

**Department of State**  
**Public Notice**

**Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Request for Statements of Interest:**  
Programs to promote and protect the human rights of persons with disabilities, women and girls, LGBTI persons and other marginalized individuals.

**I. Requested Statements of Interest Objectives**

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) announces a Request for Statements of Interest (RSOI) from civil society organizations to promote and protect the human rights of marginalized populations. This request is seeking programs that take an intersectional approach to addressing violence and discrimination targeting marginalized populations, which undermine society's collective security, and programs that provide marginalized populations with tools to prevent, mitigate and recover from violence.

Intersectional programming recognizes that multiple social identities such as gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, race or ethnicity intersect in a marginalized individual's experience and are affected by the broader existence of privilege and oppression in society. Members of excluded and vulnerable groups share common strategies to defend their human rights, as well as to mitigate and prevent human rights abuse. They also develop strategies to address their specific needs and other variations such as age, socio-economic status, or geography that can impact them in different ways. A broader inclusivity approach values the participation of all people. It assumes that interventions will not affect all segments of society in the same way. It requires stakeholders to identify and address the difference between the opportunities and barriers to equality and to design programs in a way that does not perpetuate inequality.

DRL/GP's Marginalized Populations programming works to advance the human rights of Persons with Disabilities, Women and Girls, Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersex persons and other marginalized groups. This programming supports the unique experiences and multiple social identities of individuals that impact their exclusion from society and takes an intersectional approach to program design and response.

**PLEASE NOTE:** DRL strongly encourages applicants to immediately access [www.grantsolutions.gov](http://www.grantsolutions.gov) or [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) in order to obtain a username and password. **GrantSolutions.gov is highly recommended for all submissions and is DRL's preferred system for receiving applications.** To register with GrantSolutions.gov for the first time, Please refer to the Proposal Submission Instructions for Statements of Interest at: <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/c12302.htm>.

The submission of a SOI is the first step in a two-part process. Applicants must first submit a SOI, which is a concise, 3-page concept note designed to clearly communicate a program idea and its objectives before the development of a full proposal application. The purpose of the SOI process is to allow applicants the opportunity to submit program ideas for DRL to evaluate prior

to requiring the development of full proposal applications. Upon review of eligible SOIs, DRL will invite selected applicants to expand their ideas into full proposal applications.

## **REQUESTED STATEMENT OF INTEREST PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

DRL seeks to support programming ideas that are intersectional in addressing barriers to equality for marginalized populations. SOIs are invited from civil society organizations focused on protecting the human rights of individuals who experience marginalization because of multiple social identities and civil society organizations proposing programming with strategies of inclusion across different marginalized populations. Applicants may submit no more than one (1) SOI. To support direct and indirect costs required for implementation, DRL anticipates making award amounts of \$250,000 - \$450,000. Approximately \$900,000 in funds are available for programs, pending funding availability. SOIs may address one focus area, or may respond to a combination of focus areas. SOI focus areas, include, but are not limited to:

- **Freedom from Violence:** Individuals, organizations and communities feel safe and secure from all forms of violence, including threat, intimidation, harassment, abuse, sexual and gender-based violence, and psychological or physical harm.

Objectives may include, but are not limited to: effective strategies to document and protect individuals whose intersectional identities disproportionately expose them to violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, bias-motivated violence and hate crimes; increased civil society cooperation with national authorities to prevent, mitigate, and respond to violence against marginalized populations; effective strategies to reduce political and electoral violence against marginalized populations; and, proactive engagement by media (new and traditional) to combat discrimination and violence against marginalized populations, including online violence.

- **Access to Justice:** The human rights of marginalized individuals are acknowledged and protected through inclusive and affirming laws and policies, which are fairly and consistently implemented and enforced, and efforts are made to reduce existing barriers to justice.

Objectives may include, but are not limited to: improved capacity of judicial officials, lawyers and CSOs to leverage existing domestic and international legal frameworks to advance the human rights of marginalized individuals; increased collaboration among marginalized groups to advocate for the repeal, reform and replace discriminatory legislation and policy and develop inclusive legislation and policies; increased access to secure and culturally competent legal services that consider the unique needs of marginalized individuals to file criminal complaints, serve as witnesses, and claim compensation; and, increased collaboration among relevant stakeholders on advocacy to reduce impunity for perpetrators of violence and discrimination against marginalized individuals.

- **Social Inclusion:** Marginalized individuals are empowered and have full participation in political, societal and economic systems without stigma and discrimination.

Objectives may include, but are not limited to: proactive inclusion strategies, analysis and reasonable accommodations adopted by the broader human rights community for meaningful participation by marginalized populations; increased leadership and agency of marginalized individuals across all sectors; increased support and encouragement for leadership of marginalized individuals by family members, employers, community members, religious leaders and broader society.

- **Empowered and Inclusive Movements and Organizations:** Society reflects the full diversity of the communities that it engages, and supports strong and inclusive civil society, partnerships and networks that create access, agency, skills and information for marginalized communities to advocate for social and policy change.

Objectives may include, but are not limited to: increased cooperation, shared strategies and understanding within and among marginalized populations on promoting and protecting human rights; and, increased access to and leadership within broader human rights movements and allied communities by persons who experience multiple and intersecting forms of oppression and rights violations.

## **REQUESTED CROSS-CUTTING THEMES**

Additionally, strong proposals are guided by the following cross-cutting values:

**GENDER EQUALITY:** Projects should consider the perspectives of individuals and communities based on actual or perceived biological sex, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, and/or lack of adherence to varying socially constructed norms around masculinity and femininity should be considered. Interventions should be designed in ways that seek to mitigate gender inequality and discrimination. Integrating gender involves targeted gender programming, as well as gender analysis.

**LOCALLY-LED:** *“Nothing about us without us.”* Programs should be led by or have strong support from and participation by local marginalized populations whose barriers to participation have led to human rights abuse and discrimination. They should involve local organizations, focus on activities at the local and community level, and make grants or sub-grants to local organizations where possible.

**ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY:** With the aim of creating and broadening access to marginalized populations, programming should include efforts to increase the capacity of local or regional organizations to develop and implement strategic plans, work plans, budgets, communication strategies, risk assessments, security plans and increase capacity of organizations to mobilize community members and build constituencies.

Projects should have the potential to have an immediate impact leading to long-term sustainable reforms, and should have potential for sustainability beyond DRL resources. DRL's preference is to not duplicate past efforts, but instead support new and creative approaches. This does not exclude from consideration projects that improve upon or expand existing successful projects in a new and complementary way. DRL also strives to ensure its projects advance the rights and uphold the dignity of the most vulnerable or at-risk populations.

Activities that typically are **not** considered competitive include:

- The provision of large amounts of humanitarian assistance;
- English language instruction;
- Development of high-tech computer or communications software and/or hardware;
- Purely academic exchanges or fellowships;
- External exchanges or fellowships lasting longer than six months;
- Off-shore activities that are not clearly linked to in-country initiatives and impact or are not necessary for security concerns;
- Theoretical explorations of human rights or democracy issues, including projects aimed primarily at research and evaluation that do not incorporate training or capacity-building for local civil society;
- Micro-loans or similar small business development initiatives;
- Initiatives directed towards a diaspora community rather than current residents of targeted countries.

## **II. Eligibility Information:**

Organizations submitting SOIs must meet the following criteria:

- Be a U.S.-based or foreign-based non-profit organization/non-governmental organization (NGO), or a public international organization; or
- Be a private, public, or state institutions of higher education; or
- Be a for-profit organization or business, although there are restrictions on payment of fees and/or profits under grants and cooperative agreements, including those outlined in 48 CFR 30 ("Cost Accounting Standards Administration"), 48 CFR 31 ("Contract Cost Principles and Procedures"); and
- Have existing, or the capacity to develop, active partnerships with thematic or in-country partners, entities, and relevant stakeholders including private sector partner and NGOs; and
- Have demonstrable experience administering successful and preferably similar programs. DRL reserves the right to request additional background information on organizations that do not have previous experience administering federal awards. These applicants may be subject to limited funding on a pilot basis.

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

DRL's preference is to work with non-profit entities; however, there may be occasions when a for-profit entity is best suited. For-profit entities should be aware that its application may be subject to additional review following the panel selection process, and that the Department of State generally prohibits profit under its assistance awards to for-profit or commercial organizations. Profit is defined as any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs. The allowability of costs incurred by commercial organizations is determined in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR 30, Cost Accounting Standards Administration, and 48 CFR 31 Contract Cost Principles and Procedures. Program income earned by the recipient must be deducted from the program's total allowable costs in determining the net allowable costs on which the federal share of costs is based.

DRL is committed to an anti-discrimination policy in all of its programs and activities. DRL welcomes SOI submissions irrespective of an applicant's race, ethnicity, color, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or other status. DRL strongly encourages applications from organizations working with the most at risk and vulnerable communities, including women, youths, persons with disabilities, members of ethnic or religious minority groups, and LGBTI persons.

No entity listed on the Excluded Parties List System in the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#) is eligible for any assistance or can participate in any activities under an award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR 1989 Comp., p. 235), "Debarment and Suspension." Additionally, no entity listed on the EPLS can participate in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the EPLS in SAM to ensure that no ineligible entity is included.

Organizations are not required to have a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number, formerly referred to as a DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) number, and an active SAM.gov registration to apply for this solicitation through GrantSolutions.gov. However, if a SOI is approved, these will need to be obtained before an organization is able to submit a full application.

### **III. Application Requirements, Deadline, and Technical Eligibility**

All SOIs must conform to DRL's posted Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for Statements of Interest, as updated in August 2016, available at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/c12302.htm>.

Complete SOI submissions **must** include the following:

1. Completed and signed SF-424 and SF424B, as directed on GrantSolutions.gov or Grants.gov (please refer to DRL's PSI for SOIs for guidance on completing the SF-424); and,
2. Program Statement (not to exceed three [3] pages in Microsoft Word) that includes:

- a) A table listing:
  - i. The target country/countries;
  - ii. The total amount of funding requested from DRL, total amount of cost-share (if any), and total program amount (DRL funds + cost-share); and,
  - iii. Program length;
- b) A synopsis of the program, including a brief statement on how the program will have a demonstrated impact and engage relevant stakeholders. The SOI should identify local partners as appropriate;
- c) A concise breakdown explicitly identifying the program's objectives and the activities and expected results that contribute to each objective; and,
- d) A brief description of the applicant(s) that demonstrates the applicant(s) expertise and capacity to implement the program and manage a U.S. government award.

Technically eligible SOIs are those which:

- 1) Arrive electronically via GrantSolutions.gov or Grants.gov by **11:30 p.m. ET on October 27, 2017 under the announcement title "Promote and Protect the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Women and Girls, LGBTI persons and other Marginalized Individuals" funding opportunity number "DRLA-DRLAQM-18-013"**;
- 2) Are in English;
- 3) Heed all instructions and do not violate any of the guidelines stated in this solicitation and the PSI for Statements of Interest.

For all SOI documents please ensure:

- 1) All pages are numbered;
- 2) All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper; and,
- 3) All documents are single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. Captions and footnotes may be 10-point Times New Roman font. Font sizes in charts and tables can be reformatted to fit within one page width.

Grants.gov and Grantsolutions.gov automatically logs the date and time a submission is made, and the Department of State will use this information to determine whether it has been submitted on time. Late submissions are neither reviewed nor considered unless the DRL point of contact listed in section VI is contacted prior to the deadline and is provided with evidence of system errors caused by [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) or [www.grantsolutions.gov](http://www.grantsolutions.gov) that is outside of the prospective applicants' control and is the sole reason for a late submission. Prospective applicants should not expect a notification upon DRL receiving their SOI. It is the sole responsibility of the prospective applicant to ensure that all of the material submitted in the SOI submission package is complete, accurate, and current. DRL will **not** accept SOIs submitted via email, fax, the postal system, or delivery companies or couriers. DRL strongly encourages all prospective applicants to submit SOIs before October 27, 2017 to ensure that the SOI has been received and is complete.

#### **IV. Review and Selection Process**

The Department's Office of Acquisitions Management (AQM) will determine technical eligibility for all SOI submissions. All technically eligible SOIs will then be reviewed against the same three criteria by a DRL Review Panel, which includes quality of program idea/inclusivity of marginalized populations, program planning, and ability to achieve objectives/institutional capacity. Additionally, the Panel will evaluate how the SOI meets the solicitation request, U.S. foreign policy goals, and the priority needs of DRL overall. Panelists review each SOI individually against the evaluation criteria, not against competing SOIs. To ensure all SOIs receive a balanced evaluation, the DRL Review Panel will review the first page of the SOI up to the page limit and no further. All Panelists must sign non-disclosure agreements and conflict of interest agreements.

In most cases, the DRL Review Panel includes representatives from DRL policy and program offices. Once a SOI is approved, selected applicants will be invited to submit full proposal applications based on their SOIs. Unless directed otherwise by the organization, DRL may also refer SOIs for possible consideration in other U.S. government related funding opportunities.

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

DRL's Front Office reserves the right to make a final determination regarding all funding matters, pending funding availability.

#### **Review Criteria**

##### **Quality of Program Idea/Inclusivity of Marginalized Populations**

SOIs should be responsive to the solicitation, appropriate in the country/regional context, and should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to DRL's mission of promoting human rights and democracy. DRL prefers creative approaches that do not duplicate efforts by other entities. This does not exclude from consideration programs that improve upon or expand existing successful programs in a new and complementary way. DRL strives to ensure its programs advance the rights and uphold the dignity of the most at-risk and vulnerable populations, including women, youth, people with disabilities, members of racial and ethnic or religious minority groups, and LGBTI persons. To the extent possible and appropriate, applicants should identify and address considerations to support and/or include these populations in all proposed program activities and objectives. Strong justification should be provided if the most at-risk and vulnerable populations will not be included in the proposed activities and objectives. Otherwise, SOIs that do not address the above will not be considered highly competitive in this category.

##### **Program Planning**

A strong SOI will include a clear articulation of how the proposed program activities and expected results (both outputs and outcomes) contribute to specific program objectives and the overall program goal. Objectives should be ambitious, yet measurable, results-focused, and achievable in a reasonable time frame.

#### Ability to Achieve Objectives/Institutional Capacity

SOIs should address how the program will engage relevant stakeholders and should identify local partners as appropriate. If local partners are identified, applicants should describe the division of labor among the applicant and any local partners. SOIs should demonstrate the organization's expertise and previous experience in administering programs, preferably similar programs targeting the requested program area or similarly challenging environments.

**For additional guidance, please see DRL's posted Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for Statements of Interest, as updated in August 2016, available at <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/c12302.htm>.**

#### **V. Additional Information**

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

Project activities whose direct beneficiaries are foreign militaries or paramilitary groups or individuals will not be considered for DRL funding given purpose limitations on funding.

DRL requires U.S. government Risk Analysis Management vetting of all individuals programming in certain countries, which may include the board of directors from grantee and sub-award organizations, program staff, and any program participants receiving direct assistance through grant funds. Depending on the type of vetting, the required information requested may include for each individual: The required information for each individual submission includes full name, date of birth, place of birth, nationality, a government issued ID number (drivers licenses are not accepted for any country; if the individual is a U.S. person, a SSN is required), and one piece of contact information (phone number, email address, or Skype account (if Skype is submitted an email must accompany it)). **Please keep these vetting requirements in mind when designing each program.**

Restrictions may apply to any proposed assistance to police or other law enforcement. Among these, pursuant to section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA), no assistance provided may be furnished to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country when there is credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. In accordance with the requirements of section 620M of the FAA, also known as the Leahy law, program beneficiaries or participants from a foreign government's security forces may need to be vetted by the Department before the provision of any assistance.

Organizations should be aware that DRL understands that some information contained in SOIs may be considered sensitive or proprietary and will make appropriate efforts to protect such



information. However, organizations are advised that DRL cannot guarantee that such information will not be disclosed, including pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or other similar statutes.

Organizations should also be aware that if ultimately selected for an award, the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards set forth in 2 CFR Chapter 200 (Sub-Chapters A through F) shall apply to all non-Federal entities, except for assistance awards to Individuals and Foreign Public Entities. Please note that as of December 26, 2014, 2 CFR 200 (Sub-Chapters A through E) now applies to foreign organizations, and Sub-Chapters A through D shall apply to all for-profit entities. The applicant/recipient of the award and any sub-recipient under the award must comply with all applicable terms and conditions, in addition to the assurance and certifications made part of the Notice of Award. The Department's Standard Terms and Conditions can be viewed on DRL's Resources page at: <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/c72333.htm>.

The information in this solicitation and DRL's PSI for SOIs, as updated in August 2016, is binding and may not be modified by any DRL representative. **Explanatory information provided by DRL that contradicts this language will not be binding.** Issuance of the solicitation and negotiation of SOIs or applications does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government. DRL reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program evaluation requirements.

This solicitation will appear on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), [www.grantsolutions.gov](http://www.grantsolutions.gov), and DRL's website <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/c12302.htm>.

#### Background Information on DRL and general DRL funding

DRL is the foreign policy lead within the U.S. government on promoting democracy and protecting human rights globally. DRL supports programs that uphold democratic principles, support and strengthen democratic institutions, promote human rights, prevent atrocities, combat and prevent violent extremism, and build civil society around the world. DRL typically focuses its work in countries with egregious human rights violations, where democracy and human rights advocates are under pressure, and where governments are undemocratic or in transition.

Additional background information on DRL and the human rights report can be found on [www.state.gov/j/drl](http://www.state.gov/j/drl) and [www.humanrights.gov](http://www.humanrights.gov).

#### **VI. Contact Information**

GrantSolutions.gov Help Desk:

For assistance with GrantSolutions.gov accounts and technical issues related to using the system, please contact Customer Support at [help@grantsolutions.gov](mailto:help@grantsolutions.gov) or call 1-866-577-0771 (toll charges for international callers) or 1-202-401-5282. Customer Support is available 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM ET, Monday – Friday, except federal holidays.

Grants.gov Helpdesk:

For assistance with Grants.gov accounts and technical issues related to using the system, please call the Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 or email [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). The Contact Center is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except federal holidays.

See <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/snow-dismissal-procedures/federal-holidays/> for a list of federal holidays.

For technical questions related to this solicitation, please contact the Global Equality Fund Management Team in DRL/GP at [GlobalEquality@state.gov](mailto:GlobalEquality@state.gov).

With the exception of technical submission questions, during the solicitation period U.S. Department of State staff in Washington and overseas shall not discuss this competition until the entire review process has been completed and rejection and approval letters have been transmitted.