

Department of State – U.S. Embassy, Kabul

Program Office: Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul,
Afghanistan
Funding Opportunity Title: English Teaching for Bakhtar News Agency Staff
Announcement Type: Grant
Funding Opportunity Number: SCAKAB-13-GR-035-SCA-07122013
Deadline for Applications: **August 13, 2013, 11:59 p.m., Kabul time**
CFDA 19.501- Public Diplomacy Programs for
Afghanistan and Pakistan

CONTACT INFORMATION

- A) For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726.
- B) For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation, contact **Pedro Palugyai**, Grants Manager, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, at:
Email: KabulPDProposals@state.gov (*Preferred method of communication*)

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan is pleased to announce an open competition for assistance awards through this Request for Grant Proposals (RFGP). PAS Kabul invites all eligible organizations (see Section IV for Eligibility Requirements) to submit a proposal to provide English language and editing training for employees of the Bakhtar News Agency.

A successful proposal will show: 1) demonstrated organizational capacity for planning and implementing this project; 2) experience providing English training; 3) experience providing English for editing training; and 4) experience providing workforce training in the Afghan context.

II. BACKGROUND

The Bakhtar News Agency was established in 1939. It is the official state news agency of the Afghan government. It has 112 Kabul-based and 150 provincial-based employees. The agency monitors domestic and international news, and provides news in Dari, Pashto, English and some other local languages. The agency publishes five daily news bulletins one of which is in English. In addition, the agency publishes a newspaper, called The Kabul Times. The Agency has a website which has the news in English. According to the agency officials, over 2,000 viewers are visiting their website every day to get accurate news.

The Kabul office includes the following personnel:

- 30* reporters
- 4* website developers/editors
- 4* news analysts
- 8 translators, translating from Dari to Pashto and from Pashto to Dari
- 10* translators, translating from Dari and Pashto to English, and from English to Dari and Pashto
- 10* photographers
- 10 Dari and Pashto editors
- 5 people monitoring radio
- 5 people writing press releases in Dari and Pashto
- 5 people sending news to other agencies
- 8* computer operators
- 3* IT people
- 4 people archiving the news
- 6 points of contact for the provinces

*Some people from each of these categories will attend this English training.

III. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal

The goal of this project is to improve the written English of Bakhtar News Agency staff in Kabul so that they can report the news to a professional standard.

This project will consist of two strands of work: 1) journalism-focused English training for approximately 30 reporters, news analysts, translators, and photographers; and 2) journalism-focused English editing training for approximately 14 editors; some of this editing training needs to be specifically targeted at the Bakhtar employees who are writing and editing content for their Agency's website. All of this training will take place at the Bakhtar News Agency in Kabul and will be for the Kabul-based staff.

Objectives

- 1) To provide journalism-focused English language training for approximately 30 Kabul-based employees of the Bakhtar News Agency. The applicant must conduct a needs analysis to determine the English proficiency levels of Bakhtar News Agency staff who are interested in attending English classes, and to understand the English requirements for their different job categories (e.g., a reporter might have different English requirements than a news analyst). Based on this needs analysis, the applicant will determine the type and number of courses that need to be delivered.

This training should be conducted so that each classroom includes a maximum of 15 trainees. Training for each classroom of 15 trainees should be conducted daily, five times a week, in 60-minute sessions. This training will take place on the premises of the Bakhtar News Agency inside the Ministry of Information and Culture in downtown Kabul. The Bakhtar News Agency will provide two classrooms for this training.

- 2) To provide journalism-focused English editing training for approximately 14 Kabul-based editors at the Bakhtar News Agency. Some of this training must be specifically targeted at the four Kabul-based Bakhtar employees who are writing and editing content for their Agency's website. Decisions about the content of this editing training should also be based on the needs analysis. This training will take place at the Bakhtar News Agency, at the desks of the writer/editors, or in a classroom if trainee enrollment requires it.

Proposals should address the following distinct activities:

- Conducting a needs analysis.
- Determining the English proficiency levels of Bakhtar News Agency staff who are interested in attending English classes.
- Providing a Work Plan that describes the project training plan in detail.
- Providing journalism-focused English language training for approximately 30 Afghan journalists.

- Providing journalism-focused English language editing training for approximately 14 Afghan writers/editors.
- Providing required English teaching materials, such as textbooks and handouts.
- Providing qualified English instructors. All instructors must have at least a Bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature or Journalism. Instructors with Master's degrees are preferred by the Bakhtar News Agency.

Equipping Classrooms

The Bakhtar News Agency classrooms contain only student tables and chairs. The applicant will need to provide two whiteboards, one laptop and two projectors, and sound equipment (for listening). This classroom equipment will be handed over to the Bakhtar News Agency at the end of the project.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Applicants are required to prepare a Monitoring and Evaluation plan as described in Section 5. Attendance must be taken and verified. Quality of instruction must be monitored. Quality and extent of trainee learning must be quantified.

IV. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility is open to all U.S., Afghan, and international organizations or companies with direct experience in English language training, and a proven track record of success implementing projects in Afghanistan. Organizations must demonstrate current country registration license (when applicable), competent programmatic ability and be able to meet reporting requirements. Non-Afghan organizations or companies are required to partner with an Afghan organization or company.

Applicants are not required to include funding from other donors. However, applications that include additional in-kind and/or cash contributions from non-U.S. Government sources will be more competitive, since cost-sharing demonstrates a strong commitment to the planned activities and will be considered to show greater cost effectiveness.

Applicants must:

- A. Be registered in the System for Award Management SAM located at www.sam.gov prior to submitting an application or plan; AND
- B. 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 an agency.

V. APPLICANT VETTING AS A CONDITION OF AWARD

Applicants are advised that successful passing of vetting to evaluate the risk that funds may benefit terrorists or their supporters is a condition of award. Applicants may be asked to submit information required by DS Form 4184, *Risk Analysis Information* (attached to this

solicitation) about their company and its principal personnel. Vetting information is also required for all sub-award performance on assistance awards identified by DOS as presenting a risk of terrorist financing. When vetting information is requested by the Grants Officer, information may be submitted on the secure web portal at <https://ramportal.state.gov>, via Email to RAM@state.gov, or hardcopy to the Grants Officer. Questions about the form may be emailed to RAM@state.gov. Failure to submit information when requested, or failure to pass vetting, may be grounds for rejecting your proposal.

VI. SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Award Period: 12 months

Number of Awards Anticipated: 1

Award Amount: The award ceiling is set at \$100,000.

Application Deadline: All applications must be received on or before **August 13, 2013, 11:59 p.m., Kabul time**. Applications received after 11:59 p.m. will be ineligible for consideration. Applicants are encouraged to begin the application process early, as this will allow time to address any technical difficulties that may arise in advance of the deadline. There will be no exceptions to this application deadline.

Question Deadline: For questions on this solicitation please contact Pedro Palugyai, Grants Manager, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, at: Email: KabulPDProposals@state.gov (*Preferred method of communication*).

Questions must be received on or before July 27, 2013, 11:59 p.m., Kabul time. Answers to questions will be posted at <http://www.grants.gov> and <http://kabul.usembassy.gov/pdprp.html>.

Application Submission Process: There are two submissions methods available to applicants. Applicants may submit their application using Submission Method A or Submission Method B outlined below.

- **Submission Method A:** Submitting all application materials directly to the following email address: KabulPDProposals@state.gov. Applicants opting to submit applications via email to KabulPDProposals@state.gov **must** include the Funding Opportunity Title and Funding Opportunity Number in the subject line of the email.
- **Submission Method B:** Submitting all application materials through grants.gov. For those opting to apply through Grants.gov, thorough instructions on the application process are available at <http://www.grants.gov>. For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726. Please note, KabulPDProposals@state.gov is unable to assist with technical questions or problems applicants experience with grants.gov.

Applicants utilizing Grants.gov must register with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application. **Registering with Grants.gov is a one-time process; however, it could take as long as two weeks to have the registration validated and confirmed.**

Please begin the registration process immediately to ensure that the process is completed well in advance of the deadline for applications. Until that process is complete, you will not be issued a user password for Grants.gov, which is required for application submission. There are four steps that you must complete before you are able to register: (1) Obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet (if your organization does not have one already) by calling 1-866-705-5711; (2) Register with System for Award Management (SAM); (3) Register yourself as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR); and (4) Be authorized as an AOR by your organization. For more information, go to www.grants.gov. Please note that your SAM registration must be annually renewed. Failure to renew your SAM registration may prohibit submission of a grant application through Grants.gov.

VII. APPLICATION CONTENT

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

Applications are accepted in English only, and final grant agreements will be concluded in English. Proposals may not exceed 15 double-spaced pages in 12-point, Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins. Shorter applications are encouraged. Longer applications will be considered non-responsive and will not be reviewed. This requirement excludes the allowable appendices, which are identified in Section 6 below. The proposal must consist of the following:

Section 1 - Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) and SF424A:

The SF424 is the standard cover sheet for grant applications. The SF424A is a budget summary sheet for grant proposals. Please refer to page 6-8 for a description of budget categories. Both these forms can be found on-line at:

http://fa.statebuy.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=20&menu_id=68.

Section 2 - Abstract:

The abstract is limited to 300 words in length. It must provide a summary of the project to be undertaken, expected timeline, and cost.

Section 3 – Implementation Plan:

The applicant must specify the goals and objectives of the project. Goals are general statements of intent; Objectives define a specific problem or task to be accomplished. The objective should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-framed). The applicant should describe in detail the steps which will be taken to achieve these goals. This description should include all components of the proposed project including, as needed, project design and training plans. The proposal should clearly

demonstrate how each of these project components directly relates to the project's stated goals. This section should also describe how success will be measured, and should propose specific performance indicators which can be used to track progress and determine the project's success. This section must include a time-task plan that clearly identifies the timeline for carrying out the project's major activities.

Applicants are recommended to present the following for each project component:

- An overview of the proposed project component and its respective activities.
- A description of how the project component supports the overall goal of the project.
- A detailed outline of the methodology that will be used to implement the proposed component.
- An analysis of anticipated implementation risks and challenges.
- A summary of expected outputs with their expected impact, using performance indicators that will be used to track progress towards the anticipated results.

The proposal should also describe the applicant's sustainability plan and what measures will be taken to ensure that the benefits of the proposed project continue to be realized after the completion of grant performance.

Section 4 - Organizational Capability:

Applications must include a clear description of the applicant's management structure, previous experience working in Afghanistan, experience working with Afghan government institutions (if applicable), previous experience with U.S. Government grants, and the organizational experience and background in Afghanistan related to the proposed activities. Besides information about the organization as a whole, this section must also identify the proposed management structure and staffing plan for the proposed project. The applicant should describe how its previous experience relates to the proposed project.

Section 5 – Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:

Applications must include a monitoring and evaluation plan (M&E plan), sometimes also referred to as a performance monitoring or performance management plan. The M&E plan is a systematic and objective approach or process for monitoring project performance toward its objectives over time. The plan consists of indicators with baselines and targets; means for tracking critical assumptions; plans for managing the data collection process; and regular collection of data. Evaluations should be scheduled and carried out throughout the course of the program. More information on M&E plans is located <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/c35797.htm>.

Section 6 - Appendices:

The proposal submission must include **three appendices, with a fourth, optional appendix to be submitted at the discretion of the applicant.** Only the appendices listed below may be included as part of the application:

- 1. Budget Detail (Required)** – Applications will not be considered complete unless they include budgets that respond to the solicitation guidelines. Complete budgets will include detailed line-items outlining specific cost requirements for proposed activities. Applicants must adhere to the appropriate regulations found in 2 CFR 220 (previously OMB circulars A-21, cost principles for education institutions) and 2 CFR 230 (previously OMB circular A-122, cost principles for non-profits).

Detailed Line-Item Budget (in Microsoft Excel or similar spreadsheet format) that delineates funds requested from the Embassy and cost-share (see below for more information on budget format). Costs must be in U.S. Dollars. The budget must identify the total amount of funding requested, with a breakdown of amounts to be spent in the following budget categories: personnel; fringe benefits; travel; equipment; supplies; consultants/contracts; other direct costs; and indirect costs. The following provides a description of the types of costs to be included in each budget category.

A. Personnel – Identify staffing requirements by each position title and brief description of duties. For clarity, please list the annual salary of each position, percentage of time and number of months devoted to the project. (e.g., Administrative Director: \$30,000/year x 25% x 8.5 months; calculation: $\$30,000/12 = \$2,500 \times 25\% \times 8.5 \text{ months} = \$5,312.$)

B. Fringe Benefits - State benefit costs separately from salary costs and explain how benefits are computed for each category of employee - specify type and rate.

C. Travel - Staff and any participant travel

- 1) International Airfare
- 2) In-country Travel
- 3) Domestic Travel in the U.S., if any
- 4) Per diem/maintenance: Includes lodging, meals and incidentals for both participant and staff travel. Rates of maximum allowances for U.S. and foreign travel are available from the following website: <http://www.policyworks.gov/>. Per diem rates may not exceed the published U.S. government allowance rates; however, institutions may use per diem rates lower than official government rates. Please explain differences in fares among travelers on the same routes. Please note that all travel, where applicable, must be in compliance with the Fly America Act.

D. Equipment – Please provide justification for any equipment purchase/rental, defined as tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more.

E. Supplies - List items separately using unit costs (and the percentage of each unit cost being charged to the grant) for photocopying, postage, telephone/fax, printing, and office supplies (e.g., Telephone: \$50/month x 50% = \$25/month x 12 months).

F. Contractual -

a) Sub-grants and sub-contracts. For each sub-grant/contract please provide a detailed line item breakdown explaining specific services. In the sub-grant budgets, provide the same level of detail for personnel, travel, supplies, equipment, direct costs, and fringe benefits required of the direct applicant.

b) Consultant Fees. For example lecture fees, honoraria, travel, and per diem for outside speakers or independent evaluators: list number of people and rates per day (e.g., 2 x \$150/day x 2 days).

G. Construction – For this solicitation, construction costs are not applicable.

H. Other Direct Costs - these will vary depending on the nature of the project. The inclusion of each should be justified in the budget narrative.

J. Indirect Costs - See OMB Circular A-122, "Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations or the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR part 31"

1) If your organization has a negotiated indirect cost-rate agreement (NICRA) with the U.S. Government, please include a copy of this agreement. This does not count against submission page limitations.

2) If your organization is charging an indirect cost rate, please indicate how the rate is applied--to direct administrative expenses, to all direct costs, to wages and salaries only, etc.

Cost-Effectiveness/ In-Kind Contributions – There is no minimum or maximum percentage of cost sharing required for this competition. However, the Embassy encourages applicants to provide the highest possible levels of cost sharing in support of its projects. Cost sharing demonstrates the applicant's commitment to the project, belief in the achievability of its goals, and prospects for long-term sustainability. When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its application and later included in an approved grant agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, written records must be maintained to support all costs which are claimed as contributions, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with OMB Circular A-110, (Revised), Subpart C.23—Cost Sharing and Matching.

2. **Budget Narrative (Required)** - The purpose of the budget narrative is to supplement the information provided in the budget spreadsheet by justifying how the budget cost elements are necessary to implement project objectives and accomplish the project goals. The budget narrative is a tool to help the Embassy staff fully understand the budgetary needs of the applicant and is an opportunity to provide descriptive information about the costs beyond the constraints of the budget template. Together, the budget narrative and budget spreadsheets should provide a complete financial and qualitative description that supports the proposed project plan and should be directly relatable to the specific project components described in the applicant's Implementation Plan. The description provided on the budget spreadsheets should be very brief.
3. **Resume (Required)** – a resume, not to exceed 1 page in length, must be included for the proposed key staff person, such as the Project Director. If an individual for this type of position has not been identified, the applicant may submit a 1-page position description, identifying the qualifications and skills required for that position, in lieu of a resume.

VII. AWARD SELECTION CRITERIA

U.S. Embassy Kabul Public Affairs will review all proposals for eligibility. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance of Federal regulations and guidelines and may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. The U.S. Embassy reserves the right to request any additional programmatic and/or financial information regarding the proposal.

Proposals will be funded based on an evaluation of how the proposal meets the solicitation review criteria, U.S. foreign policy objectives, and the priority needs of the U.S. Embassy. All proposals submitted under this request will undergo a technical review by embassy personnel; all proposals deemed technically eligible will be evaluated by an embassy review committee. Committee members may make conditions and recommendations on any given proposal in order to enhance the proposed program.

Proposals will be scored based on the applicants' response to each Review Criteria listed below. Review criteria will include:

1. **Quality of the program idea and program planning (20%):** The proposed project should be well developed, respond to the design outlined in the solicitation and demonstrate originality. The project should have clear goals and objectives and metrics for determining whether the project goals were met. It should be clearly and accurately written, substantive and with sufficient detail. The program plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above, and should reference the applicant's capacity to meet all needs specified in the RFGP.

2. Ability to achieve program objectives (25%): Objectives should be reasonable and feasible. Applications should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan. Proposed personnel, institutional resources and partner organizations should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program goals.

3. Institution's record and capacity (25%): The application should demonstrate an institutional record, including successful programming, responsible fiscal management, and compliance with reporting requirements, especially for U.S. Government grants.

4. Sustainability (10%): Proposed project should address the applicant's strategy for ensuring that the project benefits will continue to be realized on a long-term basis after the conclusion of the period of performance of the grant.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation (20%): Applications should demonstrate the capacity for engaging in impact assessments and providing objectives with measurable outputs and outcomes. The applicant should describe its plan for monitoring and reporting project outcomes.

6. Cost-effectiveness (Acceptable or Not Acceptable): The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be consistent with prevailing market rates in Afghanistan. All other items should be necessary, appropriate, and directly relatable to the project's goals and objectives. Cost sharing is encouraged but not required.

VIII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Award Notices: The grant shall be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The Grants Officer is the Government official delegated the authority by the U.S. Department of State Procurement Executive to write, award, and administer grants and cooperative agreements. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the Recipient through email transmission. Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified in writing.

Anticipated Time to Award: Applicants should expect to be notified if their proposal has been selected for award within 90 days after the submission deadline. PAS Kabul will provide information at the point of notification about any modification to the proposal or plan of work that will be required to finalize the grant.

Issuance of this RFGP does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received. The U.S. government also reserves the right to make an award in excess of the award ceiling.

- **Reporting Requirements:** Grantees are required to submit quarterly program progress and financial reports throughout the project period. Progress and financial reports are due 30 days after the reporting period. Final programmatic and financial reports are due 90 days after the close of the project period.

IX. DISCLAIMER

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

X. AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

This Request for Grant Proposal (RFGP) is subject to funds availability. Awards will be granted only if appropriated funds are allocated to the United States Embassy in Kabul by Department of State central budget authorities.