



OFFICE OF ACQUISITION AND ASSISTANCE

**Subject: Amendment No. 03 to Notice of Funding Opportunity Number (NOFO)
7200AA21RFA00013**

Request for Applications (RFA)

**Civil Society and Media - Strengthened Together and Advancing in New Directions
(CSM-STAND)**

Issuance Date of Amendment No. 03:	May 7, 2021
Deadline for Questions:	May 14, 2021
Closing Date:	June 2, 2021
Closing Time:	17:00 EST

Federal Assistance Listing Number: 98.001

Dear Offerors:

The purpose of this **Amendment No. 03 to Notice of Funding Opportunity Number 7200AA21RFA00013** is to provide notification that the subject NOFO is hereby amended. Changes in the NOFO are highlighted in **yellow**.

This **Amendment No. 03 to Notice of Funding Opportunity Number 7200AA21RFA00013** supersedes the previous version. Except as specifically amended below, all other terms and conditions of the NOFO **7200AA21RFA00013** remain unchanged.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is seeking applications for **two Leader With Associate Award (LWA) cooperative agreements** from qualified entities to implement the **Civil Society and Media - Strengthened Together and Advancing in New Directions (CSM-STAND)** program. Eligibility for these awards is unrestricted.

USAID intends to **make two awards** to the applicant(s) who best **meet(s)** 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

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www.grants.gov, and may be amended. It is the responsibility of the applicants to regularly check the website to ensure they have the latest information pertaining to this NOFO 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 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.6.f. 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 by the deadline for questions as 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,

Mir M Ershadullah
(affiliate)

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Mir Ershadullah
Agreement Officer

Civil Society and Media - Strengthened Together and Advancing in New Directions

(CSM-STAND)

Notice of Funding Opportunity Number: 7200AA21RFA00013
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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.

I. INTRODUCTION

Thriving civic space and active citizen participation, strengthened through advocacy and activism, help to cultivate and preserve inclusive and representative democratic societies. Citizens’ and journalists’ ability to exercise freedoms of association and expression increases transparency and accountability, energizes government and political parties in policy debate, promotes societal advancements through informed public opinion, and enables civil society and independent media to reflect the rich pluralism of all interests in a society. USAID prioritizes the advancement of democratic culture and values and supports civic education initiatives to ensure citizens understand and exercise their rights, responsibilities, and roles as active citizens. Active citizen participation in civic and political processes promotes social cohesion and community resilience, while also encouraging better and more responsive governance that advances a country’s self-reliance.

Across development sectors, USAID supports a broad range of civil society and media actors. USAID works with formal groups, such as civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), independent media outlets and startups, journalist associations, labor unions, business associations, faith-based groups, and academic and think tank organizations. USAID also partners with, and seeks to expand engagement with, less formal, more loosely affiliated, and/or increasingly critical mass-based groups, including social movements, digital and civic activists, citizen journalists, civil society coalitions, and civic networks, as well as hybrid groups, such as multi-purpose voluntary organizations and social enterprise organizations. This support enables civil society to advocate, monitor, and collaborate with governments and private sector actors, as well as promote citizen-centric government accountability.

The United States is committed to promoting an open, interoperable, reliable and secure internet on which human rights recognized offline are equally respected online, in line with long-standing U.S. Government commitments to internet freedom.¹ However, current and emerging trends indicate an expansion of its thinking on human rights online to include a broader range of digital rights and freedom from online harms, such as misinformation and hate speech. USAID works to champion emergent engagement methods that utilize technologies, particularly to engage with youth as "digital citizens" native to online civic spaces, ensuring current and future generations understand the norms that underpin participation in online public spaces that are civically oriented, and respectful of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

¹ U.S. National Cybersecurity Strategy, September 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/National-Cyber-Strategy.pdf>.

USAID and the U.S. Government have an extensive history of global support for participatory civil society and independent media (traditional and digital) as key pillars of democratic governance. By strengthening civil society and media’s capacities to credibly represent citizen interests and to hold governments accountable through advocacy, oversight, and outreach, USAID will actively contribute to partner countries’ long-term self-reliance.

At the same time, emerging threats and contextual realities require and demand creative and **adaptive approaches** to long-standing civil society and media development challenges. As USAID works to foster self-reliance in partner countries, we recognize the shifting geopolitical ideological context and the growing rise of "sharp power,"² surging authoritarianism and external malign influence that drives or accelerates restrictions on civic space in USAID partner countries.³ This context includes the rise of digital authoritarianism.⁴ Civil society and media support must be tailored to address these fundamental and cross-cutting dynamics. Similarly, while longer term effects are not fully realized, the COVID-19 pandemic is actively shaping the development landscape, particularly for local civil society and independent media, and any future support or engagement with traditional or civic spaces must be prepared to grapple with new realities and increased demands for resilient local civil society systems.⁵

There has also been a notable rise in social movements and protests grounded in the pursuit of civil liberties and greater equality. Civil society organizations, media actors and entities, informal groups, indigenous communities, and other non-state actors are working together, across diverse coalitions, to maintain civic space, demand greater representation and transparency in political decision-making processes, and increase the equitable allocation of resources. In particular, youth are embracing emergent tactics and digital tools, and harnessing social movements as a way to challenge the power imbalance, championing for the rights and equality of the most marginalized.

To address these issues, the Civil Society and Media - Strengthened Together and Advancing in New Directions (CSM-STAND) Leader with Associate (LWA) Award Cooperative **Agreements** will serve Missions, Regional Bureaus, and Independent Offices by informing the design and implementation of local Mission-initiated and funded civil society and media support programs. Associate Award level work will mainly occur through local civil society actors and independent media in each country, and the Leader Award will advance U.S. leadership in international civil society movements by identifying global best practices and lessons learned, and by facilitating learning among civil society and independent media actors and Mission-funded efforts. Mission or other Operating Unit (OU) funded Associate Awards will support and strengthen local civil society and independent media actors to better meet country-specific mandates, needs, and priorities that fit into Missions’ country strategies and U.S. Government policy interests.

² National Endowment for Democracy, "Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence," December 2017, <https://www.ned.org/sharp-power-rising-authoritarian-influence-forum-report/>.

³ V-Dem, "Autocratization Surges--Resistance Grows," 2020, https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/de/39/de39af54-0bc5-4421-89ae-fb20dce53dba/democracy_report.pdf.

⁴ V-Dem, "Digital Repression in Autocracies," March 2020, https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/18/d8/18d8fc9b-3ff3-44d6-a328-799dc0132043/digital-repression17mar.pdf; Foreign Policy at Brookings, "Policy Brief: Exporting Digital Authoritarianism," August 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/exporting-digital-authoritarianism/>.

⁵ International IDEA, "Taking Stock of Global Democratic Trends Before and During COVID-19," December 2020, <https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/global-democratic-trends-before-and-during-covid19>.

This activity is expected to be implemented through two geographically delineated LWAs. One LWA will focus on Africa and the Middle East; and the other LWA will focus on Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, and Europe and Eurasia. Both LWAs will be implemented in countries where USAID works. USAID expects the countries that the recipients will work in may vary from year-to-year over the life of the award.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In many countries, the civil society and independent media actors described above continue to face a variety of limitations to exercising civil and political liberties, including legal, financial, and other autocratic restrictions, and capacity constraints related to diversifying and sustaining resources, advancing broad-based advocacy agendas, and establishing strong connections to citizen constituencies and social movements. Civic space - including all fora for civic engagement ranging from traditional and physical spaces to digital, online, and emerging arenas - continues to suffer from a variety of growing threats that will likely only continue, evolve, or emerge in the near future.⁶

Limited Civil Society and Independent Media Capacity and Sustainability. Civil society capacity and long-term sustainability are foundational to advancing self-reliance yet remain underdeveloped in many USAID partner countries.⁷ USAID’s Civil Society Sustainability Index (CSOSI) indicates that partner countries may be making progress in capacity for service provision, but struggle in other dimensions of sustainability, such as financial viability. Civil society and independent media actors also continue to need to develop organizational and technical capacities, particularly for emerging issue sets such as data literacy, effective use of data-driven advocacy, digital hygiene, and strategic use of technology.

Based on existing research and USAID’s implementation experience, civil society are not yet, in all relevant contexts, consistently and sustainably able to mobilize, advocate, and enact or consolidate democratic changes, including via broader pro-democracy social movements, within relevant contexts, at the local, national, regional, and global levels. In a global economy hit hard by COVID-19, with some countries facing mounting debt and fiscal challenges, civil society entities also often struggle to engage in fiscal and economic policy debates critical to broader democratic governance and self-reliance goals. Independent media continue to face additional and unique challenges, including but not limited to financial sustainability, professionalization, adapting to the digital information ecosystem, new information consumption habits, disruption of business models, rising threats of domestic and foreign authoritarian influences, and the economic collapse of ad markets, which under COVID has led to what some call a “media extinction” crisis at a time where information is critical and life-saving.⁸

⁶ CIVICUS Monitor, "People Power Under Attack 2020," December 2020: <https://findings2020.monitor.civicus.org/downward-spiral.html>.

⁷ Civil society capacity is a primary USAID Journey to Self-Reliance (J2SR) indicator measured by Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)’s civil society and media effectiveness score. For more information, please visit: <https://selfreliance.usaid.gov/>.

⁸ National Endowment for Democracy, "Global Insights: COVID-19 and the Information Space, January 2021, <https://www.ned.org/global-insights-covid-19-information-space/>.

Increasingly Challenging Environment for Civil Society and Independent Media. Ongoing, more traditional challenges to civic space include a weakened enabling environment, administrative and financial impediments to civil society and media organizations, and harassment, censorship, and arrests of civil society and independent media outlets and actors. These challenges are now being further complicated by two emerging issues that risk accelerating these already concerning trends for civic space: (1) transnational autocratic influence and aid, and (2) digital authoritarianism, or the illiberal use of technology, including the use of “emerging technologies” or “technologies of the future,” such as Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, biometric IDs, facial recognition, and “smart” or “safe cities,” by authoritarian governments and other nefarious actors to restrict democratic and civic space.

These emerging issues enhance the capabilities of authoritarian governments to centralize data and information and to use it to control their populations and repress fundamental freedoms, with a need for fewer dedicated financial and human resources. Both persistent and newer threats have become acute around the world as authoritarian and repressive regimes develop methods and tools to share or duplicate coercive practices even beyond their borders. Increasingly, authoritarian actors (foreign and domestic) use strategic corruption,⁹ sow informational chaos, and support digital authoritarianism to maintain their power. These trends are most visible in the erosion of accountability for government actors and the increasingly restricted civic and legal spaces in which these actors can be held accountable at home.

Two-thirds (66 percent) of FY 2018 USAID bilateral Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) assistance was programmed in restrictive or challenging environments characterized as “closed autocracy” or “electoral autocracy.” Simultaneously, the COVID-19 pandemic has, in many countries, only accelerated democratic backsliding and related issues. Many authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes are using the COVID-19 crisis to restrict freedoms of expression, assembly, association and movement; limit digital rights; and reduce transparency, and to tighten their grip on power by granting themselves and their political loyalists more expansive powers than warranted and without appropriate time constraints or checks and balances.¹⁰ The resurgence of authoritarian practices and methods requires not only defensive measures, but increased proactive efforts to support citizens in asserting their fundamental democratic rights to political voice and government accountability in repressive contexts.

Threats to the Free Flow and Quality of Information. Information systems remain a core functioning component of safeguarding democratic societies and the integrity of democratic culture, which are both increasingly under threat from internal and exogenous factors. The growing trend of authoritarian regimes’ exploitation of new and old informational tools to corrupt the information landscape and undermine the legitimacy of democratic institutions around the world directly affects efforts to civil society and independent media. In the modern, often digital, information environment, with the capacity of spreading information widely and

⁹ Zelikow, Philip, Edelman, Eric, Harrison, Kristofer, and Gventer, Celeste Ward, “The Rise of Strategic Corruption: How States Weaponize Graft,” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2020; National Endowment for Democracy, “Deals in the Dark, Russian Corrosive Capital in Latin America,” November 2020, <https://www.ned.org/sharp-power-and-democratic-resilience-series-deals-in-the-dark-russia-corrosive-capital-latin-america/>.

¹⁰ USAID, “DRG and COVID-19 Trends Paper Series: Democratic Backsliding,” October 2020, <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/DRG-and-COVID-Trends-Democratic-Backsliding-revised.pdf>.

rapidly, weaponized disinformation is increasingly becoming a mainstream political tool widely used by domestic and foreign actors. In particular, within the context of growing influence of foreign malign actors, information systems are vulnerable to not only erosion by hostile, autocratic, and other malign influences, but also exploitation of these systems as a means for creation and dissemination of dis- and mis-information for domestic and foreign political gains.¹¹ Media business models, in many contexts, have yet to adapt to the modern geopolitical context in which China and other actors dominate media systems and narratives, and allow disinformation to pervade public information systems. Furthermore, media systems need to adapt to changing consumer preferences for information sources, as citizens trust rests not only with traditional media sources, but on a range of media influencers in an expanded media ecosystem. At the same time, given this expanded ecosystem, media literacy, and audience or consumer capacities to participate in the media ecosystem and discern legitimate information remain weak or underdeveloped in USAID partner countries as these capacities increase in importance to navigate the information landscape.

Apathy, Political Polarization and Barriers to Citizen Participation - Across both autocratic and democratic contexts, incumbents, and those in positions of power and privilege, have increasingly used identity wedges to deter participation and foster mistrust. Their actions have also contributed to highly polarized environments that have led to the further exclusion of already marginalized communities across many aspects of identity. Autocratic actors, including foreign actors, weaken societies by exacerbating fault lines. Increasing political polarization leads to greater citizen disillusionment, apathy, and decreased participation in civic space. In addition to growing polarization and identity politics, corruption, unequal access to public services, economic distress, increased security, also leads to greater citizen apathy in democratic decision-making processes and other avenues to help champion reform

Movements and informal action taken by non-state actors, in particular traditionally marginalized populations, still require support to help citizens move an issue from protest to policy, and build more inclusive, equitable, and resilient democracies. It is therefore critical to support civil society to help citizens overcome polarization and apathy, leveraging their desire for change, activism, and/or participation in social movements, into long-term engagement in the civic space arena.¹²

III. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

USAID Strategy

The CSM-STAND activity will advance key Agency priorities, including advancing democracy, human rights, and governance goals and objectives aligned with USAID's DRG Strategy.¹³ This activity will also prioritize addressing resurgent authoritarianism and countering foreign malign influences; the promotion of transparent, citizen-responsive governance and democratic norms

¹¹ National Endowment for Democracy, "Firming Up Democracy's Soft Underbelly: Authoritarian Influence and Media Vulnerability,": February 2020, <https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Firming-Up-Democracys-Soft-Underbelly-Authoritarian-Influence-and-Media-Vulnerability-Lucas.pdf>.

¹² VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, "Building Bridges: Social Movements and Civil Society in Times of Crisis," March 2020: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11266-020-00199-5>.

¹³ USAID, "Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Strategy," June 2013, <https://www.usaid.gov/democracy-human-rights-and-governance-strategy>.

and institutions; and working with countries to increase civic capacity as a means to advance their self-reliance capabilities.

This activity contributes to USAID’s Policy Framework and commitment to advancing developing nations’ journey to self-reliance by fostering best practices for and implementing activities to build the human and institutional capacities of civil society and media actors to advocate for and implement solutions to local development challenges. The level of self-reliance within individual communities and institutions within a country and the complex systems they make up, including the civil society and media sectors, are the determinants of a country’s overall self-reliance.¹⁴ Specifically, this activity will emphasize the meaningful participation and inclusion of all citizens in local democratic systems, as well as the design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and learning of interventions, with particular focus on women and girls, gender and sexual minorities, persons with disabilities, youth, indigenous peoples, members of faith-based and other marginalized groups.

Civil society and media that function well and interact constructively lead to more responsive and accountable governments that are more capable of providing broadly beneficial goods and services. High-functioning civil society and media also check corrosive fraud and abuse that hamstring countries’ abilities to be self-reliant. And, as local systems become stronger, more cohesive, more adaptable, and more capable of mobilizing the resources needed to sustain themselves, the whole country becomes more self-reliant. Activities will strive to advance and expand local capabilities and partnerships, including emerging or informal forms of civil society and independent media actors and entities, in line with the Agency’s forthcoming Local Capacity Development Policy¹⁵, and with a prioritization for engagement with new and local partners for activity implementation, in line with USAID’s Acquisition and Assistance Strategy¹⁶ (A&A Strategy) and New Partnerships Initiative (NPI) principles.¹⁷

Recognizing the importance of embracing and advancing work in digital civic spaces alongside traditional civic space to advance individual rights, freedom of expression, and the promotion of democratic norms and practice, this activity will support implementation of USAID’s Digital Strategy.¹⁸ USAID’s Digital Strategy charts an Agency-wide vision for development and humanitarian assistance in the world’s rapidly evolving digital landscape. The Digital Strategy seeks to advance the growth of self-reliant countries through efficient, effective, and responsible digital initiatives that enhance national security and economic prosperity, consistent with American values of respect for individual rights, open and competitive markets, freedom of expression, and the promotion of democratic norms and practices. Digital tools and platforms have ushered in a range of opportunities to elevate citizen voices, advance civic participation, and engagement, promote transparency, and hold governments accountable. However, at the same time, new technologies have unleashed a set of challenges to democratic societies.

¹⁴ USAID, "Policy Framework: Ending the Need for Foreign Assistance," April 2019, <https://www.usaid.gov/policyframework>.

¹⁵ USAID, "Introducing USAID’s Forthcoming Local Capacity Development Policy," October 2020, https://usaideallearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/local_capacity_development_1-pager_v7.docx.pdf.

¹⁶ USAID, "Acquisition and Assistance Strategy," February 2019, <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/AA-Strategy-02-04-19.pdf>.

¹⁷ USAID, New Partnerships Initiative, <https://www.usaid.gov/npi>.

¹⁸ USAID, "Digital Strategy: 2020-2024, 2020, <https://www.usaid.gov/usaaid-digital-strategy>.

Specifically, there is an urgent need to address the growing threat of digital authoritarianism, as governments and other malign actors become more adept at restricting online civic spaces and using technology to limit civil and political rights. This activity will use digital tools to strengthen the civil society and independent media approaches to content creation and their ability to engage with audiences for deepening trust and widening impact across a variety of platforms and technologies. It will also ensure that media and information literacy include not only developing critical thinking skills to access and interact with news and information, but to use information and communication technologies safely and securely. This includes ensuring that citizens, civil society, and government understand the role of the media in promoting transparency and accountability across open, inclusive, and secure digital ecosystems.

This activity will also advance work related to the Global Fragility Act (GFA), which requires the robust participation of civil society in the formulation of strategies and the execution of programming. Civil society actors are integral to reducing fragility, building resilience, and fostering peace. These actors help empower communities and collaborate with governments to address shared challenges to peace and stability. Fulfilling these approaches require short-term efforts to mitigate escalating conflict risks and longer-term efforts to address underlying vulnerabilities of armed conflict and violence. This activity will prioritize assistance reinforcing inclusive and legitimate governance and fostering social cohesion, including the advancement of religious freedom¹⁹ and freedom from discrimination.

Activities under this mechanism will also foster best practices and implementation of interventions to advance private sector engagement (PSE)²⁰ and financing self-reliance (FSR)²¹, ranging from engaging local private sector partnerships to develop and implement solutions to development challenges; community or local philanthropy efforts; and civil society advocacy, transparency, and accountability efforts related to other FSR components, such as public financial management and domestic revenue mobilization.

IV. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Theory of Approach

USAID programming through CSM-STAND aims to strengthen local, regional, and cross-regional approaches to foster independent civic forces, enhance civic engagement, and build vibrant, resilient, and self-reliant civil society and media sectors. USAID will accomplish this by strengthening civil society advocacy, monitoring and service delivery, and preserving the space for citizen voice and participation through a variety of modalities tailored to meet context-specific needs and opportunities. Further recognizing the rise of virtual and global threats, CSM-STAND will focus on context specific responses, including transnational or regional programs. These efforts will contribute to the overall strengthening of democratic civic culture in USAID partner countries.

¹⁹ USAID, International Religious Freedom, <https://www.usaid.gov/democracy/religious-freedom>.

²⁰ USAID, Private Sector Engagement, <https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/private-sector-engagement>.

²¹ USAID, "Strategy for Financing Self-Reliance," January 2020: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1869/USAID-Report-Congress_Financing-Self-Reliance_Post.pdf.

The theory of approach for this activity is: IF civil society and independent media strengthening interventions are implemented and supported with state-of-the-art technical guidance and resources that take into account evolving trends, new lessons learned, and the latest programming innovations in the sector, AND these timely interventions are able to adapt based on shared learning within these multi-regional civil society mechanisms, THEN USAID will be able to employ more impactful, sustainable, and effective approaches to improve civil society capacity, elevate citizens' voices, and promote self-reliance.

Associate Awards will support and strengthen local civil society and media actors to better meet country-specific mandates, needs, and priorities that fit into Missions' country strategies and U.S. Government policy interests. Under this approach, individual country-level Associate Awards activities may include providing international technical assistance to provide and/or facilitating local level capacity building to improve organizational management and governance, advocacy, and the integration of new information technologies into civil society and media operations and activities. Activities, which may range from mentoring to consulting to engaging existing local networks, will also emphasize cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and integration, and the role of youth in civil society, and, more broadly, their role in democratic transition and conflict management and mitigation.

To support increased and broader engagement of local-level and new actors and ideas, in line with NPI and USAID's A&A Strategy, co-creation processes are strongly encouraged for the design of Associate Awards. This awards should ensure that new and emerging local partners are engaged and encouraged through the use of co-creation during pre- and post-award stages, with targets for levels of effort set for local partners to implement Associate Award activities. As appropriate, Associate Awards should include objectives related to and the use of Transition Awards to local partners.

The Leader Awards will advance U.S. technical leadership in international civil society movements by identifying global and regional best practices and facilitating learning among civil society and media actors and Associate Awards. The Leader Awards will concentrate on design and learning technical leadership components, such as rigorous monitoring and evaluation analysis; baseline studies and assessments; and the collection and management of data disaggregated by gender, age, disability, and other factors to closely assess program scope and effectiveness. To identify effective programmatic approaches, the Leader Awards will also coordinate with USAID during a post-award start-up co-creation to refine and develop a robust learning agenda, including technical learning questions and established methodology(ies) to compile evidence and learning across associate awards during the life of award. The Leader Awards will use that learning to inform adaptations to existing awards or in the design of new Associate Awards. One aim of these feedback loops will be to ensure that technical approaches are continually grounded in evidence. The Leader Awards will also work together to share learning across the regional focus areas to improve programmatic approaches and strategies for supporting local partners.

Through these awards, in order to support existing and future activities, USAID will support an enhanced global civil society system. Cross-linkages between civil society and/or independent media strengthening efforts, from one developing country to another and linked to global

movements, provide inherent value over time to civil society and media actors and individuals. Therefore, this activity will not only strengthen USAID’s technical learning and quality of activity designs, but also provide a value-add of working with international civil society and media to strengthen local civil society and media actors and individuals while simultaneously building global connections. **These awards** will provide specific, quantifiable, and demonstrable economies of scale or responsive timing related to programming to advance civil society and media strengthening; likely address specific, identified needs in non-presence countries; centralize knowledge or expertise and demonstrate global technical leadership; and respond to compelling urgent programmatic requirements **that** cannot be foreseen in terms of location, timing, or magnitude.

Objectives

The purpose of CSM-STAND is to identify and foster effective approaches to strengthen civic engagement and independent media and increase the use of these approaches by USAID Missions, civil society, and independent media actors in support of DRG-related and other development results. CSM-STAND will strengthen civil society and media’s capacities to represent citizen interests; hold governments and private sector actors accountable through advocacy, oversight, and outreach; prevent conflict; and promote resilience. To this end, CSM-STAND will advance overarching outcomes, including:

- Civil society and independent media capacity and sustainability expanded;
- Civil society and independent media legitimacy and recognized role in representing citizen concerns strengthened;
- Greater citizen and civic participation to advance democratic governance, accountability, and transparency;
- Civic space, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and access to information protected and expanded; and
- State-of-the-art learning, cutting-edge technical resources, and adaptable program options developed, disseminated, and utilized.

USAID Missions rely on the DRG Center to provide cutting-edge technical guidance and assistance in designing best-fit civil society and media programming, particularly with regard to rapidly evolving tools like social media and emerging technologies. To achieve high quality, effective programming, USAID needs to continuously improve and update its knowledge base and ability to incorporate comparative knowledge from best practices simultaneously evolving in other relevant or related contexts. The CSM-STAND activity will contribute to DRG Center support to USAID Missions by identifying best practices and cutting-edge learning on relevant issues to assist in the design and implementation of Mission programs.

CSM-STAND objectives are as follows, **and apply to both LWAs:**

Objective 1: Build Civil Society and Independent Media Capacity and Leadership to Constructively Engage in Civic Space.

CSM-STAND will work with Missions or OUs to tailor assistance based on specific contextual needs. While objectives will vary by context, generally, the activity will aim to increase the number and sustainable use of practical models and tools by civil society and media; improve measurement approaches; embrace and amplify the use of a high-degree of programmatic and operational flexibility and adaptability; enhance sharing of learning from prior and ongoing

efforts among USAID OUs, donors, and partners; and increase leveraging of the experiences of the DRG Center, USAID, other donors, and global civil society movements in the design of relevant new programs and activities. These efforts should enable civil society and independent media to develop or enhance capacities, including but not limited to technical, organizational, political, financial, communications, digital capabilities, and CLA; expand and protect civic space as well as actively improve citizen engagement and state performance to play constructive roles in self-reliant democratic societies. Efforts should prioritize improving citizen-state engagement, including the protecting and expanding spaces for engagement as well as the capacity to and enthusiasm to increase participatory engagement by relevant state and civic actors. Efforts should also support, when appropriate, constructive linkages between formal and informal civic initiatives that respect the integrity of movements and embrace creative means for collaboration that enhance legitimacy of this range of civic actors.

The awards are expected to provide Agency leadership in applying holistic models of building the capacity of civil society and independent media, rooted in cross-regional collaboration and the appreciation of every organization as belonging to a wider ecosystem that shapes its present and possible future roles. Support should embed a focus on elevating local partners, regional and cross-regional partnerships, long-term sustainability, and approaches to financing self-reliance, including strengthening civil society capacities to partner with local, regional, and international networks, government entities, and private sector actors, as appropriate. Implementation approaches should be applicable to civil society roles in all aspects of development across open and restrictive environments and should emphasize and capture the value-added of a stronger civil society ecosystem to development efforts in any sector. The implementer(s) should offer proven approaches and test innovative ideas to offer programming that represents the cutting edge of ways to support civil society.

The awards should take a similarly holistic approach to the development of more open information environments, strengthening independent media and incorporating new multi-media technologies to increase the flow of information in a society, through technical and operational interventions that both enhance quality and increase sustainability of independent media and the inclusive pluralism of country mass communications systems.

The awards will play a critical role in assessing and continuing to monitoring the evolution of civic space, particularly with the growing focus on digital and online fora, and will support civil society and independent media in closed or closing space as well as in open societies, by working on the wider legal-regulatory enabling environment, supporting adaptation by civil society in response to shifting contexts, strengthening information security practices, and linking organizations to other sources of support regionally and/or internationally.

Simultaneously, CSM-STAND will address authoritarianism and resurgent authoritarian influence through the promotion of transparent, citizen-responsive governance and democratic norms and institutions; and working with countries to increase civic capacity as a means to advance their self-reliance capabilities. The increased use of effective approaches to strengthen civic engagement and independent media by USAID missions, civil society, and media actors would strategically strengthen and expand fundamental freedoms and improve government accountability as means to safeguard against and respond to threats of authoritarian influence.

Activities under CSM-STAND will ensure civil society and independent media remain an important check to counter unrestrained state power and foreign malign influence, in particular related to issues including privacy, human rights, free expression, technological standards, and other complex challenges that arise from the use of digital technologies.

The results of the Leader Award activities are expected to be useful learning and engagement, including, as appropriate, technical products or resources, relationships, operational models, behavior changes, etc., that influence work both under Associate Awards and more widely in support of civil society and independent media strengthening in open and restrictive environments, and that enables more consistent and demonstrable value-added of strengthened CSOs and media to broader development purposes around both DRG and other development outcomes.

Objective 1 illustrative anticipated results may include:

- Civil society and independent media capacities and participation in democratic political and civic systems, especially for women, youth, persons with disabilities, and religious and ethnic minorities, and including traditional and online civic spaces, enhanced.
- Value of civil society and independent media thinking and working politically capabilities demonstrated for DRG, economic, and social sector outcomes;
- Cross-sectoral approaches employed to improve constructive engagement by formal and informal civil society and independent media actors in the DRG and other sectors, such as health, education, economic growth, conflict prevention, etc., with a diverse range of public and private partners; and
- Strengthened and diverse international, regional, and local networks and coalitions for civil society engagement in democratic societies and increased social cohesion.

Objective 2: Provide DRG Sector with Cutting-edge Technical Resources and Adaptable Program Options.

CSM-STAND will build on existing resources, develop new resources, and iteratively update state-of-the-art technical resources, tools, and program interventions to strengthen practices for civil society and media strengthening. Additionally, cross-linkages between civil society or independent media strengthening efforts -- both from one developing country to another and linked to global movements -- provide inherent value over time to civil society and media actors and individuals. Therefore, this activity will not only strengthen USAID's learning and quality of Mission designs, but also provide a value-add of working with international civil society and media to strengthen local civil society and media actors and individuals and build global connections.

This activity should employ programmatic and management approaches rooted in iterative learning methodologies and an intention to influence DRG sectoral level programming, i.e. a wider scope of programming beyond activities within the LWA. This should include harvesting and synthesizing learning from diverse sources to improve practice, creating or linking with forums for meetings of different practitioners and researchers, and serving as a convener and thought leader for advocates of stronger and more effective civil society worldwide. The awards will identify evidenced based information about the role of civil society and media in the DRG sector and other development sectors

Objective 2 illustrative anticipated results may include:

- Research, development, and dissemination of technical resources and adaptable program modalities, built on evidence reviews of civil society and independent media capacity building approaches with long-term adaptive and sustainable maintenance plans, created, piloted, and in use;
- Sustainability and usability of technical resources and adaptable program modalities assessed and appropriately refined;
- Measurement approaches piloted, refined, and incorporated into new activity designs;
- Greater consensus forged around key aspects of civil society and independent media strengthening approaches and methods in closing and closed space environments;
- Learning questions defined and shared through formal products and informal discussions including with relevant USAID operating units, donors, and partners;
- Improved modalities for delivering, sharing, and maintaining technical guidance resources;
- Stakeholders and relevant actors convened and adopting learning to improve the effectiveness of civil society and media strengthening efforts;
- Global, regional, and/or local civil society and media networks and linkages strengthened between key actors working on this area in various regions of the globe; and
- Knowledge-sharing and collaboration opportunities among associate awards identified and employed to strategically extract and disseminate lessons learned.

Objective 3: Operationalize and effectively manage a broad-based, diverse consortium for LWA implementation.

Effective LWA implementation and management will draw on the strengths and diversity of its members; expand engagement with and by regional and local **networks**, organizations, and informal groups, as appropriate, and proactively deploy inclusive and innovative design approaches. Operationalization of LWA implementation should embrace an iterative, CLA-based approach to management as well as activity design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Objective 3 illustrative anticipated results may include:

- Associate Awards designed through collaborative processes that incorporate key learning and technical guidance, and responsive to Mission or OU needs;
- Diversity of consortium partners, including regional and local partners and a broad and diverse range of informal and formal local civil society and independent media actors, entities, and organizations, contributing to Leader and Associate Award activity design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation;
- Shared power and decision-making fostered via co-creation processes; and
- Overall LWA mechanism managed effectively.

Associate Awards

Associate Award activities will mainly occur through local civil society and independent media actors. These activities will support and strengthen local civil society and media actors to better meet country-specific mandates, needs, and priorities that fit into Missions' country strategies and U.S. Government policy interests. Associate Award activities may include providing international technical assistance and/or local level capacity building to improve organizational

management and governance, advocacy, and the integration of new information technologies into civil society and media operations and activities. Activities, which may range from mentoring to consulting to engaging existing local and regional networks, would also emphasize cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and integration, digital and resurgent authoritarianism, peacebuilding, resilience, financing self-reliance and youth engagement in civil society, including the role of youth in democratic transition and conflict management and mitigation. To support increased and broader engagement of local-level and new actors and ideas, the use of co-creation processes in the design of Associate Awards is encouraged.

Illustrative interventions under Associate Award include:

- 1) Improve civil society or independent media operational and leadership capacity, internal governance, and organizational sustainability, including, but not limited to, advancing inclusion, diversity, community resilience, tracking and exposing disinformation, monitoring government transparency, and promoting social cohesion.
- 2) Assist civil society and independent media, including informal organizations, social movements, and community philanthropy actors, to secure diverse funding sources.
- 3) Promote democratic culture, through targeted women's empowerment, youth engagement, and civic education, to enhance commitment to DRG principles.
- 4) Strengthen civil society oversight of government functions, public institutions, budget expenditures and procurements, and financial management policies.
- 5) Support credible and free media and open information environments globally to increase access to credible information and independent media outlets, including those that counter Chinese propaganda and disinformation efforts as well as to prevent or mitigate conflict drivers.
- 6) Strengthen civil society oversight of government functions, public institutions and financial management to promote institutional and fiscal integrity.
- 7) Expand the use of emerging technologies and partnerships with civic technology platforms to detect and counter dis- and mis-information.
- 8) Support the enabling environment for civic participation, including in politically restrictive environments, for access to information, and for increased respect for civil society's rights and freedoms.
- 9) Strengthen civil society advocacy to promote proper adoption, context appropriate, and safe use of advanced technologies, including e-governance and surveillance technologies, and data protections to safeguard rights and privacy.
- 10) Support community-led consultative processes to ensure that services and infrastructure systems that are built to deliver them are tailored to meet the needs and expectations of the citizens who would use and maintain them.

Expected results for Associate Awards will be defined by the project's contribution to improve DRG and other sector's development goals through the strengthening of civil society and media and will be particularly determined by the circumstances in the field, by the nature of each project and the award design relevant for each Associate Award as guided by Missions or OUs.

Key Assumptions

One key aspect or assumption of this development hypothesis is that interventions are conducted in collaboration with a diverse group of local, national, and international civil society and

independent media actors, when possible and appropriate. The award is encouraged to use co-creation to engage, from initial programmatic design stages through implementation, a broader diversity of partners, including more informal and/or individual civil society and media actors, within Associate Awards, while recognizing that in some instances, it may be most appropriate to also or only work with traditional and formal civil society and media actors.

Another key aspect or assumption is to identify and partner with civil society actors who are viewed as legitimate representatives of citizen interests in a global environment of rising authoritarianism in which CSOs are often portrayed as representing foreign interests. One potential approach for addressing this issue is to place an emphasis on collaboration with new and emerging partners (including less traditional or informal forms of civil society and independent media actors) in the design and subsequent award. Along these same lines, the development hypothesis assumes that civil society programming can effectively adapt to the increasingly online nature of public discourse and advocacy, as well as the challenges presented by the digitalization of authoritarian governance methods. There is much learning occurring around this issue globally that can be captured and shared through the activity to advance civil society's effectiveness.

V. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND PROGRAM APPROACHES

Local Systems and Partners

The activity will support established and new methods to advance sustainability, capacity development, and local ownership in civil society and independent media, including incorporating collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) methods into relevant capacity building interventions. Building on USAID's commitment to Capacity 2.0 methodology²² and the Local Systems Framework²³ and based on sectoral learning and historical programming, in order to advance effective civil society and independent capacity approaches, there is a clear need to embrace holistic, local systems-based approaches that are recognized, engaged and strengthened during implementation. By local systems, USAID refers to "those interconnected sets of actors—governments, civil society, the private sector, universities, individual citizens and others—that jointly produce a particular development outcome."²⁴

Wherever possible, activities should build on the principles described in the Local Systems Framework. For example, to recognize, engage and map local systems, front-end analysis should identify the existing key dynamics and stakeholders that contribute both positively and negatively to the status quo (e.g. by utilizing Political Economy Analysis or similar tools). Program approaches should be designed holistically and articulate a theory of change that is cognizant of all relevant parts of a system and their interactivity. Activities should also embed flexibility, for example, by building in dynamic feedback mechanisms for tracking how USAID-funded activities interact with those systems (e.g. advisory groups composed of local human

²² USAID, "Capacity 2.0," December 2017, <https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/capacity-20>.

²³ USAID, "Local Systems: A Framework for Supporting Sustained Development," May 2014: <https://www.usaid.gov/policy/local-systems-framework>.

²⁴ Ibid.

rights leaders). Finally, activities should seek opportunities for strengthening those systems where possible (e.g. building the capacity of local actors through implementation).

Furthermore, capacity and participation approaches, across and throughout the entirety of the program cycle, need to be locally-owned and community driven to be successful and sustainable. In line with the Agency's forthcoming Local Capacity Development Policy²⁵, international partners will play increasingly facilitation-based roles while regional and local actors and organizations - including, as appropriate, civil society and independent media entities, partner governments, and private sector actors - should be elevated as design and implementation leaders.

Sustainability

The **awards** will take a broad approach to sustainability by considering not only how organizations can be more financially sustainable, but also how they can advance sustainability by deepening their ties to their communities to increase their support among citizens. For example, local philanthropy, crowdsourcing, partnerships with private sector actors, and other emerging approaches that may be employed through the activity offer potential opportunities for civil society organizations to both diversify their financial sources and increase their local legitimacy. The awards will also work with Missions to ensure that civil society and media activities are initiated and supported by local actors and that new and emerging local partners are engaged to the extent possible, in line with Agency priorities like the New Partnerships Initiative and local sustainability. It is emphasized that decades-long U.S. Government experience with PEPFAR, Maternal Child Health, TB, Water and Sanitation (WASH), access to educational services at all levels, and the President's Malaria Initiative, have amply demonstrated the enormous value of expanded engagement with Communities of Faith and Faith-based organizations as community leaders, direct implementers of services, and behavioral change agents.

The **Leader Awards** should include data collection, evaluation and reporting sustainability issues for Leader activities and all Associate Awards. Sustainability Analyses will be conducted during the program design phase of Associate Awards, which will incorporate measures to strengthen local institutional capacity of CSOs and independent media through ensuring sound financial management of participating organizations, facilitating—where feasible—the use of host country systems and CSO-government cooperation, promoting local ownership while improving the skills of local stakeholders, and analyzing and addressing the social and cultural dimensions of ensuring the sustainability of results in the country they work in, including determining the societal forces supporting and inhibiting sustainable change based on the assessment of the underlying political dynamics of society and the philanthropy environment.

Thinking and Working Politically

Support under this activity to civil society and independent media organizations should include strengthening their attention to thinking and working politically, for all organizations but particularly for those working on social service delivery. This should include an emphasis on organizational learning and adaptive management as a central function, and a focus on tailoring

²⁵ USAID, "Introducing USAID's Forthcoming Local Capacity Development Policy," October 2020: <https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/introducing-usaids-forthcoming-local-capacity-development-policy-conversation-development>.

engagement and efforts based on applied political economy analyses to fit the power dynamics and incentive structures of the local system. Successful thinking and working politically can derive from a formal political economy analysis, but more importantly needs to reflect an integrated learning approach that constantly considers the context in refining tactics and approaches achievement of objectives as a question of contested power relations as much as techniques and tools; this orientation should be manifested in the Applicant’s work as well as in that of supported local actors.

Gender and Marginalized Groups

Gender and other relevant intersectional considerations will be integrated into this project’s overall design and implementation approach. Initiatives in the civic space must recognize women’s agency and knowledge and be gender-inclusive from the design stage. Women and gender and sexual minorities must participate as co-designers of programs and engage as competent members of society with equal potential to devise solutions rather than perceived as passive victims.

Therefore, CSM-STAND will prioritize support for women and girls’ rights and gender analysis—viewing it not only as a requirement as per USAID’s Automated Directives System (ADS) Chapter 205—but as a best practice and key part of achieving the overarching programmatic goal and objectives. Gender analysis must be conducted when planning how to implement and achieve each activity’s objectives and should reflect consideration of the context in which stakeholders will experience the program. When assessing discriminatory practices that prevent marginalized individuals from exercising their rights, consider the different ways that individuals may be targeted because of their gender expression or for speaking out against discriminatory gender norms.

While in many cases civil society organizations (CSOs) and independent media entities are leading the fight for universally recognized human rights, civil society may also be a space in which gender inequality and other forms of discrimination are reproduced. While some segments of civil society have provided much-needed leadership opportunities for women, women have also often stalled there, blocked from transferring their leadership skills to other sectors. By failing to be inclusive or gender-sensitive in their approach, CSOs and independent media organizations may also perpetuate gender inequality and other forms of discrimination, thereby weakening the democratic culture they seek to strengthen. There are, for example, often disparate levels of access to information, technological literacy, and access to technology for women and girls, as well as for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTI) individuals, racial and ethnic minorities, and the elderly. As civic and media-related activity is increasingly developed, accessed, and integrated on digital platforms and mediums, key considerations of the gender digital divide are necessary to ensure a holistic look at emerging digital civic spaces or for digitally native populations.²⁶ Initiatives that ignore gender disparities in access to the Internet and ownership and use of mobile phones will exacerbate the gender inequalities already experienced by the most vulnerable and marginalized populations.

²⁶ USAID, "Digital Strategy: 2020-2024, 2020, <https://www.usaid.gov/usaid-digital-strategy>.

Youth

CSM-STAND approaches and activities will prioritize the advancement of democratic culture and values, and civic education initiatives to ensure citizens, particularly youth, understand and exercise their rights, responsibilities, and roles as active citizens. The activity should integrate an intersectional approach to youth within activities and core approaches, incorporating the principles outlined in USAID’s Positive Youth Development approach and Youth in Development Policy.²⁷ Particular focus on youth should be prioritized for activities relating to online engagement, social or informal movements, and civic education. Activities should be mindful that civil society or media actors may perpetuate inequality and other forms of discrimination if they fail to be inclusive of youth, thereby weakening the democratic culture they seek to strengthen. Approaches should therefore consider involving youth in activities that promote increased engagement by youth within civil society and independent media approaches; initiatives that impart practical technical and leadership skills, as appropriate, to youth populations or communities; and working with youth groups to develop organizational missions and capacity, strengthen networks, develop their ability to constructively engage existing civil society systems, government entities, and private sector actors, where appropriate.

Digitally Native Citizens and Populations

Recognizing the rapidly evolving contexts of digital civic spaces and information systems, this activity should recognize and embrace, where relevant, working with and amplifying the skills of digitally native citizens and growing digital native populations.²⁸ In line with USAID's Digital Strategy²⁹, activities should work to appropriately integrate digital natives and those exposed to the continuous flow of digital information with considerations both as partners and beneficiaries, and design or adapt technical activities, operational realities, or social and behavioral approaches as appropriate and relevant. Thus, particular attention should be given to the use (and misuse) of social media, digital hygiene and security, privacy consideration, and digital information literacy.

Conflict and Context Sensitivity

Taking into account diverse operating environments across the world, sensitivity to both contextual dynamics and potential conflict triggers will be critical to successful programming. Proposed activities should integrate conflict mitigation principles, such as “do no harm” (DNH) by not disproportionately benefiting one demographic group at the expense of another, creating additional barriers to participation, or increasing physical security and privacy risks faced by partners and beneficiaries. The applicant should consider a tiered approach to programming methodologies that is sensitive to the context in which the activity operates ranging from relatively open to restrictive civic spaces.

USAID is mindful of the risk of unintentionally doing harm under this program and the risks that civil society and independent actors may incur receiving assistance from a U.S. Government institution. This program must support key principles related to DNH and human rights, including a trauma-based approach to DNH when appropriate (“DNH strongly advises

²⁷ USAID, "Youth in Development Policy," August 2013: <https://www.usaid.gov/policy/youth>.

²⁸ Dingli A., Seychell D. (2015) Who Are the Digital Natives?. In: The New Digital Natives. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-662-46590-5_2.

²⁹ USAID, "Digital Strategy: 2020-2024, 2020, <https://www.usaid.gov/usaid-digital-strategy>.

outsiders to allow insiders to make their own choices and identify their own priorities.”³⁰). While USAID will apply its own processes for assessing and managing those risks, implementing partners will be expected to articulate and adhere to their own criteria and process for mitigating the risk of doing harm under **these awards**.

Coordination

The U.S. Government and USAID have an extensive history of global support for participatory civil society and independent media (both traditional and digital) as key sectors undergirding democratic governance and broad-based prosperity by representing citizen interests and striving to make governments more transparent and accountable through advocacy, oversight and outreach.

CSM-STAND activities will be coordinated with relevant DRG Center mechanisms that relate to civil society strengthening or civil society as a vector for participation, inclusion, transparency and/or accountability, including but not limited to the Civil Society Innovation Initiative (CSII), Enabling and Protecting Civic Space - Illuminating New Solutions and Programmatic Innovations for Resilient Spaces (EPCS-INSPIRES), Greater Internet Freedom (GIF), and the Global Labor Program (GLP). This cross-sharing and coordination will ensure that learning takes place among the different DRG Center mechanisms that support field programming. Learning from this effort will also be fed into the Agency’s Local Capacity Community of Practice and NPI implementation efforts.

The two awarded LWA prime implementers will also be expected to coordinate learning, strategies, programming, and possible events aimed at amplifying new approaches, tools, and methodologies for strengthening civil society and media.

Flexibility and Adaptability

USAID recognizes the importance of thinking critically and shifting strategic decisions to respond to emerging development challenges.³¹ Maintaining a high-degree of programmatic and operational flexibility and adaptability to ensure responsiveness to evolving global, regional and local dynamics and to take advantage of opportunities and mitigate challenges is important for successful activity implementation. Accordingly, this may require iterative management approaches that regularly reassess and re-evaluate the operating environment(s) where the activity works and adjusts program planning, implementation, and results measurement as necessary. Leader and Associate Award level activities may consider employing a range of adaptable management approaches and tools such as inception periods, co-creation approaches, living work plans, crisis or program modifiers, iterative assessment or refinement periods, and/or other appropriate methods in line with USAID’s A&A Strategy and USAID ADS policy.³²

³⁰ CDA Collaborative Learning Project’s “Guidance Note: Human Rights and Do No Harm,” April 2013, <http://www.cdacollaborative.org/media/52557/Guidance-Note-Human-Rights-and-Do-No-Harm.pdf>.

³¹ USAID, "Discussion Note: Adaptive Management," January 2018, <https://usaidthinkinglab.org/library/discussion-note-adaptive-management>.

³² USAID, "ADS Chapter 303: Grants and Cooperative Agreements to Non-Governmental Organizations," <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/303.pdf>.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

The Recipient(s) should develop a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) plan, applying best MEL practices that meet USAID and international standards as well as organizational Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) approaches/processes throughout the Activity cycle to reward candid knowledge sharing and leadership of/participation in collaborative learning efforts. Innovative measurement tools for monitoring and evaluation are encouraged to be piloted and disseminated within the Internet freedom community and mainstreamed through other USAID initiatives.

As parts of its MEL plan, the Recipient of each LWA must develop a learning agenda³³ that will build on existing evidence, identify knowledge gaps, articulate priority learning questions, identify activities to answer the learning questions along with a timeline, and propose the development or adaptation of products aimed at disseminating findings and designed with usage and application in mind. The Agenda should also include a plan for how the Recipients will: (1) test and explore assumptions and hypotheses throughout implementation; (2) fill knowledge gaps that remain during implementation start-up; and (3) make more informed decisions. USAID and the Recipients will use a post-award co-creation process during the initial award start-up phase to refine the learning agenda and related iterative and adaptive processes for the life of the award.

The Recipient(s) must also develop meaningful monitoring indicators to measure key results and evaluation priorities as part of its learning agenda. In addition to quantitative measurements, use of appropriate qualitative methods and measurements is also encouraged, especially for hard to quantify and/or long-term results to gauge the Activity's contribution to the results. The MEL plan should also include plans to bring strategic actors together by providing spaces for collaborative interaction, information sharing, organizational development, and technical support.

The Recipient(s) should also systematically document the implementation approach detailing the model/ methodology used, how the model/methodology has been carried out, what worked and what did not work according to the proposed model/methodology, what actions have been taken to address obstacles and what the results were, and what factors are to be considered when expanding the model/methodology to other settings.

As deemed necessary, USAID may commission an independent performance evaluation of this program at the baseline, mid-course, toward the end of award and/or after the award has ceased, in consultation with the selected Recipient. This external evaluation will focus on outcome and selected high-level outputs that are difficult to obtain through routine monitoring data collection or other learning activities. In such case, the Recipients (and sub-recipients as relevant) will be required to collaborate with USAID and the independent evaluator as requested, such as providing monitoring data and inputs on the detailed implementation design and access to beneficiary groups.

USAID may also commission an independent impact evaluation of a specific activity or Associate Award. This would be particularly desirable if an innovative activity is developed or to

³³ USAID, "Learning Lab: CLA Toolkit - Learning Agenda," <https://usaidlearninglab.org/node/14637>.

inform a learning agenda about what works in building civil society capacity and effectiveness. As above, the Recipients (and sub-recipients as relevant) will be required to collaborate with USAID. This may require the randomization of program benefits and adherence to evaluation protocols in cases where randomization is ethically justifiable.

The successful Recipient(s) should integrate CLA into the MEL plan and its implementation to maximize the use of M&E results for course corrections and adjusting implementation plans throughout the activity life as deemed appropriate. The successful Recipients must articulate how interventions will adapt to dynamic and rapidly evolving environments and which learning processes are appropriate to ensure the most effective implementation approach and continued progress toward anticipated results. Continuous assessments may include, but are not limited to, baseline needs assessments, as necessary, for contextual variations, as well as capacity assessments for civil society and media institutions and organizations.

Applications and eventual work plans should integrate strategic and appropriately resourced collaboration, continuous learning, and adaptive management throughout the life of the program. This could include establishing a strong MEL system, applying CLA approaches to the extent possible throughout the activity cycle, and managing performance to reward candid knowledge sharing and leadership of and participation in collaborative learning efforts. The MEL plan may also include plans to bring actors together by providing spaces for collaborative interaction, information sharing, organizational development, and technical support.

Co-Creation

To further build the foundation for local ownership and sustainability for this activity, pre-, post- and/or iterative co-creation processes to bring traditional and non-traditional local partners, host country government actors, private sector actors, target beneficiaries, and other non-traditional organizations or entities into the design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and learning associated with activities under **these awards** is highly encouraged.³⁴

VI. PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Overview

The two LWA awards will provide technical leadership for regional and/or cross-regional activities, and for subsequent Associate Awards by USAID Missions or other USAID OUs. No further competition or waiver of competition is required for Associate Awards awarded within the terms of the Leader Award. Each Associate Award is a separate Assistance Agreement funded by a USAID Mission or other USAID OU and awarded to the Leader Award Recipients to support a distinct local or regional activity that fits within the scope of the broad worldwide program description in the Leader Agreement.

The **Leader Awards** made subsequent to this NOFO will include the following estimates:

Leader Award (1) Africa and the Middle East:	\$2,500,000
Associate Awards:	\$223,750,000

³⁴ USAID, "Discussion Note: Co-Creation (ADS 201 Additional Help)," June 2017, <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/Co-Creation-Discussion-Note-Final-External-May-31-2017.pdf>.

Leader Award (2) Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, and Europe and Eurasia:	\$2,500,000
Associate Awards:	\$223,750,000

These figures are estimates. There is no guarantee regarding the magnitude of Associate Awards in dollars or number of awards. The total award amounts of all Associate Awards cannot exceed this estimate.

Leader Awards

The Leader Awards will achieve results in support of objectives outlined in the Program Description. The LWAs include scope for USAID operating units to “buy in” to the Leader Awards with additional funds, as appropriate and relevant. Leader Award activities will be outlined annually via an adaptive work plan and corresponding monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan based on CLA-principles. A Leader Award cost-share amount of at least 10 percent is recommended; Leader Award cost-sharing components potentially related to defraying co-creation costs for the development of Associate Awards is strongly recommended.

Associate Awards

An Associate Award is a separate assistance agreement funded by a USAID Mission, Bureau, office, or other U.S. Government agency and awarded to the Leader Award Recipients to support a distinct local or regional activity that fits within the scope of the worldwide Program Description in the Leader Award. Agreement Officers may, within the limits of their authority, issue Associate Awards. An Associate Award may be a grant or a cooperative agreement, independent of whether the Leader Award is a grant or cooperative agreement. If an Associate Award is a cooperative agreement, it must spell out the terms of any substantial involvement by USAID.

USAID’s selection of countries and substantive areas for the Associate Awards will be based on demand from USAID Missions and offices. Associate Awards must support one or more of the Program Objectives listed in this Program Description. Under Associate Awards, the need for cost-sharing will be individually determined by each OU for their respective activity, but a minimum cost sharing threshold of 5 percent is strongly recommended for Associate Awards.

Associate Awards may be awarded for up to an initial five-year period. Associate Awards may be issued until the Leader Award expires. Associate Awards may be extended for a cumulative term of up to ten years, but in no event may Associate Awards extend for more than five years past the expiration of the Leader Award. The Recipients will be expected to implement programming simultaneously in multiple countries.

Through Associate Awards USAID will provide technical assistance to a wide range of civil society and media organizations to enhance participation, inclusion, transparency, and accountability in the DRG sector and other development sectors as relevant and appropriate. Associate Award objectives, activities, and results will vary. It is expected that Missions will support a variety of activities that involve enhanced civil society participation and media sector

strengthening to advance DRG and development objectives. CSM-STAND must be able to support a variety of potential activities with targeted, customized technical assistance, in any USAID-assisted country context. Associate Award activities will be encouraged to emphasize and embrace the programmatic approaches discussed above.

The use of co-creation principles to guide the design, development, and implementation of Associate Awards under the LWAs is strongly encouraged. Associate Awards may use co-creation processes to refine development approaches, diversify local partner relationships, build trust, and facilitate programmatic buy-in by convening traditional and non-traditional local partners, host country government actors, private sector actors, target beneficiaries, and other relevant stakeholders as appropriate.

Utilization of a variety of international and local partners for Associate Award implementation and design is strongly encouraged. In support of USAID's A&A Strategy and NPI, Associate Awards are expected to prioritize local partnerships, and will be encouraged to include a 30 percent minimum level of effort for implementation of activities by local organizations. Associate Awards will include a diversity of local entities as sub-awardees, such as civil society organizations and coalitions, community groups, independent media outlets and coalitions, labor unions, faith-based organizations, social movements, civic activists and networks, private sector entities, policy dialogue and advocacy groups, social enterprise organizations, and other types of organizations, as applicable. As appropriate, Associate Awards may include specific objectives related to and the use of Transition Awards to local partners. If so, Associate Awards must include specific criteria for evaluating local capacity and remain in compliance with USAID ADS 303.³⁵

Key Personnel

Under each LWA, the recipient must include a:

Chief of Party (COP)

Position Description: The COP is responsible for overall program management and will be expected to interact regularly with a diverse range of actors such as program staff, USAID/DRG staff, USAID Mission staff, civil society organizations, independent media organizations, private sector actors, other donors, and all program stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Minimum qualifications:

- Master's degree in social sciences, community development, media and communications, cybersecurity, business, international development, or other related field.

³⁵ USAID, ADS 303 Mandatory Reference: Process for Transition Awards, December 2020, <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/303mbb.pdf>.

- Ten (10) years of related work experience in managing donor-supported programming in relevant areas of democracy, human rights, and/or governance, with substantial experience in the field of civil society and independent media.
- Demonstrated experience working with and empowering local partners and traditionally marginalized groups.
- Demonstrated record of achieving results through developing and leading sustainable efforts involving local and regional organizations and actors; designing innovative programmatic approaches to solve complex development problems; applied and iterative technical learning; and mainstreaming of diversity and inclusion considerations into technical and operational project management.
- English proficiency is required.
- Strong oral and written communication skills.

[END OF SECTION A]

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SECTION B: FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

1. Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Contemplated

USAID intends to award two (2) Leader With Associate Award (LWA) Cooperative Agreements pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity. Subject to funding availability and at the discretion of the Agency, USAID intends to provide up to \$2,500,000 in total USAID funding over a five year period for each of the Leader Awards. The ceiling for the CSM-STAND program is up to \$452,500,000 (for each of the two LWAs: \$2,500,000 for the Leader Award and up to \$223,750,000 in Associate Awards and buy-ins from USAID Missions, Bureaus, and other Operating Units). Actual funding amounts are subject to availability of funds.

For the purposes of this NOFO, applicants must prepare a budget for the \$2,500,000 funding for each Leader Award for the five-year period, inclusive of all program costs (federal and non-federal), and in accordance with the requirements of Section D.6.d. Applicants may apply for one or both of the Leader Awards. If applying for both awards, an applicant must submit a separate application for each of the two awards.

2. Expected Performance Indicators, Targets, Baseline Data, and Data Collection

The CSM-STAND activity will strengthen civil society and media’s capacities to represent citizen interests; hold governments accountable through advocacy, oversight, and outreach; prevent conflict; and promote resilience.

Associate Award activities will mainly occur through local civil society and independent media actors. These activities will support and strengthen local civil society and media actors to better meet country-specific mandates, needs, and priorities that fit into Missions’ country strategies and U.S. Government policy interests. Associate Award activities may include providing international technical assistance to provide and/or local level capacity building to improve organizational management and governance, advocacy, and the integration of new information technologies into civil society and media operations and activities. Activities, which may range from mentoring to consulting to engaging existing local networks, will also emphasize cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and integration, digital and resurgent authoritarianism, peacebuilding, resilience, financing self-reliance and youth engagement in civil society, including the role of youth in democratic transition and conflict management and mitigation. To support increased and broader engagement of local-level and new actors and ideas, use of co-creation processes in the design of Associate Awards will be encouraged.

The Leader awards will advance U.S. leadership in support to civil society globally, including social movements, by identifying global best practices and lessons learned, and facilitating learning among civil society actors and Mission-funded efforts. Each award will focus on identifying best practices and learning in its respective geographic areas. USAID expects that there will be significant sharing, coordination, and cross-fertilization between the two awards to ensure that learning under the activity has a global lens. The Leader under each award will

concentrate primarily on the design and learning technical leadership components, such as rigorous monitoring and evaluation analysis; baseline studies and assessments; and the collection and management of data disaggregated by gender, age, disability, and other factors to closely assess program scope and effectiveness. To identify effective programmatic approaches, the Leader will also coordinate with USAID and the awardee to develop learning questions and compile evidence across associate awards. **The Leaders** will use that learning to inform adaptations to existing awards or in the design of new Associate Awards, with one aim of these feedback loops to be ensuring approaches are grounded in evidence.

Under Associate Awards:

- 1) Improve civil society or media operational and leadership capacity, internal governance, and organizational sustainability, including related to advancing inclusion, diversity, community resilience, and social cohesion.
- 2) Assist civil society and independent media, including informal organizations, social movements, and community philanthropy actors, to secure diverse funding sources.
- 3) Promote democratic culture, through targeted women's empowerment, youth engagement, and civic education, to enhance commitment to DRG principles.
- 4) Strengthen civil society oversight of government functions, public institutions and financial management.
- 5) Support credible and free media and open information environments globally to increase access to credible information and independent media outlets, including those that counter Chinese propaganda and disinformation efforts as well as to prevent or mitigate conflict drivers.

Under Leader **Awards**:

- 1) Convene actors and support learning to improve the effectiveness of civil society and media strengthening efforts and foster linkages between key actors working on this area in various regions of the globe.
- 2) Identify opportunities for knowledge-sharing and collaboration among associate awards working on similar issues, and extract and disseminate lessons learned in a targeted manner to influence and improve similar programming.

The overarching outcomes for CSM-STAND include:

- Civil society and media capacity and sustainability expanded;
- Civic space, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and access to information protected;
- Missions provided with cutting-edge technical resources and adaptable program options.

CSM-STAND will work with Missions to tailor assistance based on specific contextual needs. While objectives will vary by context, overall the activity will aim to increase the number and sustainable use of practical tools by civil society; improve measurement; enhance sharing of learning from prior and ongoing efforts among USAID operating units, donors, and partners; and increase leveraging of the experiences of the DRG Center, USAID, other donors, and global civil society movements in the design of relevant new programs and activities. This activity also aims to improve the responsiveness of USAID to address civil society and media challenges and opportunities around the world.

CSM-STAND will monitor results through an adaptive MEL plan, that will report on a variety of indicators, including the following F indicators:

- DR.4-1- Number of USG-supported activities designed to promote or strengthen the civic participation of women
- DR.4.2-2- Number of civil society organizations (CSOs) receiving USG assistance engaged in advocacy interventions

3. Start Date and Period of Performance for Federal Awards

The anticipated period of performance is five (5) years. The estimated start date is expected to be on or about **September 1, 2021**.

4. Substantial Involvement

USAID has determined that substantial involvement is necessary during the performance of any award made as a result of this NOFO. The following areas of substantial involvement are anticipated:

- a. Approval of the Recipients' Implementation Plans - **The Implementation Plans for each LWA** will be submitted post-award. Further details about this plan will be determined at the time of award.
- b. Approval of the **Recipients' Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan - The MEL Plan for each LWA** will be submitted post-award. Further details about this plan will be determined at the time of award.
- c. Approval of Specified Key Personnel.
- d. Concurrence on Sub-awards - The sub-award, transfer, or contracting out of any work under an award already requires the **Recipient(s)** to obtain the AO's prior approval under 2 CFR 200.308. Additionally, USAID may have substantial involvement in:
 - i. the criteria and selection of sub-award recipients through means of collaboration and joint participation such as the participation in preparation of solicitation documents including the topics, program descriptions, match requirements, selection criteria, and funding levels for applications; and/or participation on technical review panels for sub-grants and sub-contracts, and selection of the final list of applications accepted for funding and/or
 - ii. approval of the substantive provisions of the sub-awards, including but not limited to provisions the **Recipient(s) are required** to include in sub-awards stemming from the Standard Provisions and Branding Strategy and Marking Plan of the Leader Award, gender considerations, cost

realism, performance monitoring and evaluation plans, and technical approaches.

5. Authorized Geographic Code

The geographic code for the procurement of commodities and services under the **Leader Awards** is **937**– the United States, the recipients country, and developing countries other than advanced developing countries, but excluding any country that is a prohibited source.

The authorized geographic code for each Associate Award will be established by the USAID Operating Unit that executes the Associate Award.

6. Nature of the Relationship between USAID and the Recipient(s)

The principal purpose of the relationship with the Recipient(s) under the subject program is to transfer funds to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation of the CSM-STAND activity, which is authorized by Federal statute. The successful Recipient(s) 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(s) 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

Based on market research conducted during the planning phases, which included the issuance of a Request for Information (RFI) in October 2020, and subsequent responses from the market, USAID/DDI/DRG received substantive insight into what market players exist working on global civil society and independent media strengthening programs; related sectoral topics, such as resurgent authoritarianism, working in political restrictive environments, capacity building for and by local partners, financing self reliance, and disinformation; their capabilities, and their potential approaches.

USAID/DDI/DRG analyzed the existing capabilities in the market to meet U.S. Government needs to implement the planned activity and its stated objectives, finding that there are a number of existing U.S. International Non-Governmental Organizations with civil society and independent media capacity building and strengthening as a component of their mission.

Over the decades USAID has been doing work in this sub-sectoral space, many new players that are performing this type of work, especially as it relates to digital civic space and participation,

have emerged and there is an increasingly competitive market. Many of these organizations design and provide technical assistance and training for regional and local civil society activists and media groups; train local advocates to conduct policy and advocacy campaigns to support democratic governance and self-reliance; and, increasingly, many focus on the intersections of strengthening civil society and media actors as a key component of preventing and responding to resurgent authoritarianism, closing civic space (online and physical), and the "great power competition."

These organizations operate internationally, working in countries and with relevant local and regional partners where USAID plans to work for this activity. These INGOs are funded through grant support by USAID, Department of State (DOS/DRL), private foundations, and other donors. As these organizations provide support to local NGOs and individuals to develop the local capacities to perform this kind of work for beneficiaries on the ground.

USAID expects for this work to be conducted not for the direct benefit of the U.S. Government, but for its implementing partners, partner governments, and beneficiaries on the ground in the countries where USAID works.

Therefore, given the existence of such a market of organizations with missions and capabilities to conduct civil society and independent media strengthening programming - at multiple levels: global, regional, and local - that will be required under this activity, USAID determined that the use of an assistance instrument is appropriate to achieve maximum results based on the following:

- The awardee performs the activity to further its own program that serves the public.
- USAID supports or stimulates the awardee's activities with financial or other assistance.
- The direct beneficiaries of the activities are individuals, organizations, or institutions in the countries where the program is being implemented.
- The funded activities complement USAID's projects to support civil society and media, but the awardee will not implement the activities as agents of the U.S. Government (USG), i.e. the USG is supporting the activities but is not responsible for their success or direct management.

Based solely on application of the criteria specified in Section 6305 of the FGCAA (31 USC 6305 – Using cooperative agreements) and aim of the activity- to foster independent civic forces, enhance civic engagement, and build vibrant, resilient, and self-reliant civil society and media sectors, USAID will use a cooperative agreement as the legal instrument. A cooperative agreement reflects a grantor-grantee relationship between the Agency and the recipient, for the Activity, rather than a buyer-seller relationship for the purchase of property or services, as the principal purpose of the Agency's intended relationship with the recipients is to transfer Federal

financial assistance to the recipients in accordance with the criteria stated in FGCAA Section 6305 for use of a cooperative agreement. Substantial involvement is expected between the Agency and the recipients when carrying out the activity contemplated in the cooperative agreement. USAID will need to coordinate between the recipient, local partners, and Missions to ensure that Leader Award activities and Associate Awards, related activities, monitoring, evaluation, and learning are working in concert to achieve the higher level, global results for the activity.

A Leader With Associate Award (LWA) **mechanism** is justified to achieve program objectives. In accordance with ADS 303.3.26 justification CSM-STAND will:

- provide USAID with specific, quantifiable, and demonstrable economies of scale or responsive timing to be achieved through use of the LWA.
- achieve the Agency goal of centralizing knowledge or expertise or demonstrating global technical leadership in a specific technical area.
- will respond, as appropriate, to compelling urgent programmatic requirements that cannot be foreseen in terms of location, timing, or magnitude related to emerging civil society and independent media challenges, restrictions, or opportunities.

Program response of this nature can best be met through the use of **an LWA mechanism**.

Feedback from the previous iteration of this global LWA, as well as via the DDI Client Services development process, notes that an LWA is appropriate to responding to these field-based needs based on the (1) flexibility of instrument, (2) ease and speed of use, and (3) adaptability to emphasize local focus when appropriate and desired.

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SECTION C: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligibility for this NOFO is unrestricted.

U.S. and non-U.S. non-governmental organizations are eligible to apply.

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

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing or matching means the portion of project costs not paid by Federal (USG) funds. Cost share may include project costs incurred by the Recipients from its own funds, or project costs financed with cash, services, or property contributed or donated to the Recipients from other non-USG sources, including sub-recipients. Cost share becomes a condition of an award when it is part of the approved award budget. Cost sharing is not required for applicants to be eligible to receive USAID funding under this NOFO. Applicants may voluntarily propose cost share if it will contribute to the sustainability of the activity. A Leader Award cost-share amount of at least 10 percent is recommended; Leader Award cost-sharing components potentially related to defraying co-creation costs for the development of Associate Awards is strongly recommended. Under Associate Awards, the need for cost-sharing will be individually determined by each Operating Unit for their respective activity, but a minimum cost sharing threshold of 5 percent is strongly recommended for Associate Awards.

For recipients contributions to qualify as cost share, the cost share must be verifiable from the recipient's records. Cost share can be audited. For U.S. entities, cost share is subject to the requirements of 2 CFR 200.306, 2 CFR 700.10, and the Standard Provision, "Cost Sharing (Matching)"; for non-U.S. entities it is subject to the Standard Provision, "Cost Share." Refer to Section F of this NOFO for links to these regulations and policies.

3. Other

Applicants may submit only one application per geographic area as the prime applicant under this NOFO (a total of up to two applications as a prime applicant).

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SECTION D: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Agency Point of Contact

Ms. Joy Burriss
Acquisition & Assistance Specialist
U.S. Agency for International Development
UA, 11.2.3D
500 D Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20547
Email: CSM-Stand@usaid.gov

2. Questions and Answers

Questions regarding this NOFO should be submitted in writing and in English via e-mail to CSM-Stand@usaid.gov no later than the date and time indicated on the cover letter. 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:

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. The maximum page limit for the Technical Application is 35 pages. 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;
- LWA geographic area of the application (either (1) Africa and the Middle East or (2) Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, and Europe and Eurasia);
- 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).

A single organization applying as a prime applicant for both geographic areas must submit two separate applications, one for each geographic area.

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 may choose to submit a cover letter in addition to the cover pages, but it will serve only as a transmittal letter to the Agreement Officer. The cover letter will not be reviewed as part of the merit review criteria.

Applications must comply with the following:

- USAID will not review any pages in excess of the page limits noted in the subsequent sections. Please ensure that applications comply with the page limitations.
- The application must be written in English.
- Use standard 8 ½” x 11”, single sided, single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, 1” margins, left justification and footers on each page that include consecutive page numbers, date of submission, and applicant’s name.
- 10 point font can be used for graphs and charts. Tables however, must comply with the 12 point Times New Roman requirement.
- The application must be submitted via Microsoft Word or PDF formats, except budget files which must be submitted in Microsoft Excel with all cells unlocked and no hidden formulas or sheets.
- The estimated start date identified in Section B of this NOFO must be used in the cost application.
- The technical application must be a searchable and editable Word or PDF format as appropriate.
- The Cost Schedule must include an Excel spreadsheet with all cells unlocked and no hidden formulas or sheets.

Applicants must review, understand, and comply with all aspects of this NOFO. Failure to do so may be considered as being non-responsive and may be evaluated accordingly. Applicants should retain a copy of the application and all enclosures for their records.

4. Application Submission Procedures

Applications must be submitted by email to CSM-Stand@usaid.gov. Email submissions must include the NOFO number, the geographic area of the application, and the 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".

The technical application and the cost application must be submitted as two separate attachments. Submission should be one email with two attachments (“Technical Application” and “Cost Application”). USAID will not be responsible for errors in compiling electronic applications if no instructions are provided or are unclear.

Applicants are reminded that email 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. **No late applications will be accepted.**

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 cannot guarantee their acceptance by the internet server. File size must not exceed 50MB.

5. Technical Application Format

The Technical Application should be a results-oriented program description that clearly describes the overall objectives, the results to be achieved, and the resources and steps required to meet them. The application should demonstrate the Applicant's capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this Activity. The application should take into account the requirements of the program and merit review criteria found in this NOFO.

USAID requests that applications be kept as concise as possible. Detailed information should be presented only when required by specific RFA instructions. The Technical Application must include the sections described below and contain **no more than thirty-five (35) pages (unless specified otherwise)**.

- a. **Cover Page (one page – not included in the 35-page limit):** See Section D.3 above for requirements.

b. Technical Approach (maximum eighteen (18) pages – included in the 35-page limit)

The Applicant must propose a technical approach that demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the programming **and geographic area** context and a thorough understanding of the roles and responsibilities of relevant local, national, regional, and international stakeholders, including government entities and non-profit associations, private sector, and academic actors as applicable. This should include how the Applicant will engage these actors and foster partnerships **based on the geographic scope of the LWA**. The Applicant should describe realistic and well thought-out arrangements for working with a variety of pertinent partner organizations which bring complementary expertise and resources to the program. This section should also include the Applicant's approach to the guiding principles included in Section A, in particular local systems and partners; sustainability; thinking and working politically; and collaborating, learning, and adapting. This section must demonstrate how the Applicant intends to use a variety of programmatic techniques to address the stated objectives at the Leader Award level and through future Associate Awards.

The Technical Approach section should include:

- Discussion of applicant's technical understanding of the current state of the field of civic space, information ecosystems, civil society, and independent media, including thorough knowledge of fundamental principles, awareness of key sectoral issues and development challenges, familiarity with current practices (including both positive and negative examples), and identification of emerging trends.
- Proposed methods for assessing and programming in different **regional** and country-specific political contexts, and the viability of the proposed assistance strategies in those contexts (e.g. closed societies, authoritarian states, transitioning countries, post-conflict settings, early democracies, established democracies, etc.).
- Proposed interventions detailing how these approaches would be implemented and why they are the optimal approaches to achieve the results.
- Proposed CLA methodology, including learning agenda³⁶ to generate public knowledge and learning across activities for Leader and Associate Awards, that will be used to learn and adapt proposed approaches for activity programming; ensure activities are informed by evidence; measure progress of local, regional, and/or global activities, research, and/or partnerships; and capture how the applicant will test and explore assumptions and hypotheses throughout implementation and address gaps in knowledge.
- Proposed methods to integrate and empower a diverse range of local, new and underutilized partners, such as civil society organizations and coalitions,

³⁶ USAID, "Learning Lab: CLA Toolkit - Learning Agenda," <https://usaidlearninglab.org/node/14637>.

community groups, independent media outlets and coalitions, labor unions, faith-based organizations, social movements, civic activists and networks, private sector entities, policy dialogue and advocacy groups, social enterprise organizations, and other types of organizations as appropriate.

- Articulation of relationship between the subsector of civil society and independent media and outcomes in other subsectors of the broader democracy, human rights and governance field and to other areas of development important to USAID.
- Proposed technical strategy for ensuring the sustainability of results beyond the end of activities and the end of the award.
- Proposed approach for promoting regional and/or cross-regional collaboration and cooperation among civil society and independent media.
- Proposed approach for coordinating with the other CSM-STAND geographic area LWA.
- Logic model which diagrams the activity's interventions lead to the desired results.
- Target results to be achieved by the end of the activity.
- Proposed priorities for first year activities under the Leader Award.

c. Management and Staffing Approach (maximum five (5) pages – included in the 35-page limit)

Applicants must describe the overall management approach, organizational structure, regionally-based offices (if applicable), and staffing plan, including Organizational structure that outlines the relationship with any proposed consortium partners, and roles and responsibilities of these entities, for achieving program objectives and results. Applicants should describe the lines of authority and decision-making, as well as communication and reporting within the program. Applicants should outline staffing configuration and explain how the proposed combination of long-term staff and short-term technical assistance and local and/or expatriate staff will collectively possess the required technical expertise and skills to lead the activities and deliver the expected results. Applicants should describe how they will maximize the use of local and regional partners as well as local professionals to create a strong sense of local leadership, and foster collaborative relationships with stakeholder groups, as well as where international short-term and long-term staff will still be required. This section must address the applicant's proposed management structure and how it contributes to the achievement of program goals. Organizational charts or organograms must be included in an Annex to the Management and Staffing Approach (see Annexes below).

The application must provide evidence of applicant’s ability to administer the award in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Given the global nature of the award and its technical and administrative complexity, USAID acknowledges the likelihood that interested organizations may enter into standing or ad hoc partnerships for the purpose of applying for this award. USAID encourages such partnerships when they serve the purpose of bringing unique and complementary expertise together for the overall achievement of results.

The Management and Staffing Approach section should include:

- The applicant’s administrative arrangements for the overall implementation of the program, including a clear description of the organizational structure, logistical support, personnel management, procurement arrangements for goods and services, and roles and responsibilities of staff, including related to proposed MEL actions, and relationships between them.
- If the applicant utilizes partner organizations in its application, it should describe how the partnership will be organized and how lines of authority and decision-making will be managed across all team members and between Leader and Associate Award activities. In this regard, the application should discuss the governance structure of the partnership, the role of each organization, and how each partner will be utilized in implementing the overall strategy. In particular, such applicants should directly state how the partnership will avoid conflicts of interest and minimize duplication of effort and operating costs (e.g., personnel and benefits, office costs, security, legal fees, overhead, etc.) in Leader Award activities and under potential Associate Awards.
- The applicant should discuss the role any proposed partner organizations -- including small businesses, women-led organizations, local and regional organizations, and proposed sub-awardees –will play in the future award, and any role(s) they played in the preparation of the application.
- The applicant’s proposed process for efficiently responding to and managing Associate Award requests and coordinating activities with other collaborating organizations, including non-traditional and innovative partnerships.
- The applicant’s proposed strategies or approaches for knowledge management, reporting and file management, documenting best practices, and making information readily accessible to USAID/Washington and Missions and to the broader democracy and governance community.

d. Institutional Capability (maximum two (2) pages – included in the 35-page limit)

The application must describe the applicant’s technical capacity to implement and measure results of activities for the Leader Award and future potential Associate Awards as described in Section A. The application must describe the applicant’s experience with developing and adapting partnerships **within the relevant geographic areas and globally** with various stakeholders, in particular local, regional, new, and underutilized partners. The application must describe applicant’s experience working across a range of political contexts as well as with traditionally marginalized groups. Applicants may also submit a list of relevant projects in an annex (see Annexes below).

The Institutional Capability section should include:

- Demonstrated institutional capability to provide technical leadership as a “public good” for the broader democracy, human rights and governance community in general and the community of international and local practitioners.
- Demonstrated experience partnering with, building the capacity of, and empowering - including award management handover if applicable - experience with local, regional, new, traditionally marginalized and/or underutilized partners.
- Demonstrated ability to rapidly respond to unanticipated programming needs – including the capability to mobilize qualified personnel on a short-term and a long-term basis; assess political contexts and identify opportunities; and logistically support all necessary activities – on a global scale, especially in crisis and post- conflict situations in flux.
- Proven strategic capability to synthesize experiences and apply and incorporate best practices into ongoing and future programmatic approaches, across a variety of activities that cover a spectrum of contexts, technical issues, and partners, such as those that will be conducted under the Leader Award and Associate Awards.
- **Demonstrated experience engaging and building the capacity of local, regional, new, and underutilized partners within the geographic area.**

e. Award Management Plan (maximum ten (10) pages included in the 35-page limit)

The application must provide evidence of applicant’s ability to conduct activities and operations consistent with established parameters and to progressively accrue results towards reaching program goals.

The Award Management Plan section should include:

- the applicant’s monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) system that will provide USAID and the successful applicant information related to the Leader Award learning agenda as well as across Associate Awards to track progress, highlight achievement of results, improve performance and effectiveness, as well as to inform planning and management decisions. The application should highlight analytical approaches, CLA components, and methodologies for achieving sustainable solutions, improving performance, effectiveness, and articulating an understanding of best practices and lessons learned to date in this sector.
- the applicant's Leader Award Activity Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan (AMELP) reflecting the expected activity results and specific output and outcome indicators and targets by year. The AMELP should clearly illustrate how data will be disaggregated. The plan should clearly state the applicant’s safeguards for maintaining the accuracy, consistency and objectivity of data. The AMELP must demonstrate how all outcomes will support the interventions' robust and evidence-based results. Key components of the AMELP may include:
 - The activity’s monitoring approach, including relevant performance indicators of activity outputs and outcomes;
 - Source, method and schedule of data collection, known data limitations, and planned actions to address the limitations;
 - Any proposed internal evaluations;
 - Regular learning activities, including knowledge capture at key activity milestones; and
 - Estimated resources for proposed MEL activities that are a part of the implementing partner’s budget.
- the applicant’s sample performance monitoring plan with potential methodologies for setting baselines. The plan should clearly describe data collection methods, the frequency of data collection and analysis, and approaches to disaggregating data by sex, age, and other relevant factors.
- the applicant’s communications plan must include processes for producing public communications in specific countries and globally about program activities, opportunities and results including those related to sub-grants; strategies for sharing with USAID, other donors, the democracy, human rights and governance community generally and the public specialized knowledge and products produced under this award; and methods and media that will be used.

f. Annexes (not included in 35-page limit)

The following three annexes to the Technical Application are authorized. No additional annexes and other supporting documentation will be reviewed and evaluated.

Annex 1 – Key Personnel Resume(s) (maximum three (3) pages per resume)

USAID has determined the position of Chief of Party to be key to the implementation of the Activity. Refer to Section A of this NOFO for the position description and minimum qualifications. Applicants may propose additional Key Personnel as part of their management and staffing plan.

This Annex must include a current and complete resume for the individual proposed as Chief of Party that clearly details the individual’s requisite qualifications and experience demonstrating how the individual meets the minimum qualifications. The resume must also include a minimum of three (3) professional references within the last ten (10) years, with current contact information including email addresses and telephone numbers.

USAID may contact other references than those provided in the application. Applicants may propose additional Key Personnel positions, such as technical experts specializing in the digital security and advocacy components of the activity deemed essential for the effective implementation of the applicant’s proposed approach; and describe the anticipated roles and responsibilities and minimum qualifications of these key personnel positions. Descriptions of any proposed additional key personnel positions must be included in the three-page Management and Staffing Approach section. Applicants are limited to proposing no more than five positions or five percent of recipients employees working under the award (including the Chief of Party position), whichever is greater. If proposing additional Key Personnel positions, applicants are required to propose an individual to fill each position and submit, in this Annex, a current and complete resume including a minimum of three professional references with current contact information (email address and telephone number) for each individual. Resumes (including references) for additional Key Personnel are also limited to three pages each. USAID may contact references other than those provided in the application. Further, USAID may designate alternative positions as Key Personnel at the time of award should the management and staffing plans warrant this.

Annex 2 – Organizational Chart / Organogram (maximum two (2) pages)

Applicants must submit an organizational chart(s) or organogram(s) as an Annex.

Annex 3 - MEL Addendums (maximum five (5) pages) (optional)

Applicants may submit additional tables or graphics related to the MELP narrative.

Annex 4 - List of Relevant Projects (maximum five pages) (optional)

Applicants may submit a list of projects demonstrating their relevant experience as it pertains to Institutional Capability. Suggested details may include years of performance, funding level, donor, place(s) of performance. Submission of this annex is optional.

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 200.206. 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), which can be accessed electronically at www.grants.gov or using the following link:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html>

(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 file (MS Office 2000 or later versions) 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. The Budget Narrative shall be submitted in MS WORD, font size 12 pts. and must contain sufficient detail that clearly explains 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.
- 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 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) 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.

7) 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. 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 does not have a current 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 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.

9) Cost Sharing – The applicant should estimate the amount of cost-sharing resources to be provided over the life of the agreement and specify the sources of such resources, and the basis of calculation in the budget narrative. Applicants should also provide a breakdown of

the cost share (financial and in-kind contributions) of all organizations involved in implementing the resulting award.

e) Prior Approvals in accordance with 2 CFR 200.407

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 200.332(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 may not 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 before 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.beta.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.beta.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.beta.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 five (5) awards that ended no more than ten (10) years ago, 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 two (2) 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.

1) 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:
 - i)** All estimated costs associated with branding and marking USAID programs, such as plaques, stickers, banners, press events, materials, and so forth.
 - ii)** The intended name of the program, project, or activity.
 - (1)** 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.

- (2) 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.
 - (3) It is acceptable to cobrand the title with the USAID Identity and the applicant’s identity.
 - (4) 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.
 - (5) 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.
- iii) The intended primary and secondary audiences for this project or program, including direct beneficiaries and any special target segments.
- iv) Planned communication or program materials used to explain or market the program to beneficiaries.
 - (1) Describe the main program message.
 - (2) Provide plans for training materials, posters, pamphlets, public service announcement, billboards, Web sites, and so forth, as appropriate.
 - (3) 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.”
 - (4) Provide any additional ideas to increase awareness that the American people support this project or program.
- v) Information on any direct involvement from host-country government or ministry, including any planned acknowledgement of the host-country government.
- vi) 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.

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

2) 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:
 - i) 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:
 - (1) Program, project, or activity sites funded by USAID, including visible infrastructure projects or other sites physical in nature.
 - (2) Technical assistance, studies, reports, papers, publications, audio-visual productions, public service announcements, Web

- sites/Internet activities, promotional, informational, media, or communications products funded by USAID;
- (3) Commodities, equipment, supplies, and other materials funded by USAID, including commodities or equipment provided under humanitarian assistance or disaster relief programs; and
 - (4) It is acceptable to cobrand the title with the USAID Identity and the applicant's identity.
 - (5) 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 recipients is encouraged to otherwise acknowledge USAID and the support of the American people.
- ii) A table on the program deliverables with the following details:
- (1) The program deliverables that the applicant plans to mark with the USAID Identity;
 - (2) The type of marking and what materials the applicant will use to mark the program deliverables;
 - (3) When in the performance period the applicant will mark the program deliverables, and where the applicant will place the marking;
 - (4) What program deliverables the applicant does not plan to mark with the USAID Identity, and
 - (5) The rationale for not marking program deliverables.
- iii) 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:
- (1) 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.
 - (2) 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.
 - (3) 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.

- (4) Impair the functionality of an item. The applicant must explain how marking the item or commodity would impair its functionality.
- (5) Incur substantial costs or be impractical. The applicant must explain why marking would not be cost beneficial or practical.
- (6) 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.
- (7) 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.

j) Funding Restrictions

Profit is not allowable for recipients or subrecipients under this award. See 2 CFR 200.331 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

1) CONFLICT OF INTEREST PRE-AWARD TERM (August 2018)

a) Personal Conflict of Interest

- i)** 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.
- ii)** 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)

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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.

Technical and other factors will be evaluated relative to each other, as described here and prescribed by the Technical Application Format. The Technical Application will be evaluated by a Selection Committee (SC) using the criteria described in this section.

2. Review and Selection Process

a) Merit Review

USAID will conduct a merit 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 and relative importance:

Criterion #1: Technical Approach (Most Important)

Technical Approach will be evaluated based on the extent to which the application demonstrates the following:

- Clear and sound articulation of the overall program description and concept, including theory of change; objectives; proposed strategies, activities and tools involved; intended results; monitoring and evaluation approaches; and collaborating, learning, and adapting approaches, with specific focus on:
 - Articulation of how local and regional players are to be engaged, including to play a leading role in design, monitoring, evaluation, and learning;
 - Demonstration of how approaches, tools, and resources designed and developed under previous and/or current USAID democracy, human rights, and governance efforts will be leveraged, scaled and/or amplified;
 - Application of evidence-based good practices and techniques tailored to appropriate local contexts to achieve desired results;
 - Demonstration of an approach that will facilitate regional and/or cross-regional collaboration and cooperation among civil society and independent media;
 - Demonstration of thorough and sound coordination plan with the other CSM-STAND geographic area LWA;

- Soundness of proposed AMELP and learning agenda; and
- Realistic strategy for sustainability of efforts.

- Capability to deliver innovative and adaptive programming, including
 - the production, dissemination, and iterative update of technical leadership tools and program approaches; and
 - the design, piloting, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and iteration of civil society and independent media capacity building activities.

- Thoroughness in incorporating cross-cutting priorities, guiding principles, and program approaches priorities, including locally-led development, democratic renewal, local sustainability, financing self reliance, approaches to countering resurgent and digital authoritarianism, and inclusion of gender, youth, and other marginalized groups as appropriate.

Criterion #2: Management and Staffing Approach (Second Most Important):

Management and Staffing Approach will be evaluated based on the extent to which the application demonstrates the following:

- Efficient and logical management and staffing structure for effective project implementation, including clearly defined internal management plans; organizational structures; lines of communication and authority; staff technical expertise, levels of effort, and proportionate in-country presence that facilitates the proposed technical and operational strategies to meet program objectives.

- Clear articulation and effective integration of a flexible management approach to allow the program to strategically adjust and respond to, as needed, unforeseen circumstances and/or developments, including a capacity for rapid deployments.

- Effective approach for supporting locally-led development, and coordination with civil society and media, local partners, other relevant stakeholders, and USAID implementing partners to meet program objectives.

- Articulated implementation approach prioritizing Diversity & Inclusion principles within management of the project.

Criterion #3: Key Personnel (Equally Third Most Important)

The proposed Chief of Party will be evaluated based on the extent to which the individual possesses the requisite qualifications for the position as described in Section A (page 22) and is corroborated by references. Any additional Key Personnel proposed will be evaluated based on their quality and appropriateness to meet the needs of each position and the project as a whole.

Criterion #4: Institutional Capability (Equally Third Most Important):

Institutional Capability will be evaluated based on the extent to which the applicant demonstrates the following:

- Applied technical capacity related to programming innovative and Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA)-driven civil society and media strengthening activities at local, regional, and global scale.
- Expertise related to incorporating and elevating a diverse range of partners for activity implementation and award management, including new, underutilized, or traditionally marginalized (socially or politically) partners, covering various levels of capacity and spanning relevant technical, thematic, and regional priority focus areas.
- Experience relevant to effective management of simultaneous awards spanning a spectrum of technical and political contexts **within the geographic area**, and including a diversity of partners, for successful activity implementation as well as conduct of learning across activities to advance technical thought leadership.
- Expertise in building and managing successful strategic partnerships with diverse stakeholders working on civil society and media issues, including local and regional organizations, private sector entities, and other donors **within the geographic area**.
- Capabilities to work with marginalized groups and integrating related considerations into programmatic and management approaches.

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 Agreement Officer (AO) will perform a risk assessment (2 CFR 200.206). The AO may determine that a pre-award survey is required to inform the risk assessment in determining whether the prospective recipients 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 200.208).

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SECTION F: FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Federal Award Notices

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 Cooperative Agreement signed by the Agreement Officer is the authorizing document, which shall be transmitted electronically to the Recipients for countersignature by the authorized agent of the successful organization. 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 an executed Agreement or a specific, written authorization from the Agreement Officer. Notification will be made electronically to unsuccessful applicants pursuant to ADS 303.3.7.1.b.

2. Administrative & National Policy Requirements

The resulting award from this NOFO will be administered in accordance with the following policies and regulations.

For U.S. organizations:

- ADS 303: <https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303>
- 2 CFR 200: <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/textidx?SID=1b472774f0a1e84d725c7ca14618e8ac&node=pt2.1.200&rgn=div5>
- 2 CFR 700: <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/textidx?SID=a5489109509be4f2b9bd6335059465b2&node=pt2.1.700&rgn=div5>
- Standard Provisions for U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations: <https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303maa>

For Non-U.S. organizations:

- Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Nongovernmental Organizations: <https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mab>

See ANNEX 1 for a list of the Standard Provisions that will be applicable to any awards resulting from this NOFO.

3. Reporting Requirements

Recipient(s) will adhere to all reporting requirements listed below. Recipient(s) shall

submit one electronic copy of each report to the AOR of the **respective** Leader Award. All reports must be in English, organized logically, and adhere to the federal government’s Plain Language requirements.

The Leader Awards and each Associate Award are anticipated to generate a large number of performance, financial, and other reports. The Recipients are encouraged to propose an alternative on-line file management system to streamline the electronic submission of reports and ensuring their reliable accessibility to the Agreement Officers and AORs. Existing “off-the-shelf” information technology products and/or services would be preferred. Such a system would not alter the responsibility of the Recipients to submit documentation to the Development Experience Clearinghouse as required (see ADS 540).

a) Financial Reporting:

Financial reporting requirements will be in accordance with 2 CFR 200.327. Standard Form 425 (SF-425) and SF-425A (available online at: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/post-award-reporting-forms.html>) are used to report accrued expenditures.

i) Quarterly Financial Reports

Quarterly reports are due not later than 30 days after the end of each quarter:

- January 1 - March 31 (due date: April 30)
- April 1 – June 30 (due date: July 30)
- July 1 – September 30 (due date: October 30)
- October 1 – December 31 (due date: January 30)

Submission of an SF-425 is required for each quarter regardless of the performance start date or the estimated completion date of the Agreement’s period of performance. The final financial report is due not later than 90 days after the estimated completion date of the Agreement. Electronic submission of financial reports is required. One copy of the financial reports must be submitted to the Agreement Officer’s Representative (AOR), to the appropriate USAID payment office, and to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (if advance payments are made to the Recipients by Letter of Credit).

ii) Final Financial Report

The Final Financial Report shall be due within 90 days following the expiration of the award. Financial Reports shall be in accordance with 2 CFR 700. USAID requires recipients to use the Standard Form 425 or Standard Form 425a, Federal Financial

Report, or such other forms authorized for obtaining financial information as may be approved by OMB.

b) Performance Reporting

Performance reporting requirements will be in accordance with 2 CFR 200.328. In all cases, the Recipients shall submit a single report consolidating all program activities, progress towards results, and analysis of impact. The Annual Work Plan, Quarterly Progress Reports, and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) report should be organized by program elements for the Leader Award.

i) Annual Implementation Plan

Within 30 days of the signing of the award for the first year and 30 days before the beginning of each subsequent Agreement year, the Recipients will submit an annual work plan for approval by USAID's AOR. Its approval by the AOR will serve as a reference point for submitting subsequent reports. For convenience, the AOR may establish an alternative schedule for annual and periodic reporting, e.g., one aligned with the fiscal or calendar year.

The forward-looking annual implementation plan will outline all ongoing activities under the Leader Award that have been approved previously as a result of technical direction, and benchmarks/results to be achieved over the course of the year. The annual implementation plan will describe activities to be conducted at a greater level of detail than the Recipient's application. All work plan activities must be within the scope and objectives of the award. The annual implementation plan should not exceed 30 pages. Implementation plans cannot change the scope and objectives or any other terms and conditions of the award; such changes may only be approved by the Agreement Officer.

The annual implementation plan shall represent the Recipient's holistic approach in conducting activities in the upcoming year. The annual implementation plan should include the following:

- Introduction/Overview/Summary – A brief introduction will include an overall summary of the status of the program to date including significant programmatic accomplishments and their attributable outcomes, problems with program implementation, changes in the political context, and assumptions underlying the program.
- Plan of Activities – Each annual work plan will focus on the status of implementation of approved activities under the Leader Award. The plan for activities should be organized according to program elements of the Leader

Award and then chronologically by the date of approval for each activity. (Where an approved activity utilizes more than one program element, it should be placed in the report based on the dominant component.) Overall approved budget and the amounts obligated by USAID and amount spent by the recipient; names of the approved key personnel; and the period of performance should be included with the narrative of each activity. A short summary of results to date should precede the planned schedule of activities and benchmarks for each quarter of the upcoming year.

- Administrative Management Plan – The administrative management plan should reflect the approved management structure and report any anticipated changes for the upcoming year. This section should also provide updates on implementation of the approved Branding Strategy and Marking Plan and any issues related to implementation and management of Associate Awards.
- Associate Award Information – A list of Associate Awards including the country or region of activity; start and end dates for the period of performance (and, if applicable, modified end date); approved (and, if applicable, modified ceiling), obligated, and disbursed funding; names of key personnel; name of the Associate Award’s AO and AOR; Program Objections of the Leader Award supported; and number and date of most recent modification should be included.

Within 30 calendar days of submission of the annual implementation plan, the AOR will approve the work plan or provide the Recipients with written comments. The Recipients will have 15 calendar days to revise the annual implementation plan. If necessary, the AOR will have an additional 15 calendar days to provide a second round of comments. If no comments are received within the specified period, the work plan is deemed approved. The AOR may approve parts of the work plan while awaiting revision of the full work plan. The Recipients may request the AOR approve modifications to the approved annual implementation plan as necessary.

ii) Annual Inclusive Development Strategy

The Recipient(s) shall submit an inclusive development strategy within their first annual implementation plan that details efforts to promote diversity and inclusion within and through activity interventions as well as engage traditionally marginalized groups and to identify and address their development priorities. The Recipients shall update the strategy annually and incorporate it with the annual implementation plan. The Recipients may reference [Suggested Mission Operations \(Additional Help for ADS 201\)](#) for additional information. A discussion of how an inclusive development strategy will be implemented shall take place in a post-award meeting(s) with the Recipient.

iii) Annual Activity MEL Plan (AMELP)

At the beginning of each Agreement Year, the recipients will submit an annual activity monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan (AMELP), in conjunction with the annual work plan, consistent with USAID's Evaluation Policy and reflecting industry best practices. The AMELP will include specific baselines, benchmarks, and indicators for measuring progress for all ongoing Leader Award and Associate Award activities consistent with the Program Objectives of the Leader Award and specify how data will be collected and analyzed for each of the baselines, benchmarks, and indicators. Measurement will focus on both output and outcome data, showing the specific impacts and results of program activities. Data will be collected and reported at the level of both 1) all activities under the Leader Award, and 2) all Associate Awards aggregated globally. Associate Awards should additionally have their own individual MEL plans specific to each award.

As part of each AMELP, data will be provided for each benchmark and indicator proposed, including baseline data and any data collected to date. The AMELP will also highlight how data collected will show the impact and effectiveness of program approaches and methodologies employed and contribute toward enhancing understanding of best practices and in the sector.

iv) Branding and Marking Plan

The apparently successful applicant will be asked to submit a branding and marking. Applicants should allocate funding as part of its cost proposal for Branding and Making. Marking shall comply with the USAID "Graphic Standards Manual" available at: www.usaid.gov/branding, or any successor branding policy.

v) Quarterly Performance Reports

The Recipient(s) shall submit one single holistic performance report in a single document, not to exceed 20 pages (excluding annexes) to the AOR of the Leader Award on a quarterly basis. Quarterly progress reports will be due 30 days following the end of each quarter corresponding to USAID's fiscal year from October 1 through September 30. Program Reports shall be in accordance with 2 CFR 200.328.

Quarterly reports should, at a minimum, contain the following information:

- Progress Towards Results - A single analytical description of overall program progress towards results that reflect and synthesize achievements of the Recipients examining progress in the context of program objectives and expected results. A comparison of actual accomplishments, both for the reporting period and cumulatively with the established goals and objectives, and expected results;

the findings of the investigator; or both. Data (both qualitative and quantitative) must be presented using established baseline data and indicators, and be supported by a brief narrative. Reasons why established goals were not met (if applicable), the impact on the program objective(s), and how the impact has been/will be addressed.

- Summary of Completed Activities - A summary of activities conducted under the Leader Award, including related to technical leadership, CLA, and the established learning agenda, as appropriate.
- Problems and Issues - Problems encountered, reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate, and how challenges or problems will be overcome during the next reporting period;
- Indicators - Data on all indicators established in the performance management plan for the Leader Award activities. Data should be disaggregated by sex and other traditionally marginalized populations where relevant. Whenever appropriate and the output of programs or projects can be readily quantified, such quantitative data should be related to cost data for computation of unit costs.
- Upcoming Activities - Priorities for programming during the next reporting period.
- Budget Information - A comparison of actual expenditures with budget estimates, including analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs, and any other pertinent information.
- Associate Award Information - Summarized reporting on Associate Award activity implementation. Information on new Associate Awards signed and modifications to existing Associate Awards made during the reporting period.

The Recipient(s) must provide a report for the reporting period in which the award begins, unless the performance start date is within 30 days of the end of the reporting period. In that event, any activities undertaken during the period in which the award commences must be included in the report covering the subsequent reporting period. The Recipients are not required to submit a quarterly report for the final reporting period of the award. Instead, results from the final period must be included in the Final Results Report.

vi) Demobilization Plan

Ninety days prior to the completion date of the Cooperative Agreement, the recipients shall submit a demobilization plan including the proposed disposition of equipment.

vii) Final Reports

The Recipient(s) shall submit two comprehensive final reports. The penultimate report, pertaining only to activities conducted under the Leader Award, shall be submitted no later than 90 calendar days after the expiration of the Leader Award. The final report, pertaining to the Leader Award and all Associate Awards collectively, shall be submitted no later than 90 calendar days after the expiration of the last Associate Award. Each final performance report shall contain the following information:

1. Executive Summary - An executive summary of the accomplishments and results achieved.
2. Achievement of Results - An in-depth analysis of progress and results that synthesizes achievements of all organizations that contributed towards program objectives. This section should clearly describe activities, major accomplishments and results achieved, including results for all of the activities under the Leader Award and Associate Awards. The significance of these activities for overall elections and political transitions development worldwide should be highlighted.
3. Sustainability - An account of the sustainability of efforts under the award.
4. Indicators - Final data, compared to baseline data, for all indicators included in the monitoring and evaluation plan for Leader Award and Associate Award activities. This section should include disaggregated data by sex, traditionally marginalized groups and other relevant groups identified.
5. Problems and Issues - A summary of problems/obstacles encountered during the implementation, and how those obstacles were addressed and overcome if appropriate;
6. Lessons Learned and Recommendations - Lessons learned, best practices, and other findings from each of the Leader Award and Associate Award activities, along with recommendations for future programming under each of the program objectives;
7. Budget Information - A comparison of actual expenditures with budget estimates, including analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs, and any other pertinent information. USAID expects that the final performance reports will substantially update assessments of impact, sustainability, and lessons learned contained in the penultimate performance report.

viii) Notifications of Significant Developments

Events may occur between the scheduled performance reporting dates that have significant impact upon the supported activity. The Recipients must submit, in writing via email, one (1) copy to the AOR, and one (1) copy to the Agreement Officer of notifications, as follows:

1. Problems, delays, or adverse conditions which materially impair the ability to meet the objectives of the award. This notification must include a statement of the action taken or contemplated, and any assistance needed to resolve the problem.
2. Favorable developments which enable meeting time schedules and objectives sooner or at less cost than anticipated or producing more or different beneficial results than originally planned.

4. Program Income

a. Non-profit organizations:

Any Program Income earned under the Agreement shall be additive to the USAID and other contributions provided thereunder. U.S. organizations shall account for Program Income in accordance with 2 CFR 200.307, and non-U.S. organizations shall account for Program Income in accordance with the Standard Provision “Program Income.”

b. For-profit organizations

Any Program Income earned under the Agreement shall be deducted from the total project or program allowable cost in determining the net allowable costs on which the U.S. Government share of costs is based. U.S. organizations shall account for Program Income in accordance with 2 CFR 200.307, and non-U.S. organizations shall account for Program Income in accordance with the Standard Provision “Program Income.”

5. Environmental Compliance

- a. 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) Parts 201 and 204 (<https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/agency-policy/series-200>), 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. Recipients environmental compliance obligations under these regulations and procedures are specified in the following paragraphs of this NOFO.

- b. In addition, the recipients 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.
- c. No activity funded under the Cooperative Agreement will be implemented unless an environmental threshold determination, as defined by 22 CFR 216, has been reached for that activity, as documented in a Request for Categorical Exclusion (RCE), Initial Environmental Examination (IEE), or Environmental Assessment (EA) duly signed by the Bureau Environmental Officer (BEO). (Hereinafter, such documents are described as “approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation.”) In accordance with 22 CFR 216, USAID/DCHA/DRG developed an umbrella IEE for its projects and activities. Since the GIF activity will primarily consist of capacity-building and technical assistance, communications and knowledge management, events, and research and evaluation, the activity is covered by a categorical exclusion, per the IEE. The IEE also includes a Climate Risk Analysis that covers the activities to be implemented under GIF and finds them to be low risk.
- d. As part of its initial Work Plan, and all Annual Work Plans thereafter, the recipient, in collaboration with the USAID Agreement Officer’s Representative and Mission Environmental Officer or Bureau Environmental Officer, as appropriate, shall review all ongoing and planned activities under the Cooperative Agreement to determine if they are within the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation.
- e. If the recipients plans any new activities outside the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation, it shall prepare an amendment to the documentation for USAID review and approval. No such new activities shall be undertaken prior to receiving written USAID approval of environmental documentation amendments.
- f. Any ongoing activities found to be outside the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation shall be halted until an amendment to the documentation is submitted and written approval is received from USAID.

6. Other Requirements

Implementation in certain locations may require additional administrative requirements such as partner vetting or may necessitate additional safety and security or risk mitigation measures. These requirements will be determined at the time of award or when such

locations are identified during performance. USAID may require the recipients to include or address a location-specific Safety and Security Plan or Risk Mitigation Plan as part of the implementation plan.

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SECTION G: FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)

All questions and application submissions regarding this RFA must reference “7200AA21RFA00013” in the subject line. Please refer to Section D of this NOFO for the Agency point of contact.

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SECTION H: OTHER INFORMATION

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.

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.”

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ANNEX 1 - - STANDARD PROVISIONS

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:

Please note that the resulting award will include all standard provisions (both mandatory and required as applicable) in full text.

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

Required	Not Required	Standard Provision
TBD		RAA1. NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATES - PREDETERMINED (NOVEMBER 2020)
		RAA2. NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATES - PROVISIONAL (Nonprofit) (NOVEMBER 2020)
		RAA3. NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE - PROVISIONAL (Profit) (DECEMBER 2014)
		RAA4. INDIRECT COSTS – DE MINIMIS RATE (NOVEMBER 2020)
X		RAA5. EXCHANGE VISITORS AND PARTICIPANT TRAINING (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA6. VOLUNTARY POPULATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES – SUPPLEMENTAL REQUIREMENTS (JANUARY 2009)
	X	RAA7. PROTECTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT (APRIL 1998)
	X	RAA8. CARE OF LABORATORY ANIMALS (MARCH 2004)
	X	RAA9. TITLE TO AND CARE OF PROPERTY (COOPERATING COUNTRY TITLE) (NOVEMBER 1985)
X		RAA10. COST SHARING (MATCHING) (FEBRUARY 2012)
X		RAA11. PROHIBITION OF ASSISTANCE TO DRUG TRAFFICKERS (JUNE 1999)
	X	RAA12. INVESTMENT PROMOTION (NOVEMBER 2003)
X		RAA13. REPORTING HOST GOVERNMENT TAXES (DECEMBER 2014)
	X	RAA14. FOREIGN GOVERNMENT DELEGATIONS TO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA15. CONSCIENCE CLAUSE IMPLEMENTATION (ASSISTANCE) (FEBRUARY 2012)
	X	RAA16. CONDOMS (ASSISTANCE) (SEPTEMBER 2014)
	X	RAA17. PROHIBITION ON THE PROMOTION OR ADVOCACY OF THE LEGALIZATION OR PRACTICE OF PROSTITUTION OR SEX TRAFFICKING (ASSISTANCE) (SEPTEMBER 2014)
X		RAA18. USAID DISABILITY POLICY - ASSISTANCE (DECEMBER 2004)

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	X	RAA19. STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED IN USAID ASSISTANCE AWARDS INVOLVING CONSTRUCTION (SEPTEMBER 2004)
	X	RAA20. STATEMENT FOR IMPLEMENTERS OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING ACTIVITIES ON LACK OF SUPPORT FOR PROSTITUTION (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA21. ELIGIBILITY OF SUBRECIPIENTS OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING FUNDS (JUNE 2012)
X		RAA22. PROHIBITION ON THE USE OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING FUNDS TO PROMOTE, SUPPORT, OR ADVOCATE FOR THE LEGALIZATION OR PRACTICE OF PROSTITUTION (JUNE 2012)
X		RAA23. UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT (NOVEMBER 2020)
X		RAA24. REPORTING SUBAWARDS AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION (NOVEMBER 2020)
X		RAA25. PATENT REPORTING PROCEDURES (NOVEMBER 2020)
X		RAA26. ACCESS TO USAID FACILITIES AND USAID'S INFORMATION SYSTEMS (AUGUST 2013)
X		RAA27. CONTRACT PROVISION FOR DBA INSURANCE UNDER RECIPIENT PROCUREMENTS (DECEMBER 2014)
X		RAA28. AWARD TERM AND CONDITION FOR RECIPIENT INTEGRITY AND PERFORMANCE MATTERS (April 2016)
	X	RAA29. RESERVED
	X	RAA30. PROGRAM INCOME (AUGUST 2020)
X		RAA31. NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY (NOVEMBER 2020)

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

Required	Not Required	Standard Provision
TBD		RAA1. ADVANCE PAYMENT AND REFUNDS (NOVEMBER 2020)
		RAA2. REIMBURSEMENT PAYMENT AND REFUNDS (DECEMBER 2014)
TBD		RAA3. INDIRECT COSTS – NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT (NICRA) (NOVEMBER 2020)
		RAA4. INDIRECT COSTS – CHARGED AS A FIXED AMOUNT (NONPROFIT) (JUNE 2012)
		RAA5. INDIRECT COSTS – DE MINIMIS RATE (NOVEMBER 2020)
X		RAA6. UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM OF AWARD MANAGEMENT (NOVEMBER 2020)
X		RAA7. REPORTING SUBAWARDS AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION (NOVEMBER 2020)
X		RAA8. SUBAWARDS (DECEMBER 2014)
X		RAA9. TRAVEL AND INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORTATION (DECEMBER 2014)
X		RAA10. OCEAN SHIPMENT OF GOODS (JUNE 2012)
X		RAA11. REPORTING HOST GOVERNMENT TAXES (JUNE 2012)
X		RAA12. PATENT RIGHTS (JUNE 2012)
X		RAA13. EXCHANGE VISITORS AND PARTICIPANT TRAINING (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA14. INVESTMENT PROMOTION (NOVEMBER 2003)
X		RAA 15. COST SHARE (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA16. PROGRAM INCOME (AUGUST 2020)
	X	RAA17. FOREIGN GOVERNMENT DELEGATIONS TO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA18. STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED IN USAID ASSISTANCE AWARDS INVOLVING CONSTRUCTION (SEPTEMBER 2004)
	X	RAA19. PROTECTION OF HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECTS (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA20. STATEMENT FOR IMPLEMENTERS OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING ACTIVITIES ON LACK OF SUPPORT FOR PROSTITUTION (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA21. ELIGIBILITY OF SUBRECIPIENTS OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING FUNDS (JUNE 2012)
X		RAA22. PROHIBITION ON THE USE OF ANTI-TRAFFICKING FUNDS TO PROMOTE, SUPPORT, OR ADVOCATE FOR THE LEGALIZATION OR PRACTICE OF PROSTITUTION (JUNE 2012)
	X	RAA23. VOLUNTARY POPULATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES – SUPPLEMENTAL REQUIREMENTS (JANUARY 2009)
	X	RAA24. CONSCIENCE CLAUSE IMPLEMENTATION (ASSISTANCE) (FEBRUARY 2012)
	X	RAA25. CONDOMS (ASSISTANCE) (SEPTEMBER 2014)

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X		RAA26. PROHIBITION ON THE PROMOTION OR ADVOCACY OF THE LEGALIZATION OR PRACTICE OF PROSTITUTION OR SEX TRAFFICKING(ASSISTANCE) (SEPTEMBER 2014)
	X	RAA27. LIMITATION ON SUBAWARDS TO NON-LOCAL ENTITIES (JULY 2014)
X		RAA28. CONTRACT PROVISION FOR DBA INSURANCE UNDER RECIPIENT PROCUREMENTS (DECEMBER 2014)
X		RAA29. CONTRACT AWARD TERM AND CONDITION FOR RECIPIENT INTEGRITY AND PERFORMANCE MATTERS (April 2016)
	X	RAA30. RESERVED
X		RAA31. NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY (NOVEMBER 2020)

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END OF NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY