



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

Updated: August 2016

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

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SECTION I: ELIGIBILITY

A. Eligibility Requirements

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) welcomes Statements of Interest (SOI) in response to DRL Requests for Statements of Interest (RSOIs) from:

- U.S.-based and foreign-based non-profit organizations/non-government organizations (NGO)
- 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 their SOIs 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. Program income earned by the recipient must be deducted from the total program allowable cost in determining the net allowable costs on which the federal share of costs is based.

Applicants must have existing, or the capacity to develop, active partnerships with thematic or in-country partners, entities and relevant stakeholders, including private sector partners and NGOs, and have **demonstrable experience** in administering successful and preferably similar programs. DRL encourages SOIs from foreign-based NGOs headquartered in the geographic regions/countries relevant to the applicable solicitation. DRL reserves the right to request additional background information on applicants who do not have previous experience administering federal grant awards, and these applicants may be subject to limited funding on a pilot basis.

Applicants may **form consortia** and submit a combined SOI. However, one organization should be designated as the lead applicant with the other members as sub-award partners.

DRL is committed to an anti-discrimination policy in all of its programs 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 strongly encourages applications 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.

B. System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

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

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. However, if a SOI is approved, these will need to be obtained before an organization is able to submit a full application.

C. Eligible SOI Applications

Technically eligible SOIs are those that:

- Arrive electronically via GrantSolutions.gov or Grants.gov by the designated due date and time noted in the RSOI. If reasonable accommodations are 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 RSOI;
- Are in English and all costs are in U.S. dollars. If an original document within the application is in another language, an English translation must be provided. For any documents provided in both English and a foreign language, the English language version is the controlling version. (Please note: the Department of State, as indicated in 2 CFR 200.111, requires that English is the official language of all award documents);
- Heed all instructions and specific guidelines contained in the RSOI and PSI, including length and completeness of applications; and
- Do not violate any of the guidelines stated in the RSOI and the PSI.

It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all of the documents submitted in the SOI application are complete, accurate, and current. **DRL strongly encourages all applicants, especially foreign or first-time applicants, to submit SOIs before the designated due date to ensure that the SOI has been received and is complete.**

FORMAT REQUIREMENTS

To be considered, all SOI documents should adhere to the below formatting guidelines:

- All pages are numbered, including attachments
- All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper (U.S. letter size); and,
- 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.

A. SOI Requirements

Complete SOIs must include the following:

1. Completed and signed **SF-424** and **SF-424B**, as directed on GrantSolutions.gov or Grants.gov; and,
2. Program Statement (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 program amount (DRL funds + cost-share); and,
 - iii. Program length;
 - b) A synopsis of the program, including a brief statement on how the program will have a demonstrated impact and engage relevant stakeholders. The SOI should identify local partners as appropriate;
 - c) A concise breakdown explicitly identifying the program's objectives and the activities and expected results that contribute to each objective; and,
 - d) A brief description of the applicant(s) that demonstrates the applicant(s) expertise and capacity to implement the program 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 August 2016, and available on DRLs website <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/260979.htm>.

SECTION II: GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION COMPONENTS

A. 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>.

B. 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 note that all communications regarding the SOI will be directed to the points of contact identified in the SF-424 forms.**

I. SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance: Please refer to the following guidelines as you fill out the SF-424 form.

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
- 5 a. Federal Entity Identifier: Leave blank b. 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
- 8 a. Enter the legal name of the applicant organization. Do NOT list abbreviations or acronyms unless they are part of the organization's legal name.
b. Employer/Taxpayer ID Number: Non-U.S. organizations enter 44-4444444 (no dash)
c. 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).
d. Enter the address of the applicant
e. Enter the name of the primary organizational unit (and department or division, if applicable) that will undertake the assistance activity, if applicable
f. 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 RSOI 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 Program: List the country or countries where program activities will take

place in alphabetical order; for programs that will take place in more than one region enter “Global”

15. Enter the title of your proposed program (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 program 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.

II. SF-424 B Assurances –Non Construction Programs: Please complete the highlighted fields and ensure the document is signed by an Authorized Official. The Authorized Official is generally the grant signatory at the organization or business.

SECTION III: SOI SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

The U.S. Department of State requires that proposals be submitted electronically via www.grantsolutions.gov or www.grants.gov. Both systems require registration by the applicant.

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

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

DRL encourages organizations to **submit applications during normal business hours** (Monday – Friday, 9:00AM- 5:00PM Eastern Time). If an applicant experiences technical difficulties and has contacted the appropriate helpdesk but is not receiving timely assistance (e.g. if you have not received a response within 48 hours of contacting the helpdesk), you may contact the DRL point of contact listed in the NOFO. The point of contact may assist in contacting the appropriate helpdesk, but an applicant should also document their efforts in contacting the help desk. Applicants may also contact the DRL point of contact listed in the NOFO if experiencing technical issues with grants.gov or grantsolutions.gov that may result in a late submission.

Applicants experiencing technical difficulties should follow these three steps:

- 1) Contact the helpdesk for either Grants.gov or GrantSolutions immediately.
- 2) Document (including screenshots) technical issues AND efforts to contact the helpdesk.

- 3) If there are continued difficulties submitting documents, email all of the required documents to the DRL point of contact listed in the solicitation before the deadline.

Note: The Procurement Office will determine technical eligibility of all applications and allowability of acceptable proposal submissions.

A. GrantSolutions.gov Applications

All applicants are strongly encouraged to submit SOIs via www.grantsolutions.gov.

Applicants 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 applicant 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 SOI submission, the GrantSolutions system will provide the applicant with a confirmation page indicating the date and time (Eastern Time) of the electronic SOI submission as well as an official Application Number. This confirmation page will also provide a listing of all items that constitute the final SOI submission. Please save this page for your records. Additionally you **must** save a screen shot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

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

Applicants should not expect a separate notification from DRL upon receiving their application.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that it has an active registration in GrantSolutions.gov or Grants.gov. Applicants are required to document that the SOI has been received by GrantSolutions.gov or Grants.gov in its entirety. DRL bears no responsibility for disqualification that result from applicants not being registered before the due date, for system errors in either GrantSolutions or Grants.gov, or other errors in the application process. Additionally you **must** remember to save a screen shot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

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 or call 1-866-577-0771 (toll charges for international callers) or 1-202-401-5282. Customer Support is available 8 AM – 5 PM EST, Monday – Friday, except federal holidays.

For a list of federal holidays visit:

<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/snow-dismissal-procedures/federal-holidays/>

B. Grants.gov Applications

Applicants who do not submit applications via GrantSolutions.gov may submit via www.grants.gov. **It is DRL's preference that applications be submitted through GrantSolutions.gov.** The Grants.gov registration process can take 10 business days or longer, even if all registration steps are completed in a timely manner.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a validation e-mail from Grants.gov upon the successful submission of a SOI. Validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days. Additionally you **must** save a screen shot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

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

Applicants should not expect a separate notification from DRL upon receiving their application.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that it has an active registration in GrantSolutions.gov or Grants.gov. Applicants are required to document that the SOI has been received by GrantSolutions.gov or Grants.gov in its entirety. DRL bears no responsibility for disqualification that result from applicants not being registered before the due date, for system errors in either GrantSolutions or Grants.gov, or other errors in the application process. Additionally you **must** remember to save a screen shot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

Grants.gov Helpdesk:

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

SECTION IV: SOI REVIEW PROCESS

DRL strives to ensure each SOI receives a balanced evaluation by the DRL Review Panel. The Department's Office of Acquisitions Management (AQM) will determine technical eligibility for all SOIs. All technically eligible SOIs for a given solicitation are reviewed against the same three criteria, which are quality of program idea/inclusivity of marginalized populations, program planning, and ability to achieve objectives/institutional capacity.

Additionally, the Panel will evaluate how the SOI meets the solicitation request, U.S. foreign policy goals, and the priority needs of DRL overall. DRL may also take into consideration the

balance of the current portfolio of active programs, including geographic or thematic diversity, if needed. 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 (to include feedback from 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, selected applicants will be invited to submit full proposal applications based on their SOIs. Unless directed otherwise by the organization, 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.

The Panel may provide conditions and/or recommendations on SOIs to enhance the proposed program, which must be addressed by the organization in the full proposal application. To ensure effective use of limited DRL funds, conditions and recommendations may include requests to increase, decrease, clarify, and/or justify costs and program 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.

A. SOI Review Criteria

The Review Panel will evaluate each SOI individually against the following criteria, listed below in order of importance, and not against competing SOIs. Please use the below criteria as a reference but **do not structure your SOI according to the sub-sections**.

Quality of Program Idea/Inclusivity of Marginalized Populations

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 prefers creative approaches that do not duplicate efforts by other entities. This does not exclude from consideration programs that improve upon or expand existing successful programs in a new and complementary way. DRL strives to ensure its programs 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 minority groups, and LGBTI persons. To the extent possible and appropriate, applicants should identify and address considerations to support and/or include these populations in all proposed program activities and objectives. Strong justification should be provided if the most at-risk and vulnerable populations will not be included in the proposed activities and objectives. Otherwise, SOIs that do not address the above will not be considered highly competitive in this category.

Program Planning

A strong SOI will include a clear articulation of how the proposed program activities and expected results (both outputs and outcomes) contribute to specific program objectives and the overall program 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 program will engage relevant stakeholders and should identify local partners as appropriate. If local partners are identified, applicants should describe the division of labor among the applicant and any local partners. SOIs should demonstrate the organizations' expertise and previous experience in administering programs, preferably similar programs targeting the requested program area or similarly challenging environments.

SECTION V: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

DRL will not consider SOIs that reflect any type of support for any member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization.

Applicants 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, applicants 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 RSOI and this PSI for SOIs, as updated in August 2016, 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 RSOI and negotiation of SOIs does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government.

The U.S. government may (a) reject any or all SOIs, (b) accept other than the lowest cost SOI, (c) accept more than one SOI, or (d) waive informalities and minor irregularities in SOIs received.

Program 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,

program beneficiaries or participants from a foreign government's security forces may need to be vetted by the Department before the provision of any assistance.

A. 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 programs 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 and www.humanrights.gov.