

## Department of State- U.S. Embassy Kabul

**Program Office:** Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy Kabul  
**Funding Opportunity Title:** Management and Establishment of Lincoln Learning Centers in Afghanistan  
**Announcement Type:** Cooperative Agreement  
**Funding Opportunity Number:** SCAKAB-11-AW-003-SCA-040111  
**Deadline for Applications:** May 15, 2011  
**CFDA** 19.501

### FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the United States information and education exchange act of 1948, Public Law 80-402 22 USC, key statute at Section 501 (a), also known as the Smith-Mundt Act. The purpose of the Act is to “provide for interchanges between the United States and other countries of books and periodicals, including government publications, for the translation of such writings, and for the preparation, distribution, and interchange of other educational materials.” The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation or to request a Solicitation Package, contact **Pamela Mills**, Grants Manager, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, at: **Email:** [millspg@state.gov](mailto:millspg@state.gov) (*Preferred method of communication*); **Phone:** +93 (0)700 10 7278 or 301-490-1042 ext. 7278. Please refer to the Funding Opportunity Number SCAKAB-11-AW-003-SCA-040111 located at the top of this announcement when making your request.

## **CONTENTS**

Executive Summary.....	3
Background.....	3
Eligibility Requirements.....	7
Application and Submission Information.....	8
Award Selection Criteria.....	11
Award Administration.....	12
Disclaimer.....	13

## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul announces an open competition for registered Afghan NGOs for a cooperative agreement to coordinate logistics associated with establishing and administering Lincoln Learning Centers (LLCs) during the period of August 1, 2011 to September 30, 2012. Lincoln Learning Centers are information and program venues located in non-U.S. government sites throughout Afghanistan. Locations of any new Lincoln Learning Centers will be determined by the U.S. Embassy. Lincoln Learning Centers help maintain open dialogue and build bridges of understanding, representing the nation's long-standing commitment to spread the ideas and values of American democracy and civil society. The budget available for this program will include all logistical costs, to include materials, hardware, furnishings, renovation costs, books, salaries, utilities, and all operating expenses.

### **Administration and National Policy Perspective**

The U.S. Government (USG) is providing resources to promote diplomatic solutions to the challenges faced in Afghanistan, through language training, critical skills development, and other public diplomacy programs. These resources support the people, platforms, and programs necessary to meet the international challenges to American security and welfare.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

Lincoln Learning Centers are part of the worldwide American Corners network. They are dedicated information and program spaces hosted in schools, libraries, and other partner institutions in Afghanistan. The heart of a Lincoln Learning Center is its commitment to provide public diplomacy programs open to various and diverse audiences. Most offer collections of books, magazines, on- and off-line databases, free internet access, publicly accessible computer work stations, and an area for small programs.

**Objectives:** Lincoln Learning Centers serve as programming platforms offering English language classes, library facilities, programming venues, Internet connectivity, educational and other counseling services. A goal of the program is to reach at least 4,000 Afghan citizens per month per location.

In some locations, the Lincoln Learning Center is the only place where USG-sponsored training sessions and workshops can take place, due to infrastructure and security challenges, and it often offers the only free Internet access available to the public.

### **Core Characteristics of a Lincoln Learning Center**

1. Status is covered by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) – signed by the Embassy Public Affairs Section, Afghan national and/or provincial government officials and, where applicable, a local non-governmental host institution – that outlines the shared commitment and respective responsibilities of each institution.
2. Collections of information on the United States, such as books, U.S. government publications, CD-ROMs, periodicals, videos, DVDs, and posters (at least 800 titles).

3. Reference desk modeled on American public library service.
4. Supervised public computer and Internet access.
5. Multifunctional program platform.
6. A minimum of two programs per month in addition to regular classes and workshops.
7. English-speaking staff, to the extent possible.
8. Provision of free Internet and training to members of the community.
9. Open and accessible to women and girls.

Lincoln Learning Centers in Afghanistan usually also have the following characteristics:

- secure location but with easy public access;
- minimum size of approximately 150 square meters;
- library - minimum of 18 square meter of book shelf space and a minimum of 800 books;
- venue for programs to accommodate 30 seats;
- a least 10 computer work stations;
- furniture (reading tables, chairs, book shelves, etc.); and
- equipment (uninterruptible power supply (UPS) units, printer, copier, scanner, digital camera, heaters, TV, etc.)

Lincoln Learning Centers currently exist in twelve locations around Afghanistan: Badghis, Bamyan, Ghazni, Gardez, Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul University, Khost, Kunduz, Kunar, Mazar-e-Sharif, and the Women's Garden (in Kabul). Current plans call for opening of four new Lincoln Learning Centers in Parwan, Paktika, Helmand and Faryab before the end of July 2011, and two other locations still to be determined to be opened before the end of 2011 for a total of sixteen Lincoln Learning Centers.

For calculating budgets, applicants should take into consideration the following monthly average administration costs for each center:

- salary and benefits for coordinator, deputy coordinator and part-time cleaner = \$3,125;
- Internet connectivity = \$1,200;
- electricity and fuel = \$350;
- maintenance and supplies = \$750; and,
- travel and per diem funds = \$250.

Administration costs total approximately \$5,675 per month on average per LLC. To manage 16 centers, it is expected to cost approximately \$90,800 per month. Budget may be renegotiated if costs increase.

**Scope of Award:** PAS and the award Recipient would agree to participate jointly in the management of the Lincoln Learning Centers. Each party would have specific obligations and responsibilities under the terms of the Cooperative Agreement, as outlined below.

*The award Recipient shall provide the following overall support:*

1. Establishing and administering up to two new Lincoln Learning Centers during the period of October 1, 2011, to September 30, 2012. This support will include overseeing the renovation of the sites and hiring new staff. The sites for new LLCs will be selected by the U.S. Embassy.
2. Administering the existing Lincoln Learning Centers operationally for the period of October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2012, following a transition period of up to two months working side-by-side with the current LLC administrative organization, beginning as early as August 1, 2011.
3. Working with the current LLC administrative organization on a smooth transition during the period of August 1-October 31, 2011.

*The award Recipient shall provide the following support for each Lincoln Learning Center:*

1. Employ two qualified staff members, selected in cooperation with PAS, to oversee each Lincoln Learning Center; formally develop, document, and sign their terms of employment and disperse their monthly salaries in a timely manner. The first staff member is the Lincoln Learning Center Coordinator, responsible for overall management of the site and programming held at the LLC. The second staff member assists the Coordinator, often on a part-time basis. Female candidates will be encouraged.
2. Pay for general maintenance, upkeep, and additional utilities not covered and paid for under the MOU.
3. Provide regular oversight of the Lincoln Learning Centers, including quarterly assessment visits to address any management, administrative, and maintenance concerns at each site.
4. Negotiate with outside vendors, establish and sign contracts and pay for needed services.
5. Establish a standard list of office supplies required by the Coordinators; purchase supplies as necessary and distribute accordingly.
6. Purchase computer equipment and pay for continuous Internet connection to the Lincoln Learning Centers.

7. At PAS discretion, replace damaged or outdated electronic equipment to ensure continued services and information access to patrons.
8. Fund travel, per diem, and tuition for Lincoln Learning Center staff to attend relevant training programs at locations in Afghanistan (twice per year) or abroad (once per year).
9. Build the capacity of Afghan citizens to manage public access information centers without foreign-based assistance.
10. Submit itemized quarterly reports to the U.S. Embassy on program activities and budgets for each Lincoln Learning Center.
11. Submit itemized quarterly financial reports and an end-of-year full report.

*The U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section (PAS) shall provide the following support:*

1. Identify Afghan government partners and choose LLC locations throughout Afghanistan.
2. Develop and obtain signed MOUs outlining responsibilities of Afghan government and host institution partners in consultation with the Recipient.
3. Approve final selection of LLC staff members in cooperation with the Recipient.
4. Provide and maintain the inventory of an information resource collection including books, periodicals, DVDs, and CD-ROMs about the United States.
5. Develop and continually review programming presented at the Lincoln Learning Centers to ensure programs support U.S. objectives and are pertinent to Afghan audiences.
6. Produce and provide appropriate public diplomacy materials for free distribution to patrons.
7. Review monthly budget expenditures.
8. Cover extra-ordinary costs associated with building maintenance or security enhancements.
9. Ensure that security for operating Lincoln Learning Centers is provided by the provincial and local governments.

### **III. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

- Eligibility is limited to registered Afghan non-profit organizations.

- The Department encourages organizations that have previously received international program funding from the U.S. Government to apply under this announcement.
- Applicants must have demonstrated experience in the following subject areas:
  - management of budgets and human resources;
  - working in the cultural, library, or educational fields;
  - working in Afghanistan, especially with vendors, suppliers, contractors, etc.; and,
  - program development and implementation.
- Organizations must have appropriately staffed offices in Afghanistan as of the date of application.
- Expertise and established relationships with Afghan NGOs and/or Afghan Government officials will be considered favorably.

Cost Sharing or Matching

This program does not require cost sharing.

Other Special Eligibility Criteria

Not Applicable.

**IV. AWARD INFORMATION**

**Type of Award:** Cooperative Agreement

**Fiscal Year Funds:** 2010/2011

**Approximate Total Funding:** \$3,000,000 pending availability of funds.

**Approximate Number of Awards:** 1

**Anticipated Award Date:** Pending availability of funds, August 1, 2011

**Anticipated Project Completion Date:** September 30, 2012

**Additional Information:** Pending successful implementation of this program and the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years this cooperative agreement may be renewed.

**APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

**Application Submission Process:** Applicants must submit complete proposals electronically to PAS Kabul directly at: [KabulPDProposals@state.gov](mailto:KabulPDProposals@state.gov). For questions about this solicitation, contact **Pamela Mills**, Grants Manager, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, at:

Email: millspg@state.gov (*Preferred method of communication*)

Phone: +93 (0)700 10 7278 or 301-490-1042 ext. 7278

Please refer to the Funding Opportunity Number SCAKAB-11-AW-003-SCA-040111 located at the top of this announcement when making your request.

**Application Deadline:** All applications must be submitted on or before May 15, 2011, 11:59 p.m. Afghanistan time. Applications submitted after 11:59 p.m. will be ineligible for consideration. **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 Content:** Applicants must follow the RFP 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 RFP. The penalty for making false statements in proposals to the USG is prescribed on 18 U.S.C.1001.

The proposals may not exceed 8 double-spaced pages in 12-point, Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins. 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):**

This form can be found on-line at: <http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content/Documents/SF424-V2.0.pdf>.

**Section 2 - Abstract:**

The abstract is limited to 300 words in length. It must provide a summary of the identified need, proposed activities, and expected results.

**Section 3 - Problem Statement:**

The problem statement must describe the need for the project, with regards to: location, local resources, and regional challenges. This statement should also identify the demographic targets and educational, cultural and social goals for the Lincoln Learning Centers.

**Section 4 - Project Objectives/Implementation Plan:**

The applicant must specify the goals and objectives of the project, relative to the problem statement. The proposed activities should be described in sufficient detail to show how objectives and goals will be met. This section should also describe how success will be measured via performance indicators. Finally, this section must include a time-task plan that clearly identifies the objectives and major activities.

**Section 5 - Organizational Capability:**

Applications must include a clear description of the applicant's management structure, organizational experience, and background in Afghanistan as these relate to the proposed activities. The description should include information on the logistical strengths of the organization in Afghanistan, i.e. offices, vehicles, infrastructure, security, etc. 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 proposal should include a statement on how security would be provided for recipient staff members. While the award

recipient is responsible for providing their own security, related expenses may be included in the proposal budget.

### **Section 6 - Appendices:**

The concept paper submission must include three appendices. Only the appendices listed below may be included as part of the application:

- (a) **Budget (Required)** – the budget must identify the total amount of funding requested, with a breakdown of amounts to be spent in the following budget categories: personnel; travel; equipment; supplies; consultants/contracts; other direct costs; and indirect costs. The budget may include an estimated cost for continuation activities, which will be considered for successful applicants to this RFP in future fiscal years based on performance and the availability of funds. The budget may include security requirements.
- (b) **Resume (Required)** – resumes, not to exceed 1 page in length, must be included for the proposed key staff persons, such as the Project Director and any other staff in decision-making positions.
- (c) **Letters of Intent (Required)** – Letters of intent from all 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. Please note that these are not letters of support and should only be included for those organizations that will play an active role in the project, including those that receive financial support through the project budget. The individual letters cannot exceed one page in length, and applicants are limited to submitting up to five letters per proposal.

## **V. AWARD SELECTION CRITERIA**

Consistent with the federal grant regulations, the Department reserves the right to give priority for its funds to those organizations working on key USG objectives that are and have been supportive, in policy and programs, of USG policies on Public Diplomacy.

**Evaluation Criteria:** Applicants should note that the following criteria (1) serve as a standard against which all proposals will be evaluated, and (2) serve to identify the significant matters that should be addressed in all proposals. The USG will award grants to the applicants whose offers represent the best value to the USG on the basis of technical merit and cost.

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

- **Problem Statement (10 points):** This section should identify the importance and relevance of the applicant's proposal to the broader U.S. Public Diplomacy policy

objectives as well as relevance to the program objectives of the Department of State as described under the first two Sections of this solicitation.

- **Implementation Plan (30 points):** Applicants should describe what they propose to do and how they will do it. The proposed activities must directly relate to meeting the goals and objectives, and applicants should include information on how they will measure activities' effectiveness. The review panel will be viewing the implementation plan in terms of how well it addresses the problem statement, relevance of the goals and objectives, feasibility of the proposed activities and their timeline for completion, and the extent to which the impact of the project will continue beyond the conclusion of the funding period. The review panel will be interested in seeing practical and innovative plans for building the capacity of Afghan citizens to manage public access information centers as well as innovative programming ideas.
- **Organizational Capability (35 points):** Applicants must demonstrate how their resources, capabilities, and experience will enable them to achieve the stated goals and objectives. In addition, applicants should describe how and with whom they will collaborate to meet project goals. The application must distinguish all key partners and organizations that will be involved in the establishment and administration of the Lincoln Learning Centers.
- **Appendices (25 points):**
  - **Budget:** Costs shall be evaluated for realism, control practices, and efficiency. The Department of State must determine that the costs paid for this award are reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the proposed project activities. This will consist of a review of the budget to determine if the overall costs are realistic for the work to be performed, and if the costs are consistent with the program narrative.
  - **Resumes:** The review panel will consider the appropriateness of the bidder's proposed Project Director, in view of the role and responsibility that person will play in guiding the project through implementation to completion. Position descriptions submitted in lieu of the resume will be reviewed for the appropriateness of the qualifications and skills identified.
  - **Letters of Intent:** The review panel will consider the types and depth of relationships that the applicant has with local organizations. The panel will also review the letters to determine the willingness of such organizations to participate in the effort, and that all parties have an understanding of their unique roles and responsibilities in terms of the proposed project.

## VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

**Award Notices:** The co-operative agreement 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 either mail or facsimile transmission. Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified in writing.

Issuance of this RFP does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government, nor does it commit the Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the Government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

**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. Progress reports at a minimum should be submitted via electronic mail to an address to be provided in the award.

## **VII. 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.