

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

U.S. EMBASSY KABUL COORDINATING DIRECTOR FOR RULE OF LAW
& LAW ENFORCEMENT SECTION

Funding Opportunity Title: Access to Justice Small Grants Program
Announcement Type: Grant & Cooperative Agreements
Funding Opportunity Number: SCAKAB-14-AW-001-SCA-05202014
Deadline for Applications: June 19, 2014
CFDA Number: 19.700 & 19.703

Date Opened: May 20, 2014

Federal Agency Contact: Ms. Katherine Yates
Email: CDROLLEGrants@state.gov

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Coordinating Director (CD) at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul is pleased to announce that we are currently accepting applications for the Access to Justice Small Grants Program. The CD invites Afghan organizations to submit applications for funding for projects that will strengthen the rule of law in Afghanistan.

Purpose of the Program: The Access to Justice Small Grants Program will fund projects that improve access to the formal Afghan justice system; increase the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in advancing the rule of law and access to justice, in particular with respect to vulnerable populations such as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), detainees, women, minority groups, juveniles, and victims of sexual exploitation and human trafficking; and that increase the public's legal awareness and ability to assert their legal rights.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

FUNDING INSTRUMENT TYPE: GRANT OR COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

MINIMUM AMOUNT FOR A GRANT APPLICATION: \$10,000

MAXIMUM AMOUNT FOR A GRANT APPLICATION: \$200,000

PROJECT AND BUDGET PERIODS: PROJECTS MUST BE COMPLETED IN TWELVE MONTHS OR LESS.

III. BACKGROUND

A legal system based on the rule of law (ROL) is a key element of democracy, and the vehicle through which fundamental political, social, and economic rights are protected and enforced. The concept assumes the existence of effective and legitimate institutions, primarily within a country's national government, to administer the law as well as to guarantee personal security and public order. Rule of law also requires citizen confidence in the fairness and effectiveness in the application of the law, including procedural fairness, protection of human rights and civil liberties, and access to justice. The absence of significant government corruption is a prerequisite for effective rule of law to be established, because corruption undermines the effectiveness of the judicial system.

The U.S. Government (USG) is one of the principal international donors working to support the efforts of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) to establish a strong and credible justice sector in Afghanistan. USG assistance programs in Afghanistan center on efforts to improve access to the state-sector justice, provide support to the detentions and corrections system, improve the traditional dispute resolution system and the formal (e.g., Supreme Court, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior, and Attorney General's Office) institutions, to combat corruption and illicit activities, to deal with policy issues and initiatives relating to strengthening the rule of law in Afghanistan, including gender-specific policies, and to support the creation of a strong and functioning civil society.

IV. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Access to Justice Small Grants Program is a USG initiative, launched in 2011, to expand assistance efforts in the area of rule of law in Afghanistan. The aim of the program is to give Afghan civil-society organizations, private sector companies, academic institutions, and professional associations the opportunity to develop projects that will strengthen the rule of law in Afghanistan. In addition, the program aims to strengthen and reinforce the capacity of civil society organizations to advocate for justice and the rule of law in Afghanistan.

To this end, the program seeks to fund creative and sustainable rule of law projects in Afghanistan that address one or more of the program priorities listed below. Priority will be given to projects in under-served areas. Although this list is not exhaustive, preference will be given to projects that meet GIROA development priorities, and one or more of the following USG priority areas:

1. Improve access to the Afghan formal justice sector.

Preference will be given to projects that:

1. Increase the provision and accessibility of legal aid (in particular for vulnerable groups such as IDPs, detainees, women, minority groups, juveniles, victims of sexual exploitation and human trafficking).
2. Enhance the quality of legal defense services through legal education and other initiatives.
3. Increase the availability of Afghan formal justice in underserved districts.
4. Build capacity and expand legal support services for women.

2. Increase the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) and support their leadership of efforts to reform the justice sector and advance the rule of law.

Preference will be given to projects that focus on:

1. CSO advocacy on human rights, women's rights, and the administration of justice.
2. CSO oversight and monitoring of government policy on justice issues.
3. Strengthening constructive engagement on legal and justice sector reform between CSOs and GIROA

3. Increase the public's legal awareness and ability to assert their legal rights.

IV. ELIGIBILITY

Applications are encouraged from all sectors: civil-society organizations, private sector companies, academic institutions, and professional associations. Preference will be given to Afghan-led organizations that are registered with the appropriate GIROA Ministry in Afghanistan.

We encourage applications from organizations that have not previously received funding from the USG. New applicants must demonstrate through their application: an expertise and knowledge of the justice sector and the state of rule of law in Afghanistan, and the ability to communicate with the public, political and community leaders, and other stakeholders for the purpose of strengthening the rule of law in Afghanistan. All potential applicants should be knowledgeable of existing rule of law and justice sector programming in the provinces/regions in which they are proposing activities, including any funded by the USG, in order to avoid duplication of effort.

The Access to Justice Small Grants Program does not require cost sharing. However, applicants should provide information on any similar project it is implementing with funding from the USG, a USG contractor, or other local or international governments or organizations.

If selected for funding, applicants must:

A. Be registered in the System for Award Management SAM located at www.sam.gov; 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. APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND DEADLINE

Application Deadline: All applications must be submitted on or before June 19, 2014, 11:59 p.m. Kabul time. Applications submitted 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.

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: CDROLLEGrants@state.gov. Suggested application templates can be requested from CDROLLEGrants@state.gov, with an email that contains the subject line “Request for Suggested Application Templates”. Applicants are not required to use the suggested application templates.
- **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, CDROLLEGrants@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.

An organization may submit **no more than three (3) proposals**. Proposals that do not meet the requirements of the announcement may not be considered. Proposals that request less than the minimum or more than the maximum grant award amounts (less than \$10,000 or more than \$200,000) will be deemed technically ineligible.

Application Content: Applicants must follow the Request for Applications (RFA) 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 consideration.** Applicants must set forth full, accurate, and complete information as required by this RFA. The penalty for making false statements in proposals to the USG is prescribed on 18 U.S.C.1001.

Questions: For questions about this solicitation, contact Katherine Yates, INL Small Grants Program Coordinator, U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan, at CDROLLEGrants@state.gov. For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726.

VI. APPLICATION CONTENT

Application Format

Applicants are encouraged to submit their project proposals using the suggested application format however this is not mandatory. This suggested format, which includes a template budget and implementation plan format, can be requested from CDROLLEGrants@state.gov, with an email containing the subject line “Request for Suggested Application Templates”.

If not using the suggested application format, the proposal must consist of the following:

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

The SF-424 is the standard cover sheet for grant applications. This form can be found on-line at: http://kabul.usembassy.gov/call_for_proposals.html.

Section 2 - Executive Summary/Problem Statement:

The executive summary should be a maximum one-page overview of what the applicant believes best represents the key features of its proposed program, and how the proposed program addresses the RFA program priorities. The summary should identify needs or shortcomings in the rule of law or justice sector that the project will address, and describe briefly the overall strategic approach of the program to address those needs.

Section 3 - Project Goal, Planned Activities, Project Outcomes:

The applicant must specify the Project Goal, which describes what the project is striving to accomplish overall, taking into consideration the RFA program priorities, GIROA development priorities, and the issues highlighted in the applicant’s problem statement. In connection with this, the proposal should outline the planned project activities which will contribute to the achievement of the Project Goal, giving specific details about the activities and deliverables in an Implementation Plan. The Project Outcomes should be linked directly to the Planned Activities, along with the result of each activity and the indicators/means of verification the applicant will use to measure whether they have achieved these Project Outcomes.

The proposal and Implementation Plan should identify any local partners, the specific locations of activities, the target participant groups, selection criteria for participants, and other relevant details.

Where appropriate, applicants may include back-up plans if the program or components of the program are not able to be implemented as initially conceived.

Section 4 - Monitoring, Evaluation & Sustainability:

Applicants should address their plans for monitoring, evaluation and sustainability separately. Monitoring should address how the applicant will monitor the progress of planned activities; it is a tool for making sure the program stays on track. Evaluation should focus on what indicators the applicant will use to determine whether or not the applicant has achieved their anticipated outcomes and project goals. Sustainability of the project should give an assessment of the long term sustainability of the activities and outcomes, with reference to the stakeholders and other relevant factors.

Section 5 - Organizational Capacity:

The purpose of this section is to provide us with an understanding of the applicant's capacity to implement the program. Applications must include a clear description of the applicant's management structure and organizational experience and background in Afghanistan. The description should include information on the logistical strengths of the organization in Afghanistan, i.e. offices, vehicles, infrastructure, security, etc. In addition to information about the organization and its capabilities, this section must also identify the proposed management structure and staffing plan for the proposed project. A description of the management structure should include: 1) an organizational chart with the proposed key staff; and, 2) roles, responsibilities, and authorities of key personnel.

Section 6 – Appendices:

1. Budget (Required):

Applications will not be considered complete unless they include a budget that responds to the solicitation guidelines. Complete budgets will include detailed line-items outlining specific cost requirements for proposed activities, along with a justification/narrative for each expense in a separate column. 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.

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.

I. 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.

J. Cost-Effectiveness/ In-Kind Contributions – There is no minimum or maximum percentage of cost sharing required for this competition. 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 Justification/Narrative (Required):

The budget must include a narrative in the comments section, to clarify and justify individual line-items (i.e. calculation of how the costs were derived per month or year, their necessity and overall contribution to the program’s cost effectiveness, and official quotations from third party service providers for contracted services).

3. Resume/CV (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.

4. Letters of Intent (Required):

Letters of intent/authorization from all relevant government bodies and partners should be included with the application. The letters must identify the type of relationship to be entered into (formal or informal), the roles and responsibilities of each partner in relation to the proposed project activities, and the expected result of the partnership.

VII. AWARD SELECTION CRITERIA

The Access to Justice Small Grants Program will review all applications for eligibility, completeness and the ability of the USG to monitor and evaluate project activities. After the initial review, eligible applications will be evaluated against the criteria set out below. Successful applications will be subject to compliance with all applicable regulations and guidelines. The International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) section of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul reserves the right to request any additional programmatic and/or financial information regarding the application.

An interagency Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) will evaluate applications submitted under this request. The TEC may impose additional conditions and make recommendations on any given application in order to enhance the proposed program.

Applicants should note that the criteria listed below (1) serve as a standard against which all applications will be evaluated, and (2) serve to identify the significant matters that should be addressed in all applications. The USG will award grants to the applicant whose offer represents the best value to the USG on the basis of technical merit and cost.

Each application will be evaluated by the review committee and other experts, as deemed appropriate. The evaluation criteria have been tailored to the requirements of this RFA.

- **Overall Project Design:** (50 points) This criterion is intended to measure whether the RFA program priorities are adequately addressed; whether a project goal to address the problem has been clearly defined; whether the proposed activities directly relate to meeting the project goal and address the problem statement; the clarity and feasibility of the proposed activities and their timeline for completion; the clarity and validity of the

intended outcomes and indicators; the soundness of the monitoring plan and evaluation plan; the sustainability and the extent to which the impact of the project will continue beyond the conclusion of the funding period. The clarity and relevance of the implementation plan, and the extent to which the activities relate to the projects goals and outcomes.

- **Organizational Capacity:** (30 points) This criterion is intended to measure how well the applicant has demonstrated their ability to develop and implement programs in the selected field and their ability achieve the goals and outcomes outlined in their application. Where partners will be involved (including government bodies), this criterion is intended to measure how well the organization and any partners will be able to collaborate to meet project goals. Capacity refers primarily to the organization's demonstrated ability or potential to carry out the project, including the level of experience of identified key personnel, and the organization's capacity to mobilize quickly and effectively.
- **Appendices** (20 points):
 - Budget & Budget Justification/Narrative: Costs will be evaluated for realism, control practices, and efficiency. The TEC must determine that the costs paid for by this award are reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the proposed project activities. The TEC will analyze the budget to determine if the overall costs are realistic and justifiable for the work to be performed and if the costs are consistent with the program narrative.
 - Resumes/CVs: The TEC will consider the appropriateness of the selected project director and other key personnel in view of the roles and responsibilities they will perform in guiding the project through implementation to completion. Position descriptions submitted in lieu of resumes will be reviewed for the appropriateness of the qualifications and skills identified.
 - Letters of Intent: The TEC will consider, where relevant, the types and depth of relationships that the applicant has with local government, universities and local partners. The panel will also review the letters to determine the willingness of these partners to participate in the effort, and whether all parties have an understanding of their unique roles and responsibilities in terms of the proposed project.

VIII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Award Notices: The grant award shall be written, signed, awarded, and administered by INL Grants Officers. The Grants Officer is the USG 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 Grantee in person or via email transmission. Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified in writing via email.

IX. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Grantees will be required to submit quarterly program progress reports throughout the project period. Such reports must include information on:

1. Overall status of the project;
2. Actions taken to complete the project;
3. Positive results of the effort;
4. Pictures, if applicable;
5. Partners and contact information; and
6. Lessons learned and recommendations for future indicators of progress.

In addition to the quarterly reports mentioned above, the Grantee will be required to submit quarterly financial reports. Quarterly financial reports are due 30 days after the end of the calendar year quarter (quarter 1: January-March, quarter 2: April-June, quarter 3: July-September, quarter 4: October-December). Final programmatic and financial reports are due 90 days after the close of the project period. Progress reports at a minimum should be submitted via email to an address to be provided in the award.

X. 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 principle 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 a proposal.

XI. DISCLAIMER

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the USG, nor does it commit the USG to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. All proposals are subject to availability of funds; final award cannot be made until funds have been fully appropriated, allocated, and committed through internal USG procedures.

Further, the TEC reserves the right to reject any, some or all proposals received for any reason. If a proposal is selected for funding, INL Grants Officers have no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with the award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or to extend the period of performance will be entirely at the discretion of the INL Grants Officers.

