreement Officer

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SECTION A: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This funding opportunity is authorized under the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, as amended. The resulting award will be subject to 2 CFR 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, and USAID's supplement, 2 CFR 700, as well as the additional requirements found in Section F.

Background and Context

Since the 1990s, USAID has played a critical role in supporting the development of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Central Asia through building the basic capacity of various organizations and institutions and helping them to obtain the necessary knowledge and skills to participate in their countries' systems and policy development processes. Throughout the last two decades, USAID initiated and funded numerous projects to support the Central Asian civil society sector as broadly as possible.

USAID's support to civil society in Central Asia has focused on several different elements of civil society strengthening, including: basic and advanced capacity building; the development of intermediate support organizations to provide support and training to grassroots CSOs in the region; support for policy advocacy efforts; improving the legal and regulatory environment for CSOs; forging connections between CSOs and private sector / government stakeholders; and expanding citizen access to civically-relevant information. These programs have primarily been implemented by international implementing partners, but in recent years, USAID/CA has expanded the number of activities implemented directly by host country partners.

While the governments of the Central Asian countries have pledged support for the development of CSOs, the political and operational environment remains volatile. Organizations critical of government actors often face repression. To differing degrees, all four countries have challenges with the legal enabling environment for non-governmental, non-commercial organizations. Registration procedures for CSOs across the region remain complex and burdensome and need further improvement. Almost everywhere in Central Asia, local organizations and foreign CSOs are facing increased government scrutiny. Governments in Central Asia are increasingly using tax and other administrative legislation to exercise control over CSOs' activities.

Government financial support and umbrella organization oversight of NGOs in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan means that many organizations are not independent from the state. At the same time, the governments of all Central Asian states are taking some measures to become increasingly receptive to including civil society organizations in policy and decision-making processes, such as participation in parliamentary working group meetings on draft legislation and policies and media monitoring of judicial proceedings.

Although civil society in Central Asia is still far from the ideal of a network of independent, voluntary associations that mediate between citizens and the state, there has been progress over the last ten years in terms of building government and citizen trust in CSOs and developing CSO capacity for service delivery. USAID has identified several areas where its assistance could contribute to a more effective and sustainable civil society sector: improving transparency for advocacy; fostering a new generation of civically oriented citizens; and promoting new models for civil society financing.

Country context with regard to civil society development

Geographical coverage: This will be a regional award with at least some activities taking place in all participating countries. Participating countries will include Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Specific interventions will be determined based on individual country contexts and bilateral priorities, while not all components will be applicable and implementable in all of the participating countries. Activities in the Kyrgyz Republic are not initially included in this activity, but they may be added later depending on USAID funding and priorities.

Kazakhstan

Over the last 10 years, Kazakhstan has had a mixed record in terms of civil society promotion. On the one hand, the government has shown an increasing commitment to the civil society sector, establishing dedicated funding for CSOs through the "state social contracting" mechanism to implement public service projects. The government has also launched numerous events, such as the annual "Civil Forum" highlighting the role of CSOs in providing social services, or the "Asar Forum" focused on "tri-lateral" collaboration between the private sector, government, and CSOs. The government has also encouraged the formation of "public councils" which bring together civil society actors to serve as advisory bodies to state entities.

However, the government's support to CSOs remains largely limited to groups focused on delivering services to vulnerable populations (e.g. orphans, elderly, disabled), and there is little political will to enable CSOs to hold government entities accountable. As the capacity of CSOs to deliver services has developed, so has their dependence on the government. While positive from a service delivery perspective, this has simultaneously undermined to some extent the legitimacy and operating environment for independent CSOs

Moreover, some CSO actors believe that despite recent State initiatives aimed at supporting civil society, the government's consultation of civil society may have actually declined. Although CSOs in Kazakhstan are now part of many consultative and advisory bodies jointly composed of governmental and non-governmental entities, the CSOs advisory capacity is not enforced by any formal mechanisms and the technical advice of CSOs sometimes goes unheeded.

Tajikistan

Civil society in Tajikistan is confronted with a number of challenges. In addition to the operating environment for CSOs in Tajikistan becoming more restrictive over the last 10 years, the Government of Tajikistan has not developed a legal operating environment that would foster financial sustainability of the non-profit sector. Other than foreign donors, Tajikistan's CSOs have few options to finance their work, which leads to the reduction of active CSOs due to shrinking donor funding, especially in rural areas. Government funding of civil society is scarce and eligibility to receive it is limited to CSOs working with people with disabilities and the elderly, individual women entrepreneurs, and the government-affiliated youth groups and associations. CSOs engaging on other topics and those receiving foreign funding must be careful to avoid sensitive topics. The traditional civil society sector is aging, and the younger generation appears less interested in working in the non-profit sector.

Turkmenistan

Civil society in Turkmenistan faces both unique and similar challenges to those of other civil society actors in the region. The legal enabling environment for CSOs in Turkmenistan is complicated and limits the possibilities for CSOs to be responsive to citizen needs. Funding opportunities for civil society are also constrained--in part because of the complex structure of grant registration put in place by the government, and in part due to a rapidly shrinking donor pool in country. In addition, due to the previous prevalence and continued presence of GONGOs, CSOs are viewed with suspicion by much of the population. CSOs must be creative in identifying opportunities for engagement that will be responsive to the government's interests and the needs of citizens.

Uzbekistan

While the operational environment in Uzbekistan remains challenging for CSOs, direct engagement by the USG with the Government of Uzbekistan (GOU) has helped facilitate activity development and implementation. The GOU continues to express willingness to cooperate with CSOs, and as a result, in 2018, the government began strengthening social partnerships between government entities and CSOs. In 2018, the Law on Parliamentary Control was adopted as part of the overall "openness" reform. It has the potential to increase the transparency of Parliament and government bodies. In addition, government decrees have called for the establishment of public councils in which civil society will have a significant role, the creation of the Advisory Council to the President on Civil Society development, and the creation of "Houses for NGOs." On May 4, 2018, the Presidential Decree on Significant Increase of the Role of CSOs in the Democratic Renewal Process was passed, lifting the requirement for CSOs to receive prior approval from the GOU for their activities. Rather, CSOs will only need to inform the MOJ on their plans. The GOU also lifted a legal requirement that mandated CSOs obtain approval prior to the receipt of any

assets from foreign sources. This has significantly improved the operating environment for Uzbek CSOs working with the USG.

Although the legal environment for civil society is slowly improving, challenges remain. For example, one law allows the GOU to receive information about CSOs from banks, reportedly because such information is deemed necessary for the GOU to ensure compliance and enforcement of law. The August 8, 2018, Ministry of Justice (MOJ) Regulation on Monitoring and Studying Activities of NGOs by Justice Bodies, and the October 23, 2018, Cabinet of Ministers Decree # 854, impose additional requirements on local and international NGOs which might have a negative impact on their operations in the country. For instance, if an NGO did not inform the MOJ about a change of its postal address within three days of such a change, then it is considered a violation of the law. The administrative procedure on conducting inspections provides the MOJ with broad authority to initiate and conduct inspections of NGOs' activities. Specifically, the procedure contains a broad list of reasons for inspections of NGOs' activities, including scheduled inspections by the MOJ; appeals from individuals to the MOJ regarding violation of their rights; and news posted in mass media, including on the internet.

Problem Statement

Problem: attracting a new generation to social and civic advocacy. USAID has traditionally focused on building the capacity of formal organizations. However, recent trends and developments in the sector indicate a fair amount of informal and youth-led advocacy in the region. Young people in Central Asia coordinate and share information through social media but tend to lose interest in more formal or longer-term advocacy efforts. Additionally, websites in all of the Central Asian countries can be shut down and they are not always accessible in rural areas; thus, there is a need for public spaces and resource centers where like-minded young people can gather, share ideas, learn soft skills, find resources, and learn from each other. American Corners and CSO co-working spaces are recognized as examples of best models for community leaders and civic advocacy organizers to convene and plan their efforts.

Problem: lack of access to information for advocacy, policy making, and program implementation. Currently, there is limited information available for community advocacy leaders and traditional CSOs on how to conduct policy advocacy or public awareness raising campaigns, especially for those working in rural areas or on issues of environmental protection. Professional policy think tanks have low capacity and often fail to produce quality, fact-based analyses and public policy research. In both cases, better access to information can improve the watchdog function of CSOs and enhance their contribution to policy adoption and implementation. There is also a need in all target countries for higher education on non-profit administration and policy research. On the positive side, some Central Asian governments are turning to civil society organizations to inform policy at the local and national level and have international commitments

to transparency that provide an opening to help CSOs and civic initiatives function independently both in a watchdog and policy expert capacity.

Problem: institutional development and sustainability. Across Central Asia, CSOs have limited capacity to raise funds from sources other than international donors or government funding, to start and run social enterprises, and to effectively communicate with their supporters. In this light, CSOs across the region are in need of support to strengthen their organizational and technical capacities in planning, programming, mobilization of resources, and building relationships with supporters and constituencies. It is critical to help CSOs increase their productivity, enhance their impact, and increase the likelihood that an organization will survive long enough to have a lasting effect on society.

These problems suggest that there is a need to reinvigorate civil society in Central Asia by identifying new approaches to address the ongoing, critically important need for a strengthened civil society responsive to the current environment in the region. Importantly, this mechanism should be flexible in nature and able to contract or expand depending on funding realities and strategic priorities.

Theory of Change

Priority countries for this activity are Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The Kyrgyz Republic may be included in this activity depending on funding and other programmatic considerations.

If we continue to build on USAID's investments in promoting the creation and development of civil society in Central Asia;

If we employ a combination of traditional and innovative approaches to strengthen and empower civil society; and

If we increase citizens' understanding of and appreciation for the role that civil society can play;

Then, civil society's ability to fulfill its role and advance the objectives of rights and equitable development for all citizens of Central Asia will be strengthened.

Results Framework
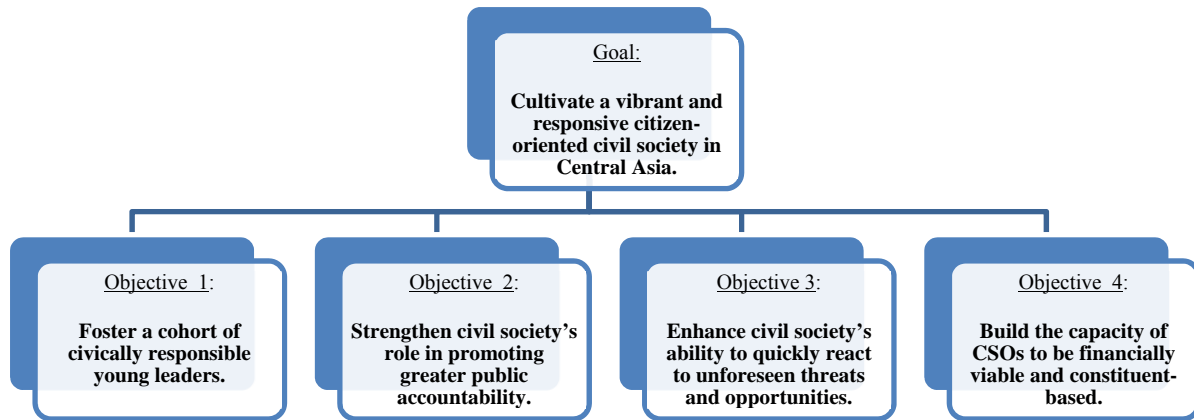
Goal and Objectives:

Goal **- Cultivate a vibrant and responsive citizen-oriented civil society in Central Asia.**

Historically, CSOs in Central Asia came into existence as a result of funding opportunities provided by western donors following the dissolution of the USSR, rather than in a traditional or so called "evolutionary" way as they emerged in western democracies. The significant amount of foreign aid that flowed into the Central Asian countries during the immediate Post-Soviet period stimulated the growth of CSOs in the region, thus providing a vehicle for different groups and individuals to play an active role in addressing socio-economic issues and promoting human development within their countries. Over time, however, the CSO sector has been negatively affected by increasingly limited funding opportunities, shifting attitudes of the governments to CSOs, a lack of public understanding of the role of CSOs, and limited engagement of young people in the CSO sector.

Given these challenges, it is critical to foster a mutually beneficial relationship so that both government and civil society entities recognize the value and role of the other. Civil society can help government to further develop and propagate concepts of national unity, indigenous values, and civic engagement. Governments can benefit from working with civil society to provide

improved services and more transparent and accountable governance. There is an increasing need to build the capacity of civil society organizations to improve their long-term sustainability and help them build the needed skills to establish broader constituencies and expand the base of civic participation. Furthermore, it is essential to engage young people in civic engagement and advocacy to promote positive development and government responsiveness on issues most relevant to citizens.

Cross-cutting Approaches – regional coordination, networking and peer learning will form the cross-cutting foundation of the program's technical approach that is modeled through capacity building activities, communities of practice, roundtables, study tours, conferences, meetings and other necessary relationship-building processes.

Objective 1: Foster a cohort of civically responsible young leaders.

Critical Assumptions:

- There is the need to attract a new generation to civic advocacy.
- There is a fair amount of informal advocacy in the Central Asia region.
- Young people tend to share information and coordinate on social media and often lose interest in more formal or longer-term advocacy efforts.
- In rural areas in particular, there is a need for public spaces and resource centers where like-minded young people can gather, share ideas, learn soft skills, find resources, and learn from each other.

The main focus of this program component will be on those who were born and raised in newly established countries - after the breakdown of the Soviet Union. The United Nations world population database estimates that approximately 30% of the Central Asian population is between 15 and 29 years of age: in Kazakhstan young people constitute 24.5% of the population, in Tajikistan this number is around 29.5%, in Turkmenistan 27.9% and in Uzbekistan youth makes up 29% of the country's population. Central Asian youth are worthy of attention for several reasons: they were born and raised when serious geopolitical changes took place in their countries; they experienced political, social and economic transformations from communist to free-market societies; and compared to their parents' generation, they have higher rates of illiteracy, unemployment, poor health, drug use and are more prone to be victims or instigators of violence.

Many young Central Asians say they want to leave their countries, and a growing number do migrate for work and permanent settlement to Russia, Turkey, South Korea, Eastern Europe, the United States, and other countries. Such migration dynamics are characterized by large flows of mainly unskilled workers from Central Asian states to more economically prosperous countries. However, over the past few years, there has been a noticeable increase in skilled workers leaving their home countries in search of a better quality of life thus increasing the magnitude of the 'brain drain' in the region. This situation is of growing concern because of its negative impact on the economy and governance systems in Central Asian countries.

At the same time young people are searching for role models in society and for ways to make their communities a better place in which to live. Although the practice of advocacy, civic engagement and volunteerism is not very popular among Central Asian youth, this pattern is gradually changing with more youth becoming involved in volunteering and causes like charity events, social movements and unpaid community work. The growing power of the internet, social media, and networks has played a significant role in promoting civic engagement among young people, which helps them to share information and organize themselves to implement socially useful activities and projects. Therefore, it is critical for well-established and mature civil society organizations to engage with youth leaders who pursue the same goals, that of serving communities, promoting positive social changes, and bringing citizen concerns to Governments with the intention of finding common ground and identify opportunities to work together.

USAID's partner will work to identify young leaders and community advocates throughout Central Asia to provide opportunities for them to engage and develop their leadership skills. Activities under this component are expected to support civic education and empowerment of the Central Asia youth population. Activities should seek opportunities to engage local governments in these efforts. The implementer is expected to identify and build into the design of this activity sustainability factors.

Illustrative Activities:

- Education about civil society for young leaders and social advocates/CSOs jointly with their local government officials and representatives of the business community.
- Youth spaces in different parts of the countries with resource libraries, café space, and training in soft skills for civic advocacy and business, social entrepreneurship, fundraising, etc. This could be a permanent facility, utilization of an existing venue (ex. American Spaces), or a traveling salon.
- Pilot mentoring activities in selected areas where there are strong mentors from the civil society sector available. This could include multi-stage, small grants linked to the mentoring program.
- Study-tours, internships, residencies, and scholarship programs for young people to gain exposure and practical experience in social entrepreneurship and non-profit management.
- Debating activities, volunteer opportunities, sports, cultural and social events, English language courses, leadership trainings, networking and outings through which young leaders can develop and enhance their creativity, leadership, communication and critical thinking skills.
- 'TED talks and TEDx'-like events and activities that spark discussion and connection among young people, youth opinion leaders, positive role models and the broader population.
- Grants and technical assistance to implement advocacy campaigns, community projects and youth empowerment activities. In countries where monetary grants are not practical, various types of non-monetary grants may be offered.
- Training and pilot activities which work with youth to use social media in order to foster civic engagement.

Objective 2: Strengthen civil society's role in promoting greater public accountability.

Critical Assumptions:

- There is a lack of access to information for advocacy, policy making, and program implementation, especially for those working in rural areas or on issues of environmental protection.
- There is a need in all countries for higher education on non-profit administration and policy research.
- Governments have made international commitments to transparency, which provides an opening through which CSOs can engage governments.

In democratic societies, civil society is expected to play a role in public oversight and accountability of government and state institutions. This includes promoting transparency of government budgets and spending and ensuring effective government service delivery for all citizens. In Central Asia, CSOs' role in promoting transparency and accountability is limited due to low capacity, lack of experience and inadequate resources. Many experts argue that a lack of public participation and stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes impedes effective policy-making and implementation. This is where a vibrant civil society can play a critical function. Civil society, as a mediator between duty-bearers and rights-holders, can promote public review of government actions and policies, which will lead to greater transparency and accountability.

This component will provide support, technical assistance and resources to expand the advocacy and research skills of civil society groups that work to promote citizen involvement in governing and decision-making processes, increase citizens' access to public interest information, monitor the activities of governmental and quasi-governmental institutions, industry, or other organizations, and inform the public when they uncover actions that contradict the public interest.

Illustrative Activities:

- Training programs and internships that increase the capacity of think tanks and/or transparency advocacy organizations.
- Sub-grants to think tanks and/or existing transparency advocacy organizations. In countries where monetary grants are not practical, various types of non-monetary grants may be offered.
- Study tours within Central Asia and beyond to enable young researchers, think tanks and transparency advocacy organization members to meet with representatives of Eastern European and other countries' think tanks and advocacy groups to gain a comprehensive insight into their work and identify cooperation possibilities.
- Support citizen monitoring and oversight initiatives, including citizen engagement in advocacy and/or service delivery.

● Support government-CSO engagement mechanisms and opportunities, for example through working at the local and national level with Parliament members, working groups and committees.

Objective 3: Enhance civil society's ability to quickly react to unforeseen threats and opportunities.

Critical Assumptions:

● Civil society groups and citizen advocacy promoters lack ready access to financial resources.

USAID recognizes that reform situations in the Central Asian countries are fluid and that the needs and priorities of the host country and USAID can shift. Within this context, it will be necessary for technical assistance for CSOs and civic leaders to remain flexible in order to respond rapidly to the environment in each country. When political will, resources, and vision come together, the project implementer must be ready to support the opportunity (or react to the threat). Under this component, the project will use rapid-response funding to address rising socio-economic and political developments relevant to the work of the civil society sector. This Rapid Response Fund will provide small- to medium-size grants to CSOs and associations particularly well-positioned to leverage key opportunities in a dynamic political environment. In addition, rapid response funds will be available to individuals and civic advocacy leaders, where feasible, who urgently need funds to travel within their home country or abroad to participate in important meetings and civil society events, purchase equipment and software that allow them to do their critical work, and hire experts and consultants who are key for the implementation of their urgent campaigns.

The project implementer must have the organizational flexibility to respond to this changing environment and employ creative responses and approaches to achieve desired results. The project implementer will be expected to work closely with the AOR (and Activity Manager, if designated) to implement this objective and should be prepared to rapidly add to, shift, or restructure the Rapid Response Grants should US government priorities shift and/or new targets of opportunity arise.

Illustrative Activities:

● Develop a flexible, small grants program for CSOs and initiative groups to respond to emerging opportunities and threats. In countries where monetary grants are not practical, various types of non-monetary grants may be offered.
● As appropriate, facilitate linkages between civil society groups targeted under other project components and "Rapid Response" grantees for greater impact
● Take a leading role in facilitating regular dialogue and cooperation among the broader civil society community (including CSOs, media, government bodies, international donors, private sector actors, and others), particularly to address nascent threats to the human rights

and civil society agenda and train civil society on how to respond to emerging challenges and identify future opportunities.
- Support for travel to respond to crises/opportunities that are time-limited (e.g. transparency, international policy on key issue areas like human trafficking, etc.).

Objective 4: Build the capacity of CSOs to be financially viable and constituent-based

Critical Assumptions:

- If CSOs themselves fail to practice what they preach (transparency and accountability), they will be less effective in garnering constituent support and advocating for change.

The intent of this component is to strengthen the capacity of Central Asian civil society groups to be more organizationally and financially viable, improve their accountability and transparency, and increase their effectiveness in communicating with their beneficiaries and constituencies.

The program component will support as many CSOs as possible each year in each of the target countries through a competitive selection process. The selection criteria will seek active CSOs with demonstrated track records of developing and executing advocacy and/or service delivery projects in their communities and having the potential to build a strong presence at the sub-national and national level.

The implementer is expected to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each of the selected CSOs and to then use this information to develop individualized capacity building programs for each of the organizations. It is expected that the initial institutional assessments will establish an institutional capacity base-line and that this institutional assessment will be repeated later to measure progress and to design any follow-on, individualized training programs.

Capacity building assistance may address, but is not limited to, the following topics: organizational and network development; strategic management; financial transparency, accountability and sustainability; daily operations and management; fundraising and using new models of civil society financing, such as social entrepreneurship, donations from citizens, crowdfunding, diaspora funding, etc.; and other topics identified as relevant to the participating CSOs. Substantial attention should be given to increasing CSO's usage of social media and enhancing their ability to communicate effectively with their stakeholders, whether they are in government, the private sector or local community.

Illustrative Activities:

- Conduct an open and competitive grant selection process for institutional grants to participating CSOs in target countries. In countries where monetary grants are not practical, various types of non-monetary grants may be offered;

- Conduct an institutional assessment of each of the participating CSOs in order to identify individual strengths and weaknesses and generate CSO buy-in for internal capacity building;
- Develop and carry out tailored, institutional capacity building programs in partnership with participating CSOs;
- Support participating CSOs in identifying and procuring technical assistance in institutional strengthening and staff training;
- Work closely with participating CSOs to develop sustainability mechanisms, such as functioning boards of directors, membership, fundraising, etc.
- Provide limited commodities/IT support and improvements for participating CSOs, as needed;
- Develop a fundraising/funds diversification strategy and transparency and accountability standards for each participating CSO that takes into consideration both local, national and international funding options and accountability requirements;
- Work with participating CSOs to improve their compliance with their own charters and to serve as role models for transparent and accountable public organizations; and
- Assist participating CSOs in developing communication strategies and constituency building strategies to help them better communicate their activities to stakeholders, constituents and the media, and increase their visibility and relevance in society.
- Pilot innovative approaches to fundraising and capacity strengthening, such as crowdfunding and private sector engagement.

Targeted Stakeholders

The program's target audiences include, but are not limited to, people and institutions who influence public opinion, including: civil society (in the broad sense), think tanks, research groups, governmental and quasi-governmental institutions and their representatives, media outlets and journalists, bloggers, opinion leaders, academia, the private sector, youth, and community organizations and leaders.

Geographic Focus

The focus of this activity is country-wide in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Depending on future funding and other factors, the Kyrgyz Republic may be included in out years. All activities should be sensitive to the language needs within each country and carry out program activities in the respective languages where appropriate – including Kazakh, Tajik, Turkmen and Uzbek - while utilizing Russian as a common language for regional events or when appropriate. In all of the countries, geographic focus will be determined in consultation with and final approval from USAID.

Strategic Context

This activity will support USAID/CA's Regional Development Cooperation Strategy, Development Objective #3, "More effective and inclusive governance, institutions, and practices

that serve the public good," particularly Intermediate Results (IR) 3.2, "More constructive engagement between representative civil society and governments" and its sub-IR 3.2.1, "Stronger, more representative civil society." The activity will also contribute to IR 3.3, "More accountable and transparent state bodies." Additionally, this activity supports the following objective of the Central Asia Civil Society Project Appraisal Document, "Central Asia to be a prosperous, stable and secure place to live because it is governed in a responsible manner that is accountable to its people."

Host Governments Priorities

<u>Kazakhstan</u>

In Kazakhstan the proposed activity should be consistent with Kazakhstan's "100 Concrete Steps", and the recently-signed Kazakhstan Strategic Development Plan 2025, which is part of the "Kazakhstan 2050" strategy and is intended to become the key to state planning. In addition, the Government of Kazakhstan has adopted "Rukhani Zhangyru – spiritual renovation" program aimed at the modernization of society and is planning to develop a new vision for civil society which will clarify the role of CSOs in advancing development at the local and national level. The GOK has also shown increasing interest in working with CSOs to make progress towards achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals

<u>Tajikistan</u>

The proposed civil society activity will contribute to the objectives stated in the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2030. This strategy paper highlights the need for (1) professional government able to coordinate and regulate economic activities, ensure long-term, sustainable and inclusive development; (2) diversified economy in the country able to bring prosperity to all and stimulate the development of private business and investment activity; and (3) civil society involvement in the country's development process.

<u>Turkmenistan</u>

The proposed activity will be consistent with the Program of the President of Turkmenistan on Socio-Economic Development for 2018-2024. The Program sets forth the objectives of the country's social and economic development and outlines the forthcoming tasks, basic principles, priority areas and results. The Program aims to improve macroeconomic management and continue reforming the financial and banking sector. The Program prioritizes measures that will advance: 1) stable growth of the national economy, particularly non-governmental sectors; 2) the establishment of joint and stock ventures and increased activity of the stock exchange and security markets; 3) provision for all strata of society to become full members of Turkmen political life; and 4) consolidation of social protections to improve living and social conditions of the Turkmen people.

Uzbekistan

The proposed activity will be consistent with the National Country Development Strategy for 2017-2021, which was developed following the comprehensive study of topical issues, analysis of the current legislation, law enforcement practices, and best international practices, and following public discussion. The strategy covers five priority areas, including: (1) stronger system of state and public construction; (2) competent and efficient judicial system; (3) economic development and liberalization; (4) development of an effective social sphere; and (5) security, inter-ethnic harmony and religious tolerance, and implementation of balanced, mutually beneficial and constructive foreign policy. This strategy puts a strong emphasis on the advancement of the role of civil society in government reforms and dialogue.

Other Programmatic Connections & Collaboration

Other USAID Activities

The Enhanced Enabling Environment (E3) activity, covering Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan and ending in September 2020, is designed to strengthen the ability of CSOs and governments to improve the enabling environment for civil society, while promoting local ownership and public participation. Assistance provided under E3 reflects best practices in legal reform that the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law has identified in its work in Central Asia and globally. E3 collaborates with host governments and the civil society sector to enhance enabling legislation, encourage progressive implementation of laws, and prevent additional restrictive legislation from being enacted.

The Partnership for Innovations (P4I) project, works to strengthen the role of CSOs and networks in Central Asia to influence their respective governments on all aspects of local, national, and regional debate and policy making, representing the voices of their beneficiaries and constituents. This activity is implemented in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and runs through September 2020. P4I has seen real success in promoting cross-border and multilateral dialogue, network development and capacity building. P4I initiated positive changes in civic participation mechanisms by strengthening public councils throughout the Central Asian region as instrumental platforms for CSOs and citizens to participate in the governmental policy and decision-making processes.

The Justice Reform in Uzbekistan Program (JRUP) provides support for rule of law development, improving the professionalism of lawyers and employees of the judicial system, and creating a favorable legal environment for civil society and NGOs. Through this project, JRUP will develop the capacity of civil society to provide advocacy and monitoring for legal reforms; develop and disseminate information on new laws, regulations and procedures relevant to civil society; support local organizations to conduct activities related to judicial reform, legal training, and legal aid; and develop citizen oversight and public input mechanisms through models and case studies based on

international best practices. JRUP will also provide subgrants to support Uzbek CSOs, CBOs, and professional associations to embark on citizen engagement and awareness campaigns. JRUP is scheduled to operate until February 2022.

The Central Asia Media Project (CAMP) aims to: strengthen journalistic professionalism; increase media coverage in local languages; improve the media literacy of the population so that they can become more critical consumers of information; improve the legal and regulatory environment for media; and boost the financial sustainability of media outlets. This activity includes Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Enriching Youth for Tomorrow, a bilateral activity implemented in Turkmenistan, aims to improve the capacity of youth to contribute to the local economy and their community and to promote the active engagement of young people in the labor market and in civil society. The activity will improve youth competitiveness in the labor market, increase social involvement through the development of a civic awareness and volunteerism program, and analyze the enabling environment for youth to succeed.

The Governance Support Program (GSP), a bilateral activity implemented in Turkmenistan, aims to enable government officials and civil servants to be better able to serve the citizenry. GSP will do this through the application of international governance best practices, increased inclusive policy dialogue with a more active and better informed civil society, strengthened policy development and lawmaking processes, and enhanced ability of the Government of Turkmenistan to more effectively enact and implement new policies and government priorities.

Interagency

This activity will complement interagency efforts and initiatives focused on support for civil society development in participating countries. It is expected that the implementer will take into account activities funded by the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, the US Embassies' Democracy Commission Small Grants Program and other civil society development projects administered by the Public Affairs sections in the U.S. embassies in Astana, Dushanbe, Ashgabat and Tashkent and the U.S. Consulate General in Almaty. These small grants are designed to support civil society in each of the Central Asian countries and advance the interests and will of their citizens. This activity will also seek synergies and develop joint actions, where appropriate, with American Corners/Spaces that serve to build bridges of understanding, collaboration and partnership between host countries and the United States of America. They provide access to current and reliable information from and about the United States via book collections, the internet, and through local programming to the general public overseas or abroad.

Other donors and development partners

The activity will seek to complement the activities of other donors and development partners working with the civil society sector in Central Asia. The list below highlights a small sample of other activities which share similar or complementary goals.

- The Delegation of the European Union to Kazakhstan provides support for the Red Crescent Society of Kazakhstan and civil society organizations to contribute to local development. Their objective is to raise the effectiveness of the relationship between civil society institutions and the Government and to expand the participation of civil society institutions in the realization of development strategies.
- The World Bank's Kazakhstan Youth Corps program promotes young people's community engagement and life skills through a community-based service learning program, especially for vulnerable youth. There are three components of the project. The first component supports community-based service learning and life skills. The second component supports the institutional development of the Committee on Youth Affairs for youth policy implementation. The third component supports project management, monitoring, and evaluation activities.
- The Delegation of the European Union in Tajikistan implements the *Civil Society in Development* program with the aim to support civil society contributions toward reinforced governance, accountability and inclusive policy-making. It prioritizes inclusiveness and enhancing formal space for dialogue with government for rural CSOs representing grassroots populations and socially excluded groups.
- The Aga Khan Foundation Civil Society Program in Tajikistan aims to strengthen community-level civil society organizations by facilitating their establishment and building their capacity to improve the quality of life of communities. The program also seeks to increase the knowledge and appreciation of good governance in society.

Implementation Principles and Guidance

This activity will follow the Implementation Principles and Guidance for gender and social inclusion, sustainability, youth, inclusion of vulnerable groups, and flexible and adaptive programming as found in Section F, Federal Award Administration.

[END OF SECTION A]

SECTION B: FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. **Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Contemplated**

USAID intends to award one Cooperative Agreement pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity. Subject to funding availability and at the discretion of the Agency, USAID intends to provide $18,000,000 in total USAID funding over a five year period.

2. **Start Date and Period of Performance for Federal Awards**

The anticipated period of performance is 5 (five) years. The estimated start date will be determined at the time of the award.

3. **Substantial Involvement**

a. Approval of the Recipient's Annual Work Plans:

The **initial Annual Work Plan and subsequent work plans** must be submitted to and approved by the Agreement Officer's Representative per the description of work plans in "Reporting Requirements".

b. Approval of Specified Key Personnel:

Key personnel as designated in the Section "Key Personnel" must be submitted in writing to the Agreement Officer's Representative for approval.

c. Approval of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan (MELP):

The initial MELP and subsequent updates to the MELP must be submitted to and approved by the Agreement Officer's Representative. As necessary, the MELP may be updated each year of this award as part of the work plan approval process.

d. Approval of Grants Manual:

The Grants Manual, describing policies and procedures of sub-grant making process under this award, must be developed and submitted to the AOR for concurrence and Agreement Officer for approval.

e. Agency and Recipient Collaboration as follows:

    i.   USAID concurrence is required in the selection of any sub-award recipients and on the substantive provisions of these sub-awards. This concurrence is to be provided by the Agreement Officer for those subawards or subcontracts not previously identified in the technical and cost applications and with a total cost of $50,000 and above. The AOR's concurrence is required in the selection of all sub-award recipients, either prior to the Agreement Officer's concurrence or solely for sub-awards less than $50,000. In addition,

please note the additional requirements of ADS 303.3.21.b "Subawards to PIOs and Partner Government Entities" will apply to this award.

    ii.   USAID monitoring to permit direction and redirection because of interrelationships with other projects;

   iii.   USAID authority to immediately halt a construction activity, if applicable.

<u>f. Halt Construction</u>: The AO may immediately halt a construction activity if identified specifications are not met. In addition, please note that per standard provision "Limiting Construction Activities (August 2013)" Construction is not eligible for reimbursement under this award.

4. Title to Property

Property title under the resultant agreement vest with the Recipient in accordance with the Requirements of the Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations.

5. Authorized Geographic Code

The geographic codes for the procurement of commodities and services under this program are Code 937 (the United States, the recipient country, and developing countries other than advanced developing countries, but excluding any country that is a prohibited source) and 110 (the United States, the independent states of the former Soviet Union, or a developing country, but excluding any country that is a prohibited source).

6. Nature of the Relationship between USAID and the Recipient

The principal purpose of the relationship with the Recipient and under the subject program is to transfer funds to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation of the Regional Civil Society Program which is authorized by Federal statute. The successful Recipient will be responsible for ensuring the achievement of the program objectives and the efficient and effective administration of the award through the application of sound management practices. The Recipient will assume responsibility for administering Federal funds in a manner consistent with underlying agreements, program objectives, and the terms and conditions of the Federal award.

7. Selection of Instrument

An Assistance Instrument was selected as the implementing mechanism based on the following rationale:

1. Market research has indicated that American (to a greater extent) and Central Asian (to a lesser extent) non-profit organizations are best suited to implement the activities envisioned under this program, in particular the youth development component, technical assistance in public policy and advocacy issues, capacity building support to CSOs and management of flexible and needs-based sub-grants. An assistance instrument is the preferred mechanism for engaging these types of non-profit implementing partners. The implementer will be

selected through full and open competition based on the existence of several non-profit organizations that have experience in implementing similar projects.

2. The goal under this program is to cultivate a vibrant and responsive citizen-oriented civil society in Central Asia. This activity has been designed to accommodate specific needs of civil society organizations and civic activists in the region. The activity will also foster a mutually beneficial relationship so that both government and civil society entities recognize the value and role of the other. Civil society can help government to further develop and propagate concepts of national unity, country and community leadership, indigenous values, and civic engagement. Governments can benefit from working with civil society to provide improved services and more transparent and accountable governance. There is an increasing need to provide capacity development support to civil society organizations to improve their long-term sustainability and help them build the needed skills to establish broader constituencies and expand the base of civic participation. In order to achieve the overarching goal for civil society to become vibrant, responsive and citizen-oriented the activity will offer a combination of technical assistance, training, education, and different types of grants (rapid response grants, travel grants, and thematic grants) for CSOs, advocacy organizations, think-tanks, initiative groups and civic activists to strengthen their ability to articulate people's concerns, meet needs within a local context, provide better services to beneficiaries, initiate public debate, and serve as a mediator between citizens and government institutions.

3. USAID/Central Asia currently utilizes assistance mechanisms for support to civil society in the region.

[END OF SECTION B]

SECTION C: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. **Eligible Applicants**

Qualified U.S. and Non-U.S. organizations may participate under this NOFO.

USAID welcomes applications from organizations that have not previously received financial assistance from USAID.

2. **Cost Sharing or Matching**

Cost sharing is not anticipated under this award.

3. **Other**

An applicant may submit only one application under this notice of funding opportunity.

[END OF SECTION C]

SECTION D: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

   1. Agency Point of Contact

      Primary: Ms. Jannat Koksalova
                     Acquisition and Assistance Specialist

      Secondary: Mr. Jonathan Chappell
                     Regional Agreement Officer

      Address: USAID/Central Asia
                     41 Kazibek Bi Street
                     050010 Almaty, Kazakhstan

      Email: AlmatyAASolicitations@usaid.gov

   2. Questions and Answers:

Questions regarding this NOFO should be submitted to AlmatyAASolicitations@usaid.gov no later than the date and time indicated on the cover letter, as amended.

Any information given to a prospective applicant concerning this NOFO will be furnished promptly to all other prospective applicants as an amendment to this NOFO, if that information is necessary in submitting applications or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicant.

   3. General Content and Form of Application

Preparation of Applications:

Applicants are expected to review, understand and comply with all aspects of the NFO. Applications must be submitted in accordance with the instructions below.

 Electronic. Application and modifications thereof must be submitted in two separate volumes (electronically): (a) technical and (b) cost applications. Email submission must include the following in the subject line:

 a.   "Technical application under #72011519RFA00005, submitted by: [name of Applicant organization]. Part X of X"

b.   "Cost application under #72011519RFA00005, submitted by: [name of Applicant organization]. Part X of X"

Each applicant must furnish the information required by this NOFO. Applications must be submitted in two separate parts: the Technical Application and the Business (Cost) Application. This subsection addresses general content requirements applying to the full application. Please see subsections 5 and 6, below, for information on the content specific to the Technical and Business

(Cost) applications. The Technical application must address technical aspects only while the Business (Cost) Application must present the costs, and address risk and other related issues.

Both the Technical and Business (Cost) Applications must include a cover page containing the following information:

- Name of the organization(s) submitting the application;
- Identification and signature of the primary contact person (by name, title, organization, mailing address, telephone number and email address) and the identification of the alternate contact person (by name, title, organization, mailing address, telephone number and email address);
- Program name
- Notice of Funding Opportunity number
- Name of any proposed sub-recipients or partnerships (identify if any of the organizations are local organizations, per USAID's definition of 'local entity' under ADS 303
- DUNS number of the Applicant.

Any erasures or other changes to the application must be initialed by the person signing the application. Applications signed by an agent on behalf of the applicant must be accompanied by evidence of that agent's authority, unless that evidence has been previously furnished to the issuing office.

Applicants who include data that they do not want disclosed to the public for any purpose or used by the U.S. Government except for evaluation purposes, should mark the title page with the following legend:

"This application includes data that must not be disclosed outside the U.S. Government and must not be duplicated, used, or disclosed – in whole or in part – for any purpose other than to evaluate this application. If, however, a grant is awarded to this Applicant as a result of – or in connection with – the submission of this data, the U.S. Government will have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting grant. This restriction does not limit the U.S. Government's right to use information contained in this data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction are contained in sheets {insert sheet numbers} and, mark each sheet of data it wished to restrict with the following legend:

"Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this application."

Applicants should retain for their records one (1) copy of the application and all enclosures which accompany it.

The Technical Application should be in English and submitted in a Microsoft work (.docx) format. **Technical application must not exceed 20 pages**, utilizing Times New Roman 12-font size, single spaced, typed in standard 8 ½" x11" on letter size paper with one-inch margins both right

and left, and each page numbered consecutively. Cover letter, dividers, table of contents, and annexes will not count toward the page limit. Any pages that exceed the page limitation will not be furnished to the Selection Committee.

4. Application Submission Procedures

Applications in response to this NOFO must be submitted to AlmatyAASolicitations@usaid.gov no later than the closing date and time indicated on the cover letter, as amended. Late applications will not be reviewed nor considered. Applicants must retain proof of timely delivery in the form of system generated documentation of delivery receipt date and time/confirmation from the receiving office/certified mail receipt.

Email submissions must include the NOFO number and applicant's name in the subject line heading. In addition, for an application sent by multiple emails, the subject line must also indicate whether the email relates to the technical or cost application, and the desired sequence of the emails and their attachments (e.g. "No. 1 of 4", etc.). For example, if your cost application is being sent in two emails, the first email should have a subject line that states: "[NOFO number], [organization name], Cost Application, Part 1 of 2".

USAID's preference is that the technical application and the cost application each be submitted as consolidated email attachments, e.g. that you consolidate the various parts of a technical application into a single document before sending it. If this is not possible, please provide instructions on how to collate the attachments. USAID will not be responsible for errors in compiling electronic applications if no instructions are provided or are unclear.

After submitting an application electronically, applicants should immediately check their own email to confirm that the attachments were indeed sent. If an applicant discovers an error in transmission, please send the material again and note in the subject line of the email or indicate in the file name if submitted via grants.gov that it is a "corrected" submission. Do not send the same email more than once unless there has been a change, and if so, please note that it is a "corrected" email.

Applicants are reminded that e-mail is NOT instantaneous, and in some cases delays of several hours occur from transmission to receipt. Therefore, applicants are requested to send the application in sufficient time ahead of the deadline. For this NOFO, the initial point of entry to the government infrastructure is the USAID mail server.

There may be a problem with the receipt of *.zip files due to anti-virus software. Therefore, applicants are discouraged from sending files in this format as USAID/Central Asia cannot guarantee their acceptance by the internet server.

5. Technical Application Format

The technical application will be the most important factor for consideration in selection for award of the proposed Cooperative Agreement. The technical application should demonstrate the Applicant's capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this activity. Therefore

it should be specific, complete and presented concisely. The application should take into account the requirements of the program and evaluation criteria found in this NOFO.

The technical application must include the following sections:

a. Cover Page (not included in 20-page limit)

The Cover Page should include the information listed in Section D.3 above.

b. Table of contents (not included in 20-page limit)

The table of contents must list all parts of the technical application, with page numbers and attachments.

c. Executive Summary (included in 20 page limit; not to exceed 2 pages)

Provide a concise summary of the Applicant's program description, program methodology and expected results.

d. Technical Approach (included in 20-page limit)

In this section, Applicants are not to merely repeat what is already described in this NOFO. Applicants must focus on describing the program that the Applicant will implement and how they propose to achieve the objectives, expected results, and make a significant contribution toward achieving the strategic purpose and priorities identified in USAID's activity Funding Opportunity Description (FOD). Applicants are expected to demonstrate an approach reflecting the guiding principles outlined in the activity FOD, which are central to achieving the objectives, and should be well described throughout the application. The Applicant must discuss the specific challenges to be addressed, the general strategy and plan to achieve activity objectives, and results to be achieved. Results and the associated impact should be concrete and measurable.

The program description set forth in this NFO describes a range of issues that should be addressed in the technical approach. It is not meant to describe all of the issues pertaining to civil society sector development in Central Asia nor how those issues should be addressed, as Applicants should describe in their technical applications the key challenges related to the civil society sector as they understand them and how they propose to address such challenges. Therefore, the program description of this NFO should not be interpreted as restrictive. Applicants are encouraged to raise and justify other technical issues that may not appear in the program description but are, nevertheless, related.

The approach must include a clear vision and comprehensive strategy, as well as feasibility and sustainability in achieving all of the project objectives and results identified in this NFO, including an understanding of effective strategies in the operational context. This must exhibit Applicants' familiarity with the operational context. Applicants are required to ensure sustainability of interventions are incorporated throughout the Activity, including but not limited to, building

organizational capacity of local and regional partners to pursue self-sustaining operational capacity and to mobilize non-USAID resources.

Applicants will be expected to articulate how programming interventions will adapt to dynamic and rapidly evolving environments and which learning processes are appropriate to adapt activities to ensure the most effective approach over time and ensure continued progress toward anticipated results. Proposed approaches must reflect a systematic strategy and continuous processes for institutional learning and change, which incorporate lessons learned and best practices throughout the program. This includes analysis, planning, implementation, assessment, and measurement that are reflected in organizational practices of adaptive learning and innovation to ensure they are sustained beyond the life of the project cycle.

The approach must:

- Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the programming context.
- Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the roles and responsibilities of key local, national, and regional stakeholders, including government entities and non-profit associations, the private sector, and research/academic actors. This should include how the Applicant will engage these actors and forge partnerships with them.
- Articulate the proposed approach to achieving results under each of the program's components, including how the Applicant will maintain flexibility and adapt to evolving conditions.
- Demonstrate the clarity and soundness of the approach and the ability to test, document, and disseminate "best practices" and "lessons learned," including through the establishment and/or strengthening of existing knowledge management platforms.
- Articulate the proposed approach for awarding and managing grants to local organizations (see the Budget and Budget Narrative instructions in the Business Application Format section for a summary cost allocation of grants to local organizations).

In addition, the Applicant is expected to incorporate gender and sustainability throughout its technical approach.

Gender Equality and Female Empowerment:

Ensuring opportunities for women's participation and leadership in decision-making at all levels of society has not been fully realized. The Recipient must promote women's participation and work to empower women in decision-making processes to ensure maximum opportunities to gain access to advocacy and civic engagement efforts, benefits, and reforms that can bring strategic changes to their status, and to gender relations. Interventions implemented by the Recipient must be responsive to gender considerations, and seek to ensure that the assistance provided and the results achieved are beneficial to both genders. As appropriate, impact and indicators must be disaggregated by gender. None of the interventions must inhibit the active participation of either men or women. Men and women must be treated as equal partners in their role as clients, and as partners of USAID.

Sustainability:

A clear description of how the Applicant will ensure the sustainability of the approaches that are developed and the results that are achieved via the alliance. For example, describe specific steps and actions that the Applicant will take to ensure sustainable results and impacts beyond the term of USAID's financial support and the prospects for the activities and results to continue after completion of the agreement.

e. Management Structure and Staffing Plan

The Applicant must propose a staffing/organizational structure that demonstrates effective means for managing program resources and working with local partners and organizations under the major objectives of this program.

This section must address at a minimum the following:

a. Composition and organizational structure of the proposed team (including an organizational diagram for the program as an annex) and a description of each long/short-term key or non-key team member's role, technical expertise, and estimated amount of time to be devoted to the activity. This should include any proposed institutional partners (sub-awardees or other arrangements) along with their expertise, roles, and responsibilities. USAID encourages prospective applicants to seriously consider diversifying the partner base by targeting new and underutilized organizations who may bring new perspectives and creative approaches to the sector;
b. Identify positions (up to five) that will be filled by key personnel. For each key personnel position, briefly highlight why the roles and responsibilities justify the position being designated as "key".
c. Effective management systems and procedures for personnel, sub-contractors, commodities, training, and information technology solutions. If sub-awardees are proposed, a demonstrated ability to issue, manage, and monitor sub-awards and sub-awardee activities;
d. Ways in which the structure will ensure effectiveness and efficiency in order to achieve maximum benefits and results at minimum cost; and
e. Any home office support that will be included and at what level.

USAID neither requests nor desires exclusivity agreements between the Applicant and any proposed sub awardee.

f. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):

The Applicant will provide an overview of the M&E approach in the technical application. This narrative must include the following: a planned staffing structure and resource allocation for M&E; how data collection, analysis and reporting of performance data will be managed under the project; how data quality assessments will be undertaken; how gender analysis will be incorporated into the M&E methodology; and how data will be shared and used to inform programming. In addition, given the dynamic nature of this activity, the Applicant should explain how it will utilize an adaptive learning approach to ensure lessons gleaned from M&E are incorporated into the activity.

The M&E approach should describe how routine assessments and internal evaluations will be used to inform programmatic decision-making. Refer to section F of the NOFO for MEL Plan content requirements.

The Applicant will directly report performance information (e.g. activities, indicators, quarterly and annual reports, etc.) into USAID/CA's management information system for the entirety of the performance period. Appropriate training will be provided by USAID to ensure compliance.

Annexes:

Annex 1: Gender Action Agenda (up to 2 pages and not included in 20 page limit)

The Applicant is expected to incorporate gender considerations throughout its technical approach. In addition, the Applicant must also develop and implement a gender and development action agenda (narrative, graphic, or both) that describes its objectives, gender parity entry points, and interventions to ensure sustainable access to resources and equal access to participation by both men and women. This agenda should clearly highlight and expand upon how gender is incorporated into the technical approach.

Annex 2: Country Strategies (up to 1 page per country and not included in 20 page limit)

The Applicant should submit brief country strategies for Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan that highlight the overall approach that will be taken in each country including any key considerations and opportunities/challenges that will affect program implementation and potential for success. Sustainability of approaches will be a required component of the country strategies. Country strategies should not exceed 1 page for each country (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), not to exceed 4 pages in total. See Section F for more information on Country Strategies.

Annex 3: Organigram (up to 2 pages and not included in the 20 page limit)

An organigram should be provided as an annex to support the manage structure and staffing plan narrative.

Annex 4. Job Descriptions for Key Personnel (1 page per position and not included in the 20 page limit)

Job descriptions for a minimum of 3 and maximum of 5 Key Personnel positions must be submitted as an annex to demonstrate how the Applicant intends to meet Key Personnel requirements and illustrate the experience and expertise each identified Key Personnel position must hold. The job descriptions must highlight the duties, responsibilities and required qualifications each key personnel position will have. It is USAID's expectation that key personnel will include a positive youth development expert, a research and policy advocacy expert, and a civil society capacity building expert. However, USAID is open to alternate proposals for the structure of key personnel.

Applicants must not submit individuals for the designated as Key personnel positions and must not submit CV/resumes and other similar documentation related to candidates key personnel. However, within 5 days of signing the award, the Recipient will be asked to submit candidates for Key Personnel positions. As such, USAID encourages Applicants to begin recruiting for key personnel during the application process. See Section F. "Key Personnel" for additional information on Key Personnel requirements.

Annex 5. Mobilization Plan (up to 2 pages and not included in the 20 page limit)

A proposed plan for an effective start-up and timely mobilization of activities, including a demonstrated ability or understanding of organizational and project registration procedures in each of the four initial countries and recruitment and hiring of non-key personnel.

6. Business (Cost) Application Format

The Business (Cost) Application must be submitted separately from the Technical Application. While no page limit exists for the full cost application, applicants are encouraged to be as concise as possible while still providing the necessary details. The business (cost) application must illustrate the entire period of performance, using the budget format shown in the SF-424A.

Prior to award, applicants may be required to submit additional documentation deemed necessary for the Agreement Officer to assess the applicant's risk in accordance with 2 CFR 200.205. Applicants should not submit any additional information with their initial application.

The Cost Application must contain the following sections (which are further elaborated below this listing with the letters for each requirement):

a) **Cover Page** (See Section D.3 above for requirements)

b) **SF 424 Form(s)**

The applicant must sign and submit the cost application using the SF-424 series. Standard Forms can be accessed electronically at www.grants.gov or using the following links:

Instructions for SF-424	http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424-instructions.html
Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html
Instructions for SF-424A	http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424a-instructions.html
Budget Information (SF-424A)	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html
Instructions for SF-424B	http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424b-instructions.html
Assurances (SF-424B)	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html

Failure to accurately complete these forms could result in the rejection of the application.

c) Required Certifications and Assurances

The applicant must complete the following documents and submit a signed copy with their application:

    (1) "Certifications, Assurances, Representations, and Other Statements of the Recipient" document found at http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mav.pdf

    (2) Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)

    (3) Certificate of Compliance: Please submit a copy of your Certificate of Compliance if your organization's systems have been certified by USAID/Washington's Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA).

d) Budget and Budget Narrative

The Budget must be submitted as one unprotected Excel-compatible file with visible formulas and references and must be broken out by project year, including itemization of the federal and non-federal (cost share) amount. Files must not contain any hidden or otherwise inaccessible cells. Budgets with hidden cells lengthen the cost analysis time required to make award, and may result in a rejection of the cost application. The Budget Narrative must contain sufficient detail to allow USAID to understand the proposed costs. The applicant must ensure the budgeted costs address any additional requirements identified in Section F, such as Branding and Marking. The Budget Narrative must be thorough, including sources for costs to support USAID's determination that the proposed costs are fair and reasonable.

The Budget must include the following worksheets or tabs, and contents, at a minimum:

- Summary Budget, inclusive of all program costs (federal and non-federal), broken out by major budget category and by year for activities implemented by the applicant and any potential sub-applicants for the entire period of the program. See Section H, Annex 1 for Summary Budget Template

- Detailed Budget, including a breakdown by year, sufficient to allow the Agency to determine that the costs represent a realistic and efficient use of funding to implement the applicant's program and are allowable in accordance with the cost principles found in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E.

- Detailed Budgets for each sub-recipient, for all federal funding and cost share, broken out by budget category and by year, for the entire implementation period of the project.

The Detailed Budget must contain the following budget categories and information, at a minimum:

1) Salaries and Allowances – Must be proposed consistent with 2 CFR 200.430 Compensation - Personal Services. The applicant's budget must include position title, salary rate, level of effort, and salary escalation factors for each position. Allowances, when proposed, must be

broken down by specific type and by position. Applicants must explain all assumptions in the Budget Narrative. The Budget Narrative must demonstrate that the proposed compensation is reasonable for the services rendered and consistent with what is paid for similar work in other activities of the applicant. Applicants must provide their established written policies on personnel compensation. If the applicant's written policies do not address a specific element of compensation that is being proposed, the Budget Narrative must describe the rationale used and supporting market research.

2) Fringe Benefits – (if applicable) If the applicant has a fringe benefit rate approved by an agency of the U.S. Government, the applicant must use such rate and provide evidence of its approval. If an applicant does not have a fringe benefit rate approved, the applicant must propose a rate and explain how the applicant determined the rate. In this case, the Budget Narrative must include a detailed breakdown comprised of all items of fringe benefits (e.g., superannuation, gratuity, etc.) and the costs of each, expressed in U.S. dollars and as a percentage of salaries.

3) Travel and Transportation – Provide details to explain the purpose of the trips, the number of trips, the origin and destination, the number of individuals traveling, and the duration of the trips. Per Diem and associated travel costs must be based on the applicant's normal travel policies. When appropriate please provide supporting documentation as an attachment, such as company travel policy, and explain assumptions in the Budget Narrative.

4) Procurement or Rental of Goods (Equipment & Supplies), Services, and Real Property – Must include information on estimated types of equipment, models, supplies and the cost per unit and quantity. The Budget Narrative must include the purpose of the equipment and supplies and the basis for the estimates. The Budget Narrative must support the necessity of any rental costs and reasonableness in light of such factors as: rental costs of comparable property, if any; market conditions in the area; alternatives available; and the type, life expectancy, condition, and value of the property leased.

5) Subawards – Specify the budget for the portion of the program to be passed through to any subrecipients. See 2 CFR 200.330 for assistance in determining whether the sub-tier entity is a subrecipient or contractor. The subrecipient budgets must align with the same requirements as the applicant's budget, including those related to fringe and indirect costs.

6) Grants to Local Organizations - Applicants should allocate approximately 25% of the overall budget for grants to local organizations. Of this amount, approximately 40% should be allocated to Objective 4 and remaining amount should be allocated across Objectives 1-3.

7) Construction – If applicable.

8) Other Direct Costs – This may include other costs not elsewhere specified, such as report preparation costs, passports and visas fees, medical exams and inoculations, as well as any other miscellaneous costs which directly benefit the program proposed by the applicant. The applicant should indicate the subject, venue and duration of any proposed conferences and

seminars, and their relationship to the objectives of the program, along with estimates of costs. Otherwise, the narrative should be minimal.

9) Indirect Costs – Applicants must indicate whether they are proposing indirect costs or will charge all costs directly. In order to better understand indirect costs please see Subpart E of 2 CFR 200.414. The application must identify which approach they are requesting and provide the applicable supporting information. Below are the most commonly used Indirect Cost Rate methods:

Method 1 - Direct Charge Only
Eligibility: Any applicant
Initial Application Requirements: See above on direct costs

Method 2 - Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)
Eligibility: Any applicant with a NICRA issued by a USG Agency must use that NICRA
Initial Application Requirements: If the applicant has a current NICRA, submit your approved NICRA and the associated disclosed practices. If your NICRA was issued by an Agency other than USAID, provide the contact information for the approving Agency. Additionally, at the Agency's discretion, a provisional rate may be set forth in the award subject to audit and finalization. See USAID's Indirect Cost Rate Guide for Non Profit Organizations for further guidance.

Method 3 - De minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC)
Eligibility: Any applicant that has never received a NICRA
Initial Application Requirements: Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate an indirect rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time. The applicant must describe which cost elements it charges indirectly vs. directly. See 2 CFR 200.414(f) for further information.

Method 4 - Indirect Costs Charged As A Fixed Amount
Eligibility: Non U.S. non-profit organizations without a NICRA may request, but approval is at the discretion of the AO
Initial Application Requirements: Provide the proposed fixed amount and a worksheet that includes the following:
● Total costs incurred by the organization for the previous fiscal year and estimates for the current year.
● Indirect costs (common costs that benefit the day-to-day operations of the organization, including categories such as salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting, or that benefit and are identifiable to more than one program or activity, such as depreciation, rental costs, operations and maintenance of facilities, and telephone expenses) for the previous fiscal year and estimates for the current year

- Proposed method for prorating the indirect costs equitably and consistently across all programs and activities of using a base that measures the benefits of that particular cost to each program or activity to which the cost applies.

If the applicant does not have an approved NICRA and does not elect to utilize the 10% de minimis rate, the Agreement Officer will provide further instructions and may request additional supporting information, including financial statements and audits, should the application still be under consideration after the merit review. USAID is under no obligation to approve the applicant's requested method.

e) Prior Approvals in accordance with 2 CFR 200.407

Inclusion of an item of cost in the detailed application budget does not satisfy any requirements for prior approval by the Agency. If the applicant would like the award to reflect approval of any cost elements for which prior written approval is specifically required for allowability, the applicant must specify and justify that cost. See 2 CFR 200.407 for information regarding which cost elements require prior written approval.

f) Approval of Subawards

The applicant must submit information for all subawards that it wishes to have approved at the time of award. For each proposed subaward the applicant must provide the following:

- Name of organization
- DUNS Number
- Confirmation that the subrecipient does not appear on the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) list
- Confirmation that the subrecipient does not have active exclusions in the System for Award Management (SAM)
- Confirmation that the subrecipient is not listed in the United Nations Security designation list
- Confirmation that the subrecipient is not suspended or debarred
- Confirmation that the applicant has completed a risk assessment of the subrecipient, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.331(b)
- Any negative findings as a result of the risk assessment and the applicant's plan for mitigation.

g) Dun and Bradstreet and SAM Requirements

USAID <u>may not</u> award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier (DUNS number) and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements. Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is exempted from 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:

1. Provide a valid DUNS number for the applicant and all proposed sub-recipients;
2. Be registered in SAM <u>before</u> submitting its application. SAM is streamlining processes, eliminating the need to enter the same data multiple times, and consolidating hosting to make the process of doing business with the government more efficient (www.sam.gov).
3. 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 registration process may take many weeks to complete. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to begin the process early. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements above by the time USAID is ready to make an award, USAID may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

DUNS number: http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform
SAM registration: http://www.sam.gov

Non-U.S. applicants can find additional resources for registering in SAM, including a Quick Start Guide and a video on how to obtain an NCAGE code, on www.sam.gov, navigate to Help, then to International Registrants.

h) History of Performance

The applicant must provide information regarding its recent history of performance for all its cost-reimbursement contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements involving similar or related programs, not to exceed 5 (five) awards, as follows:

- Name of the Awarding Organization;
- Award Number;
- Activity Title;
- A brief description of the activity;
- Period of Performance;
- Award Amount;
- Reports and findings from any audits performed in the last 3 years; and
- Name of at least two (2) updated professional contacts who most directly observed the work at the organization for which the service was performed with complete current contact information including telephone number, and e-mail address for each proposed individual.

If the applicant encountered problems on any of the referenced Awards, it may provide a short explanation and the corrective action taken. The applicant should not provide general information on its performance. USAID reserves the right to obtain relevant information concerning an applicant's history of performance from any sources and may consider such information in its review of the applicant's risk. The Agency may request additional information and conduct a pre-award survey if it determines that it is necessary to inform the risk assessment.

i)   Branding Strategy & Marking Plan

The apparently successful applicant will be asked to provide a Branding Strategy and Marking Plan to be evaluated and approved by the Agreement Officer and incorporated into any resulting award.

(Note: The apparently successful applicant will be requested to propose a name for the program. The name should directly contribute to the intended overall results of this Activity. The apparently successful applicant should vet the name with a broad set of Central Asian and U.S. stakeholders to confirm suitability, with final approval from USAID/Central Asia.)

Desired Level of Visibility

The Recipient must ensure that the project (as well as the fact that it is made possible by the American people through USAID) receives broad visibility not only among its beneficiaries and counterparts, but also among the general public in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. USAID's experience in Central Asia demonstrates critical importance and multiple opportunities for public outreach through information dissemination.

In the case of events, trainings or conferences related to market based solutions that are put on by private sector lead firms and not directly by the implementer or its sub-grantee, a reduced branding and marking approach can be applied. This is to promote more visibility for the role of the private sector and private sector actors in leading these events. However, this does not apply when an event, training or conference is being directly sponsored by the implementing partner and its sub-grantee.

Branding Strategy – Assistance (June 2012)

a. Applicants recommended for an assistance award must submit and negotiate a "Branding Strategy," describing how the program, project, or activity is named and positioned, and how it is promoted and communicated to beneficiaries and host country citizens.

b. The request for a Branding Strategy, by the Agreement Officer from the applicant, confers no rights to the applicant and constitutes no USAID commitment to an award.

c. Failure to submit and negotiate a Branding Strategy within the time frame specified by the Agreement Officer will make the applicant ineligible for an award.

d. The applicant must include all estimated costs associated with branding and marking USAID programs, such as plaques, stickers, banners, press events, materials, and so forth, in the budget portion of the application. These costs are subject to the revision and negotiation with the Agreement Officer and will be incorporated into the Total Estimated Amount of the grant, cooperative agreement or other assistance instrument.

e. The Branding Strategy must include, at a minimum, all of the following:

(1) All estimated costs associated with branding and marking USAID programs, such as plaques, stickers, banners, press events, materials, and so forth.

(2) The intended name of the program, project, or activity.

(i) USAID requires the applicant to use the "USAID Identity," comprised of the USAID logo and brandmark, with the tagline "from the American people" as found on the USAID Web site at http://www.usaid.gov/branding, unless Section VI of the RFA or APS states that the USAID Administrator has approved the use of an additional or substitute logo, seal, or tagline.

(ii) USAID prefers local language translations of the phrase "made possible by (or with) the generous support of the American People" next to the USAID Identity when acknowledging contributions.

(iii) It is acceptable to cobrand the title with the USAID Identity and the applicant's identity.

(iv) If branding in the above manner is inappropriate or not possible, the applicant must explain how USAID's involvement will be showcased during publicity for the program or project.

(v) USAID prefers to fund projects that do not have a separate logo or identity that competes with the USAID Identity. If there is a plan to develop a separate logo to consistently identify this program, the applicant must attach a copy of the proposed logos. Section VI of the RFA or APS will state if an Administrator approved the use of an additional or substitute logo, seal, or tagline.

(3) The intended primary and secondary audiences for this project or program, including direct beneficiaries and any special target segments.

(4) Planned communication or program materials used to explain or market the program to beneficiaries.

(i) Describe the main program message.

(ii) Provide plans for training materials, posters, pamphlets, public service announcement, billboards, Web sites, and so forth, as appropriate.

(iii) Provide any plans to announce and promote publicly this program or project to host country citizens, such as media releases, press conferences, public events, and so forth. Applicant must
incorporate the USAID Identity and the message, "USAID is from the American

People."

(iv) Provide any additional ideas to increase awareness that the American people support this project or program.

(5) Information on any direct involvement from host-country government or ministry, including any planned acknowledgement of the host-country government.

(6) Any other groups whose logo or identity the applicant will use on program materials and related materials. Indicate if they are a donor or why they will be visibly acknowledged, and if they will receive the same prominence as USAID.

e. The Agreement Officer will review the Branding Strategy to ensure the above information is adequately included and consistent with the stated objectives of the award, the applicant's cost data submissions, and the performance plan.

f. If the applicant receives an assistance award, the Branding Strategy will be included in and made part of the resulting grant or cooperative agreement.

[END OF PRE-AWARD TERM]

Marking Plan – Assistance (June 2012)

a. Applicants recommended for an assistance award must submit and negotiate a "Marking Plan," detailing the public communications, commodities, and program materials, and other items that will visibly bear the "USAID Identity," which comprises of the USAID logo and brandmark, with the tagline "from the American people." The USAID Identity is the official marking for the Agency, and is found on the USAID Web site at http://www.usaid.gov/branding. Section VI of the RFA or APS will state if an Administrator approved the use of an additional or substitute logo, seal, or tagline.

b. The request for a Marking Plan, by the Agreement Officer from the applicant, confers no rights to the applicant and constitutes no USAID commitment to an award.

c. Failure to submit and negotiate a Marking Plan within the time frame specified by the Agreement Officer will make the applicant ineligible for an award.

d. The applicant must include all estimated costs associated with branding and marking USAID programs, such as plaques, stickers, banners, press events, materials, and so forth, in the budget portion of the application. These costs are subject to the revision and negotiation with the Agreement Officer and will be incorporated into the Total Estimated Amount of the grant, cooperative agreement or other assistance instrument.

e. The Marking Plan must include all of the following:

(1) A description of the public communications, commodities, and program materials that the applicant plans to produce and which will bear the USAID Identity as part of the award, including:

(i) Program, project, or activity sites funded by USAID, including visible infrastructure projects or other sites physical in nature;

(ii) Technical assistance, studies, reports, papers, publications, audiovisual productions, public service announcements, Web sites/Internet activities, promotional, informational, media, or communications products funded by USAID;

(iii) Commodities, equipment, supplies, and other materials funded by USAID, including commodities or equipment provided under humanitarian assistance or disaster relief programs; and

(iv) It is acceptable to cobrand the title with the USAID Identity and the applicant's identity.

(v) Events financed by USAID, such as training courses, conferences, seminars, exhibitions, fairs, workshops, press conferences and other public activities. If the USAID Identity cannot be displayed, the recipient is encouraged to otherwise acknowledge USAID and the support of the American people.

(2) A table on the program deliverables with the following details:

(i) The program deliverables that the applicant plans to mark with the USAID Identity;

(ii) The type of marking and what materials the applicant will use to mark the program deliverables;

(iii) When in the performance period the applicant will mark the program deliverables, and where the applicant will place the marking;

(iv) What program deliverables the applicant does not plan to mark with the USAID Identity; and

(v) The rationale for not marking program deliverables.

(3) Any requests for an exemption from USAID marking requirements, and an explanation of why the exemption would apply. The applicant may request an exemption if USAID marking requirements would:

(i) Compromise the intrinsic independence or neutrality of a program or materials where independence or neutrality is an inherent aspect of the program and materials. The applicant must identify the USAID Development Objective, Interim

Result, or program goal furthered by an appearance of neutrality, or state why an aspect of the award is presumptively neutral. Identify by category or deliverable item, examples of material for which an exemption is sought.

(ii) Diminish the credibility of audits, reports, analyses, studies, or policy recommendations whose data or findings must be seen as independent. The applicant must explain why each particular deliverable must be seen as credible.

(iii) Undercut host-country government "ownership" of constitutions, laws, regulations, policies, studies, assessments, reports, publications, surveys or audits, public service announcements, or other communications. The applicant must explain why each particular item or product is better positioned as host-country government item or product.

(iv) Impair the functionality of an item. The applicant must explain how marking the item or commodity would impair its functionality.

(v) Incur substantial costs or be impractical. The applicant must explain why marking would not be cost beneficial or practical.

(vi) Offend local cultural or social norms, or be considered inappropriate. The applicant must identify the relevant norm, and explain why marking would violate that norm or otherwise be inappropriate.

(vii) Conflict with international law. The applicant must identify the applicable international law violated by the marking. f. The Agreement Officer will consider the Marking Plan's adequacy and reasonableness and will approve or disapprove any exemption requests. The Marking Plan will be reviewed to ensure the above information is adequately included and consistent with the stated objectives of the award, the applicant's cost data submissions, and the performance plan.

g. If the applicant receives an assistance award, the Marking Plan, including any approved exemptions, will be included in and made part of the resulting grant or cooperative agreement, and will apply for the term of the award unless provided otherwise.

[END OF PRE-AWARD TERM]

j) Funding Restrictions

USAID policy is not to award profit under assistance instruments. However, all reasonable, allocable and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect, which are related to the agreement program and are in accordance with applicable cost principle under 2 CFR 200 Subpart E. of the Uniform Administrative Requirements may be paid under the anticipated award.

Profit is not allowable for recipients or subrecipients under this award. See 2 CFR 200.330 for assistance in determining whether a sub-tier entity is a subrecipient or contractor.

Construction will not be authorized under this award.

USAID will not allow the reimbursement of pre-award costs under this award without the explicit written approval of the Agreement Officer.

Except as may be specifically approved in advance by the AO, all commodities and services that will be reimbursed by USAID under this award must be from the authorized geographic code specified in Section B.4 of this NOFO and must meet the source and nationality requirements set forth in 22 CFR 228.

k) Conflict of Interest Pre-Award Term (August 2018)

a. Personal Conflict of Interest

1.   An actual or appearance of a conflict of interest exists when an applicant organization or an employee of the organization has a relationship with an Agency official involved in the competitive award decision-making process that could affect that Agency official's impartiality. The term "conflict of interest" includes situations in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise, or have the appearance of compromising, the obligations and duties of a USAID employee or recipient employee.

2.   The applicant must provide conflict of interest disclosures when it submits an SF-424. Should the applicant discover a previously undisclosed conflict of interest after submitting the application, the applicant must disclose the conflict of interest to the AO no later than ten (10) calendar days following discovery.

b. Organizational Conflict of Interest

The applicant must notify USAID of any actual or potential conflict of interest that they are aware of that may provide the applicant with an unfair competitive advantage in competing for this financial assistance award. Examples of an unfair competitive advantage include but are not limited to situations in which an applicant or the applicant's employee gained access to non-public information regarding a federal assistance funding opportunity, or an applicant or applicant's employee was substantially involved in the preparation of a federal assistance funding opportunity. USAID will promptly take appropriate action upon receiving any such notification from the applicant.

[END OF PRE-AWARD TERM]

[END OF SECTION D]

SECTION E: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. **Criteria**

The merit review criteria prescribed here are tailored to the requirements of this particular NOFO. Applicants should note that these criteria serve to: (a) identify the significant matters which the applicants should address in their applications, and (b) set the standard against which all applications will be evaluated.

Recognizing that various approaches may have merit, the award seeks a Recipient that, on the basis of its experience, can propose cost-effective ways of implementing this program. USAID may reject the application if the response is not deemed sufficiently responsive.

An award will be made according to the evaluation criteria below. The application will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation criteria below in descending order of importance:

- Technical Approach
- Management Structure and Staffing Plan
- Implementation and Monitoring

2. **Review and Selection Process**

a. Merit Review

USAID will conduct a merit-based review of all applications received that comply with the instructions in this NOFO. Applications will be reviewed and evaluated in accordance with the following criteria shown in descending order of importance:

Criterion	Description
Technical Approach	The extent to which the proposed approach and country strategies demonstrate comprehensive support to the civil society sector while applying best practices for support to civil society in Central Asia that will effectively achieve the intended results and outcomes of this Activity as described in Section A.
Management Structure and Staffing Plan	The extent to which the application's management structure, staffing plan, and organigram convincingly demonstrate the ability to effectively implement the proposed activities, achieve the objectives described in Section A, and diversify the civil society partner base in Central Asia.
Implementation and Monitoring	Implementation and Monitoring will be evaluated with regards to the extent to which the Application demonstrates the ability to mobilize, implement, monitor, and evaluate proposed activities.

b. Business Review

The Agency will evaluate the cost application of the applicant(s) under consideration for an award as a result of the merit criteria review to determine whether the costs are allowable in accordance with the cost principles found in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E.

The Agency will also consider (1) the extent of the applicant's understanding of the financial aspects of the program and the applicant's ability to perform the activities within the amount requested; (2) whether the applicant's plans will achieve the program objectives with reasonable economy and efficiency; and (3) whether any special conditions relating to costs should be included in the award.

Proposed cost share, if provided, will be reviewed for compliance with the standards set forth in 2 CFR 200.306, 2 CFR 700.10, and the Standard Provision "Cost Sharing (Matching)" for U.S. entities, or the Standard Provision "Cost Share" for non-U.S. entities.

The AO will perform a risk assessment (2 CFR 200.205). The AO may determine that a pre-award survey is required to inform the risk assessment in determining whether the prospective recipient has the necessary organizational, experience, accounting and operational controls, financial resources, and technical skills – or ability to obtain them – in order to achieve the objectives of the program and comply with the terms and conditions of the award. Depending on the result of the risk assessment, the AO will decide to execute the award, not execute the award, or award with "specific conditions" (2 CFR 200.207).

[END OF SECTION E]

SECTION F: FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. **Federal Award Notices**

A notice of award signed by the AO is the authorizing document for the award resulting from this NOFO. USAID will provide it electronically to the authorized individual identified by the Recipient in the application.

Award of the agreement contemplated by this NOFO cannot be made until funds have been appropriated, allocated and committed through internal USAID procedures. While USAID anticipates that these procedures will be successfully completed, potential Applicants are hereby notified of these requirements and conditions for the award. The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. No costs chargeable to the proposed Agreement may be incurred before receipt of either a fully executed Agreement or a specific, written authorization from the Agreement Officer.

2. **Administrative & National Policy Requirements**

The award will be administered as follows:

> Agreement Office:
> Acquisition and Assistance Office
> USAID/Central Asia
> 41, Kazibek Bi Street
> Almaty, Kazakhstan
>
> Technical Office:
> Office of Democracy and Governance
> USAID/Central Asia
> 41, Kazibek Bi Street
> Almaty, Kazakhstan

For U.S. organizations [ADS 303](), [2 CFR 700](), [2 CFR 200](), and [Standard Provisions for U.S. Non-governmental organizations]().

For non-U.S. organizations, [Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-governmental Organizations]() will apply.

See Annex 2 for a list of the Standard Provisions that will be applicable to any awards resulting from this NOFO.

3. **Reporting Requirements.**

The Recipient must provide the following reports to the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) and to the Agreement Officer at [AlmatyAAReporting@usaid.gov](), as specified below, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.328 and 200.327 and the Substantial Involvement provisions.

a. Financial Reporting:

The Recipient must submit the Federal Financial Form (SF-425) on a quarterly basis within 30 calendar days after the end of each USG fiscal quarter (i.e. October 30, January 30, April 30, July 30) via electronic format to the USAID/CA Office of Financial Management at CARInvoices@usaid.gov, and to the Agreement Officer at AlmatyAAReporting@usaid.gov and the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR).

The Recipient must submit the original and two copies of all final financial reports to USAID/CA/FMO, the Agreement Officer, and the AOR. The Recipient must submit the final financial report no later than 90 calendar days from the end of the agreement.

Electronic copies of the SF-425 can be found at: www.grants.gov

b. Performance Reporting:

i. Annual Work Plans (AWP):

Within forty five days (45) of the award of the Cooperative Agreement, the Recipient must develop and submit the first annual work plan to the AOR. Work plans may be submitted electronically. Upon acceptance of the work plan by the AOR, any substantial revisions to the plan must require the written approval of the AOR. Annual work plans for subsequent years are due to the AOR 30 days prior to the end of the USG's fiscal year or approximately August 31st. Regardless of the start date of this award, work plans will be adjusted to the fiscal calendar of October 1-September 30.

The Recipient must ensure that the AWP appropriately reflects activity objectives and the program description. The AWP should detail the work to be accomplished during the upcoming year. All work plan activities must be within the scope of the award. The AWP will serve as a guide for activity implementation–a demonstration of links between interventions and objectives in accordance with the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan. The AWP must outline key activities and the expected results to be accomplished for that year and will be negotiated and shared with key stakeholders for comments as appropriate. The AWP should also include the individual country strategies, which should be updated annually as part of the work planning process. The AWP will also serve as a basis for budget estimates for that year of program implementation. A budget with sufficient detail to allow the AOR to judge the efficiency of the implementation plan should be included. The AWP should delineate an overall budget by line item and a budget per objective and activity. The AWP may be revised on an occasional basis in the course of implementation, as needed, to reflect changes on the ground with the concurrence of the AOR.

ii. Quarterly/Annual Performance Reports:

The Recipient will use the standard form Performance Progress Report (SF-PPR) to report performance progress for the program under the award. Reports may be submitted electronically.

Regardless of the start date of the cooperative agreement all reporting will be adjusted to the USG fiscal year calendar.

Quarterly Reports: The Recipient must submit quarterly reports that include narratives of quarterly achievements, and progress against the work plan and agreed-upon performance indicators. A format for the quarterly report must be approved by the AOR on an annual basis. The Recipient must submit quarterly reports within thirty (30) calendar days of the end of each quarter. The following quarter end dates must be used to determine the date of submission off the quarterly reports: 3/31, 6/30, 9/30, or 12/31. The fourth quarter report must be drafted as an annual report and must cover activities of the quarter as well as overall assessment of performance and progress for the prior 12 months of the program (See Annual Reports below).

The quarterly report must describe and assess the overall progress to date based upon agreed performance indicators. The reports must also describe the accomplishments of the Recipient and the progress made during the past quarter and will include information on key activities, both ongoing and completed during the quarter (e.g. meetings, trainings, workshops, significant events, subcontracts, and grants). The quarterly report should include targets and results for each indicator agreed upon in the MEL Plan. The quarterly report provides the opportunity to discuss impacts of learning on the program; for example, how has implementation evolved as the result of information gathered over the course of the quarter? Also, notification must be given in the case of problems, delays, or adverse conditions which materially impair the ability to meet the objectives of the award or which may have an impact on the development hypothesis or theory of change for the activity, and/or other activities (USG-funded or not) which might be informed by such learning. This notification must include a statement of the action taken or contemplated, and any assistance needed to resolve the situation. Lastly, the quarterly report will outline how the project has collaborated with host country governments and other USG and other-donor funded projects and efforts. The quarterly reports must utilize photos, maps, tables and other graphical elements useful in communicating performance data and activity implementation and include at least one success story. Any outreach or press reporting about the activity must also be included.

Annual Reports: The Recipient must submit annual reports that include narratives of achievements, and progress against the work plan and agreed-upon performance indicators. A format for the annual report must be approved by the AOR on an annual basis. The Recipient must submit annual reports within thirty (30) calendar days of the end of each U.S. Government fiscal year. Annual reports should contain content appropriate for public dissemination. In addition to content summarizing performance from the preceding quarter (See Quarterly Report above), the Annual Report must include a section that summarizes performance from the preceding year. The annual summary must concentrate on outcome and impact based on agreed upon performance indicators. It will report on annual achievements against targets and will account for any shortfalls. The analysis in the annual section must not be limited to performance measures – it will also summarize progress during the previous year in a qualitative fashion. The Annual Report should also include a section that summarizes the state of civil society in each of the countries of Activity implementation. To this end, the Annual Report must also utilize photos, maps, tables, and other graphical elements useful in summarizing project performance from the past year. In addition, the annual report must include a professionally formatted, four-to eight page annual summary of achievements, noteworthy activities, lessons learned, changes in the environment, etc. The

summary must be formatted to function as a stand-alone, externally sharable document, designed to keep key project stakeholders (such as USG agencies, other donors, and other USG implementers) up to date on progress. The summary must include photos, maps, tables, and other graphical elements as relevant. The annual summary must not directly recycle text, photos or other elements from quarterly summaries.

As Part of Quarterly Performance reporting, the Recipient will address the following:

Marking and Branding: The Recipient will be requested to provide the following information:
- An updated quarterly list of public events to be organized by the Recipient during the upcoming three months, including approximate date, location, and audience. The Recipient will coordinate with USAID about all planned events with press participation, press activities, press releases, as well as inclusion of USAID promotional materials for the participants, participation of USAID/USG representatives.
- Two success stories a year with an accompanying photograph (see item c. for specifications). The success stories will be provided in a Word Document format, using a standard USAID success story template.
- The fourth quarterly performance report must also include a digital collection of at least 20 photographs a year that are illustrative of project's achievements in jpeg format. The photographs will comply with a guidance provided in the USAID Graphic Standards Manual. Each photograph will have a brief explanation about its subject, and identify: the author and his/her organization, person(s) featured in the photograph, and the location where the photograph was taken.
- Clippings of press articles that mention the project.
- At least 2 copies of all public communications materials produced by the project. In addition, the Recipient must submit all final documents to USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse.

Participant Training Reports: The Recipient will collect training data on technical trainings (i.e., conferences and workshops) provided for beneficiaries that were held in the United States, third countries, or in-country under this Cooperative Agreement. The training data will be entered into TraiNET and submitted to the AOR quarterly no later than 45 days following the end of each fiscal quarter measured from October 1, as relevant. The Participant Training report for the final quarter of the final year of the agreement will be due 30 days prior to the end date of the award. The Recipient will follow ADS 252 policy, which provides detailed information regarding visa compliance guidelines, and ADS 253, which provides guidance on how to implement USAID funded training programs.

TraiNet and USAID Sponsored J-1 Visas: All host country nationals being funded fully, partially, directly, or indirectly by USAID must enter the U.S. on a J-1 Visa, regardless of the type or duration of the activity. In order to secure a J-1 visa, each participant must first secure a DS-2019 form (Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor J-1 Status). TraiNet is the only means of obtaining a DS-2019 for USAID funded Exchange Visitors.

USAID/CA delegates the TraiNet data entry, verification, and reporting responsibilities to its implementing partner who is responsible for data entry (the R1 role) and verification (the R2 role)

of all training programs and participants that are funded by USAID. USAID/Central Asia/SPO is responsible for approval (the R3 role) and the COR/AOR and Program Managers are responsible for working with their implementing partners to obtain the data needed by the R3. USAID/Washington is responsible for submission of the data (the R4 role) to SEVIS.

The DS-2019 approval process is as follows:

Data is entered into TraiNet by the implementing partner's Data Entry Initiator (R1);

- The R1 submits the information to the Visa Compliance System (VCS);
- The designated Verifier (R2) verifies the accuracy of the data in the VCS, uploads documents, and either submits the information to the R3 if all is correct, or rejects the file if there are errors in the data;
- A designated United States citizen in the Central Asia Mission – the Approver (R3) – reviews the electronic versions of documents and either approves or rejects the files (for missing data or other concerns based on review of the files) sending them back to the R1 with comments;
- When the R3 approves a file, the information is electronically transferred to the Responsible Officer (R4) in USAID/Washington who provides the final approval before the information is submitted to the Department of Homeland Security SEVIS database;
- The DS-2019 form is created, printed and mailed to the R3;
- The R3 gives the form to the USAID AOR who provides it to the implementing partner. The implementing partner is responsible for delivering the form to the participant so that he/she can present it to the Consular Officer during their appointment for a J-1 visa at the U.S. Embassy consular section, or designated Consulate. Exchange visitors apply online at the U.S. State Department's website in each respective CAR countries. When asked to enter a "Program Number", applications should enter USAID's Exchange Visitor Program Number G-2-00263."

Gender Reporting: The Recipient will report any activities implemented during the period, with progress and results that contributed towards promotion of Gender Equality and Female Empowerment. As part of its regular reports, the Recipient must collect, analyze and submit sex-disaggregated data and propose actions that will address any gender-related challenges that might arise from that data. The Recipient will report any challenges to the AOR who, in turn, will work with the USAID/CA Mission's gender specialist to find reasonable solutions.

iii. Final Report:

The Recipient must submit a final report that summarizes achievements, and progress against the work plan and agreed-upon performance indicators over the life of the project. The Recipient must submit the Final Report within ninety (90) calendar days after the expiration of the award. The Final Report must contain content appropriate for public dissemination. The Final Report must contain the following information:
1. An executive summary of the accomplishments and results achieved;
2. An in-depth analysis of progress and results that synthesizes achievements that contributed towards program objectives. This section must clearly describe activities, major

accomplishments, and results achieved, including results for all of the activities under the Cooperative Agreement;

3. Describe reasons why targets were not achieved or were surpassed and why activities were delayed or not carried out, if appropriate;

4. A summary of problems/obstacles encountered during the implementation, and how those obstacles were addressed and overcome, if appropriate;

5. Success stories, including examples of synergy and collaboration with partners;

6. Lessons learned, best practices, and other findings, along with recommendations for future programming in this sector;

7. A summary of progress made in achieving indicator targets during the activity implementation (based on valid data collection and analysis and credible baseline) including final data, compared to baseline data, for all indicators included in the monitoring and evaluation plan. This section should include disaggregated data by gender, historically disenfranchised groups, and other relevant groups identified;

8. A comparison of actual expenditures with budget estimates, including analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs, as relevant;

9. Other pertinent information, including recommendations with-in depth- analysis and lessons learned, related to the overall activity results;

10. The Final Report must also contain an index of all reports and information products produced under the award; and

11. The Final Report must include a professionally formatted, four-to eight page annual summary of achievements, noteworthy activities, lessons learned, changes in the environment, etc. The Report must be formatted to function as a stand-alone, externally shareable document, designed to keep key project stakeholders (such as USG agencies, other donors, and other USG implementers) up to date on progress. The Final Report must include photos, maps, tables, and other graphical elements as relevant. The Final Report must not directly recycle text, photos or other elements from Annual Reports.

4. Grants Manual

Within 60 days after the effective date of the Cooperative Agreement the Recipient will develop and submit the Grant Manual, describing policies and procedures of sub-grant making process under this award. The Grant Manual should be developed and submitted to the AOR for concurrence and must be subject to Agreement Officer approval. The Grant Manual will include codes of conduct, check potential vendors in the excluded parties list, marking and branding requirements, updated provisions for subgrantees, etc., and must include subaward related Standard Provisions.

5. Development Experience Clearinghouse Requirements

Consistent with ADS 540, the Recipient must prepare and submit a copy of semi-annual and final performance reports, results of assessments and operational research, if any, required by this award to the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) at:

Online: https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/content/submit.aspx;

By Mail:
USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse
M/CIO/ITSD/KM/DEC
RRB M.01-010
Washington, DC 20523-6100

Essential bibliographic information must accompany submissions, whenever it is available. The submission page on the DEC identifies the minimum required fields to submit. For questions on DEC submissions, contact:

> Email: ksc@usaid.gov

> Telephone: +1 202-712-0579

*Note: Mail sent to USAID via the US Postal Service undergoes security and irradiation processing. To send sensitive items, like CDs or DVDs, please contact the DEC team at ksc@usaid.gov to arrange delivery.

6. Program Income

Pursuant to 2 CFR 200.400(g), Recipients may not earn profit under assistance instruments. However, all reasonable, allocable, and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect, which are related to the cooperative agreement program and are in accordance with 2 CFR 200 Subpart E - Cost Principles may be paid under the award.

USAID does not anticipate any program income under the award.

7. Key Personnel

Within 5 days of the award having been made, the Recipient will propose candidates for key personnel positions (with a minimum of 3 and up to 5 key personnel positions), which corresponds to the proposed technical approach of the Activity Description and the proposed staffing plan, along with written justification in sufficient detail to permit evaluation of the impact on the program.

The Key Personnel, as a team, must possess fluency in Russian and English, and the team must possess the following skill sets:

- Demonstrated experience in managing international development programs including experience in advancing youth leadership and community engagement, supporting civil-society's research and advocacy role, grant management, and organizational capacity development.
- Advanced educational background and knowledge relevant for similar projects in developing countries;

- Strong leadership, administrative, management, presentation, reporting, and communication (both oral and written) skills and the ability to implement projects with diverse subject matter;
- Demonstrated ability to research and analyze state policies and legislation and make recommendations for improvement to relevant stakeholders;
- Ability to coordinate with USG and other donor programs on civil society and seek synergies and complementarities to maximize results; and
- Ability to perform at a high level and apply diplomacy skills with a wide range of stakeholders (i.e., national, provincial, district and local government officials, private sector, CSOs/NGOs, informal community organizations, youth, and beneficiaries).

Preferred:

- Preferred candidates will have practical experience in technical and organizational capacity development in the civil society sector and knowledge of the civil society and political landscape in Central Asia, as well as experience in integrating youth empowerment and engagement in civil society projects and programs;
- Demonstrated experience of successful interactions with a wide range of stakeholders;
- Experience working on civil society issues in Central Asia or the former Soviet Union is strongly preferred;
- Advanced advocacy and policy analysis experience, preferably in the former Soviet Union, and strategic mindset and ability to turn strategic imperatives into program actions and outcomes;
- Successful experience managing small-grants programs (including oversight of all financial aspects); design and management of flexible and needs-based grants programs;
- Ability to speak regional/ local languages (Kazakh, Tajik, Turkmen and Uzbek) is strongly preferred.
- In addition, the Applicant must provide a staffing plan that has the collective experience and knowledge to implement the proposed activity. This includes a staffing plan that provides clear roles and responsibilities and ensures efficient operations both for technical implementation and project management (e.g. finance, accounting, contract/grant management). The Applicant must highlight in its staffing plan the chain of command among staff for the activity and the location of positions for key personnel.

8. Environmental Compliance

The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, Section 117 requires that the impact of USAID's activities on the environment be considered and that USAID include environmental sustainability as a central consideration in designing and carrying out its development programs. This mandate is codified in Federal Regulations (22 CFR 216) and in USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS) Chapters 201 and 204, which, in part, require that the potential environmental impacts of USAID-financed activities are identified prior to a final decision to proceed and that appropriate environmental safeguards are adopted for all activities. The recipient's environmental compliance obligations under these regulations and procedures are specified in the following paragraphs of this RFA.

In addition to complying with the obligations below, the recipient must comply with host country environmental regulations unless otherwise directed in writing by USAID. In case of conflict between host country and USAID regulations, the latter shall govern.

A Memo to the File #3 (MTF #3) to the Programmatic Democracy and Government IEE (P-IEE) Amendment #8 (DCN: Asia18-076) for Central Asia Civil Society Activity was approved on 3/1/2019 (please **see Annex 3** to this NOFO). MTF #3 documents that environmental compliance screening, mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements established in P-IEE Amendments #6 and #8 cover this activity through 2024; and conducts first review of climate risk management. MTF #3 is included as an Annex (TBD).

USAID has determined that most of project activities and grants for technical assistance, and training programs except to the extent such programs include activities directly affecting the environment (such as construction of facilities, etc.); analyses, studies, academic or research workshops and meetings; and document and information transfers qualify for a Categorical Exclusion (CE) under 22 CFR Part 216.2(c)(2) (no effect on the natural or physical environment) and, therefore, these activities are excluded from further environmental review and reporting to USAID.

USAID has also determined that the program will also work on different types of grants, including grants for community projects, commodity and IT support and other activities qualifying for a Negative Determination with Conditions (NDC). In this case the recipient will screen, mitigate, monitor and report to USAID in accordance with terms established in the P-IEE Amendments #6 and #8. For grant proposals, the recipient will be required to screen them to ensure that they are sustainable and don't result in adverse environmental impacts; that mitigation measures, as necessary, are developed, and monitoring and reporting is specified.

All activity components are rated as low Climate risk as they are not expected to materially affect the implementation or outcomes of the activity. The recipient shall consider climate change resilience for all NDC program components and, when applicable, implement climate risk management practices as required by ADS 201mal. The recipient may use sources referenced in the Central Asia Climate Change Risk Profile at https://www.climatelinks.org.

As part of its Work Plan, and all Annual Work Plans thereafter, the recipient, in collaboration with the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) and the Mission Environmental Officer, will review all ongoing and planned activities under this award to determine if they are within the scope of the approved MTF #3. If the recipient plans any new activities outside the scope of MTF #3, it must assist the AOR to prepare another MTF or P-IEE amendment for USAID review and approval. No such new activities shall be undertaken prior to receiving written USAID approval of the MTF or amendment.

9. Performance Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

The Recipient is required to develop and implement monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plan that is consistent with ADS 201, in consultation with the AOR, and, as appropriate, with the mission monitoring and evaluation lead. The MEL plan shall cover the life of award. Annual

MEL Plan development is **NOT** recommended. However, the Recipient should review the MEL plan annually to ensure that it is still valid. If, over the course of implementation, modifications to the MEL plan become necessary, changes to the MEL plan shall be proposed to the AOR. Once approved by the AOR, the Recipient will then amend the MEL plan to reflect those changes and document clearly the changes as approved. If modified, the MEL plan shall not exclude data previously collected, and, to the extent possible, shall mitigate any significant variations in data collection methodology, indicator definition, or data presentation. The intent of the MEL plan is to show changes over time as a result of USAID intervention.

The MEL plan will be guided by the activity's goal and objectives, anticipated results articulated in the results framework, the theory of change, and planned inputs/interventions as laid out in the annual work plan. The MEL plan will also serve as a tool of mutual understanding among all involved parties (e.g. USAID, the Recipient , Sub-Recipient (if any) and other stakeholders) on stakeholders' MEL roles and responsibilities and how the achievements of this award will be measured and presented. Routine MEL tasks and reports will give the Recipient and USAID/CA a basis for gauging performance and return on investment, promoting learning, and facilitating adaptive management to allow activity adjustment due to unforeseen changes in strategy, approach, or operating environment that may be needed to achieve or maximize results. The MEL plan must, therefore, articulate clearly the link to the results framework and the theory of change of the award; identify how key assumptions in the theory of change would be tested or validated over the course of implementation; clearly define the high quality indicators to be reported to USAID (see below); and contain practical, feasible, and cost-effective methodologies to accomplish the tasks laid out in the MEL plan.

The MEL plan will be submitted to the AOR for approval within 45 days of the award and is separate from the work plan and regular financial and other reports required by the standard clauses. The MEL plan and its annexes should be finalized within 30 days after activity start-up, before major implementations begin, and prior to the first indicator data is being collected.

Performance Monitoring

Regardless of the start date of the award, the performance monitoring plan will be adjusted to the fiscal calendar of October 1 to September 30. The first monitoring report is due no later than October 1 each activity year, and within 45 days following the activity's conclusion.

The MEL plan shall follow contents and instructions as specified in the USAID/CA **MEL Plan Template***. At minimum, the MEL plan shall be accompanied by two annexes: an indicator tracking table* (ITT) and indicator reference sheets (IRSs). The ITT will contain a list of all indicators with appropriate disaggregations to be tracked and reported to USAID/CA. The Recipient is encouraged to use quantitative as well as qualitative indicators as deemed appropriate for the result it is intended to measure. The ITT will be submitted to the AOR according to the reporting timeline specified in the award. To the extent possible, and with AOR approval, baseline data should be collected prior to intervention inputs.

It is highly recommended that the MEL plan include no more than 10 indicators; i.e., those at the higher level results or at the output level and above, rather than all indicators that the Recipient uses for its internal management. When selecting indicators, the Recipient should take into

consideration the relevance and accuracy of the indicators according to the planned tasks/services and intended results, as well as time and resources required to collect and report each indicator data. All selected indicators must be in line with the activity as well as the Mission-wide Performance Management Plan (PMP). The existing U.S. Foreign Assistance Standard Indicators and/or those of the US Government's Initiatives, the mission's Regional Development and Cooperation Strategy, and other relevant IRSs shall be used as applicable.[1]

A separate IRS* is to be developed independently for each indicator as per the template and instructions provided. If a qualitative indicator is used it must also be accompanied by a IRS. If a qualitative indicator is used it must also be accompanied by a IRS. If a Standard Foreign Assistance Indicator is used a standard definition must also be used. The Recipient may add a "precise definition" to the standard definition to further elaborate inclusion and exclusion criteria specific to the nature the activity as needed. However, the precise definition must be within the scope of the standard definition. If the selected standard or custom indicators are same as those being used in activity and/or the PMP, the same standard IRSs shall be used so that the results can be aggregated at USAID/CA level. As applicable, all indicators shall be disaggregated by geographical locations at the Administrative 1 (province or state) level. All people indicators must be disaggregated by sex and include other metrics that allow the full capture of effect on gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

USAID/CA will conduct data quality assessment (DQA) of the indicators that are to be reported to Washington, DC, as soon as each required indicator data is being collected and reported to the mission. The mission may conduct the DQA on other indicators as deemed appropriate.

Routine monitoring is not all about tracking and reporting numbers against the selected indicators. The Recipient should use appropriate means, mechanisms, and tools to assess the level of performance beyond tracing numbers; capture any unintended positive results and the factors contributing to such results; and examine any unintended negative consequences or results of the implementation, especially those that could affect the safety of beneficiaries or their equitable access to the services. All these should be well documented and shared with the AOR. USAID staff may pay visits to the implementation sites at any time during the life of the award.

Evaluation

The USG funding shall not be used for any studies that do not meet USAID and/or international standards, are not necessary or have no added value to maximize the outcomes or results, and/or have no clear objectives and a plan for data use. The Recipient may conduct special studies, such as internal evaluations[2], formative assessment, and baseline and endline surveys, as deemed necessary. The studies shall be planned and their purposes, methods, and intended use of the findings and recommendations be precisely described in a relevant section of the MEL plan. The

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[1] http://f.state.sbu/Pages/Indicators.aspx

*The templates will be provided by AOR after the award is signed

[2] Either by the Recipient 's or Sub-Recipient 's staff or outsourced Recipient or consultant. See definition in ADS 201.
*The templates will be provided by AOR after the award is signed

study concept/protocol and the scope of work or terms of reference of the study team should be shared with the AOR and AOR clearance shall be obtained prior to implementation.

At any time of award, USAID/CA may conduct one or more evaluation(s), either by USAID staff and/or a third party external to USAID and the Recipient, as deemed appropriate. This is mainly to generate strategic information and learning opportunities that can inform program management and to strengthen current programming and/or to support design of future activities; measure progress and/or achievement of intended/unintended higher level outcomes; and account for the investments and demonstrate their effectiveness and/or impact. The Recipient must work closely with and provide essential support to USAID and/or external evaluators as requested.

Learning

The Recipient shall concisely describe the plan for adaptive learning in the MEL plan. This section shall explain the activity's approach to learning from monitoring data, evaluation findings (if applicable), data presentation, and other learning activities, and how it will be adapted in response to new learning and knowledge, especially how the lessons can be applied to the USAID program cycle. Learning also includes creating case studies, best practices, and communications pieces to share internally to USAID and externally to partners and stakeholders.

10. Electronic Payments System

1. Definitions:

   a. "Cash Payment System" means a payment system that generates any transfer of funds through a transaction originated by cash, check, or similar paper instrument. This includes electronic payments to a financial institution or clearing house that subsequently issues cash, check, or similar paper instrument to the designated payee.

   b. "Electronic Payment System" means a payment system that generates any transfer of funds, other than a transaction originated by cash, check, or similar paper instrument, that is initiated through an electronic terminal, telephone, mobile phone, computer, or magnetic tape, for the purpose of ordering, instructing or authorizing a financial institution to debit or credit an account. The term includes debit cards, wire transfers, transfers made at automatic teller machines, and point-of-sale terminals.

2. The Recipient agrees to use an electronic payment system for any payments under this award to beneficiaries, subrecipients, or contractors.

3. Exceptions. Recipients are allowed the following exceptions, provided the Recipient documents its files with the appropriate justification:

   a. Cash payments made while establishing electronic payment systems, provided that this exception is not used for more than six months from the effective date of this award.

   b. Cash payments made to payees where the Recipient does not expect to make payments to the same payee on a regular, recurring basis, and payment through an electronic payment

system is not reasonably available.

    c. Cash payments to vendors below $3000, when payment through an electronic payment system is not reasonably available.

    d. The Recipient has received a written exception from the Agreement Officer that a specific payment or all cash payments are authorized based on the Recipient's written justification, which provides a basis and cost analysis for the requested exception.

4. More information about how to establish, implement, and manage electronic payment methods is available to Recipients at http://solutionscenter.nethope.org/programs/c2e-toolkit.

11. Police and Prisons

Under this award, assistance may not be used to provide training, advice, or any financial support for police, prisons, or other law enforcement forces.

12. Salary Supplemental for Host Government Employees

Any payments by the Recipient to any host government's employee at any level is subject to the USAID policy guidance on criteria for payment of salary supplements for host government employees dated April 1988 (or as amended). When this issue arises during the life of the cooperative agreement, the Recipient must consult with the AO on any questions regarding the applicability of the policy.

13. Implementation Principles and Guidance

Gender and Social Inclusion

Gender issues are key to the achievement of USAID's strategic plans and Development Objectives, and the Agency strives to promote gender equality in which both men and women have equal opportunity to benefit from and contribute to economic, social, cultural and political development; enjoy socially valued resources and rewards; and realize their human rights. Civil society organizations can play an important role in promoting gender equality and combating gender discrimination and advancing gender-sensitive legislation and mechanisms. They can also become catalysts for new approaches to addressing gender inequality and discrimination. Central Asian governments are increasingly recognizing the important role that CSOs play in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment and engage them for developmental work around gender issues. Through civil society organizations women can advocate for increased gender equality in their own communities. The implementer must seek to include both men and women in all aspects of this activity, and raise awareness of the particular obstacles facing women in their quest to be deemed full participants in society.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a core part of U.S. global development policy and USAID's reform agenda. The applicant's approach to sustainability of the proposed activity is, therefore, a key consideration for USAID. The activity is expected to build the institutional capacity of civil society organizations, to foster partnership and to introduce tools and mechanisms in a manner that these will continue to develop beyond the timeframes and scope of this activity.

Sustainability of the civil society sector in all Central Asian countries remains challenging. Sustainability is a broad concept that encompasses many aspects of civil society organizations' functioning, such as legal environment, organizational capacity, financial viability and diversification of funding sources, and relationships with stakeholders and constituencies. A sustainable and vibrant civil society is necessary for transparent and accountable governance. In order to improve transparency and accountability at all levels of government, USAID will support efforts that will build the sustainability and resilience of the civil society sector to help it become more financially viable, efficient and constituency-oriented. USAID will also continue its work on improving the legal and regulatory environment to promote a more enabling operating environment for civil society groups.

Youth
It is critical that the Activity is designed to pay special attention to youth as drivers of change, future leaders within society, and entrepreneurs within the workforce. In recent years, young people all over the world have demonstrated a keen desire to contribute to decisions that affect them and their future and have been at the forefront of civic engagement efforts, often using social media to advocate for and advance civic initiatives. It is critical to include youth throughout the entire program cycle to better respond to their needs and preferences and cultivate this growing potential within the context of the proposed interventions. The Activity must ensure that appropriate interventions, choices, and incentives for meaningful and inclusive youth participation are integrated throughout programming. USAID's policies on Youth in Development must be mainstreamed throughout the activity.

Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups
The inclusion of vulnerable ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and the elderly are a critical aspect of the activity. The needs and interests of minorities and vulnerable groups such as rural youth, young people who have dropped out of school, unemployed people, and LGBTI groups are often left overlooked in CSOs' interventions and projects. USAID's policies on persons with Disabilities, as well as international best practices on inclusive development, must be mainstreamed throughout the activity. Applicants should address their approach to increasing the awareness, inclusion and representation of minorities, persons with disabilities and other disenfranchised groups in activity interventions.

Flexible and Adaptive Programming
USAID recognizes the importance thinking critically and shifting strategic decisions to respond to emerging development challenges. This activity should maintain the flexibility and adaptability to ensure responsiveness to evolving local dynamics and to take advantage of opportunities, as well as mitigate challenges in a timely and effective manner. This will require a management approach that regularly reassesses the operating environment in target countries and adjusts program planning and implementation as necessary. The activity will be flexible enough to be able to adapt

to changing circumstances and respond with different approaches as well as different types of funding or unanticipated shifts in level of funding, as needed.

Country Strategies
Given the different operating environments and needs in each of the countries, the programmatic emphasis and approach will be slightly different from country to country.

It is envisioned that the implementer will propose a sound and reasoned country strategy for each of the participating countries at the beginning of the project. USAID/CA and its Country Offices will have significant input into these strategies, ensuring adequacy and appropriateness of the proposed approaches, that operating environment sensitivities are addressed, and that lessons learned from previous USAID-funded projects are incorporated. Sustainability of approaches will be a required component of the country strategies.

These country strategies are meant to be flexible and 'living' documents that serve as a basis for both life of program approaches and quick decision-making and will be updated annually based on shifting priorities and specific needs of civil society in each of the target countries. Additionally, as part of the work planning process (and the annual reports), the implementer will be required to provide an update on the state of civil society in each of the countries.

[END OF SECTION F]

SECTION G: FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions please refer to Section D of this NOFO.

[END OF SECTION G]

SECTION H: OTHER INFORMATION

1. Award

USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. Any award and subsequent incremental funding will be subject to the availability of funds and continued relevance to Agency programming.

2. Applications with Proprietary Data

Applicants who include data that they do not want disclosed to the public for any purpose or used by the U.S. Government except for evaluation purpose, should mark the cover page with the following:

"This application includes data that must not be disclosed duplicated, used, or disclosed – in whole or in part – for any purpose other than to evaluate this application. If, however, an award is made as a result of – or in connection with – the submission of this data, the U.S. Government will have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting award. This restriction does not limit the U.S. Government's right to use information contained in this data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction are contained in sheets {insert sheet numbers}."

Additionally, the applicant must mark each sheet of data it wishes to restrict with the following:

"Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this application."

[END OF SECTION H]

ANNEX 1 - SUMMARY BUDGET TEMPLATE

Item #	Cost Category	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total in US Dollars
1.	Salaries and Allowances						
2.	Fringe Benefits						
3.	Travel and Transportation						
4.	Equipment & Supplies						
5.	Subawards						
6.	Grants to Local Organizations						
7.	Construction (if any)						
8.	Other						
9.	**Total Direct Charges**						
10.	Indirect Charges						
11.	**Total Estimated USAID Amount**						

Note: Your organization should submit its summary budget in the above summary budget template. You must also submit the detailed budget for each of the cost categories with the accompanying budget narrative.

[End of Annex 1]

ANNEX 2 – STANDARD PROVISIONS

(Note: the full text of these provisions may be found at:
https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303maa and
https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mab). The actual Standard Provisions included in the award will be dependent on the organization that is selected. **The award will include the latest Mandatory Provisions for either U.S. or non-U.S. Nongovernmental organizations.** The award will also contain the following "required as applicable" Standard Provisions:

REQUIRED AS APPLICABLE STANDARD PROVISIONS FOR U.S. NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Required	Not Required	Standard Provision
TBD		RAA1. NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATES - PREDETERMINED (DECEMBER 2014)
		RAA2. NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATES - PROVISIONAL (Nonprofit) (DECEMBER 2014)
		RAA3. NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE - PROVISIONAL (Profit) (DECEMBER 2014)
X		RAA4. EXCHANGE VISITORS AND PARTICIPANT TRAINING (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA5. VOLUNTARY POPULATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES – SUPPLEMENTAL REQUIREMENTS (JANUARY 2009)
	X	RAA6. PROTECTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT (APRIL 1998)
	X	RAA7. CARE OF LABORATORY ANIMALS (MARCH 2004)
	X	RAA8. TITLE TO AND CARE OF PROPERTY (COOPERATING COUNTRY TITLE) (NOVEMBER 1985)
	X	RAA9. COST SHARING (MATCHING) (FEBRUARY 2012)
	X	RAA10. PROHIBITION OF ASSISTANCE TO DRUG TRAFFICKERS (JUNE 1999)
	X	RAA11. INVESTMENT PROMOTION (NOVEMBER 2003)
X		RAA12. REPORTING HOST GOVERNMENT TAXES (DECEMBER 2014)
	X	RAA13. FOREIGN GOVERNMENT DELEGATIONS TO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA14. CONSCIENCE CLAUSE IMPLEMENTATION (ASSISTANCE) (FEBRUARY 2012)
	X	RAA15. CONDOMS (ASSISTANCE) (SEPTEMBER 2014)
	X	RAA16. PROHIBITION ON THE PROMOTION OR ADVOCACY OF THE LEGALIZATION OR PRACTICE OF PROSTITUTION OR SEX TRAFFICKING (ASSISTANCE) (SEPTEMBER 2014)
X		RAA17. USAID DISABILITY POLICY - ASSISTANCE (DECEMBER 2004)
X		RAA18. STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED IN USAID ASSISTANCE AWARDS INVOLVING CONSTRUCTION (SEPTEMBER 2004)
	X	RAA19. STATEMENT FOR IMPLEMENTERS OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING ACTIVITIES ON LACK OF SUPPORT FOR PROSTITUTION (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA20. ELIGIBILITY OF SUBRECIPIENTS OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING FUNDS (JUNE 2012)

	X	RAA21. PROHIBITION ON THE USE OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING FUNDS TO PROMOTE, SUPPORT, OR ADVOCATE FOR THE LEGALIZATION OR PRACTICE OF PROSTITUTION (JUNE 2012)
X		RAA22. UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM OF AWARD MANAGEMENT (July 2015)
X		RAA23. REPORTING SUBAWARDS AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION (DECEMBER 2014)
	X	RAA24. PATENT REPORTING PROCEDURES (DECEMBER 2014)
	X	RAA25. ACCESS TO USAID FACILITIES AND USAID'S INFORMATION SYSTEMS (AUGUST 2013)
X		RAA26. CONTRACT PROVISION FOR DBA INSURANCE UNDER RECIPIENT PROCUREMENTS (DECEMBER 2014)
X		RAA27. AWARD TERM AND CONDITION FOR RECIPIENT INTEGRITY AND PERFORMANCE MATTERS (April 2016)
	X	RAA28. PROTECTING LIFE IN GLOBAL HEALTH ASSISTANCE (MAY 2017)

REQUIRED AS APPLICABLE STANDARD PROVISIONS FOR NON-U.S. NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Required	Not Required	Standard Provision
TBD		RAA1. ADVANCE PAYMENT AND REFUNDS (DECEMBER 2014)
		RAA2. REIMBURSEMENT PAYMENT AND REFUNDS (DECEMBER 2014)
TBD		RAA3. INDIRECT COSTS – NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT (NICRA) (DECEMBER 2014)
		RAA4. INDIRECT COSTS – CHARGED AS A FIXED AMOUNT (NONPROFIT) (JUNE 2012)
X		RAA5. UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM OF AWARD MANAGEMENT (July 2015)
X		RAA6. REPORTING SUBAWARDS AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION (DECEMBER 2014)
X		RAA7. SUBAWARDS (DECEMBER 2014)
X		RAA8. TRAVEL AND INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORTATION (DECEMBER 2014)
	X	RAA9. OCEAN SHIPMENT OF GOODS (JUNE 2012)
X		RAA10. REPORTING HOST GOVERNMENT TAXES (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA11. PATENT RIGHTS (JUNE 2012)
X		RAA12. EXCHANGE VISITORS AND PARTICIPANT TRAINING (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA13. INVESTMENT PROMOTION (NOVEMBER 2003)
	X	RAA 14. COST SHARE (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA15. PROGRAM INCOME (DECEMBER 2014)
	X	RAA16. FOREIGN GOVERNMENT DELEGATIONS TO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES (JUNE 2012)
X		RAA17. STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED IN USAID ASSISTANCE AWARDS INVOLVING CONSTRUCTION (SEPTEMBER 2004)
	X	RAA18. PROTECTION OF HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECTS (JUNE 2012)

	X	RAA19. STATEMENT FOR IMPLEMENTERS OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING ACTIVITIES ON LACK OF SUPPORT FOR PROSTITUTION (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA20. ELIGIBILITY OF SUBRECIPIENTS OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING FUNDS (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA21. PROHIBITION ON THE USE OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING FUNDS TO PROMOTE, SUPPORT, OR ADVOCATE FOR THE LEGALIZATION OR PRACTICE OF PROSTITUTION (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA22. VOLUNTARY POPULATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES – SUPPLEMENTAL REQUIREMENTS (JANUARY 2009)
	X	RAA23. CONSCIENCE CLAUSE IMPLEMENTATION (ASSISTANCE) (FEBRUARY 2012)
	X	RAA24. CONDOMS (ASSISTANCE) (SEPTEMBER 2014)
	X	RAA25. PROHIBITION ON THE PROMOTION OR ADVOCACY OF THE LEGALIZATION OR PRACTICE OF PROSTITUTION OR SEX TRAFFICKING(ASSISTANCE) (SEPTEMBER 2014)
	X	RAA26. LIMITATION ON SUBAWARDS TO NON-LOCAL ENTITIES (JULY 2014)
X		RAA27. CONTRACT PROVISION FOR DBA INSURANCE UNDER RECIPIENT PROCUREMENTS (DECEMBER 2014)
X		RAA28. CONTRACT AWARD TERM AND CONDITION FOR RECIPIENT INTEGRITY AND PERFORMANCE MATTERS (April 2016)
	X	RAA29. PROTECTING LIFE IN GLOBAL HEALTH ASSISTANCE (MAY 2017)

[End of Annex 2]

ANNEX 3 - A Memo to the File #3 (MTF #3) to the Programmatic Democracy and Government IEE (P-IEE) Amendment #8 (DCN: Asia18-076) for Central Asia Civil Society Activity