



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

AFGHANISTAN

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**THE USAID BROAD AGENCY ANNOUNCEMENT FOR
AFGHAN CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA SELF-RELIANCE
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

I. OVERVIEW

A. Introduction

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is issuing this Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) to seek opportunities to co-create, co-design, co-invest, and collaborate in the research and development, piloting, testing, and scaling of new, innovative and realistic interventions to advance Afghan civil society and media's effectiveness and self-reliance.

In undertaking research and development that will lead to innovative, and potentially commercially viable, solutions to the Problem and Challenge Statements set forth in this BAA, potential questions you may wish to consider include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. What would be the effect(s) of programming that takes a broader systems approach to civil society development, focused on building linkages between civil society organizations, constituencies of citizens, academic and research institutions, youth and community groups, grassroots organizations, trade associations, traditional and religious institutions, government and the private sector?
2. How can civil society organizations develop and/or strengthen broader-based constituencies, and effectively engage with and represent the interests of these communities? How can constituencies develop and/strengthen civil society organizations that represent their interests?
3. Given the substantial economic challenges in Afghanistan, how can civil society and media cultivate and diversify funding sources and thereby reduce dependence on international funding?
4. Given the financial and administrative challenges of working in Afghanistan, how can donors effectively support grassroots and community organizations? How do the needs and opportunities differ in rural and in urban areas?

5. How can media organizations more effectively understand and meet the demand signals of their audiences, and balance civic responsibility with audience demands?

The intent of the BAA is to allow co-creation, co-design, co-investment and collaboration to the maximum extent to create high quality, effective partnerships and to pilot new and innovative ways of addressing civil society and media challenges. USAID will invite selected for-profit and non-profit, public and private organizations, as detailed below, to co-create research and development (R&D) solutions to the Problem and Challenge Statements stated in this BAA, including those organizations that have ideas, expertise, resources, and/or funding to add to potential solutions.

B. Federal Agency Name:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

C. Opportunity Title:

Afghan Civil Society and Media Self Reliance

D. Opportunity Number:

BAA-AFG-CSM-2019

E. Authority:

This BAA is issued under Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) Part 35.016 (c). This is not a FAR Part 15 Procurement.

F. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:

98.001 USAID Foreign Assistance Programs for Overseas

II. PROBLEM AND CHALLENGE STATEMENTS

A. PROBLEM

Over the last 17 years, USAID and other donors have supported Afghan civil society to develop from a disparate network of intellectuals, religious communities and tribal affiliations, to a more formal and organized advocate for citizens' interests¹. Civil society and media organizations now have the operational and financial capacity to manage donor funds, have developed advocacy skills, and have established significant relationships with communities and Afghan government

¹ Harpviken, Strand and Ask, *Afghanistan and Civil Society*, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2002.

institutions. This has resulted in civil society and media positively influencing legislation, and holding government accountable².

At the same time, the civic sector remains heavily dependent on international donors. Civil society relies on donors financially, and international projects often provide the resources and platform for civil society representatives to have their voices heard.³ The type of civil society organizations that have been best placed to take advantage of donor funding are non-governmental organizations (NGOs).⁴ However, allegations of self-enrichment and corruption have affected the reputation of NGOs. In search of funding, some NGOs have focused on donor's development priorities rather than that of their communities. This has disconnected some NGOs from the Afghan public. Many citizens view civil society as a foreign creation representing western values, rather than an organic part of modern Afghan society, complementing the government and private sectors. The most recent Survey of the Afghan People found less than half of respondents expressed confidence in national NGOs, significantly less than community development councils, community shuras or religious leaders.⁵

Another vulnerability is financial sustainability, as the sole source of resources for many organizations is the dwindling pool of donor funding. While many civil society development programs have made efforts towards sustainability, this is one area where little progress has been made⁶.

For civil society to continue to grow into a fully effective and self-reliant sector, civil society organizations must continue to strengthen their legitimacy with the public, solidify their role as an essential partner of the government, and diversify their funding sources. The media sector also needs to diversify funding, generate more revenue, better understand their audiences, and ensure they are balancing civic responsibility and audience demands.

The desired end state we expect this activity to contribute to is a more influential and sustainable civil society sector that can channel citizens' demands and holds government accountable. Obstacles to civil society self-reliance that this BAA seeks to address include a lack of public support for civil society advocacy efforts, and limited CSO engagement of citizens in determining programming priorities. Focus on donor priorities over that of constituencies of citizens challenges the legitimacy of CSOs in the eyes of the public. Another obstacle includes limited influence of civil society on government decision makers, and the perception that civil society is acting in its own, rather than in the public interest. An additional problem has been an

² Winter, E. *Civil Society Development in Afghanistan*, London School of Economics. 2010.

³ Checchi and Company *Mid-Term Evaluation, Afghanistan Civil Engagement Program*, January 2017

⁴ USAID/Afghanistan uses "civil society" as a broad term to include advocacy groups, trade associations, media organizations, citizen movements, academic and research institutions, and a wide variety of groups that are not part of the government or private sector. NGOs are a specific type of civil society organization, normally with a formal organizational structure, full-time staff, offices and project-based activities. In Afghanistan, NGOs are regulated through the Ministry of Economy, as opposed to associations which are regulated through the Ministry of Justice.

⁵ The Asia Foundation. *Afghanistan in 2018: A Survey of the Afghan People*. December 2018

⁶ Checchi and Company Sector Assessment of Civil Society and Media in Afghanistan. Draft. September 2018

<https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/content/Detail.aspx?vID=47&ctID=ODVhZjk4NWQtM2YyMi00YjRmLTkxNjktZTcxMjM2NDBmY2Uy&rID=NTE0NjE2>

excessive focus on supporting civil society organizations, as opposed to the wider institutional system in which civil society operates, including the public and private sector and traditional institutions. Finally, civil society's overreliance on international donors as the sole source of funding is a significant obstacle to self-reliance for civil society organizations, including media organizations.

USAID is focusing programming in the five largest population centers: Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, Jalalabad and Herat, with support to surrounding peri-urban and rural areas. USAID anticipates programming under this BAA will focus in these areas. Innovative solutions for effectively reaching rural areas and/or neighboring provinces outside these urban centers are also encouraged.

B. CHALLENGE

The problem described above is not new or unknown, and USAID has worked since 2001 to strengthen the capacity and viability of Afghan civil society. Interventions have included substantial training, advocacy grants, conferences, study tours, and technical assistance. These activities have improved the knowledge and skills of civil society activists, but they have also had negative effects. In some cases, generous funding of NGOs has exacerbated tensions between the formal civil society sector and the Afghan public, and fostered rivalries between NGOs competing for funding. International funding has created strong accountability mechanisms between CSOs and donors, but has been less successful in promoting CSO accountability to the public. Finally, foreign-funded programming has distorted the size and capacity of civil society, resulting in large staffs hired to implement vast projects focused on stabilization. When the grants end, the staff is let go and activities stop. As Afghanistan looks towards longer-term development, appropriately scaled interventions must focus on more sustainable, domestically supported activities.

USAID's mission statement asserts that USAID works to "...strengthen democratic governance, and help people emerge from humanitarian crises and progress beyond assistance. USAID Administrator Mark Green has termed this objective the "journey to self-reliance." For civil society and media organizations, this does not mean full financial independence – civil society organizations are not businesses, nor should they be. Self-reliance for these groups means that they derive their authority and influence from constituencies of citizens, to whom they are accountable. Government listens to civil society, because civil society is speaking on behalf of the public. It also means that civil society as a sector has diverse sources of funding – a combination of philanthropic donations from foundations and individuals, private-sector support, membership fees, government funding, social enterprises, crowd funding, international aid, and other sources. USAID recognizes that the journey to self-reliance is long and difficult and most countries have yet to reach the end. But we are committed to help Afghanistan move a little farther down this road. We also recognize that while the media is a part of civil society, media organizations are unique and require different types of support than NGOs or advocacy organizations. Applicants are encouraged to include in their expressions of interest both distinct media activities and/or separate general civil society activities.

Fostering civil society self-reliance in a conflict-affected country like Afghanistan is a substantial challenge – after 17 years of USAID programming, there are not known and proven solutions ready to be implemented. Research, testing hypotheses, evaluation, learning and adaptation through an iterative programming approach will be necessary to make progress on this intractable challenge.

III. CRITERIA FOR CONSIDERATION

A. Initial Expressions of Interest are not evaluated against other submissions, but solely on whether USAID believes that the submitter will be a valuable contributor to the co-creation process. USAID may need to limit the number of initial submissions selected to move forward based on efficiencies.

B. Concept Papers are not evaluated against other submissions, but solely based on USAID’s determination that the Concept Paper will successfully address the Problem and Challenge set forth herein. USAID may need to limit the number of Concept Papers selected to move forward based on efficiencies.

C. Decisions regarding USAID’s pursuit of a particular project, technology or relationship are based on the available evidence, data, and resulting analysis. USAID seeks solutions that have a significant impact (i.e. breakthroughs, not incremental improvements), and can achieve that impact at scale.

D. The reputations of an organization, its past performance, the managerial and technical ability of the person or team of people engaged in the endeavor are always significant considerations in assessing the potential and the risks associated with each award.

E. Additional criteria may be considered under this BAA to indicate that the submission successfully addresses the Problem and Challenges; these criteria will be specified in each Addendum.

IV. THE BAA PROCESS

The resources made available under this BAA will depend on the concepts received and the availability of funds from USAID and other resource partners. Some award types may not include any funding. The award process under this BAA has the following steps:

STAGE 1 - SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (EOIs)

Please submit an expression of interest (EOI) addressing the criteria below, in the format required in Section VII. More than one expression of interest can be submitted.

USAID will review the EOI to determine the extent to which it addresses the criteria stated below. Not all organizations that submit an EOI will be invited to proceed to Stage 2. Due to

the number of EOIs expected to be received, USAID is unable to provide details on why an EOI was not selected for further consideration.

Criteria for Expressions of Interest:

1. EOIs must indicate the research or development idea which will work towards discovering potential solutions to the Problem and Challenge Statements, by increasing knowledge and understanding of potential solutions, exploiting scientific discoveries or improvements in technology, materials, processes, methods, devices, or techniques, advancing the state of the art, or using scientific and technical knowledge in the design, development, testing, or evaluation of a potential new product or service (or of an improvement in an existing product or service).

Any awards issued under this solicitation will be for Applied Research or Development, as those terms are defined in 48 USC 35.001, as follows:

“Applied research” means the effort that:

- (a) normally follows basic research⁷, but may not be severable from the related basic research;
- (b) attempts to determine and exploit the potential of scientific discoveries or improvements in technology, materials, processes, methods, devices, or techniques; and
- (c) attempts to advance the state of the art. When being used by contractors in cost principle applications, this term does not include efforts whose principal aim is the design, development, or testing of specific items or services to be considered for sale; these efforts are within the definition of “development,” given below.

“Development” means the systematic use of scientific and technical knowledge in the design, development, testing, or evaluation of a potential new product or service (or of an improvement in an existing product or service) to meet specific performance requirements or objectives. It includes the functions of design engineering, prototyping, and engineering testing; it excludes subcontracted technical effort that is for the sole purpose of developing an additional source for an existing product.

2. Expressions of Interest must demonstrate the potential to have a significant impact (e.g. breakthroughs, not incremental improvements), that ultimately could achieve that even greater impact at scale.

3. Expressions of Interest must indicate the background and expertise of the organization, and the managerial and technical staff or team engaged in the endeavor.

⁷ The primary aim of basic research is a fuller knowledge or understanding of the subject under study, rather than any practical application of that knowledge. (FAR 2.101)

4. Expressions of Interest must indicate what, if any, co-investment resources are available to bear on the solution, including those from the submitting organization and those from other third party businesses, donors, foundations, or other organizations. Such resources include cash and other resources, both tangible and intangible, such as in-kind contributions, expertise, intellectual property, brand value, high-value coordination, and access to key people, places, and information.

5. USAID will also consider the reputation of an organization and its past performance in assessing the ability of the organization to contribute to the co-creation.

STAGE 2 - CO-CREATION AND CO-DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT PAPER

During Stage 2, key stakeholders will co-create potential solutions to the Problem/Challenge by brainstorming and innovating solutions and resources, potentially leading to concept papers that USAID or other resource partners will consider for funding.

Co-Creation

USAID will review the EOIs and will select those organizations that USAID determines have addressed the criteria/eligibility stated within the BAA to an extent that the organization will make a significant contribution to the co-creation. The co-creation will also include USAID and other co-investment organizations that may be able to contribute cash and other resources, both tangible and intangible, such as in-kind contributions, expertise, intellectual property, brand value, high-value coordination, and/or access to key people, places, and information.

Co-creation may take the form of a workshop, conference, meeting, or other method at the discretion of the USAID. An invitation to co-create is not guarantee of funding nor is it a guarantee of moving forward to Stage 3. For more information on co-creation and its design approaches, see <https://usaidlearninglab.org/library/co-creation-discussion-note-ads-201>.

Unless provided otherwise, organizations selected to participate in the co-creation process are responsible for all costs incurred by the organization to participate in the co-creation.

The method of co-creation for this BAA is expected to be a two-day, facilitated conference in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Not all organizations invited to participate in the co-creation may be invited to co-develop a Concept Paper.

Co-Development of Concept Papers

Working together, USAID and the potential partner(s) will collaborate on Concept Paper(s), taking a holistic approach to addressing the Problem/Challenge based on learnings from the co-creation, and identifying creative approaches to resourcing projects. Such Concept Papers will consider and include additional implementing and co-investment partners to complement the project, including reasonable cost sharing, leverage, or other exchange of resource arrangements.

The Concept Paper, not more than eight pages, will further detail and explain the project.

STAGE 3 - REVIEW BY THE PEER AND SCIENTIFIC REVIEW BOARD

USAID and the organizations connected with each Concept Paper will present the Concept Paper to the Peer and Scientific Review Board, comprised of experts from USAID, partners, and/or outside parties. The Peer and Scientific Review Board will review Concept Papers and recommend which applicants should be considered Apparently Successful Partners. Using its technical expertise, the Peer and Scientific Review Board will recommend whether to move forward with a project, including revisions/additions to a project, and potential partners and resources.

Not all organizations that present a Concept Paper to the Peer and Scientific Review Board will be invited to move to Stage 4.

STAGE 4: AWARD DETERMINATION

USAID will review the Peer and Scientific Review Board's recommendations and consider other information, such as resource availability and Agency priorities, and will make a determination whether to move forward with a Concept Paper. For Concept Papers that demonstrate a valid innovation to address the Problem/Challenge Statement, the Contracting/Agreement Officer will assess the partner's responsibility and identify the anticipated instrument type – acquisition or assistance- to facilitate project design.

Request for Additional Information. USAID will work with partners identified by the Peer and Scientific Review Board, and co-design the project(s) and assist the partner to provide additional information with respect to the proposer's technical approach, capacity, management and organization, past performance, and budget, as well as representations and certifications, as needed.

Final Review and Negotiation. The USAID Contract/ Agreement Officer will engage in final review, negotiation, responsibility, cost reasonableness, etc., and will co-develop/craft an award instrument with the Apparently Successful Partner. If the Apparently Successful Partner and USAID cannot arrive at a mutually agreeable arrangement, USAID may cancel the project at no cost to the Government.

Award. Award(s) under this BAA will be made to the Apparently Successful Partner(s) on the basis of their ability to achieve solutions to the Problems/Challenges, as provided herein. The standard clauses or provisions for awards are generally prescribed by law and regulation and will vary considerably by award type. Information regarding clauses and provisions will be offered to the Apparently Successful Partner when the award type is identified.

IV. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- A. Expressions of Interest are not evaluated against other Expressions of Interest, but solely whether USAID believes that the submitter will be a valuable contributor to the co-creation process. USAID may limit the number of initial submissions selected to move forward based on efficiencies.
- B. Concept Papers are not evaluated against other Concept Papers, but solely based on USAID's determination that the Concept Paper will successfully address the Problem and Challenges set forth herein. USAID may limit the number of Concept Papers selected to move forward based on efficiencies.
- C. Decisions regarding USAID's pursuit of a particular project, technology or relationship are based on all available information, evidence, data, and resulting analysis.
- D. Eligibility Information. Public, private, for-profit, and nonprofit organizations, as well as institutions of higher education, public international organizations, non-governmental organizations, U.S. and non-U.S. governmental organizations, multilateral and international donor organizations are eligible under this BAA. All organizations must be determined to be responsive to the BAA and sufficiently responsible to perform or participate in the final award type.
- E. All organizations must be determined to be responsive to the BAA and responsible to perform or participate in the final award type.

V. SPECIFIC RIGHTS RESERVED FOR THE GOVERNMENT UNDER THIS BAA

The Government reserves specific rights, in addition to rights described elsewhere in this document or by law or regulation, including:

- A. The right to award multiple awards, a single award, or no awards.
- B. The right to make award without discussions, or to conduct discussions and/or negotiations, whichever is determined to be in the Government's interest.
- C. The right to accept concepts in their entirety or to select only portions of concepts for award or co-investment.
- D. The right to select for award an instrument type that is appropriate to the specific development context, partner relationship, and concept selected for award. Instruments types include, but are not limited to, contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, public-private partnerships, Inter-Agency Agreements, Government to Government Agreements, Donor to Donor Agreements, and Memorandums of Understanding. In addition, the Government may craft a new instrument type to meet the needs of a specific relationship.

- E. The right to co-create projects with one or more proposers under the BAA, when it is in the best interest of the Government.
- F. The right to request any additional, necessary documentation upon initial review. Such additional information may include, but is not limited to, a further detailed proposal/application, budget, and representations and certifications.
- G. The right to fund or co-invest in proposals/applications in phases, with options for continued work at the end of one or more of the phases.
- H. The right to award instruments under this BAA that do not commit or exchange monetary resources.
- I. The right to remove organizations from the BAA process if USAID determines it is no longer in the best interest of the Government to proceed with the organization.

VI. INFORMATION PROTECTION

USAID's goal is to facilitate research and development that will lead to innovative, and potentially commercially viable, solutions. Understanding the sensitive nature of submitters' information, USAID will work with organizations to protect intellectual property.

Expressions of interest should be free of any intellectual property that submitter wishes to protect, as the expressions of interest will be shared with USAID partners as part of the selection process. However, once submitters have been invited to advance beyond co-creation, submitters can work with USAID to identify proprietary information that requires protection.

Therefore, organizations making submissions under this BAA grant to USAID a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable right to use, disclose, reproduce, and prepare derivative works, and to have or permit others to do so to any information contained in the Expressions of Interest submitted under the BAA. If USAID further engages with the organization regarding its submission, the parties can negotiate further intellectual property protection for the organization's intellectual property.

Organizations must ensure that any submissions under this BAA are free of any third party proprietary data rights that would impact the license granted to USAID herein.

VII. EXPRESSION OF INTEREST INFORMATION FORMATTING

Expression of Interest in response to this BAA must:

- A. Be In English, no more than three (3) pages in length, and no smaller than 12 point font;
- B. Be submitted electronically to the e-mail address: kblaidooaodgteam@usaid.gov **not later than the expiration date January 28, 2019;**

- C. Contain a header with the following information (included in the page count):
- 1) Respondent Name/Group and Contact Information;
 - 2) Response Title;
 - 3) BAA Name/Number;
 - 4) Optional graphic that fits on an 8.5"x11" or A4 piece of paper (included in the page limit);
- D. Be in .pdf, .docx, or .odf format

The Government reserves the right to accept/reject EOIs, if such is considered to be in the best interest of the Government.