



U.S. Department of State  
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor  
2201 C Street, NW, Room 7827  
Washington, D.C. 20520  
<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/>

# **Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for Statements of Interest**

**Updated: September 2018**

***PLEASE REFER TO THIS DOCUMENT WHEN PREPARING A STATEMENT OF  
INTEREST.***

# Table of Contents

SECTION I: Eligibility .....	1
A. Eligibility Requirements .....	1
B. System for Award Management (SAM.gov) .....	1
C. Eligible SOI Applications .....	2
Format Requirements .....	2
A. SOI Requirements .....	3
SECTION II: Guidelines for Application Components .....	4
A. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Regulations .....	4
B. SF-424 Forms .....	4
SECTION III: SOI Submission Instructions .....	6
A. SAMS Domestic Applications .....	6
B. Grants.gov Applications .....	7
SECTION IV: SOI REVIEW PROCESS .....	8
A. SOI Review Criteria .....	8
SECTION V: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION .....	10
A. Background Information on DRL and General DRL Funding .....	10

## SECTION I: ELIGIBILITY

---

### A. Eligibility Requirements

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) welcomes Statements of Interest (SOI) in response to DRL Requests for Statements of Interest (RSOIs) from:

- U.S.-based and foreign-based non-profit organizations/non-government organizations (NGOs);
- Public international organizations;
- Private, public, or state institutions of higher education; and
- For-profit organizations or businesses.

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 their SOIs 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 total program allowable cost in determining the net allowable costs on which the federal share of costs is based.

Applicants must have existing, or the capacity to develop, active partnerships with thematic or in-country partners, entities and relevant stakeholders, including private sector partners and NGOs, and have **demonstrable experience** in administering successful and preferably similar programs. DRL encourages SOIs from foreign-based NGOs headquartered in the geographic regions/countries relevant to the applicable solicitation. DRL reserves the right to request additional background information on applicants who do not have previous experience administering federal grant awards, and these applicants may be subject to limited funding on a pilot basis.

Applicants may **form consortia** in order to bring together organizations with varied expertise to propose a comprehensive program in one proposal. However, one organization should be designated as the lead applicant with the other members as sub-award partners.

DRL is committed to an anti-discrimination policy in all of its programs and activities. DRL welcomes SOI submissions irrespective of race, ethnicity, color, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or other status.

### B. System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

Note: SAM.gov is not the same as SAMS Domestic. It is free to register in both systems, but the registration processes are different.

Any applicant listed on the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS) in the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#) is not eligible to apply for an assistance 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.gov to ensure that ineligible entities are not included in their application.

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. **However, if a SOI is approved, these will need to be obtained before an organization is able to submit a full application. Therefore, we recommend starting the process of obtaining a SAM.gov registration as soon as possible.** Please note that there is no cost associated with UEI or SAM.gov registration.

**Note: The process for obtaining or renewing a SAM.gov registration has changed. DRL encourages all organizations to begin the process of registering or renewing with SAM.gov as early as possible. *The registration process may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks.***

### **C. Eligible SOI Applications**

Technically eligible SOIs are those that:

- Arrive electronically via SAMS Domestic or Grants.gov by the designated due date and time noted in the RSOI. If reasonable accommodations are granted for persons with disabilities or for security reasons, SOIs must still be received by DRL by the designated due date and time noted in the RSOI;
- Are in English and all costs are in U.S. dollars. If an original document within the application is in another language, an English translation must be provided. For any documents provided in both English and a foreign language, the English language version is the controlling version. (Please note: the Department of State, as indicated in 2 CFR 200.111, requires that English is the official language of all award documents);
- Heed all instructions and specific guidelines contained in the RSOI and PSI, including length and completeness of applications; and
- Do not violate any of the guidelines stated in the RSOI and the PSI.

It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all of the documents submitted in the SOI application are complete, accurate, and current. **DRL strongly encourages all applicants, especially foreign or first-time applicants, to submit the SOI before the designated due date to ensure that the SOI has been received and is complete.**

### **FORMAT REQUIREMENTS**

To be considered, all SOI documents should adhere to the below formatting guidelines:

- All pages are numbered, including attachments;
- All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper (U.S. letter size); and,
- 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 1 page width.

## **A. SOI Requirements**

Complete SOIs must include the following:

1. Completed and signed **SF-424** and **SF-424B**, as directed on SAMS Domestic or Grants.gov; and,
2. Program Statement (not to exceed three [3] pages in Microsoft Word) that includes:
  - a) A table listing:
    - i. Organization name
    - ii. The target country/countries;
    - iii. The total amount of funding requested from DRL, total amount of cost-share (if any), and total program amount (DRL funds + cost-share); and,
    - iv. 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.

Please note: DRL retains the right to ask for additional documents not included in this PSI. Additionally, to ensure all SOIs receive a balanced evaluation, the Department of State Review Panel 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.

Information on additional materials that organizations with approved SOIs must submit can be found in DRL's PSI for Applications, available on DRL's website:

<https://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/c12302.htm>.

## **SECTION II: GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATION COMPONENTS**

---

### **A. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Regulations**

Prospective applicants should be aware that if ultimately selected for a Federal 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 (for more information on these exceptions, see Chapter 5, Federal Assistance to Individuals, and Chapter 6, Federal Assistance to Foreign Public Entities Directive.) Sub-Chapters A through E shall apply to all foreign organizations, and Sub-Chapters A through D shall apply to all U.S. and foreign for-profit entities.

The 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 at <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/c72333.htm>.

### **B. SF-424 Forms**

Organizations must fill out, sign, and submit SF-424 and SF-424B forms as directed on SAMS Domestic or Grants.gov. **Please note that all communication regarding the SOI will be directed to the points of contact identified on the SF-424 forms.**

**I. SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance:** Please refer to the following guidelines as you fill out the SF-424 form. Complete all fields except where noted as "Leave Blank" below.

1. Type of Submission: Application.
2. Type of Application: New.
3. Date Received: Leave blank. This will be assigned automatically.
4. Applicant Identifier: Leave blank.
- 5a. Federal Entity Identifier: Leave blank.
- 5b. Federal Award Identifier: Leave blank.
6. Date Received by State: Leave blank. This will be assigned automatically.
7. State Application Identified: Leave blank. This will be assigned automatically.
- 8a. Enter the legal name of the applicant organization. Do NOT list abbreviations or acronyms unless they are part of the organization's legal name.
- 8b. Employer/Taxpayer ID Number: Non-U.S. organizations enter 44-4444444.
- 8c. Enter organizational Unique Entity Identifier number (UEI) or DUNS Number.
- 8e. Enter the headquarters address of the applicant.
- 8f. Enter the name of the primary organizational unit (and department or division) that will undertake the assistance activity as applicable.
- 8g. Enter the name, title, and all contact information of the person to be contacted on matters involving this application. Please note this is the only person to receive updates on the submitted application.
9. Select an applicant type: Select the type of organization applying.
10. Enter: Office of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

11. Select: 19.345.
12. Enter the Funding Opportunity Number and title. This title and number will already be entered on electronic applications.
13. Enter the Competition Identification Number and title. This number will already be entered on electronic applications.
14. Areas Affected by Project: Enter country or region intended for project. Multiple countries may be entered for regional programs.
15. Enter the descriptive title of applicant's project. Note, there is a 30 character limit including spaces.
16. (16a) Congressional districts of Applicant: Applicants based in the U.S. should enter congressional district. Foreign applicants should enter "90." (16b) All applicants should enter "70."
17. Enter projected start date and projected end date. Refer to the funding opportunity for guidance on projected start dates.
18. (18a) Enter the amount requested for the project described in the full proposal under "Federal"; (18b) enter any cost-share under "Applicant." If not proposing cost-share, enter zeros. For (18c-f) please enter zeros. For (18g) the total should automatically populate.
19. Select "c. Program is not covered by E.O 12372."
20. Select the appropriate box. If the answer is "yes" to this question, provide an explanation.
21. Enter the name, title, and all contact information of the individual authorized to sign for the application on behalf of the applicant organization.

## **II. SF-424 B Assurances – Non Construction Programs:**

This form must be signed online in SAMS Domestic or Grants.gov. All sections of this form must be filled out and signed. Please note, public international organizations are required to sign the form in order to submit their proposal, but may submit an additional letter declaring the following:

"Our organization is a Public International Organization and therefore is not subject to any of the assurances and certifications referring to US law." Ensure the document is signed by an Authorized Official. The Authorized Official is generally the grant signatory at the organization or business.

## **SECTION III: SOI SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS**

---

The U.S. Department of State requires that SOIs be submitted electronically via SAMS Domestic or www.grants.gov. Both systems require applicant registration.

Faxed, couriered, or emailed documents will generally **not** be accepted. Reasonable accommodations may, in appropriate circumstances, be provided to applicants with disabilities or due to security reasons. Applicants must follow all formatting instructions in the applicable RSOI and these instructions.

DRL encourages organizations to **submit applications during normal business hours** (Monday – Friday, 9:00AM- 5:00PM Eastern Time). If an applicant experiences technical difficulties and has contacted the appropriate helpdesk but is not receiving timely assistance (e.g. if you have not received a response within 48 hours of contacting the helpdesk), you may contact the DRL point of contact listed in the RSOI. The point of contact may provide assistance contacting the appropriate helpdesk, but an applicant should also document their efforts in contacting the help desk. Applicants may also contact the DRL point of contact listed in the RSOI if experiencing technical issues with Grants.gov or SAMS Domestic that may result in a late submission.

Applicants experiencing technical difficulties should follow these three steps:

1. Contact the helpdesk for either Grants.gov or SAMS Domestic immediately.
2. Document (including screenshots) technical issues AND efforts to contact the helpdesk.
3. If there are continued difficulties submitting documents, email all of the required documents to the DRL point of contact listed in the solicitation before the deadline.

*Note: The Procurement Office will determine technical eligibility of all applications and allowability of acceptable proposal submissions.*

### **A. SAMS Domestic Applications**

All applicants are strongly encouraged to submit SOIs via SAMS Domestic ([https://mygrants.service-now.com/grants/portal\\_login.do](https://mygrants.service-now.com/grants/portal_login.do)).

Applicants using SAMS Domestic for the first time should complete their “New Organization Registration”. To register with SAMS Domestic, click “Login to [https://mygrants.service-now.com/grants/portal\\_login.do](https://mygrants.service-now.com/grants/portal_login.do)” and follow the “create an account” link.

Organizations **must** remember to save a screen shot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

Late applications are neither reviewed nor considered unless the DRL point of contact listed in the RSOI is contacted **prior** to the deadline and is provided with evidence of a system error caused by Grants.gov or SAMS Domestic that is outside of the applicant’s control and is the sole reason for a late submission. Applicants should not expect a separate notification from DRL upon receiving their application.

**It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that it has an active registration in SAMS Domestic or Grants.gov. Applicants are required to document that the application has been received by SAMS Domestic or Grants.gov in its entirety. DRL bears no responsibility for disqualification that result from applicants not being registered before the due date, for system errors in either SAMS Domestic or Grants.gov, or other errors in the application process.** Additionally you **must** remember to save a screen shot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

**SAMS Domestic Help Desk:**

For assistance with SAMS Domestic accounts and technical issues related to the system, please contact the ILMS help desk by phone at 1-888-313-4567 (toll charges for international callers) or through the Self Service online portal that can be accessed from <https://afsitsm.service-now.com/ilms>. Customer Support is available 24/7/365.

**B. Grants.gov Applications**

Applicants who do not submit applications via SAMS Domestic may submit via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). The Grants.gov registration process can take 10 business days or longer, even if all registration steps are completed in a timely manner.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a validation e-mail from Grants.gov upon the successful submission of a SOI. Validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days. Additionally you **must** save a screen shot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

Late SOIs are neither reviewed nor considered unless the DRL point of contact listed in the RSOI is contacted **prior** to the deadline and is provided with evidence of a system error caused by SAMS Domestic that is outside of the applicant's control and is the sole reason for a late submission.

Applicants should not expect a separate notification from DRL upon receiving their application.

**It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that it has an active registration in SAMS Domestic or Grants.gov. Applicants are required to document that the SOI has been received by SAMS Domestic or Grants.gov in its entirety. DRL bears no responsibility for disqualification that result from applicants not being registered before the due date, for system errors in either SAMS Domestic or Grants.gov, or other errors in the application process.** Additionally you **must** remember to save a screen shot of the checklist showing all documents submitted in case any document fails to upload successfully.

**Grants.gov Helpdesk:**

For assistance with Grants.gov, 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).

## **SECTION IV: SOI REVIEW PROCESS**

---

DRL strives to ensure that each SOI receives a balanced evaluation by the DRL Review Panel. The Department's Office of Acquisitions Management (AQM) will determine technical eligibility for all SOIs. All technically eligible SOIs for a given solicitation are reviewed against the same three criteria: 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. DRL may also take into consideration the balance of the current portfolio of active programs, including geographic or thematic diversity, if needed. Panelists review each SOI individually against the evaluation criteria, not against competing SOIs.

In most cases, the DRL Review Panel includes representatives from DRL and the appropriate Department of State regional bureau (to include feedback from U.S. embassies). In some cases, additional panelists may participate, including from other Department of State bureaus or offices, U.S. government departments, agencies, or boards, representatives from partner governments, or representatives from entities that are in a public-private partnership with DRL. 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 Grants Officer Representative (GOR) for the eventual award does not vote on the panel. All Panelists must sign non-disclosure agreements and conflict of interest agreements.

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.

With the exception of technical submission questions, during the solicitation period U.S. Department of State staff in Washington and overseas shall not discuss competing SOIs or applications with organizations until the review process has been completed and rejection and approval letters have been transmitted.

### **A. SOI Review Criteria**

The Review Panel will evaluate each SOI individually against the following criteria, listed below in order of importance, and not against competing SOIs. Please use the below criteria as a reference but **do not structure your SOI according to the sub-sections.**

#### **Quality of Program Idea**

SOIs should be responsive to the program framework and policy objectives identified in the country/regional context, and should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to DRL's mission of promoting human rights and democracy. Projects should have the potential to have an immediate impact leading to long-term sustainable reforms. DRL prefers new

approaches that do not duplicate efforts by other entities. This does not exclude from consideration projects that improve upon or expand existing successful projects in a new and complementary way. 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 and how these efforts will be coordinated. Proposals that promote creative approaches to recognized ongoing challenges are highly encouraged. DRL prioritizes project proposals with inclusive approaches for advancing these rights.

### **Addressing Barriers to Equal Participation**

DRL strives to ensure its projects advance the rights and uphold the dignity of all persons. As the USG's lead bureau dedicated to promoting democratic governance, DRL requests a programming approach dedicated to strengthening inclusive societies as a necessary pillar of strong democracies. Violence targeting any members of society undermines collective security and threatens democracy. DRL supports program models that assess and address the barriers to access created by violence and discrimination targeting individuals and groups based on their religion, gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Applicants should describe how programming affects all of its beneficiaries, including support that specifically targets communities under threat of violence and discrimination. This approach should be an integral part of both the concept and explicit design of all proposed project activities and objectives. Strong proposals will provide specific analysis, measures, and corresponding targets as appropriate. Stakeholders shall identify the difference between opportunities and barriers to access and design programs that do not perpetuate these inequalities but rather enhance programmatic impact by including all people in society. The goal of this approach is to bring communities and those in power together in support of stable and secure societies.

### **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.

## **SECTION 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.

Applicants 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, applicants 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.

The information in DRL's RSOI and this PSI for SOIs, as updated in October 2017, 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 a RSOI and negotiation of SOIs does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government.

The U.S. government may (a) reject any or all SOIs, (b) accept other than the lowest cost SOI, (c) accept more than one SOI, or (d) waive informalities and minor irregularities in SOIs received.

Program activities that provide training or other assistance to foreign militaries or paramilitary groups or individuals will not be considered for DRL funding given purpose limitations on funding.

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.

To maximize the impact and sustainability of the award(s) that result(s) from this SOI/NOFO, DRL reserves the right to execute a non-competitive continuation amendment(s). The total duration of any award, including a potential non-competitive continuation amendment(s), shall not exceed 60 months or five years. Any non-competitive continuation is contingent on performance and availability of funds. A non-competitive continuation is not guaranteed; the Department of State reserves the right to exercise or not exercise the option to issue non-competitive continuation amendment(s).

### **A. Background Information on DRL and General DRL Funding**

DRL has the mission of 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 its efforts can be found on [www.state.gov/j/drl](http://www.state.gov/j/drl) and [www.humanrights.gov](http://www.humanrights.gov).