

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Request for Proposals: Democracy, Human Rights, and Rule of Law in Europe and Eurasia (Belarus and Ukraine)

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Department of State

Public Notice

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SUMMARY

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) announces a Request for Proposals from organizations interested in submitting proposals for projects that promote democracy, human rights, and rule of law in Europe and Eurasia.

PLEASE NOTE: DRL strongly urges applicants to access www.grantsolutions.gov or www.grants.gov as soon as possible in order to obtain a username and password to submit your application. GrantSolutions.gov is highly recommended for submission of all applications and is DRL's preferred choice for receiving applications. For more information, please see DRL's Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI), updated in November 2012, available at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/c12302.htm>.

REQUESTED PROPOSAL PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

DRL invites organizations to submit proposals outlining program concepts and capacity to manage projects targeting one of the following issues:

Belarus

Connecting Political Parties with Civil Society (approximately \$500,000 available): DRL's goal is to connect Belarusian political parties with civil society groups in the Belarusian regions to allow political parties to better understand and address the needs of their constituencies. In particular, the program will work with political parties on strategic planning and communication with civil society and citizens to create positive interactions that go beyond major events like elections or historical dates, and establish constructive, mutually beneficial relationships. The program will also help political parties understand how civil society can be an exceptional resource for understanding the interests of the public at the local level rather than just a mobilizing force for obtaining votes. By looking at these relationships and issues in the regions, the program will also emphasize the importance of local elections and politics. Proposals should pay special attention to supporting and building the capacity of youth participants from both the civil society and political party sides in order to encourage the development of the next generation in both sectors.

Ukraine

Increasing Transparency and Countering Corruption (approximately \$500,000 available): DRL's goal in Ukraine is to continue building the capacity of civil society and the media to advocate for reforms that target corruption and increase government transparency, as well as to hold the new government accountable for implementing anti-corruption measures. The project will capitalize on public activism, civic entrepreneurship, and the opportunities triggered by the Euromaidan protests that captured the imaginations of Ukraine's activists and civil society to genuinely combat corruption. Proposals may focus on assisting civil society to work with the new government to counter specific types of corruption or corruption in particular social spheres, such as politics, religion, education, health care, and law enforcement. Proposals could also build bridges between journalists and anti-corruption activists by expanding the capacity of journalists, bloggers, and/or civil society to effectively publicize anti-corruption reforms and to hold the government accountable on the local, regional, or national levels using new and traditional media.

DEADLINE AND TECHNICAL ELIGIBILITY

Please refer directly to DRL's posted Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI), updated in November 2012, available at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/c12302.htm>.

Faxed, couriered, or emailed documents will not be accepted at any time. Applicants must follow all formatting instructions in this document and the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI).

To ensure all applications receive a balanced evaluation, the DRL Review Committee 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.

An applicant may submit **no more than two [2] proposals (one per country/theme)**. Proposals that combine target countries and/or themes will be deemed technically ineligible. **Proposals that request less than the award floor (\$300,000) or more than the award ceiling (\$500,000) may be deemed technically ineligible.**

Technically eligible submissions are those which: 1) arrive electronically via www.grantsolutions.gov or www.grants.gov by **Thursday, November 13, 2014** before 11:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST); 2) heed all instructions contained in the solicitation document and Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI), including length and completeness of submission; and 3) do not violate any of the guidelines stated in the solicitation and this document.

Applicants submitting applications must meet the following criteria:

- Be a non-profit organization/non-government organization (NGO), including U.S.-based NGOs, public international organizations, or foreign-based NGOs; or
- Be a private, public, or state institution of high education; or
- In some instances, subject to additional approvals, be a for-profit organization or business, although there are restrictions on payment of fees and/or profits to any recipient under grants and cooperative agreements in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR Part 31.

Applicants must also:

- Have existing, or the capacity to develop, active partnerships with in-country entities and relevant stakeholders including industry and non-governmental organizations; and
- Have demonstrated experience administering successful and preferably similar projects. DRL reserves the right to request additional background information on organizations that do not have previous experience administering federal grant awards. These applicants may be subject to limited funding on a pilot basis.

Applicants may form consortia and submit a combined proposal. However, one organization should be designated as the lead applicant.

Applicants should be aware that all awards made on or after 12/26/2014 will be made with terms and conditions subject to the OMB Uniform Guidance: Cost Principles, Audit, and Administrative Requirements for Federal Awards (2 CFR Chapter I, Chapter II, Part 200, et al.). Applications that are submitted before 12/26/2014 for Federal awards to be made on or after 12/26/2014 should be developed in accordance with the Uniform Guidance.

All applicants, whether based in the U.S. or in another country, must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Number (DUNS) and an active registration with the System for Award Management (SAM) in order to receive awards from DRL or submit an application through Grants.gov. Organizations submitting an application through GrantSolutions.gov may not need a DUNS or an active registration in SAM.gov at the time of submission, but will be required to get them in order to receive the award. Please refer to the applicable solicitation for eligibility requirements on submitting your application.

It is the responsibility of all applicants to ensure that proposals have been received by www.grantsolutions.gov or www.grants.gov in their entirety. DRL bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.

Once the Request for Proposals deadline has passed U.S. Department of State staff in Washington and overseas may not discuss competing proposals with applicants until the review process has been completed.

NOTE: In order to process final awards, approved applicants will need to register with www.grantsolutions.gov.

REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

DRL will review all proposals for eligibility. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance of Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. Final signatory authority for assistance awards resides with the Department's Grants Officer. DRL and the Grants Office reserve 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 DRL. The Department of State will host a U.S. government interagency review panel to evaluate proposals submitted under this request. Each proposal will be rated along the following six criteria:

1) Quality of Program Idea

Proposals should be responsive to the solicitation and appropriate in the country/regional context, and should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's mission of promoting human rights and democracy. The bureau prioritizes innovative, stand-alone programs. 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. Projects that have a strong academic, research, conference, or dialogue focus will not be deemed competitive. DRL strongly discourages health, technology, or science-related projects unless they have an explicit component related to the requested program objectives listed above. Projects that focus on commercial law or economic development will be rated as non-competitive.

DRL strives to ensure its programs advance the rights and uphold the dignity of the most at risk and vulnerable populations, including women, people with disabilities, racial and ethnic minorities, religious minorities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. To the extent possible, organizations should identify and address considerations to support these populations in all proposed program activities and objectives, and should provide specific means, measures, and corresponding targets to include them as appropriate.

2) Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives

A strong proposal will include a clear articulation of how the proposed program activities contribute to the overall program objectives, and each activity will be clearly developed and detailed. A comprehensive monthly work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and the logistical capacity of the organization. Objectives should be ambitious, yet measurable results-focused and achievable in a reasonable time frame. A complete proposal must include a logic model to demonstrate how the program will have an impact on its proposed objectives. Proposals should address how the program will engage relevant stakeholders and should identify local partners as appropriate. If local partners have been identified, the Bureau strongly encourages applicants to submit letters of support from proposed in-country partners. Additionally, applicants should describe the division of labor among the direct applicant and any local partners. If applicable, proposals should identify target areas for activities, target participant groups or selection criteria for participants, and the specific roles of sub-grantees, among other pertinent details. In particularly challenging operating environments, proposals should include contingency plans for overcoming potential difficulties in executing the original work plan and address any operational or programmatic security concerns and how they will be addressed.

3) Multiplier Effect/Sustainability

Proposals should clearly delineate how elements of the program will have a multiplier effect and be sustainable beyond the life of the grant. A good multiplier effect will have an impact beyond the direct beneficiaries of the grant (e.g. participants trained under a grant go on to train other people, workshop participants use skills from a workshop to address local concerns that are relevant to a wider national audience). A strong sustainability plan may include demonstrating continuing impact beyond the life of a project or garnering other donor support after DRL funding ceases.

4) Program Evaluation Plan

Complete proposals must include a detailed plan (both narrative and table) of how the project's progress and impact will be monitored and evaluated throughout the project. Incorporating a well-designed monitoring and evaluation component into a project is one of the most efficient methods of documenting the progress and potential success of a program. Proposals should demonstrate the capacity for engaging in impact assessments

and providing objectives with measurable outputs and outcomes. Projects that propose an external evaluation with a clear plan will be viewed favorably in this category.

5) Institution's Record and Capacity

The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful democracy and human rights programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past grants. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the project's objectives.

6) Cost Effectiveness

DRL strongly encourages applicants to clearly demonstrate program cost-effectiveness in their Proposal. Proposals should include budgets with reasonable overhead and administration costs and provide clear explanations and justifications for these costs in relation to the work involved. All budget items should be clearly explained and justified to demonstrate its necessity, appropriateness, and its link to the program objectives. Programs that leverage resources from funds internal to the organization or other sources, such as public-private partnerships, will be highly considered. Cost sharing is encouraged, and cost sharing contributions should be outlined in the proposal, budget, and budget narrative.

For additional guidance, please see DRL's posted Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI), as updated in November 2012, as well as DRL's Monitoring and Evaluation Primer and Sample Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. All are available at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/c12302.htm>.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

DRL will not consider proposals that reflect any type of support, for any member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization, whether or not elected members of government.

The information in this solicitation is binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the Bureau that contradicts this language will not be binding. Issuance of the solicitation does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program evaluation requirements.

This request for proposals will appear on www.grantsolutions.gov or www.grants.gov and DRL's website, www.state.gov/j/drl.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Should you have any questions regarding the solicitation, please feel free to contact Erin Spitzer at SpitzerEM@State.gov. Once the deadline has passed, State Department officials and staff - both in the Bureau and at embassies overseas - may not discuss this competition with applicants until the entire proposal review process is completed.