

An August 2016 version of DRL Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for Statements of Interest (SOIs) is available at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/261029.htm>.



U.S. Department of State  
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor  
2201 C Street, NW, Room 7827  
Washington, D.C. 20520  
<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/>

# **Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for Statements of Interest**

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## Table of Contents

Eligibility .....	1
Eligible Applicants.....	1
Eligibility Requirements .....	2
Technical Eligibility.....	2
SOI Requirements.....	2
Format Requirements.....	2
Required SOI Components .....	3
Guidelines for SOI Components.....	3
Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Regulations .....	3
SF-424 Forms.....	4
SOI Submission Instructions.....	5
GrantSolutions.gov .....	5
Grants.gov.....	6
SOI Review Process.....	6
SOI Review Criteria.....	7
Quality of Program Idea.....	7
Project Planning .....	7
Ability to Achieve Objectives/Institutional Capacity .....	8
Inclusive Programming .....	8
Additional Information .....	8
Background Information on DRL and general DRL funding .....	9

***PLEASE REFER TO THIS DOCUMENT WHEN PREPARING A STATEMENT OF INTEREST.***

## **Eligibility**

### **Eligible Applicants**

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) welcomes Statements of Interest (SOI) in response to DRL solicitations from U.S.-based and foreign-based non-profit organizations/non-government organizations (NGO) and public international organizations; private, public, or state institutions of higher education; and for-profit organizations or businesses. DRL's preference is to work with non-profit entities; however, there may be occasions when a for-profit entity is best suited.

For-profit entities should be aware that its SOI may be subject to additional review following the panel selection process and that the Department of State generally prohibits profit under its assistance awards to for-profit or commercial organizations. Profit is defined as any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs. The allowability of costs incurred by commercial organizations is determined in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR 30, Cost Accounting Standards Administration, and 48 CFR 31, Contract Cost Principles and Procedures. Project income earned by the recipient must be deducted from the total project allowable cost in determining the net allowable costs on which the federal share of costs is based.

Providing cost sharing, matching, or cost participation is not an eligibility requirement.

Organizations must have existing, or the capacity to develop, active partnerships with thematic or in-country partners, entities and relevant stakeholders including industry and NGOs and have demonstrable experience in administering successful and preferably similar projects. DRL encourages SOIs from foreign-based NGOs headquartered in the geographic regions/countries relevant to the applicable solicitation. Organizations may form consortia and submit a combined SOI. However, one organization should be designated as the lead with the other members as sub-award partners. DRL reserves the right to request additional background information on organizations that do not have previous experience administering federal awards, and these organizations may be subject to limited funding on a pilot basis.

DRL is committed to an anti-discrimination policy in all of its projects and activities. DRL welcomes SOI submissions irrespective of an applicant's race, ethnicity, color, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or other status. DRL welcomes SOIs from organizations working with the most at risk and vulnerable communities, including women, youths, persons with disabilities, members of ethnic or religious minority groups, and LGBTI persons.

Any applicant listed on the Excluded Parties List System in the **System for Award Management (SAM)** is not eligible to apply for an assistance award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR, 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR, 1989 Comp., p. 235), "Debarment and Suspension." Additionally, no

entity listed on the Excluded Parties List System in SAM can participate in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the Excluded Parties List System in SAM to ensure that no ineligible entity is included.

## **Eligibility Requirements**

Organizations are not required to have a valid Unique Entity Identified (UEI) number, formerly referred to as a DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) number, and an active SAM.gov registration to apply for this solicitation through GrantSolutions.gov. If applying through Grants.gov, these will be required. If a SOI is approved, a valid UEI number and an active SAM.gov registration will be required before an organization is eligible to submit an application. For further guidance on the registration process, please see the Registration Guide on DRL's website <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/c12302.htm>.

## **Technical Eligibility**

Technically eligible SOIs are those which:

- 1) Arrive electronically via GrantSolutions.gov or Grants.gov by the designated due date and time noted in the solicitation. If reasonable accommodations is granted for persons with disabilities or for security reasons, SOIs must still be received by DRL by the designated due date and time noted in the solicitation;
- 2) Are in English and costs are in U.S. dollars (Please note: the Department of State, as indicated in 2 CFR 200.111, requires that English is the official language of all award documents);
- 3) Heed all instructions and do not violate any of the guidelines stated in the solicitation and this PSI.

It is the sole responsibility of the organization to ensure that the SOI is complete, accurate, and current. DRL strongly encourages all organizations to submit SOIs before the designated due date to ensure that the SOI has been received and is complete.

## **SOI Requirements**

### **Format Requirements**

For all SOI documents, please ensure:

- 1) All pages are numbered;
- 2) All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper; and,
- 3) All documents are single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. Captions and footnotes may be 10 point Times New Roman font. Font sizes in charts and tables can be reformatted to fit within 1 page width.

## Required SOI Components

Complete SOIs must include the following:

1. Completed and signed SF-424 and SF424B, as directed on GrantSolutions.gov or Grants.gov; and,
2. Executive Summary (not to exceed three [3] pages in Microsoft Word) that includes:
  - a) A table listing:
    - i. The target country/countries;
    - ii. The total amount of funding requested from DRL, total amount of cost-share (if any), and total project amount (DRL funds + cost-share); and,
    - iii. Project length;
  - b) A synopsis of the project, including a brief statement on how the project will have a demonstrated impact, engage relevant stakeholders, and it should identify local partners as appropriate;
  - c) A concise breakdown explicitly identifying the project's objectives and the activities and expected results that contribute to each objective; and,
  - d) A brief description of the prospective applicant(s) that demonstrates prospective applicant(s) expertise and capacity to implement the project and manage a U.S. government award.

Please note: DRL retains the right to ask for additional documents not included in this PSI. Additionally, to ensure all SOIs receive a balanced evaluation, the Department of State Review Panel will review the first page of the requested section up to the page limit and no further. DRL encourages organizations to use the given space effectively.

Information on additional materials that organizations with approved SOIs must submit can be found in DRL's PSI for Applications, as updated in July 2015, and available on DRL's website <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/c12302.htm>

## Guidelines for SOI Components

### Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Regulations

Prospective applicants should be aware that if ultimately selected for a Federal award, the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards set forth in 2 CFR Chapter 200 (Sub-Chapters A through F) shall apply to all non-Federal entities, except for assistance awards to Individuals and Foreign Public Entities (for more information on these exceptions, see Chapter 5, Federal Assistance to Individuals, and Chapter 6, Federal Assistance to Foreign Public Entities Directive.) Sub-Chapters A through E shall apply to all foreign organizations, and Sub-Chapters A through D shall apply to all U.S. and foreign for-profit entities.

The recipient of the award and any sub-recipient under the award must comply with all applicable terms and conditions, in addition to the assurance and certifications made part of the

Notice of Award. The Department's Standard Terms and Conditions can be viewed at <https://www.statebuy.state.gov/fa/Documents/2015DeptTermsAndConditionsForUSandForeignOrg.pdf>.

## SF-424 Forms

Organizations must fill out, sign, and submit SF-424 and SF-424B forms as directed on GrantSolutions.gov or Grants.gov. Please refer to the following guidelines as you fill out the SF-424:

1. Type of Submission: Application
2. Type of Application: New
3. Date Received: Leave blank. This will automatically be assigned.
4. Applicant Identifier: Leave blank
- 5a. Federal Entity Identifier: Leave blank
- 5b. Federal Award Identifier: Leave blank
6. Date Received by State: Leave blank. This will automatically be assigned
7. State Application Identified: Leave blank. This will automatically be assigned
- 8a. Enter the legal name of the applicant organization. Do NOT list abbreviations or acronyms unless they are part of the organization's legal name.
- 8b. Employer/Taxpayer ID Number: Non-U.S. organizations enter 44-4444444 (no dash)
- 8c. Enter organizational DUNS number (Data Universal Numbering System). If a DUNS number is not required at time of submission, please enter 4444-44444 (no dash).
- 8d. Enter the address of the applicant
- 8e. Enter the name of the primary organizational unit (and department or division, if applicable) that will undertake the assistance activity, if applicable
- 8f. Enter the name, title, and all contact information of the person to be contacted on matters involving this application
9. Select an applicant type (type of organization)
10. Enter: Department of State
11. The CFDA number is normally 19.345. However, please see the solicitation if another CFDA number should be used instead.
12. Enter the Funding Opportunity Number and title. This number will already be entered on electronic applications.
13. Enter the Competition Identification Number and title. This number will already be entered on electronic applications.
14. Areas Affected by Project: List the country or countries where project activities will take place in alphabetical order; for projects that will take place in more than one region enter "Global"
15. Enter the title of your proposed project (if necessary, delete pre-printed wording)
16. Congressional districts of Applicant and Program: If based in the U.S. please enter congressional district; if unknown or a foreign applicant, please enter "90."
- 16b. For congressional district of program, please enter "90."
17. Please refer to the solicitation for the estimated start date and enter your projected end date
- 18a. Enter the amount requested for the project described in the proposal under "Federal"

18b. Enter any cost-share under “Applicant”. Otherwise, use zeros.

19. Enter “c”

20. Select the appropriate box. If you answer “yes” to this question you will be required to provide an explanation.

21. Enter the name, title, and all contact information of the individual authorized to sign for the application on behalf of the applicant organization.

Please fill in the highlighted fields of the SF-424B: Page 2 - Complete applicant organization and title of authorized official sections. The Authorized Official is generally the grant signatory at the organization or business. **The person who signs the 424B must have legal authority to do so on behalf of the organization.**

## SOI Submission Instructions

The U.S. Department of State requires SOIs be submitted electronically via [www.grantsolutions.gov](http://www.grantsolutions.gov) or [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). Both systems require registration by the applying organization. Please note: the Grants.gov registration process can take 10 business days or longer, even if all registration steps are completed in a timely manner.

**It is the responsibility of the organization to ensure that it has an active registration in GrantSolutions.gov or Grants.gov and that the SOI has been received by GrantSolutions.gov or Grants.gov in its entirety. DRL bears no responsibility for organizations not being registered before the due date or for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.**

**GrantSolutions.gov is highly recommended for submission of all SOIs and is DRL’s preferred choice for receiving SOIs.**

Faxed, couriered, or emailed documents will not be accepted. Reasonable accommodations may, in appropriate circumstances, be provided to prospective applicants with disabilities or for security reasons. Prospective applicants must follow all formatting instructions in the applicable solicitation and these instructions.

## GrantSolutions.gov

All organizations are strongly encouraged to submit SOIs via [www.grantsolutions.gov](http://www.grantsolutions.gov). Organizations using GrantSolutions.gov for the first time should complete their “New Organization Registration” as soon as possible. This process must be completed before a SOI can be submitted. Registration with GrantSolutions.gov usually occurs directly after an organization submits their registration. To register with GrantSolutions.gov, click “Login to GrantSolutions” and follow the “First Time Users” link to the “New Organization Registration Page.” There are different ways to register your organization, click on the link that fits best. Upon completion of a successful electronic submission, the GrantSolutions system will provide the organization with a confirmation page indicating the date and time (Eastern Time) of the electronic submission as well as an official Application Number. This confirmation page will

also provide a listing of all items that constitute the final submission. Please save this page for your records.

Late submissions are neither reviewed nor considered unless the DRL point of contact listed in the solicitation is contacted prior to the deadline and is provided with evidence of system errors caused by GrantSolutions.gov that is outside of the organizations' control and is the sole reason for a late submission.

Organizations should not expect a separate notification from DRL upon receiving their SOI. GrantSolutions.gov Help Desk.

For assistance with GrantSolutions.gov accounts and technical issues related to the system, please contact Customer Support at [help@grantsolutions.gov](mailto:help@grantsolutions.gov) or call 1-866-577-0771 (toll charges for international callers) or 1-202-401-5282. Customer Support is available 8 AM – 6 PM EST, Monday – Friday, except federal holidays.

## Grants.gov

Organizations who do not submit applications via GrantSolutions.gov may submit via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). It is DRL's preference that SOIs be submitted through GrantSolutions.gov.

Please be advised that completing all the necessary registration steps for obtaining a username and password from Grants.gov **can take more than two weeks**. A valid UEI number, formally known as DUNS number, and an active registration in SAM are both required prior to submitting an application via Grants.gov.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Organizations will receive a validation e-mail from Grants.gov upon successful submission. Again, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days. DRL will not automatically notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

Grants.gov Helpdesk:

For assistance with Grants.gov, please call the Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 or email [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). The Contact Center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except federal holidays.

## SOI Review Process

DRL strives to ensure each SOI receives a balanced evaluation by the DRL Review Panel. All SOIs for a given solicitation are reviewed against the same four criteria. These criteria are:

- 1) Quality of Project Idea;
- 2) Project Planning;
- 3) Ability to Achieve Objectives/Institutional Capacity; and,
- 4) Inclusive Programming.

Additionally, the Panel will evaluate how the SOI meets the solicitation request, U.S. foreign policy goals, and the priority needs of DRL overall. Panelists review each SOI individually against the evaluation criteria, not against competing SOIs.

In most cases, the DRL Review Panel includes representatives from DRL and the appropriate Department of State regional bureau, which may request feedback on SOIs from the appropriate U.S. embassies. In some cases, additional panelists may participate, including from other Department of State bureaus or offices, U.S. government departments, agencies, or boards, representatives from partner governments, or representatives from entities that are in a public-private partnership with DRL. Once a SOI is approved, organizations of successful SOIs will be invited to submit a full application based on their SOI. Unless directed otherwise by the prospective applicant, DRL may also refer SOIs for possible consideration in other U.S. government related funding opportunities. The Grants Officer Representative (GOR) for the eventual award does not vote on the panel. All Panelists must sign non-disclosure agreements and conflict of interest agreements.

DRL Review Panels may provide conditions and recommendations on SOIs to enhance the proposed project, which must be addressed by the applicant when submitting an application. To ensure effective use of limited DRL funds, conditions or recommendations may include requests to increase, decrease, clarify, and/or justify costs and project activities.

With the exception of technical submission questions, during the solicitation period U.S. Department of State staff in Washington and overseas shall not discuss competing SOIs or applications with organizations until the review process has been completed and rejection and approval letters have been transmitted.

## **SOI Review Criteria**

SOIs should address the four specific criteria described below:

### **Quality of Program Idea**

SOIs should be responsive to the solicitation, appropriate in the country/regional context, and should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to DRL's mission of promoting human rights and democracy. DRL prioritizes innovative and creative approaches rather than projects that simply duplicate or add to efforts by other entities. This does not exclude projects that clearly build off existing successful projects in a new and innovative way from consideration. In countries where similar activities are already taking place, an explanation should be provided as to how new activities will not duplicate or merely add to existing activities and how these efforts will be coordinated.

### **Project Planning**

A strong SOI will include a clear articulation of how the proposed project activities and expected results (both outputs and outcomes) contribute to specific project objectives and the overall

project goal. Objectives should be ambitious, yet measurable, results-focused, and achievable in a reasonable time frame.

### **Ability to Achieve Objectives/Institutional Capacity**

SOIs should address how the project will engage relevant stakeholders and should identify local partners as appropriate. If local partners are identified, prospective applicants should describe the division of labor among the prospective applicant and any local partners. SOIs should demonstrate the organizations' expertise and previous experience in administering successful projects, preferably similar projects targeting the requested project area or similarly challenging project environments.

### **Inclusive Programming**

DRL strives to ensure its projects advance the rights and uphold the dignity of the most at risk and vulnerable populations, including women, youth, people with disabilities, members of racial and ethnic or religious minorities, and LGBTI persons. To the extent possible, applicants should identify and address considerations to support these populations in all proposed project activities and objectives. Prospective applicants should provide strong justifications if unable to incorporate the most at risk and vulnerable populations within proposed project activities and objectives. Prospective applications that do not include this will not be considered highly competitive in this category.

### **Additional Information**

DRL will not consider SOIs that reflect any type of support for any member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization. No entity listed on the Excluded Parties List System in SAM is eligible for any assistance.

Project activities that provide training or other assistance to foreign militaries or paramilitary groups or individuals will not be considered for DRL funding given purpose limitations on funding.

Restrictions may apply to any proposed assistance to police or other law enforcement. Among these, pursuant to section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA), no assistance provided may be furnished to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country when there is credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. In accordance with the requirements of section 620M of the FAA, also known as the Leahy law, project beneficiaries or participants from a foreign government's security forces may need to be vetted by the Department before the provision of any assistance.

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

The information in DRL's solicitation and this PSI is binding and may not be modified by any DRL representative. Explanatory information provided by DRL that contradicts this language will not be binding. Issuance of a solicitation and negotiation of SOIs does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government. DRL reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the project evaluation requirements.

### **Background Information on DRL and general DRL funding**

DRL is the foreign policy lead within the U.S. government on promoting democracy and protecting human rights globally. DRL supports projects that uphold democratic principles, support and strengthen democratic institutions, promote human rights, prevent atrocities, combat and prevent violent extremism, and build civil society around the world. DRL typically focuses its work in countries with egregious human rights violations, where democracy and human rights advocates are under pressure, and where governments are undemocratic or in transition.

Additional background information on DRL and its efforts can be found on [www.state.gov/j/drl](http://www.state.gov/j/drl) and [www.humanrights.gov](http://www.humanrights.gov).